



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Transactions

(A Peer Reviewed Journal)

www.ijmrt.in

Dr.S.RADHAKRISHNANS' PHILOSOPHY ON RELIGION

*** Prof. Koppula Victor Babu**

Associate Professor, Institute of Education, Mettu University, Metu, Ethiopia

*Corresponding author

Abstract

Dr.Radhakrishnan craved for religious harmony. In his different works he attempted to show that the religious differences are only superficial and not in depth. Referring to the different religions of today, he said. "Religions hitherto have been building walls between one another instead of breaking down barriers. All religions bear witness to the penetration of the finite by the infinite. Every religion is based on a personal encounter a human apprehension and all theologies are stammering attempts to translate the experience in towards and draw out its implications". God in many religions is an aggressive despot, full of phobias and complexes. All religions ask us to practice brotherly love which is inseparable from knowledge. No religion today cares to live on mere revival or repetition of the past. All religions emphasize the common inheritance and plead for progress along a path of mutual respect and understanding. We feel that we are all partners in the same quest. The meeting together of the religions has contributed to the vitality of these religions. Religious isolationism is no longer possible. The different religious traditions are governed by the same spirit and work for the redemption of both man and the universe. Cosmic salvation is the aim of all religions. "All the religions of the world, at their best, require us to understand one another in a spirit of humility and friendliness. Whatever helps us to get a living sensation of the supreme is permitted". It is essential to understand other religions and appreciate their values and co-operate with them for the sake of self-preservation. Experiential religion is the religion of the future. It is that to which the religious world is leading.

Keywords: S. Radhakrishnan, Religion, Philosophy.

Religion and the new world order

Radhakrishnan observes that though religious aims are at universality. Religions are becoming local and particularly interfering with the development of fellowship.

All religions are now attempting to express themselves in a new idiom, and so are approximating to one another. Untenable doctrines are not so much refuted as set aside, and the universal elements of religions on which there is agreement are emphasized. This process will be speeded up in the years to come, and the gradual assimilation of religions will function as a world faith. Religions teach that God is in man, that man is possessed of the power to choose between good and evil and this power makes him a man and distinguishes him from the animal and lends sacredness to human life. The human being is treated by living religions as a sacred entity. Religions upset the scale of values in the life of people. All things which, in accordance with the instincts of nature, had constituted the value of the present visible life, power and pleasure wealth and fame, are treated with contempt by religion. Religions formulate the conception of kingdom of God. Into this kingdom the poor and the oppressed enter after death more easily than the rich and the comfortable. Only such a belief in post-mortem justice can make sense of our life on earth. Radhakrishnan observes that religions teach humility and patience, comforting them with the hope of heavenly reward. Belief in God and future life detracts from devotion to ideals. Religions have failed simply because we did not take them seriously. Their fundamental aim is the remaking of man. Self-will and egotism are making one's own bargain, furthering one's own interest at the expense of others, are the sources of all frustration. Every religion has an ethical and social expression. Sanctity and love go together. Religion and politics are two separate realms between which a gulf is fixed each with its own standards of thought, feeling and conduct. Religion is not medicine for the disorders of the spirit. It is a dynamic for social progress. Unless we have faith in an inner order, we cannot build a stable outer order. Religion is not so transcendent as to have no bearing on human life. The development of religious life demands a withdrawal from practical activity in order to permit of the concentration of reflection, intellectual or emotional. Religious life is a rhythm of withdrawal and return: withdrawal into individual solitariness, which expresses the need for thought and contemplation, and return to the life of society. The aim of religion is not reflection or ecstasy, but identification with the current of life and therefore participation in its creative advance. The religious man transcends the limitations imposed on him by his material nature or social conditions and enlarges the creative purpose. Religion is a dynamic process, a renewed effort of the creative impulse working through exceptional individuals and seeking to uplift mankind to a new level. Religion properly conceived and practised will bring about a profound renewal and a peaceful revolution.

Radhakrishnan observers that the present-day society appears very confused. It is caught in the cross-currents of different cultures. Millions of people do not really know where to go and where to get satisfaction, peace and fulfillment in life. They are not clear even about the aims of life. We are gradually becoming like bees in a beehive or ants in an anthill. The resulting totalitarian form of society is proving suffocating. Fascism will harm mankind for a long time to come. Art, science and the different forms of totalitarianism are all 'emergency camps for refugees'. The camps in which we are taking refuge are temporary. Different forms of humanism, anarchist or Marxist, are not acceptable either. The revolt of the individual against collectivity, unless properly imbued with the spirit of the group, is likely to prove selfish, narrow and egoistical. From totalitarianism one must not rush in haste to sentimental humanism. Radhakrishnan is also opposed to the purely philosophical or intellectual ideal of humanism. He is not in favour of the mere social, i.e., secular form of humanism. He believes that the social form of humanism rests on a deeper spiritual truth.

However, this spiritual truth must not be construed other-worldly. It is very much this-worldly. But it is not a mere expression or reaction to this or that form of social or political Ideal. It has a larger import. Radhakrishnan conceived humanism as a mere reaction against fascism and communism and is false and therefore he rejected it. He defends the true form of humanism in which human individuality and dignity are quite consistent with social unity and harmony. Society articulates and fulfils itself and through individuals. Individuals shed their egoism, transcend their narrowness and find their larger self in the society. It is only this noble sort of humanism which is to the spiritual taste of Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan's religion of the spirit is not opposed to scientific temper. Rather, it is integrated to it. Radhakrishnan is opposed to creedal religion, however, legal or moral might it be for us. Such a creedal religion, he says is bad because it demands unquestioned obedience of the individual and it tends to destroy one's power of rational judgement and by taking away his freedom, it debases him.

In Radhakrishnan's concept of the religion, importance is given to the freedom of the spirit. Spirit is always 'Spirit of something or of some being. Both thing and being have their body, gross or subtle. Spirit is the freedom of body. One must draw a distinction between two expressions, 'Freedom of body' and 'freedom from body'. Radhakrishnan highlights the former, which recognizes body as the locus of freedom. This is his way of dispelling the widespread misconception that spirituality means negation of materialism. He not only affirms materialism, though in this qualified way, but what is more interesting to note he also asserts. The positive character and relevance of Marxism in the present day context tends to destroy his power of rational judgement, takes away his freedom and thus, debases him. Whatever is sensible is real and since the spirit is not sensible, it is not real amounting to a surrender to a sort of dogmatism. What is worse is that this attitude also bids farewell to our down-to-earth linguistic intuition.

Radhakrishnan draws an important line of distinction between the religion of authority and the religion of the spirit. The religion of authority is basically institutional, must have its unquestionable scripture and some prescribed rites and rituals. The authority of the scripture and the official head of the religious order and the rituals are beyond question. Within the scope of the religion of authority the gap between the official doctrine and the individual's perception of truth can hardly be bridged. To cite an example, we can refer to Vatican that took nearly 300 years to recognize the scientific truth of Copernicus's heliocentric hypothesis. If the individual's or scientist's perception of truth is brushed aside by dogmatic authority, not only is man's freedom is curtailed, but also his moral dignity is under threat. Consequently, the religion of authority block scientific progress and human freedom and development.

Radhakrishnan observes that each religious genius spells out the mystery of God according to his own endowment – personal, racial and historical. The variety of the pictures of God is easily intelligible when we realize that religious experience is psychologically mediated. Religious rites and social institutions, whatever they may be, issue out of experiences that may be hundreds of years old. The truly religious never worry about other people's beliefs. We cannot have religious unity and peace so long as we assert that we are in possession of religious light and all others are groping in darkness. That very assertion leads to insurmountable difficulties. The political ideal of the world is not so much a single empire with a homogeneous civilization and a single communal will, but a brotherhood of free nations differing profoundly in life and mind, habits and institutions, existing side by side in peace and order, harmony and co-operation and each contributing to the world its own unique and specific best, which is irreducible to the terms of others. So also we should not expect that the world should follow one religion.

Radhakrishnan observes that the cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century and the nationalism of the nineteenth century are combined in the ideal of a world common wealth, that allows freedom and security in the majority of mankind. Radhakrishnan sees no hope for the religious future of the world if this ideal is not implemented in the religious field also. When two or three different systems claim that they contain the revelation of the very core of the future of the world, if this ideal is not extended to the truth and the acceptance of it is the exclusive pathway to heaven, conflicts are found to arise. In such conflicts one religion will not allow others to prosper and no one can gain ascendancy until the world is reduced to dust and ashes. “to obliterate every other religion than one’s own is a sort of bolshevism in religion which we must try to prevent”. In the recent years we observe that different religions are slowly learning to extend hands to friendship to each other. The parliaments of religions and conferences and congresses of liberal thinkers of all creeds are promoting mutual understanding and harmony. The study of comparative religion promotes a fairer attitude to other religion by indicating that the genius of the people, the spirit of the age and the need of the hour determine the emphasis in each religions. We are learning to think clearly about the interrelations of religions. We tend to look upon different religions not as contradictories but as complementaries. Closer contact with other religions has dispelled the misconception of only a particular religion has produced men of courage and patience, “every great religion has cured its followers of the swell of passion, the thrust of desire and the blindness of temper. The crudest religion seems to have its place in the cosmic scheme”.

In his thought proking work Eastern religions and Western through Radhakrishnan holds that the different religions have now come together and if they are to avoid conflict or competition, they must develop a spirit of comprehension which will break down the barriers and bind them together as varied expressions of a single truth. The views of Radhakrishnan reflect the Vedic saying that “Truth is one, scholars call it many’ (Ekam Sat, Vipra Bahuda Vadanti). Radhakrishnan continues that in India Hinduism and its off-shoot of Buddhism adopted the attitude of understanding and appreciation of other faiths quite persistently. Truth is always greater than man’s reach. There is more in God than we know. The seers speak of the ‘Divine Dark’ and their reverent agnosticism is a fitting attitude there are many possible roads to reach God from time to time and we need to choose one road. Growth in religion is a significant process. To start with there is a limited aspect and if we steadily and with faith pursue it we get to the immeasurable reality. The doctrine we adopt and the philosophy we profess are immaterial than the language we speak and the clothes we wear. “for the peace of a religious soul is not necessary that its insight be perfect but its faith must be sure”.

All sincere religious worship is a worship of the supreme, who responds to every call. No formula, however comprehensive, has absolute value for itself alone. It has to be accepted so long as it creates for those who use it a true path for spiritual life. Its value lies in its suggestive quality its power to invoke or express the mysterious. One’s religiousness is to be measured not by one’s the logical affirmations but the degree to which one brings forth the fruits of the spirit. Every religion reflects the highest truth we cannot say that any one religion contains all the truth that exist. We should judge religious men, not by what they say, but by what they do. It is sometimes argued that a particularly religion has been an instrument of greater progress, and so has higher truth. It is represented as the power of a superior type of civilization. But it is difficult to determine what constitutes the content of progress or superiority. Radhakrishnan is of the view that religion alone cannot make a nation great. The efficiency of a nation depends upon several other factors. For instance, Christianity is no doubt the religion of Europe and America but their progress is not due to Christians. The Ethiopians were Christianized earlier than many European races but they were not civilized and progressed until recently, in their pursuit of religious truth. The west is supreme not by

religion but by her thought efficiency. It has worked out methods of increased efficiency in agriculture and industries, in economic affairs and political administration. Radhakrishnan writes, "Let us frankly recognize that the efficiency of a religion is to be judged by the development of religious qualities such as quiet confidence, inner calmness, gentleness of the spirit, love of neighbor, mercy to all creation, destruction of tyrannous desires and the aspiration for spiritual freedom and there are no trustworthy statistics to tell us that these qualities are found more in efficient nations". The disease of dogmatism, whether in religion or politics or social thought, is dangerous to human freedom and progress. 'Our obligation to our religion or nation is not generally a matter of will or choice but one of blind fate or herd infection'. Each form of faith appeals in precisely the same way to the inner devotion of its followers. It is their deepest apprehension of God and His revelation to them. The claim of any religion to validity is the fact that only through it have its followers become what they are. They have grown up with it and it has become a part of their being.

Radhakrishnan holds that the different creeds of religion are the historical formulations of the formless truth. While the treasure is one the earthen vessel that possesses it takes the shape and the colour of its time and environment. 'Religion is like the string of a violin: if removed from its resonant body, it will give the wrong tone, if any'. As human personality depends as either persistence of memory social life depends on the persistence of tradition. Therefore it would be 'as difficult to separate a man's religion from the rest of his life as it would be to separate a vein of gold from the rock in which it is embedded. As every religion aims at social cohesion to replace it by a rival religion is to be attempted with an extreme care. Moreover an outrage on others convictions cannot be a victory for any religion. The discipline of religion 'demands that we should be willing to worship where we are and as we can. Faith in one religion seems to kill faith in others. The followers of each religion treat their religion an article of export. The superiority of are religion over the other is undesirable. Radhakrishnan says that the inspiring treasures of human spirit is the memory of Gautama Buddha. His sway over millions of people is immense. The contribution of Buddhism to the refining spirit of man is impressive. However attempts were made to destroy the memory of Buddha and to terminate his influence. Radhakrishnan says that we can attribute it to 'blind prejudice, to pitiful ignorance'. Every religion should have its own movement, no one form of it can lay claim to finality. No historical religion can be regarded as absolute and changeless. The career of any particular religion is less important if we judge by its age and it is presumptuous to assume that in this short period we have arrived at absolute truth. We may assume that God is not only immanent in man by virtue of his first creation, but is also energizing in him. God holds us by roots of our being. He is everywhere sustaining by his spirit the footsteps of all mankind in its ascent towards spiritual heights. Religion should remain the home of liberty. It cannot be forced on us. For Radhakrishnan 'Religious life is not exempted from the law that governs our mental activity. People comprehend and assimilate a new view in accordance with their own mental potentialities. Religions reform themselves by interpretation and adjustment to one another. Religions in the world, do not compare with the one that is our own. If strangers are skeptical it is because of their ignorance Hinduism respects this sentiment and effects the change in the essentials. We can know only so much of the ultimate truth it has some correspondence with our own nature and its past development. Man cannot be remade suddenly. By a practical deepening of experience we change the ideas. His conception of God and his worship depends upon his character. The noble the man, the worthier is his conception of God and the purer his worship. By raising the standard of religious life we can be clear of our vision. Beliefs which are irrational and practices which are repugnant to our conscience get transformed in the new atmosphere into which they are brought. Falsehood carries within itself the seed of its own decay so that if you

give it time, it will surely perish. Faith is a living response of the soul to God. It is ceaseless action and perpetual renewal. For a religious soul there is no rest. He / she has to strive constantly to perceive what he / she cannot yet perceive and to become what as yet he / she is not. 'The prayer requires us, not to lose ourselves, but to find our true self, naked and without the mask of falsehood to live our lives on the highest plane of self-criticism and human aspiration'. Radhakrishnan observes that the other religions which came into India are influenced by Hindu spirit. While Hinduism is a larger synthesis achieved in the course of centuries, Islam is the creation of a single mind and is expressed in a simple statement. 'There is one God and Mohammad is his prophet'. The Indian form of Islam is modulated by Hindu beliefs and practices. Popular Islam shows the influence of Hinduism. The influence on Christianity of Hinduism is a more interesting study. A true Christian's response to other faiths must be tolerance. Radhakrishnan observes that all religions of the world are important. No one is neither high nor low. Every religion finds its place in the history of religions. He writes 'we cannot dismiss as negligible the sense of the majesty of God and consequent reverence in worship which are conspicuous in Islam, the deep sympathy for the world's sorrow and unselfish search for a way of escape in Buddhism, the desire for contact with ultimate reality in Hinduism, the belief in a moral order in the universe and consequent insistence on moral conduct in Confucius. It is difficult for us at this time of the day to believe that only one religion provides divine revelation and others have nothing of it referring to the doctrine of Christianity Radhakrishnan says that its doctrine did not grow up in a vacuum, in a straight encounter between God and soul. It arose in a world full of warring sects and rival faiths. While Palestine gave morality and monotheism, Greece offered art and philosophy, Rome, order and organization and the East mysticism and worship. The great church Fathers did not repudiate the non-Christian faiths. St. Augustine observes that the spirit of Christian religion existed among the ancients but it was named after Christianity only when Christ came in the flesh and blood. While Christianity need not exist independently apart from other religions, it is not to be regarded as merely relatively excellent, as every religion is good of itself. The history of religions reveals that each religion claims with absolute sincerity that it alone is the true light while others blind us to the truth and turn us away from it. When it attempts to understand better it affirms that the light of its religion is to that of others as the sun is to the stars and the minor lights may be tolerated so long as they accept their position of subordination. But Radhakrishnan even rejects this position. No religion need not subordinate to the other as all religions are equally great and important. Hinduism is against proselytism. The Syrian Christians are also opposed to proselytism. But among the later converts to Christianity, this attempt is gaining acceptance. The international missionary council at its Jerusalem meeting (1928), declares that any symptoms of a religion's imperialism that imposes beliefs and practices on others are to be repudiated. The council also calls upon the non-Christian religions to join forces with Christianity in resisting the attacks from the atheists. The report of the American commission on Laymen affairs emphasizes that it is not wise to undermine men's concentration together in search after truth. A growing apprehension of truth is effected by the creative interaction of different minds and their insights by the mutual criticism and enlargement. This results into a fuller appreciation of other systems of thought and culture. All fences and private truths are of waste. The final truth whatever it may be is the New Testament of every existing faith. There is a common ethical and religious ideal influencing the whole civilized world and each group of people tries to find it in its own religion. Radhakrishnan says that no religion in its present form is final and every religion is approaching for a better expression. There will be a day in future where the religious differences will disappear. Radhakrishnan says that we are living in the world of diversity. The diversity of religions cannot be changed overnight. We must recognize humbly the partial and defective character of our isolated traditions and seek their

source in the generic traditions from which they all have sprung. Religions have to assist each other to find their own souls and grow to their full stature. Owing to a cross fertilization of ideas and insights a great unification is taking place in the deeper fabric of men's thoughts. Respect for other points of view, appreciation of the treasures of other cultures confidence in one another unselfish motives are increasing. We are slowly grasping that different opinions and convictions are necessary to each other to work out the larger synthesis which alone can give the spiritual basis to a world brought together into intimate oneness by man's mechanical ingenuity.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Murty, K. Satchidananda; Ashok Vohra (1990). Radhakrishnan: his life and ideas. SUNY Press. ISBN 978-0-7914-0343-3.
- [2]. Minor, Robert Neil (1987). Radhakrishnan: a religious biography. SUNY Press. ISBN 978-0-88706-554-5.
- [3]. Gopal, Sarvepalli (1989). Radhakrishnan: a biography. Unwin Hyman. ISBN 978-0-04-440449-1.
- [4]. Pappu, S.S. Rama Rao (1995). New Essays in the Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Delhi: South Asia Books. ISBN 978-81-7030-461-6.
- [5]. Parthasarathi, G.; Chattopadhyaya, Debi Prasad, eds. (1989). Radhakrishnan: centenary volume. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.