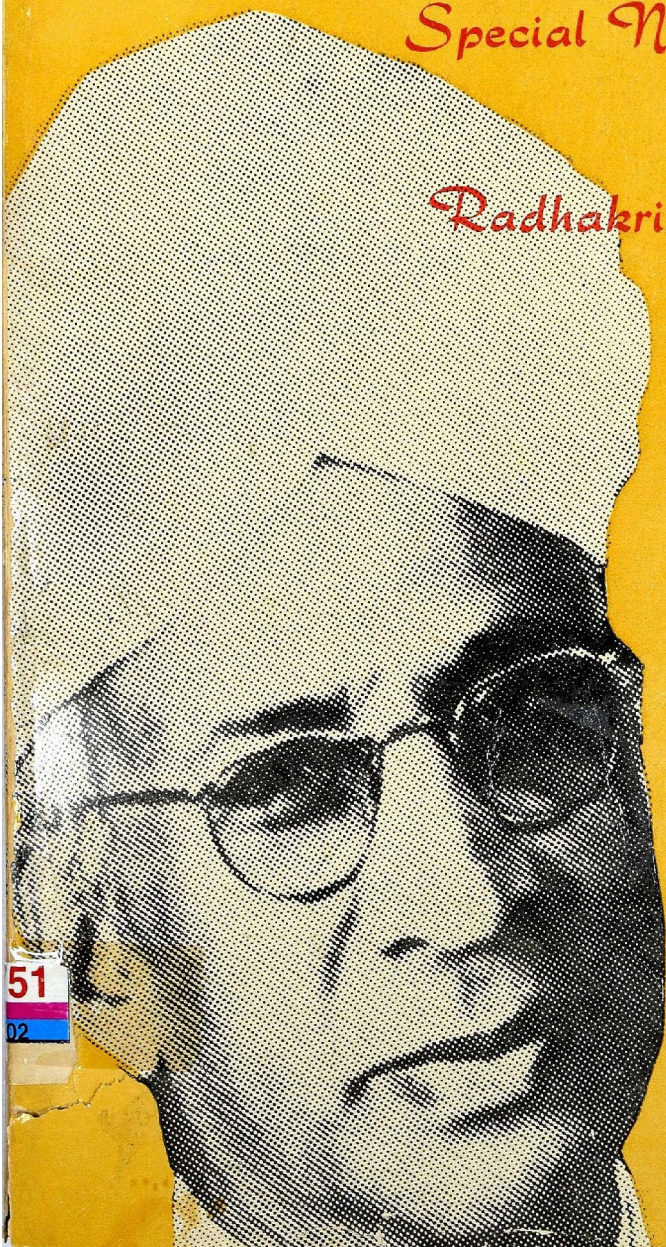


# INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL ANNUAL

*Special Number*

*on*

*Radhakrishnan*



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INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL ANNUAL

VOLUME TWELVE

1977-78





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*Editor:*

R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

*Associate Editor:*

S. GOPALAN



THE Dr S. RADHAKRISHNAN INSTITUTE  
FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN PHILOSOPHY  
UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS



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## PREFACE

The present volume is a Special Number on Radhakrishnan and covers the proceedings of the nineteenth All-India Seminar organized by us in September 1977. The theme of the Seminar was "The Philosophy of Radhakrishnan." Besides the papers presented in the Seminar we have taken the opportunity to publish some articles specially dealing with Radhakrishnan's views on the various schools of Indian philosophy as expressed in his *Indian Philosophy*. Though we were planning to bring together reactions of scholars to Radhakrishnan's treatment of all the orthodox as well as the heterodox systems, due to various reasons this has not been possible.

We are thankful to the Government of Tamilnadu for meeting the cost of publication of the present Volume and to Professor G. R. Damodaran, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Madras and the other authorities for offering facilities for bringing out the present publication.

To my colleague, Dr S. Gopalan, my thanks are due for helping me in editing the Volume and for seeing it through the press. My thanks are also due to Mr P. Balasubramanian and Dr V. K. S. N. Raghavan, colleagues in the Department, and to Miss Parimala Nathan, Junior Research Fellow, for all the help they rendered in proof-reading. I would also like to record my thanks to the printers, Messrs. Avvai Achukkoodam, Madras for the neat and expeditious execution of the printing.

Madras }  
March 21, 1979 }

R. BALASUBRAMANIAN  
Editor



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Dr. M. K. MATHEW

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A. JAYASUBRAMANIAN  
Madras

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# RADHAKRISHNAN, A PHILOSOPHER WITH A DIFFERENCE

## PART ONE



# RADHAKRISHNAN, A PHILOSOPHER WITH A DIFFERENCE

---

S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

## I

This Seminar is manifestly designed to record our grateful appreciation of the philosopher Radhakrishnan. He was a philosopher with a difference in many senses and one such is that he rose to the highest position in the non-academic world also, filling it, as he did all the earlier positions, with eminence and distinction. No other philosopher rose so high. Even Gentile could become only the Educational Minister in Fascist Italy. In this highest secular position he received great honour worthily deserved. The specially perceptive President of the United States, Kennedy, paid him glowing tributes.

That a professor of philosophy could ascend to this height requires some explanation. That men such as Rajagopalachari and Rajendra Prasad who surrendered themselves to the cause of Indian freedom through sacrifice and suffering could be placed so high in the nation's esteem is understandable. Radhakrishnan did not belong to this category of active participants in the freedom struggle. But still his memorable tributes to the personality and message of Mahatma Gandhi in terms universal and philosophical, in his speeches and writings, at a time when such expressions of appreciation were dangerous made him an ideological participant in Gandhism. No wonder the nation accorded to him, when the occasion arose, due honour and responsibility. But we are not directly concerned with this aspect of our subject. Luck, conspicuous ability and devotion to the great cause of the times made him the President of India with

a dimension other than political and a dignity reached by heads of states.

## II

The intellectual career of Radhakrishnan stretches through a long duration and covers a wide range of reflection. He was marked as a promising young philosopher by Lokamanya Tilak in his *Gītā-rahasya*. He acquired popular fame by his brightly written book on *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. In later years he edited works and wrote considerably on Mahatma Gandhi. Mahadev Desai in his work on the *Gītā* and Pandit Nehru in his *Discovery of India* took substantial material from him bearing on philosophy and religion. His speeches and writings built up a great reputation in international philosophical circles. C.E.M. Joad wrote a fine and telling book on him and the International Library of Living Philosophers edited by Schilpp produced a very substantial volume on him. His entry into the field of world-thought was greatly due to the early sponsoring, he received from Muirhead, the last great Idealist of Oxford of the present century.

The quantum of his contribution is enormous. His first work to catch attention was the youthful and belligerent *Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*. He starts the work with the intent to defend Absolute Idealism of the type developed by Bradley and Bosanquet through a critique of several leading contemporaneous thinkers who deviate from that position and he attributes true devotion to the influence of religion. He concludes with a broad statement of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, thereby succumbing, as it were, to the religious tradition of Vedānta. The work as a whole foreshadows the direction of thought he was to elaborate in his subsequent writings in great detail. It also shows that his philosophical reflection takes on the character of historical survey out of which Idealism of the Absolutistic Vedāntic type emerges as the final precipitate. The next great work consists of the two substantial volumes entitled *Indian Philosophy*, in the manner of a history. Even in this, Vedāntic commitment runs in unmistakable clarity and force. In his hands, Indian philosophy gets rescued from the plane of mere Indology, though there is an enormous utilization of all the then available data on Indian philosophy reconstructed by the Sanskritic researches, Western and Indian. In the handling of themes a masterly spirit nurtured on the best in European



philosophy is deployed. There is the play of imagination and art. The outcome is a brilliant presentation of the evolution of Indian philosophy as philosophy. In so vast a canvas minor inaccuracies of details and perspectives are to be expected. But the execution bears the quality of a superb imaginative reconstruction. The old traditional matter clothed in scholastic verbiage gets converted into the living word of perennial truth. Indian philosophy gets placed on the map of world thought, with all its march of systems, intricacies of doctrines and vista of daring metaphysical creativity. The technique of presenting Indian thought acquires a style and mode destined to constitute the standard for later writers. It is truly a history of Indian philosophy which is itself historic.

The next significant book was *The Hindu View of Life*, which shot into great popularity. It presented Hinduism in terms of modern thought in all its fundamental insights in a brief compass. In places, it does the work of open advocacy and minimises the limitations. But the total impression is that of a glowing case for the Hindu point of view in its largest sense. The social aspects of Indian thought are further expounded in terms of modern social philosophies in the much later work *Religion and Society*.

The personal philosophical thought of Radhakrishnan implied in all his earlier writings is involved in excessive preoccupation with contemporaneous philosophy and the history of Indian philosophy. It gets liberated into full and independent articulation in *An Idealist View of Life*, which perhaps is his best philosophical production. It is a work on the philosophy of religion. After reviewing the challenges to religion and the substitutes offered for it, the central affirmations of religious consciousness are brought out magnificently. We have here an Idealism not constructed metaphysically in the style of Hegel or Bradley, but one founded on mystic experience. It is a departure from Radhakrishnan's older moorings. But in the exposition of that experience all the rich heritage of idealistic metaphysics is amply used. The picture of reality in this setting is drawn up in all its levels, matter, life, mind and human personality culminating in the Absolute. Into this structure of argument all the essential elements of Vedāntic thought are incorporated. It is Vedāntic idealism founded on Vedāntic experience. The fundamental thought is



claimed to rest on intuition as contrasted with intellect. Herein we have one basic tenet of Radhakrishnan that the ultimate is accessible only to intuition. He advances the claim on behalf of Vedānta and ventures to demonstrate that the spirit in man has effected all his advances, in the spheres of philosophy, science, art, poetry and in short, in all the finer achievements of human life, through intuition. Intellect flourishes in fruitful subordination to the commanding vision of intuition. In the final chapter on ultimate reality there is a short digression to a critical review of holism, emergent evolution and the philosophy of Whitehead. One would expect a revision of his earlier strictures on Bergson in the context and some acknowledgment of the great contribution in this direction by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement and Sri Aurobindo. Bradley's "higher immediacy" gets fully acknowledged.

In his course of lectures at Oxford as Spalding Professor published as *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, the theme of *The Idealist View of Life* is repeated with ampler historical reference bringing out the indebtedness of Western thought to the ancient spiritual culture of India and a spirited and a sustained reply to Schweitzer's critique of Indian thought as "world-and-life negation." The familiar themes of *The Hindu View of Life* are also restated at leisure. The contrast between Eastern intuitionism and Western intellectualism is re-vindicated. After several minor writings and vigorous lectures, Radhakrishnan puts on the mantles of a traditional Acārya in his translation and interpretation of the basic scriptures of Vedānta — the *Gītā*, the principal *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahma-sūtra*. There is nothing epoch-making in these, except the felicitous modes of translation and a competent mastery of all the existing literature on the texts. But a certain freshness and vitality of re-affirmation are discernible throughout with occasional originality of insight and critical appraisal of old commentaries. The oft-used texts are transmuted into vibrant documents of living spiritual wisdom. The old masters such as Deussen and Thibaut are reincarnated in the fresh expositions, with copious notes in the spirit of comparative philosophy and religion.

Such is the bulk of Radhakrishnan's major philosophical bequest to us and to the world's philosophy.



## III

It may be worthwhile to dwell a little on the dominant traits of Radhakrishnan's philosophical personality. A bare catalogue of his works conveys a poor impression of individuality and brilliance of the contribution.

Radhakrishnan comes before us first of all as an ardent lover of Indian thought at its best as delivered in the great classics. He is no simple admirer. All his stupendous learning in Western thought and culture is harnessed to the high endeavour of presenting Indian thought as embodying the supreme spiritual wisdom of mankind. This current of higher patriotism, at once fervent and informed, runs through all his writings and speeches. In this task of reconstruction, Indian thought undergoes substantial modernization. Its apparent world-denying tendency, its theological predilection in some schools and apathy to the problem of social justice are shown to be aberrations not intrinsic to the original inspiration of the *r̥ṣis*. His wide and accurate scholarship in the history of Western philosophy and prodigious memory serve his purpose remarkably. There is one limitation in this philosophical inheritance. He adopts wholly the Anglo-Hegelian tradition of philosophy, which is undoubtedly rich and grand, but renders him insufficient in the treatment of other trends of European philosophy.

The tougher schools of Realism and all those which are sharply opposed to Absolute Idealism are feebly taken account of by him. The affinity of the Western Idealist tradition to Vedānta in its larger sense is marvellously mobilized by him. More than all, Radhakrishnan had the supreme gift of utterance, carrying the radiant assurance of the prophets. No wonder he inspired and elevated countless students in his classes and audiences. The writing largely follows the pattern of his philosophical oratory. He is unique in this respect. No other representative of Indian philosophy in the recent past had his forceful delivery and inspired and inspiring eloquence. He spoke with the firmness and authoritativeness of unclouded vision. The English language at its literary best was his medium. Radhakrishnan was neither a *yogin* nor a *kavi*. But he so closely approximated to both in his philosophical meditation that he almost communicated the exaltation of mystical poetry. The world's heritage

of mystical poetry was his possession in abundance and he spoke forth in the same plane. He never lost the splendour of utterance even in his argumentative prose. It must also be added that his analytical clarity did not suffer by virtue of this gift ; rather his ratiocination gained added convincing power through it.

#### IV

The fundamentals of Radhakrishnan's philosophical standpoint can be briefly enunciated. He is principally a philosopher of religion. He is neither a speculative idealist nor a theologian. Religion for him is the reaction of the whole man to the whole of reality. It is an apprehension of the real and an enjoyment of it for its own sake. The three noteworthy points of spiritual experience are reality, awareness and freedom. This is the triadic characterization of the ultimate as *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda*. In it all distinctions disappear. It carries its own credentials. It confers inward peace, power and joy. The experience is not ours to call up at our will. It has the character of revelation. There is a fundamental ineffability in the experience. It lends itself only to negative terms. But the central reality is immanent in the soul of man. This is the uniform testimony of mysticism. It is a hasty logic that banishes the finite to the realm of illusion. "The one reveals itself in the many."

It is obvious that a philosophy based on this experience can be only a form of Absolute Idealism. As Radhakrishnan is a master of comparative philosophy he elucidates it in terms familiarized by Bradley and his Indian counterpart Śaṅkara. Between the two, it appears that Śaṅkara is the primary object of loyalty and the other is used to bring Śaṅkara up-to-date. The combination discloses a disadvantage. For Bradley the world of appearance is not an illusion but falls within reality 'somehow' in a transmuted form. This position finds accommodation in Radhakrishnan's absolutism. He rejects Śaṅkara's apparent acosmism and re-interprets him so as to find a place for the world in his ultimate conception. This can be seen even in his account of Advaita in his *Indian Philosophy*. So we have Śaṅkara's Advaita with a liberal admixture of non-illusionistic Vedānta.



Radhakrishnan's Idealism is founded, as we have seen, not on metaphysical argument but on the deliverance of religious experience. This mode of deriving Idealism is rendered legitimate by the fundamental distinction in epistemological value between intuition and intellect. That distinction figures throughout, in great emphasis, in all the philosophical writings of Radhakrishnan.

As opposed to the popular understanding, Vedānta has a great humanistic dimension. This is worked out greatly in Radhakrishnan's version of Vedānta. This is particularly conspicuous in his daring ascription of the ideal of *Sarvamukti* to Śaṅkara himself. He is not quite sure of himself. He says, "We offer a few considerations general and tentative and perhaps not quite self-consistent."<sup>2</sup> But the direction of this thinking is itself a remarkable advance.

The final conception of reality is that of the Absolute. How is the Absolute to be construed in relation to the God of theistic consciousness? This is a pressing problem in all similar philosophical modes of thinking. There are two temptingly easy solutions. God may be consigned to the realm of appearances valid for theology and popular religion but not real from the higher point of view of serious metaphysics. As Radhakrishnan negatives in many ways the illusionistic version of absolutism, he does not adopt this drastically abstract Idealism. For theism, God is the highest category with all the connected implications of personality and realism and the logic of Śaṅkara and Bradley ruled out that philosophical alternative. Radhakrishnan subscribes to that logic. He approaches the problem with a synthetic line of solution. For him God and the Absolute are one entity and it permits of two ways of conceiving, neither of which is philosophically unsound though one-sided. God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view. The Absolute is God from the pre-cosmic point of view. "We call the Supreme the Absolute, when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos." "While the Absolute is pure consciousness and pure freedom and infinite possibility, it appears to be God from the point of view of the one specific possibility which has become actualized."<sup>3</sup> The Absolute is a wider category as it holds within itself infinite possibilities but God is richer from the standpoint of concreteness. As the cosmos is no hallucination for our philosopher, he raises the status of God above that of *Īśvara* in traditional



Advaita. No critical comment can be risked in our brief account on this integrative solution.

## V

Radhakrishnan was truly a philosopher with a difference. Though engaged in the contemplation of the eternal and ultimate, he was keenly aware of the crises of his times both national and international and lent his strong voice in support of causes noble and just. As it happened in no other case in his line, extra-philosophical positions and honour came to him in quick succession. He fulfilled his responsibilities with distinction in all such positions stretching to the most eminent. Though by profession and choice he was a metaphysician dealing with seemingly dull and uncertain abstraction, he commanded a radiant and fascinating style of self-communication. He was heard with thrill and admired both with understanding and more often without it. His scholarship was immense and memory was dangerously prodigious, but all this was harnessed to the high endeavour of vindicating truths — spiritual or Vedāntic in an age bereft of interest in them. His metaphysical standpoint was transcendentalism or Idealism built through the austere logic of Śaṅkara and Bradley but he rested it ultimately on the affirmations of mystical religion. His hard intellectual convictions were transformed into vital experiential certainties conveyed through words of mystical poetry. He was certainly an absolute Idealist but he consistently avoided the hasty logic of acosmism. He could find room for the individual and construed his Absolute as hardly other than the concrete Godhead of the great theistic systems. His Vedānta had a strong and unconventional humanistic dimension and it was a life-affirmation in the highest sense. Hence his abiding devotion to the Mahatma. Though he enters the field of philosophy as a keen critic of recent philosophy and an imaginative historian of the great philosophical past of India, he imparts to his findings a modernist, nay, a futurist significance, with a message far transcending the bounds of narrow Indianism. He is an honour to the nation and an inspiration to all in quest of truth.

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1. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 110.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 306.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 343, 345.



# PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS OR ON THE OECUMENICAL ELEMENT IN RADHAKRISHNAN'S THOUGHT

HERBERT HERRING

One can write the history of philosophy from two main points of view, oriented either on thinkers or on problems. The thinker-oriented history gives a chronological account of the various thinkers and their achievements, mostly resulting in a glittering kaleidoscope which Hegel had already rejected as being unphilosophical and which Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan once compared with a visit to Madame Tussauds famous collection of waxworks where one could find everything, except life.<sup>1</sup> The other point of view from which the history of thought can be written is the problem-oriented one, resting upon the basic conviction (derived from a critical analysis of history itself) that the great problems of philosophy have always been the same, and that thus the history of philosophy shows the ever anew tackling of these problems in their unlimited abundance by the critical human mind, which permits us to state that history of philosophy is philosophy itself, and this only. To give but an example of what I mean when pleading for a problem-oriented history of philosophy : the period of Western thought from, say, roughly 1780 (Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*) till 1900 (the death of Nietzsche) in my opinion could and should be depicted as the movement from the statement of the incomprehensibility of the Supreme Being or Being as such by the human mind to the bold declaration of the Supreme Being's non-existence. I can hardly think of a more appropriate instance for treating of the history of philosophy under this problem-oriented aspect in the East

than of Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy* (in two Volumes) which is a laudable attempt to present the perennial problems of life and world in a new interpretation, always taking into account the stage of development and the intellectual needs and demands of our times.

I do not consider it my task here and now to analyse the main ideas and special merits of this exemplary historical account of Indian philosophy nor of any other of Radhakrishnan's works. Many of them have gained great repute, even outside India, and to Indian students of philosophy they are thoroughly familiar. Let me only mention in passing those which I consider the most valuable of his works, besides his *Indian Philosophy* and the two collections, *A source Book in Indian Philosophy* (together with Charles A. Moore), 1957, and *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (co-editor J.H. Muirhead), 1936. *An Idealist View of Life*, 1932, contains a chapter on Kant (ch. IV) that should be strongly recommended to any student of philosophy, though I personally hold different views on the meaning of the terms phenomenon/appearance and noumenon/thing-in-itself in Kant's critical idealism. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 1939, reveals a profound knowledge of the fundamental ideas and personalities who have shaped cultural history in the East and in the West. To ponder over chapter VIII entitled 'The Meeting of Religions' is a must for anyone aiming at an East-West dialogue in the realms of religion and metaphysics. *Recovery of Faith*, 1956, I personally consider one of those books one can read and re-read time and again, every time discovering new facets of a great thinker's life-experience, especially in ch. IV on 'The Quest for Reality'. And we should surely not forget Radhakrishnan's exemplary editions and translations of *The Bhagavadgītā*, 1948, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, 1953, and *The Brahma Sūtra*, 1959. *The Principal Upaniṣads* I have always taken as his most inspired and inspiring work, in particular for its beautifully written lucid commentary, almost in the form of a classical *bhāṣya*.

As I have said, I do not intend to comment on these works which are so well-known to you. Instead I shall try to bring out the oecumenical or universal element in Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's thought, attempting to show his passionate though unbiased intention aimed at revealing the common grounds of philosophizing in the East and in the West and in so doing to bridge the gulf between



seemingly heterogenous, even contradictory world-views, making philosophy an instrument for attaining a better mutual understanding between men, thus contributing to the realization of a peaceful co-existence of the peoples. "...to cast off the unessentials and return to the basic truths",—how has this aim been achieved in Radhakrishnan's work?

Perhaps the best point of departure for answering this question is a passage in his speech on his being awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, on October 22, 1961. In this speech at Frankfurt Radhakrishnan said:

Today as never before Christian and non-Christian religions are acting and reacting on each other. Let me make it clear that I do not believe in the emergence of a 'World Faith' of an eclectic character which will take the valuable elements of all religions. Any attempt to have a religion which will be no religion in particular is as untenable as an attempt to speak without speaking any particular language. We recognize the different religions but discern the unity underlying them. We do not wish to flatten our diversity or impose uniformity. Differences should not mean divisions nor does diversity mean discord. Each religion while maintaining its individuality will learn to appreciate the values of others. We do not believe in any favoured races or chosen people or exclusive truths... The different faiths are like the different fingers of the loving hand of the Supreme extended to all, offering completeness of Being to all.

Let us analyse this statement as to its proper meaning and to its implications.

The statement speaks of different religions or world-views which in our times are bound to enter into a dialogue with each other. Such a dialogue, however, is possible only if each of the interlocutors has a firm command of his mother-tongue, that is to say, of the rules and principles of his way of thinking and their traditional sources. In so doing, they will surely recognize the differences in their outlook on life and world but at the same time realize that they originally and finally only spring from different ways and methods of tackling



the same underlying basic problems. Thus one comes to see that each of these ways and methods of approaching truth and reality is valuable as such, and that it would be wrong to measure other religions or systems of thought by the standards of one's own achievements; for there is no religion, no system of thought, no race, no individual, favoured with the possession of truth as such. The belief in such a spiritual and intellectual privilege of being the infallible supreme court judge, as it were, who—putting his hand on the relevant passages of his particular law book—is to decide on the validity and soundness of any other world-view, has been the fatal mistake of most of the so-called comparative studies in religion and philosophy, in the East as well as in the West. As against this, one has to see that

East and West are relative terms. They are geographical expressions and not cultural types. The differences among countries like China, Japan and India are quite as significant as those among European or American countries... Human beings are fundamentally the same and hold the same deep values. The differences among them which are, no doubt, significant are related to external, temporary, sociable conditions and are alterable with them...<sup>2</sup>

It is this oecumenical or universal outlook that made Radhakrishnan one of the eminent thinkers and teachers of philosophy in our century. Having his spiritual roots firmly in the Vedānta, he had nevertheless a profound knowledge of the great philosophical thoughts of the West. Plato and Aristotle, the medieval mystics, Descartes and Spinoza, Leibniz and Hume, Kant and Hegel, Husserl and Bradley, the existentialists as well as Wittgenstein and the heralds of logical positivism were familiar to him; and those who had the good fortune, as I myself had, to attend his lectures during his time as Spalding Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at Oxford (1936-1952) did actually not know what to appreciate more in him: his profoundness as a scholar, his clarity and eloquence as a teacher or his exemplary behaviour as a man. But in him, as in any great thinker, these qualities could not be taken separately. The clarity in verbal expression presupposes profoundness and exactness of thought; and the more and deeper someone has gone into the problems of



Being, the more he keeps himself responsible for the welfare of other beings.

It has rightly been said that the Vedānta is not only a system of thought but essentially a way of life, meaning that knowing the truth and realizing the truth in one's own life are identical. From such a point of view it is not difficult to see how idle it is to ponder over the primacy of religious awareness, of vision and intuition on the one hand or intellectual knowledge, perception and comprehension on the other. Intuitive awareness, i. e. a knowledge which is not merely or predominantly perceptual or conceptual, is not a-logical but super-logical ; as integral insight it is not opposed to intellectual insight. In the words of Radhakrishnan himself :

An intellectual search for the ultimate cause may lead us to an idea of God. Intuition tells us that the idea is not merely an idea but a fact.<sup>a</sup>

Intuition and intellectual research are thus two different but inter-related ways of referring to the one and only truth in its absolute reality.

If it is true that the vital difference in outlook between Western and Indian thought rests upon the fact that in the West, since Aristotle, a rather clearcut distinction has been drawn between Mythos and Logos, whereas in Indian thought these fundamental sources of human world-experience have never been separated, let alone opposed to each other, we may state that the leading principle of Radhakrishnan's thought was devoted to the task of showing why such a separation would reduce the realm of philosophy to the spheres of phenomenal entities and logical analysis, thus leaving completely undiscussed the metaphysical essentials of life and world. To him the problem was not, to use modern terminology, as to which of our propositions and statements were empirically verifiable and hence meaningful and which were not verifiable and hence meaningless or metaphysical. The problem was rather whether there was any knowledge which although not expressible in verifiable propositions and statements, was nevertheless reliable knowledge. And this is, indeed, the fundamental problem of human inquiry to which the works of the great thinkers of all times have been dedicated.

It is this idea of the intimate interrelation between the physical and the metaphysical, the rational and the spiritual, the profane and the religious that calls for converting "an intellectual proposition into a life conviction."<sup>4</sup>

If the peoples of the world are to survive, the survival cannot be secured by means of any political, scientific or technical achievement; it can only be secured by a world-wide community based upon tolerance which again is based upon a mutual understanding of the different people's cultural heritage.

The explorers of the art, literature and thought of the world's varied cultures have a more decisive voice in shaping the minds and hearts of the people than even political leaders, in the spirit of scholarship which knows no frontiers, and which, if genuine, breeds humility and tolerance in the task of building a new world, in ridding ourselves of every trace of hatred, intolerance and fanaticism of every variety, in moving forward to a great meeting where we respect every man, every race, every culture, every creed.<sup>5</sup>

What Radhakrishnan here is asking for, in line with such great Indians of our century as Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhiji, is a unity of mankind which, far from being uniform, is a unity in diversity, based upon an idea of tolerance that acknowledges others, their ways of thought and life, not in spite of their being others but because of their being others. It is a rare fact in history that the one who holds such universal humanitarian ideas and ideals is given the chance to put them into practice on a larger scale. Radhakrishnan was given this chance when being assigned high-ranking positions in public life. The Socratic ideal of the philosopher-king came true in his life, the ideal that those who constantly strive after the truth, that those who are thoroughly devoted to reality as it is (and not only in its ephemeral, phenomenal appearances) should be made the political leaders. When referring to this ideal in his reply to the Farewell Address by the Members of Parliament on May 7, 1967, Radhakrishnan said among other things :



...the Platonic axiom is something which is common to all great cultures. It again shows the universality of culture. We must have vision, we must have practical work...Once you have the vision, you must try to transform that vision into reality...That is what all great people are expected to do. All students of philosophy are called upon not merely to interpret but to change the world, not only to exert their vision but also to exert honest service, honest dedication...<sup>6</sup>

But he would certainly not have this understood in the Marxian sense that a change of the economic conditions would automatically bring about a change of consciousness. He would rather have pleaded that a change of consciousness was the necessary condition for bringing about a good and just socio-economic set-up. Drawing once more our attention to the ideal of the philosopher-king and the need for a change of consciousness, he wrote:

If science and machinery get into other hands than those of warring Caesars and despotic Tamerlanes, if enough men and women arise in each community who are free from the fanaticisms of religion and of politics, who will oppose strenuously every kind of mental and moral tyranny, who will develop in place of an angular national spirit a rounded world-view, what might not be done?<sup>7</sup>

Thus the oecumenical element in Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's thought seems to me to be a two-fold one. In the field of philosophical research it consists in his treating of the history of world philosophy as the perennial inquiry into the fundamental problems of truth and reality, culminating in the conviction that the absolute reality is non-dual as well as intellectually inexpressible: *Sāntam śivam advaitam*. This conviction was the result of a thorough knowledge of the great trends of thought, East and West, and in depicting them he was far more than a mere historian. What he once had stated of Ādi Śaṁkara in his inaugural speech of the Śaṁkara Sadas Seminar in New Delhion August 7, 1964, holds good for Radhakrishnan's own achievements in philosophy:

His originality was in re-interpreting the great traditions . to suit the conditions of the time.. His re-interpretation was in the form of a new creation.

In the realm of practical performance I discover the oecumenical element of his thought in his untiring efforts to contribute to a moral uplift of mankind, regardless of their various religions, racial and national differences, thus striving for world-peace through mutual understanding and tolerance, a maxim and an aim which is so beautifully expressed in the *R̥g Veda*, X, 192 :

Meet together, talk together. May your minds comprehend alike. Common be your action and achievement. Common be your thoughts and intentions. Common be the wishes of your hearts. So may there be union amongst you.

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# THE RELEVANCE OF RADHAKRISHNAN'S RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT

KLAUS K. KLOSTERMAIER

## *Introductory*

In virtually all of his writings, Radhakrishnan exhibits an idea of philosophy that is closely related to, if not identical with, religion. To some extent this understanding of philosophy as speculative science of liberation belongs to the Indian philosophical tradition (we are not here overlooking, as some earlier Western writers may have done, the non-religious specialized philosophical disciplines of the Indian tradition). In Radhakrishnan's case, as he himself tells us in his autobiographical sketch, this philosophical interest in religion or the religious interest in philosophy was nurtured by the atmosphere of the Christian colleges in which he received his higher education. From his early youth Radhakrishnan was acquainted in more than a superficial manner with the Indian philosophico-religious tradition as well as with the philosophy and religion of the West. Notwithstanding his deep commitment to ultimate values, several of his major works contain trenchant criticisms of (virtually all) traditional forms and beliefs of religions. Although he most severely criticised Christianity in its organised forms ('Churchianity'), he did not spare orthodox Hinduism and rigid Buddhism with his criticism.

One might say that it is fairly easy to criticise any organisation or any set of beliefs and convictions from one angle or the other. Radhakrishnan's critique, however, does not grow out of a hostility towards religion or a denial of the values that religions profess, but—

paradoxically—out of his deep commitment to, and appreciation of, the central values of religion. He has also articulated the basis from which he judges the performance of religion: it is not a rationalism in the fashion of the Enlightenment, nor a socio-political ideology as in Marx, nor a commitment to one particular denomination which claims to possess the whole and sole truth. His idea as well as the ideal of religion—the yardstick with which he measures all existing religions—is ‘the Religion of the Spirit’.

### *The ‘Religion of the Spirit’*

Not just by accident, the term ‘Religion of the Spirit’ reminds us of Hegel. A great deal of contemporary Western philosophy which Radhakrishnan read as a student, was exposition and interpretation of Hegelian conceptions and thoughts. Hegel, in an attempt to embrace quite literally everything within the grand scheme of his philosophical system, needed a concept, at once open enough to allow development, and also specific enough to represent the Western Christian tradition, which in its Protestant contemporary forms he regarded as the fulfilment of the supreme ideal. But whereas Hegel had relegated Indian religions to a relatively low place in the ladder of evolution of the Spirit and had seen the fulfilment (almost) reached in the Prusso-Protestant civilization of his own lifetime, Radhakrishnan located the clearest articulation and the most perfect realization of the ‘Religion of the Spirit’ in the India of the *Upaniṣads* and the early *Dharmaśāstr*.

At this point the question arises whether the ‘Spirit’ of Hegel and the ‘Spirit’ of Radhakrishnan are indeed the same. A careful historical analysis of the concept of ‘Spirit’ in the West, embracing the *logos* tradition of classical Greek philosophy and stoicism as well as the *pneuma* tradition of Christian writers together with its secularized forms that developed during the enlightenment, would certainly find many features in the ‘Spirit’ that do not coincide with ideas associated with the *Ātman-Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads*, especially in their Advaita Vedānta interpretation—and vice versa.

However, in spite of the not negligible differences in the histories of the two key concepts, it is in itself a highly significant event that an Indian philosopher, whose own bias is strongly in the direction of



Advaita Vedānta, chooses a central term from a Christian philosophical theologian's vocabulary to describe his idea and ideal of religion. Is it, then, merely a Platonic idea and ideal? Radhakrishnan would maintain that it is much more. Adopting again an Indian view of history he would hold that it did exist as a reality in the past, that it is present in vestiges, throughout all ages, and that it could and should become a reality again now and in the future. It is not tied to an almost mechanical system of evolution in which the perfect stage can only be reached once and that too in the end only. Again, more realistically-minded historians may not idealize Vedic India to the extent to which Radhakrishnan does. But the principle upon which he builds his ideas of the 'Religion of the Spirit' remains valid: the possibility (and actuality) of its realization in human history, repeatedly and not only as an eschatological event.

### *The Fruits of the Religion of the Spirit*

Every religion promises its followers some particular reward, unobtainable by any other way. The reward of the Religion of the Spirit is *Unity*. That may sound abstract and unattractive to most people. But Radhakrishnan develops the theme of unity—or its opposite, disunity—in such a way as to make it all comprehensive and very real.

There is no need to refer in this place to the extensive analyses which we find in Radhakrishnan's works with regard to the theme; suffice it to repeat his basic idea that the root of the conflicts which we witness in the socio-political field and which cause such immense suffering in our present world, lies in the lack of unity within each individual man; that the unity of man with himself must be restored before we can hope to achieve unity in society or in the world at large. The lack of unity has been noticed before by others, of course. And many more realistic and timely looking remedies have been proposed; some of them have been tried. Radhakrishnan exposes the intrinsically divisive character of all historic philosophies, religions and ideologies. For this reason he is not prepared to settle for one of the existing 'unifiers' but insists that only the 'Spirit' can give the true kind of unity which provides the foundation for every other true unity. The crux of every philosophy is its application: most philosophers have been content with providing just a few hints as to how



to live their philosophy. Others who have been more precise have gloriously (or not so gloriously) failed, as we know. Radhakrishnan has shown great concern for the application of his 'Religion of the Spirit' to the world of the twentieth century. A series of lectures as well as many public speeches of his are devoted to a translation of the ideas of the 'Religion of the Spirit' into social and political reality. Again, critics have pointed out that he over-idealized the institution of the *varṇāśramadharma* and overcriticised Western parallels of stratifications of society.

It is here, again, in the realization of the 'Religion of the Spirit' in the world of man that a typical difference between Radhakrishnan and Hegel, in spite of their fascination by the Religion of the Spirit, becomes manifest. While Hegel had seen in the State (in principle, if not in fact) the highest form of the objectivation of the Spirit, Radhakrishnan appears to be hostile to the very idea of 'state'. He blames the Nation-state idea for almost everything that is wrong in the world at large and, typically enough, he sees in *sannyāsa* the highest ideal of man: a life free from every bondage to family, society and state. In his ideal society there is no place for the state. Equally, of course, there is no place for a Church. If unity at the highest level is the supreme value, any form of organisation which rests on the particularisation of a group of people, with emphasis on difference (on whatever grounds), must be intrinsically evil.

In the course of his life Radhakrishnan mellowed and he was inclined to emphasise the presence of at least some glimpses of the religion of the spirit in the historic forms of religiosity. But his conviction remained as strong as ever, that it was this 'Religion of the Spirit' that had to be cultivated if mankind was to survive the tensions and frustrations created by the contemporary industrial, technological and ideological competition. 'Unity' on a even more profound level became his overriding concern: not only as philosopher, but as a statesman as well he saw the great need of our time in the realization of the unity of the spirit with the spirit as prerequisite for any lasting improvement in any sphere of life.

#### *The followers of the Religion of the Spirit*

A cynic might observe that the 'Religion of the Spirit' may be the right thing for our age—but it only had a prophet, and no people



to follow him. Religion as such is visibly on the decline in virtually all countries of the world. The process of 'secularization' is still in full swing; even where people still follow religious customs and come to places of worship, their daily lives are more determined by non-religious values and constrictions.

Where religious revival takes place, forms of religiosity are cultivated that are a far cry from the above-described Religion of the Spirit. Not Radhakrishnan but Mahesh Yogi Maharishi and Swami Bhaktivedānta are best known as representatives of India's religious genius in the West. Today the Religion of the Spirit is neither popular with the ordinary believers nor with those who go in for the extraordinary (not to say the extravagant). And the intellectuals and those in leading positions in government or business and industry—would they have any use for it? 'Religion' has, for them, the ring of unreality any how; and 'Spirit', well, it is just too nebulous to have any importance in the real world of men and their money. And yet, beneath all the obvious secularization and over and above the overriding economic concerns of our age, new forms of search for meaning and mystery are developing.

The natural sciences, in spite of their preoccupation (by definition) with material objects and matter-immanent laws are by no means 'materialistic'. On the contrary, some of its most respected representatives have emphasised the primacy of the spirit also in this stratum of reality. After a good many non-religious substitutes for traditions, whose shortcomings were all too evident, have failed, a new awareness of a 'spiritual dimension' of reality is taking ground in many areas of contemporary intellectual life.

By definition, almost, the followers of the 'Religion of the Spirit' cannot form a sect or a party—they remain followers of this religion of the spirit only to the extent that they do not separate themselves from the rest of mankind and that they do not introduce any differentiating concept of reality. Neither by vocation nor by temperament was Radhakrishnan a *guru* or a priest. He was an intellectual, a philosopher, a statesman—and in all of these capacities an advocate of the 'Religion of the Spirit'.



### *The Role of Inter-Religious Dialogue*

In Radhakrishnan's commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahmasūtras* and in his translation of *The Dhammapadam* we find quotes not only from the classical Indian *bhāṣya* and *ṭīka* - writers but also from the Bible, the Quran, Jewish and Christian sages as well as classical and more recent Western philosophers. Again, this is not done in the vein of 'comparative religion', laying out a museum of comparable ideas from various cultures, but in documentation of the meaning and articulation of the 'Religion of the Spirit' which had representatives in all ages and among all people.

The realization of the pointlessness of religious strife and competition has led in our age to the emergence of 'inter-religious dialogue'. Although misunderstood by friend and foe very often as a continuation of the old proselytising effort or as another name for religious syncretism, it could prove one of the most effective means to open the eyes of many for the reality and the necessity of the spirit. The men and women, who are interested in inter-religious dialogue are interested in learning from each other about the meaning of religion as such, not just the explanation of certain forms of belief and worship. They are in search of more than just conventional religiosity. It does happen time and again in these encounters that the 'Religion of the Spirit' manifests itself as the underlying truth of all particular religions—a call to unity, not for practical and obvious reasons but for the sake of the spirit; a call to action, not to expand one's own sphere of influence but to manifest the reality of the spirit; a call to being pure and simple. There are other ways to the realization of the Religion of the Spirit—ultimately there are as many ways as there are human minds capable of recognizing their intrinsic oneness. It is one of the characteristics of this Religion of the Spirit that its manifestation and articulation keeps changing: it cannot live in a fossilized form. A good many of the observations of Radhakrishnan in connection with the 'Religion of the Spirit' may sound commonplace today or of purely historical interest. However, he did kindle in his own time the spark of the spirit in many minds and he serves for us and coming generations as proof that it is possible to be religious in a cynical age, to believe in the power of the spirit in spite of the corruption of the intellect, to draw strength from the past and have faith in the future.



## PHILOSOPHY AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

A. S. NARAYANA PILLAI

What is Philosophy? This question, although very old, is not very precise. In asking it we may be having in mind either of two things or sometimes both. First, what is the subject matter covered, the field studied as a discipline as in the case of economics, history, sociology? And what is the method of study employed? Secondly, what is the distinctive characteristic of the philosophic activity? If activity has pragmatic or volitional overtones, we may say, "What is the philosophic pursuit as different from, say, artistic or scientific pursuit?" Of course, the question of the method used is relevant both in academic study and in a life's pursuit.

In defining philosophy as *darśana* Radhakrishnan emphasises the Indian traditional point of view. *Darś* means "to see". Philosophy is thus "seeing". But this "seeing" needs education. He has given some elucidations. "It is understanding, contemplation, insight. .... a philosopher can find no rest until he gains a view or vision of the world of things and persons which will enable him to interpret the manifold experience as expressive, in some sort, of a purpose."<sup>1</sup> Again, "it is a human effort to comprehend the problem of the Universe or determine the nature of Reality."<sup>2</sup> It is insight and vision that has to serve as tool. Interpreting the manifold experience and determining the nature of reality are the goals before the philosopher. The subject matter, we may say, is the ultimate constitution and meaning of things.

He is also aware that often the philosophic pursuit as carried on in the academic institutions and places of learning has to do with

'logical surveys'. "Generally," he says, "darśanas, mean critical expositions, logical surveys or systems."<sup>3</sup> In the Indian context this mainly involves the re-interpretation of the traditional classics in which philosophical truths have been expressed. No doubt every great civilization must possess a treasure in the form of works of perennial value. There is nothing surprising in the fact that this great country also claims to own a treasure of such classics. A study of these with critical expositions, logical surveys, etc. can be the starting point (though not necessarily the only starting point) of philosophical enquiry. It can even be the sustaining ground. The need for this and the great scope offered by the material is emphasised by him in many places.

"The classics," he says, "are not merely guardians of the past but heralds of the future." "Indeed any system of thought should satisfy two basic requirements; it should state the truth and interpret it for each new generation. It must move back and forth between these two poles, the eternal and the temporal." The classics which contain truth expressed through it will lead to a continual clarifying and fuller understanding of the truth. This, let us suppose, makes it clear that Radhakrishnan gives the philosopher the *role of the interpreter of truths*, presuppositions, held, statements made through affirmations and denials. The subject matter is as wide as life itself, all experience in its widest context, thought, felt, striven for.

In this context we have to consider the tendency to make philosophy coeval with metaphysics and make philosophical enquiry and questions coincide with metaphysical enquiry and metaphysical questions. This is not quite justified, however convenient it may be in certain discussions. This identification may give unexpected slants to what has to remain an objective estimation or an impartial exposition of the whole field of experience. Philosophy should include metaphysical study as well as the study of values in ethics, philosophy of science, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, logic and epistemology, religious experience, etc. The scope of philosophy as a study and as a pursuit is obviously wider than that of metaphysics. We need not go to Plato to clarify, though of course he has clearly laid down the role of metaphysics, nor to Aristotle to seek the etymological sense



This question is sometimes answered by the assertion that in any case metaphysics is the *core* of philosophy, putting the other enquiries in some sense in the periphery only. This is an assertion that can be called into question. After all, this itself involves a statement of value and has to be substantiated. For the Naiyāyika and the Bauddha philosophers logic may be everything and they have reasons which compel attention. And their pursuit is philosophy. The point of this discussion is that in defining philosophy as *darśana*, insight, "seeing", we cannot imply that it must refer only to metaphysics. The object of metaphysical enquiry is *man* in the Vedāntic texts. So philosophy is *adhyātma-vidyā*. Its scope is to discover the *ātman*. While the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* may name it as the foundation of all *vidyās* and call it *sarva-vidyā-pratiṣṭha* it might still be argued by a philosopher that a metaphysical theory of the state is the fundamental work of philosophy. We cannot ridicule him on any philosophical grounds. A Buddhist philosopher can contend that *change* is the central problem. "Seeing" must be valid in some sense for *all* the various branches of philosophy. It must be elucidated in such a fashion, modified and elaborated if necessary. If we say that philosophy is *darśana* which is "seeing" in the sense of direct, mystic insight because philosophy is metaphysics and metaphysics is concerned with direct apprehension of a transcendent reality which reasoning cannot reveal, we are making a series of assumptions and not stopping to justify them.

The position reveals its unsatisfactoriness when we examine the role of those who have to interpret the classics which contain the revealed or directly intuited truths. "Philosophy is not merely the intuitive or mystical experience of transcendental reality. Reason is used to interpret and understand this experience."<sup>4</sup> There is need for an interpreter of the revealed truths. Whether he is himself the *jijñāsu*, the seeker after truth or another interpreter, we have to assume that the interpreter in both cases is a philosopher. He is performing the philosopher's task.

We do not take away in any sense the special value of direct insight which gives the transcendent truths when we say that they stand in need of interpretation too and the interpreter is a philosopher. Even if these involve two levels of knowing they are both



necessary and valuable. The seers and the Ācāryas are both necessary. They both do philosophical work. "The remote, intimately personal intuitions of the seers reveal an objective relevance and validity through the interpretations and discussions of the commentators."<sup>5</sup> It is reflection based on vision and insight. It is only pointed out here that the definition of philosophy as *darśana* in a very narrow sense will make only the seers philosophers and not the commentators. This should not be. That some of the commentators can themselves claim to be seers should not make any difference to the point stressed here, *that both types of pursuit are philosophical and the term darśana should be given a connotation to include both.*

It is not suggested that Radhakrishnan ignores this. But one wishes that he makes the position absolutely clear. As it is, in most of his writings where he mentions both, he leaves the reader in doubt as to what the special task of the philosopher is and what his special tool is. Radhakrishnan has put emphasis on intuitive insight as the source of ultimately true knowledge and the possession of that knowledge as the hallmark of the philosopher. This may tend to make rational interpretation unrelated to the philosopher's task. "Philosophy is an exhibition of insights." Again, he says "there is no generally accepted definition of philosophy; but a definition which is broad enough to cover most of the systems dealt in histories of philosophy would be this, a *logical enquiry into the nature of reality.*"<sup>6</sup>

### III

A somewhat similar position exists with reference to discussions on integral insight and spiritual experience. He contrasts intellectual knowledge with integral experience. It is one of the distinguishing characteristics of his philosophical position. Intellect and the integral insight, he says, are related as part to whole. "Integral insight discloses to us eternity, — timelessness in which time and history are included."<sup>7</sup> Again "it is not a question of the subject and knowing the object. It involves the realisation that subject and object are one in a deeper sense than any physical analogy can make clear."<sup>8</sup> He goes on to point out that even logical knowledge is possible only because this highest knowledge is ever present. It can only be accepted as foundational. He has argued in various contexts with his usual felicity and distinction of phrase how this integral knowledge is non-con-



ceptual but not non-rational I shall only quote here a paragraph from his "Fragments of a Confession". "There are different types of knowledge, perceptual, conceptual, and intuitive and they are suited to different kinds of objects. Plotinus tells us that sense perceptions are below us, logical reasonings are with us, and spiritual apprehensions are above us...The last type of knowledge may be called integral insight, for it brings into activity not merely a portion of our conscious being, sense or reason, but the whole. It also reveals to us not the abstractions but the reality in its integrity ..... we use the direct mode of apprehension, which is deeper than logical understanding, when we contemplate a work of art, when we enjoy great music, when we acquire an understanding of another human being in the supreme achievement of love. In this kind of knowledge the subject is not opposed to the object but is intimately united with it. By calling this kind of knowledge integral insight, we bring out the point that it does not contradict logical reason, though the insight exceeds the reason. Intellect cannot repudiate instinct any more than intuition can deny logical reason. Intellectual preparation is an instrument for attaining to the truth of the spirit, but the inward realisation of the truth of spirit transcends all intellectual verification, since it exists in an immediacy beyond all conceivable mediation."'

Does he mean by integral insight what other philosophers, say Bergson, mean by intuition? It is not always clear. He has been criticised for his vagueness (See Rebett W. Brown, *Reason and Intuition in Radhakrishnan's Philosophy*, pp. 175-277). His vivid contrasts between intellectual knowledge and integral experience and his insistence that intellect gives only conceptual reconstruction identifies his integral knowledge with this intuition that gives insight. And he goes on to say that philosophy is an exhibition of insights.

But unlike many writers on the subject, he places much more stress on the discipline of philosophic *reason*. "Philosophy as conceptual knowing is a preparation for intuitive insight and an exposition of it when it arises ... The great truths of philosophy are not proved but seen. The philosophers convey to others visions by the machinery of logical proof."<sup>10</sup> One will like to know whether "philosophical truths" come first or independently and integral experience is a vivid "realisation" of these truths. Here again is the nature of the philosopher's task, the defining of the philosopher's province.



In various works of his, Radhakrishnan expounds the nature of spiritual experience. In certain places he draws a distinction between spiritual experience and religious experience. The former as distinct from religious feeling of worship or dependance or awe engages our whole personality. It is a state of ecstasy or complete absorption of our being. When the flash of absolute reality breaks through the normal barriers of the conscious mind, it leaves a trail of illumination in its wake. The excitement of illumination is distinct from the serene radiance of enlightenment."<sup>11</sup> And he calls this spiritual experience a mode of integral insight.

Spiritual experience is illumination. They are intuitions of the ultimate fact of spirit. Critical reflection only confirms what has been approached in another way. These reflective accounts are only approximations. Being as such is uncharacterisable and our descriptions and translations are in forms of objects which are less than Being and consequently are inadequate. This is so. And this evidently refers to philosophical reflections, intellectualisation, categorisation.

Of religious experience again, "Being is given to us as Absolute Presence in adoration and worship. It is through religious contemplation that we realise the Holy. It is not simple apprehension. It is the surrender of the self, its opening to the supreme."<sup>12</sup> One wishes that spiritual experience is distinguished clearly from religious experience, i.e., the exact relationship between the two is brought out. Are they identical? If different, how different?

"It is an attempt to discover the ideal possibilities of human life, a quest for emancipation from the immediate compulsions of vain and petty moods. It is not true religion unless it ceases to be a traditional view and becomes personal experience. It is an independent functioning of the human mind, something unique, possessing an autonomous character. It is something inward and personal which unifies all values and organises all experiences. It is the reaction of the whole man to the whole reality. We seek the religious object by the totality of our faculties and energies. Such functioning of the whole man may be called spiritual life, as distinct from a merely intellectual or aesthetic activity or a combination of them."<sup>13</sup>

It must be said here that these are insignificant points (even if they prove to contain any substance) in the magnificent edifice built



by an universally acknowledged master. The only excuse we can think of is that it is the privilege of every student of philosophy to bring in sometimes at least some insignificant points and in our effort to understand fully a thinker, these may also help.

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# RADHAKRISHNAN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION

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P. NAGARAJA RAO

Among the contemporary interpreters and creative thinkers and system-builders of India's ancient wisdom in the light of the impact of modern science and thought of our century, Radhakrishnan stands second only to Gandhiji and Tagore. By his massive erudition, phenomenal exposition, undiminished vigour of thought, arresting originality, amazing sweep and range of thought and ideas and by his power of speech and through his forty volumes, he has elicited the admiration of world thinkers and has held fast the loyalty of intellectuals in the East and West. He is the most gifted exponent of Indian philosophy. In every page of his exposition we perceive the dynamic idealism, the spiritual note, the catholic outlook, the quick appreciation of the eternal values of the cultures of the different faiths, and an abiding optimism in man's perfectibility and in the destiny of the human race.

Radhakrishnan combines in himself different roles — a brilliant interpreter, an integrated system-builder, a great educationist, a writer of distinction, the occupant of the Presidential gadi of the Indian Union, the missionary of peace struggling to outlaw war from politics, the modern Ācārya with his commentaries on the triple texts of Vedānta (the *Upaniṣads*, the *Gītā*, and the *Vedānta Sūtras*). As an orator, he wielded the English language with perfect ease and astounding selectivity and could reel off in eloquent language his speeches without a slip of paper in his hand to the amazement of the



audience. He has been the hero of a thousand platforms. His memory was phenomenal and was the despair and envy of many. His asides have been full of allusions and have delighted audiences. There is hardly a university in India and abroad which has not conferred its honorary doctorate on him. He has served India and held several distinguished offices in the period of eight decades—Vice-Chancellor of two Universities (Andhra and Benaras), Professor of half a dozen universities which includes the world's platform of cultures, Oxford; his was the first unprecedented appointment of an Asiatic to the Spalding chair of Eastern Religions and Western Thought; he was a member of the Intellectual Co-operation Committee of the erstwhile League of Nations, Chairman of the UNESCO, Chairman of the University Education Commission, Vice-President of the Indian Union for a decade (two terms) and the President of India.

Radhakrishnan's personality has had a charisma all its own. One who has listened to him has been captivated by his eloquence and manner of delivery. Radhakrishnan rose from the position of an Assistant Professor of Philosophy in the Presidency College, Madras to the Presidency of the Indian Union. The amplitude of the rise has been an eloquent commentary on his talents. He impressed a number of great men of his age, who differed from him widely in their temperament, talents and outlook on life. At a leave-taking ceremony from his Ambassadorial assignment in Russia on the 5th of April, 1952, Radhakrishnan met Stalin. The Russian psychology professor, Pavlov, was the interpreter. Radhakrishnan reminisces significantly and writes: "I met Stalin, I told him we had an emperor, who after a bloody victory, renounced war and became a monk. You have waded your way through force. Who knows, that might happen to you also?" Stalin replied: "Yes, miracles do happen sometimes. I was in a theological seminary for five years." Radhakrishnan continues, "I patted him on the cheek and on the back; I passed my hand over his head." Stalin said: "You are the first person to treat me as a human being and not as a monster. You are leaving us and I am sad. I want you to live long. I have not long to live." Events proved prophetic; six months after, Stalin died and Radhakrishnan lived for over two decades and passed away on April 17, 1975.



Here again we gather another impression from the meeting of Radhakrishnan with an entirely different type of personality. In 1947, a few weeks before Gandhiji's assassination, Radhakrishnan most humbly sought Gandhiji's permission to dedicate to him his (Radhakrishnan's) English translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Sri Pyarelal records Gandhiji's remarks: "I know Radhakrishnan will not write anything unworthy." On another occasion Gandhiji Radhakrishnan told: "I am your Arjuna; you are my Krishna; I am like Arjuna confused." Radhakrishnan made an abiding and affectionate impact on all who met him. His affability and kindly love endeared him to all, irrespective of their political parties and ideological divergences. All went to him alike and he met each according to his measure and needs. He was a great intellectual who became the philosopher-king of the Indian Union.

Radhakrishnan's contribution is two-fold. He is an interpreter of Indian thought and the tenets of sound, spiritual, humanistic religion. His two volumes on Indian philosophy have come to stay as the standard exposition of the subject. They are characterized by a massive erudition, brilliant style, cogent array of citations, authentic documentation, insightful asides and instructive comparisons with Western thought. They have all made the book a classic. Radhakrishnan, in the manner of the traditional ācāryas, has set his hand to translating and commenting upon the *triple texts*. He has also translated the Buddhist Bible, the *Dhammapada*. In the commentaries his stand is refreshingly original. He claims that he has a right to interpret them and disclose the flexibility of the eternal ideas embodied in the triple texts. He feels that the traditional systems have given an undue fixity to the eternal truths in the scriptures and have ignored their flexibility. His role as a commentator is to disclose the relevance and the topicality of the central truths of the scriptures to our nuclear age. This is not merely an exposition of the texts as in the splendid histories of Indian philosophy by Professors Hiriyanna and Das Gupta. He holds that the doctrines of the triple texts are neither old nor new but eternal. They are not merely "the guardians of the past but the heralds of the future."

In his exposition of Indian philosophy, particularly Advaita Vedānta, he has not merely restated the orthodox Advaita position of



Śaṁkara. He was influenced by Hegel. He does not accept the Śaṁkarite position that Brahman is a homogeneous non-composite entity. It is, according to our Professor, dynamic and not immobile (*kuṭastha*). "We know it, we cannot explain it. It is felt everywhere though seen nowhere." It is the ground and the goal of existence. He calls it "The Absolute". Brahman is not only immanent but transcendent. According to Radhakrishnan, the Absolute is not exhausted in the world. The other two aspects of the Absolute are God and the souls. Radhakrishnan was influenced by Śaṁkara's *vivarta-vāda* in his description of the relationship between the Absolute and its manifestations. He envisages a one-sided relationship between the cause and the effect. The Absolute is the logical prius of the world. The world could not be but for the reality of the Absolute. The defects of the world and those of the plurality of souls do not in any way affect the Absolute.

God and the Absolute are the forms under which the central Reality is viewed. God is the Absolute viewed in the cosmic context. God does not amuse Himself, watching the universe and the drama of life from the wings. He is organic to the world. He endures as long as the world lasts. Time, God and the universe are coeval. There is no dualism of God and the world in his system. In contrast to orthodox Advaita, Radhakrishnan asserts that God is not a mere appearance of the Absolute, but is the very Absolute in the world context. When the souls attain conscious realization of the unity with the spirit, God and the world lapse into the Absolute.

Radhakrishnan's conception of the self is after the manner of the theists. The soul of man is not a fallen creature, bound up in sin with no glimmer of divinity in him. Man and spirit are akin to each other. They are consubstantial. Man is not body plus a mind and sense organs. He is that which animates them. He has a free will. If man has no freedom of the will, history has no meaning and spiritual injunctions have no practitants.

Radhakrishnan upholds the freedom of man in every one of his writings. He observes : "Man is not an aggregate of chemical compounds. He is not a slot machine with predictable responses to outer stimulations ; he is not a puppet in the hands of fate, nor a pawn in the cosmic chess, moved by impersonal forces of nature, fate or des-



tiny. Unless we accept the will of man as free, his dignity turns into a myth, his optimism into an illusion and history a fate." Man is essentially an indomitable spirit. Human history is not a chapter of accidents with no plan or purpose. Neither is it a see-saw nor a cyclic process. It is the interplay between creative personalities and historical processes. Man is the only creature that has been destined to be a creator.

Radhakrishnan's philosophical system discloses significant reverence for life and opposed tooth and nail the other-worldly view which regards human life as a vale and a snare from which man must find an escape. He is opposed to *saṃsāra-vimukta-vāda*. He writes, " *Saṃsāra* is a succession of spiritual opportunities." The opportunities in *saṃsāra* when used will lead to the emergence of spiritual values, free us from pain and misery and enable us to attain liberation. The sentiment echoes the sensitive view of the poet Keats. He writes: "Do you not see how necessary a world of pain and trouble is, to school an intelligence and make it a soul?"

Radhakrishnan's contribution to Indian philosophical thought is two-fold. In his British Academy lecture on Gautama the Buddha and in his other writings — particularly the long chapters on Buddhism in the first Volume of *Indian Philosophy*, he maintained, in contra-distinction to the orthodox Vedānta position, that Buddha was not a nihilist or a *śūnyavādin* nor an agnostic. He argues that to the 6th century B. C. audience, Gautama the Buddha could not have preached the arid rationalism and enjoyed great spiritual popularity. To dub the Buddha as a rationalist and as an agnostic is to give a wrong assessment of his stature. By his positive interpretation of Buddhism he has brought back the Buddha into the Hindu fold.

He has given a positive interpretation of Śaṅkara's *Māyā* and has not been deterred in describing it as real and unreal (*sadasādātma*). He takes his stand on the three orders of reality.

(1) Apparent reality (*Prātibhāsika sattā*): This refers to objects seen in the dream-world, which are sublated when we wake up from the dream. They are real till the dream lasts. They differ from individual to individual and are private.



(2) Empirical reality (*Vyāvahārika sattā*): This is the world of our waking experience. It is not the subjective creation of the individual souls. If it were so, each would have created a world fulfilling completely his heart's desires. It is a public world and has an objective reference to all souls. It is law-abiding in its functioning and is not chaotic and is a well ordered cosmos into which the moral law is built in. Empirical reality lasts and is sublated with the onset of Brahman-realization. Till then a popular verse engraved on the ruins of Belur, and a verse which affirms the empirical approach to Reality and confirms the fellowship of faiths (*sarvadarśana samata*) has been one of Radhakrishnan's pet verses :

*"Yam śaivāssamupāsate Śiva iti Brahmeti Vedāntinaḥ Bauddha Buddha iti pramāṇapaṭavaḥ Karttreti Naiyāyikāḥ Arhan ityathā Jaina śāsana rataḥ Karmeti Mimāṃsakaḥ."* To this Radhakrishnan adds the line *"Kraistvāḥ Kristuriti Kriyāpararatāḥ Alleti Māhammadāḥ Soyam vividadhātu vāñchitaphalam Trailokyanātho Hariḥ."* The meaning of the verse is as follows: Whom the Śaivas worship as Śiva, the Vedāntins as Brahman, the Buddhists as Buddha, the Naiyāyikas who specialise in the canons of knowledge as the chief Agent, the followers of Jaina code as the Liberated, the ritualists as the principle of Law, whom the Christians devoted to work as Christ and the Mohammadans as Allah, May that Hari, the Lord of the three worlds grant your cherished prayers.

Radhakrishnan argues that the Hindu tradition accords great importance to this principle of tolerance towards all men and women pursuing their spiritual *sādhana*. The principle itself is the corollary of the metaphysical doctrine that the one Reality is described differently and is approached diversely, suiting different types of talent, temperament and training. The Vedic declaration reverberates this truth. *Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*. It is absolutely real. All these ideas are compactly expressed by Radhakrishnan in a memorable sentence: "Unreal the world is, but illusory it is not." Hence the world is not a complex of individual ideas or a mental construct as the Vijñānavādin of the Buddhist school (subjective idealism) think. The world is a creation of Brahman in the empirical setting when He is called *Īśvara*. The soul and Brahman differ at this stage. *Īśvara* is controlling *māyā* whereas *māyā* controls the soul.



(3) Absoulte Reality (*Pāramārthikasattā*): At this stage there is only the reality of Brahman and nothing else. Radhakrishnan accords, unlike the traditionalists, an equal status to both the poises of Brahman, viz., *nirguṇa* (static) and *saguṇa* (dynamic).

Many accuse Radhakrishnan as not putting forth a philosophical system like those of Russell, Moore and others. Professor A.E. Taylor has discussed the issue about the concept of originality. "There are two qualities, which we may fairly demand from the work of a man, whom we have to recognize as a great philosopher with a permanent place in the history of human thought. In the first place the work must be *original* and in the second the work must be *critical*. When I say that the work must be original, I do not mean it must be startling or revolutionary, but it must be the achievement of a genuine, personal intellectual effort. The great philosopher must be one who has thought for himself hard and closely; and by saying he must be critical, I do not mean that it must necessarily be largely devoted to the criticism of other men's thoughts. I mean that it must be something more than a construction of a brilliant and undisciplined, speculative imagination." Judged by this test, Radhakrishnan's system of spiritual humanism emerges well.

Radhakrishnan has stressed the importance of spiritual religion and has spelt out its contents in a manner acceptable to our age and the children of science and reason. Religion is not mere credal confession of faith. It is not blind obedience to authority nor implicit acceptance of what is laid down in the scriptures. It is not magic or necromancy. It is not mere belief but behaviour. It is not the opium of the mind as Marx held it; nor is it a return to the infantile state of mind as Freud opined; nor is it the stupid fanaticism of the dogmatic theologian who believes that his religion is in the exclusive possession of the whole truth and that all other faiths end up in absolute error. Religion is the most cohesive force for the integration of the individual and the well-being of society. It abjures violence and adopts persuasion and rational reflection. It does not insist on compulsive proselytization nor indulge in the art of competitive indoctrination. It is not a mere emotional slush, experienced occasionally by the highly suggestible mind nor a disordered brain with an intemperate imagination.



Religion is an absolute and total commitment of the individual in word, thought and deed to the supreme Reality of God. Its existence is validated by spiritual experience. It is a self-certifying experience and the most transforming act. Religion is the perfect instrument for social regeneration. It outlaws war and rings in peace and security for men. It does not absolve us from our social duties and individual obligations. It is extreme sensitivity to the social agonies of the age and sufferings of humanity. It is not going to mountain tops and monasteries in search of individual salvation disclosing arid apathy and non-concern for our fellowmen. It at once satisfies the demands of reason and the needs of humanity. The religion of one who is completely selfish, consistently dishonest, performing scrupulously the elaborate rituals ordained by scriptures, experiencing the most edifying emotions, if he is wholly unrepentant, is mere sham.

Radhakrishnan pleads for the unity of faiths. In his study of the writings of the mystics of the different faiths, he discerns a wide area of agreement among them. In his inaugural lecture at Oxford, he called that religion emerging from the area of agreement of the mystics, 'the world's unborn soul.' He pleads for the 'meeting of religions'. He does not make a fetish of the past, but looks upon it only as the inspiring ideal and not as a prison-house. He carries from the past altars only fire and not smoke. He says, "We must look backwards and live forwards." Science and technology have helped us to knit the world into a close unity physically. But we need religion to unite our minds. That is the sole function of religion. Indian spirituality discloses these characteristics. We must revive it to save ourselves and serve as a model to the world.

Sound spiritual religion, Radhakrishnan holds, is opposed to scientific naturalism and materialism which deny the existence of the Transcendent and confine reality to the limits of sense horizon. It is also opposed to dogmatic theologies which hold that only one religion is in the exclusive possession of the complete truth. Radhakrishnan, on the authority of the experience of the mystics and the *Gītā*, pleads for a multi-personal approach to Reality. He condemns the unimpersonal approach. He has often quoted the celebrated passage in the *Gītā* :

*"ye yathā mām prapadyante  
tān tathaiva bhajāmyaham  
mama vartma anuvartante  
manuṣyaḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ"*

Puṣpadanta elaborates it in the memorable verse :

*"trayī sāṅkhyam yogāḥ paśupatimatam vaiṣṇavamiti  
prabhinne prasthāne paramidamataḥ pathyamiti ca.  
rucīnām vaicitryāt rjukūtila nānā patha jusaṁ  
nṛṇām eko gamyaḥ tvamasi payasam āṛṇava iva."*

The Vedas, the Sāṅkhya, the Yoga, the Pāśupata and the Vaiṣṇava creeds, each of them is declared as praiseworthy and useful in some place or other—some think that this is better or that is better because of the difference in their tastes ; but all men reach unto you, the Supreme, even as all rivers, however zigzag their courses may be, reach the sea. This popular sentiment is the daily tolerant prayer of the enlightened Hindu. Just as the rain waters descending from the heavens reach the ocean at the end, so does the worship of all the deities reach Keśava.

*"akāśāt patitam toyam yathā gacchati sāgaram.  
sarvadeva namaskāraḥ keśavam prati gacchati"*

This principle is responsible for the sound instinct, strange vitality and the staying power of Hinduism through the ages, according to Radhakrishnan and has also come in for great appreciation and acceptance at the hands of several thinkers of the West like Arnold Toynbee, Aldous Huxley and a host of Orientalists.



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## RADHAKRISHNAN ON RELIGION

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R. RAMANUJACHARI

A perfect master of the entire range of Indian thought through the ages and fully conversant with the philosophy of the West, Radhakrishnan made the wisdom of the East and the West his own. In his authentic and fascinating story of Indian philosophy in all its ramifications, he is not, as C.A. Moore says, repeating parrot-like the ancient wisdom but interpreting the subtle nuances of thought of the multitudinous *darśanas* in the perspective of the modern age. With sympathetic imagination he presents each system as if it is presenting its own case without himself giving up his inherent right as a historian to assess the worth of the systems from his own point of view. He has shown how Indian thinkers have exhibited remarkable speculative daring, penetration and originality in constructing thought-structures that compare favourably with those that have been devised by thinkers of the West. Radhakrishnan is no mere exponent of Indian thought but is a virile and acute thinker who has thought out the ultimate problems of life and existence. A fairly systematic account of his thought structure is presented in his *An Idealist View of Life*. His numerous other works spread over several decades indicate that on the whole he sticks to that position and elaborate its social, economic, political and other implications. In his first major work, *The Rein of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* he passes in review the philosophies of some of the great thinkers of recent times to illustrate his thesis that the intrusion of religion deflects philosophic speculation from its rightful course and winds up the discussion with a brilliant account of the Upaniṣadic approach to philosophy. In inviting philosophers to be wary and to guard against religion dominating philosophic endeavour he makes it clear



that he is not opposed to religion as such but only against credal, dogmatic and authoritarian faith and belief in a personal saviour understood as "experience of or living contact with ultimate reality." Religion, according to Radhakrishnan, is no luxury, but a necessity and is inescapable. He quotes a statement of Pestratus recorded in Homer's *Odyssey*, "All men have need of gods (i.e. religion)." Long before that, the ancient Indian seers have recognised the imperative need of man to inquire into the ultimate reality. "That verily from which these things originate, by which they live, to which departing they return, endeavour to understand that—that is Brahman."<sup>1</sup> Another *śruti* text enjoins "Meditate on the ultimate cause" (*kāraṇam tu dhyeya*). The opening section of *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* reads: What is the cause? Is it Brahman? Whence are we born? Whereby do we live? On what are we established? Over-ruled by whom in pleasures and pains do we live our various lives? O ye Brahmvādins, by meditation and *devaprasāda* we know the unborn, the ruler over both the knowing and the unknowing and our fetters fall off."

Under the caption "The View of an Idealist" Radhakrishnan subscribes to the philosophy of Vedānta; and the brand of Vedāntic thought that finds favour with him is Śaṅkara's Advaita interpreted liberally so as to rub off the rugged edges of *māyāvāda* and acosmism. He makes a valiant effort to give a concrete setting to the Absolute of Śaṅkara which is commonly taken to be Pure Being devoid of attributes. Radhakrishnan presents a two-tier theory of the ultimately Real, one the Absolute free of all characteristics and the other a God manifest in the empirical world of man and nature. The *mūrta* and the *amūrta* forms are, according to him, in the very nature of the Absolute, and are not merely juxtaposed. The Absolutist and the theistic trends are discernible all through his presentation of the Real and he moves freely from one position to the other and says that the contrast between them is not sharp in the *Upaniṣads*. The Absolute and God are, in essence, one. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God; and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view. He says, "The impersonality of the Absolute is not its whole significance. The *Upaniṣads* support divine activity and participation in nature and give us a God who exceeds the mere infinite and the mere finite."<sup>2</sup> "The supra-personal and the personal representa-



tions of the real are the Absolute and the relative ways of expressing the only reality.”<sup>3</sup> “There is no hard and fast line of distinction between the simple one of intuition supported by Śaṅkara and the concrete whole of Rāmānuja. The *Upaṇiṣads* imply that Īśvara is practically one with Brahman.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet he says, “The Absolute is one in which all form is lost. God is organically connected with the universe, but the Absolute is not.” “A personal God has meaning only for practical religious consciousness and not for the highest insight.” He poses a dilemma—a God is not God at all, if he is all; if he be all, then religious experience is not the highest. God’s nature, he says, cannot be perfect so long as man’s imperfect nature, stands over against it. He quotes an old text as saying that the worshippers of the Absolute belong to the highest rank; below them come those who are devoted to a personal God; lower down come those who worship the incarnations of the Absolute; and the lowest group comprises those who propitiate godlings, ancestors, sages, petty forces of nature and the like.

Aware of the implications of this, he hastens to say, “The worship of God is not deliberate alliance with falsehood, since there is no other way of contacting the Absolute except as it appears as God.” A creator God, he says, is not robbed of significance. The suggestion is that it has a pragmatic value. For the benefit of persons of inferior clay who cannot suddenly transcend lower forms, worship of a personal God is tolerated. Yet the *Gītā* is quoted as recommending full and active life in the world with the inner life anchored in the eternal spirit.

Radhakrishnan speaks of the foundational character of religious experience. In an important publication he writes, “It is spiritual certainty offering us strength and solace in the hour of need and sorrow. It is the conviction that love and justice are at the heart of the universe and that the spirit who gave rise to man will further his perfection. It is faith that grips us even when we suffer defeat, the assurance that though the waves of the shores may be broken, the ocean conquers nevertheless.”<sup>5</sup> “God is the final satisfaction and in him man finds self-completion.”<sup>6</sup> As against this he says belief in a personal God as wisdom, love and goodness meets certain vital reli-



gious needs, but there are others which it does not fulfil ; for example, the sense of rest and fulfilment, of eternity and completeness characteristic of spiritual experience could only be met by the Absolute as pure and passionless Being transcending the restless turmoil of the cosmic life. "Essence of fullness of selfhood leads to a feeling of self-transcendence ; belief in a personal saviour is no longer tenable." "The Supreme has an individual interest in and a deliberate care for, human beings." God shares in the life of the finite creatures, bears with them the whole burden of their finitude. Apart from his indwelling presence in all, on special occasions he incarnates. He is born out of his own free will (*saṁkalpa*) and not out of kārmic necessity, and endeavours to bring men nearer to the goal. The concept of *avatāras* is the greatest contribution of Hindu thought to religion. The Ṛg Vedic hymns sing, "All that is bare he covers ; all that is sick, he cures ; by his grace the blind man sees, the lame walks." "He is the refuge, the friend of all." The most intimate tie binds man and God. "Thou art ours ; we are thine." Strangely enough, Radhakrishnan says if God is indifferent to man's travails, he cannot be God of love ; if he feels for man's fallen nature, he is a sorrowing God and as such he cannot be God at all. When asked who was a true Vaiṣṇavite a reputed teacher said he who feels intensely for the distress of his fellowmen is a Vaiṣṇavite. This definition would apply equally to the followers of any religion worth the name. *Karuṇā* or love is at the heart of the real yet it is strange to find Radhakrishnan saying "Theism leads to a finite God and thereby to pessimism and despair."

In its non-relational aspect, the Real is the Absolute ; and in its active aspect it is God. He speaks of Absolute silence and its boundless movements. The silence is said to provide the force for movements. Viewed in its relation to the cosmos and not as it is in itself, we have Īśvara who guides and directs the world process. The tendency to regard Īśvara or God as phenomenal and Brahman or Absolute as real is not correct. The very next sentence reads, "This is a distinction of great importance which we should preserve if we are to crave a balanced view of the Supreme." He goes on to add the criticism that the vacillation between non-dualism of Śaṅkara and the personal theism of Rāmānuja is based on the postulate that



the Supreme must be either the one or the other which I do not admit.”<sup>8</sup>

The Absolute mind in the fullness of its wisdom has a realm of infinite ideal possibilities and is also free activity. This universe is but one of the infinite possibilities chosen for being actualised. God as the creator, sustainer and judge of this universe is not unrelated to the Absolute but is limited to this world and therefore lower. Further as a stage manager charged with the duty of putting this cosmic drama on boards, he is indispensable to the world, even as the world is indispensable to God. As for the infinite possibilities being greater than one actuality, one critic remarks that an actual raising is indeed to be preferred to a printed menu of several courses. As regards the relation of God to the universe as Radhakrishnan himself admits elsewhere, there is mutual relation but a one-sided dependence. As a *Taittirīya* text declares : “Who indeed can breathe, could live, if there were not this blissful Brahman ?”<sup>9</sup>

The destiny of the human soul is, according to theistic systems, the shedding of false sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and enjoying the bliss of God-vision. The released soul attains considerable similarity with God, (*parama sāmānya* as the *Vedānta-Sūtra* puts it or *sādharmya* as the *Bhagavad Gītā* characterises it). As Professor P. N. Srinivasachari puts it, “There is no loss of personality, but loss in personality.” The soul is divinized, enters a new mode of life transfigured and uplifted. It experiences *śānti* (tranquillity) betokening fullness of bliss, ‘spiritualised harmony’ in the words of Plato. But Śaṅkara favours absorption into the Absolute ; but this merger awaits till all the souls are redeemed (*sarvamukti*) and the cosmic process is wound up. With his characteristic felicity of expression, Radhakrishnan says the released soul ‘enters the light but does not touch the flame.’ The idea of a life of bliss endlessly extended, a life without struggle and consequently without any further progress is repugnant to Radhakrishnan and he ridicules it by quoting Plato’s description of the righteous dead as “reclining at a banquet of the pious and with garlands on their heads, spending all eternity in wine bibbing, the fullest reward of virtue being, in their estimation, an everlasting carousal.” He rejects off hand A.E. Taylor’s conception of ‘progress in fruition’ as self-discrepant. He does not seem to have considered the possibility of perfection be-



ing achieved and yet being never exhausted, precisely because God is the abode of infinite excellences. As Saint Śaṅkara says in the very opening line of the first stanza of *Tiruvāymoli*, the Lord is possessed of unexcelled and ever-surging excellences (உயர்வற உயர் நலமுடையவன்). Again he speaks of *bhagavadanubhava* as never being finished but holding ever new nectarine delights (அப்பொழுதைக் கப்போது என் ஆராவமுதே). A verse from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is relevant in this context. “*maccittā madgata prāṇa bhodayantaḥ parasparam kathayantaś ca mām nityam tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca.*”<sup>10</sup>

Rāmānuja has some illuminating comments to offer on this description of the manner in which the Lord's devotees engage themselves. They are said to be glad (*tuṣyanti*) and happy (*ramanti*). The two terms *tuṣyanti* and *ramanti* are surely not idle repetitions. The former signifies, according to Rāmānuja, that the devotees, single-minded in their devotion, experience infinite delight in praising the Lord's excellences and manifold activities, since otherwise their very existence would be unbearable. *Ramanti* refers to their being transported to the heights of rapture in hearing others praise the Lord. This dual role is suggested by the expression *bhodayantaḥ parasparam* found in the first line of this verse. Now by singing the Lord's praises or teaching and now by being exhilarated in listening to discourses of others on the attributes of the Divine, the man of God fills his time. Precisely because the attributes are infinite, inexhaustible, there is scope for perpetual novelty. As the *Kena Upaniṣad* says “Brahman is above the known, above and beyond the unknown.”<sup>11</sup> “Religion,” says Whitehead, “is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within the passing flux of immediate things, something which is real, and yet waiting to be realised; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of the present facts.”<sup>12</sup>

Radhakrishnan says, “The liberated souls lapse into the still recesses of the Absolute. In the mystic state we become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness.” As against this one meets the statement, “Individuality is not abolished, but transfigured into a conscious term of the universal being, an utterance of the transcendental divine.” Again take the following pronouncement of his. “There is no question, in my scheme, of the individual



being included and absorbed by the Divine. What is involved is unity in personal life. God and man remain distinct though bound together in love, so that we cannot speak of one apart from the other. God comes to self-expression through the regenerated individuals ... till the end of the cosmic process is achieved, the individuals retain their distinctions, though they possess universality of spirit. Even those who have freed themselves from subjection to *karma*, whose natures are indwelt by the Divine work, unceasingly for the service of the world; for its redemption they retain their centre as individuals till the cosmic consummation is reached."<sup>13</sup> The crux of the position is in the last sentence. The implication is that the life span for finite souls as for God is limited only to the duration of the empirical world. The souls no less than the individual souls who worship him are equally phenomenal. Thus by a strange irony Radhakrishnan who started by stating that he was only opposed to credal, authoritarian and dogmatic religion ends up by reducing religion along with ethics to the realm of appearance—a position not far different from that of Bradley.

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## RADHAKRISHNAN AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF FAITHS

K. SESHADRI

Radhakrishnan's role as a bridge-builder and a synthesiser is readily recognised. The spirit of harmonization or *samanvaya*, which had been adopted as a basic concept both by Bādarāyaṇa in his *Brahma-Sūtra* and by the principal *bhāṣyakāras* in their commentaries, pervades the writings of Radhakrishnan. The principle of *samanvaya* is not restricted to his exposition of Vedāntic thought as such but "extended to the living faiths of mankind." In this Radhakrishnan adheres to the age-old tradition of India which regards philosophy at its roots more as *darśana* than as a mere exercise of a closed faculty like the human intellect or reason.

Replying to his critics Radhakrishnan writes: "In several essays a complaint is made that I make use of religion in the development of my thought, and yet object to the interference of religion in the pursuit of philosophy ... If philosophy is to co-ordinate and interpret all significant aspects of experience, it must reckon with religious experience also. This, however, does not mean that we should adopt any particular religious doctrine." Radhakrishnan is clear enough not to confuse defence of "a dogmatic tradition" with "discovery of philosophic truth." Indeed, the tradition of Vedāntic thought has amply demonstrated the intrinsic relevance of spiritual experience in the shaping of a self-complete philosophy. The experience, being self-sufficient, "does not look beyond itself for meaning or validity," explains Radhakrishnan. "It is self-established, self-evidencing, self-luminous. It does not argue or explain, but it *knows* and *is*." Quoting Patañjali, he adds "*ṛtambharā tatra prajñā*", which means



that the insight is "truth-filled and truth-bearing." Philosophy as "darśana" presupposes such insight, which would serve as the source-springs of religion in a fundamental sense, no less than of philosophy. The Supreme, says Radhakrishnan, is *real*, not merely *true*; *perfect*, not merely *good*. Arguing that a true philosophic attitude would help correct and purify religion, he observes: "Traditional continuity is not mechanical reproduction. It is creative transformation, an increasing approximation to the ideal of Truth." "My own supreme interest has been to try to restore a sense of spiritual values to the millions of religiously displaced persons, who have been struggling to find precarious refuges in the emergency camps of Art and Science, of Fascism and Nazism, of Humanism and Communism."

Philosophy is not a perpetuation of doubt, although a genuine spirit of enquiry is essential for a philosopher. Refuting Swami Aghēnanda's views on theology and philosophy, Radhakrishnan writes, "It is somewhat arbitrary to say that men of conviction are theologians and men who are in a state of doubt are philosophers. Scepticism as a method is valuable but not scepticism as metaphysics." Devotion to truth demands our admission that "others may also be in the right as ourselves." "Religion concerns man as man, not man as Jew or Christian, Hindu or Buddhist, Sikh or Moslem."

Pointing out the risks implicit in an over-emphasis on theology Radhakrishnan remarks: "Many of us do not seem to defend faith in God, but are concerned to defend *our ideas* of God. We seem to overlook the unfathomed and inexpressible depths of God's being and eternity and the limitations and imperfections of the human agency through which all revelations are made to us." A study such as that of Comparative Religion would provide "insight into the values of the various faiths, values which would transcend their differing symbols and creeds, and in the transcending penetrate to the depths of spiritual consciousness, where the symbols and formulas shrink into insignificance."

There is an equally important lesson to be drawn from the history of religions, which illustrates the tragic effect of an intolerant and exclusive faith. We learn that the menace to religion as spiritual adventure is the claim of final solution. We learn

that a regimented mind is not suited for spiritual purposes. Says Radhakrishnan: "The Greeks, the Indians and the Chinese do not look upon religious theories as giving literal interpretations of the experience. They are symbolised representatives of the intuited truth. The supreme is above all religious systems." He quotes Karl Barth, for whom "non-Christian religions are invitations of the devil to draw men away from the truth", and says that "if we adopt Barth's view and look upon God as a jealous one there will be no peace in the religious world. I am persuaded that this view of Christianity, which led to the Inquisition and the Wars of Religions, is not fair to the teaching of Jesus that God is love." "If Christian religion is to be true to its main tradition, it should admit the operation of divine revelation in non-Christian religions", is one of Radhakrishnan's significant affirmations. "Even the conviction that one's own faith gives a deeper insight into reality need not engender hostility to those who cherish other beliefs. We may look upon others as fellow-seekers of truth." "A revelation granted to a small group at a particular moment in history, reconstructed by fallible men in narratives which are not always consistent, does not appeal to intelligent men. ... A God of love will reveal himself to all men who seek him, though none would expect to know him wholly."

Delivering the Newton Baker Lecture at Ohio in March 1958, Radhakrishnan said, "If we want to achieve world unity, religion must have a universality of outlook. But it has become like the nation state, — a bad citizen belongs to it, a good stranger is out of it, an alien."

Referring to the challenges of modern times, Radhakrishnan feels that there is no opposition between religion and science, between religion and highest social morality, between religion and co-operation among religions. He assures the world that he is a firm believer in the need for religion and the need for co-operation among religions. "I am sure that religions which are now passing through a process of self-understanding, self-searching, self-criticism, will be able to respond adequately to these great challenges."

The purpose of religion, as Radhakrishnan sees it, is to help man grow from a world of divided consciousness, with discords,



dualities, to a life of harmony, of freedom, of love. He agrees that cosmic evolution has not come to a stop with the advent of intelligence. The ultimate religious evidence lies in the existential character of spiritual experience, "the ravishment of the soul when it meets in its own depths the ground of its life and reality."

Religion is both experience and expression. It is on the side of its expression that we see its impact on society. The forms of religious expression are diversified, including those of scripture and tradition, codes and creeds, beliefs, practices and institutions. These in a sense constitute the variegated pattern of religion. All these are subject to change. Beliefs become outworn. Practices get petrified. Institutions are but experiments. Tradition may dope the will and become a dead-weight on society. Even in scripture "the letter killeth". All these call for periodical revision and reassessment, and that is the work of religious leaders, reformers and so-called heretics, who by the power of their personality and spirit of self-sacrifice lead humanity back to the fundamentals and first principles, from which it strays away from time to time. "There is an atheism which is the life-blood of all true faith", and it is this which inspires change and justifies it by its fruits.

Religious expression flows out of the plenitude of spiritual experience. Through expression is the experience shared, communicated and revived. But no expression is adequate. All are symbolic and suggestive, standing in need of interpretations and elucidations, commentaries upon commentaries. The great scriptures of the world are full of symbolic expression. Scripture is revelation in the literal sense. The substance of that which is revealed in scripture is vouchsafed to man in moments of his deepest intuition. Scripture is an embodiment in words of that which is beyond words. Hence the need for a symbol in religion. At its source religion is a direct encounter with Reality, with a world hidden to the senses but experienced in the inmost depths of the self. The symbol connects the sense-presented world with the transcendental, inner Reality. It serves to reveal and interpret the ideal in terms of the actual, the eternal through the temporal, the universal in the particular.

All expression is particular. The more precisely particular it is, the less adequate it becomes to reveal the profundities of the spirit.



The particular has its place and value. But when we over-emphasize the particular, there arises a danger. This is what happens when we set too much store by historicity, by specificity of time and circumstance, by factual evidence, as if religion were some disputed transaction in mundane affairs. In spiritual matters the historical or the factual is on the same level as the symbolic. Tradition releases the symbol from the restrictive relevances of historicity, and elevates it to a wider, sublimer context. But tradition, too, is inadequate in itself. The symbol is but a means, a vehicle conveying thought beyond itself. Religions get divided when the symbolic, whose value is instrumental, is mistaken for the substantial which is of intrinsic worth, when we miss the core and the kernel, and wrangle over some empty shell. Intolerance and fanaticism inevitably follow. That is not the way leading to a world-order or a world-society. If there is any power in the modern world, which could serve as a unifying force, it is the power of religion; but it is religion in the fundamental sense, which apart from all label and banner must be rooted in the depths of the human spirit.

Religions may be many, but religion in the fundamental sense of spirituality and spiritual experience is one. Religions in the sense of creeds and codes and practices may divide, but the *soul* of religion, which is spirituality, would always unite. As there is a soul, there is a body. Religions are *bodies* in an infinite variety of forms and names, but the hidden spirit implicit in all religions—like the soul occult in the body, without form, without name—is one and the same. Call it Ātman, the Self of all selves, the Soul of all souls; call it Paramātmān, God the universal Father, the source and support of all manifested existence; call it the centre of one's own being and of the cosmos in its entirety, the summit of all aspiration and the goal of all evolution: it is all the same. When one enters the depths and acquires the power of an inward vision, one finds oneself in a fresh dimension, where differences do not divide, but deeper harmonies reveal hidden identities. In mysticism lies the pith and substance of religion. When the substance is grasped, the shell drops off as an utter irrelevance. It is the outer shell that harbours germs of discord, and breeds disharmony. In the core is the common ground, and mysticism reveals and leads to it.



Radhakrishnan's emphasis is on the necessity to move from the surface dimensions of religious consciousness into its depths. All differences, disharmonies, agitations belong to the surface-consciousness. So long as a deeper and more basic dimension is not realised, these differences are bound to persist and express themselves variously as cultural chauvinism, linguistic rivalries and sectarian conflicts. The panacea for all such ills is in profound spiritual awakening, not merely in national integration or international or inter-cultural understanding or some kind of a synthesis forged at the surface levels.

Religious harmony is essential and fundamental even for national or cultural integration. And what is more, through religious harmony, a deeper and more substantial unity could be achieved by humanity, transcending all limitations and barriers. Man would awaken into a freer world, which may have horizons but not boundaries. This would not mean a dissolution of national or cultural consciousness but an expansion of it. World unity is possible only when the universality of outlook, which it implies, grows from the roots of religion.

"When the faiths interact, our religion is imperceptibly modified," says Radhakrishnan, and avows: "All the religions are our inheritance and we should not squander it away." It is not "homogeneity" that he advocates but "organic unity". India, he believes, is best fitted to take the initiative and give the lead towards such a consummation for "though India suffered as a result of her tolerance she never abandoned her attitude of respect for other religions, and regarded them as varied expressions of the religious spirit."

The time, too, is not unpropitious for a fellowship of beliefs and believers. Apart from an urgent and obvious necessity for such a move, the very forces that apparently challenge the deepening of religious consciousness would in fact turn out to be aids and instruments in its fulfilment. Under the very stress of modern thought, as Radhakrishnan argues, the religions of the world are to-day "moving forward to a realization of the spirit of religion, a reaching forth to the fundamental and lasting verities of truth and love."



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## RADHAKRISHNAN AS PROPONENT AND CRITIC OF RELIGION

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R. DAVID KAYLOR

Radhakrishnan's greatness as a philosopher, statesmen, scholar, lecturer, college professor, ambassador of goodwill, spokesman for India's past and present is beyond comparison in this century. A brief article on any aspect of his work may therefore seem trivial, and yet it is the task of the present to keep alive the heritage it receives, to reflect upon it, even to evaluate and criticise it so that its influence can be extended into the future. It is in that spirit that this present attempt is made to review Radhakrishnan's work as a proponent and critic of religion.

Radhakrishnan was a philosopher, but true to his Indian tradition he wished to see philosophy in the service of religion, and therefore he was unable "to confine philosophy to logic and epistemology." His philosophy, he says, is like that of Marx in that it is concerned more with changing life than with merely interpreting it. He saw himself as living in a crucial period of history, and was convinced that philosophy had a profound contribution to make in procuring a fully human life for all people of the world.<sup>1</sup>

His work as a philosopher and as a statesman was thoroughly informed by a religious spirit: in both he sought to mediate between East and West and in so doing help to achieve a greater unity of the entire human family. Neither philosophy nor statesmanship (and certainly not technology either) could produce a good future for mankind unless based upon a realisation of man's spiritual nature.



*Need for Religion*

Radhakrishnan is convinced of the necessity of religion, both because of the nature of man and because of the present crisis in the history of civilisation. Religion is an "intrinsic element of human nature"<sup>2</sup> due to the metaphysical fact that there is an ultimate, primordial mystery"<sup>3</sup> at the base of the universe to which the human must be related. Radhakrishnan quotes Augustine's famous passage, "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee,"<sup>4</sup> as well as the equally famous Upaniṣadic prayer, "Lead me from unreality to reality, from ignorance to knowledge, from death to life."<sup>5</sup>

The "imperfect condition of man"<sup>6</sup> makes religion necessary. "Everything that lives aims at its own perfection" and man knows himself to be incomplete. Religion is that human activity by which man seeks the larger life of perfection and freedom;<sup>7</sup> it gives meaning and purpose to life and supplies the courage to live;<sup>8</sup> through religion "the goal of life (which) is communion with the Supreme" is realised.<sup>9</sup>

In analysing the individual human condition in this manner, Radhakrishnan is seeking a common ground among all religions. His way of expressing the human need is largely Hindu, and some religions might take exception to his language about removing imperfection through the realisation of the potential divinity inherent within humanity, but in general his analysis would receive wide approval.

While Radhakrishnan stresses the need for religion to fulfil individual life, he emphasises even more the role that religion must play in redeeming corporate, social life. Pervasive in his writings and speeches are expressions of his conviction that his was the most crucial epoch in human history. "The world has been shrinking at an increasingly rapid pace, with the advance of communication and technology. We now have the physical basis for a unified world community." However, Radhakrishnan is keenly aware of the terrible possibilities of technological man's vast new powers.

The destructive power now in the hands of men has reached such terrifying proportions that we cannot afford to



take any risks. World solidarity ... is no longer a pious dream. It is an urgent practical necessity ... If the world is to endure, it must find psychological unity, spiritual coherence.<sup>10</sup>

So far technology has not been harnessed by a good will and until it is, it will be demonic in its consequences. "We cannot forget that these great advances in scientific progress have not prevented our descending into the depths of horror submarine warfare, napalm and atom bombs, obliteration air attacks, liquidation of millions in camps of death...we seem to be aiming at power and more power, mechanical, nuclear."<sup>11</sup>

Radhakrishnan affirms that religion alone can provide an adequate vision for civilisation, without which the people will perish. The world is like a body groping for a soul which only religion can provide.<sup>12</sup>

We cannot base the new civilisation on science and technology alone...We must discover the reserves of spirituality, respect for human personality, the sense of the sacred found in all religious traditions and use them to fashion a new type of man who uses the instruments he has invented with a renewed awareness that he is capable of greater things than the mastery of nature. The servitude to which man must return is man himself, the spirit in him. It is not enough to feed the human animal or train the human mind. We must also attend to the human spirit.<sup>13</sup>

Here again we see Radhakrishnan as a mediator between East and West. He parts company with those who believe the world is illusory and therefore cease to bother with it ; neither does he have patience with those enthusiasts for technological development who consider religious issues to be a hindrance. He wishes to combine a "Western" affirmation of the world with an "Eastern" spiritual transformation of it.<sup>14</sup>

### *What Kind of Religion ?*

If religion is necessary for perfecting the individual and for redeeming the social order, what kind of religion will be adequate ?



In his work both in comparative religion and in social criticism, Radhakrishnan makes clear what he considers the "ideal" religion to be. This ideal forms the basis not only of his criticism of religious creeds and practices but also of his efforts as a religious reformer and a proponent of "authentic" religion. First, then, let us summarize that ideal, and subsequently see how it is applied both negatively and positively.

For Radhakrishnan, authentic religion must be experiential, rational, ethical and universal. The foundation of religion—indeed the essence of *all* religion—is the inward mystical experience. Radhakrishnan affirms that there is an "ultimate primordial mystery" which is the "central reality"<sup>15</sup> to which man can be related. The mystical approach, which Radhakrishnan sees as essentially the same in all religious traditions, is the method by which one can be attuned to that divine mystery. The goal of the mystic way is *samādhi*, the identification with the divine gained through purification and concentration and resulting in transformation of the whole person.<sup>16</sup> "The fundamental truths of a spiritual religion are that our self is the supreme being, which it is our business to discover and consciously become, and this being is one in all."<sup>17</sup> In mysticism, "the intellect is subordinate to intuition, dogma to experience, outer expression to inward realisation."<sup>18</sup> Radhakrishnan emphasises that such a religious experience, while ineffable, is not merely an emotional thrill or a subjective fancy, but that it is an experience in which the whole person—thought, will, feeling—is raised to the highest level of fulfilment and perfection.

While the mystical experience is ineffable, and while it is not dependent on any particular conception of the human or divine self, it is not irrational. So strong is Radhakrishnan's emphasis on the intellect that he sometimes speaks of the rational criterion as the first basis for judging authentic religion<sup>19</sup> and he decries the superstition and ignorance which have too frequently permeated the phenomenal expressions of religion.<sup>20</sup> But he also emphasises that the essence of religion is in the experience, not in the intellectual apprehension. How then are religion and reason related? Reason must reflect upon the inward transformation which occurs in the mystical experience and "convert the product of faith into a product of enlightenment."<sup>21</sup>



It is unthinkable that reason should ignore so profound and universal an experience and pretend to be scientific; it is also unthinkable that reason should attempt to state that ineffable experience in dogmatic terms. Thus reason rightly applied will comprehend and express the validity and necessity of religious experience, the proximate nature of all theological statements. Science and religion conflict only when one (or both) makes erroneous claims for itself. In the case of science it has often been in denial of that which is intangible and mysterious; in the case of religion, it has often been in dogmatic assertion of historical and scientific finality to the claim to revelation. The mystical experience is the cure for both errors: "Mysticism is opposed to the (scientific) naturalism which categorically denies the existence of God and the dogmatism which talks as if it knew all about him;"<sup>22</sup> it affirms the mystery at the heart of the universe. Religion does not need rationality for its basis of support, since "religious experience is of a self-certifying character...It carries its own credentials."<sup>23</sup> But reason is needed to prevent religion from being perverted into superstition, ritualism, blind emotional thrills, subjective flights of fancy, or dogmatic authoritarianism.<sup>24</sup>

Mystical experience and rational reflection upon it are essential to human perfection at which religion aims, but perfection is to be expressed in action. Faith and knowledge are to be embodied in conduct.<sup>25</sup> Radhakrishnan stresses the ethical dimension to such a degree that he can say, in a paraphrase, of the prophet Micah, "Religion consists in doing justice, in loving mercy and in making our fellow creatures happy."<sup>26</sup> With these words Radhakrishnan sums up the theme of his collection of addresses published as *East and West in Religion*. Here he even alters Micah's statement by omitting "walking humbly with your God."<sup>27</sup> When once we realise in personal experience our unity with the divine, "we can't put up with the pain, the iniquity, the errors, etc., which happen in this world. We have to apply ourselves to their removal."<sup>28</sup> The code of ethics adopted by the truly religious person is noble and austere, involving as it does self-surrender and personal suffering. Radhakrishnan does not condemn asceticism as such; he sees in it a legitimate "passivity which is a kind of activity" which contributes to the redemption of social life even while remaining outside its main flow.<sup>29</sup> But he



does condemn the kind of other-worldly asceticism which he thinks has been too common in Hinduism ; he advocates instead an asceticism of a rigorous self-discipline and restraint in lives given to social service. He maintains :

No one who holds himself aloof from the activities of the world and who is insensitive to its woes can be really wise.... The spiritual man does not turn his back on the realities of the world, but works in it with the sole object of creating better material and spiritual conditions. For spiritual life rises in the natural...life is a great gift, and those who do not love it are unworthy of it.<sup>30</sup>

Thus the truly spiritual person will not fall a prey to the temptation of thinking that only the "spiritual" counts. All genuine religion is essentially other-worldly, Radhakrishnan asserts, in the sense that it is concerned with the transcendent, but it is not to be world and life negating ; the central power of religion is to raise and enlarge the internal person, but religion is not complete until it permeates political, economic and social life and thus shapes the external existence of all human beings.<sup>31</sup> The best test of genuine religion, then, is applied to conduct, not to creed or ritual.<sup>32</sup>

The universal dimension of authentic religion is reflected in many of the above statements ; it is one of the dominant notes sounded throughout Radhakrishnan's writings. Religion which is based on mystical experience, which is rational in its reflection and verbal expression and which is ethical in its conduct will of necessity appeal and apply to the human family. On the other hand religion that is irrationally and dogmatically credal, that is narrowly nationalistic or egotistic or that is insensitive to moral problems is a perversion of the genuinely religious spirit. Those who are authentically religious, whose religion grows out of experience with God, "belong to a single spiritual family." That point is often stated negatively :

The greatest temptation we must overcome is to think that our religion is the only true religion, our vision of reality is the only authentic vision, that we alone have received a revelation and we are the chosen people, the children of light and the rest of the human race lives in darkness.<sup>33</sup>



Radhakrishnan affirms Vivekananda's assertion that we should not merely tolerate other religions, but accept them as God-given.<sup>34</sup> That acceptance does, however, have a limitation : "Any kind of religion which does not believe in service to humanity" should not be accepted.<sup>35</sup>

### *Authentic Religion and the Religions*

Not one of the available world religions can claim to be the exemplar of Radhakrishnan's ideal authentic religion. All religions have a pernicious tendency to turn vital religious experience into lifeless creeds, dogmas and rituals. In an effort to communicate and foster such experience and to express it in life, religions naturally engage in religious teaching, disciplined exercises and theological formulations; but when these become frozen into orthodoxy, "Spiritual life is smothered...by dead forms, making our daily life petty and trivial, reducing our manhood into a narrow provincialism...We are shut off from the Universal Spirit by a hundred artificial barriers."<sup>36</sup> Radhakrishnan is especially incensed at the way religions preach peace but cause conflict; at the way modern religions have been so reluctant to denounce warfare and condemn inhuman social practices.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, no religion is without the resources within its own tradition for fostering authentic religion. The primary resource, as we have seen, is the mystical experience; therefore, Radhakrishnan sees the East as the main source of the ideal.

Radhakrishnan sees a radical difference between West and East : "Vigorous life and active service appeal to the west. Life is...to be possessed and enjoyed... (One is to) make the most of it...(and) order it to its best purpose." Emphasis is placed upon "development of the individual personality interpreted humanistically on the other hand, in the East stress is placed on the "cultivation of interior life...the attainment of freedom solitude and isolation...meditation...communion with the eternal." In the West religion is more social, more ecclesiastical, more dogmatic, more credal, more exclusive, more aggressive, and more political. Religion in the East is more inward, intuitive, experiential, other-worldly, relativistic in its understanding, mystical, prone to passive virtue of patience and gentleness and



acceptance, not given to absolute creeds and forms.<sup>38</sup> In general Judaism, Christianity and Islam imbibed the activism and love of power as well as the exclusiveness and intolerance of their semitic origin; Christianity especially in the modern period reveals that spirit, especially so in its protestant forms.<sup>39</sup>

Radhakrishnan admits that this is an oversimplification and that "when we take the long view of history we will find that there is not an Eastern view which is different from the "Western view of life."<sup>40</sup> He says "Eastern" and "Western" are not historical and geographical terms as much as they are two possibilities which each person has within, two movements of the human spirit ; as such they represent "a tension in the nature of man between his scientific and religious impulses."<sup>41</sup> Even with this more symbolic understanding of "East" and "West", however, it is clear that Radhakrishnan locates the primary source of authentic religion in the geographical East, and the primary source of danger to modern life in the geographical West. Mankind has potential benefits to derive from the West—indeed, vast potential benefits—but the potential for good will be realised only if the aggressive, nationalistic, power-mad West can be harnessed and transformed by the spirit of Eastern religion.

Radhakrishnan never quite states it the way it is stated in the preceding sentence, but that it is basically his understanding is substantiated by his interpretation of the Christian faith. In his view, Jesus (and other authentic religious leaders) have been influenced by Indian religious tradition. He relies upon questionable conclusions of the "History of Religious School" in his attempt to show that Jesus and his disciples were influenced by Eastern (especially Buddhist) thought. He maintains that there is sufficient material to support the contention that "prominent ideas travelled from the older to the younger system."<sup>42</sup> While he is reluctant to assert direct borrowing, he affirms that "Buddha and Jesus are the earlier and later Hindu and Jewish representatives of the same upheaval of the human soul whose typical expressions we have in the Upaniṣads."<sup>43</sup> While Radhakrishnan has great respect for Jesus as a religious reformer, he does not find any authentic and valuable truth in Jesus which is not already present in Hinduism. The same could be said of his attitude toward Buddha, too, for though Radhakrishnan's appreciation of Buddha seems to be



greater, both function as religious reformers rather than discoverers or revealers of new religious truth. Jesus' greatness really lies in the fact that in him authentic Eastern religion has a spokesman in the Semitic tradition:

The characteristics of intuitive realisation, non-dogmatic toleration, as well as insistence on non-aggressive virtues and universalist ethics, mark Jesus out as a typical Eastern seer.<sup>44</sup>

Radhakrishnan's affirmation of Jesus is not extended to Western Christianity. Although he is anxious to point out many persons throughout the history of Christianity who maintained tolerance and openness toward other religions, the Semitic ideal of exclusiveness and particularism "appealed to the forceful instincts of the Western man, who expressed them in the Greek language (and logic) and embodied them in Roman organisation."<sup>45</sup> Real Christianity never appealed to the aggressive West, which was not prepared to abandon the world. Jesus did not emphasise creeds, rituals, natural success and organisation, but these along with pride and intolerance have become characteristic of Western Christianity.<sup>46</sup> If one remembers Radhakrishnan's criterion that any religion which generates pride and a sense of intolerance is not authentic,<sup>47</sup> then the conclusion is inescapable that he does not regard most of Christianity to be authentic religion. The West conquered Jesus, Jesus did not conquer the West.

Apart from his questionable acceptance of the theory of Buddhist influence upon Jesus, the interpretation of Jesus as essentially a mystical Hindu *sannyāsī* is almost certainly inaccurate. Jesus was not primarily a mystic for whom the goal of life is individual communion with God; he was primarily a prophet in the Hebrew mould who believed that God is working to redeem the present world order. However, one must sadly agree that the dogmatism and intolerance which Radhakrishnan decries have been too characteristic of Western Christianity.

To this reader, Radhakrishnan's criticisms of Hinduism appear less severe. If that is a correct perception, the reason may be indicated in his description of his becoming a philosopher. He speaks of his Christian teachers "curing" him of his traditional faith, and thus freeing him for philosophy. They "shook the traditional props on



which I leaned.”<sup>48</sup> But at the same time they impelled him to “make a study of Hinduism and find out what is living and what is dead in it.”<sup>49</sup> In a real sense Radhakrishnan’s career as a lecturer and a writer can be understood as an attempt to sort out the living from the dead (in every religion, but especially) in Hinduism, to proclaim against the dead and to promote the living. As has already been seen, the “living” is primarily the mystical experience, reflected upon rationally and applied ethically. But he also finds much deadness in Hinduism, like the curate’s egg, which is good only in parts. It is admirable and abhorrent, saintly and savage, beautifully wise and dangerously silly, generous beyond measure and mean beyond example.”<sup>50</sup> To some extent he sees Hinduism plagued by one of its strengths—toleration and acceptance, which has led Hinduism through the ages to take over many primitive and superstitious aspects, some of which it has purified and/or ejected, but some of which it has retained. “The danger of the Hindu attitude is that what *is* may be accepted because it is, and progress may be indefinitely delayed.”<sup>51</sup> “We have tolerated beliefs and practices which are anti-social.”<sup>52</sup>

Radhakrishnan’s critical yet sympathetic treatment of Hinduism is especially revealed in his dealing with the caste system. He refers obliquely to the way the caste system has come to be practised when he speaks of “our insistence on touchability and untouchability” as being an “abuse of religion;” it is one of those “beliefs and practices which are anti-social;” and in his view, “No temples should be raised in the countries which permit social discrimination. Temples should foster social discipline and solidarity.”<sup>53</sup>

The caste system.....has come to denote privilege and snobbery. That many men should, by the accidents of birth and opportunity, have a life of toil pain, hardness and distress, while others, no more deserving, have a life of ease, pleasure and privilege, arouses indignation in sensitive minds. The petrified caste system by which large numbers have fallen into superstition, practising rituals which they do not understand, is utterly inconsistent with the ideal of the latent divinity of all men.<sup>54</sup>

Such trenchant criticisms might lead one to suspect that Radhakrishnan as an enlightened, idealistic, democratic man has



utterly rejected a system which finds its roots in the ancient *Vedas*. But such is not the case. Radhakrishnan maintains, without adducing much evidence in support, that the four-fold system was in original intent essentially democratic; it was the method devised by the conquering Aryans to ensure the spiritual equality of all people, the integration of all persons into one harmonious social organisation. While allowing for the greatest individuality and opportunity for all, it allowed each individual to rise according to his own inner, essential qualities.<sup>55</sup> To a Western non-Hindu, Radhakrishnan probably engages in his last convincing writing in which he attempts to justify, on democratic principles, the system of the four *varṇas* and their attendant restrictions on marriage and inter-class contact, as he does at length in the fourth chapter of *The Hindu View of Life*. He seems to be engaged in apologetic justification of an inherited system that inevitably contains within it an elitism and special privilege that Radhakrishnan decries. He himself maintains that attaching class to birth leads to its degeneration into caste, but he does not say how the system could otherwise function. Further, he is at least partially sympathetic with the attempts made by the *Laws of Manu* to prevent "indiscriminate crossing of men and women," and says, "the principle of *savarna* marriages is not unsound."<sup>56</sup> In affirming the principle that "Indiscriminate marriage relations do not always seem desirable," he does not say whether he would prefer to leave the matter to individual choice, or whether it would be better to retain religious sanction against practices in order "to prevent the suicide of the social order."<sup>57</sup> While Radhakrishnan's intention here is, in part, to warn against a rank individualism which does not care about social well-being, there appears also to be a glossing over of features which he might find more objectionable in other religions.

One can question, too, Radhakrishnan's frequent assertion that Hinduism is tolerant, universal and accepting. It may be true that the tolerant attitude is more widely found in Hinduism than in Christianity, and tolerance is more characteristic of Radhakrishnan's preferred Advaita Vedānta than of some other types of Hinduism. But that it is not generally true in sectarian Hinduism is evidenced by the fact that many Hindu temples remain closed to non-Hindus, and by the attitude expressed by Tirumalīśai Ālvār: "Jains are ignorant,



Buddhists have fallen into delusion, Śaivas are ignorant innocents, and those who do not worship Viṣṇu are low indeed."<sup>55</sup>

Even Radhakrishnan's kind of tolerance often seems to be that of a superior who tolerates the weakness of an inferior: truth is one, and those who have realised it can look benignly upon those whose inferior ideas and practices show that they still have ways to go.

These criticisms aside, one must applaud the universalist and humanitarian outlook that informs and motivates his work. It is this outlook which causes him to assert that in the area of social ethics the East has something to learn from the West:

In the East the exaggerated respect for spiritual life has issued in an indifference to those material conditions in which alone the spiritual intention can be carried out.....The superiority of Western religion lies in the fact that the individual seeks his salvation in service to others.<sup>59</sup>

Indian thinkers, he says, have often fallen victims to the common temptation: "Spirit is all that counts, while life is an indifferent illusion, and all efforts directed to the improvement of man's outer life and society are sheer folly."<sup>60</sup> In connection with this comparison of East and West, Radhakrishnan states his own view which is closer to what he describes as Western: "It is not enough to retire into solitude to seek closer contact with the divine. Religion is not only life-transcending but also life-transforming. True worship is in the service of suffering humanity."<sup>61</sup> But while Radhakrishnan sees social ethics as more characteristic of the West than of the East, it is far from pervasive in the West and certainly not entirely lacking in the East. It is just at that point of the relation of mysticism and social ethics that Radhakrishnan makes a brilliant (even if at times partisan) defence of Hinduism against Schweitzer's charge that it is world and life-negating.<sup>62</sup> Radhakrishnan is able to find plenty of support throughout the Hindu tradition for an active social ethics, but even so he acknowledges an indebtedness to Western religions (especially Christianity) for reminding modern Hindus of that dimension which is so easily forgotten when emphasis falls so strongly on mystical experience.



Radhakrishnan believed optimistically that beneath the clash which is accompanying the commingling of East and West in our time lies the promise of a new day. A new world is coming, and both East and West have contributions to make to it. The function of the West is to provide the basis for scientific and technological advances, for the removal of those conditions which have thwarted human life; and further, to remind the ascetically inclined East of the necessity of redeeming the social order as well as the individual souls within it. The role of the East is to remind the West of that spiritual dimension of all human existence which is too easily overlooked in the mad rush for technological development.

He believed that the old moulds of both East and West were cracking, and that further development of them was impossible. For mankind to have a real future, we need a new orientation with the spiritual values symbolised by the "East" fused with the dynamism and vigour symbolised by the "West."

Whether the two can be constructively put together remains an unanswered question. Radhakrishnan believed, it would be answered through religion, and he was optimistic that the religions of the world would find their unity and, through it, promote the renewal and unity of the world. But in his optimism there was also a warning :

If we do not bring together in love those who sincerely believe in God and seek to do his will, if we persist in killing each other theologically, we shall only weaken men's faith in God. If the great religions continue to waste their energies in a fratricidal war instead of looking upon themselves as friendly partners in a supreme task of nourishing the spiritual life of mankind, the swift advance of secular humanism and moral materialism is assured.<sup>63</sup>

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## RADHAKRISHNAN AND EMPIRICO-POSITIVISTS ON INTUITION

GIRISH CHANDRA BARUAH

### *Introduction*

The present empirico-positivist tendencies in the West<sup>1</sup> are very much critical of the intuitionist trend in philosophy. They are of course not so much critical of intuition as a psychological phenomenon; but they rise unitedly against the view that by means of it we can know the ultimate truth.<sup>2</sup> Again they are also critical of the anti-intellectualistic tendencies among the intuitionists. We propose here to discuss Radhakrishnan's views on intuition in the light of the views expressed by Russell, Ayer and Wittgenstein on the problem.

### *Radhakrishnan and Russell*

Radhakrishnan, like Bergson and Bradley, takes intuition as the "sole arbiter of metaphysical truth" although with some exception. Such a position of the intuitionist metaphysicians has been subject to severe criticisms at the hands of philosophers like Russell. Russell observes that the notions that we can know reality through intuition are based on some illusory view of reality.<sup>3</sup>

Radhakrishnan holds that intuitive knowledge is infallible. Russell wonders how a philosopher can hold such a view, for intuition as a human faculty is subject to all limitations and therefore, it cannot rise above limitations and be infallible and all-knowing.<sup>4</sup>

Though Radhakrishnan eulogizes intellect to a great extent he subordinates it to intuition. Intellect has only a limited scope.<sup>5</sup> Russell vehemently criticises such anti-intellectualist tendencies. He



says that the intuitionists arrive at the conclusion that intellect is secondary through the intellectual method itself.<sup>6</sup> Should the intuitionists deny that method through which they arrive at philosophical conclusions? Can they claim that they arrive at such conclusions through their intuitive experience? As a philosopher cannot avoid an intellectual enquiry in philosophising, he cannot say that intellect is subordinate to intuition.

According to Russell, to rely more on intuition means to return to the animal plane; for, animals are prone to follow instinct, not intellect. Man, it is to be remembered, is specially gifted with intellect and he is different from animal because of this difference only. So to give more importance to intuition means to return to animals and sacrifice intellect in favour of a lower plane.<sup>7</sup>

Radhakrishnan holds that intuition is an immediate knowledge and in it we have the direct touch of reality (*Brahma-sākṣātkāra*). Russell holds that acquaintance is not a special privilege of intuition alone, it is there also in sensations. According to Russell the data of experience are not provided either by intellect or by intuition, but by sensations alone. We have direct contact with the data through sensations. Intuition and intellect can work only on the data provided by sensations. Therefore not intuition, but sensation is the primary method of knowledge.

Though Russell gives primary importance to sensation yet his sensation involves intuition. For he distinguishes between two kinds of sense-knowledge. In one we know sense-data, universals and "perhaps selves",<sup>8</sup> and in the other we know external objects. The first is knowledge by acquaintance and the second is knowledge by description. Russell himself holds that only the first type of knowledge which is immediate is perfect.

Radhakrishnan, observes that in Russell "the law and the fact, the universal idea and the immediate experience remain outside each other."<sup>10</sup> This dualistic position of Russell makes him face an insoluble problem. Had Russell understood that "in the world of reality we do not find them apart, but get them as aspects of a single unity," he would not have faced this situation. The realistic and pluralistic bias of Russell has prevented him from holding such a view.

Russell's theory of knowledge is based on the ultimate distinction between subject and object.<sup>11</sup> According to him consciousness is a *sui generis* relation called experience or awareness between subject and object.<sup>12</sup>

But for Radhakrishnan

The objective world is the 'fallen' world, disintegrated and enslaved, in which the subject is alienated from the object of knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

Radhakrishnan, following the Upaniṣadic tradition, holds that subject-object distinction gives us only false knowledge (*avidyā*). True knowledge (*vidyā*) consists in the identity of the two.

Russell seems to relegate intuition to the instinctive plane when he says that intuition works in 'customary surrounding' only.<sup>14</sup> When, due to constant practice, a habit is formed, animals and men work unknowingly and it is said that they work by intuition. But this intuition is a failure in tackling new situations. Radhakrishnan also holds,

While the beings guided by instinct act with unhesitating precision, they are helpless in unfamiliar surroundings. For, they act without knowing why they do so.<sup>15</sup>

But this instinct is not intuition, although in instinct intuition is involved. It will be wrong to hold that intuition works only in customary conditions. This may be true of instinct, but not of intuition.

According to Russell a blind belief in intuition leads to mysticism. He holds that the monistic tendencies in philosophy are the results of such intuitive cum mystical beliefs. He thinks that such tendencies become dominant when intuition amounting to animal instinct works predominantly in us. Such dominance of instinct relegates intellect to the background and makes man irrational. At this stage man denies the sensuous reality around him and refers to such a trans-empirical reality which is nothing but ghostly. Such beliefs, according to Russell, are dependent upon 'certain moods' of the intuitionist metaphysicians.<sup>16</sup> Under the influence of such intoxicated moods they



neglect "the world of science and daily life" and "convict it of unreality in the interests of a super-sensible real world."<sup>17</sup> With a queer logic they infer that there is only one reality and the plural universe is an unreality.<sup>18</sup>

Now if Radhakrishnan is to reply to these charges levelled by Russell against the intuitively biased monistic philosophers, he would say that the logic of an intuitionist or of a mystic is not queer. Russell does not accept intuition because he is unable to have that intuitive or mystic experience or rather he is unable to appreciate it due to his positivist and realist bias. He is busy with the sensible world and the world of mathematics and logic and this has prevented him from the seeing (*darśana*) of the real world. He does not possess that intuitive gift through which a mystic sees reality. When a blind man does not see the light of the sun, should he conclude that there is no light? His incapacity should not lead him to deny something. Blinded by the intellectualist bias Russell like an ordinary blind man fails to see the light (*jyotis* or *bhargha*) of ultimate reality as his eye of knowledge (*jñāna-cakṣu*) or the *third eye*<sup>19</sup> is not opened (*unmīlita*). Mystic knowledge is different from ordinary knowledge, and when it dawns, the ultimate reality in its true being and wholeness is revealed.

According to Russell the intuitionists are bad thinkers and therefore, failing to think in a true logical way they play jugglery. They stumble over logical concepts and, failing to grasp their true meaning, observe that they are not essential to know reality. Under the influence of 'bad thinking' they relegate science and mathematics to sheer bankruptcy.<sup>20</sup> Is this not to deny the stern reality around us and to accept what is unreal? Should we allow ourselves to be swayed away by such ignorance of the intuitionists? Should we worship their unnecessary and harmful prejudices?<sup>21</sup> Should we accept such ascetic escapism?

Now how could Radhakrishnan reply to these charges? Do philosophers like Radhakrishnan actually deny the world of existence under the intoxication of intuition? It is true that the absolute idealists and intuitionists give less importance to the phenomenal world. Radhakrishnan speaks of the redemption of the world. When true knowledge arises in all men the world evolution would stop. But empirically the world is as real as the table before

me. It is not like the horns of a hare or the son of a barren woman. We cannot deny the real world before us; the world is not denied of reality, but denied of its ultimate or independent existence. At the empirical level the intellect has its full sway and it may go to the extent of knowing (theoretically) God or the Absolute even. So Russell's contention does not hold good in regard to Radhakrishnan's views on intuition; for in the latter intuition does not nullify but sublimates the intellect.

Russell, of course, does not altogether deny the role of intuition in man.<sup>22</sup> He says that through intuition man can perform many logically inconceivable things. He cites the name of Blake as an example of such men who achieve greatness through intuitional knowledge. But a philosopher should give importance to both intuition and intellect. According to Russell the first faculty leads man to mysticism and the second to science. He is the true and successful philosopher who can combine in him these two faculties. In the opinion of Russell, Plato and Heraclitus are such philosophers who have been able to successfully combine these two faculties and thereby have become the greatest of philosophers.<sup>23</sup> Russell does not see this tendency in the later philosophers and, therefore, they have not been able to reach the eminence gained by Plato and Heraclitus. The latter idealistic schools, according to Russell, have become "thin, life-less and insubstantial", failing to combine intuition and intellect.<sup>24</sup>

From Radhakrishnan's standpoint Russell is correct in holding the above view. According to Radhakrishnan also, man is endowed with intuition and intellect, nay, his whole emphasis lies in their combination. Human knowledge would be perfect when these two faculties work together in understanding reality. The philosophy which can explain rationally the mystic experience of the ultimate reality is the best philosophy in the opinion of Radhakrishnan.

#### *Radhakrishnan and Ayer*

According to Ayer the intuitionist metaphysicians take the help of intuition with a view to clarify their inexplicable and uncertain theories and concepts which, they think, cannot be explained with other means like perception, reason, etc. They rely on intuition



to safeguard their other-worldly concepts and to defend their position from the attack of the non-metaphysician. On the basis of this faculty they point to certain facts or truths which are otherwise impossible to establish.<sup>25</sup> These metaphysical truths, in their opinion, are beyond human intellect, and they cannot be proved or experienced through intellectual knowledge. Thus they point to an unusual faculty like intuition to bear the testimony of those truths which lie beyond the empirical or logical world. In the opinion of Ayer these philosophers do not find adequate logic to prove the reality of the empirical world and, therefore, fly to a transcendent reality with the wings of imaginative intuition and they think that philosophy is meaningless or unwanted if it does not engage itself in the metaphysical enquiry of the so-called ultimate truths.

Ayer holds that metaphysical proofs cannot be explained with reason. Radhakrishnan does not admit this. For though reason may not help in apprehending metaphysical truths, it can be instrumental in inferring such truths. It is true that without any reference to intuitive experience, reason alone cannot convince us. But once something is established on intuition we can demonstrate it very well with reason.

According to Ayer we call that knowledge intuitive which comes to us unaware.<sup>26</sup> He admits that there are some kinds of knowledge which suddenly flash on us and that no explanation is possible as to how they come about. Such knowledge is called intuitive knowledge. Noting the inexplicable nature of this kind of knowledge, the intuitionists exaggerate its value to the extent of claiming that ultimate truths are thus known and argue in support of its transcendental attributes which cannot be grasped by the modes of ordinary knowledge, avers Ayer.

If Ayer admits the reality of intuitive knowledge then why should he deny the intuitive experiences of some gifted men? He perhaps does not deny the work of intuition at the empirical level; what he denies is its work at the trans-empirical level. According to him intuitive knowledge is possible in the area of science and through it scientific discoveries take place. In art and poetry also intuition works equally well. But he hesitates to appreciate the idea of taking intuition to a trans-empirical plane. The empirical faculties of intuition cannot be

denied; but *ipso facto* we cannot carry it to a plane quite different from the present one.

Let us see what Radhakrishnan has to say in this matter. Radhakrishnan also, like Ayer, admits the role of intuition on the empirical level. But unlike Ayer he carries it to the trans-empirical level and gives reasons for it.

It should be remembered that Radhakrishnan is an idealist philosopher, and he discusses everything from the idealist standpoint. He admits the limited role of language and reason which work only on the empirical plane. They cannot go to the transcendental plane. But intuition has the capacity of playing its role on both the planes. How? He says that intuition is present at every phase of knowledge like Bradley's immediate experience. Reality is grasped in intuition. Through intellect we cannot grasp reality, for it is concerned with partial exposition and works on the relational plane. How intuition leads to reality and how intellect cannot, are discussed by Radhakrishnan in several places.

The question of the origin of knowledge, according to Ayer, is not a philosophical question; it is only a psychological one.<sup>27</sup> Hence philosophers may not take much trouble in dealing with it. In philosophy we are concerned with the validation of knowledge. Thus Ayer limits the study of philosophy and *ipso facto* the role of a philosopher. Radhakrishnan does not admit this standpoint and refuses to confine philosophy to such narrow limits. According to Radhakrishnan, philosophy is the analysis of human experience and this experience not only includes empirical experience but also trans-empirical knowledge. What the positivists mean by experience is only empirical experience and that too expressed through language forms. According to Radhakrishnan, this positivist interpretation of experience is very narrow. Experience has a much wider field and we must include within it the mystic experience also. If so, then intuitive knowledge must have a vital role in philosophical studies.

Ayer criticises the standpoint that intuitive knowledge is self-sufficient.<sup>28</sup> The Vedāntins advocate the self-evident theory of truth (*svataḥ-prāmānya*) and Radhakrishnan endorses this. Even empirical



knowledge is self-evident. Not the external conditions (*parataḥ*) but the conditions which produce knowledge make it true. True empirical knowledge (*pramā*) works very well on the empirical level. But it is sublated by higher intuitive knowledge. Radhakrishnan says, "Strictly speaking logical knowledge is valid only till intuition arises."<sup>29</sup> So although empirical knowledge, when it is true, works on the empirical level without any flaw, yet it is not final, for it is subject to sublation. Only intuitive knowledge which is non-dual in nature is wholly authentic and veracious, and only this knowledge has the capacity to reveal the non-dual (*advaita*) reality. Thus Ayer's view that intuitive knowledge is not self-sufficient cannot be accepted.

A self-evident knowledge is one which does not require any other knowledge to validate it. Intuitive knowledge is regarded as self-evident in this sense. It can also withstand verification by any mode of empirical analysis and it welcomes the latter.<sup>30</sup> But empirical knowledge fails to verify it fully, for it goes beyond empirical conditions (*upādhis*).

Falsity arises due to the external and accidental conditions. When the accidental conditions (*upādhis*) do not work, knowledge reveals itself and also reality. So our ignorance (*avidyā*) is due to external conditions (*parataḥ aprāmāṇya*). That a knowledge is false is not due to the fault of knowledge itself; but the fault lies in us. It is on account of our incapacity being influenced by such external conditions as emotion, desire, instinct, etc., that we cannot know a thing in its true nature. Due to the influence of these external conditions which are not within the being of the subject we commit mistakes. We do not also see the reality because we are prevented "from doing so by our nescience. When nescience goes away from us due to intellectual and ethical training, knowledge is purified and then its original capacity to manifest itself is discovered.

According to Ayer, intuition is private and subjective. It is confined to the states of the mind. It is so because when something is intuitively certain to one man it is not so to another. But Radhakrishnan refutes this view. He does not admit that intuitive knowledge is purely subjective.<sup>31</sup> While differentiating intuition from imagination he says that it is the reality of the object which "distinguishes intuitive knowledge from mere imagination."<sup>32</sup> If this is the case, then intuitive

knowledge is quite objective. Even if it is said that in intuition the self knows itself, yet it does not mean subjective knowledge. There is no difference between the self and reality. So to know the metaphysical self (*ātman*, not *jīva*) means to know reality. And reality includes within itself the whole objectivity. It is wrong to say that intuitive knowledge is solipsistic in nature, for it is not devoid of content.<sup>33</sup>

Ayer finds fault with the theists, absolutists and mystics when they claim that they experience something super-normal without demonstrating it.<sup>34</sup> If their experience is a cognitive one, then why can it not be demonstrated?<sup>35</sup> It is meaningless to experience something and say that it is ineffable and incommunicable. Such claims, according to Ayer, may bear meaning only for a psychoanalyst, not for a genuine philosopher.<sup>36</sup>

Ayer argues that if the experience of the mystics is cognitive their statements should not have been meaningless. The meaninglessness of their propositions proves that they are non-cognitive.<sup>37</sup> They speak in a meaningless language. It is so because their experience has no 'factual foundation.'

It is true that the language of the mystics is not understood by common men who do not have such experience. But thereby it cannot be said that it is meaningless. The mystics speak in a language relevant to their own experience. They use metaphysical symbols, for with the help of common language and symbols it is impossible to describe trans-empirical experience. If anything is not understood through ordinary intellectual modes and methods, this does not demonstrate its meaninglessness.

Positivists say that mystic experiences are introspective in nature. Introspective experiences, according to the positivists, do not bear "the characteristics of a factually meaningful statement."<sup>38</sup> To be meaningful a statement must refer to a fact which actually exists. The facts of introspection are nothing but mental creations. So the positivists hold that intuition which is introspective in nature has no corresponding objective basis. God and other objects known through intuitive experience are reduced by the positivists to mere mental creations.



Idealists like Radhakrishnan vehemently criticise such viewpoints. Radhakrishnan has very well shown how in intuition a real object is there as *prameya*. Intuition cannot be contentless. At the empirical level the different aspects of nature may be its objects. At the trans-empirical level also, God, etc. may be its objects. Therefore God, etc. are not mental images; they are actually existing facts apprehensible by intuitive knowledge.

Ayer is of the opinion that the idealists bring forth intuition to prove their *a priori* truths. He says :

...the reason why we are entitled to feel no doubt about their (of *a priori* statements) truth may be that we can prove them, or even just that we can see them to be valid; in either case there is an appeal to *intuition*, since we have at some point to claim to be able to see the validity of a proof.<sup>39</sup>

Since the validity of *a priori* knowledge is based upon intuition, it can be deduced that whatever is based on intuition will be valid. But according to Ayer it will be a rash conclusion.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Ayer opines that *a priori* judgments are true not because they are based on intuition, but because they are tautologies.<sup>41</sup> So the acceptance of the truth of *a priori* judgments does not lead to that of intuition and its self-evident validity.

It will be wrong to think that all *a priori* judgments are analytic. Kant proves how there can be synthetic *a priori* judgments; and, therefore, it cannot be the only mark for the validity of them. That the *a priori* judgments are obtained by intuition there is no doubt. But it is doubtful whether they are self-validated or not. Of course, philosophers like Radhakrishnan are of the opinion that those *a priori* propositions which are proved false are not truly intuitive; they are only hypotheses.<sup>42</sup> *A priori* propositions truly based upon intuition cannot be non-valid. So for the validity of *a priori* judgments, intuition is the basic criterion; others are only secondary.

Descartes also supports the above view. He claims that *cogito ergo sum* is self-ascertained. Intuition, according to him, is a "special state of mind." Infallibility is the very characteristic of it. Ayer's argument that logic, not intuition, can bestow infallibility has, therefore, no



ground. Descartes's above judgment is not an inferential one, but is intuitive and, therefore, is infallible (*avyartha*).

Ayer's contention that the appeal to intuition has only a psychological value also cannot be accepted from Radhakrishnan's viewpoint. It is not only a psychological factor, but also an ontological one. Nay, intuition is truly spiritual, not psychological. Psychology is there within the sensuous set-up. But the sensuous set-up is not the only set-up which contributes to human knowledge. The true subject is not psychical but spiritual and intuition belongs to this true subject.

Ayer admits,

Our intellects are unequal to the task of carrying out very abstract processes of reasoning without assistance of intuition.<sup>43</sup>

We hear the echo of Radhakrishnan when he says that in reasoning also intuition is necessary. Reason cannot work at a higher level without the help of intuition.<sup>44</sup> Reason can simply add one concept after another; the linking is achieved by intuition. The role of intuition cannot be denied even in mathematical thinking. Intuition comes to the rescue of reason when it fails to solve some intricate problems.

According to Ayer, no proposition except the tautological is absolutely certain. Even the ostensive or protocol judgments are not certain. He disagrees with other positivists who hold that protocol judgments, which are based on immediate experience, are self-verified; for if we do not admit them as self-verified then we shall face infinite regress. He holds that even in our protocol judgments description is involved, and to describe means to go beyond the given or presented. He argues:

The fact is that one cannot in language point to an object without describing it. If a sentence is to express a proposition, it cannot merely name a situation; it must say something about it. And in describing a situation, one is not merely "registering" a sense-content; one is classifying it in some way or other, and this means going beyond what is immediately given.<sup>45</sup>



We are not going to discuss here how far Ayer's argument is true, for it does not fall within our scope. We are merely interested in knowing that from the argument it follows that whatever is obtained in the field of sense is not valid by itself. It has to refer to some other knowledge.<sup>46</sup> But Radhakrishnan's intuition, which is non-sensuous, is beyond doubt; for to deny the validity of intuitive experience means to deny intuition itself which is not possible.

Ayer does not deny the role of intuition in discovering synthetic truths. He says:

We do not in any way deny that a synthetic truth may be discovered by purely intuitive methods as well as by the rational method of induction.<sup>47</sup>

He also does not deny "the work of genuine mystical feeling", because we can ascribe "moral or aesthetic value" to it<sup>48</sup>. He admits that a mystic has "his own special methods" and by means of them he is able to discover truths."<sup>49</sup> These special methods are generally irrational in nature. He admits that the beliefs which are frequently arrived at by traditional means have "rational grounds." But his philosophical ideology prevents him from going deep into these questions, and like an agnostic leaves them where they are. Had he thought of these facts more seriously he would have approached the position held by Radhakrishnan, particularly in the context of the problem of intuition.

#### *Radhakrishnan and Wittgenstein*

That something lies beyond our intellectual understanding is admitted by Wittgenstein; and the *mystical* is the name he ascribes to this.<sup>50</sup> It is mystical because it does not come within the purview of our normal cognitive processes and, therefore, logical enquiry into it is impossible. According to Wittgenstein, we can study something logically when it is statable i.e., expressible in language. The mystical, what-ever its nature may be, remains unstatable or unsayable and, therefore, a philosopher has nothing to do with it, as he is primarily concerned with logical analysis of language, according to Wittgenstein.

The main philosophical problem, according to Wittgenstein, is to know *how* the world is, not *what* of it. The *what* or *that* of the world



is a mystical question and philosophy has nothing to do with it.<sup>51</sup> But in the *Upaniṣads* and, for that matter, in Radhakrishnan the *that* (*tat*) is the vital problem and the main function of philosophy lies in its enquiry. The *Brahma-sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa starts with the proposition, viz., *Athāto brahma-jijñāsā* (Now, therefore, the enquiry into Brahman). This very vital problem is avoided by Wittgenstein in his enquiry, and he engages himself in the study of logic so that correct understanding of language is possible.<sup>52</sup>

Philosophical problems for Wittgenstein are logical in nature, not intuitive or mystical. But for Radhakrishnan, if we confine ourselves to logical enquiry alone then we shall miss the very essence of reality, and shall catch only the outward garb. He says :

The deepest convictions by which we live and think, the root principles of all thought and life are not derived from perceptual experience or logical knowledge.<sup>53</sup>

Thought without intuition is barren and it cannot produce anything. He again says:

The orderedness of the universe is a conviction of life which is beyond mere logic. It will not do to be merely logical.<sup>54</sup>

If there are no premises, what does logic start with?<sup>55</sup> And the premises are obtained through intuition.

Radhakrishnan agrees with Wittgenstein in holding that "at no stage does the act of faith become a logically demonstrated proposition."<sup>56</sup> What we have in faith or intuition cannot be stated in a proposition. But if the mystical is not stated in a proposition, should we, for that reason, stop enquiry into the nature of ultimate reality? Should we not try to harness or rather evolve the inner spiritual faculty lying deep in us? If we fail to do so, such a policy would be suicidal, for it would imply negation of life-essence rather than discovery and assertion of it. Radhakrishnan, unlike Wittgenstein, tries to trace out the ways and means of preparing ourselves to apprehend reality in all its grandeur and richness.

Wittgenstein is right when he says that thought is capable of giving us a picture of the world.<sup>57</sup> It cannot penetrate deep into reality. It simply photographs it. Thought simply represents fact;



it does not depict it vividly. This incapacity of thought is also admitted by Radhakrishnan. He, like Bradley, says that thought is relational in nature and with the help of it we can go upto *Īśvara*, which has only relational existence, not upto Brahman, which exists beyond relation.

Wittgenstein very significantly says that thought represents only fact, not factuality. He distinguishes between fact and factuality. By fact he means "a combination of objects"<sup>58</sup> and by factuality he means the formal feature of fact. What thought gives us is the combination of objects or entities, not the formal features of them; because the formal feature, like Plato's 'Idea', being the universal form does not exist in the things of the world. So the universal form, like Radhakrishnan's Absolute, remains outside the scope of thought. Thus Wittgenstein also, like Radhakrishnan, maintains that something is there which lies beyond the grasp of thought.

What is this formal feature in Wittgenstein? It is 'fate' or 'alien will' or God for him. This formal feature which although is the essence<sup>60</sup> of the world lies outside the world, i.e., is transcendent. When he says, "God does not reveal himself *in* the world,"<sup>61</sup> his God takes the form of Radhakrishnan's Absolute which is also not wholly exhausted in the world. This transcendent God or Brahman is certainly not the object of thought, but that of intuition.

Wittgenstein says that we have a "feeling of the world as a limited whole."<sup>62</sup> This feeling is a kind of mystical feeling. To feel the limit of the world that means that there is something beyond the world, and this is God. The limitedness of the world refers to something unlimited. Radhakrishnan also admits that the world has a limited reality, and this limit refers to the existence of unlimited Brahman which is known by intuition.

Wittgenstein seems to come very near the Vedānta position and thereby to Radhakrishnan's position when he says that the 'I' is the metaphysical subject and it is the entire world.<sup>63</sup> This 'I' of Wittgenstein is not the thinking subject. He says, "The thinking subject is surely mere illusion."<sup>64</sup> The metaphysical subject, according to him, is the willing subject.

Wittgenstein's drawing a distinction between the willing 'I' and the thinking 'I' has some resemblance with the Vedāntic distinction of the Ātman and jiva. The Ātman is the whole world and this position of the Vedānta and of its exponent Radhakrishnan is very similar to that of Wittgenstein when he says that the spirit of the subject is the spirit of the world. The most interesting thing in Wittgenstein is that the spirit is not only there in man alone, but also in animals, plants and inanimate objects.<sup>65</sup> This position of Wittgenstein approaches Radhakrishnan's as the latter also holds that the whole reality — animate or inanimate—is pervaded by the spiritual energy. Wittgenstein's statement that the 'My Will' and the 'World Will' are identical has some similarity with the Upaniṣadic view of '*Ātmā eva Brahma*' which is endorsed by Radhakrishnan. When Wittgenstein speaks of an encounter of the willing 'I' with the mystical, then also we hear the Vedāntic note in him.

Wittgenstein clearly shows that the forms of proposition, the metaphysical subject, the values like good and evil are not known by thought, i.e., they are not statable or sayable. Even the simple objects constituting the world are not statable in language. We feel their existence mystically, i.e., intuitively.<sup>66</sup> This thought of Wittgenstein reminds one of the Upaniṣadic concept that the ultimate reality is unthinkable (*acintya*). Brahman is not statable and is not to be found in any of the objects of the world. But this negative principle (*via negativa*) does not mean that the ultimate reality is not there. Simply it tries to prove that its essence is not found in the phenomenal world.

Though the ultimate reality is 'inexpressible', yet it is there and it shows itself.<sup>67</sup> According to Wittgenstein silence is the best method to know this 'inexpressible'.<sup>68</sup> Radhakrishnan also says,

It is through quitening the strivings of the will and the empirical intellect that the conditions are realised for the revelation of the supreme in the individual soul.<sup>69</sup>

The *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* also says,

...having become calm, self-controlled, withdrawn, patient and collected (one) sees the Self in his own self, sees all in the Self.<sup>70</sup>



The Upaniṣadic seers sometimes remain silent when their disciples press them too much to answer their questions. Yājñavalkya, for example, cautions Gārgī in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* not to question too much lest her head would fall off. He tells Gārgī,

Verily, you are questioning too much about a divinity  
*about which we are not to ask too much.*<sup>71</sup>

Wittgenstein tacitly admits that the inexpressible is knowable through emotional experience which is equivalent to feeling.<sup>72</sup> Inexpressibility means incommunicability, i.e., the ultimate reality is not communicable, even though it is apprehensible through intuition. This position wholly approaches that of Radhakrishnan, who also holds that intuitive experience cannot be expressed through linguistic or logical symbols.

Being influenced by Kant<sup>73</sup> Wittgenstein holds that God is apprehended on the plane of willing and feeling. But Radhakrishnan, like Bradley, holds that to know the ultimate reality all the three faculties of our mind—thinking, feeling and willing—must work together. It is apprehensible only in our integral experience, not in feeling and willing alone.

Though in many respects these two philosophers agree yet there is a fundamental difference between them. The main difference is the difference of approach. Wittgenstein's approach is positivistic, while that of Radhakrishnan is speculative. Wittgenstein is satisfied with studying the world of language, while Radhakrishnan is more interested in the world beyond this. We can understand the philosophical position of Wittgenstein in the statement:

The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e., propositions of natural science, i.e., something that has nothing to do with philosophy—and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person—he would not have the feeling that we were

teaching him philosophy—this method would be the only strictly correct one.<sup>74</sup>

A philosopher should be like a painter who shows what there is something in reality or like a literary critic who cannot restate the meaning of a literary piece, but simply can suggest something about its significance. No philosopher should try to depict ontology through language which is an impossible task.

According to H.D. Aiken, Wittgenstein's philosophy resembles that of the pragmatists and idealists.<sup>75</sup> Whatever may be the primary philosophical position of Wittgenstein, it remains that he expresses idealistic thoughts, and in him we see some tacit tendency towards absolutism. In Wittgenstein we find a new speculative direction and there is no doubt that his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a superb intellectual creation.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Not only in the West, in India also such a trend has recently developed under "the spell of British empiricism." (S.N.L. Shrivastava, *Samkara and Bradley*, p. 3).
2. "The entire trend of empiricist philosophy, beginning with Hume, has cast a serious doubt upon the validity of such (trans-empirical) knowledge by intuition." (Feigl, 'Critique of Intuition According to Scientific Empiricism,' *Problems in Philosophy: West and East*, eds. R.T. Blackwood and A.L. Herman, p. 210).
3. Russell, *Mysticism* etc., p. 13.
4. *Loc. cit.*
5. According to Radhakrishnan intellect has "the inherent incapacity" "to grasp the whole". Agreeing with the Upaniṣadic teachings he holds, "Intellect, with its shibboleths, creeds and conventions, is not by itself adequate to the grasp of the real..." He again says, "The ultimate reality cannot be made into an objective representation which the intellect can grasp." (Radhakrishnan, *I.P.*, Vol. I, pp. 173-74)
6. Russell, *Mysticism* etc., p. 15.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
8. Radhakrishnan, *R. R.*, p. 353.
9. *Loc. cit.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 356.
11. *Loc. cit.*
12. *Loc. cit.*



13. Radhakrishnan, *P.U.*, p. 98.
14. Russell, *Mysticism* etc., p. 17.
15. Radhakrishnan, *I.V.L.*, p. 214.
16. Russell, *Mysticism* etc., p. 19.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
19. "The Hindus metaphorically speak of an 'eye of intuition'—the '*jñāna-netra*', in order to express perhaps the easy and spontaneous working of the mind in intuition." (N.K. Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhana*, p. 168.)
20. Russell, *A History of* etc., p. 831.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 832.
22. "Because he (Russell) wrote at times as though he rigidly excluded appeals to 'intuition' and 'instinct' from his philosophy, this did not mean that he did not realize their importance." (Alan Wood, 'Russell's Philosophy : A Study of its Development', *My Philosophical Development*, Russell, p. 257)
23. Russell, *Mysticism* etc., p. 1.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
25. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, pp. 33-34.
26. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, p. 31.
27. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 137.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38.
29. Radhakrishnan, *I.V.L.*, p. 146.
30. "When they (intuitions) arise they can and should be logically demonstrated." (*Ibid.*, p. 181.)
31. "Intuition is not an appeal to the subjective whims of the individual, or a dogmatic faculty of conscience, or the uncritical morbid views of a psychopath." (Radhakrishnan, *R.R.*, p. 439).
32. Radhakrishnan, *I.V.L.*, p. 143.
33. Cf. Bradley who also says that in immediate experience there is no self to know its states. It occurs in finite centre of experience where self and not-self (subject and object) are intermingled.
34. Ayer, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 111.
35. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 120.
36. *Loc. cit.*
37. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
38. Frederick Ferre, *Language, Logic and God*, p. 19.
39. Ayer, *The Problems of Knowledge*, pp. 43-44. Underlining mine.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
42. For, according to Radhakrishnan true intuitive knowledge can never be false, because "it is proved on our pulses." (Radhakrishnan, *I.V.L.*, p. 145.) So

when some *a priori* judgments lead to falsify they can never be truly intuitive.

43. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 83.
44. Reasoning by itself "is not all. There is a realm where it has no sway. There are limitations of scientific knowledge. Moral values, wisdom and the life of spirit are beyond it." (Radhakrishnan, *B.S.*, p. 104.)
45. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, p. 91.
46. This is also clear from the following statements of Ayer : "The testimony of the senses is not to be relied on, and ..if we have any acquaintance with material things as they really are, it is not through any act of *sense-perception* but only through some "intuition of the mind." (Ayer, *Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*; p. 29.)
47. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
50. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* etc., prop. 6.522.
51. *Ibid.*, props. 5.552 and 6.44.
52. But it should be remembered that Radhakrishnan also admits that it is not possible for us to "account for the fact of the world," what we can do is simply to "construe its nature." (Radhakrishnan, *B.G.*, p. 40.) This means that we can know the *how* and *what* of the world, not its *why*.
53. Radhakrishnan, *I.V.L.*, p. 154.
54. *Loc. cit.*
55. Radhakrishnan says, "If intuitive knowledge does not supply us with universal major premises, which we can neither question nor establish, our life will come to an end." (*Ibid.*, p. 156.)
56. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
57. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, etc., prop. 3.01. It is something like Hegel's 'picturing' or representing the Absolute in religion. (H.B. Action, 'Hegel' Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, Vol. 3, p. 449.)
58. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* etc., prop. 2.01. By object he means thing or entity.
59. *Ibid.*, propos. 4.1272, 4.124.
60. By 'essence' Wittgenstein means 'meaning'. (Wittgenstein, *Note-Books*, date 11.6.16).
61. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* etc., prop. 6.432.
62. *Ibid.*, prop. 6.45.
63. *Ibid.*, props., 5.632, 6.63.
64. Wittgenstein, *Note-Books*, date 4.8.16.
65. *Ibid.*, date 15.10.16.
66. Wittgenstein. *Tractatus* etc., prop. 6.45
67. "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself..." (*Ibid.*, prop. 6.522).
68. *Ibid.*, prop. 7.



69. Radhakrishnan, *P. U.*, 101. He again says, "The austerity of silence is the only way in which we can bring out the inadequacy of our halting descriptions and imperfect standards." (Radhakrishnan, *B. G.*, p. 21) In the Introduction to *The Brahma Sūtra* he says, "It is difficult to express the truths of experience through logical propositions, for the most appropriate response to the spiritual experience is *silence* or poetry." (p. 20. Underlining mine) Vide also p. 124 where he says, "Silence is the only language of worship." Buddha's silence on the metaphysical problems is also an important contribution to this concept. (Radhakrishnan, *Gautama the Buddha*, p. 37).
70. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. 4. 4. 23. Radhakrishnan's tran. *P. U.* p. 280.
71. *Idid.*, 3. 6. 1. *Ibid.*, p. 223. Underling mine.
72. E. Stenius, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, p. 323.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 222. The influence of Kant comes to Wittgenstein through Schopenhauer. (*Ibid.*, p. 223.) It is also admitted by C. A. Van Peursen, *Ludwing Wittgenstein : An Introduction to His Philosophy*, tr. R. Ambler, p. 14. See also Wittgenstein's *Note-Books*, date 2. 8. 16.)
74. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* etc., prop. 6. 53.
75. Henry D. Aiken's Introduction, *The Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, eds. V. Barret and H. D. Aiken, Vol. II, p. 492.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Mysticism etc.	: Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays.
I. P.	: Indian Philosophy.
P. U.	: The Principal Upanisads.
I. V. L.	: An Idealist View of Life.
A History of etc.	: A History of Western Philosophy.
B. S.	: The Brahma Sutra : The Philosophy of Spiritual Life.
Tractatus etc.	: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.
B. G.	: The Bhagavadgītā.

# THE CONCEPT OF BEING IN RADHA-KRISHNAN AND TILlich

CH. G. S. S. SREENIVASA RAO

## I INTRODUCTION

"Wisemen came from the East; here is a wiseman," wrote C.E.M. Joad in his *Counter Attack from the East*, referring to Radhakrishnan. For many Western philosophers Radhakrishnan appears more like a prophet or a preacher with a message<sup>1</sup> than as a philosopher. In India, Swami Agehananda Bharati and M.N. Roy consider him as a 'Hindu theologian',<sup>2</sup> but Radhakrishnan refused to be called a dogmatic theologian and asserted that he was a philosopher.<sup>3</sup>

Paul Tillich<sup>4</sup> is recognised as one of the world's leading theologians. His contribution to Christian theology, mainly imbedded in his three-volume work, *Systematic Theology*, has influenced immensely the secular and the religious thinking of the Western world.

While Radhakrishnan attempted to bridge the gulf between the East and the West through his writings, Tillich aimed at bridging the gulf between Christian religion and the modern mind which came to be influenced by new discoveries in the fields of science and technology and by the advent of logical positivism and analysis.

Radhakrishnan and Tillich were idealists. If Radhakrishnan was claimed as an absolute idealist, Tillich was called an idealistic theologian and existentialist. Both of them imbibed the spirit of the world religions and the contemporary philosophical thought. They were influenced by the modern existentialist thought, and their writings show references to existential thinkers. Existential thought



had a special attraction for both of them. In the later works of Radhakrishnan, we find references to the works of Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Sartre and Marcel. Many of the existential concepts are reflected in his philosophical views. Tillich was fascinated by the school of Existentialism. If mathematics was considered as good luck of human reason by Kant, existentialism was recognised as the good luck of theology by Tillich. Existentialism, he says, has helped to discover the classical Christian interpretation of human existence. In fact, we find many existentialistic terms in his *Systematic Theology* and other works.

Radhakrishnan and Tillich were firm believers in their respective religious traditions—Hinduism and Christianity—and were determined to interpret their scriptures in the light of modern philosophies and changes in modern cultures. While interpreting their scriptures, both of them were deeply concerned with the problems of modern man and hence they took into consideration not merely the religious, but also the other problems facing modern society. Both of them emphasised the significance of reason and aimed at presenting a rational faith which could suit the modern mind. Hence, they did not hesitate to take ideas from other religions and philosophies, which they felt could be accommodated into their respective systems.

Radhakrishnan and Tillich offered many suggestions relating to the future of religions. Perhaps, both of them were interested in developing a religion which could be acceptable to the whole of mankind. This is implicit in their writings. If Radhakrishnan called his religion as the 'Religion of the Spirit', Tillich called his as the 'Religion of the Concrete Spirit'.

This paper attempts to present the similarity of ideas on the nature of Being, found in the writings of Radhakrishnan and Tillich, the former representing the East and Hinduism and the latter representing the West and Christianity.

## II THE NATURE OF BEING

### (a) *Definition of Philosophy*

Radhakrishnan defines philosophy as "a logical inquiry into the nature of Reality."<sup>5</sup> He attempts to envisage the hidden structure and



analyse the guiding concepts of ontological reality. For Tillich, philosophy is an investigation of everything *that is* and analysis of all forms of Being.

(b) *Being and Non-Being*

To explain the nature of Being Radhakrishnan and Tillich begin with the ontological questions: "Why is there something rather than nothing?", and "Why has this world this character and not any other?" As an answer, they agree that the given fact of the world in which we live is a 'mystery'<sup>6</sup> which we have only to acknowledge. The world process can only be considered as a struggle between two antagonistic but indispensable principles of being and non-being. To account for this world of change, it is necessary to assume not only the principle of being but also the principle of non-being.

Radhakrishnan explains the relation between being and non-being.<sup>7</sup> Being-with-existence or nothingness [(non-being) implies being-without-nothingness (being)]. This universe in which we all live is being-with-nothingness (non-being). But this cannot exist or sustain itself, independent of the being-without-nothingness (being) which alone is transcendent and self-sufficient. This being-without-nothingness is being-itself, the ground of being which transcends the totality of nature. Existence is in the being-itself.

Tillich recognises the fact that God who is the ground of creative processes of life (being) should possess a negative principle (non-being) besides him, in order to account for evil and sin in the world and that the positing of a dialectical negativity (non-being) in God himself (being) cannot be avoided.<sup>8</sup> Being precedes non-being and non-being is literally nothing except in relation to being.

Radhakrishnan and Tillich consider non-being as a limiting and finitising principle of being, necessary to explain the finitude and creaturliness of man. Non-being, for Radhakrishnan, is a limiting concept,<sup>9</sup> depending on Being. It is essential to unfold divine mystery.<sup>10</sup> Man has, therefore, affinities with nature as well as outside nature. For Tillich, finitude indicates the limitation of being by non-being. Without the concept of dialectical non-being, the finitude and creaturliness of man is unintelligible.<sup>11</sup> Everything which participates in the power of being is mixed with non-being.



(c) *Radhakrishnan on the Nature of Being*(i) *Being—itself as the Brahman of the Upaniṣads*

The very existence of the world, according to Radhakrishnan, implies the existence of being from which the world is derived. Being is the foundation of all existence. In order to establish that anything is, we seek the use of the concept of being. Hence it is considered as the most universal and most comprehensive concept. Nothing can possibly exist without being since being is present in everything that is existing. "In metaphysics, we get beyond the sphere of daily life, the objects of science and rise to the transcendent conception of being itself."<sup>12</sup> Being posits everything, but is not itself posited. It is not an object of thought. Hence it is uncharacterisable and indefinable. Our descriptions and translations are in the forms of objects which are less than being, and are consequently inadequate. Even abstract ideals and intellectualisations do not deal justly with being.<sup>13</sup> He calls this being as *Aseitas*, the power of being to exist absolutely, i.e., requiring no cause.

To say that God exists, *a se* of and by reason of Himself, is to say that God is Being-itself. This is the concept of Brahman, as it is formulated in the Upaniṣads.<sup>14</sup>

Radhakrishnan identifies the Being-itself with the Brahman of the Upaniṣads.<sup>15</sup> He calls this also as Absolute.

(ii) *Absolute and God*

Radhakrishnan points out that some attempts to rationalise and translate this inexpressible being into concepts resulted in different versions. One such attempt has been the two-fold conception of the Absolute as pure transcendent being, above all relativities and the free active God, *Īśvara*, functioning in the world.<sup>16</sup> Radhakrishnan attempts to explain the two-fold conception of the Absolute and God in relation to the world of multiplicity. He writes :

While the Absolute is pure consciousness, pure freedom and infinite possibility, it appears to be God from the point of view of one specific possibility, which has become actualised (world). While God is organically bound up with the universe, the universe is not.<sup>17</sup>



Again,

God, who is the creator, sustainer and judge of the world is not totally unrelated to the Absolute. God is the Absolute from the human end. While we limit down the Absolute to its relation to the actual possibility, the Absolute appears as the Supreme Wisdom, Love and Goodness. We call the Supreme the Absolute, when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view.<sup>18</sup>

The above passages affirm that God is not a mere appearance of the Absolute as in Śaṅkara, but is the very Absolute viewed from our finite standpoint. The Absolute is the transcendent divine and God is the cosmic divine. The Absolute is the ultimate reality, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic end. Out of the infinite possibilities or ideal forms imbedded in the thought or mind of the Absolute, only one specific possibility is actualised into space and time which is the universe. In other words, the Absolute is the matrix of infinite possibilities of which one is actualised as the world. When the Absolute is viewed from this actualised world, it is God. If viewed apart from this actuality, it is the Absolute. It means that God with whom the worshipper stands in personal relationship is the very Absolute in the context of the world and not a mere appearance of the Absolute. In another place, Radhakrishnan states that God or Īśvara is the best image of truth which is possible to the existent conditions of the mind and that it is not the highest Reality. To quote Radhakrishnan :

Brahman (Absolute) cast through the moulds of logic is Īśvara (God). It is not the highest Reality....Yet it is the best image of truth possible under our present conditions of knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

It is evident from the above that Radhakrishnan is attempting to reconcile the Absolute, the pure and transcendent being with the God of theism, without either identifying them or sacrificing one for the other and at the same time, preserving the ultimacy of the Absolute and the intimacy and significance of the God of theism, by adopting



what he calls 'the balanced view of the Supreme Being'.<sup>20</sup> He neither wants to identify God with the Absolute, nor is he willing to dispense with either of the two, Absolute and God. This is an attempt to find a tenable relation between them.

(iii) *The Supremacy and the Ultimacy of the Absolute*

In the scheme of Radhakrishnan, God or Īśvara is not an eternal reality, because He exists only so long as the universe remains undissolved. The moment the world reaches its ultimate end or consummation, the existence of God ceases to be. Since the reality of God is a derivation from the Absolute, it attains its final dissolution in the Absolute.

Despite the significant roles ascribed to God as the creator, sustainer and judge of the universe, Radhakrishnan maintains the supremacy and ultimacy of the Absolute by ranking the worship of the Absolute as the highest and by pushing God into the background of the Absolute, when the end of the universe is completely achieved. In other words, the God of theism stands only as long as we and our logic stand, and fades away into the Absolute soon after the universe, along with us, is dissolved in its final end. He says, "God is a symbol in which religion cognises the Absolute."<sup>21</sup> The following passages reflect his views.

The worshippers of the Absolute are the highest in rank ; second to them are the worshippers of the personal God ; then come the worshippers of the incarnations like Rama, Krishna, ...<sup>22</sup>

Again,

There is an unrealised residuum in God, but it vanishes when we reach the end. God recedes into the background of the Absolute."<sup>23</sup>

The pre-cosmic nature of God is identical with the Absolute ; therefore, the post-cosmic God will return to this identity ultimately.

Radhakrishnan does not accept the validity of the proofs for the existence of God.<sup>24</sup> He considers them as results of critical reflections on the spiritual intuitions. As such, they can only confirm what has been apprehended through spiritual intuitions and can be taken as approximations.



(d) *Paul Tillich on The Nature of Being*(i) *God as a being does not exist*

For Tillich the being of God is being-itself. The being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside of others. If God is a being, he is subject to categories of finitude, especially space and substance. Even if God is considered as the highest of all beings, this situation does not change. Even the superlatives such as the greatest and the highest, he thinks, will become diminutive when applied to God. They will place God at the level of other beings, while elevating him above all of them.<sup>25</sup> For Tillich God does not exist. To argue that God exists is to deny him.<sup>26</sup> He exposes the impotency of the traditional arguments for the existence of God and points to their inadequacy regarding questions relating to God.

God is 'by Himself' and possesses 'aseity', which means that God is the power of being and is being-itself.<sup>27</sup> He thinks that many confusions can be avoided if God is understood as being-itself or as the ground of being. The concept of being as being-itself points to the power inherent in everything and the power of resistance to non-being. Hence it is possible to say that God is the power of being in everything and above everything.

(ii) *Being-itself*

Tillich defines being-itself as "that which is not a special being or a group of beings, not something concrete or something abstract, but rather something which is always thought implicitly and sometimes explicitly, if something is said to be."<sup>28</sup> Both positive and negative judgments only affirm the existence of Being which is Being-itself. In his words:

You can deny every statement but you cannot deny that Being is. If you ask what this 'is' means, you arrive at the statement that it is the negation of possible Non-Being. 'Is' means 'is not not' — you can deny anything particular whatsoever, but not Being, because, even your negative judgments themselves are acts of being and are only possible through Being.<sup>29</sup>

Being-itself is not a specific entity, since specificity for Tillich is a mark of limitation. God as being-itself transcends all categories of



thought and the subject-object scheme.<sup>30</sup> Hence, being-itself cannot be characterised by any set of defining features. God as being-itself is a non-symbolic statement. Being-itself is beyond essence and existence.<sup>31</sup>

Being-itself cannot also be substituted for God. This would destroy its status because it would then be brought down to the level of subject-object relation, which is limited and conditional. Only by transcending the subject-object relation can we realise that the truly ultimate cannot be the God of theism.<sup>32</sup> Tillich rejects the traditional attributes of God such as omniscience and omnipotence on the basis that they belong to the level of the subject-object scheme.

Being-itself is the most adequate expression of the dimension of ultimacy for him.<sup>33</sup> It can become a matter of ultimate concern for man if it appears in a concrete embodiment. This concrete embodiment is what Tillich calls 'religious symbol'. "Man's ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically, because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate."<sup>34</sup> Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned.<sup>35</sup>

### (iii) *Significance of Religious Symbols*

Tillich develops systematically a theory of symbols and these symbols of faith play a significant role in his theology. He firmly believes that all religious symbols are linked to what they ultimately symbolise since every being participates in the truly ultimate (being-itself). Every symbol, according to him, truly represents the ultimate, points beyond itself, opens up levels of reality in the depths of our being, participates in the reality to which it points, grows by integrating personalities and communities and dies when it loses this power.<sup>36</sup> His theory of symbols allows for the possibility of direct confrontation with being-itself by means of a symbol or a chain of symbols.

Symbols are very potential in his scheme, for they not only bring down the Infinite to the earth, to the level of the finite being, but they also raise the finite to the level of the Infinite. The divine-human relationship which they point to is consecrated and possesses sacramental depth. Religious symbols are, therefore, double-edged.<sup>37</sup>



They are directed towards the Infinite which they symbolise and also towards the finite being (man) through whom they symbolise.

They (symbols) force the Infinite, down to finitude and finite upto the Infinite. In other words, they open the divine for the human and the human for divine. For example, if God is symbolised as 'Father' he is brought down to the human relationship of a father and child. But, at the same time, this human relationship is consecrated into divine human relationship. If 'fatherhood' is employed as a symbol of God, fatherhood is seen in its sacramental depth. When we speak of God as living, it should be done only in symbolic terms. Yet, every true symbol, participates in the reality which it symbolises. God lives so far as he is the ground of life.<sup>38</sup>

These anthropomorphic symbols (God-men), Tillich thinks, are adequate for speaking of God religiously. In his view God can be a living God for man only in this way.

(iv) *Radhakrishnan on "Religious Symbols"*.

It is interesting to find in the writings of Radhakrishnan certain references to the significance of religious symbols, though he did not develop a theory of symbols as Tillich did. In his view, a true religious symbol is not a dream or a shadow, but a living revelation of the unfathomable.<sup>39</sup> He refers to 'fire' which was looked upon by the Vedic Aryans and Zoroastrians as a symbol of the Supreme.<sup>40</sup> The different religious traditions do not create the truth, but "clothe it in language and symbols for the help of those who do not see it themselves."<sup>41</sup> They are pointers to the way of spiritual realisation. The gods of the polytheists are the symbolic representations of the true God and the God of the monotheists is at bottom a symbol. All religions are symbols to him; and "God is a symbol in which religion recognises the Absolute."<sup>42</sup>

### III KNOWLEDGE OF BEING

(a) *Views of Radhakrishnan*

Though man is a finite being, says Radhakrishnan, he has the capacity for self-transcendence and the ability to look at himself



objectively. Man's existence includes the power and determination to stand out of existence and in the truth of being. Hence he can obtain the knowledge of the true being through his spiritual experience directly.

Radhakrishnan refers to three kinds of knowledge possessed by the human mind. They are sensory or perceptual knowledge, intellectual or logical knowledge<sup>43</sup> and intuitive knowledge.<sup>44</sup> The latter two are significant in his thought. While God is the truth for our intellect, the Absolute is the truth for our intuition. Yet intuition is considered as higher than the intellect by him.

(i) *Intellect and Intuition*

Logical or intellectual knowledge is obtained by the processes of analysis and synthesis. It analyses the data supplied by the senses and presents a systematic knowledge of the objects perceived. But this is indirect knowledge and is symbolic in character; hence it is inadequate to know the Real.

Different from the intellectual knowledge is intuitive knowledge, which is non-sensuous and immediate. It is called self-knowledge and may be referred to as true knowledge or direct knowledge. It is not obtained either through the senses or through symbols, for it is knowledge by being. This results from an intimate fusion of the mind with reality.<sup>45</sup> It is only through the intuitive apprehension that the deepest things of life can be unravelled.<sup>46</sup>

Both intellectual and intuitive kinds of knowledge have their own specific purposes. While we gain the knowledge relating to the conditions of the world through the intellect, we obtain the knowledge of things in their uniqueness and indefeasible reality through intuition, by transcending discursive knowledge. But these two are not unrelated or opposed to each other. Intellectual knowledge serves as the preparatory ground for intuitive apprehension. Intuition is neither irrational nor anti-rational, but supra-rational. Consider the following passages :

Though intuition lies beyond intellect, it is not contrary to it. Reflective knowledge is a preparation for this integral experience.<sup>47</sup>

Intuitive knowledge is not non-rational; it is only non-conceptual. It is rational intuition, in which both mediacy and immediacy are comprehended. Intuition gives us the object in itself, while intellect details its relations... Every intuition has an intellectual content. Even if intuitive truths cannot be proved to reason, they can be shown to be not contrary to reason but consistent with it."<sup>48</sup>

Logical knowledge gives us only the structure of being and not being-itself, but intuition or integral insight puts us in touch with the eternal being. This intuitive knowledge is the highest which transcends the distinction of subject and object.

### (ii) *Religious Intuition or Spiritual Experience*

Radhakrishnan mentions a number of intuitions such as rational intuition, aesthetic intuition, artistic intuition, ethical intuition, scientific intuition and religious intuition. Out of these, religious intuition has been considered by him as an 'all-comprehending one, covering the whole of life.' Consciousness is realised completely and fully in this state.<sup>49</sup> Sometimes, he calls this as religious or spiritual experience. It is a state of ecstasy or complete absorption of our being,<sup>50</sup> where we seem to be standing literally out of our narrow selves. In this experience one finds oneself transcending limitations of everykind including the subject-object structure. The experience can be felt by the individual, but cannot be analysed or examined, verified or authenticated by any external standards of logic or laws of thought. It is a condition of consciousness in which feelings are fused, ideas melt into one another, boundaries broken and ordinary distinctions transcended. Thought and reality coalesce and creative merging of subject and object results. The experience itself is felt to be sufficient and complete. It does not appeal to external standards of logic or metaphysics. It is its own cause and explanation. It is self-established, self-evidencing.<sup>51</sup>

### (b) *Views of Paul Tillich*

Every being, according to Tillich, participates in the structure of Being, though man alone is immediately aware of this structure. Man is able to answer ontological questions since he experiences the structure of being and its elements, directly and immediately. He is a



fully developed and completely centred self, possessing a self-conscious ego, which can separate itself from everything else and be able to look beyond. By virtue of this ego-self, man transcends every possible environment and goes beyond his finitude under the subject-object structure.

While dealing with the knowledge of being, one can find Tillich anticipating ideas regarding reason as well as revelation.<sup>52</sup> With regard to the knowledge of being, Tillich maintains a two-level theory. We find in his scheme two significant and distinct concepts, which he calls ontological reason<sup>53</sup> and technical reason<sup>54</sup> belonging to two levels or dimensions of reality. Technical reason which deals with objects in detachment does not reach the level on which religion stands. Questions relating to the relation of reason to revelation cannot be discussed at the level of technical reason, but only at the level of ontological reason.

These two levels have been very well brought out by him in his views regarding the relation of science and faith (religion). He writes :

Science has no right and no power to interfere with faith (religion) and faith has no power to interfere with science. One dimension of meaning is not able to interfere with another dimension. Science can conflict only with science and faith only with faith ; science which remains science cannot conflict with faith which remains faith.<sup>55</sup>

The object of faith is not one which is within the whole of scientific experience. It cannot be discovered by detached observations or conclusions derived from such observations. It cannot be tested by scientific methods of verification. Tillich refers to Pascal's statement about the "reasons of the heart which reason cannot comprehend," where reason is used in a double sense. The 'reasons of the heart' here means the structures of the aesthetic experience and the experience of communion (ontological reason) ; the reason 'which cannot comprehend them' is technical reason.<sup>56</sup>

#### (i) *Technical Reason and Ontological Reason*

Technical reason is the term Tillich coined to refer to all modes of knowledge — perceptual and conceptual — that can be acquired



through observation and verification. It is used for the ordinary observation as well as extremely complicated observations (technical) and theorising that go into scientific statements.

Controlling knowledge is the outstanding example for technical reason. It is the kind of knowledge which is predominantly determined by the element of detachment. In order to gain control over the object, the subject seeks unification with the object. Controlling knowledge looks upon its object objectively without expecting a return look from them.<sup>57</sup> It also claims control over every level of reality including life, spirit, personality, community, meanings, values, even one's ultimate concern and treats them in terms of detachment, analysis and technical knowledge, making man a thing among things, a cog in the machine and a dehumanised object. However, it disregards the kind of knowledge which can be known only by participation and union. Therefore, technical reason is inadequate to know the real nature of things and man as well as the meaning of life, for this can be explained only by the ontological reason.

Ontological reason is different from technical reason. It is defined as the structure of the mind which enables it to grasp and shape Reality.<sup>58</sup> It is also understood as depth of reason. Depth of reason, he says, could be called being-itself, which pours into the rational structures of mind and reality and actualises and transforms them.<sup>59</sup> Though it is not reason, it precedes reason and manifests itself through it. When applied to various fields where reason is actualised it can be described metaphorically. In the cognitive realm it points to truth itself through relative truths; in the aesthetic realm it points to beauty itself through creation of beauty; and in the realm of communion, it points to Love itself through every form of actualised love.

If controlling knowledge is the example of technical reason, receiving knowledge is the example of ontological reason. 'Receiving knowledge' takes the object into itself, into union with the subject.<sup>60</sup> A truly objective relation to man is determined by the element of union between the subject and object in it. For it there is no cognitive approach to man without this union of the subject and the object. It rejects the methods and approaches of controlling



knowledge to know human nature, and considers detachment as secondary.

This does not mean that ontological reason and technical reason are two separate entities without any relationship whatever. The former is always accompanied by the latter. In fact technical reason depends on ontological reason, says Tillich, for the former becomes impoverished and corrupted if it is not nourished continually by the latter.<sup>61</sup> But the true relationship, he points out, between technical reason (controlling knowledge) and ontological reason (receiving knowledge) has not been explained properly by philosophers. Some of them have accepted either of the two and rejected the other. In this view the true relationship between the two can be explained only in terms of revelation. It is only in revelation that the claims of both technical reason and ontological reason can find their fulfilment. He identifies ontological reason with the content of revelation, which does not reject the claims of technical reason.<sup>62</sup>

## (ii) *Revelation and Ecstatic Reason*

Tillich defines Revelation as an extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something which is hidden and cannot be approached through ordinary ways of gaining knowledge. This hiddenness is a mystery. When this mystery appears subjectively, he says, it is called 'ecstasy'. The literal meaning of ecstasy is 'standing outside oneself.' It points to a state of mind which is extraordinary in the sense that the mind transcends its ordinary situation. Ecstasy is a state of mind in which reason goes beyond itself or its subject-object structure. This does not mean that reason, in going beyond itself, ceases to be reason. Ecstasy neither negates nor denies reason but remains as reason. To avoid such possible confusion Tillich calls it 'ecstatic reason'.<sup>63</sup> Ecstatic reason does not receive anything irrational or anti-rational which is self-destructive, but only transcends the basic condition of finite rationality which is the subject-object structure. The mystics and the saints attempt to attain this state through their ascetic and meditative acts. Ecstasy occurs only when the mind is grasped by the ground of being. Ecstasy is a miracle of reality.

### (iii) Ecstatic Reason and Technical Reason

Technical Reason is limited, and it decides the best means for achieving certain goals. Since it cannot determine the goals, this must be done by the ecstatic reason. Technical reason has its own boundaries beyond which it has no capacity to traverse. These limits can be transcended by the ecstatic reason. The use of ecstatic reason uncovers the being-itself. The ecstatic reason involves participation as in love, but technical reason which operates at the level of detachment is inadequate for such participation.

## IV CONCLUSION

An attempt was made above to discuss the conception of being in Radhakrishnan and Tillich in the light of the criticisms levelled against it by Western philosophers and theologians. A brief evaluation of their views can now be attempted.

Radhakrishnan's conception of the Absolute and its relation to God has been criticised by some Western philosophers on the ground that it is less clear and consistent. In the judgment of C.C.J. Webb, Radhakrishnan's use of language in contrasting theism and Absolutism is less clear and consistent than could be wished.<sup>64</sup> On the basis of his view that the supreme being must be either the Absolute or God, Brightman points to Radhakrishnan's vacillation between the non-dualism of Śaṅkara and personal theism of Rāmānuja.<sup>65</sup>

The relationship between the Absolute and God as indicated in his thought, does not find a parallel either in the non-dualism of Śaṅkara or in the personal theism of Rāmānuja though there are some similarities in their doctrines. In asserting the supremacy of the Absolute (Brahman), Radhakrishnan neither denies the reality of the world and God (Īśvara), ascribing them a phenomenal character like Śaṅkara nor identifies the Absolute with the personal God (Īśvara) as in Rāmānuja. For him God is neither identical with the Absolute nor independent or separately existent from it. The so-called 'inconsistency' is the result of his attempts to reconcile the God of theism with the Absolute. There are two significant points to be noted in his scheme of thought.



Radhakrishnan looks at the question of God's relationship to the Absolute from two different standpoints — one from that of the philosopher and the other from that of the theist or believer. From the standpoint of the philosopher, God may be considered as different from the Absolute, but the same when viewed by the believer or theist through his religious consciousness, has been realised as one and the same.<sup>66</sup> He does not seem to subscribe to the view that there is a fundamental contradiction between the Absolute of the philosophers and the God of the theists. While asserting the supremacy of the Absolute, he accommodates the God of theism in his thought in order to provide for the worship of God or gods.

There cannot be a fundamental contradiction between the philosophical idea of God (Absolute) as an all-embracing spirit and the devotional idea of a personal God, who arouses in us the specifically religious emotion. The personal conception develops the aspect of spiritual experience in which it may be regarded as fulfilling the human needs.<sup>67</sup>

For some reasons of his own, Radhakrishnan does not either identify God with the Absolute and turn them into one Reality or dispense with either of them, but attempts to find a tenable relationship between the two. Therefore (1) God is as real as the Absolute and not phenomenal or illusory. (2) God is one of the poises of the Absolute. Such a distinction should be preserved in order to have a balanced view of the Supreme. (3) God with whom the worshipper stands in personal relationship is the very Absolute in the world context, i.e., God is the Absolute from the human end.

But at the same time, it may be noted, Radhakrishnan firmly maintains the supremacy as well as the ultimacy of the Absolute. This is evident from some of his statements: (1) Though God is as real as the Absolute, He is not the ultimate or is as eternal as the Absolute, for God fades away into the Absolute when the final end is achieved. (2) God (*Īśvara*) is the Absolute cast through the moulds of logic, and He exists so long as our logic and universe remain. (3) God and his attributes are symbols of the Absolute, cognised in religion. (4) The worshippers of God are second in rank, first being the worshippers of the Absolute (Brahman).



Thus Radhakrishnan draws a tenable relationship between the Absolute and God of theism. Though God is real and plays a significant role in the context of the world, He is not ultimate. The supremacy as well as ultimacy belongs to the Absolute alone. The inconsistency that Webb and Brightman find in Radhakrishnan in this regard is due to the two different view-points he maintains. Through his scheme or thought he wanted to satisfy the modern philosopher and the believer.

While maintaining that Being-itself is the ultimate, Tillich rejected the reality of God, considering Him as a being among beings conditioned and limited by the subject-object structure. God is a symbol through which the believer worships the ultimate. The symbol of God serves as a means rather than as a goal to reach the ultimate. Symbols are potent enough to truly participate in the reality, to raise levels of reality in the being of man and to represent the truly ultimate. Despite such extra-ordinary capacities ascribed by him to them in his theory of symbols, they remain as dry symbols in the minds of the believers, without eliciting any emotion, feeling or religious awe from them. They see nothing substantial in the symbol, for the very name 'symbol' is derogatory and gives the impression that it is not as real as reality. Once it is called a symbol, its significance is reduced considerably. This is detrimental to the faith of the believers in a historical and concrete God, who has been worshipped through the ages.

By emphasising the ontological concept of Being-itself and by rejecting the God of theism, Tillich attempted to satisfy the rational mind of the modern man and thereby save himself from the onslaughts of the modern logician and philosopher. But this has been done by sacrificing a host of significant Christian doctrines. Referring to this, Colin Brown remarks :

Tillich starts with his notion of Being and then forces the gospel of Christ to lie on a procrustean bed of pre-conceived ideas, lopping off any item, which does not quite fit.<sup>68</sup>

However, Tillich does not think that he has sacrificed anything significant in the Christian religion. In his view, this anthropomorphic



God of the theists, duly supported by organised religion, is only an idol, but not the truly ultimate, which alone is the cause of this world, and hence it should be rejected.

Being-itself is the most comprehensive concept and an adequate expression of the ultimate according to both Radhakrishnan and Tillich. However, we find certain significant differences in their explanations concerning the relationship between the ultimate Being and the God of theism. Whereas Radhakrishnan attempts to reconcile the God of theism with the supreme Being, Tillich rejects the god of theism and considers Him as a symbol. But the functions he ascribes to the symbol of God make it as potential as the God of theism. If Tillich is ready to sacrifice a host of creeds and myths of religion in the name of rational religion, acceptable to the logician and the rational mind of the modern man, Radhakrishnan is unwilling to do the same. On the other hand, he finds a significant place for God of theism in his system, with all the paraphernalia of myths and cults of religion, despite the threat of criticism of it from the logician and the philosopher as logically inconsistent. The different positions taken by these two thinkers in this respect truly represent the fundamental character of the religious and philosophical traditions to which they belong.

If Radhakrishnan considers intellect and intuition as the two sources for obtaining the knowledge of the creator-God and of the Absolute beyond respectively, Tillich holds technical reason and ecstatic reason as the two sources for obtaining the knowledge of the things within the subject-object structure and of the ultimate. However, there is a difference between them regarding worship. While Radhakrishnan ranks the worship of the Absolute as the highest and the worship of God as the second, Tillich does not seem to draw such a distinction. The worship of the ultimate Divine, he thinks, is possible through the symbol of God (faith), the latter serving only as a means to reach the former.

#### REFERENCES

1. P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 394.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 465; p. 546

3. *Ibid.*, 820. There is a distinction between philosophy and theology as understood in the West. (a) The philosopher tries to be detached as he looks at the structure of Being, while the theologian is 'existential' and looks at Being as one who is desperately involved in the whole of existence. (b) The philosopher is concerned with the structure of reality as a whole, independent of any authority other than reason. But the theologian looks at the same, with scriptural statements as authority. His reason is reconciled with the statements of the scriptures. (c) While the philosopher deals with the structure of Being in general, the theologian is concerned with the values associated with the object of his religion.
4. Tillich was a professor of Philosophical Theology at the Union Theological Seminary, New York, for a long time. Philosophical theology attempts to explain the Christian message in close inter-relation with modern philosophy. Under the impact of Tillich's writings, a number of new theologies and schools arose in protestant Christianity, especially in U.S.A.
5. Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 816.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 39; See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 207. *Māyā* is the concept which was devised to express the *Ultimate Mystery*, in the relationship between the Absolute and the empirical world. (C. A., Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 302.)  
The question of Being and Non-Being produces a 'metaphysical shock' says Tillich (*op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 181).
7. Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
8. *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 210.
9. *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 48.
10. Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
11. *op. cit.*, Vol I, p. 210.
12. Schilpp *op. cit.*, p. 38.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
15. In the writings of Radhakrishnan we find a number of identical terms denoting this Being. They include the following: Supreme Being, Absolute, Ultimate Reality, Being-itself, Being-as-such, Transcendent, the Unconditioned, the Spirit, Reality etc.
16. In another place he makes mention of the three poises of the Supreme Being. In his words: "The Supreme has three simultaneous poises of being, the transcendent Absolute, Brahman, the creative freedom *Īśvara*, and the wisdom, power and love manifest in this world, *Hiraṇyagarbha*. These do not succeed each other in time. It is an order of arrangement and logical priority, not temporal succession. *Ibid.*, p. 797.
17. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 272.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

The *Upaniṣads* do not draw a hard and fast line of distinction between Brahman and *Īśvara*. The Upaniṣadic conception of Brahman (Absolute)



implies that Īśvara is practically one with Brahman. While the *Upaniṣads* maintain the impersonality of Brahman, they also support the divine personality who participates in the universe.

19. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 540.
20. The distinction between the Absolute and Īśvara or God is of great significance which should, in Radhakrishnan's view, be preserved, if we are to have a balanced view of the Supreme. Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 797.
21. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 86.
22. *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 24.
23. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 269.
24. Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
25. Paul Tillich, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 261.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 261. Tillich makes use of certain significant terms whenever he refers to the truly Ultimate. They are : Being-itself, the power of Being, the ground of Being, God above God, Infinite and the Divine. Sometimes he refers to Divine Spirit as a significant symbolic term.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
29. Paul Tillich, *Absolutes*, p. 80 (Quoted in M. L. Diamond, *Contemporary Philosophy and Religious Thought*, p. 330).
30. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 230, 263, 309.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 227, 262.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 263.
33. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 263.
34. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 41.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
36. Paul Tillich, "Religious Symbols and our Knowledge of God" in *Philosophy of Religion*, W. I. Rowe and W. J. Wainwright, ed., pp. 481-482.
37. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 266-267.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268. Tillich recognises the absolutely fundamental character of the symbol 'personal God' since man cannot be concerned about anything less than personal. "Personal God does not mean God is personal. It means that God is the ground of everything and that he carries within himself, the ontological power of personality." *Ibid.*, p. 271.
39. *Recovery of Faith*, p. 140.
40. The Real according to Radhakrishnan, has been expressed in many ways through religious symbolism. Our deeply felt experiences are expressed in propositions which are symbolical. God as Father has been expressed in a familiar human relationship for defining the relation of man to God in

the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, the teachings of Jesus, etc. The forms and symbols are the ways to help us to 'gain' an inward realisation.

Intuitive knowledge, regarded as the highest, is expressed in symbols. It makes use of rational modes only as symbols to describe and translate absolute knowledge. The variety of symbolism, in his view, is due to the prevailing theological and metaphysical conceptions of time and place. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-141.

An ordinary man like King Rāma, was regarded as the incarnation of Viṣṇu, by the Hindu tradition. Later, Rāma became the symbol of Ultimate Reality, for millions of Hindus. Radhakrishnan says that we accept the dogma or the symbol through faith, which is only a possible mode of participation in the divine truth for most people. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

41. Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
42. *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 85-86.
43. Intellectual knowledge is also called by Radhakrishnan as reflective knowledge, discursive reasoning, logical knowledge, conceptual knowledge, mediate knowledge, etc. in his writings.
44. He makes use of different terms denoting intuitive knowledge with slightly different meanings in some places. Some of them are: direct experience (*sākṣātkāra*), non-sensuous immediate knowledge (*aparokṣajñāna*), integral insight (*prajñā*), religious or spiritual experience, integral experience (*anubhava*), perfect knowledge, self-knowledge, and intuitive apprehension.
45. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 109.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
50. Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
51. *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 72-73.
52. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 80.
53. Tillich uses a cluster of terms in his writings denoting ontological reason such as *subjective reason*, *depth of reason*, *receiving knowledge*, *ecstasy*, *ecstatic reason* and *revelation*.
54. *Technical Reason* also finds its synonyms in such terms as *controlling reason*, *formalism*, *intellectualism*, *formalised logic*.
55. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, pp. 81-82.
56. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 86.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 109.



61. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
62. Revelation, according to him, claims to create complete union of the subject with that which appears in it and at the same time claims to satisfy the demands of controlling knowledge, of detachment and analysis. This description and interpretation of Revelation, given by Tillich, seems to differ from the traditional meaning of Revelation.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
64. Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 389.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 797.
66. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 86.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
68. Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, p. 198.

## RADHAKRISHNAN'S AESTHETICS

V. RAGHAVAN

I chose the subject of Radhakrishnan's aesthetics in consultation with the Director as none of the other participants of this Seminar have offered to reflect about it. That none have taken it up appears natural. The burden of Radhakrishnan's writings has been on religion and philosophy and the need for them, on the Spirit in man, on the idealist view of life, on the comparative study of religions, their interlinks and the fundamental unity underlying the diverse forms of religion. In his extensive writings, aesthetics does not figure mainly. Even the brief attention devoted to it is as part of his treatment of intuition and its contrast with Reason. Apart from its brevity, the treatment is full of epigrammatic utterances which leave one often in perplexity. That the subject is difficult has also been the feeling of the only predecessor, known to me, who deals with it, Robert W. Browning.<sup>1</sup> Explaining the difficulty, Browning says: "A number of expressions and concepts (e.g., fusion, oneness, absorption, vision, creation, inspiration, truth, reality, etc.) leave us quite uncertain as to how literally or how figuratively they are to be taken..... .. *Radhakrishnan's metaphysics of aesthetics is obscure.*" I would not call it obscure; it is not certainly full; it has some apparently divergent propositions but a connected account can be made out of it. I shall add my own to Browning's effort and piece together Radhakrishnan's ideas on the subject and tailor them into a fabric.

On this subject, as on other main subjects of his, religion, philosophy, intuition, etc., Radhakrishnan, in his own inimitable style and in modern terms, expounds and emphasizes the Indian conception of



these. He quotes from English poets and critics, Wordsworth, Keats, Bridges and others and philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Croce and others, citing parallels which substantiate the Indian ideas. It will therefore be proper to use in my task the aid of the Indian tradition and views of the Sanskrit aesthetics on this subject. Indeed Radhakrishnan's citations of Sanskrit terms and texts in his treatment make this method of interpreting or understanding him quite legitimate.

In his discussions of this subject, Radhakrishnan uses mainly the art of poetry. Historically, his earliest observations on the subject occur in his exposition of the philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore. There are passing references to and stray statements on the subject in some of his other writings like *The Hindu View of Life*. In his speeches, as Vice-President and President of India at the Award Functions of the Sahitya and Sangeet Natak Akademies, he has spoken on literature and art. Besides, in his *An Idealist View of Life*<sup>2</sup> and *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*<sup>3</sup> he devotes a little over two pages to aesthetics.

Radhakrishnan's conception of a poet arises out of his idea of poetry as a product of intuition. When he says, "A poet is a seer, a revealer of hidden truths,"<sup>4</sup> he is affirming the Indian conception that none who is not a *ṛṣi* is ever a *kavi* (*Na anṛṣiḥ kavir ityuktah*). In his "Spirit in Man", the heightened level from which the poet functions is described as a divine afflatus. He says:

In these highest moments, the masters of human expression feel within themselves a spark of the divine fire and seem to think and feel as if God were in them and were revealing fragments of the secret plan of the universe. Mathew Arnold said that when Wordsworth and Byron were really inspired, Nature took the pen from their hands and wrote for them.<sup>5</sup>

We are told in our literary tradition about some beautiful lines in the *Gītāgovinda* that they were written by Lord Kṛṣṇa himself who came as Jayadeva when the poet had left a line incomplete and gone out. The visitation of a divine power gives the poet a greater being, whereby what he utters becomes great, *Brahman*. The radical meaning of *Brahman* is 'becoming greater' and it is one of the names of the Vedic hymn or poem or *Mantra*. On this Radhakrishnan says:



The authors of the Vedic hymns regarded themselves as channels of something greater than they knew, instruments of a higher soul beyond themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Between their vision and expression there is a simultaneity whereby they are said, not to compose but to *see* the hymns (*mantra-draṣṭāraḥ*).

It is this power that is called inspiration which is needed for great art and he quotes here one of the early Sanskrit aesthetes, Daṇḍin who considers the innate or natural genius (*naisargikī pratibhā*), as one of the conditions that produce poetry.<sup>7</sup>

Concentration and deep absorption are necessary conditions of an artistic creation, even as of the perception of truth. Radhakrishnan cites more than once a passage from Kālidāsa's play *Mālavikāgnimitra* which speaks of *samādhi* as a prerequisite for artistic creation. He relates this *samādhi* to what Theodor Lipps calls Empathy, a 'feeling into'.<sup>8</sup> In the *Bhāgavata*, Nārada asks Vyāsa to recapitulate the latter's sacred theme through *samādhi* (*samādhinānusmara*). After Brahmā's command to him to compose the story of Rāma, Vālmīki sits on sacred grass and facing east, seeks the course of his work through concentration (*dharmenāvekṣate gatim*). The critic Vāmana says in his *Sūtras* on poetics that the seed of poetry is in the inspiration and genius (*pratibhāna*) and for things to flash in that state, concentration (*avadhāna*, which he later calls *samādhi*) is needed.<sup>9</sup> It is in *samādhi* that the genius of the artist perceives the things. Radhakrishnan defines genius as extreme sensibility to truth<sup>10</sup> and it is in *samādhi* that this sensibility becomes steady, intense and pregnant. And for this Vāmana prescribes solitude and the still pre-dawn hours.<sup>11</sup> In his speech on Literature, Radhakrishnan gives the following stages of the artist's creative process : solitude, concentration, vision, then shaping with emotion and carving with words.<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere, he describes this process in the following words :

The mind concentrates on the material, becomes thoroughly possessed by it, gets as it were fused to it, absorbs it and remoulds it according to its own ideals and thus creates a work of art ... It is a state in which all our energies are heightened, tautened and sublimated.<sup>13</sup>



*Samādhi* or concentration naturally means contemplation over the idea or ideas seen in a flash. When expounding Tagore, he quotes with approval Wordsworth's observation that poetry is what is recollected in tranquillity. In 'The Spirit of Man' also, he says, "we must allow the intellect to lie fallow and let the object soak into the subsoil of our mental life..."<sup>14</sup> "The vision, however, is not operative, for so long as it continues, its very stress acts as a check on expression."<sup>15</sup> But immediately he also observes that experience is recollected but not in tranquillity.

The description of poetry as a product of intuition brings him into some disagreement with Croce. To Croce, the artistic creation has already taken place in intuition, and expression is either external to it or identical with it. Radhakrishnan agrees that it is difficult to draw the line between *intuition* and *expression*, but he points out that the unexpressed or "the purely formless cannot be known or conceived," and that poetry is not the vision itself but the image of it.<sup>16</sup> Radhakrishnan adds that although the form is *implicitly* present in the experience itself, "the great poet is he who senature it is to represent experience through words winged with magic, capable of evoking his experience. The experience has its full share in the words and phrases which clothe it. The strongest argument against Croce's view which he points out is this: "Croce seems to ignore the problem of artistic communication."

But he meets Croce half way when he writes that the poet attempts a translation of the ineffable experience into words :

While *poetry is in the soul*, the poem is a pale reflection of the original, an attempt to register in words an impression which has become an image in memory. There is something incommensurable, eluding expression in words.<sup>17</sup>

The Indian view on this question finds its best enunciation in Bhaṭṭa Tota, in his *Kāvya Kautuka*. There are two phases *intuition* and *expression*, *darśana* and *varṇanā*. All seers (*ṛṣis*) are poets (*kavis*) and all poets are seers ; but the name *ṛṣi* emphasises *darśana*, the vision, and *kavi*, *varṇanā*, the expression. As a seer Vālmīki had already the pure vision but he did not become a poet until expression came to him (*noditā kavitā loke yāvaj jātā na varṇanā*).



Another idea in Croce's thesis is that poetry is essentially "self-expression." Radhakrishnan finds it difficult to accept this, as on this basis, it cannot be explained how the expression of one man's self could be valid or significant to another.<sup>18</sup> The real answer to this problem is however what Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka offered as the 'universalisation' (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*), which poetic expression effects when it is transmitted or received by the reader or spectator. This universalisation of the concrete is tied up with the process of the worldly becoming non-worldly (*alaukika*); the real becoming ideal. This answers the question why, out of decency, we cannot keep staring at a couple in love in the park but can look on, contemplate and enjoy witnessing a love-scene between Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā on the stage.

While we are on the expression aspect, we may also see what Radhakrishnan has to say of the elements which compose the expression and contribute to its appeal. He maintains that the music and rhythm of words, the images they suggest, the choice of apt words and the proper order in which they are set,—are all there in poetry but, "they are not all." "Its essential quality is the emotional fervour."<sup>19</sup> That is, in terms of the Sanskrit critics *rasa* is the essence; all the rest, the stylistic qualities (*guṇas*) and figures and imageries (*alaṅkāras*) are subsidiary and are useful only to bring out the *rasa* more powerfully. All this, with *rasa* at its apex, is one whole. Summing up this section he says: "In the last analysis, the essentially poetic character is derived from creative intuition."<sup>20</sup>

The Indian theory at its best holds that in the realm of poetry as also in other arts, it is the process of suggestion (*dhvani*) that is supreme. When Radhakrishnan observes "Arts do not so much represent as suggest,"<sup>21</sup> he has in mind the sovereign principle of *dhvani*.

If the emphasis is on expression, a question naturally arises regarding the things which expression embodies. There is the well-known line according to which the poet gives shape to airy nothings. Radhakrishnan refers to this: "It hardly matters on what subjects he speaks, a night wind or a love fancy, a flower or a fleeting memory" and opines "But this does not mean that all themes are equally good for poetry . . . only great themes can give great poetry."<sup>22</sup>



Although art is a product of intuition and "is not wholly rational" and "oversteps the limits of the rational"<sup>23</sup> and "aesthetic creation and enjoyment are both non-intellectual actions,"<sup>24</sup> it should not be considered that they are totally opposed to each other. For, Radhakrishnan defines "intuitive power" as "a riper reason"—the nexus between appearance and reality. He says here that for great art, what is needed is inspiration and not intellectual power. He also observes: "Aesthetic perception or appreciation is different from intellectual discrimination and analysis."<sup>25</sup> But he balances all these statements by pointing out that it should not be forgotten that the work of art is charged with thought. He writes:

A good deal of system and symmetry, of reflective determinateness is involved in the unfolding of the artist's experience. A Beethoven symphony or a Shakespearean play has one indivisible inspiration but its expression involves elaborate labour on the intellectual plane.<sup>26</sup>

Now on the well-known definition of art as *imitation*, Bharata also speaks of this *anukṛti*, calls it also *anu-kīrtana*, and Abhinavagupta clarifies it more precisely in metaphysical terms as *anuvyavasāya*. It is a re-presentation, a re-creation. Let us look at Radhakrishnan's comments on this idea of imitation. He observes that poetry is creation, not copying; it is vision, not imitation.<sup>27</sup>

In *An Idealist View of Life* he writes:

It is imitation, as Aristotle said, but not of outward nature but of inner reality...He (the artist) discerns within the visible world something more real than its outward appearance, some idea or form of the true, the good and the beautiful...this idea or form, this meaning or value is not an added grace or refinement, but the very heart of the object itself.<sup>28</sup>

He therefore considers art not so much as creation, i.e., of something not existing, but a discovery, i.e., of the thing that is already there as the deeper reality. According to Mahima Bhaṭṭa, the author of the *Vyaktiviveka*, even when the poet describes things as they are, he contributes his own interpretation. There are two aspects in things, the common and the apparent, which figure in the ordinary verbal



descriptions and the *viśiṣṭa*, the special or primal, the *sūkṣma-svabhāva* as another calls it, which is beyond the parlance in vogue and which is the object of direct or pure perception. It is this that is dealt with by great poets of genius. This poetic imagination, Mahima Bhaṭṭa likens to the third eye of Śiva, which penetrates appearance and exposes the inner reality and brings into its cognisance things transcending limitations of space and time.

On aesthetic appreciation, we may notice two ideas expressed by Radhakrishnan. In "The Spirit in Man", he says, "The enjoyer becomes a secret sharer of the creator's mind"<sup>29</sup> and again that "we cannot appreciate if we are not aided by a higher insight. We must share the world which the artist presents to us. The reader of poetry is one of a similar heart and temperament"<sup>30</sup> and uses here the Sanskrit equivalent *sahrdaya* or *samāna-hrdaya*. And following this we may suggest that when he says "appreciation requires sympathy", he is referring to *hrdaya-samvāda*. In *An Idealist View of Life*, he characterises appreciation itself as creative. Later, in the same book, he endorses Croce's view that aesthetic experience is active creation<sup>31</sup> and that "even when we enjoy poetry, our mind is actively creating an intuition and finding its expression though we may not be conscious of it at all."<sup>32</sup> Rājaśekhara holds that the same creative imagination (*pratibhā*) has two phases, the active and productive (*kārayitṛī*) and passive and appreciative (*bhāvayitṛī*). And, in the words of Abhinavagupta, the *kavi* and the *sahrdaya* together form the true nature of the Muse (*sarasvatyās tattvam*).

We have again his statement: "Deepest poetry has widest appeal."<sup>33</sup> In the Indian conception of *rasāvāda*, the element of universality is basic; everybody is *liable innately* to have this aesthetic rapport but actually one should possess the necessary cultivation to have this response and hence the *sahrdayas* are not all and sundry. Therefore Robert Browning is correct when he says that the above statement of Radhakrishnan requires the qualification "potentially", because one must have the developed artistic sensibility. Radhakrishnan's statement here has to be read with or understood in the light of his other statements on the need for being a *sahrdaya*.

On the relation between art and religion, he makes some statements which may appear to be contradictory. In his *An Idealist View of Life*, he refers to art as one such substitute and observes:



Art provides 'imaginary satisfaction' for our unfulfilled desires and plays in infancy the roles which we have missed in life. Art becomes a sort of mental self-indulgence, a distraction that takes away the horrid taste of the real.<sup>34</sup>

But this is evidently meant as an *arthavāda*, for here he is emphasising the importance of religion. For him, as he later says here, "The cognitive, the aesthetic and the ethical sides of our life are only sides, however vital and significant. The religious include them all."<sup>35</sup> In other places, wherever he touches upon this aspect of artistic activity, he generally integrates art and religion or art and spiritual experience. In his short lecture on Art, he says: "The purpose of all art is sacramental,...an accessory of worship ..made in temples and in honour of gods."<sup>36</sup> He also writes that the arts "purge the soul of its defect and lead to a vision of the eternal."<sup>37</sup> This is the traditional Indian view of art as a *sādhana*.

The ultimate nature of the experience of artistic activity and the enjoyment of art also brings the two approaches of art and religion as close as possible. He quotes the Vedic definition of art (*śilpa*) as *ātma-saṁskṛti*, refinement of the soul, and explains: "he who attains to the vision of beauty is from himself set free."<sup>38</sup> Quoting Tagore on 'Poetry and Philosophy' and on the true function of poetry as a path-way to freedom, he says: "The artist helps us to forget the bonds with the world and reveals to us the invisible connections by which we are bound up with the eternity."<sup>39</sup> "The aesthetic emotion is a spiritual experience and not a mere subjective feeling."<sup>40</sup> Again "Instead, therefore, of saying that philosophy and poetry are incompatible, we should say that poetry to be poetry must essentially be philosophical, in the sense here indicated."<sup>41</sup> In the sequel here, he explains that the traditional opposition between the two, religion and philosophy, applies to the lower forms of the two, not the two at their highest. "The poet worships God as the spirit of beauty, while the philosopher pays his homage to God as the ideal of truth."<sup>42</sup> "The two are not opposed, as truth is beauty and beauty is truth."<sup>43</sup> The two aim at the same end; their starting points differ;<sup>44</sup> but they go on converging ultimately to the same fountain and goal of Intuition.<sup>45</sup>



The Indian aesthetes hold that the higher or ultimate end of poetry is *ānanda*, the ineffable, supra-mundane bliss and it is only at a lower level or secondary stage that poetry instructs us. The *ānanda* is of a category different from pleasure of any gain or enjoyment here, a distinction which Radhakrishnan also makes.<sup>46</sup> This joy is therefore spiritual, as it is disinterested. This joy is really that of peace and repose, an easing of the heart or a falling off of its knots, which is called in Sanskrit, *hrdaya-viśrānti*. This is perhaps what Radhakrishnan has in mind when he observes: "The greatest gifts of art are peace and reconciliation and every great poem conveys a sense of peace."<sup>47</sup> Art stills the restlessness and brings on a serenity, *prasāda* more commonly, *śānti*. All named *rasas* shed their particular complexions and partake of the nature of the fundamental *rasa*, *śānta*. This is perhaps what he has in his mind when he maintains that in the disinterestedness of aesthetic perception or appreciation, one "rises to the calm of the Universal Spirit."<sup>48</sup> It is thus akin to the realisation of the Supreme Brahman, *Brahmāsvādasodara*. It is akin to or an imitation of the actual bliss of Brahman-realisation because when the artistic stimulus is withdrawn, there is a lapse into the mundane state. Radhakrishnan observes :

The greatest gifts of art are peace and reconciliation. In those rare moments when we are moved by some beautiful poem or a great work of art, we are not only absorbed by it but our mind is raised to a higher altitude when it beholds the vision of things far above sense knowledge or discursive reasoning.<sup>49</sup>

It is apt to state here that he has also maintained that "the poetic experience is but *momentary* for the veil is redrawn and the mood of exaltation passes."<sup>50</sup> In another place also he has expressed the same idea, viz., that the disinterestedness of aesthetic contemplation makes the human spirit free from the...confusions of temporal life, but this is *momentary*.<sup>51</sup>

The two ends of poetry, the primary and the secondary, of joy and edification, *ānanda*, and *vṛtṭpatti*, are also reconciled in the Indian theory by explaining the process of edification or instruction or improvement of man as spontaneous, imperceptible and inevitable. The *Ālaṅkārikas* use the analogy of the beloved, who even as she is



unfolding her charms, beguiles her lover into wholesome conduct: *kāntā-sammitatayā upadeśa-yuje*. The elixir carries its innate reforming and sublimating power. It is this idea that Radhakrishnan gives expression to when he observes:

The function of art is to stir the spirit in us, humanize our nature, refine life and produce profoundly satisfying states of mind which gradually become persistent attitudes. The light of knowledge commends itself by its own sweetness.<sup>52</sup>

One other topic touched upon by Radhakrishnan is the place of tragedy in artistic presentations. He voices forth the Indian view when he observes: "In all true poetry, as in all true philosophy, the end must be reconciliation."<sup>53</sup> But he adds that this does not mean that drama should conventionally end in a marriage or a benediction. The poet cannot skip the misery and imperfection in the world but, according to Radhakrishnan, a tragedy which leaves in the mind an impression of disgust and dissatisfaction is a failure as a work of art. He does not expressly cite and discuss Greek Tragedy but appears indirectly to administer a correction to it and underline the Indian conception at its best, when he adds that the ultimate feeling in true art should be one of triumph and satisfaction. Without mentioning *catharsis*, he offers his interpretation of it that the conclusion of the tumult of the soul is the settled peace underneath.

There are some epigrams of Radhakrishnan on literature and poetry which could not be woven into the fabric but which may be stitched on like tassels to its borders. For instance, he writes: "Literature is the channel between spiritual vision and human beings. The poet is a priest of the invisible world."<sup>54</sup> "The aim of literature is the good of the world, (*viśvaśreyah kāvyam*). Its purpose is not to reflect the world but to redeem the world."<sup>55</sup> "Poetry then is a form of life, a realisation of the meaning of common life by living it more intensely. It is a ripe nature as organic as life itself. It is life come to utterance."<sup>56</sup>

Where are we now after all this exercise of our minds and words? Are the inherent paradoxes resolved? Art is the product of *intuition* and *vision*, not of *reason*, but the role of the intellect cannot be eliminated. Its aim is not didactic, it is the revelation of the inner bliss.

But its educative value cannot be minimised when we see the moral and social function it has always had. It is the form, the way of expression, that constitutes art, not the mere content or thought; without the latter, however, art cannot exist, nor can it communicate. Technique is required to shape it, technical elements go into the make-up of its charm and appeal but it is not exhausted by technique which is after all its device. Its appeal is based on universality, yet the connoisseurs (*sahṛdayas*) are rare souls of developed sensibilities. The verbal expression is inadequate to convey the vision in its fulness and vividness; even so, all of our critical analysis and terminology can but grope to reach or touch some of the aspects which strike us. The thing of beauty, mysterious in its origins and near-mystic in its end, is verily a thing of magic. Its enthralling delight and elevating effect are a fact of experience, but this, as well as all that is behind it, can only be called *anirvacanīya*. Let us then sit back, expose ourselves to it and get exalted !

## REFERENCES

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2. Sections 2, 3 and 4 of Chapter 5.
3. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, pp. 488-490.
4. "Reply to Critics" in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 793.
5. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 489.
6. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 147.
7. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 489.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 488.
9. I. 3, 16, 17, 3.16.
10. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 138.
11. *op. cit.*, I.3. 16-20; 3.1.6.
12. *Present Crisis*, p. 179.
13. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 488.
14. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 141.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 152.



19. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
21. *Present Crisis*, p. 187.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
23. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 489.
24. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 155.
25. "Reply to Critics" in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 793.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 490.
27. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 85.
28. p. 152.
29. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 144.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
34. p. 42.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
36. *The Present Crisis of Faith*, p. 186.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
39. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 77.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
47. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 153.
48. "Reply to Critics" in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 793.
49. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 153.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
51. *Crisis of Faith*, p. 186.
52. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 150;  
cf. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 104.
53. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 83.
54. *Present Crisis*, p. 179.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 146.

# INDIAN POLITICAL TRADITION AND RADHAKRISHNAN

PAUL YOUNGER

Was Radhakrishnan a philosopher-king as many have argued? Was he the fulfilment of Plato's long unfulfilled ideal? If he was a philosopher-king, would he not have been a living refutation of the Indian political tradition which had so carefully differentiated the functions of philosopher and king? Plato had complex philosophical reasons for believing that the ideal state would be one ruled over by a philosopher-king. But Manu, Kauṭilya and others had equally clear reasons for distinguishing and separating philosophy and religion from politics; *dharma* from *artha*; the role of the brāhmaṇas from that of the kṣatriyas. Radhakrishnan, of course, was not the only brāhmaṇa to participate in politics in twentieth century India, for as everyone knows, most of the leaders of the Freedom Struggle were brāhmaṇas, but he is the best example of someone who truly fulfilled the philosophical ideal of the brahmaṇical tradition and yet served in a distinguished way as Vice-President and later President of India. We propose then in this paper to re-examine the structure of the Indian political tradition and to ask whether the career of Radhakrishnan serves as a refutation or a confirmation of that structure.

In spite of prolonged periods of foreign rule the rhythm of the Indian political tradition is not very difficult to recognize. Indian history is a rhythmic alternation of periods in which there is a longing for local roots followed by periods in which there is a search for a unifying vision. The complex local traditions of the traditional sixteen



*janapadas* were, for example, followed by the unifying vision of the Mauryans and the great Buddhist emperor, Aśoka. The Mauryans were in turn thrown out by the "localist" Śuṅgas, but they were then followed by another "visionary" Kaniṣka, the great Kuṣāṇa.

Something of these two tendencies can, of course, be seen in all political traditions, for they are tendencies which are rooted in man's basic situation in the world. On the one hand man emerges from the womb much more dependent than other animals and longs for the warmth and love of his mother for many years. On the other hand man is also a creature who anticipates his own death and he therefore longs for some kind of universal significance, meaning or salvation. What is unique about the Indian tradition is the way in which these two human tendencies have been identified with their extreme forms and have been held in what one might call a polar tension. On the one hand, India has glorified that which is warm and loving and maternal so that the family, the caste, the region or even the nation are seen as motherly. On the other hand, the position of the philosophical schools and religious sects is a severely universalistic one in which no significance is attached to family, caste and nation at all.

The way in which the Indian political tradition has handled the polar tension between these two extremes is not to call for moderation, but to establish a three point dialectic in which the longing for warm rootedness (*samsāra*) and the longing for a unifying vision (*mokṣa*) are followed by a firm affirmation of order (*dharma*). As many scholars have said, the quest of the Indian political tradition, of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* for instance, is a quest for order or *dharma*. This statement is correct as far as it goes, but it is only properly understood if *dharma* is seen as the product of a dialectic, is seen as a balancing point where the tendency toward rootedness, local loyalties and the tendency toward universal vision periodically meet. The stable regimes of the Indian political scene have been those such as of the Guptas and the Choḷas which have recognized the claims of a visionary order and yet have insisted on utilizing that vision to re-establish local loyalties and thus in the end to gain a reputation for *dharma* or order. The Guptas clearly imitated Aśoka and the Mauryans, but also wisely erected temples to locally popular *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. In a similar way the Choḷas continued the Pallava



tradition of bringing in brāhmaṇa priests, but they built their temples on the old sacred sites and thus provided a sense of *dharma* or order to the whole.

We might describe this structure from another angle if we point out that from the point of view of the individual these three point in the dialectic are seen in terms of three loyalties: that to his family and caste (the local tradition), that to the brāhmaṇa teacher or religious leader (the universal vision), and that to the king (the enforcer of *dharma*). The balancing of these three loyalties was always a delicate matter. The loyalty to family and caste was naturally reinforced through ritual activities and was in many ways the strongest of the three. The texts find it necessary to frequently reiterate the importance of respect for the brāhmaṇa and recognition of the central role of the king. The king's role, while greatly exalted in the texts, was in some ways dependent both on the cooperation of those holding the caste and regional loyalties and on the visionary leaders who had to create an atmosphere which made people feel that it was worthwhile to reach out beyond their local loyalties. When the system worked well, it was the philosophical appeal to a universal visionary purpose which renewed the opportunity for a strong dynasty to come forward and reestablish the king's role as custodian of *dharma*. Theoretically the ultimate loyalty of the visionary,—whether he be a Buddhist, an orthodox Vedic brāhmaṇa or a sectarian brāhmaṇa, was universal and apolitical. The ultimate loyalty of the dominant castes and the local rulers was on the other hand essentially that of political power. These were two separate principles and on the theoretical plane one could not be incorporated into the other. But in working out a *modus vivendi* between them the brāhmaṇas recognised the importance of establishing the king as a median point who, even while he represented "power", could be made to serve the principles of "vision" and the system of *dharma*. The king in turn did not challenge the supremacy of the brāhmaṇa for it was only with the help of the brāhmaṇa that his vulnerability to the ever present claims of the local loyalties could be overcome.

With the coming of foreign rule one might have expected this political tradition to be lost altogether. Muslim rule was, of course, disruptive in many ways for it not only set aside most of the Hindu



kings but it also held on to the political theory that there was a near identity between religion and politics. Some Indians such as Kabir and Nānak attempted to see the Muslim rulers as being within the framework of the Indian tradition. But in general the tradition did not attempt to absorb Islamic ideas. The major structural adjustment which the tradition made to the disappearance of most of the Hindu kings was to recognize the brāhmaṇas as the sole leaders in Hindu society and to allow the distinction between the roles of brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas to become obscured. It was during this period that Tulsidās in rewriting the *Rāmāyaṇa* made Rāma a moral teacher as well as a king; that the Vijayanagar kings felt it necessary to become directly involved with religious matters; and the Marāṭha peshwas took over the running of that state.

With the arrival of the British, the foreign rulers chose a new role and the Indian political tradition was forced to respond in a rather different way. While the Muslim challenge had been directed at the Hindu kings, the British challenge was directed at the brāhmaṇas for they attempted to introduce a new philosophical initiative. After the debates of the early decades of the nineteenth century, the philosophy of Utilitarianism was agreed upon and the British set about trying to create in India a class of liberal gentlemen who would implement the new philosophy of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". Ram Mohan Roy and others accepted this philosophical initiative in a general way and it eventually became a new "visionary" element in the dialectic of the tradition. The philosophy of Mahātma Gāndhi eventually served as the third point in this dialectic so that by the time of Independence, the Western democratic vision had been accepted into the tradition in so far as it could be incorporated along with the local traditions and in so far as it could be made part of Gandhi's sense of order or *dharma*. Many political parties can claim that they total follow the philosophy of Gandhi, for that philosophy is understood not as a rigid set of principles but as a three-part dialectic in which the Western democratic vision is combined with caste and regional loyalties in an overall sense of order or *dharma*. Prime Minister Nehru may have emphasized the Western democratic vision, evidence of caste and regional loyalty may be more of a factor in certain sections of the Janata, and Prime Minister Desai may have an unambiguous perception of *dharma*. Nevertheless all three can legitimately claim



to be Gandhian in that they work out their political philosophy in terms of the total three-point dialectic.

What was Radhakrishnan's role in the adjustments which the Indian political tradition has had to make? Was he a brāhmaṇa from the South who felt he had to fulfil the dual role of philosopher and king to fill the vacuum created by the Muslim destruction of Hindu kingship? Was he a Westernized philosopher who was attempting in the spirit of Plato, Bentham or Mill to reform society? Or was he a traditional brāhmaṇa serving as a *rājaguru* to the ruler? In a way his career had all three of these elements, but we are going to argue that whatever his own intentions, he was understood by the public to be a *rājaguru* and therefore to be a confirmation of the validity of the traditional political system. In other words I am going to argue that it was Radhakrishnan's function to bring philosophical vision back into its traditional role in Indian political life.

The Indian public has attributed two accomplishments to Radhakrishnan. They have seen him as one who "mastered" the Western philosophical vision, and they have seen him as an able *rājaguru* to Prime Minister Nehru. He was seen as having "mastered" the Western philosophical vision: (1) because he had participated in the internal debates of that philosophical world and his arguments had won recognition in that context, and (2) because he had redefined the Indian tradition in such a way as to protect it against what was perceived as the greatest threat from the Western world of thought. He was seen as a *rājaguru* of Prime Minister Nehru: (1) because he had become a close confidant of the Prime Minister and could, it was thought, influence the latter's actions, and (2) because his speeches while supportive of government policy had taken on an air of detachment as if they were defining the general structure of *dharma* rather than advocating particular courses of action. Let us then look at each of these four accomplishments of Radhakrishnan in closer detail.

Radhakrishnan was seen as someone capable of full participation within the debates of Western philosophy. He became a champion of the "idealist view of life" over against the empiricist emphasis then prevailing in British philosophy. In retrospect one might wonder whether this "accomplishment" was as philosophically sound as it appeared at the time, for the similarities between European idealism



and Indian thought now seem a bit superficial and it is now possible to see that there were other philosophical currents in the West with which an Indian philosopher might have established links. But whatever our retrospective view might be, the public was correct in its assessment that Radhakrishnan had entered into the heart of the philosophical vision which nineteenth century Britain had left as its legacy to the Indian tradition.

Radhakrishnan's credentials as a "master" of the Western philosophical vision are related not only to his positive accomplishments as a participant in that philosophical world, but also as the creator of a philosophical boundary or limit for the participation of that vision in the Indian tradition. In setting forth the "Hindu view of life" Radhakrishnan gently but definitively eliminated an anxiety which had been troubling the Indian tradition from the time of Ram Mohan Roy. The British philosophical challenge was led by the Utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill with their emphasis on "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" through an administration aimed at justice, equality before the law, liberty, tolerance and the like. But in close support of these rather fragmented Utilitarian principles was the philosophical thrust of Christian missions which was to be seen on a day by day basis in the schools and hospitals of British India. From the time of Roy on, one can see a deep vacillation on the part of India's leaders toward this Christian dimension of the Western philosophical vision. Some, such as K.C. Sen felt that Christianity was the purest and the best part of that vision; others such as Tilak thought that ultimately Utilitarianism was only a front for Christianity and that the Western philosophical vision was indeed a threat to Hinduism and hence to the Indian tradition as a whole; still others such as Vivekananda and Aurobindo quickly dismissed Christianity itself but recognized that Utilitarianism needed a more profoundly religious base and set about to fill that need with their own contributions. Tilak's fear of the underlying Christian presence in Western thought was probably the most widespread of these three attitudes, and it was that kind of fear which Radhakrishnan allayed when he set forth the "Hindu view of life" for his Western colleagues.

Implicit in Radhakrishnan's ability to set forth the "Hindu view of life" are three hidden assumptions. On the one hand he speaks on the understanding that there is a distinction between the scheme of



Utilitarian values, which he accepts as the Western philosophical vision and Christianity, which he is then free to praise as a separate school of thought from which good ideas can be derived. Secondly, he accepts the essential structure of Utilitarianism which says that a "view of life" consists of the set of values a given culture has arrived at through the historical process. And thirdly, he reinterprets Hinduism in such a way that its basic tenets are seen as values which Indian culture happened to arrive at over the centuries. In retrospect one might wonder whether he has not made too great a concession to the liberal tendencies of the Utilitarians when he defined Hinduism in terms of a system of human "values", but the important point remains that what he was *perceived* to have done in defining the "Hindu view of life" was, to once and for all, put Christianity in its place as a religious system which was not coextensive with the Western philosophical vision which India had accepted from the West.

We have argued that the public perception of Radhakrishnan's twin philosophical accomplishment was that he "mastered" the Western philosophical world by entering into its internal disputes on the side of Idealism, and he defined the Western philosophical vision in such a way that it no longer included the possibility of a hidden Christian presence. The fact that he was given a chair of philosophy in Oxford confirmed for the Indian public Radhakrishnan's role as a master of the Western philosophical vision and set the stage for his second role as the agent of that philosophical vision within the political tradition of India.

Radhakrishnan's role in the politics of twentieth century India is unique. There were many other brāhmaṇas on the political scene and there were plenty of political activists who were philosophers at heart. But Radhakrishnan is not remembered for his political activity during the freedom struggle, but for the unusual role he played as a confidant of Prime Minister Nehru during the early years of Independence. What was the nature of the relationship between these two men and how was Radhakrishnan able to extend that relationship into a more formal institutionalization of the *rājaguru* relationship when he became Vice-President and later President?

Prime Minister Nehru, though described as arrogant by many, was in fact usually very close to the popular sentiment of the people.



He accepted the role which the leadership from Roy to Gandhi had given to the Western philosophical vision. He had none of Tilak's fear about the dangers that might be entailed for Hinduism nor did he even share some of the hesitation one can still see in Gandhi. Nehru's personal inclination had been to follow this vision even further in its Marxist direction, but his instinct for remaining with the people held him back when Subhash Chandra Bose as early as 1929 sought his cooperation and when Jaya Prakash and others formed the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. On becoming Prime Minister he recognized in Radhakrishnan what the people had already seen, namely someone who had "mastered" the various philosophical opportunities and dangers associated with an Indian appropriation of the Western philosophical vision. Recognizing that his own acceptance of labels such as "democracy" and "socialism" were essentially instinctive and political in nature, he honestly sought out the friendship of someone who had thought through these issues more thoroughly but was also committed, as he was, to using the Western vision to again set in motion the Indian political tradition. To put it in another way, Prime Minister Nehru saw in Radhakrishnan first of all a more able and accomplished philosophical friend, but also one who shared with him (as against Vallabhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others) the view that the Western philosophical vision had a valid place within the Indian political tradition. What he came to realize only slowly (and perhaps never in all its fullness) was that the people saw in Radhakrishnan a great figure who towered above the particular philosophical vision he served at the moment and stood as a symbol of the eventual harmonious order of the whole Indian political tradition.

The fourth, and, the last accomplishment of Radhakrishnan in the minds of the Indian people was that through his dignified performance of his role as *rājaguru* he reassured them that the Indian political tradition was in order and that the integration of the Western philosophical vision had been accomplished without losing anything essential from that tradition. When one reads Radhakrishnan's speeches as Vice-President and President one might be tempted at first to think of them as echoes of Prime Minister Nehru's ideas. But an important difference is discernible, and it grows much stronger



in the later years, in that Radhakrishnan's advocacy of democracy and socialism has an important note of "detachment" about it. He is advocating these policies not as a member of the political order but of the ideological order, not as a kṣatriya but as a brāhmaṇa. Although he himself gradually became conscious of his special brāhmaṇical role, it was the people who had thought of him in this role even in the days of his closest association with Prime Minister Nehru. Radhakrishnan was never looked on by the people as the liberal, radical, or Westernized successor to the conservative Rajendra Prasad (although to Prime Minister Nehru that was precisely the difference). He was rather looked on as a great philosopher who could explain and maintain the moral structure in which political life had to be lived.

In the final analysis Radhakrishnan was seen as a symbol of the tradition. While the *substance* of his philosophical task had involved him in winning a place within the Western philosophical world, and the *substance* of his political activity had involved him supporting the most vigorous advocate of the Western vision which the Indian political scene has known, nevertheless the *form* in which he carried out both of these tasks was one which brought about the renewal of the Indian tradition. Radhakrishnan worked in a Western philosophical context, but he did so on behalf of the Indian tradition which had taken the "vision" of the West unto itself and needed to "master" that vision if it was to fully incorporate it even as it had (mastered) the various Vedic, Buddhist and Vaiṣṇava visions of old. Most of the philosophical categories he used were Western, but the ultimate function to which that philosophical accomplishment was put was defined by the Indian tradition. Radhakrishnan also served as *rājaguru* to a non-traditionalist politician, but the dignity with which he conducted himself in the *guru* role allowed the tradition to believe that all political developments were still in the long run governed by the principles of *dharma*.

Since Radhakrishnan's time the course of India's political life has taken its usual quota of twists and turns, but few would doubt that these two great areas of accomplishment have become a permanent part of India's political heritage. On the one hand the Western philosophical vision has been absorbed into the tradition and taken



its place in that old dialectical pattern. On the other hand the old distinction between political power (*danḍa*) and moral order (*dharma*) remains strong. However one interprets the election of 1977 these two truths are evident. While the Janata is clearly closer to local loyalties and less apt to talk of universal vision than Nehru was, it is still generous in the role it gives the Western democratic and socialist vision within its conception of *dharma*. And nothing could have more eloquently demonstrated the interdependence but separateness of the domains of *danḍa* and *dharma* than the role Jaya Prakash has played during the past year. Radhakrishnan was too much of an Indian and too wise a man to have tried to dabble in politics and experiment with the untested role of philosopher-king. He was a good philosopher and a wise *guru* to his friend Jawaharlal Nehru. Because he played these roles well, the Indian people have been able to see in him a symbol of the traditional political structure; they have therefore renewed their confidence in that structure and restored it to its true vitality.

## RADHAKRISHNAN'S INTERPRETATION OF REBIRTH\*

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C. T. K. CHARI

During the long years in which Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan exercised his potent influence in more than one sphere of Indian national life, he was acknowledged as the doyen of those recent Indian philosophers who addressed themselves to the task of reinterpreting the ancient Hindu wisdom in the greatly changed context of modern knowledge. He was one of those very few thinkers who attempted a daring re-rendering of the Hindu belief in rebirth.

(1)

Two features of the reinterpreted doctrine of reincarnation, as set forth in Radhakrishnan's Hibbert Lectures, are noteworthy.<sup>1</sup> Radhakrishnan flatly denies the juridical and hedonistic theories of *karma* for which popular support can be found in India as elsewhere. The human demand for justice associates wickedness with future suffering and pain. Even Kant and Hegel advocated retributive theories of punishment. Radhakrishnan dismisses all questions about the expediency of virtue as trivializations of a great issue. Goodness is self-sufficient; it is its own reward. Evil-doing is itself a punishment. The moral government of the world should not be confused with any systematic distribution of rewards and punishments. If we follow Radhakrishnan, it is possible that even in India the belief in *karma* assumed crude and questionable forms. The abiding Hindu wisdom,



however, is not to be found in these popular misconceptions. Says Radhakrishnan:

Karma is not so much a principle of retribution as one of continuity. Good produces good, evil evil. Love increases our power of love, hatred our power of hatred. The reward for virtue is not a life of pleasure nor is punishment for sin pain. Pleasure and pain may govern the animal nature of man but not his human . . . Good and evil are not to be confused with material well-being and physical suffering.<sup>2</sup>

In my opinion, Radhakrishnan has given a brilliant answer to critics like A. Seth Pringle-Pattison and R.A. Tsanoff who, in the twenties of this century, dwelt on the weakness of all juridical theories of *karma*. Pringle-Pattison argues<sup>3</sup> that the doctrine of *karma* only extends the notion of punishment as a legalized revenge. It is but a glorification of talon law, *lex talionis*. If the essential business of the world is punishment, then naturally for every shade of guilt, there must be an appropriate punishment. The brutish man must be reborn as an animal and the oppressor as a slave. Tsanoff, fears<sup>4</sup> that if the *kārmic* mechanism of necessity is universal and inevitable, a 'sullen helplessness' is all that is left to us. Radhakrishnan has answered these critics once for all. *Karma* is no principle of reward and punishment. It is quite compatible with creative freedom. In a world of frail human beings, sympathy and charity are the essence of spirituality.<sup>5</sup>

I turn to the second liberating feature of Radhakrishnan's doctrine of *karma*. Pringle-Pattison remarks that punishment in the juridical sense can be justified, suffering can have a remedial effect, only if the evil doer can consciously connect the punishment with the crime. The complete absence of 'memories of previous lives' stultifies the Hindu theory. It is little consolation to say with Edmond Holmes that every 'mysterious error' has been somehow atoned for. Radhakrishnan trenchantly replies that on Pringle-Pattison's own admissions, memory is necessary only for a retributive theory of *karma*. He who is punished must, of course, know the why and the wherefore of it. But *karma* as a principle of spiritual continuity can dispense with conscious memory. Rebirth in animal forms, found in some Hindu sources, may be a figure of speech. The self of man is not an abstract



identity. It is a perpetual going and renewal. We carry the past with us and weave new patterns out of it, thereby preparing ourselves for the future.<sup>6</sup> Continuity in this new context cannot be assimilated to the more familiar types of empirically established continuity. Even this life is not all memory.

(2)

Radhakrishnan realizes clearly that almost all theories of rebirth must postulate that the habits, the skills, the tastes, the preferences, the inclinations for good and evil acquired by an individual through practice in one generation must be transmitted, however unconsciously, to an individual born in a later generation. Radhakrishnan saw that this, in effect, was a form of the Lamarckian doctrine. He suggests a *rapprochement* between the Lamarckian and Bergsonian theories of evolution as providing reasonable foundations for biology as well as reincarnation. In the sixth Hibbert lecture on 'Matter, Life and Mind'. Radhakrishnan notes that for Lamarck changes in habits in changed environments operated through the use of some organs and the disuse of other organs. Cumulative changes in structure and function, with the inheritance of acquired characteristics, are supposed to result. Radhakrishnan hints that Lamarck's needs and necessities must be supplemented by a deeper urge common to all life, a vital impetus creatively experimenting with its material environment and striving after higher forms.<sup>7</sup> He finds that psychical research investigating survival, although vitiated by fraud and error, affords some support for the ancient Hindu belief in a subtle body or *sūkṣma śarīra* regarded as the Lamarckian mechanism operating in rebirth.<sup>8</sup>

Some critics may demur to Radhakrishnan's empirical and quasi-empirical arguments for reincarnation. In the letters exchanged by Julian Huxley and Swami Ranganathananda and subsequently published<sup>9</sup>, Huxley said that even after rejecting materialism and accepting the emergence of consciousness in higher vertebrates, he found reincarnation impossible on genetic grounds. Swami Ranganathananda retorted that reincarnation went far beyond the purview of the physical sciences, singly and jointly considered. The Swami holds that reincarnation will 'ever remain a mystery to every human being till he or she realizes his or her true spiritual nature.'



I must confess that I have greater respect for Radhakrishnan's quasi-empirical defence of reincarnation than for Swami Ranganathananda's sanctification of a sheer mystery. The reduction of all science to sense perception and physics will not do at all. Radhakrishnan unfolds wider vistas for science.

## (3)

Perhaps some issues about Lamarck's theory deserve to be re-stated in the context of a debate on reincarnation. Lamarck's theory is opposed to Weismann's much later thesis about the continuity of the germ-plasm. Weismann maintained that once the body or the somatoplasm has arisen from the germ-plasm, there could be no impact of the former on the latter. The continuity of the germ-plasm is uninterrupted and unaffected by the vicissitudes of the somatoplasm. Weismann cut off the tails of mice through twenty-two generations and found that the tails did not become progressively shorter. I understand that formerly in the Freiburg Institute of Zoology the mutilated remains of some 1592 rodent martyrs to science could be found, neatly labelled in bottles.

It should be obvious that mutilations are not inherited any more than the effects of circumcision among the Jews in 4,000 years, or the effects of tattooing among the Red Indian braves or of the squeezing of feet among the high-born Chinese ladies of yore or of the flattened heads and distended lips among certain African races. Radhakrishnan argues that the discussion need not, and cannot, end here. Mutilations are passive and arbitrary effects inflicted on organisms. On Lamarck's theory, organic adaptations to the environment arise from a deep need (Lamarck used the French term *besoin*), a wilful struggle and effort. In Lamarck's celebrated illustration of the giraffe, the ancestors of the present-day animals by stretching their necks to reach the higher leaves on trees left their marks on successors with accompanying changes or co-adaptations in the general build of the body and the shortened legs. In the ancestors of the horse, gradually all the toes except the median atrophied. Even the metacarpals became vestiges. Horny layers appeared on the remaining digit. The hind legs of the whale ancestors declined when they took to swimming.



Radhakrishnan submits that the absence of experimental proof of the Lamarckian doctrine does not entail the rejection of it. There is some positive evidence for it.<sup>10</sup> At the time when Radhakrishnan delivered the Hibbert Lectures in 1929-1930, there were distinguished Neo-Lamarckian spokesmen like Cope, Packard, Le Dantec, Giard and Pauly. General Smuts adopted a sympathetic approach to Neo-Lamarckism.<sup>11</sup> He pointed out how a certain kind of light-coloured moth (*Ypsipetes trifasciata*), after exposure over a decade to the smoke and allied conditions prevailing in the industrial areas of Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and USA, turned black. The descendants were visibly and permanently affected by the environment. Towers by exposing the Colorado beetle (*Leptinotarsa*), the potato pest, to high and low temperatures, and Sumner in similar experiments with mice, produced permanent modifications in the off-spring.

Unfortunately for Lamarckism, many of these cases are examples of parallel induction, of simultaneous changes produced in the body and in the germ cells. The latter change alone was effective over the generations. Melanism in moths is not like the artificial colour imparted to eggs by the use of external agents like aniline dye. Harrison, by feeding the caterpillars of the moth with heavy metals like lead and manganese, produced a black mutant which persisted. The change was not an adaptation but rather a response knocked out of the resources of the germ cell. Mutation in a simple Mendelian gene sufficed. Mark Baldwin, and later Lloyd Morgan and Osborn, proposed the theory of organic selection according to which a somatic modification, e.g., appearance of fur in an animal living in the polar regions, might shield and reinforce an analogous germinal mutation. But the two kinds of changes are not always in the same kind. Delage and Goldschmidt questioned the selective value of ontogenetic modifications if they occurred generally. The callosities on the knees of the camel and the warthog were described as true Lamarckian inherited adaptations produced by kneeling and continued friction with the ground. But Patrick has pointed out that in the 'mud-poppy', an aquatic salamander (*Necturus maculatus*), a thickening of the sole could be seen in a cross-section of the foot. The ancestors of the animals could not have walked on the ground at all to produce the change. Pavlov and McDougall (Radhakrishnan refers to the latter)<sup>12</sup> in some learning experiments found that the effects of learning were transmit-



ted to successive generations. The animals seemed to learn quicker<sup>14</sup> and quicker over the generations. It transpired that the improvement was in the experimenter's set-up and not in the animals at all. C.H. Waddington, in his discussion in the symposium<sup>14</sup> observes that, however open we keep our minds, Lamarckism and Neo-Lamarckism are highly unlikely hypotheses. Evidence for the genetic assimilation of what are, in the first instance, environmental modifications, has steadily declined. The Neo-Lamarckian experiments of Kammerer producing in the midwife toad pigmented nuptial pads and of Lysenko producing hazelnut on hornbeam were tainted with more than a suspicion of fraud.<sup>15</sup> Even Soviet geneticists questioned Lysenko's environmentalism in its claims to oppose bourgeois Mendelism.<sup>16</sup>

Several strands of the Lamarckian theory may be disentangled in examining reincarnationist claims. Cope designates as physiogenesis the effects on the organism of environmental factors like temperature, pressure, air currents, water and metals. The effects arising from the activation of organs he calls kinetogenesis. Mechano-Lamarckists take a physico-chemical view of physiogenesis while Vitalistic Lamarckists adopt a hormic view of it. Psycho-Lamarckists stress kinetogenesis. Pauly postulates conscious and subconscious needs and explorations. Cope invokes a generalized energy or 'bathmism' (the Greek *bathmos* signifies a threshold or step) promoting growth in germ cells. Lysenko denied that he was a Neo-Lamarckian because he favoured physiogenesis rather than kinetogenesis.

That reincarnation is in the main a specialized psycho-Lamarckism must be evident not only from Radhakrishnan's speculation but also from the reasoning of the French reincarnationist and medical psychologist Gustave Geley. He claimed that the doctrine to be reasonable needs a dynamo-psychism operating in all living forms, interacting with the environment, transmitting the modifications in structure and function to the later generations, and rising from the unconscious to the conscious.<sup>17</sup> More recently the Scandinavian reincarnationist Lasse Laine has invoked Lamarckism to account for the transmission of mental, moral and spiritual traits during reincarnation.

#### (4)

Is reincarnation viewed as a special kind of psycho-Lamarckism plausible in the light of more recent research? I shall distinguish



three types of biological informational systems. First, there is the genetic informational system which does not have a feedback into the individual organism but is passed on from generation to generation. Second, there is the environmental information arising from experience and learning which has profound feedback into the individual organism but is not passed on to later generations. Lastly, there is, at the human level, the cultural information system based on language and recorded symbols which is passed on to individuals as well as to succeeding generations. I shall conveniently call the three informational systems the primary, secondary and tertiary systems. They correspond roughly to, even if they are not identical with, the Alpha, the Beta and the Gamma, codes described by J.G. Miller in his paper.<sup>19</sup>

Reincarnation is basically the claim that the environmental information arising from the experience and learning of a specified individual in one generation can modify the genetic or primary information system of a subsequent generation and thereby the secondary and tertiary information systems of a specified individual in that later generation. On theoretical and empirical grounds, the suggestion appears inadmissible. The three stages in the elaboration of genetic information are replication, transcription and translation. Replication is the transfer of genetic information from deoxiribonucleic acid or DNA to DNA. Transcription is the transfer of genetic information from DNA to ribonucleic acid or RNA. Translation is the transfer of genetic information from RNA to protein. The binding of the codon to the anticodon with complementary bases must take place on the transfer RNA. Crick's 'Central Dogma of Molecular Biology' states that the flow of biological information can be only from the DNA of one generation to the DNA of another generation or from the DNA *via* RNA to protein. Pattee and Frölich have extrapolated various quantum-mechanical analogues of coding theorems to preserve the asymmetrical flow of biological information.

Reincarnation seems to reverse the direction of flow of biological information. On its premises, information flows first from DNA *via* RNA to protein in one generation and then, after the death of the individual, from the protein of the deceased to the DNA of a newly-born individual in another generation. The formidable difficulty remains even if a subtle or astral body carries the 'memory traces' of



the deceased. The subtle body must perform the essential functions of a secondary informational storage in order to influence directly the DNA of a newly-born individual and thereby the secondary and tertiary informational systems of that individual. How and when does the subtle or astral body interact with the various informational systems? An answer along general lines at least must be given by the reincarnationist even if no explicit and detailed solution is offered.

Recent research on learning and memory, as reported, for instance, in two symposia,<sup>20</sup> points to bioelectric activity as well as to changes in RNA, changes in its quantity as well as in the proportion of its bases. Specific proteins, too, must be produced; for substances which block protein syntheses seem to affect memory storage. There may not be a localized area of the brain for memory storage. The hippocampus may figure in its bio-electric and bio-chemical roles. Long-term memory presupposes complex molecular patterns, a whole constellation of factors as argued by Hyden, Dixon and others: DNA in the genome, regulator genes, complementary RNA, synthesis of proteins, de-repression and release of specific proteins in the neural synapses. How does the *sūkṣma śarīra*, I ask, produce changes in the secondary and tertiary informational systems without first acting directly on the primary genetic system? The indications are that the unfertilized egg, although it contains a wide assortment of RNA, the messenger, ribosomal, and transfer forms, restricts RNA translation into proteins until fertilization occurs. Even after fertilization, considerable differentiation can proceed without the new RNA synthesis so basic to all memory and learning.<sup>21</sup> There is little or no evidence of accumulated results of experience and learning associated in a cryptic fashion with the fertilized egg and waiting to be triggered off. Nor is there a shadow of such evidence in the studies of infantile amnesia conducted with animals and beings, for instance in the recent work of Xenia Coulter. There seems to be a real immaturity of information storage systems, in structure and function, in the newly born which is very hard to reconcile with accumulated long-term memories presupposed in reincarnation.

Suppose the subtle or astral body carrying the 'memory traces of earlier lives' interacts in some bizarre way with the genetic information system on the analogy, say, of modern genetic engineering.



How can it selectively transmit memories and habits to *one* individual and avoid passing them on to *other* members of later generations? Let us consider the so-called allophenic mice produced from vastly different paired combinations of cellular genotypes, in plain English, mice of multiembryonic origin. The allophenic embryos can be shifted from *in vitro* to *in vivo* states in order to produce a pseudo-pregnancy. Throughout the development, the allophenic mice are unique; they do not resemble at all the experimental 'chimeras' produced by introducing a limited tissue graft into a host.<sup>22</sup> Reincarnation is not even a coherent Lamarckism; it is an inconsistent Lamarckism requiring a selective and highly non-uniform transmission of acquired traits to later generations. The assumption would seem to render biological information systems highly unreliable and evolution a veritable chaos.

There is an added difficulty. Suppose 'genius', as Radhakrishnan maintains, is but the ripe fruit of countless earlier efforts and trials; then there would seem to be no room at all for genuine novelties or truly creative advances. A theorem about the constancy of gene frequencies was given independently by G.H. Hardy and W. Weinberg. But the Hardy-Weinberg theorem is true only if gene frequencies in a Mendelian population remain constant from generation to generation and the carriers of different genes are adaptatively equivalent. Fluctuations of mutation rates cannot be ruled out in practice. The Hindu theory of rebirth, in its usual formulations, reflects the inherent weakness of a cyclical or repetitive theory of all time and history. The spirals of Spengler, Marx, Toynbee and Sorokin are far different and raise issues of a different order altogether.

Radhakrishnan's restatement of the doctrine of rebirth is challenging even if it is inconclusive. Can we grapple today with his questions seeking insights from the newer research in order to offer more constructive and comprehensive suggestions? In my opinion, Indian philosophy, to be truly productive in the modern climate, must make strenuous efforts both at revision and synthesis.

#### *Postscript*

Dr Ian Stevenson of the Virginia University, one of the chief investigators of alleged cases of reincarnation, has suggested that partisans of heredity *only* and of environment *only* may well have to reckon



with reincarnation as a third possible factor. I have argued that reincarnation is but a disguised form of environmentalism. The possibility of a reincarnating theta factor influencing biological information systems must first be supported by available evidence in the new bids for human embryo transplants, the new recombinant DNA's the artificially created 'synthetic genes' and the plans for producing a 'clone man'.

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## PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETY: RADHAKRISHNAN'S APPROACH

S. GOPALAN

It is perhaps a truism to state that the most significant feature of Radhakrishnan's philosophy is that it attempts a blending of the empirical and the transcendental analyses of human life. But, this very synthesis that Radhakrishnan seems to be emphatic about—both in regard to the analysis of man as a person and with regard to an identification of the ideals of human life—creates difficulties in understanding his thought-system. On the one hand, we find him being interpreted as a philosopher whose main concern is to emphasize that man ought to realize his transcendent potentialities and achieve a total transformation of being. On the other, his interpreting Hindu thought to the West, his reiterating that Hindu philosophy is not other-worldly but is a significant guide for righteous living, is understandably held to offer his readers an insight into his basic position in the world of philosophy. It seems to me that the difficulty in interpreting Radhakrishnan's view-point stems from the notion that the transcendental and the empirical 'realms of human existence' are incompatible with each other such that the acceptance of the one entails the rejection of the other.

I wish to submit in this paper, that while the compatibility of these two elements in Radhakrishnan's philosophy may perhaps be argued for in more ways than one (thus dismissing attempts to *read away* the one or the other aspects of his philosophy), the area of social philosophy offers certain clues to the idealistically-oriented 'worldly



philosophy' of Radhakrishnan. Since however, there is a lot of debate in regard to the meaning of social philosophy itself, I would like to spell out three aspects of philosophizing about society which may be helpful in understanding the basic methodology adopted by Radhakrishnan in his approach to the problem of man and interpreting the deeper aspects of human living. I wish also to avoid committing the mistake of reading all our debates into Radhakrishnan's philosophy. For one thing, that would clearly be a case of 'finding what *we* want to find' and for another, it needs to be conceded that Radhakrishnan was *not* a philosopher of society, primarily.

It seems to me that a philosophy of society can be built by analysing fully and interpreting carefully the system of values in a given tradition. The procedure requires not merely that the various values are noted down and *studied* for getting at their implications and significance, but more importantly, it involves the difficult task of mapping out the pattern—the *gestalt*—they offer. This may be referred to as the *axiological approach*. Though in a sense, the individual as against society receives the focus of attention in this approach, it should not be thought that the significance of society is overlooked completely here.

The second way of 'doing' a philosophy of society seems to be by taking up for consideration, the various social institutions and attempting to understand the value-orientations they sustain and the ideals they stand for. The structuralist approach (which consists in describing the social structure, as some contemporary sociologists would call it) as well as the functionalistic standpoint (which more clearly reveals the philosophical perspective) are equally significant here. This may be described as the *institutional approach*. Though the shifting of attention in this approach is clearly towards inter-personal relationships and away from the personal aspects of human life, it needs to be noted that the personal aspects merely recede to the background, but never totally disappear from the scene of investigation.

The third approach to philosophizing about society is in terms of interpreting the significance of the social sciences *vis-a-vis* the philosophy of the social sciences. Here again, the analytical approach of the various sciences of society (and, consequently their having to circumscribe their scope of discussion) is clearly contrastible with the



synthetic-synoptic approach of the philosophy of the social sciences; but, the contrast itself is meaningful in the context of appreciating the peculiarity of the subject-matter (viz., man) of these disciplines. The fact that the purely objective method which characterizes the physical and the natural sciences is not applicable to the social sciences points to the peculiarity of the human situation which refuses to succumb to the reductionistic methods of understanding. This can be described as the *meta-social method* of doing social philosophy.

For the purposes of this paper we need not concern ourselves with the details of the three approaches. What requires to be stated, however, is that these three are not opposed in principle but are together indicative of the complexity of the human personality and hence also of the difficulties involved in philosophizing about man and society. The axiological analysis is primarily aimed at reflecting about the significance of man's pursuit of values from the point of view of understanding the 'great potential' they hold for personal transformation of human life. The institutional approach is concerned more with the social dimension of the transformation than with the subjective aspects of individual development. The social-scientific and the meta-social methods of analysis lay bare the empirical and the extra-empirical dimensions of human life and consequently leave open the possibility of other approaches to an understanding of man.

I would like to suggest here that while it is possible for us to visualize, with a fair amount of certainty, what Radhakrishnan would have written (had he analysed them specifically and deliberately as fundamental questions in the philosophy of society) on the axiological and the institutionalistic methods of philosophizing about society, it is extremely difficult for us to get at his ideas in terms of the social sciences—philosophy question. What is significant here is that certain trends in sociology and discussions in the social sciences seem to concede what Radhakrishnan has been stressing, viz., the uniqueness of man. In the context of the discussion in this paper it is not necessary to dilate upon the dominant reason for the social sciences pleading for the uniqueness of man, viz., that human nature is such that the physical and the natural science methods are not wholly useful in understanding it. What needs to be noted is that both the analyses—Radhakrishnan's as well as (some) social scientists'—point to an irreducible



core in man. I am particularly concerned to indicate the philosophical use which Radhakrishnan makes of the 'irreducible core'.

Reflecting about the distinctiveness of human life, Radhakrishnan observes :

The uniqueness of man among all the products of nature lies in this, that in him nature seeks to exceed itself consciously, no longer by an automatic or unconscious activity, but by a mental and spiritual effort. Man is not a plant or an animal, but a thinking and spiritual being set to shape his nature for higher purposes. He seeks to establish order and harmony among the different parts of his nature and strives after an integrated life. He is unhappy so long as he does not succeed in his attempt at reaching an organic wholeness of life. There is always a mental and moral ferment in him, a tension between what he wishes to become, between the matter which offers the possibility of existence and the spirit which moulds it into significant being.<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis he lays on the uniqueness of man is thus designed to diagnose the human crisis. For he writes :

The present crisis in human affairs is due to a profound crisis in human consciousness, a lapse from the organic wholeness of life. There is a tendency to overlook the spiritual and exalt the intellectual.<sup>2</sup>

The critical approach he takes to the attitude of elevating the intellectual aspect above that of the spiritual is clearly seen to be born *not* out of his improper appreciation of the intellectual aspects of the human personality but out of his grave concern at the complacent attitude of looking upon the product of intellection as revealing the true nature of man. He observes :

If we think that our nature is limited by the little wave of our being which is our conscious waking self, we are ignorant of our true being. The relation of our life to a larger spiritual world betrays itself even in the waking consciousness through our intellectual ideas, our moral aspirations,

our cravings for beauty, and our longing for perfection. Behind our conscious self is our secret being without which the superficial consciousness cannot exist or act.<sup>3</sup>

Though terms like 'conscious activity' and 'unconscious activity' are used here, it needs to be reiterated that Radhakrishnan is here intent on emphasizing the fact that *only* by transcending the rational can transformation of personality be effected. Terms like 'conscious waking self' seems to be used by Radhakrishnan to make the point that the spiritual aspect of man is the one which ultimately lends meaning to human life itself and is thus helpful in getting over the crisis of man. In so far as the spirit in man is not revealed to thought at the first instance it could best be described as being a potentiality merely, — a potentiality which is waiting to be actualized by 'thought deepening itself' or by the 'intellect transcending itself'. Paradoxically, this type of 'spiritual introversion' is instrumental to getting over the limitations imposed by individuality. The introversion 'to find the spirit' in fact results in a simultaneous widening of concern which in turn leads to an integration of the various aspects of man's being, the physical, the mental and the spiritual, — an integration characterized by the physical and mental aspects subserving the 'interests' of the spiritual. In his own words :

Consciousness in us is partly manifest and partly hidden. We can enlarge the waking part of it by bringing into play ranges of our being which are now hidden. It is our duty to become aware of ourselves as spiritual beings instead of falsely identifying ourselves with the body, life or mind. While we start with the immediate and the actual, our limited self-consciousness, we can constantly increase and enrich it, gathering into it all that we can realize of the seen and the unseen, of the world around us and above us. This is the goal of man. His evolution is a constant self-transcending until he reaches his potential and ultimate nature which the appearances of life conceal or inadequately express. We are not through this process, abolishing our individuality but transforming it into a conscious term of the universal being, an utterance of the transcendent divine. The instinctive and the intellectual both attain their fruition in the spiritual



personality. The flesh is sanctified and harmonized with the spirit; the intellect is illumined and harnessed to the realm of ends. Body and mind, instinct and intellect become the willing servants of spirit and not its tyrannical masters.<sup>4</sup>

It seems certain that Radhakrishnan does not accept a compartmentalised treatment of the various aspects of the human personality. Understanding man requires, as a preliminary, the recognition of the fact that man can be reduced neither to the more obviously observable aspects of his life nor to the less clearly perceptible aspects, that human life is one organic whole in which it is extremely difficult to discern the dividing lines between the domains of the different parts. Rather than drawing the conclusion that the uniqueness of man points to the unpredictability of human behaviour (and hence also to the futility of the philosophic activity itself) he seems to underline the inapplicability of the either-or approach.

In more traditional philosophical terms, the question at issue is whether man is free or determined, for, ultimately it is the answer to this basic question that should give us an insight into the role of values *vis-a-vis* the institutions in human life. We are thus to consider the axiological and institutional aspects as not being unrelated to the uniqueness of man but as being based on it. The value-pursuit that man is capable of is seen to be indicative of the unpredictability of human life while the institutional aspects are interpreted as pointers to certain deterministic elements in human life. The indeterministic and the deterministic aspects of human life, however, should not be baldly identified respectively with man's value-pursuit and institutional life. For, not only do they admit of elements of determinism and indeterminism but both of them are clearly grounded in man's uniqueness, viz., the possession of a free-will. Vehemently arguing for the freedom of the individual (and hence for the creativity that man is endowed with), Radhakrishnan points out :

Man is not a mere mechanism of instincts. The spirit in man can triumph over the automatic forces that try to enslave him ... We can use the material with which we are endowed to promote our ideals ... What the individual will be cannot be predicted beforehand, though there is no caprice. We can predict an individual's acts so far as they are governed by



habit, that is, to the extent his actions are mechanical and not effected by choice. But choice is not a caprice. Free-will in the sense of an undetermined, unrelated, uncaused factor in human action is not admitted, (for) such a will defies all analysis. It has nothing to do with the general stream of cause and effect...If human actions are determined... there is no meaning in punishment or training of character... Man controls the uniformities in nature, his own mind and society. There is thus scope for genuine rational freedom while indeterminism and chance lead to false fatalism.<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious from the above that Radhakrishnan is careful enough to point to the blending of the elements of determinism and indeterminism in human life by bringing into focus the meaning of freedom itself. It is necessary to note that as the term 'human life' connotes not merely the *personal* but also the *social* aspects, whatever has been said above in regard to the personal aspects of life can be said also in regard to its institutional side. In terms of the axiological and the institutional approaches to the philosophy of society, spelt out at the commencement of this paper: it can be maintained that since they are reflective of the value-pursuing characteristic of man and of the institutional orientation inherent in human life, they cannot be equated with the indeterministic and the deterministic aspects of man's social living either. This is perhaps what Radhakrishnan has in mind when he writes:

The universe is not one in which every detail is decreed. We do not have a mere unfolding of a pre-arranged plan. There is no such thing as absolute prescience..... The divine in us can, if utilised, bring about ... sudden conversions. Evolution in the sense of epigenesis is not impossible. For the real is an active developing life and not a mechanical routine.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of the values-institutions question: it follows that human values have their institutional significance and institutions are ultimately based on certain core-values cherished by man. Radhakrishnan seems to be appreciative of this as he has taken pains to argue both for the institutional significance of the value of *dharma* and for the deep values that an institution like religion stands for.



The reference here to Radhakrishnan's according importance to the institutional aspects of *dharma* is not meant to ignore his writings on the other values of *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, just as pinpointing to his views on the institution of religion is not born out of our overlooking his deep analyses of other institutions like education, property, family and the state. For the purposes of this paper which is designed to argue that a proper understanding of Radhakrishnan's philosophy of society is possible only when his views on the value-institution question are understood, it is deemed sufficient to make passing references to his views on *dharma* and religion alone.

To indicate the way he approaches the concept of *dharma* first : While interpreting the traditional four-fold values (accepted in the Indian tradition, the *puruṣārtha*-scheme) in general and *dharma* in particular, Radhakrishnan pleads for an approach in which the social relevance of this core value of Hindu ethics is accorded a place of importance. It may perhaps be objected here that Radhakrishnan's stress on the social, even in preference to the personal dimension of the question may best be accounted for by his concern for "talking to the West in its own language" and, as such, it is symptomatic more of an earnest desire to establish communication-channels with them rather than of an enduring value he attached to the social meaning of *dharma*. Though the objection seems to be unanswerable and unassailable, the fact that Radhakrishnan, in interpreting *dharma*, was as much concerned with "resolving the tension between *dharma* and *mokṣa*" as he was in underlining social concern, would, it is hoped, add considerable significance to the interpretation attempted here, viz., that a prominent role is assigned by Radhakrishnan to the institutional aspects of man's ethical living. The "tension" that is referred to here is between morality which is admittedly contextual to the workaday world of empirical experience and spirituality which is indicative of a transcendent level of *being*. The complex nature of the question clearly precludes the choice of one of them *in preference to* or "as against" the other and thus leaves open the possibility of the one suffusing deeper meaning into the other. It is only in this light that Radhakrishnan's analysis and interpretation of the deeper institutional significance of *dharma* can be understood.

It is hence not surprising to note that even while referring to the general characteristics of Indian thought, Radhakrishnan points to



the prominent place accorded to *dharma* in it. He is seen to be deeply concerned to contest the criticism that Indian philosophy is non-ethical in character, that "there is practically no ethical philosophy within the frontiers of Hindu thinking"<sup>7</sup> and maintains :

The charge, however, cannot be sustained. Attempts to fill the whole of life with the power of spirit are common. Next to the category of reality, that of *dharma* is the most important concept in Indian thought. So far as the actual ethical content is concerned, Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism are not inferior to others. Ethical perfection is the first step towards divine knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

The significance of this 'element of defence' of Indian tradition is that in so far as *dharma* as an ethical value, is accorded a place of importance, the institutional context of human life is given due recognition by the Hindu philosophers. No doubt, Radhakrishnan does not belittle the significance of *mokṣa*, the ultimate spiritual value to be attained by man, but there is no contradiction involved in his taking the stance that neither of the values should be overlooked. Ethical values get their deeper meaning only when they are related to spiritual values; consequently, institutionalization of ethical values, far from 'diffusing' them actually helps intensifying social concern which result from them.

Such an interpretation, by Radhakrishnan, of the relationship between the ethical and the spiritual makes for an easier access to his ideas on religion. If religion is not *merely* a belief-system but is something more, if its significance is not considered to have been exhausted by a study of its inter-personal aspects, notwithstanding its institutional characteristics, the implication clearly is that its importance arises from the deeper-personal, multi-dimensional nature of the individual for whom it provides anchorage. In Radhakrishnan's own words :

Religious life does not consist in the acceptance of academic abstractions or the celebration of ceremonies. It is not sentimental adoration or cringing petition. It is not confession of faith or a vague social idealism. It is spiritual certainty offering us strength and solace in the hour of need and



sorrow. It is the conviction that love and justice are at the heart of the universe, that the spirit which gave rise to man will further his perfection...It is a deep acceptance of life and death and an unyielding determination to refashion existence in conformity with the dreams of heaven. It works for the welfare of the world, not for the sake of personal gain or private advantage, but because highest love (which is the highest wisdom as well) has for its natural outcome this highest duty.

In the light of these statements of Radhakrishnan, it may be observed that the institutionalization of religion can be considered to be ultimately traceable to a three-fold potential it has. First and foremost, it provides a meaning-structure to man and shapes his *view* and *way* of life. The correlation between the theoretical formulation and the practical aspects of true religion can thus be accounted for. Secondly, religion is seen also to be a system of values which provide both the ground and the grist for the more specifically subjective-developmental aspects of man in search of his soul, this *not* at the cost of, but *in addition to* the objective-social structures it provides. Thirdly, it reveals a theory of Reality, which is at the basis of both the meaningfulness of life and the system of values suggested therein. Though Radhakrishnan himself does not spell out these aspects of religion, it is quite apparent from his analysis of the spiritualistic aspects of religion that he would, in effect contribute to the three-fold analysis. For, he writes:

Self-perfection is the aim of religion, but until this aim takes hold of society as a whole, the world is not safe for civilization and humanity... The religious soul must seek for divine fulfilment not only in heaven above but on earth below. Each individual must strive to spiritualize himself so as to become a fit member of the kingdom of spirit. If the kingdom of God on earth is the ideal destiny of mankind, it cannot be reconciled with a gladiatorial theory of human life which assumes that the weak must go to the wall for the benefit of the strong or which requires man to slay brother-man. 'On earth one family' is the rule of the righteous... The feuds and agitations which sow seeds of hatred among



different nations and impel them to fly at each other's throats in fratricidal strife are the substance of irreligion... Religion is not simple spiritual state of the individual. It is the practice of the divine rule among men. The believer in God loves his fellowmen as he loves himself, seeking their highest good as he seeks his own, by redemptive service and self-sacrifice.<sup>10</sup>

The ultimate seriousness that religion stands for and the abiding concern for attaining transcendence that naturally evolves can be explained only in terms of the deeper ethical and spiritual values that sustain the institution of religion, Radhakrishnan seems to maintain.

The result, from the point of view of formulating a philosophy of society, is that the axiological and the institutional approaches seem to be necessary correlates which need to be constantly attended to and balanced at each stage of development, both of the individual and society. How the correlation can be effectively attained and similarly the precise way in which the process of balancing the claims and counter-claims of the two factors can be effectuated it is difficult to anticipate and would account for the uniqueness of man himself. This seems to be the basis of Radhakrishnan's reiteration of the uniqueness of man as a person and as a social being.

From the side of the social sciences, the method of *verstehen* (understanding) which is suggested as a possibility of getting over the debate whether natural science methods are wholly applicable to the social sciences seem to 'corroborate' Radhakrishnan's basic thesis in regard to the complexity of man and, as I maintained at the beginning, I do not want to take the position that Radhakrishnan's philosophy of society is also traceable to this aspect of the methodology of social philosophy.

Adopting the terminology of Karl Popper, I wish to conclude that in approaching Radhakrishnan's philosophy of society, we cannot help adopting the method of "conjectures and refutations" for the simple reason that Radhakrishnan was *not* a philosopher of society in the same sense in which some sociologists who acknowledge the normative orientations of the study of human society deserve that title.



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## HINDU DHARMA: RADHAKRISHNAN'S VIEW

T. S. DEVADOSS

In this paper an attempt is made to analyse briefly the function of *dharma* as a comprehensive concept of social regulation in relation to patterns of ethics in the Hindu tradition especially in the light of Radhakrishnan's interpretation. The concept of *dharma* is an extremely complicated one, offering many diversified though related meanings, and extending to a wide range of referents. *Dharma* is theoretically rooted in and derived from the sacred Vedic texts. However, we should note that the formulation of the concept of *dharma* as an effective social code and its justification appear subsequent to the Vedic age. In the context of this paper Radhakrishnan's interpretations are considered extremely significant.

In the *Vedas*, the concept of *dharma* is used merely to denote religious rites. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* indicates three branches of *dharma*—relating to the duties of the *brahmacārin*, *gṛhastha* and *saṁnyāsin*. The *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra* views *dharma* as that from which happiness and beauty occur. Śaṅkara emphasizes the universal aspect of the Vedic *dharma* as exemplified in the *Gītā* thus: "Two fold, verily is Vedic *dharma*, of the nature of action (*pravṛtti*) and withdrawal (*nivṛtti*), together constituting the world's stabilizing factor, being productive of true social welfare and spiritual perfection of all beings." According to Manu, *dharma* is that which will give satisfaction to the inner self (*antarātman*). Yājñavalkya states that what is agreeable to oneself, and desire born of careful thought is *dharma*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* states that self-control (*dama*) charity (*dāma*) and



compassion (*dayā*) constitute *dharma*. Thus we find that the concept of *dharma* was of paramount importance in ancient Hindu thought.

It may be noted that in spite of the various uses of *dharma* one underlying feature is its normative value. Basically, *dharma* is a rule of action. For example, *rājadharma* refers to the rule of the kingdom by the king based on ethical code of conduct. *Samāja-dharma* refers to the *dhārmic* principle underlying the regulation of communities. *Manuṣya-dharma* refers to that aspect of *dharma* meant for human beings. *Nitya-dharma* (daily *dharma*), *naimittika-dharma* (occasional *dharma*), *kula-dharma* (family *dharma*), *strī-dharma* (woman's *dharma*), *puṣa-dharma* (man's *dharma*), *sādhāraṇa-dharma* (common-*dharma*), *guṇa-dharma* (*dharma* according to one's characteristic qualities), *varṇa-dharma* (the duties prescribed for members belonging to the various social orders), *āśrama-dharma* (duties pertaining to the various stations of life), *āpad-dharma* (*dharma* in times of calamity), *deśa-kāla-dharma* (*dharma* according to the place and time of action), *yuddha-dharma* (*dharma* for fighting of war), *mokṣa-dharma* (*dharma* pertaining to the realisation of ultimate freedom). These varied actions of life have a common normative feature which involves the notion of regulation and are therefore essentially rules of action.

The understanding of *dharma* as a normative concept warrants two considerations : first, the *content* of *dharma* viz., the specific rules that constitute each of the particular kind of *dharma* and secondly, the justification of the rules. It is primarily with the latter aspect that this paper deals with, although both the questions are tied together. It is in the light of Radhakrishnan's thought that these two aspects will be analysed and discussed.

Man's life, individual as well as collective, would be impossible but for a certain measure of morality. In this sense *dharma*, according to Radhakrishnan, is 'man's inner nature'. The greater the approximation to the moral standard, the more truly does man realize his own nature. Each man's *dharma* — what the *Gītā* calls *sva-dharma* — is to perform the duties that pertain to his station in life. True, it is considered that *dharma* assumes the role of an instrumental value, but it is instrumental not to the realisation of any secular ends, however purely they may be conceived, but for achieving what is regarded as the supreme spiritual ideal. As Radhakrishnan observes:



The principle of *dharma* rouses us to a recognition of spiritual realities not by abstention from the world, but by bringing to its life, its business (*artha*) and its pleasures (*kāma*), the controlling point of spiritual faith.<sup>1</sup>

He further states :

*Dharma* is the whole duty of man in relation to the four-fold purposes of life (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*) by members of the four groups (*cāturvarṇya*) and the four stages (*caturāśrama*).<sup>2</sup>

Thus *dharma* helps an individual to gain self-knowledge that constitutes the supreme end for man.<sup>3</sup> While it is true that *mokṣa*, and not *dharma*, is the *paramapuruṣārtha*, it is accepted by all Indian thinkers that, without *dharma*, *mokṣa* cannot be attained. If *mokṣa* is the end, *dharma* is the means.

*Dharma*, the moral value, and *mokṣa* or spiritual freedom, are not opposed to each other, and the pursuit of these is possible for man who alone is endowed with the power to discriminate value from disvalue. Disvalue may be taken as that which is shunned or avoided. *Artha*, the economic good and *kāma*, the hedonistic good are of empirical value. Hence, they are not ends properly so called. Yet they find their place in the Indian scheme of values, for man after all, has to live before he could live spiritually.

Let us try to analyse the relation of *dharma* to *kāma*. Radhakrishnan points out that it is in helping us to discriminate between good and bad *kāma* that the superiority of *dharma* comes to be realised. The *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* declares: "Both the good and the pleasing come to man. One who is wise considers the two all round and discriminates them. He chooses the good in preference to the pleasing. One who is stupid chooses the pleasing for the sake of acquisition and prosperity."<sup>4</sup>

Radhakrishnan contends that "life is one, and in it there is no distinction of sacred and secular..... *Dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* go together."<sup>5</sup> Pleasure is indeed a part of the good life. It is both sensuous and spiritual. The needs of the body and the mind were too insistent to be completely suppressed and Radhakrishnan recognises the fact that such a suppression would lead to serious disorder in



the pattern of organised social life. We therefore find that the inclusion of *kāma* as an ideal of life was a sign of this significant development. Thus under the concept of *dharma*, the Hindu brings the forms and activities which shape and sustain human life. Radhakrishnan's interpretation of the concept of *kāma* as an instrumental value is humanistic in its approach. The Lord of the *Gītā* emphasises the relation of *kāma* to *dharma* thus: 'I am *kāma*, not at strife with *dharma*.'<sup>7</sup> Commenting on this verse, Radhakrishnan observes: "Our desires and activities, if they are expressive of the spirit in us and derive from the true spiritual personality, become a pure overflowing of the divine will."<sup>8</sup>

*Dharma* and *artha* are the two levels on which Indian thought dwells and action is pursued. The two traditions interpenetrate at all levels of human existence. They stand in a certain sense for the spirit of sacerdotalism and anti-sacerdotalism and phases of economic growth and social and economic depression.

The Sanskrit term for wealth is *artha* which means what is sought after as good. True, man has his desires and he seeks pleasures in the objects of sense. Indian thought does not attempt to suppress the desires and emotions that spiring from the human heart. On the contrary, its purpose is to make them flow within bounds and so canalise them that through them one may reach higher levels of experience. Radhakrishnan rightly contends that the economic factor is an essential element in human life. He observes: "There is no sin in wealth, just as there is no virtue in poverty."<sup>9</sup> It is true that wealth and enjoyment are not opposed to righteousness and spiritual perfection provided they are pursued as a means to spiritual well-being and welfare of all.

Mahatma Gandhi, being influenced by the idealism of the *Īśo-paniṣad* which inculcated that things of the world should be enjoyed by renunciation and wanted the rich men to hold their wealth in trust for the poor or give it up for them. He wanted that the rich should become trustees of their surplus wealth for the good of society. Therefore, Gandhi put forth his doctrine of trusteeship. His basic belief was that everything belonged to God and was from God, and that therefore, it was for His people as a whole, not a particular



individual. Radhakrishnan upholds Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship and says : "Let not people imagine that the one main interest in life is to acquire wealth, protect it, retain it ... An acquisitive mind has produced a sick society. Men should not therefore be satisfied with wealth. They should share their surplus for the welfare of all .. What shall it profit a man, says Jesus, if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul ?"<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Radhakrishnan pleaded for a dhārmic way of acquiring wealth. Wealth acquired by wrong means is undesirable.

The ordering of life to secure these four aims for each individual connotes the entire range of Hindu *dharma*. The *dharma* of a being is evident from its participation in the ultimate reality of which it is a manifestation. It should be noted that it is not something added on to the being of the individual in question in order that certain aims be achieved. Radhakrishnan contends that it is this basic conception of reality that must be understood if we are to appreciate the relationship between *mokṣa-dharma* and *sādhāraṇa-dharma*. It is a misnomer to look for justification of *dharma* in terms of the agreement of certain propositions about reality, with the kinds of aims, the rules of action are intended to achieve. On the contrary, one must look to the agreement of life with its source. It should be noted that *dharma* is rooted in something much more basic and fundamental to ultimate reality than merely the manifestations of human action and reason.

The full significance of the normative character of *dharma* can be clearly seen in the relation between *dharma* and *ṛta* as conceived in the Vedas. The concept of *ṛta* is used in the *Ṛg-veda* to signify the unchanging order of the highest reality. *Ṛta* is rectitude, the straight path leading man to perfection. According to Radhakrishnan, it is the cosmic order that envelopes the whole world and sustains it. It is also the law that regulates the punctilious performance of Vedic sacrifices. The starry heavens above and the moral law within man are both the manifestations of a supreme law which is the quest of the sages. Radhakrishnan interprets *ṛta* as that which manifests itself in the moral consciousness of man and comes to be called *satya* or Truth. It is *satya* that is socialised and becomes *dharma* which



stands for a perfect social order where everything is in place and where every individual takes in accordance with his needs.

The proximity of the concept of *dharma* to *ṛta* is seen in the fact that in this world, the chief duty of man is to engage in sacrifice (*yajña*). Engaging in sacrifice is the means for securing the order and function (*ṛta*) of the highest reality in this world. Since the effect of sacrifice is maintenance of order, and *ṛta* is the highest order of reality, these concepts are closely related and are clearly normative. But it is wrong to infer, as Radhakrishnan puts it, that, since *dharma* and *ṛta* are normative, they are ontological. There is no difference between the being (*sat*) of reality and its function (*ṛta*). Just as in the *Upaniṣads*, truth is identified with *dharma* so in the *Vedas*, truth is identified with *ṛta*. Radhakrishnan's contention, however that the identity of being and function (*sat* and *ṛta*) is one of the profoundest aspects of the Vedic vision is acceptable. *Dharma* as the effect of sacrifice represents the order and function of this world, for sacrifice establishes the connection with the *ṛta* of the higher unmanifest reality from which this world has evolved. It is not surprising to note that the later concepts of *dharma* and *karma* should replace the concept of *ṛta*, with *karma* referring to the connectedness of events, and *dharma* referring to the normative dimension of this connectedness of events.

The law of *karma* guarantees the relatedness of all events in the world, but does not provide for the regulation of events. The ordering of regulation of relations between events is accomplished by *dharma*. Because the idea of *karma* points to the progression of the Self through time, it becomes a link between *dharma* and *mokṣa*. The notion of *dharma* points to the integrity of the individual as also of society. In its close bearing on ethics and social philosophy, we must take note of the fact that the word *dharma* is used in a variety of senses ranging from customary observances of caste to the qualities of the soul—the righteousness that exalts individuals and nations.

The concept of *dharma* understood in its collective aspect is the foundation of the Hindu ideas of progress and social order. The *Gītā* doctrine of *niṣkāma-karma* has definitely set its face against utilitarian morality. Ethical perfection is a condition precedent to the achievement of liberation, and ethical perfection can be achieved by the individual only in and through society. Radhakrishnan speaks



of *svadharma* as a law of one's being, reflecting one's capacities, temperament and endowment. He also appeals to the natural hierarchy of society as a justification for *varṇa*. In the natural hierarchy of the social order, there cannot be one moral standard for all; rather there will be different norms or patterns of duty which express both individual capacity and social need.<sup>11</sup>

Radhakrishnan speaks of the organic character of society which is expressed in the description of *varṇas* as parts of the body of the creator, and he says that "there is a profound integration of the social destiny with that of the individual."<sup>12</sup> Being influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, he championed the cause of the Harijans. He observes: "Any discrimination against the Harijans is unjustified." He argues that for "the development of a degree of organic wholeness and a sense of common obligation, the caste spirit must go."<sup>13</sup> He accepts the principle of oneness of humanity and insists on the blending of the past with modernity: He observes:

From a study of the imperishable principles that have been evolved in our past history, we must develop new institutional safeguards for the protection of human dignity, freedom and justice. The genuine forces of the new must be woven with the valid principles of the past into a new unity.<sup>14</sup>

The wheel of *dharma* moves on in the trackless jungle of infinite possibilities. Good men (*sreṣṭhas*) are the path-makers who set the direction for the wheel to move. What gives them moral authority over others is not physical might, but strength of character and righteousness. By recognising the role played by them, Hindu *dharma* has proved that it is progressive, rational, adaptable and elastic. The whole structure of society depends on the foundation of *dharma* as thus conceived. "To follow the lines laid down by the good men who have the competence and insight to interpret the meaning of *dharma*, is the "safest way" for the ordinary man.

It follows from our analysis of Radhakrishnan's thought that, if *dharma* is determined by the inner being of the individual, regulating his multifarious activities to provide a harmonious blending of outward empirical manifestation and the inner reality, conflicts between the social and the extra-social aspects of human life can be avoided.



Radhakrishnan has contributed significantly to an understanding of *dharma* by reinterpreting it.

Radhakrishnan has been a distinguished champion of mystical idealism, the Gandhian ideal of *ahimsā*, universal religion and world unity. His familiarity with Western intellectual style and technique is abundantly evident in books like *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* and *An Idealist View of Life*. Radhakrishnan's life-task has been a search for universal religious principles, and his chief instrument of enquiry has been a powerfully developed historical consciousness. In the midst of expounding absolute idealism and extolling timeless verities, Radhakrishnan manifests an extraordinary attachment to the assumption that human experience must be understood in a historical context. Radhakrishnan goes so far as to say that "mankind is still in the making" and calls for a new world order based on the Gandhian principles of truth and *ahimsā* and mutual respect between cultural traditions. His universalisation of the principle of *dharma* is of significant relevance in the context of the changing modern world.

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## THE POLITICAL IDEALS OF RADHAKRISHNAN

R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

In his political thinking Radhakrishnan is an idealist, a liberal, an individualist and a democrat. The idealist tradition in philosophy in the West as well as in India in which he got his training and to which he is committed provides the base for his political philosophy which is idealistic in the best sense of the term. "An idealist view of life," Radhakrishnan holds, "is not expressed in any one pattern. It is many coloured and its forms are varied."<sup>1</sup> Underlying the different variations in which it appears, there is a basic belief. Radhakrishnan explains it as follows:

An idealist view finds that the universe has meaning, has value. Ideal values are the dynamic, the driving power of the universe. The world is intelligible only as a system of ends ...It finds life significant and purposeful. It endows man with a destiny that is not limited to the sensible world... Idealism today has to reckon with our problems and help us to face them.<sup>2</sup>

Radhakrishnan's political philosophy is the outcome of his conception of man and of the world. There are not only organic but also hyper-organic values such as truth, beauty, and goodness. Without neglecting the former kind of values, man pursues the latter kind of values and aims at perfection. The world in which he lives—the society of which he is a member—is conducive to the attainment of the higher values by him. In the course of the analysis of "the world we live



in", Radhakrishnan mentions six characteristics. The world, first of all, is an ordered whole. Secondly, every existent in the world is an organization. Thirdly, the organisms tend towards greater harmony with the environment. Fourthly, there is the emergence of new qualities which can never be predicted from the lower level. Fifthly, the changes that take place in the world are not meaningless. Finally, the highest kind of experience we have seems to be all-inclusive, and to produce personalities possessing such experience seems to be the end of the cosmic process.<sup>3</sup>

According to Radhakrishnan, there is an organic relation between man and the world. Man can develop his personality and attain the highest he is capable of only by being a member of a society, and the world which is the training ground subserves the purpose of man. Radhakrishnan observes :

However self-conscious or self-determining, the human being is not absolutely individual. From the first his world is equally real with himself and his interactions with it influence the growth of his individuality. The individual and the world co-exist and subsist together.<sup>4</sup>

In another passage he says :

No one can stand in proud isolation with contempt for the common herd. We can rise in the scale of being only by drawing all into ourselves. While the individual has to cultivate his own garden and integrate his own self, the self is not sharply marked off from the world, the garden is not fenced off from the rest of the universe. The world is our garden and we cannot become self-sufficient until the world is so.<sup>5</sup>

Radhakrishnan is a political idealist for two important reasons. In his explanation of the nature and function of the state, he is not concerned with any particular state as it is. He is rather concerned with the *ideal* state, with the state as it ought to be. He looks upon the state, as Aristotle would do, from the standpoint of its fully developed condition. It is in terms of the ideal of the state that we have to judge the actual functioning of any particular state. This is



an important feature of the idealistic political philosophy which Radhakrishnan shares with the Greek political thinkers in ancient times and with T.H. Green and other idealists in modern times. Radhakrishnan says:

... the importance of any nation is estimated not by its territory, population, or commerce, but by the values it has brought to the world and the degree to which they have been embodied in its life.<sup>6</sup>

There is another reason to show why Radhakrishnan is an idealist in political philosophy. Politics can never be severed from morals, though it is necessary to distinguish the one from the other. Like other idealists Radhakrishnan is concerned with the moral questions involved in politics. The state has to serve a moral end. It does not matter how the end is described. One may think of it as *Sarvodaya*, as the common good of society with which the good of every individual is inseparably connected. Or, one may think of it, as Green does, in terms of the attainment of 'self-perfection by acting as a member of a social organization in which each contributes to the better being of all the rest.'<sup>7</sup> Or, one may characterize it, as Radhakrishnan does, as "spiritual freedom". To quote Radhakrishnan:

Freedom has many implications, the chief one being to provide scope for the expression and development of the individual human being...All other freedoms—political, economic and social—are an indispensable means to this spiritual freedom...Man is not completely a social being, there is also a solitary side to him. It is by the way in which one handles his solitariness that man becomes truly human. Democracy is a faith in the spiritual possibilities of not a privileged few but of every human being.<sup>8</sup>

It is the business of the state to help man realize his spiritual freedom by enforcing a system of rights and obligations, which is applicable to all men in society. It means that the ground or justification for political obligation of the citizen is based on the function of the state—what it does and what it abstains from doing for the purpose of achieving the common good with which the good of the individual is connected. In other words, just as the citizen has obligation to



the state, the state also, in its turn, has obligation to the citizen. This, indeed, is the unwritten political contract between the state and the citizen. It is wrong to speak of obligation in a one-sided way. A state which insists on the performance of duties and obedience to law by the citizen, while it does not serve the moral end for which it exists, will become totalitarian. Citizens who expect that the state should do everything for them will not only lose the initiative and the advantage of self-help, but also pave the way for paternal government. We must, therefore, understand obligation in a reciprocal way, *i.e.* as the obligation of the state to the citizen and as the obligation of the citizen to the state. This is what Radhakrishnan calls "the law of co-operation." He observes:

A nation as an experiment in social living with its graces and values has a place, but as an instrument of power and exploitation it has been ruinous...A nation will endure only if it conforms to the law of love, of co-operation.<sup>9</sup>

It is wrong to think that Radhakrishnan is hopelessly "idealistic" (which is only another way of saying that he is unrealistic) when he speaks of "spiritual freedom" as the end to be served by the state. Spiritual freedom is the highest value to be attained through political, social, and economic freedoms. The state has to provide the necessary climate, through guaranteeing political, social, and economic freedoms, in the presence of which alone the individual can realize spiritual freedom. It has to maintain conditions of life in which spiritual freedom shall be possible. It is impossible for the state to promote spiritual freedom directly. Just as it cannot make men moral through the network of laws which it enforces, even so it cannot make them spiritually free through legislation. Radhakrishnan is aware of the limitation of state action in this regard. That is why he says that the state has to provide "scope for the expression and development of the individual human being". It should not do anything more than this positively. The relation of the state both to morality and spiritual freedom is ancillary, not creative.

It does not mean that the individual will attain spiritual freedom when political, economic, and social freedoms are guaran-



teed to him by the state. In addition to the help of the state, self-help on the part of the individual is needed to achieve this goal; and it may be noted that this is possible only in the case of a limited few. While the majority may remain satisfied with the other freedoms—political, economic, and social—which are external, a few not being satisfied with them may aim at the highest, *viz.*, spiritual freedom. To quote Radhakrishnan: "In any society a small minority overcomes spiritual inertia and asserts the force of spirit which is unconquerable. It resists the *status quo* .."<sup>10</sup> The state is concerned only with the minimum, *i.e.* the indispensable conditions conducive to spiritual freedom. The rest is left to the individual. "Each of us," Radhakrishnan says, "has the right to explore the universe for himself. Each individual has to blaze out his own trail into the unknown. And however much others may assist, the achievement is an individual one."<sup>11</sup>

Radhakrishnan is not only a political idealist, but a liberal as well. As a liberal he does not think in terms of restricted state function. He is not a votary of the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. Increase in state activity does not necessarily mean loss of the liberty of the individual. Functions which were considered to be outside the sphere of state are now admitted to be legitimate state functions. Consider, for example, the role of the state and the new assignments it has assumed with regard to education, housing, and health, labour and industrial dispute. The new functions which a state performs in the context of rapidly changing circumstances brought in by science and technology might not have been thought of in earlier times. The functions of the state, it must be emphasized, is not just *negative*—to prevent interference with the liberty of the individual. The state should not be viewed merely as "a hindrance of hindrances", "a force that repels force opposed to freedom". The state, no doubt, has to do this function. There is also a *positive* side to the work of the state which is equally important. The modern state has to be a welfare state. It has to undertake several measures for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the people without, however, encroaching upon the true freedom of the individual. Elucidating democracy as a political arrangement, Radhakrishnan says :

We must help to bring up the buried treasure in each individual without breaking any of it. For this, certain minimum



cultural and economic conditions must be provided. That is why we have universal education as a target in our Constitution. We talk often of a socialistic pattern of society. This does not mean regimentation of the individual. In the drama of human evolution, the chief actors are the individuals, the individuals of genius. We should not allow the individuality of human beings to be crushed or even diminished by the assaults of science and technology, by the mechanization of life.<sup>12</sup>

The concern for the individual is the basis and sustaining force of political liberalism. Individualism and liberalism go together; and this is borne out by the passage quoted above in support of the new role which the state has to play in the modern society. Radhakrishnan will not assign to the state any function which will be detrimental to the value and dignity of the individual. The individual is the maker of history, though, of course, in a given environment. He is capable of changing the environment; he could alter the course of events, achieve the impossible and obstruct the possible. "Man, the subject, can control his inward distortions and shape the world to the pattern of his ideal."<sup>13</sup> The human factor is the most unpredictable. Radhakrishnan says:

The absence of any preconceived pattern in history, the contingency, the unforeseeability, the haphazardness of history point to the intervention of the free spirit of man. The future of mankind is wide open. There is nothing inevitable about it.<sup>14</sup>

We no longer speak, as Ernest Barker put it, of man *versus* the state; on the contrary, we speak of man in the state and the state for man. As a political liberal and individualist, Radhakrishnan does not accept the view of the political absolutist who holds that the state is an end in itself. The state cannot have any end or goal of its own apart from the goal of the individuals for whose sake it exists and functions. However important the state may be as an institution which sustains, secures, and extends the rights of the individual, it cannot override the individual. It makes no sense to speak of the state as having an end of its own, a personality of its own, rights of its own, a morality of its own, as totalitarians do.



After all, the state as *an* association or institution comes into the picture only in the context of other institutions or forms of community, families and individuals. It should not, therefore, be allowed to supersede the individual. To Radhakrishnan, the claims of the individual are ultimate. He says:

Our suffering is not due to the poverty of our inward lives but to the utter absence of any inward life. We have ceased to be individuals and have become statistical units. The meaning of democracy consists largely in the ability to live purposefully apart from the bickerings and manoeuvres of our political or economic lives. The regaining of the sense of the value of the individual is the only way to save the neurosis of the soul now so widely rampant.<sup>15</sup>

Radhakrishnan is a champion of democracy. Analysing the nature of democracy, he says that there are different aspects in democracy. "Democracy," he observes, "has different sides to it. It is a political arrangement. It is an economic approach; it is an ethical way of life."<sup>16</sup> As a political arrangement it involves equality and liberty of all human beings, popular representation, representative government, rule of law, and the right to dissent. Radhakrishnan says:

Today political democracy cuts across the differences of class, caste, race and religion. Whatever these differences may be, they are irrelevant to the sanctity, the dignity of man as man. We should respect the human individual for his human nature, for his possibilities. Each human being is a potential candidate for the highest life.<sup>17</sup>

In another context he says :

Democracy is rule of law. It is rule of reason. It is rule by consent. Violence in any form is betrayal of the spirit and letter of democracy.<sup>18</sup>

Democracy as a political arrangement for the purpose of governing a nation requires constant vigil and frequent self-examination of the public issues by the people. Radhakrishnan stresses the importance of a strong, enlightened public opinion for keeping democracy in good shape. He says :

Democracy means a temper of mind, a sense of humility...A true democrat must subject himself to frequent self-examina-



tion. It is only such self-scrutiny that will make us avoid a sense of infallibility utterly inconsistent with the democratic spirit and mood...In the ultimate analysis that which can keep a democracy healthy and growing is a strong, instructed, enlightened public opinion.<sup>19</sup>

On the economic side, the state must attend to the basic needs of the individual such as food, shelter, and clothing. Though every individual is not a producer, every one is a consumer. Differences among people arise not at the minimum level of consumers, but only when we go beyond it. So long as a man is not guaranteed the basic necessities of life, he cannot function as a citizen in a state. Political freedom will not be of any use in the absence of economic freedom. To quote Radhakrishnan :

When we say that it is necessary for us to feed, clothe and shelter all human beings, we are emphasizing what may be called the economic aspect of the democratic ideal. We wish to diminish wealth and poverty and to raise the living standards of the ordinary man. So long as there are people in our country who do not get a square meal a day, who sometimes do not have a roof over their heads, who sleep on the pavements of our cities, it is a challenge to us...We should combat them, abolish them, if our country is to be called democratic.<sup>20</sup>

Radhakrishnan points out that economic democracy can be achieved only if we increase our national wealth, agricultural output, and industrial products.<sup>21</sup>

The ethical side of democracy is equally important. Radhakrishnan invites our attention to persuasion, restraint, consent in the settlement of our problems, application of reason and acceptance of human frailty as the important features of the ethical aspect of democracy. In the ultimate analysis, "democracy," Radhakrishnan holds, "is a faith."<sup>22</sup> In his own characteristic way he elucidates the ethical aspect of democracy as follows :

When we emphasize the ethical character of democracy we mean that every human being has an element of rationality,



that it is possible for us to appeal to it. We must believe that we may not always be right, our opponents may sometimes be right. We should be modest enough to believe that there may be some virtue in our opponents also. It is this sense of humility, the sense of restraint, that democracy imposes on us . . . Dissent is not treason; opposition is not rebellion. We must try to settle our problems with reason, without bitterness. Democracy and violent action are inconsistent with each other.<sup>23</sup>

One has to be careful in interpreting the principle of equality which is cardinal to democracy. "Equality" means "equality of opportunities"; *i.e.* "equal opportunities for all." It means that every man has an equal right to develop his potentialities and to realize all that he has in him to be and that he must, therefore, be provided with the necessary facilities for achieving his aim. There are functional differences among individuals; and in this respect, as in some others, all men are equal. The work of a judge is different from that of a labourer; the work of a doctor is different from that of a barber; the work of an administrator is different from that of an agriculturist. Instances which point to functional differences among human beings can be multiplied. In the name of the principle of equality it is wrong to treat a judge and a labourer, a doctor and a barber, as equal and provide them with the same opportunities in disregard of the differences in their vocations. Lenin remarked that any demand for equality which goes beyond the demand for abolition of classes is a stupid and absurd prejudice. Stalin was much more pungent in his denunciation of the wrong interpretation of the principle of equality. Socialism, he said, does not mean levelling of members of society, levelling of their tastes and personal lives; and he further maintained that to say that according to Marxism everyone must walk in the same type of suit, and eat the same dishes, and the same amount of food, is to talk rubbish and slander Marxism. Radhakrishnan explains what the principle of equality means as well as what it does not mean in the following passage:

Socialism does not mean equalization of the abilities of all individuals. It is impossible. All men are not equal. Socialism means only the provision of equal opportunities for



all. We do not say that all men are equal, but we do say that all men must be given equal opportunities for expressing whatever possibilities they have.<sup>24</sup>

It may be noted that what A.D. Lindsay says of Green and his fellow idealists is equally true of Radhakrishnan. Lindsay observes that in the ultimate analysis democracy is, and must be, based on religion and that the doctrine of human equality is a religious doctrine.<sup>25</sup> Radhakrishnan is a political democrat, because he is a religious democrat. There is no way of justifying this principle of equality excepting on the religious basis. All men are equal, because in everyone the same divine principle is present. Radhakrishnan says: "We thus affirm the equality of all human beings. This principle is a part of our heritage. Each individual is a spark of the divine. *deho devālayo nāma*. The body is the temple of God."<sup>26</sup>

As a political idealist the outlook of Radhakrishnan is not narrowly confined to the concept of "nation" and "national interests". The term "nation" means something more than the state. Ramsay Muir defines "nation" as "a body of people who feel themselves to be actually linked together by certain affinities which are so strong and real for them that they can live happily together, are dissatisfied when disunited, and cannot tolerate subjection to peoples who do not share these ties." Awareness of belonging to a nation and a strong motivation to preserve its interests are absolutely necessary on the part of the people. Radhakrishnan will not discount or underestimate the advantages which a society will derive when its members who are politically organized are aware of the several ties which unite them as a nation. Nationalism was one of the strongest and greatest forces of the 19th century Europe. It continues to be so in some states outside Europe even now. It has played a significant role by uniting the people in India against the British rule in the first half of this century. Whatever may be the merits of nationalism as seen particularly in those countries which are developing, it produces several undesirable consequences such as seclusion at the national level, authoritarian rule and international conflicts. It is, therefore, no wonder that Radhakrishnan looks upon nationalism as an outdated concept, particularly in a world of interdependent nations. To quote Radhakrishnan:



Nationalism is not the highest concept. The highest concept is world community to which we have to attach ourselves. It is unfortunate that we are still the victims of concepts which are outmoded, which are outdated, so to say. We are living in a new world, and in a new world a new type of man is necessary; and unless we are to change our minds, to change our hearts, it will not be possible for us to survive in this world.<sup>27</sup>

If individuals have to cooperate with one another as members of a state for the purpose of achieving a common good, nation-states, too, have to work together in harmony for the purpose of achieving the common good—the good of humanity, the good of the international community. It is wrong to think that national interests are more important than those of the international community. National interests such as peace and prosperity, growth and welfare of the people will suffer when the interests of the international community are in jeopardy, for in the long run national interests are inseparably connected with those of the international community.

Radhakrishnan says that the conflict between two nation-states arises because of the double standard in behaviour of the people—one kind of behaviour as individuals and another kind of behaviour as citizens of a state. To quote Radhakrishnan :

Human beings who are civilized as *individuals* behave differently as *citizens* of states. They fear and suspect members of other states and are on their guard in their behaviour towards them. We do not judge them by their character but by their belonging to a particular state.<sup>28</sup>

Economic factors also contribute to the conflict among nation-states. Radhakrishnan observes :

The uneven distribution of wealth as between different countries, and the widening gap between the living standards of the rich countries and the poor two-thirds of the world, constitute the greatest threat to orderly international relations. Peace, it has been said, is indivisible; so is international prosperity.<sup>29</sup>



According to Radhakrishnan, the principles which we follow in a state for ensuring order, peace, and harmony among the people can also be followed *mutatis mutandis* in inter-state relations. A state functions through rule of law. It maintains the framework of justice for settling disputes. It has police force for enforcing the system of rights and obligations. It maintains conditions of human welfare which do not encourage unrest, disorder, and strife. In other words, the forces of social passion, humane concern, and compassion as well as the influence of the common end are at work within the state. Radhakrishnan pleads for the extension of these principles to inter-state relations for achieving world peace through building an international society.<sup>30</sup> We have already moved from the stage of the tribal state to that of the nation-state. Radhakrishnan thinks that change from the stage of the nation-state to that of the international state is not impossible. There are many factors which will help us to move towards this ideal. Radhakrishnan says:

An appreciation of the common heritage of all peoples, an awareness of the growing interdependence of the world, a sense of the indivisibility of the freedom and well-being of all people, and an abandonment of the faith in the unqualified freedom of nations, will help to build up an international society.<sup>31</sup>

There is the urgent need to transcend the narrow ideal of nationalism and affirm our faith in the world community. "Our fundamental loyalty," declares Radhakrishnan, "is to the world community." He justifies this on the ground that "humanity is above all nations... national groupings or administrative conveniences which have developed on account of geographical and historical conditions."<sup>32</sup> It is no argument to say that Radhakrishnan is unrealistic when he thinks in terms of "the world community", "international society", "a world without fear and war" and so on. Rabindranath Tagore argued that the growth of freedom will result in the perfection of human relationship. And this perfection of human relationship cannot stop at the national level. It has to be comprehensive enough to embrace the entire humanity. Tagore envisaged a world 'where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free; where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic



walls..." This is Tagore's "religion of man" which is indistinguishable from Radhakrishnan's "political ideal of man". To quote Radhakrishnan:

A world without fear, without anger, may seem to be impracticable. But all historical experience confirms the view that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible. What man has achieved so far is immense, yet it is very small compared to what he may [have] yet to achieve. History has many surprises in store for us.<sup>33</sup>

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## FORMULATION OF ETHICAL NORMS: RADHAKRISHNAN'S APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM IN HINDU ETHICS\*

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Indian philosophers did not write treatises on ethics as Aristotle did and the reason for this phenomenon is obvious. Ethics is this-worldly and the pursuit of our sages was other-worldly. They were concerned about moral behaviour only in so far as it entered into the total framework of liberation. Morality is essentially a means to the attainment of *mukti*. Because morality has a value relative to the absolute Good of liberation, we cannot make morality the end of life. Moral action has value only when it is subsumed by the transcendental intentionality. Buddhism and Jainism, according to Radhakrishnan, failed precisely because they did not look beyond the ethical to the transcendental. Man's needs as man and as a spiritual, transcending being must be taken into account.<sup>1</sup>

Morality, then, is not devalued but rather placed in its proper perspective. The single-minded pursuit of the transcendental did take into account the ethical. This is evident when we consider the content of moral life as portrayed in Hindu scriptures. The ethical imperatives found in them have a value for man not because the scriptures are infallible and inerrant—Radhakrishnan does not attribute such qualities to them—but because they are derived from the lived experience of the sages.<sup>2</sup>

From Radhakrishnan's non-dualistic viewpoint, the hymns of the *Rg-veda* cannot be accepted *in toto* since they contain naturalistic,



and monistic strands of thought.<sup>3</sup> They also contain "wild imagination and fancy".<sup>4</sup> But their great contribution was the notion of *ṛta* which is a law that is all-pervasive, that gods and mortals must obey, that expresses the truth of things (*satya*) and the universal essence of beings.<sup>5</sup> The unique contribution of the *Upaniṣads* for ethics is the idea of *dharma* which has a vital relationship with the concept of Brahman. *Dharma* seems to be the ethical counterpart of Brahman. Because He is *sat*, *satya*, *cit*, *anantam* and *ānanda*, He is said to be the ground of beings, the truth of things and bliss of man not only on the ontological level but also on the moral level.<sup>6</sup> Brahman is said to exist as 'law-abidingness' (B.U. II, 5, 11-14). This implies that He is in the law, and thus *dharma* and Brahman are intimately linked together. But this is too general a law to serve as a norm of moral action in practical life.

The *Gītā* proposes models of morality,<sup>7</sup> puts forward an impressive catalogue of virtues (B.G. XVI, 1-3) and stresses the necessity of avoiding the three deadly sins of anger, lust and greed. But all these virtues can be summed up in the golden rule: "Do unto others what you would like to be done unto you." In most cases the injunction of the *Gītā*: "Do your duty" could be a useful guide for action. The epistemological problem regarding one's duty is solved by *varṇadharma* which is normally determined by birth. But then Radhakrishnan avers that what counts is not birth but right conduct.<sup>8</sup> Hence the answer to the question "How do I act morally?" is not *svadharma* as determined by caste but right moral behaviour. To say that one is moral by being moral is to indulge in tautology. Hence "Do your duty" cannot serve as a norm of action. Besides, in modern India there is the factual breakdown of *varṇadharma*.

Of all the ethical concepts in Hinduism, it is the concept of *dharma* that can serve as the first and unifying principle in the Hindu system of morality. The idea of Vedic *ṛta* is taken up into the complex concept of *dharma* which has lasted up to the present day. *Dharma* is used in a variety of ways in the Hindu tradition and by Radhakrishnan. One usage that is pertinent to our discussion is *dharma* expressing itself as non-arbitrariness and law-abidingness of human nature which reflects the mind and will of God.<sup>9</sup> This conception of *dharma* must be translated into specific modes of moral



action and to do this we must have recourse to the sources of *dharma*: the scriptures, tradition, the example of virtuous men and the voice of conscience. The *Veda* contains eternal truths but does not spell out the implications of *dharma* into ethical norms. The example of holy men can be a safe guide but it cannot have a normative function in itself since the norm should be objective and non-arbitrary. With regard to conscience, Radhakrishnan says that its dictates must be guided by objectivity and right reason and should be in accord with the voice of the inner self. This, however, needs to be studied in greater detail.

Radhakrishnan is aware of the difficulties in spelling out the content of *dharma* and of the exceptions to the moral principles as found in the four sources of *dharma*. He is also conscious of the complexity of the human situation and the changing times. Even amid the vast change, *dharma* which contains the scale of values and principles of conduct must be maintained. But to hold on to "*sanātana-dharma* is not to stand still. It is to seize the valid principles and use them in modern life."<sup>10</sup> Radhakrishnan does not elaborate what these enduring principles are but affirms the absoluteness of *dharma* which, however, does not have an absolute content valid for all times. Moral codes and rules are relative to social situations and times and therefore not absolute. "There is no positive human action that can be pronounced *a priori* to be absolutely right or wrong, wholly without regard to the circumstances in which it is done."<sup>11</sup> The law-abidingness of *dharma*, however, is absolutely binding on all in spite of the fact that its content depends on the factors of time and situation and knowledge.<sup>12</sup> "While the truths of the spirit are permanent, the rules change from age to age."<sup>13</sup> Hence, there is need for accommodation when translating the absolute *dharma* into practical rules. *Dharma* "should not be too far behind, or too far ahead of, intelligent public opinion."<sup>14</sup> This statement is sociological in content but does not tell us how to derive norms from the concept of *dharma*. Again, the statement seems to advocate a spirit of compromise and to uphold the golden mean of Aristotle. But then, Radhakrishnan has labelled it as a humanist's position which advocates a balance between pleasures and virtue. How can we find a balance between 'ascetic purity' and 'sensual indulgence'? Besides, one cannot be a moral hero on "a judicious compromise. The



saints aim at righteousness, not respectability."<sup>15</sup> Radhakrishnan is against the idea of the golden mean in *An Idealist View of Life* whereas he advocates a similar position in *Religion and Society*. But he is consistent in pressing for the change in the content of *dharma*, though he fears that his position may be accepted neither by the conservative Hindus nor by the radicals.<sup>16</sup>

On what grounds, then, can we proceed to establish the change of the content of *dharma* and to formulate moral norms in accordance with the law-abidingness and reasonableness of *dharma*? Can we solve the problem as the moral hero does through the intuitive apperception? The way Radhakrishnan exalts the moral hero, his inner rhythm and skill in grasping the situation, his capacity to choose the right and the good with sure insight, we get the impression that he is proposing the way of the hero as the norm of action.<sup>17</sup> If by supposition we are all moral heroes, then we do not need norms, since the intuition we have will guide us into all things, moral and supra-moral. In such a case the formulation of norms would be a meaningless exercise. But then by his own admission, even saints have faltered and therefore they cannot be the norms for the unliberated.<sup>18</sup> J.G. Arapura rightly points out the impracticability of the intuitive ethics of the moral superman for the ordinary man: <sup>19</sup>

Either (a) he must relax the rigour of his ethical idealism or (b) he must insist less on the power of intuition. If he follows the second course then he will be forced to do one of the two things: either (i) reducing ethics to a matter of faith—at least as far as the unperfected are concerned, or (ii) submitting ethics to a deductive and inductive method...<sup>20</sup>

Arapura grants that Radhakrishnan speaks of the second possibility but dismisses it as not representing his definitive viewpoint on the matter. The second possibility must, however, be pursued and if Radhakrishnan did not pursue it, it is because he did not undertake a systematic study of ethics in Hinduism in his mature years. Logically he should have no difficulty in accepting the rationally valid method of deduction and induction. He says that the creative moral decisions of the liberated man cannot be foreseen but they are thoroughly rational. If they are based on reason, their rationality can be isolated



and studied by the intellect. Hence arises the possibility of having moral principles and norms founded on the rational faculty of man. The creative decisions of the moral hero cannot be normative for the ordinary man, but the rationality enshrined in them and isolated by man can be of help in the formulation of norms. "Whatever is based on sound reasoning ought to be accepted...Whatever is not so based ought to be rejected, even if it is uttered by...Śuka himself."<sup>21</sup> Scriptures and moral codes of all societies are ascribed to the gods, but according to our philosopher "they all originated in the discordant passions and the groping reason of human beings."<sup>22</sup> When the scriptures of Christians and Moslems contradict each other, we cannot appeal to their conflicting authority and therefore he proposes a criterion common to all: the rationality of the content of scriptures.<sup>23</sup>

When Radhakrishnan takes a critical attitude to the Upaniṣadic opposition of the Vedic rites and terms it as exaggerated, he uses reason as a criterion to judge what is exaggerated.<sup>24</sup> He is in favour of the spirit of inquiry which is obviously based on rational models of investigation.<sup>25</sup> The scriptures must be clarified "by the use of reason" and thus we have a "reasoned faith."<sup>26</sup> The spiritual and the mystical cannot be adequately perceived by reason, but they are certainly grounded in reason.<sup>27</sup> The mystics are acutely aware of 'the rational aspect of existence' and hence Radhakrishnan emphasizes .....the continuity of reason and intuition and the predominantly rational character of religious insight. He writes: "As experience has a cognitive quality about it, the judgments based on it should be subjected to logical analysis. Logical scrutiny is the one safe-guard against mere caprice."<sup>28</sup> But for the glaring exception of Karl Barth, he finds that Catholic and Protestant theologians accept the legitimate role of reason in the field of religious faith.<sup>29</sup>

If reason plays such a vital role in the religious sphere and the mystical plane, then *a fortiori* it has to play an even greater role in the area of morality. Radhakrishnan pleads for rational changes in the rules of *dharma*, since they "are the mortal flesh of immortal ideas and so are mutable."<sup>30</sup> "Though *dharma* is absolute, it has no absolute and timeless content."<sup>31</sup> That is why every action should be judged in 'the bar of reason' and against the background of the transcendental intentionality of his faith.<sup>32</sup> The absolute *dharma* must be



framed into moral rules and principles; but there can be no rules valid for all times, since *dharma* itself is dependent on those variable factors.<sup>33</sup> But when we formulate moral principles, they "must approximate to the ideal, which is the holy more than the adequate, love more than law."<sup>34</sup> Yet it is man's task to formulate correct, just, and adequate moral laws because the moral ideal stretches to infinity and hence cannot determine the minimum demands of morality. The 'fallen' man in any religious tradition needs to know the limits of what makes an action moral or immoral. Lack of clarity in the past in these matters has led and can still lead to absurd and immoral practices. The ethics of the Pharisees at the time of Christ is a case in point (Mt. 23:16-22).

Lack of clarity regarding the minimum demands of morality and the absence of the distinction between moral laws and societal laws lead to a mockery of morality itself. Radhakrishnan's contention that the Hindu social order (*varṇadharmā*) in its pristine purity was noble and according to right reason, is supported by Mahatma Gandhi himself. But that an actual transition took place from *varṇa* to *jāti* proves that the distinction between ethics and social convention was not sufficiently emphasized in course of time. Radhakrishnan says that much "of current morality is unsound and conventional. Our codes have stagnated into mechanical habits ..."<sup>35</sup> The conventional morality can be replaced only when the rational element is introduced into the ethical aspect of life. This is what *āpaddharma* actually suggests. Eating dog's meat was not permitted in the Hindu tradition and by this man-made law the people must have wanted to safeguard a value. When Viśvāmitra faced a conflict between the value of saving his life by eating dog's meat and the value of not eating such meat, he chose the value of life.<sup>36</sup> By this ethical judgment he was implicitly affirming the hierarchy of values and the relativity of man-made laws. This has relevance not only in the abstract field of ethics but may have a positive bearing in case of a famine. Vijñāneśvara proposed "that society has the right to reject unsuitable laws, even if they are permitted by scriptures."<sup>37</sup> Are the laws unsuitable on the grounds of morality or because of other considerations such as economics, sociology, culture, and hygiene? If laws are suitable on moral grounds, then they can be termed ethical norms. They are moral (i) directly as in the case of saving one's own life by eating the



meat of an animal, and (ii) indirectly as in the case of the law forbidding meat to be eaten. The one stresses the hierarchy of values and the other a value enshrined in a symbolic non-action. Hinduism like any other religion or system is called upon to make more distinctions in the ethical field. Morality is essentially man's task, and Āpastamba recognized this long ago when he said:

Right and wrong do not go about proclaiming 'here we are'; nor do gods, angels and the manes say 'this is right and that is wrong,' but right is what the Aryans praise and wrong is what they blame.<sup>38</sup>

Right is what the Aryans praise because it was founded on right reason and not on arbitrary affirmation.

Let us see how Radhakrishnan himself deals with some ethical problems. One of the cardinal principles of Hindu morality is *ahimsā* which is not merely non-injury but includes positive love of human and non-human beings. Non-resistance is the ideal, but in this imperfect world where men touched by "sinful ambition, pride, lust, and greed," do not follow the ideal, the state has to use violence for the sake of maintaining the rule of law. Even those who practise *ahimsā* are able to do so "only because they owe their security to the maintenance by others of the principles which they repudiate."<sup>39</sup> The use of force, then, is not the ideal, but is ethically permissible when there is no other alternative and it is used primarily for the sake of establishing a social order in which moral values can be preserved and practised. The use of violence must not only have an "ethical aim", but it must be used in "an ethical way."<sup>40</sup> By *ethical aim* Radhakrishnan means right intention and the *ethical way* seems to refer to the means employed. The means too should be morally permissible. Hence, for example, in a war the king should not permit the use of poisoned arrows, the destruction of architecture or the killing of the family of the defeated. The motive of war is justice and not revenge or vindictiveness.<sup>41</sup>

In the case of marriage, Radhakrishnan does not accept polyandry and polygamy, though both were prevalent in India at some time or the other, but proposes monogamy as the ideal because only monogamy takes seriously the equality and dignity of the man and the



woman whereas the other two forms of marriage set up a double standard of morality.<sup>42</sup> Monogamy is in accord with the true *humanum* to which man is called through the process of ethical evolution. Marriage is not merely a contract but a 'sacrament', and there must be seriousness of purpose when a man and a woman enter upon it. But there can be exceptions to this monogamous ideal. "If love without marriage is illegal, marriage without love is immoral."<sup>43</sup> Not only is marriage without love immoral at the initial stage but also after it has been consummated and lasted for a period of time. Radhakrishnan does not favour divorce; nor does he hold "the dogma of indissolubility of marriage."<sup>44</sup> He allows divorce and remarriage when love has been dead, when there is misery and unhappiness in a family with the attendant effects on children.<sup>45</sup> "Desertion, habitual cruelty, adultery, insanity and incurable disease should be the only grounds for the dissolution of marriage, at the option of either party."<sup>46</sup> Though such a procedure may not be in accord with the ideal, it would not seriously militate against the spirit of Hinduism.

In advancing a solution to the problem of population and birth-control, Radhakrishnan again resorts to his distinction of the ideal and the permissible. In *Religion and Society* which was delivered as lectures in 1942, he says that population-growth is not the cause of poverty and that there are enough natural resources for the increasing population. Coming to the ethical problem, he approvingly quotes Lord Dawson who says that young couples who want to limit the number of children because of economic reasons cannot do so by merely abstaining from intercourse. Such a celibate life is impossible for the masses and would lead to grave dangers both in health and in morals.<sup>47</sup> So birth-control by abstention is the ideal, but contraception is permissible.<sup>48</sup> Marriage is for the perpetuation of the human race and hence it is the duty of the parents to have children. But it is also for the growth of the spirit. The married couple have intercourse not only for the sake of children but also for their own sake. Contraception is not permissible when sexual pleasure becomes an end in itself and when people evade the responsibilities of married life. To the argument that contraception is unnatural and therefore immoral, he says that we have always interfered with the processes of nature. The natural is not to be identified with the savage, the ancient and the primitive. Polygamy, for example, grew 'naturally'



in certain cultures but we have advanced from the 'natural' polygamy to the 'rational' monogamy. Another objection that is raised against birth-control is its abuse. His pithy answer is that the abuse does not nullify the claims of "its proper use."

What emerges from this discussion is the vital role that right reason has to play in the formulation of ethical norms and principles based on the absoluteness of *dharma*. Man is called upon to incarnate the ideal values enshrined in it but it is his task to draw the line between what is ethical and what is not. While mysticism is grounded in reason, morality is shaped by it. Radhakrishnan constantly uses the categories 'the ideal' and 'the permissible' when discussing particular moral problems. In a similar context moral theologians make the distinction between the theoretical and the practical norms;<sup>49</sup> Bernard Häring makes the distinction between goal-oriented norms which are to be found, for example, in the *Sermon on the Mount* (*zielgebote*) and limitative norms like the Ten Commandments.<sup>50</sup>

The ideal norms of Radhakrishnan, such as *ahimsā* (love and non-violence), are actually principles since they point to the general stand that Hindus should take in their moral life. Goal-oriented norms of Häring are similar to the ideal ones. Permissible norms, on the other hand, are norms that are arrived at by right reason which takes into consideration the ideal norm and the existential situation of man. These are not arbitrary but are grounded in reason and formulated in the ambiance of the transcendental intentionality of one's faith.

Space does not permit me to make a study of other religious traditions for the sake of comparative analysis; but I am strongly persuaded that the problems encountered in Hinduism with regard to norms will be the same in every system of thought. Historically and psychologically morality was always related to religion; but through analysis we can separate one from the other.<sup>51</sup> It is possible to be ethical without being religious. Morality in union with religion assumes a sacred character and we can see how *ṛta* and *dharma*, the Koranic *sharia* and the revealed Will of God, came to be viewed in the context of one's beliefs. But an ethicist for the purpose of analysis can consider morality in isolation from its religious roots. Morality, then, gets desacralized and comes to possess a value in itself. When we



secularize the notions like Divine Law, *sharia* and *dharma*, we arrive at the majesty, objectivity, and non-arbitrariness of values. This discovery of the autonomous ethical value is incidentally one of the outcomes in the process of the formulation of ethical norms.

### ABBREVIATIONS

The content of this paper is taken from my doctoral dissertation which will soon be published by Concept Publishing Company, Delhi 35, under the title *Radhakrishnan on Hindu Moral Life and Action*.

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9. *brh*, the root of *Brahman*, means literally growth, evolution or the swelling of the spirit and it can mean a holy life. Moral life consists in the growth of



the spirit. This growth is possible only when man is rooted and is held together. (*dhṛ*) in *dharma*. In *Brahman* all things and beings are held together.

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# RADHAKRISHNAN'S INTERPRETA- TION OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

AMIYA KUMAR SEN

## I

In his condolence message after the demise of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, Radhakrishnan said:

He was the greatest figure of the modern Indian Renaissance. A poet of his qualities we have not had for some generations. He is in the grand line from Vālmīki and Kālidāsa. His versatility was remarkable. As a poet and prose writer, as a singer and composer, his achievements were of the first quality. Besides, he was a great prophet and wise councillor and a guide of our future destiny. Millions outside India respected our country and its culture on account of his writings. I have lost a very dear friend; that he was born in our country means that God is not disappointed with us. The greatest respect that we can render to his memory would be to stand for the spiritual ideals of this great man and fight for them against every attempt to subjugate the country.

This tribute itself is an interpretation of Rabindranath in a nutshell. Radhakrishnan characterises Rabindranath as the greatest figure of the modern Indian Renaissance. He regards Rabindranath as one of the great poets of India. He mentions Rabindranath's versatility in different spheres of creative activity. He acknowledges the poet as a prophet and a sustainer of spiritual ideals of India.



Radhakrishnan was, however, conscious of the shortcomings on his part when he first came out with his book which interpreted Rabindranath's philosophy. He had not then met the poet and talked to him. He had access to the writings of the poet only in translations and that too of a very insignificant segment of his total output. But what surprises especially a Bengali reader about Radhakrishnan's book is that with inadequate materials at his disposal he intuitively paints a picture of the poet which was not only relevant at that time but also for later times. In 1919 when the interpretation was tried, the poet had only come out with half of his works, his versatile genius in many fields was yet to express itself. In the years following, Radhakrishnan came to know the poet personally and met him both inside and outside of Santiniketan. Personal acquaintance deepened the impressions that the philosopher had about the poet. From 1921 onwards Radhakrishnan was Professor of Philosophy in the Calcutta University and had the opportunities of meeting the poet off and on. At his initiative the Indian Philosophical Congress was established; and Rabindranath was persuaded to preside over the first session in December 1925. The subject of his lecture was "Philosophy of the People". In 1928 the poet was invited to deliver the Hibbert lectures at the Oxford University. But as the poet was ill at that time, the lectures were not delivered till march 1930. Radhakrishnan was present at the lectures. He records his impressions of the lectures entitled *Religion of Man* as follows:

...He emphasised the validity of the ancient wisdom of India.

"My religion is in the reconciliation of the super-personal man, the universal human spirit, in my individual being."

He taught us a religion of love of humanity, beauty and laughter. Record house listened to him. Though many did not understand him, all were impressed by the magic of his poetry and the music of his voice. His aged face was worn deep with the lines of thought and struggle but on his rapt countenance seemed to glow the radiance of an unrisen day.

And of the yet unrisen day did Rabindranath sing till the end of his being.

Radhakrishnan presided over the public meeting in Calcutta for the celebration of the 70th birthday of the poet in 1931. Felicitation



and homage poured in from far and near. He was eulogized for his artistic creation, and in the words of Radhakrishnan for "his effective work in promoting spiritual freedom, national self-respect and material progress."

In 1933, as the Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra University, Radhakrishnan invited Rabindranath to deliver a few lectures under the endowment created by Sri Alladi Krishnaswamy. The poet gave three lectures in December 1934. These were published with the title *Man*.

A volume called *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* was contemplated to be published from Oxford under the joint sponsorship of Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead. Rabindranath was requested to contribute an article which he did after much hesitation at the insistence of Radhakrishnan. The poet wrote:

I have received...a copy of the Philosophy compilation and the poet in me feels painfully ill at ease in the company of the philosophers who, I am sure, will find it difficult to tolerate the intruder.

Radhakrishnan's first visit to Santiniketan came about in 1938. The poet took personal care for arranging a fitting welcome to him. A dance-drama was also staged by the students. Radhakrishnan in his address made a fresh bid to assess Rabindranath in the context of modern India and the world. He said that though he had known personally the poet for a number of years he was looking forward to meeting him there at Santiniketan, in his own setting, from where he was radiating sweetness and light, strength and joy to his countrymen and others. At a time when the country was smarting under political subjugation and economic breakdown, he gave us hope by revealing that the greatness of a nation was to be judged by other qualities than economic power and political efficiency. At that time Japan was trying to occupy a portion of China in the name of cultural unity. Rabindranath sent letters of protest to the greatest living poet of Japan, Yone Noguchi. Rabindranath's deprecation of the policy of Japan drew angry protest even from Noguchi. Referring to the correspondence, Radhakrishnan remarked that the Poet of India was the voice of the whole civilization even as Gandhi was the



conscience of the whole country. He was one with the poet when he said that if after so many centuries of energetic enlightenment, women and children were being trained in the use of gas-masks and streets were being provided with underground refugees, it shows that there is something radically wrong about our society. Through the centuries wars have been a persistent feature of civilized states and they cannot be superseded until the slave basis of society and the attitude of exploitation were got over. Radhakrishnan said that man should also feel like these two great Indians that the human mind could not be satisfied with a mere sufficiency of material goods. He appealed for adoption of a religion based not on dogma or revelation but rooted in personal experience which would have for its effect the spirit of inner freedom and universal love, *abhaya* and *ahimsā*.

The poet thanked Radhakrishnan in a beautiful letter which concluded thus:

My only claim is that of an artist who is amply rewarded if he is assured by a visitor like yourself, whose praise is precious, that he has been able to please you.

Radhakrishnan's last visit to Santiniketan during the life-time of the poet was during 1950 in the company of Sir Maurice Gwyer both of whom were authorised by the Oxford University to hold a convocation at Santiniketan and confer the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*). The conferment address was delivered in Latin and Rabindranath read his acceptance in Sanskrit. Extracts from the speech was of particular interest to Radhakrishnan. The poet said in a paragraph of his speech:

In an era of mounting anguish and vanishing worth, when disaster is fast overtaking countries and continents with savagery let loose and brutal thirst for ossession augmented by science, it may sound merely poetic to speak of any emerging principle of worldwide relationship. But Time's violence, however immediately threatening, is circumscribed, and we who live beyond it and dwell also in larger reality of Times must renew our faith in the perenial growth of civilization toward an ultimate purpose.

This passage is reminiscent of a small poem which the poet wrote under the shadow of the impending second world war.



"The serpents are hissing venom on all sides ;

Charming words of peace

Will sound like useless mockery

But before I leave, send away my call for those

Who are preparing for an all-out war

With demons everywhere"

After the death of the poet Radhakrishnan visited Santiniketan twice. During the first visit as the Chairman of the University Education Commission in 1948, he observed in one of his speeches that Santiniketan was truly Indian both in its spirit and tradition, and was indeed the first of institutions till then visited by the members of the Commission. "Beautiful, it was wrought by the hands of a great poet ... Education here had become a part of life." 'Deliverance is not for me in renunciation' sang the poet and heralded a great cultural renaissance in the great land of ours. In another speech the next day he said :

As an emblem of India's cultural tradition we may refer to the terracota seals of Mohenjadarō wherein one finds the image of Śiva wrapped in meditation and surrounded by species of animals. This indeed symbolizes the conquest of the self, the triumph of truth and love. Another such symbol would be the image of the Buddha seated under the Bodhi tree representing wisdom and compassion ... Then again we have the tradition of the *Gītā* which shows a harmonization of the centralities for our religion, — energy on the one hand and the idea of the Supreme on the other, the *dhanus* of Arjuna and the *yoga* of Kṛṣṇa. Nor have our ancient traditions grown obsolete. Even in recent years they have lived again in persons like Ramakrishna, Rabindranath and Mahatma Gandhi.

Radhakrishnan's last visit to Santiniketan was in 1961 during the convocation of Visva-Bharati, newly elevated to the status of a Central University. It was the Centenary year of the poet. Radhakrishnan was one of the eminent admirers of the poet. He was adorned with the conferment of "Deśikottama" — the highest honour the Visva-Bharati Samsad could offer to one whose ideal of life was similar to those of the great founder. By this act Visva-Bharati

honoured one of the first interpreters of the poet and one of the exponents of the culture of India. Radhakrishnan himself was also one of the brightest products of the cultural renaissance of India in modern times and perhaps he was also the last of the stalwarts India had produced during her cultural resurgence.

In the same year (1961) the Sahitya Akademy came out with a centenary volume to pay homage to the poet Radhakrishnan contributed a very illuminating article entitled "Most dear to all the Muses". He borrowed this phrase from the citation of the Oxford University which was presented to Rabindranath in 1940 during the conferment of the honorary degree. From the foregoing paragraphs, it will be evident that whenever the poet was asked to write on any philosophical topic including his own reflections on philosophy he chose the subject in relation to man or human problems. He had no claims that he had produced an original interpretation of philosophy much less an original philosophy. But he showed the relevance of the age-old philosophy of India in the modern context. That, according to Radhakrishnan, was itself a creation. Radhakrishnan remarked: "Rabindranath as a dreamer and an artist was an exponent of it." *The Times Literary Supplement* observed about him: "Perhaps no living poet was more religious and no man of religion was more poetical than this great Indian."

In one poem of *Gītāñjali* Rabindranath says, "Obstinate are trammels, but my heart aches when I try to break them ... The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death: I hate it, yet I hug it in love." "This passage," Radhakrishnan asserts, "affirms the reality of an Eternal behind the world." Tagore also confirms, "If ever I have somehow come to realize God, or if the vision of God was ever granted to me, I must have received the vision through this world, through man, through trees and birds and beasts, the dust and the soil."

The poet's anxiety was to travel away in all discourses about religion and God to man and his yearnings to outgrow the physical existence. "At one pole of my being," says he, "I am one with stocks and stones ... but at the other pole of my being I am separate from all." (*Sādhana*). This feeling of separateness the poet calls the "thirst



after light" which is to be quenched, according to him, through the world of forms. In one of his songs he prays on behalf of all men,

Those that are lost to themselves  
 Seeking for the loadstar  
 Hidden in the depth of night  
 Bring back their sight  
 To the world of forms  
 To the paths of the celestial light, my Lord.

## II

Radhakrishnan broadly divided his interpretation of the poet under several heads like "Spiritual philosophy and Ideal," "Aesthetic Philosophy," "Social Philosophy," "Message to India" and "Message to the World." We would follow his pattern and his observations and very often his language.

### *Spiritual Philosophy and Ideal*

As has already been said, the first interpretation of Rabindranath by Radhakrishnan was made under the deepening shadow of the devastating world war that threatened all potential values of human existence. Tagore like a prophet had apprehended this. In his younger days Rabindranath like many others was an admirer of the French Revolution and the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity brought in its wake. But he was soon disillusioned. He saw that the mightier nations were exploiting the weaker ones for their own selfish ends. On the last day of the 19th century, when the atrocities of the Boer war were still making every conscience bleed, he wrote a poem which reads :

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red clouds of  
 The West and the whirlwind of hatred,  
 The naked passion of self-love of Nations, in its drunken  
 Delirium of greed, is dancing to the clash of steel and the  
 Howling verses of vengeance,





adequate provision for a touch of spirituality and a harmony of the diffused emotion of the soul through intimate contact with Nature.

Rabindranath did not decry machines and mechanical devices as such, but was very much opposed to these gaining supremacy over the soul of man. Dull mechanical work and too much reliance on machine degrades and brutalizes the individual while intimacy with nature elevates and purifies. The same light dwells in the world outside and the world within. The music of the sphere and the song of the soul are both expressions of the divine harmony. A feel of this harmony gave Rabindranath a sense of unity among all living beings and all phenomena of creation. Sang he:

My heart sings at the wonder of my place in the world  
of light of life; at the feel in my pulse of the rhythm of  
creation cadenced by the swing of endless time.

I feel the tenderness of the grass in my forest walk, the  
wayside flowers startle me; that the gifts of the infinite  
strewn in the dust waken my song in wonder.

I have seen, have heard, have lived; in the depth of the  
known have felt the truth, that exceeds all knowledge  
which fills my heart with wonder and I sing.

Rabindranath, true to Indian tradition, considered that God himself gave birth to the world through a creative joy and that man had inherited the same joy. The joy of self-expression is the better part of human existence; mere intellect can only read the manifestations of creation but misses the unity of intellect and emotion. Wisdom born of emotion and love transcends the way of knowledge. It is in this concept that Rabindranath is one with the *bhakti* cult of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Rabindranath did not advocate asceticism and renunciation of the world and shutting out of the senses to achieve the touch of the Absolute we call God. He also despised inaction.

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation,

I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses,

The delight of sight and hearing and touch will bear the delight.



His God was also a person and not an impersonal Absolute of some schools of philosophy.

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground, and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off the holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil !

Again,

Let who so will, with shut and brooding eyes,  
If earth be real or more than dream surmise !  
Meanwhile let me with thirsty vision drink  
Its beauty, ere my sun of life shall sink.

Rabindranath believed that the human individual is a unity of intellect, emotion and will and the supreme ideal is to satisfy sentiment, will, and reason. The Absolute appeared as supreme Beauty, supreme Good and supreme Truth. "Art, philosophy and religion are different forms and expressions of worship and different ways of reaching the Absolute or the God." In Rabindranath, the Art form predominated. His idea of sin was not akin to that of Christianity. Sin, according to him, was the detachment and the failure to harmonize ourselves with the whole. Radhakrishnan regards him as one of the last of the Vedāntins and places him in the hierarchy of the great *ṛṣis* of the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*, of the Buddha, and the saints and religious leaders of the middle ages like Kabir, Nanak, Caitanya, Tukāram and others.

### *Aesthetic Philosophy*

Rabindranath, according to his own admission and the interpretation of Radhakrishnan, was primarily a poet and an artist in life. The poet worships God as the spirit of Beauty, while the philosopher pays homage to Him as an ideal of truth. They have both the same end, but the starting points are different.

Rabindranath perceived the hands of truth in every little beauty that adorned creation, the living world. Through things beautiful he



approached and contemplated truth, and in communion with truth he entered the realm of bliss. Not that he denied the existence of sorrow and pain. These were manifestations of the pangs of separation from the Absolute and the cry of the soul to merge ultimately in Him.

Far as I gaze at the depth of Thy immensity

I find no trace there of sorrow or death or separation.

Death assumes its aspect of sorrow, and sorrow its pain,

Only when away from Thee

I turn my face towards my own limited self.

Beauty, Truth and Bliss not unmixed with deeper pangs for ultimate realisation, were the aesthetic steps of the growth of Tagore's personality. As an aesthetic idealist and artist, Radhakrishnan placed Tagore in the line of the great poets like Vālmīki and Kālidāsa.

### *Social Philosophy*

The social philosophy of Rabindranath is the outcome of his spiritual and aesthetic philosophy. Great philosophers always try to elevate the existence around them. They work for a better world order and social structure based on justice and equity to all living beings. They dream of a better earthly existence than the one in which they are destined to have been born. Rabindranath was no exception. Said he in one of his *Gītāñjali* poems:

Here is thy foot-stool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, lowliest and lost. When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest and the lowliest and lost. Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest and lowliest and lost. My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless, among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost.

This yearning of the soul prompted Tagore to formulate his own social philosophy and leave political activities to devote more comprehensively to the social upliftment work. He was one of the initiators of the cooperative movement in India. He prepared schemes of agricul-



tural expansion and removal of agricultural indebtedness. He was one of the pioneers of the movement for the eradication of untouchability, illiteracy and other social evils.

The Santiniketan school and the village upliftment work at Sriniketan were the handiwork of his social philosophy. He held that social injustice was a more potent enemy of civilization than political dependence.

### *Message to India*

Tagore wished that modern resurgent India did not turn away from her age-old moorings while trying to incorporate in her frame the vigorous spirit that the West had brought to her doors. She should borrow scientific knowledge from the West, for knowledge has no stamp of any region. But the pride of knowledge which was evident in some countries of the West was to be mellowed with Indian wisdom. He wanted India to shed the inferiority complex for being poor in material wealth. But she had wealth of the soul.

Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud and the powerful with your white robe of simpleness.

Let your crown be humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul.

Build God's throne daily upon the ample barrenness of your poverty

And know that what is huge is not great and pride is not ever-lasting.

He was for rebuilding India on no narrow bias of creed, caste or language, but with the help of universal love. He did not view the modern social and economic problems from the narrow ephemeral utilitarian point of view. He thought that India should meet the world on equal terms with the wealth of her genius which had sustained her through the ages. He discarded imitation in the name of quick progress. India's ideals, he thought, should be spiritual rather than material. He, however, did not approve the Indian type of inertia in the name of spiritual superiority. True modernism, he maintained, was the freedom of the mind and not taste. He had laid



down an all-time ideal for regeneration of India in one of his elevating poems beginning with "Where the mind is without fear and head is held high." This ideal is true of any country of the world at any time.

### *Message to the world*

Rabindranath was of the opinion that the modern Western civilization which was dominating the world at the present time was more mechanical than spiritual, more political than religious, more mindful of power than peace. This had given many powerful nations a sense of self-idolatry. The unbridled national pride and prestige becomes a curse which ends in wars. He considered the world war as the "bleeding body of God." He advocated not the commerce of commodities, but an exchange of hearts. He thought that one devastating war would bring humanity to its senses. But he had to see the beginning of another war more devastating. While this great crisis pained him, he still had faith in humanity which would derive benefits out of the crisis. He was a nationalist to the core, but not one of a wrong type. He knew that one day humanity would regain its lost empire. He said it was a sin to lose faith in man, and sang of a new dawn :

The Great one comes,  
 Sending sivers across the dust of the Earth,  
 In the heavens sounds the trumpet,  
 In the world of man the drums of victory are beaten,  
 The hour has arrived for the great Birth.  
 Today the gates of night's fortress  
 Crumble into the dust.  
 On the crest of awakening dawn  
 Assurance of new life  
 Proclaims "Fear Not".  
 The great sky resounds with paeans of victory  
 To the coming of Man.

## MAN'S OWN IMAGE

PABITRAKUMAR ROY

My object in this paper is to offer a critique of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. I shall consider some of the cardinal issues of Tagore's philosophical position and try to show how these have been explicated by Radhakrishnan, how far his account is adequate in the light of Tagore's philosophical testament, *The Religion of Man*. I take Tagore as propounding a non-naturalistic theory of man.

### I

Radhakrishnan's study is sympathetic, interpretative and expository in nature. He finds in Tagore's thoughts a genuine manifestation of Indian spirit. I am not sure if it could be asserted in so unqualified a manner, and without eliminating from Tagore's philosophical outlook a substantial Western content. Conscious formulation of theories of man has never been in vogue in the philosophical tradition of India. The so-called Indian theories of man have only been incidental. With Tagore it is a primary concern and should be considered, in part at least, as an inheritance from the positivist influence of the West. In spite of Tagore's own statements about the Vedic ancestry of his ideas, his "human philosophy" is essentially European in spirit. But this is another story, a matter of our cultural renaissance.

The significance of Radhakrishnan's study lies elsewhere. Just as Hölderlin is regarded as the literary pioneer of many of Heidegger's moods in philosophy, so is Tagore related to Radhakrishnan. This



shows the relation of a philosophy to the culture in which it has grown up.

## II

I would like to indicate briefly Radhakrishnan's interest in the works of Tagore and the common points of their philosophical interest. Radhakrishnan made his *debut* as a serious writer on philosophy with his *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, published in 1918. Often one's youthful works have elements of interest as well as significance, containing as they do germs of many ideas that later play an important part in the development of one's thought. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* shows the deep and pervasive influence of Tagore which is discernible in the various stages of Radhakrishnan's development. Much of what he says here about Indian religion, philosophy and civilization in general terms forms the theme of many later works. While expounding the philosophical significance of Tagore's thoughts, was the author rehearsing his own world-view?

Beginning with his two articles on Tagore's philosophy of life in *The Quest* in 1917, Radhakrishnan never lost interest in Tagore's thought and vision. Tagore wrote the introduction to Radhakrishnan's *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads* (later incorporated in volume I of the *Indian Philosophy*).

Radhakrishnan was directly associated with Tagore's philosophical activities on two occasions. He listened to Tagore's Hibbert Lectures (1930) at Manchester College, Oxford. These were published in 1931 under the title *The Religion of Man*. Tagore's Andhra University lectures, published as *Man*, were delivered in 1933 on an invitation from Radhakrishnan. On receiving the Goethe Medal at Heidelberg in 1961, Radhakrishnan spoke on the philosophical views of Tagore, his concept of man in particular.

Radhakrishnan's contributions are, first, his re-interpretation of the doctrine of *māyā* in the classical Vedānta of Śaṅkara, and second, the exposition of a philosophy of the spirit. Tagore too, in his own manner, was concerned with the notion of *māyā*. In *Sanyasi*, an early drama, he addressed himself to clarifying and understanding the notion in its extreme world-negating connotation. When Tagore says, "The world as an art is *māyā*," we have an intriguing employ-



ment of the notion. Nietzsche said, one might recall, that the world is justified as an aesthetic experience. *Māyā*, for Tagore has not been a closed metaphysical concept. He regards appearance itself as an aspect of truth: "When we deprive truth of its appearance, it loses the best part of its reality." The suggestiveness of the idea of *māyā* is conveyed by Tagore in another of his statements: "*Māyā* is that which revolts against the truth of relatedness," — an original interpretation indeed.

*An Idealist View of Life* is Radhakrishnan's philosophical *tour de force*. A philosophy of the spirit has been enunciated here, and it is argued with great passion and authenticity. *The Religion of Man* is, in many ways, a source of inspiration to the author of *An Idealist View of Life*. Yet references to Tagore's mature philosophical works in Radhakrishnan's writing is conspicuous by their absence. He emphasizes Tagore's Upaniṣadic writings more than the writings of contemporary relevance. This involves some amount of unfairness to Tagore, the philosopher. A similar predilection is observable in Ananda Coomaraswamy's writings as well. This however, may be a matter of temperament, though philosophically exceptionable.

### III

Radhakrishnan's study of Tagore's thought is based more on creative than discursive evidence. He concentrates on such a book of Upaniṣadic meditations as the *Sādhanā*, besides poems and plays. The *Sādhanā* may be described as a *bhāṣya* on some of the Upaniṣadic passages, and contains a good many of Tagore's important philosophical views. The lecture, 'What is Art?', of course, receives its well-deserved attention at Radhakrishnan's hands.

Much of Tagore's literary work is philosophical in content, at least, many of his poems and dramatic creations employ their full linguistic, rhythmic, and associational resources to open up new insights into values, relationship and significant possibilities. There are pieces of creative writing in which language is employed in such a manner as to generate implicit insights, adumbrated by poetic means so as to deepen and enliven some explicit philosophical vision.

Radhakrishnan's use of Tagore's creative writings as if they constituted philosophical evidence, i.e., they expressed well-consi-



dered philosophical opinion and not fleeting moods, should raise a familiar problem of recent literary criticism. Is art or poetry a form of philosophy? Ideas wrapped in form? Is it possible to overlook the distinction between an idea and an experience? T. S. Eliot, in his essay on Dante, has put forward the distinction between "belief attitudes" or "philosophical attitudes" on the one hand, and "poetic assent" on the other. In some of the poems Tagore's philosophical beliefs are logically and overtly the same as that of Kant's *The Critique of Judgement*. But the belief attitude of a man reading *The Critique of Judgement* must be different from that of the same man adequately responding to the poems of Tagore. The poems, unlike Kant's *Critique*, are constructed according to a "logic of sensibility" representing a complete scale of the depth and height of human emotion. In those poems Tagore's poetic assent, his total belief attitude, is inseparable from the elaboration of images which are serious and practical means of making the spiritual visible.

But Radhakrishnan holds to a theory of poetry which is revelatory. He shares the Romantic identification of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge held that the poet is implicitly a philosopher. His view concerning the implicitly philosophical nature of poetry is based upon a theory of imagination derived in part from Kant. Kant's word for imagination is not *Fantasie* but *Einbildungskraft*, connoting by its etymology a power (*kraft*) of making (*bilden*). Coleridge's *Primary Imagination* is virtually equivalent to Kant's *transcendental unity of apperception*. The *Secondary Imagination* is a combination and reflection of the primary (metaphysical) and secondary (artistic). Thus for Coleridge, there is a firm continuity between a genuine poet's philosophical insights and his poetic creations.

Schopenhauer defines art as the kind of knowledge concerned with the Ideas, and declares that its only aim is the communication of knowledge. The highest art and highest philosophy are therefore one, since they both aim at that painless state in which the wheel of Ixion stands still and we are for the moment set free. *Apropos* Nietzsche's distinction between Dionysian creative frenzy and Apollonian love of form, hazardous flashes of poetic insight, not demonstrative arguments, are the way to truth.



In Tagore's case Goethe's idea of art is specially relevant. The role of mind, according to Goethe, is not to impose its law upon an alien world of sense-data, as Kant had taught in his *The Critique of Pure Reason*. The true role of mind is "thinking in objects" which involves the discovery of harmonies and analogies between the creative processes of nature and of art, and thus comes to grasp "Ideals" or archetypes, which are present in both of them. The Goethean archetype, however, is not, like the Platonic *eidos*, something sharply distinguishable from the particulars, that embody it. Rather it exists only in and through particulars, and thus can be known only to one whose eyes and ears and heart are responsively open to the sensuously living world. Among these sensuous particulars that flow through one's living experience, the role of the mind is to discover "eminent instances", each of which is a living moment disclosure of the Inscrutable—a disclosure which would never have been made were it not for just individual manifestation. Poetry has, therefore, by its very nature something of the character of revelation: because by grasping the particular in its living character it implicitly apprehends the universal with it. Goethe, in fact, carried forward the Aristotlean idea that poetry is more philosophical than history. Art, according to Aristotle carries to completion what nature has left incomplete. The carrying to completion of nature's partly realized tendencies is what establishes art as a philosophical operation.

Tagore, like Empedocles and Goethe, is a poet-thinker, and Radhakrishnan is in good company when he uses Tagore's philosophical poetry with a view to explicating the latter's poetic philosophy. Radhakrishnan's ideas of philosophy and poetry are worth noticing in this context. He says, "Philosophy tells us how a synoptic vision which finds together all terms and relations in a concrete spiritual whole is the real. Poetry individualises the vision of philosophy"<sup>1</sup> He is an *anekāntavādin* in respect of realizing Reality. Poetry is one such way among these. Philosophy admits alternative symbolisms, alternative standpoints. Poetry, even if not identical with philosophical knowledge, does express a general attitude towards life. And some poets often answer systematically questions which are also themes of philosophy. Such problems as those of nature, of man, etc., are themes philosophy cannot help considering. The problem



of man concerns questions of the concept of man, and also of man's relation to death, man's concept of love. These are problems that belong to the history of sensibility and sentiment, no less to the history of thought, for often the ideological intermingles with the emotional.

But the concrete problem "How do ideas actually enter into art or poetry?" has not yet been solved. When ideas are actually incorporated into the very texture of the work of art, they become "constitutive"; they cease to be ideas in the ordinary sense of concepts and become symbols. Radhakrishnan's theory of poetry needs to be qualified as follows. Philosophical truth as such has no artistic value. Philosophy, ideological in content in its proper context seems to enhance artistic values, those of complexity and coherence. When some identification of philosophy and art takes place, image becomes concept and concept image. It should be admitted that philosophical poetry, however integrated, is only one kind of poetry.

#### IV

Let us now turn to Tagore

"What is man?" This is surely one of the most important questions of all, for so much else depends on our view of human nature. The meaning and purpose of human life, what we ought to do, and what we can hope to achieve, all these are fundamentally affected by whatever we think is the real, 'or true' nature of man. Our age of anxiety has forced the question upon us once more.

In his creative writings (poems and plays) and philosophical works, Tagore engaged himself in finding the right answers to the question: What is the *dharma* of man? *The Religion of Man* is a tract on philosophical anthropology. The word *dharma* corresponds to the word 'nature'. Tagore believes that man has a nature, and this nature is man's truth. *Mānuṣera dharma* or human truth is *regulative* rather than constitutive of the human mode of being. There is in man a tension between the opening elements of life, ideal aspirations and actual facts, freedom and necessity, surplus and utility, finitude and infinity, separateness of the ego and the harmony of human relationships. Man finds himself in a crisis, and his *humanity* consists in the conscious criticism of the crisis. In other words, man starts as an



ego, but it cannot be the centre of his personality for ever. A paradoxical being, *homoduplex*, that man is, he needs and seeks for a wider life, unity and relationship.

Tagore's concept of man has moral and aesthetic overtones. With him the evidence of the aesthetic and the ethical carry greater weight than the logical. His concept of man is spelt out in terms of axiological notions. Man is, for him, a value-making and value-seeking animal. Protean in essence, man is an "angel of surplus". What Sri Aurobindo said of Tagore applies equally to Tagore's concept of man — "a constant music of overpassing of borders."

What does Tagore understand by 'philosophy'? It is, he tells us, reason illumined into vision, a practical activity guiding man to his life's fulfilment, and concerned with such fundamental questions as the ultimate meaning of existence. The ultimate meaning of existence is a disinterested joy through "harmony of communication", which is freedom. It is at once aesthetic and ethical in import. Philosophy, says Tagore, begins by taking into account the spirit of alienation, the obscuration of man in the human world, and aims at a "positive relation" of freedom. "The history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationship." Philosophy, for Tagore, is philosophy of life, and is intended for the *ātmahano janāḥ*, spiritual suicides. Tagore's meta-philosophy centres around a concept of man, and his philosophical statements are partly descriptive and partly emotive. They are descriptive of human truth and are employed for dynamic use.

We have already noticed that man finds himself in alienation, yet he refuses to be what he is. While attempting to answer the question "What is man?" he searches for his identity. The search may be inconclusive, yet it is a human prerogative, forced upon him by his self-consciousness. Man's refusal to be what he is cannot be a matter of theoretical awareness alone; it entails an assent to an imperative concerning the 'real' or 'true' nature of man. The theory regarding man suggests a course of action. Tagore's concept of man exhibits the following elements of a theory of human nature, a diagnosis of what is wrong with man, and a prescription for 'effecting corrections'.



The ideological content of Tagore's philosophy is ambiguous, if not obscure. It prescribes actions as well as claims belief. But does Tagore's system of belief about the nature of man give rise to a way of life of some *group* of people? It is more akin to Kant's theory of social group which defines a way of life. In this sense, it has affinities with existentialism. Radhakrishnan has taken Tagore's philosophical views to be ideological. In interpreting Tagore, he thought he was interpreting the Indian ideal of philosophy and religion. This must be considered an overstatement, owing largely to the nationalist motivations of the time. Tagore said of himself, "I, the outcaste and the uninitiated." He was a rare example of the moral loneliness of an Indian philosopher.

## V

I shall now take up the more specific conceptual issues in Tagore's theory of man.

When we consider Tagore's statements about man's true or real nature, e.g. "Man is an angel of surplus," etc., we must decide what type of statement he is making. Radhakrishnan takes Tagore as saying that man is "a finite-infinite being", combining in himself spirit and nature. The statement may turn out to be a value-judgment (saying what ought to be the case), rather than a statement of fact (about what is the case). If what is being asserted is evaluative and not factual, then it becomes impervious to evidence. Statements about human nature are especially subject to a kind of ambiguity. When Tagore says that man is an artist or a creative spirit, does he mean that all or most human beings are actually so, or that we should all be so, or what? In thus distinguishing value-judgements from statements of fact, I am not implying that Tagore's statements are merely expressions of individual taste, that they cannot be given objectively valid reasons, whether for or against. I am just pointing out that the above kind of clarification is often essential when discussing theories of human nature. And Radhakrishnan does not raise any such issue. He takes Tagore's statements as tautologically descriptive, though not ignoring their evaluative import. I think that to take Tagore's statements about human nature as tautologically descriptive is to make him committed in the wrong direction. Tagore employs in his philosophical writings the methods of persuasive defini-



tion. According to Stevenson, this method consists in changing the descriptive meaning of a term without altering its emotive meanings. Radhakrishnan does not notice this phenomenon in Tagore's writings, and seeks in vain to bring him under the banner of classical Vedānta. All that can be made about Tagore's assertions about man's nature is that there is no reference-point beyond man's "truth is human". The term 'man' for Tagore is an open-ended concept (*homo-homini deus*). There is more that is protagorean in Tagore than Radhakrishnan intercepts. Does Radhakrishnan give any reason for accepting Tagore's statements about human nature? Many of Tagore's statements about human nature are concealed definitions, and on this score may be held to be impregnable to contrary evidence. They reveal part of what he means by the word 'man'. Not all matters of definition are trivial however. Sometimes Tagore introduces new terms (e.g. "Angel of Surplus") or uses old words (e.g. "infinite") in new ways. It is then very necessary for definitions to be given, and for it to be made clear they are not claims about any sort of fact. Definitions are not the sort of statements which can be proved or disproved merely by investigating the evidences as empirical ones can be. Now if a statement does not fall into any of the three categories, e.g. evaluative, analytic or empirical, then we have a really difficult case. Tagore's statements about man's bi-polar existence may be considered. These assertions try to say something about what, in a sense, is the case; and in another sense, what ought to be the case. They assert some fundamental truth about man's nature and are hence not mere matters of definition. It is at least clear that these assertions are not genuinely empirical.

Tagore would not like to win too easily by explaining away all possible evidence against his assertions. His statements are too mixed a bag, and many deserve individual attention. It is of no use suggesting testability by observation, for it is a criterion not of meaningfulness, but of a statement's being scientific. The emphasis can, of course, be put on falsification. Tagore's statements are unfalsifiable, and this is an important fact to be established about them. Sometimes unfalsifiability characterises the class of statements called "metaphysical", i.e., statements of highest generalisation.<sup>4</sup> Radhakrishnan has taken Tagore's statements about human nature as



metaphysical, though the co-extensionality which he often institutes between the metaphysical and the ontological need not be accepted. And the reasons for accepting Tagore's metaphysical statements are to be sought in man's capacity for intuiting truths about himself. They have a self-certifying character. Tagore's is a speculative philosophy, and Radhakrishnan is right in showing him as endeavouring to frame a coherent system of general ideas in terms of which every element of an experience can be interpreted. With Tagore, we are to pursue, in a single hypothesis, the general and the concrete. 'Harmony' is Tagore's word for it.

## VI

In his philosophical writings, Tagore proposes to rethink the whole foundation of our lives, and find their meaning and purpose in human terms alone. He makes some general statements about the human mode of consciousness or imagination. The ability to conceive of what is not the case is the freedom to imagine other possibilities. As men, we can never reach a state in which there are no possibilities unfulfilled, for whatever state we are in, we can always conceive of things being otherwise. Tagore repeatedly refers to the human faculty of imagination, a word almost never used in the Indian context. He takes it to be "the most distinctly human of all our faculties."<sup>6</sup> The imagination reveals a new dimension, an ampler measure of significance, meaning and fulfilment. This is Tagore's description of the intentionality of human consciousness. There is a sort of conceptual connection between human freedom and imagination. Man's consciousness, if unhappy, is creative. Man is an artist, who freely fashions his possible image and tries to actualize it. Herein lies man's authenticity. Human reality must not be necessarily what it is, but must be able to be what it is not. Tagore's basic point is that to be conscious at all is to be free.

Contrary to what Radhakrishnan has argued, the reality-value of the ideals of man's own further development is not ontologically prior to men. Reality is *human*.<sup>7</sup> It is ambiguous to say, as Radhakrishnan does, that "man is yet to become what is."<sup>8</sup> Man's ideal being must be different from his actual mode of existence, and the ideal is real for man alone, and hence no ontological priority should be ascribed to it in all fairness to Tagore. Truly do we find him in such moods



as saying that that which is "eternal is realising itself in history." But such expressions as this are misleading. According to Tagore's intentions, the so-called 'eternal' is no other than man's "own infinity"; otherwise, he says, it has no justification to exist.<sup>9</sup> When Radhakrishnan says that the content of man's ideal passes beyond his existence, he is, in point of fact, mis-stating Tagore's point. To be precise, for Tagore, to exist is to be creative, and accordingly, *human* existence encompasses the ideal.<sup>10</sup> Conversely man's humanity itself is an ideal. Man exists in and through his creative approximations of his ideal.

Thus owing to overlooking the intentionality of human consciousness Radhakrishnan has missed the *dynamics* of Tagore's description of human life. He explains Tagore's notion of the Infinite by saying that it is not other than the finite transfigured. It should be noted that for Tagore, the process of transfiguration cannot be a matter of metaphysical intuition, a life of recognition of all things in the self, and the self in all things. Two points may be stated in this connection: first, according to Tagore, "the infinite" is a regulative notion, beckoning man's self-transcendence. Radhakrishnan renders it completely *constitutive* of human destiny. Second, the word "infinite", in Tagore's usage, functions in the manner of 'Deity' as in Samuel Alexander's philosophy. It connotes more than it denotes; it is a shorthand expression for man's intentional consciousness, his value-positing freedom. Moreover, Radhakrishnan interprets Tagore's view that man's *dharma* is to become infinite much in the fashion of *satkāryavāda*. This would be inconsistent with Tagore's point that freedom of endless growth characterises all of man's activities. There seems to be no reason for supposing why men's self-discovery should culminate in a final event, marking the consummation of the creative process. What Tagore means by man's infinity is that no set of predicates, however adequate, can descriptively exhaust what the notion 'man' implies. This is borne out by Tagore's remarkable phrase, *mānavika bhūmā*<sup>11</sup> as well.

It is obvious that Tagore would not allow the concept of man to be subsumed under the category of God, as Radhakrishnan has intended. "God" is a word Tagore hardly uses, and even when he uses it, it is rhetorical in effect. His word is "infinite". Man, says



Tagore, aspires for rising in dignity of being, and religion is one of the ways in which human aspiration finds itself expressed. In the religion of man the idea of God presupposes the idea of man. Had there not been in man, a search for his own supreme value and had he not asked, "What is it to be man like?", the idea of God as a vision of a being would not have been cultivated. And having been cultivated the idea, his no definitive answer to the question. The concept of man for Tagore is then a necessary pre-condition of the idea of God.

## VII

Radhakrishnan's description of Tagore's view of nature as an attribute of the divine does not fare well either. Tagore's conception of nature is indeed complex and deserves probing into in depth. The term 'nature' is unperspicuous and lends itself to equivocation. For example, by 'nature' one might mean all that is not-self or the anti-thesis of man. It is possible to understand the term, following Collingwood, in Galileo's sense, i.e. the physicist's nature, quantifiable in space and time. Such a nature as this may be said to exist independently of our consciousness, of human mind. Tagore says that the realist's belief is a "mystical belief", natural and yet inexplicable. He argues that to say that truth exists apart from humanity is to contradict science itself. According to Tagore science organizes into rational concepts, whatever man can know. The "knowledge is his who is a man." What Tagore says has a Kantian ring about it. "We can never go beyond man is all that we know and feel." Nature, unrelated to the human mind, does not exist in Tagore's philosophical discourse.

Thus we get the notion of the unity of man and nature. Nature "satisfies our personality with manifestations that make our life rich and stimulate our imagination ..."<sup>12</sup> I would call this conception of nature Berkeleian-Kantian. It is farthest from that of Locke, i.e., a bundle of primary qualities. It has rather striking similarities with the Aristotelean theory. Nature occasions our self-discovery, for in all knowledge we know our own self in the condition of knowledge. "As we know the truth of the stars we know the great comprehensive mind of man."<sup>13</sup> The unity of man and nature is a *human* unity forged by the creativity of the human mind. "What we call nature is



not a philosophical abstraction, not cosmos, but what is revealed to *man* as nature. In fact, it is included in himself and therefore there is a commingling of his mind with it, and in that he finds his own being."<sup>14</sup> Nature, then, is a human achievement. The passage just cited is very much decisive, and it states very clearly that the unity of man and nature is possible because unity is a human principle, transcendental, though not transcendent. Radhakrishnan has ontologized this principle of unity of harmony as a concrete spirit which reveals itself in both man and nature. I doubt if Tagore would ever say that except for the sake of quoting metaphysical poetry.

But Radhakrishnan is very much near the truth in assimilating society to nature in respect of man. Society, or for that matter, culture and civilization are human creations. These are organs of man's self-realization. Man creates his society, builds his culture and civilization by an inner necessity whereby he can embody his values. "Civilization is to express Man's *dharma*."<sup>15</sup> It is "a creation of art, created for the objective realization of our vision of the spiritually perfect."<sup>16</sup> Human personality, says Tagore, is "multicellular," and this fact about man's being is put forward by him with a view to explaining both the unity of man and nature as well as of man and society. Society, conceived along the premises of Tagore's concept of man, must not be a system of windowless monads interacting by a *pre-established* harmony. The generative principle for harmony should lie within the social individuals. Society, thus envisaged, is as distant from that of Rousseau as it is from that of Hobbes. It cannot be modelled on the bee-hive<sup>17</sup> either. Short of freedom or harmony, society becomes closed and man gets alienated.

The foregoing account gives us an idea of Tagore's social philosophy. In discussing Tagore's social thoughts Radhakrishnan has remarked that social justice is demanded by the consciousness of divine immanence. This may be the case with different presuppositions, but inadmissible in respect of Tagore. He explains social injustice in terms of deadening of human consciousness, owing to a lack of a sense of harmony. On pages 50-51 of his book Radhakrishnan quotes a passage from Tagore which belies the contention. Tagore's position is closer to Kant's second and third formulations of the Categorical Imperative. It may not be out of place to mention that



Tagore's thoughts on society and related matters had gradually grown into radical convictions which incorporated many of Marx's theses on alienation and his *critique* of capitalism. The fact, however, is that Tagore altogether drops the category of the divine from the domain of social explanation, and upholds the same humanistic point of view as elsewhere. For him the social and the political ultimately comprise a subset of the ethical and hence his account of social injustice is given in terms of privation of moral virtues.

## VIII

How can the truth of general propositions about man be ascertained? Shall we follow the path of intellect or that of intuition? Aeschylus, in speaking of the office of intuition, says that when the mind sleeps, it is bright with eyes. Radhakrishnan's *critique* of the logical intellect in his *An Idealist View of Life* is well-known. In Tagore's case he has argued the thesis that intuition enables us to penetrate beneath outward appearances studied by science and see the life in things. The relationship between intellect and intuition is to be carefully understood. Intuition, according to Radhakrishnan, not only corroborates the truths grasped by intellect but also comprehends it. On the plane of intuition the intellect is *realised*. Further, man, for Tagore, is a unity of intellect, emotion and will. Since the human individual is a unity of the three, these elements need not conflict with each other, and *a fortiori* no one of them can be complete without gathering into itself the two others. There should be no divorce between intellect and intuition. The "understanding mind of man", says Tagore, comprehends both the reasoning mind and the creative imagination.

Tagore's word for 'intuition' is 'imagination'. It is the deputy of man's deeper self and grasps the truths of relationship. It is very much like Kant's notion of reflective judgment, except perhaps for the fact that it is endowed with a nœtic quality. "The details of reality must be studied in their differences by science, but it can never know the character of the grand unity of relationship pervading it, which can only be realized immediately by the human spirit."<sup>14</sup> If it is possible to put our trust in the mind in one of its functions, it would not be wrong in trusting it in another of its capacity.

Radhakrishnn's *resume* of Tagore's view concerning the functions of the logical intellect and that of intuition is excellent as far as it goes. It suffers from only one defect. He has not put it in the perspective of Tagore's aesthetically oriented philosophical anthropology. As a result, much is left unexplained. For example, the experienced fact that whatever enhances the value of our being gives us joy. Why should the apperception of harmony be a matter of disinterested delight? And above all, for Tagore, why is love, which is the highest truth, the most perfect relationship?

According to Tagore's philosophical method, it would not be enough to assent intellectually to a theory of man, it must be held with a certain intensity and depth of feeling. Unless the theory is distilled from life, if it is only argued about, it would remain merely abstract and conceptual. For both Tagore and Radhakrishnan, without letting logic slumber and reason rest, imagination also shall have to be aroused in the philosopher.

It is, in effect, a proposal to practise philosophy in the manner of art. The religion of man asks us to be sensitive persons, for it is so much a religion of the artist as well. Jacques Maritain, we know, has advocated a notion of 'poetic knowledge' and Radhakrishnan is right in pointing out that, for Tagore, art is a pathway to freedom. Art frees us by disengaging the mind from its imprisonment in the web of customary associations and routine ideas.

Aesthetic emotion is a spiritual experience, since art has its origin in the non-hedonistic, non-utilitarian dimension of man's being, the surplus in man. Man *qua* man is an artist, a citizen of the kingdom of freedom. In art man's self-expression<sup>20</sup> is its own object, and helps him to leap free of the fetters that obscure his real nature.

Radhakrishnan appears to suggest that, with Tagore, the function of art is to lift us up into a passive mood of contemplation. If he does it, then he must have profaned the conceptual point that Tagore's notion of harmony or creative unity comprehends the aesthetic as well as the ethical. The beautiful is interdefinable with the good. For Tagore production of forms of beauty alone is no aim of art. In its wider connotation, art is religion, *ātmasaṁskṛti*, a flame as it should be with a sense of reality. Beauty, he identifies with truth



or harmony. The same spiritual plenitude, man's will-to-communicate accounts for both beauty and goodness. As a moral agent and as a creator of beauty alike, man builds bridges between the self and the not-self. Art, like morality, is essentially *sāhitya* which etymologically suggests *sahitātva* or communication in non-solipscist human world. Art would be impossible but for freedom or transcendence of alienation, appropriating the world into our consciousness. The word 'love' sums up all these.

"Goodness is the freedom of our self in the world of man, as is love,"<sup>19</sup> says Tagore. It may be debated if 'love' is an aesthetic or ethical notion. For Tagore it is both. Love illuminates our consciousness of reality, and beauty bears its everlasting meaning. In sum, the notions of beauty, goodness and love are revelatory of the "human message" of our experience.

Harmony, we have noticed, is the key-notion of Tagore's philosophical anthropology. Interchangeably so are 'freedom' and 'surplus'. Whatever term is predicable of man must be either derivable from or definable in terms of these. In Radhakrishnan's account this methodological point is not observed. He mentions the notion of surplus only in connection with explicating Tagore's view of art. But it should be worth recalling that working through the imagination the surplus in man renders a plethora of man's adventure of ideas and action possible. It "finds its manifestation in science, philosophy and the arts, in social ethics, in all things that carry their ultimate value in themselves."<sup>20</sup> That the manifestation of man has no end, that man is infinite, would remain well-nigh inexplicable without the crucial notion of the surplus in man, and with this notion, against the claims of every abstract idea, Tagore has pleaded for the cause of the complete man. This continues to be, even today, a desideratum of any theory of man.

## REFERENCES

1. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (Baroda, 1961), p. 99. Henceforth this book will be referred to as *PRT*.
2. *The Religion of Man* (London, 1970), Chapter 3. Henceforth this volume will be referred to as *RM*.

3. *Faith of a Poet* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964), p. 22. Henceforth this work will be referred to as *FP*.
4. See my *Rabindra Darsan* (in Bengali), Visva-Bharati: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, 1968, p. 7.
5. See A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: 1929), p. 4.
6. *RM.*, p. 11. Also, "What is unique in man is the development of his consciousness ... Man's imagination is the faculty that brings before their mind the vision of their own greater being" p. 84.
7. *RM.*, Chapter IX. Also p. 84.
8. *PRT.*, p. 21 What man ideally is never given as an axiological datum, rather it is a projection of man's intentional consciousness, it evolves in history. The ideal, in Tagore's own words, "dwells in the prospective memory of the future". Time past and time future are spanned by man's spelling his ideals. It is man's own time. "Man", says Tagore, "includes in himself the time, however long, that carries the process of becoming." p. 14.
9. *RM.*, p. 38.
10. *RM.*, "Man has a feeling that he is truly represented in something which exceeds himself. He is aware that he is not imperfect, but incomplete. He knows that in himself some meaning has yet to be realized." p. 36.
11. This phrase occurs in Tagore's *Mānusera Dharma*.
12. *RM.*, p. 12. Also "Our universe is the sum total of what man feels, knows, imagines, reasons to be, and of whatever is knowable to him now or at another time." p. 15.
13. *RM.*, p. 15.
14. *RM.*, p. 72. Also "As an animal, he is still dependent upon nature, as a Man, he is a sovereign who builds his world and rules it." p. 27.
15. *RM.*, p. 92.
16. *RM.*, p. 72.
17. *RM.*, p. 22.
18. *RM.*, pp. 63-64.
19. *RM.*, p. 121.
20. *RM.*, pp. 36-37.



## RADHAKRISHNAN'S ASSESSMENT OF NYAYA-VAISESIKA

PRABAL KUMAR SEN

Ever since its publication, Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy* has been held in high esteem by students and teachers of philosophy, who have turned again and again to this monumental work for inspiration and guidance. The overwhelming popularity enjoyed by this book is not due to its inimitable lucidity alone. Radhakrishnan did not assume the role of a mere chronicler of facts — he undertook the uphill task of interpreting and evaluating the systems as well. In his own words :

The historian of philosophy must approach his task, not as a mere philologist or even as a scholar, but as a philosopher who uses his scholarship as an instrument to wrest from words the thoughts that underlie them.<sup>1</sup>

Few scholars were as competent as Radhakrishnan for undertaking such a venture. But with characteristic humility, he admitted that his judgment was not final. As he says:

To outline the history of Indian philosophic thought, which has had a long span of development of over three thousand years, on a cautious estimate, is indeed a prodigious task ... No scholar, however learned, can know everything on so vast a field. There will be gaps and mistakes.<sup>2</sup>

The second volume of *Indian Philosophy*, which contains a detailed account of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools, was published in



1929. Since then, fifty years have passed, and during this period, the philosophical climate in India has perceptibly changed. The influence of Neo-Hegelianism and other forms of Idealism is on the wane, and analytic philosophy is gaining ground. Besides, important texts of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools that were not available to Radhakrishnan have been discovered and published, previous editions of important texts have been superseded by better ones, and excellent research work by a number of scholars has enabled us to fill up some gaps in the history of these schools, and to look at them from new perspectives. The Buddhist texts discovered by Rahula Sankrityayana have thrown a flood of light on the medieval period of Indian philosophy. It seems to us that Radhakrishnan himself would have endorsed a reassessment of his views in the light of the new material. As he says :

The true teachers help us to think for ourselves in the new situations which arise. We would be unworthy disciples if we do not question and criticise them.<sup>3</sup>

The present paper is an humble attempt at a revaluation of Radhakrishnan's assessment of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. Criticism suggested here should not be taken as a mark of disrespect to him.

The second and third chapters of *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, which comprise Radhakrishnan's account of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika respectively run to about two hundred and eighteen pages. Radhakrishnan believes that "effective exposition means criticism and evaluation"<sup>4</sup>; accordingly, even the expository parts of this account are interspersed with critical comments. Owing to limitations of space, we will consider only some of them. The chronological and bibliographical details of the chapters, which need some drastic revision, will not be considered here, since they are not that important for the purpose at hand.

Let us look at the following remarks in the opening paragraph of the second chapter :

While the other systems of Indian thought are mainly speculative, in the sense that they deal with the *universe as a whole* the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika represent the analytic type of philosophy, and uphold common sense and *science* ... What is distinctive of these schools, is the application of a



method, which their adherents regard as that of science ... Applying the methods of logical enquiry and criticism, they endeavour to show that these do not warrant the conclusions which the Buddhist thinkers derived from them ... *They are mainly interested in averting the sceptical consequences of the Buddhist phenomenalism*, which merged external reality in the ideas of mind (Italics mine).<sup>5</sup>

In the remarks quoted above, there is much that is true. But the italicized parts lead to some problems. Radhakrishnan has admirably captured the basic spirit of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika by emphasizing their affinity with the common-sense views of the world; still, the distinction that he draws between these schools and other systems is not very helpful. While the Naiyāyikas did not claim that the categories admitted by them exhaust the furniture of the universe, the Vaiśeṣikas made such a claim, and consequently, the first sentence is, to some extent, misleading. The use of the word 'science' calls for some explanation. For Radhakrishnan, the tasks of science and philosophy are different, as evident from the following remark:

Science sorts out, while philosophy sums up. The Vaiśeṣika is not interested in constructing an all-embracing synthesis within whose bounds there is room for all that is, bringing all the variety of the worlds of sense and of thought under a single comprehensive formula. In the spirit of science, it endeavours to formulate the most general characters of the things observed ... The resulting philosophy comes to be of piecemeal character, and not an adequate and comprehensive one<sup>6</sup>.

Evidently, for Radhakrishnan, philosophy must bring everything under a single comprehensive formula, and this, in its turn, follows from his belief that "the prerequisite of all thinking is the undivided reality from which subject and object are derived by a process of abstraction,"<sup>7</sup> and that "the conception of a plurality of reals externally related to one another must yield place to the idea of the essential unity of the world."<sup>8</sup> If we accept these contentions, then Radhakrishnan's view that Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika are scientific rather than philosophical in outlook would be correct. But Radhakrishnan has



not given adequate arguments in favour of these views and they have not been unanimously accepted either. The following passage from Austin might provide a good example of dissent :

... What has ever been gained by this favourite pastime of counting worlds ? And why does the answer always turn out to be one or two, or some similar, well-rounded, philosophically acceptable number ? Why, if there are nineteen of a thing, is it not philosophy ?'

Radhakrishnan's view that Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika were interested in combating the Buddhist phenomenalism has been established beyond doubt by other scholars.<sup>10</sup> We should, however, remember two things in this connection. First, these schools did not stem solely from a hostility towards Buddhism. The fundamental tenet of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is that language and ordinary experience give us a true picture of reality—everything is *jñeya* and *abhidheya*. Buddhism denies both these views, and consequently Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Buddhism were destined to meet in a head-on collision. The struggle became more intense and bitter with the passage of time. We should note that the Naiyāyikas raised their voice against the Advaita view of *anirvacanīyatva* as well, though their protest was comparatively feeble. We shall return to this point in a moment. Second, it should also be remembered that the Naiyāyikas crossed swords with the Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas on a number of issues (e.g. whether cognition is self-luminous, whether knowledge is self-validating, etc.), even though the Mīmāṃsakas sided with the Naiyāyikas in combating Buddhism. In fact, these controversies assumed greater importance when the Buddhists disappeared from the battle-field. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school also opposed the *satkāryavāda* of Sāṅkhya and Yoga. What we want to point out is that these issues were equally vital for the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools, and this has not been sufficiently stressed by Radhakrishnan.

Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika are traditionally regarded as allied (*samāna-tantra*) systems, but they also differ in some vital respects. According to Radhakrishnan, "the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika take up respectively the world within and the world without."<sup>11</sup> He is more explicit when he observes :



While the Nyāya gives us an account of the processes and methods of a reasoned knowledge of objects, the Vaiśeṣika develops the atomic constitution of things which the Nyāya accepts without much argument.<sup>12</sup>

In this connection, it may be pointed out that in some cases the Naiyāyikas and the Vaiśeṣikas gave different explanations of the same physical process, and the difference was never toned down. The famous controversy between *pilupāka* and *piṭharapāka* is a good example of this. Moreover, the third and fourth chapters of the *Nyāya-sūtras*, as well as the commentary and sub-commentaries thereon, were exclusively devoted to metaphysical problems. In fact, Radhakrishnan himself says elsewhere that "the Nyāya is a metaphysics of reality as well as a theory of knowledge."<sup>13</sup> Thus, we cannot distinguish between these two schools merely by the emphasis they put on different problems. The two schools, however, differ on a fundamental issue, and unfortunately, it has escaped the notice of Radhakrishnan. The Vaiśeṣikas evolved a categorial framework for classifying things, and they resisted all attempts at its revision. The Naiyāyikas, on the other hand, did not believe in such unalterable frameworks. Vallabhācārya pointed out this difference when he called the Naiyāyikas *anīyatapadārthavādins*. His contention is fully substantiated by a cursory glance at the *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* of Bhāsarvajña and the *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa* of Raghunātha Śiromaṇi, where drastic revisions of the Vaiśeṣika scheme of categories have been suggested.<sup>14</sup>

For Radhakrishnan, the value of Nyāya is mainly pedagogic. In his words:

Whatever other specialized studies a student may take up later, the preliminary course includes logic, which is the basis of all studies. Every system of Hindu thought accepts the fundamental principles of Nyāya logic, and even in criticising the Nyāya system, uses the Nyāya terminology. The Nyāya serves as an introduction to all systematic philosophy.<sup>15</sup>

According to Radhakrishnan, "Nyāya theories of fallacies have served Indian thinkers as a ready reckoner, 'saving us', to use Börne's expressive words, 'from the need of going to the ocean every time we



want to wash our hands.”<sup>16</sup> The problem of ‘fallacies’ was dealt with in great detail by the later Naiyāyikas, but it is somewhat surprising that their work did not attract Radhakrishnan. His attitude to it is best expressed in his own words:

The modern Naiyāyika devotes a great attention to *pramāṇa* or the theory of knowledge, and discards altogether the question of *prameyas* or the objects of knowledge. The scholastic subtleties, the logical legerdemain, the fine hair-splitting in which the works of the successors of Gaṅgeśa indulge, terrify many, and even those who have grappled with them cannot be sure that they have comprehended their ideas.<sup>17</sup>

We cannot agree with Radhakrishnan on this point. First, it is not a fact that the Navya-Naiyāyikas discarded the *prameyas*. Texts like *Kiraṇāvali*, *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, *Āmatattvaviveka* and *Nyāyalīlāvatī*, which deal primarily with the *prameyas*, were commented upon by them and many of them wrote commentaries on the *Nyāya-sūtras* as well.<sup>18</sup> Second, they did not indulge in ‘fine hair-splitting’ just for the fun of it. Radhakrishnan admired the Naiyāyikas for combating the Buddhist phenomenalism<sup>19</sup>, but he did not notice that the Naiyāyikas’ ‘terrifying’ terminology and search for impeccable definitions were part of this very task. Nevertheless, the terminology of Navya-Nyāya is ontologically neutral, and hence it was adopted by other schools. This was no mean achievement on the part of the Naiyāyikas.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere, Radhakrishnan has said:

My approach to the problems of philosophy from the angle of religion as distinct from science or of history was determined by my early training. I was not able to confine philosophy to logic and epistemology.<sup>21</sup>

This may explain why Navya-Nyāya, which is primarily concerned with logic and epistemology, could not satisfy Radhakrishnan.

We do not suggest that everything is allright with Navya-Nyāya. Of late, it has been accused of treating ontological, epistemic and logical constructions on a par leading to a mixing up of frames of reference. It has also been suggested that Navya-Nyāya lacks a criterion of distinguishing between empirical and ontological reals.<sup>22</sup> These charges deserve serious attention. But we cannot



simply brush Navya-Nyāya aside by saying that it is "more confusing than enlightening."<sup>23</sup> It is unfortunate that Radhakrishnan has not substantiated his sweeping remarks by concrete examples. It must, however, be admitted that he is not the only person to hold such views. Some authors have gone one step further, and maintained that "not only Navya-Nyāya made no contribution to the *prameya* part of the system ... but none, even to the *pramāṇavāda*."<sup>24</sup> It has also been suggested that Navya-Nyāya exhibits "scholastic subtlety leading to decadence."<sup>25</sup> Radhakrishnan had the fairness to admit that "the value of Navya-Nyāya as a training ground can hardly be overestimated."<sup>26</sup>

Radhakrishnan was not satisfied with the epistemology or metaphysics of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. In his opinion, the Nyāya theory of knowledge "transforms the ordinary assumptions of common sense into a metaphysical theory which is inadequate to the facts of consciousness as well as the demands of logic."<sup>27</sup> The epistemology of Nyāya, which sharply distinguishes self from not-self is supposed to lead to a position "where it becomes impossible for us to be certain that the world is as we perceive it."<sup>28</sup> The argument offered by Radhakrishnan is as follows:

When we divide the subject from object, the question of building the bridge from the one to the other becomes difficult. ... Nothing but thought itself is known directly, and we cannot compare the thought with the real, since only one of them is given, and the act of comparison implies that both the terms should be given.<sup>29</sup>

I would like to make only some passing remarks on this argument. The three terms, 'subject', 'thought' and 'given' need some clarification. If 'subject' means the knowing self, then for the Naiyāyika, cognition itself is the bridge between subject and object. Similarly, if 'thought' stands for cognition, then what Radhakrishnan claims will be simply rejected by the Naiyāyika, for whom cognition reveals the object, and not itself. The Naiyāyika would not say that only one of the 'terms' is 'given'; for him, the object is given in the cognition, and the cognition is given in a subsequent *anuvyavasāya*. The Naiyāyika is fully aware of the consequences of



admitting the view that 'thought' alone is known directly, and he has tried his best to refute it.

The second mistake of Nyāya epistemology is, according to Radhakrishnan, the "prejudice" that "consciousness is the result of the causal action of the not-self on the self."<sup>30</sup> The supporting evidence runs as follows :

The problem for logic is not so much the genesis of knowledge as its nature. We cannot hope to determine the nature of knowledge by trying to go behind it and observe the manner of its coming to be. When the Naiyāyika regards consciousness as a product or resultant, he is trying to get behind the process of knowing.<sup>31</sup>

To us, the argument does not seem to be conclusive. The Naiyāyikas are not interested in logic alone — their theory of inference is a part of their epistemology, which in its turn is determined by metaphysical considerations. If cognition is an event, as it seems to be, then one way of determining its nature is to specify its causes. Radhakrishnan's opposition to this procedure stems from his belief that "the only absolute . . . is the undivided reality of consciousness." This, again, is based on the claim that "a metaphysical investigation of the nature and conditions of knowledge reveals to us the universality of consciousness."<sup>32</sup> But this view is not shared by the Naiyāyika, and Radhakrishnan has not given any convincing argument in its favour. In other words, his 'criticism' consists in positing a counter-claim, and hence it fails to be effective.

Limitations of space do not permit me to discuss Radhakrishnan's criticism of other important doctrines maintained by the Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas. The criticisms indicate the factors that render the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tenets unacceptable to a philosopher, for whom "spirit creates the world and controls its history by a process of perpetual incarnation"<sup>34</sup> and who believes that "whereas the scientific mind is satisfied with secondary causes, the philosophic mind demands final causes."<sup>31</sup> The factors are, however, emotional rather than rational. We are not minimizing their value; but on closer scrutiny most of the criticisms turn out to be 'external' in nature, *i.e.* they start from assumptions that are not shared by the Nyāya or Vaiśeṣika



schools. An effective criticism of their tenets should be 'internal', *i.e.* it should either show that the basic assumptions of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika are incompatible with one another, or else should reduce the assumptions to absurd consequences. But Radhakrishnan seldom adopts this procedure while criticizing the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tenets.

This is not to suggest that the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tenets are invulnerable, or that the criticisms of Radhakrishnan are pointless. Indeed, many of his views are shared by Advaita Vedāntins, who picked up the weapons left by the Buddhists, and made mincemeat of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika epistemology and metaphysics. But then, Advaita Vedāntins like Citsukha and Śrīharṣa struck at the root of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools by pointing out the logical contradictions that infested their fundamental assumptions. We admit that Advaita Vedāntins had an extra weapon in their arsenal, *viz.* the Upaniṣadic passages that lent support to unqualified monism, which compelled the Naiyāyikas to adopt a defensive posture. But, without the logical arguments, the scriptural evidence would have been less convincing; in other words we could have classed them along with the criticisms of Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan might have beaten the Naiyāyikas at their own game if he had adopted the techniques of Citsukha and Śrīharṣa; and his arguments would have gained in depth and force. But for reasons best known to him, Radhakrishnan usually preferred to criticize a theory by positing an opposite view and leaving it at that.

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## RADHAKRISHNAN'S EXPOSITION OF DVAITA VEDANTA

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Radhakrishnan first discusses the theory of knowledge of Dvaita Vedānta. He mentions that Dvaita accepts three sources of knowledge, *i.e.* perception, inference and scriptural testimony. In the case of the third, the special point, *viz.*, the whole *Veda* consisting of *Saṁhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa* and *Upaniṣad* being taken as the source of spiritual knowledge, instead of only *Upaniṣads* being taken so, is noted. *Karmakāṇḍa* portion also being treated as yielding spiritual content in addition to ritualistic content, is a special approach of Dvaita. This is mentioned in this exposition. It may be added that even within *Upaniṣads* the distinction of *tattvavedaka* and *atattvavedaka*, *i.e.*, those passages that give finally valid knowledge and those that yield some tentative knowledge that is to be rejected later, is not made in Dvaita. This grouping is made in Advaita to resolve the conflict between *abhedaśrutis* and *bhedaśrutis*. However, in Dvaita *abhedaśrutis* are interpreted suitably and the conflict is resolved so as to affirm *bheda* as the final purport. Six guidelines of suitably interpreting *abhedaśrutis* (to resolve the conflict with *bhedaśrutis*) are mentioned.

Madhva's acceptance of the intrinsic validity of apprehension is stated and his opposition to all theories that regard knowledge as mere appearance is pointed out.

Madhva's insistence that "Every case of illusion implies two positive entities, a given thing and a suggested object; therefore the notion of un-reality of the world means that there is something real which we mistake for something else. It does not mean that there is nothing



real at all," is recorded, and Madhva's opposition to the illusory nature of the world is summed up.

The Dvaita position in respect of knowledge, *viz.*, "there can be no knowledge without a knower and a known" is elucidated. "The distinction of things" is affirmed with the remark, "If we do not admit distinctions of things, we cannot account for the distinctions of ideas."

The Dvaita way of stating categories as independent and dependent, positive and negative, *cetana* and *acetana* and so on, is briefly stated.

Describing the concept of God in Dvaita, Radhakrishnan observes: "Independent reality is Brahman, the absolute creator of the universe. We can know his nature ..... So his nature is not indefinable. When the supreme is said to be indefinable, all that is meant is that a complete knowledge of him is difficult to acquire ..... Though the supreme being and his qualities are identical, they can be spoken of in different terms. The famous passage that Brahman is one only without a second (*ekam evādvitīyaṁ brahma*) means that Brahman is unsurpassed in excellence and without an equal. The attributes of God are absolute in their character and so do not limit him. Brahman possesses every kind of perfection. He is identified with Viṣṇu. He is said to direct by his will the world and all that is in it, as an absolute ruler. He is transcendent to the world as well as immanent, since he is the inner ruler of all souls. God rules the souls and matter, though he does not create them from nothing or reduce them to nothing. He is the efficient but not the material cause of the universe. God's activity is the result of his over-flowing perfection. Simply because God takes into account the karma of the individuals, it cannot be said that the Lord is dependent on karma, for, as Madhva says, the very existence of karma and other things depends on the Lord."

The above observations of Radhakrishnan on the concept of God in Dvaita give us all important features of that concept and help to understand the same in contrast with the concept of Brahman in Advaita and that of God in other systems.

Discussing the nature of individual souls according to Dvaita, he observes: "The distinction between Brahman and Jīva is real.



Though absolutely dependent on Brahman, the Jīvas are essentially active agents and have responsibilities to bear. Jīva is said to be of atomic size. It pervades the body on account of its quality of intelligence. The soul is by nature blissfull, though it is subject to suffering, on account of its connection with material bodies due to its past karma. The qualities like bliss become manifest at the time of release. No two Jīvas are alike in character. Each has its own worth and place in the scale of existence. The souls are of three kinds : (1) eternally free (*nityamukta*, i. e. Lakṣmī), (2) those who have freed themselves from *saṁsāra* (*mukta*, i. e. devas, Ṛṣis, fathers, etc.), (3) the bound (*baddha*). The last class includes both those who are eligible for release (*muktiyogya*) and those who are not. These latter are either those intended for hell or those who are bound to the circuit of *saṁsāra* for all times. The threefold classification is based on the three *guṇas*. The *sāttvika* soul goes to heaven, the *rājasa* revolves in *saṁsāra*, while *tāmasa* falls into hell. A gradation dependent on distinctions of souls is worked out. In celestial hierarchy, Brahmā and Vāyu occupy the most prominent places. Vāyu is the mediator between God and the souls. He helps the souls to gain saving knowledge and obtain release." This sums up the salient features of the concept of Jīva in Dvaita.

"The material products originate from the primary matter, *prakṛti*, and return to it in course of time. God moulds forms out of *prakṛti*, which is the material cause and in which exists himself in various forms. Before we get from the unmanifested *prakṛti* to the well-developed forms of creation, we have twenty-four transitional products of creation which are *mahat*, *ahamkāra*, etc."

"*Avidyā* is a form of *prakṛti* of which there are two kinds, *jīvāchādīkā*, that which obscures the spiritual powers of the jīva, and *paramācchādīkā*, that which screens off the Supreme from the jīva's view. These two forms of *avidyā* are positive principles formed out of the substance of *prakṛti*."

"Madhva rejects all attempts to reduce the world of souls, and nature to a mere illusion or an emanation of God. The individual soul is dependent on God. Even Lakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu, is dependent on God. She is the presiding deity over *prakṛti* which is the material cause of the world."



"The text '*tat tvam asi*' (That art thou), Madhva argues, does not declare any identity between God and the soul. It only states that the soul has for its essence qualities similar to those of God. He sometimes reads the passage in a different way, *viz., sa ātmā atat tvam-asi* (that ātman thou art not). Madhva uses the etymological meanings of Ātman and Brahman to explain away the passages which indentify the individual and the universal self."

"The supremacy of God introduces order and unity into the universe, in spite of ultimate differences. Through the category of *viśeṣa* which distinguishes a quality from a substance, etc., the one and many are brought into relation. *Viśeṣa* or particularity is numerically infinite, since it abides in eternal and non-eternal things and belongs to positive and negative being."

"A sound moral life is a preliminary for salvation. The moral rules are to be obeyed and obligations fulfilled without any desire or claim for fruit. A virtuous life helps us to win insight into truth. Madhva allows to all who can understand it the right to study the Vedānta. Meditation or the act of absorbing oneself as often and as intensely as possible in the glory of God, is advised. In the act of meditation the soul can by divine grace arrive at a direct intuitive realisation of God (*aparokṣajñāna*)."

"Release, according to Dvaita, consists in a restoration to the pure spiritual existence (*svarūpeṇa vyavasthiti*) after casting off the unessential forms (*anyathārūpam*). It is fellowship with God, and not identification with him."

"In the state of release, we have absence of pain as well as the presence of positive enjoyment. But the soul is not capable of rising into equality with God."

The above brief account of Radhakrishnan's exposition of Dvaita Vedānta makes it clear that he has given a lucid account of the theory of knowledge, concepts of God, individual souls, and matter in a compact way and mentioned the salient features of these concepts according to Dvaita. He has also briefly discussed the ethics, religion and the final goal of spiritual attainment, *i.e. mokṣa*.

Now, we may turn to his critical reflections on this system. He has made the following observations by way of his criticism.



(1) The fact of knowledge leads us to an organic conception of the world, but does not justify the division of the world into God, souls and objects externally related to one another.

(2) If God creates, if the beginning of the world-process is the result of the desire of the divine self, we may be able to account for creation. But the difficulty remains that whoever feels a want or has a desire is imperfect and limited. God, on such a view, cannot be regarded as the supreme perfection.

(3) The nature of the dependence of the world on God is not clearly brought out.

(4) If Brahman is co-eternal with the world, what is the relation between the two? If it is also a co-eternal relation, is the supreme spirit bound to objects other than itself? We cannot say that it is the nature of the supreme spirit to stand related to the individual souls, since the former does not contain the reason for the latter's existence.

(5) If the souls and matter depend on the ultimate Brahman, they cannot be regarded as substances. In the highest sense, the term 'substance' can be predicated only of a *res completa*, that which is complete in itself, determined by itself and capable of being explained entirely from itself. Madhva recognises that such a reality is possessed only by the supreme spirit.

(6) The theory of election is fraught with great danger to ethical life. The predestinarian scheme of thought puts an excessive strain on the other parts of Madhva's theology. The moral character of God is much compromised, and the qualities of divine justice and divine love are emptied of all meaning and value. Individual effort loses its point, since whether one believes oneself to be the elect or the non-elect, one is bound to lapse into indifferentism and apathy.

In respect of the above critical reflections, it is necessary to clarify Dvaita position and remove certain mis-understandings.

(1) As regards the first observation mentioned above, Radhakrishnan's own remark made earlier, in the section "God and world" answers the point. He has remarked that "the supremacy of God introduces order and unity into the universe in spite of ultimate differences". The souls and the world of nature being dependent on God in respect of *svarūpa*, *sattā* and *pravṛtti* (their nature, being, and



functioning) will introduce the necessary order and unity and can be sufficient ground for an organic conception of the world if at all such a conception is a must.

(2) The point raised in the second observation, *viz.*, if the creation is the result of the desire of divine-self, then, he has a want and consequently is imperfect. He cannot be regarded as supreme perfection.

This criticism is a summary of the *pūrvapakṣa* of one of the *adhikaraṇas* in the *Brahmasūtras* and is adequately answered by all the three *Bhāṣyakāras*. The pertinent question here is whether the desire to serve one's own purpose is necessary for all activities or serving the purpose of others can also initiate activity. Within the limited field of human, animal and birds activities also, we observe the self-less activities. God's creation is intended to provide an opportunity for the souls to pursue a course of career that ultimately enables them to realise their spiritual nature. This purpose does not necessitate any want on the part of God in the usual sense of the term and does not result in his imperfection. Further, activities that emanate as the very nature of something and those that are undertaken with a purpose have to be distinguished. God's creation being of the former type, no want and consequent imperfection have any room.

Moreover, this problem is a common problem to all theists, and the nature and the degree of answer depends upon the nature and degree of perfection each one has thought of. In any case, it is not an absolutely insoluble problem. Radhakrishnan's earlier remark under the section 'God' puts Dvaita solution in a nut-shell. He remarks: "God's activity is the result of his over-flowing perfection."

(3) The third criticism is about the difficulty felt in respect of the nature of dependence. There is no difficulty at all here. Even in the ordinary usage, when we say 'A' is dependent on 'B', we mean that its nature, being or functioning is supported by the other. Madhva has made it clear that souls and the world of nature depend on God in respect of *svarūpa*, *sattā* and *pravṛtti* (nature, being and functioning). This is exactly the dependence of souls and world on God.

(4) The fourth criticism relates to the relation between the world and Brahman, if both are co-eternal. It is argued that if both are co-eternal and if their relation is also co-eternal, some reason has to be adduced as present in the Supreme for warranting such a co-relation.



Such a problem is not peculiar to Dvaita. In Sāṅkhya, for instance, Prakṛti and Puruṣa are co-eternal and somehow co-related also. Similarly, in Advaita, Brahman and *avidyā* are co-eternal and somehow co-related also. On these analogies it is not difficult to understand God, souls and the world of nature being co-eternal and also co-related. The nature of relation, naturally differs in each case depending upon the ontological status assigned to the partners. In the case of Dvaita, it is *bimba-pratibimba* relation. Soul is *pratibimba* of God. Even matter is *pratibimba* of God in respect of its *sattā* (being).

(5) The next criticism relates to the question whether souls and world of nature can be considered as 'substance' in Dvaita. As per the definition of the substance quoted by Radhakrishnan, only God can be substance in Dvaita. This definition corresponds to the concept of 'Pūrṇa' in Dvaita and therefore, certainly, God alone is Pūrṇa. But the usual practice is to render the Sanskrit term 'Dravya' as substance, and in that sense souls and the world of nature are *dravya* or substance. The connotation of the terms in Sanskrit and in Western Philosophy do not exactly agree in many cases. Therefore, their implications have to be defined and used. Even in Indian Philosophy, the term *guṇa*, for instance, is used in different senses in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya. Further, dependency on a transcendental entity may not mitigate the self-sufficiency required for the purpose of being described as a substance in the world of nature.

(6) The theory of 'hierarchy of souls as *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*, and the eligibility of only *sāttikas* for liberation' accepted in Dvaita has caused annoyance to many thinkers and writers, and has created an impression that it is highly unethical and a great discouragement to the efforts for spiritual uplift. Naturally, Radhakrishnan also as felt this way and has given his candid opinion. It is not necessary to go into the very question whether such a gradation is worked out merely on the basis of scriptural authority or has reasons also to support it. It is also not necessary to examine the purport of the scriptural authority quoted by Madhva in this connection or the status of the same as authority. Assuming that such a gradation is accepted on whatever authority, the question whether it is unethical or discouraging the efforts for spiritual uplift, can be examined. With this in view, two remarks of Radhakrishnan are examined here.



The first one is that the moral character of God is much compromised and the qualities of divine justice and divine love are emptied of all meaning and value. The second one is that individual effort loses its point, since whether one believes oneself to be elect or the non-elect, one is bound to lapse into indifferentism and apathy.

Let us consider the second remark first. Continuing this remark, Radhakrishnan observes, "If we do not know what we are destined for, we may work on to purify ourselves. In the absence of knowledge we may at least have a hope." These remarks give us a clue to the solution. A *sāttvika*, *rājasa* or *tāmasa* jīva is not aware of his true nature when he is in transmigration. Therefore, he does not know what he is destined for. In the absence of the knowledge of his true nature as non-eligible, he can certainly have a hope. If he does not entertain any such hope, there must be something intrinsically wrong with him. There is no question of God playing any practical joke on him by implanting a desire in him for heaven. Only, he will not be permitted to play a practical joke on God or himself as a spiritual seeker. Therefore, so far as the efforts for spiritual uplift are concerned, it is guided by what one is, but not what one thinks 'he is'. On the contrary, the belief that everyone bears the divine in human form is more likely to lead to indifferentism, if not apathy, since he is quite certain that one day the divine in him will assert. Such an assertion of the divine may be conveniently postponed until one gets tired of this world or something tragic develops here. Therefore, a seeker seeks without being diffident about his being elect, and a non-seeker does not, even if he is told to be an elect.

As regards the moral character of being compromised consequent on electing some and rejecting the others, it is a problem that has to be faced by all theists irrespective of the fact whether they accept the gradation of souls or not. Even without gradation, the fact remains that some are happy and some are not, in worldly life. The variation in divine justice and divine love in this respect is explained with reference to *karma* in Hindu philosophies. The next question as to why this very *karma*, the performance of which is also guided by God, is differentially initiated in different souls by God and a practical gradation, if not an ultimate gradation, is introduced, is parried by different philosophers in different ways. Madhva is bold enough to say that it is rooted in the very nature of the souls. To



the next question whether God cannot change this nature and make all souls good souls, Madhva's reply is that he can, but he does not. Whether one gently parries the question, or bluntly answers, the result is the same.

Divine justice and divine love are not found justly bestowed in this world and there is no point in creating a make-belief that it will be done so after death or liberation. Therefore, one has to change one's very approach to understand the way of divine justice and divine love ; and Madhva's is one way of understanding it. This will not make any difference to a genuine seeker who believes in the infinite love of God, irrespective of dialectician's dilemma.

The above clarifications of the position of Dvaita in respect of the points raised by Radhakrishnan are intended to enable the readers to appreciate his critical reflection with a little more background of Dvaita position.

A few more points that are not in the critical reflections but are mentioned in other sections also deserve to be noticed.

He remarks that Madhva makes a clever use of Sāṅkhya and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theories. This remark is also made by a few other writers. In this connection, it may be clarified that Dvaita differs from Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika in respect of the theory of error, nature of soul and God, nature of liberation, *Vedāpauruṣeyatva*, and even in working out the details of *vyāpti*, *hetvābhāsa*, etc. Dvaita does not accept *jāti*. Its *viśeṣa* is altogether different from that of Nyāya. Nyāya holds the theory of external verification for the validity of knowledge, while Dvaita accepts intrinsic validity. Nyāya holds *asat-kārya-vāda*, while Dvaita holds *sadasatkārya-vāda*. Nyāya refers to the silver present elsewhere while explaining error, while Dvaita holds that the silver presented in error is totally absent and only mentally presented. Dvaita takes *prakṛti* as the source of matter, while Nyāya goes by *paramāṇus*. The differences in respect of the nature of soul, God, liberation, etc., are well-known. As against these major differences, there is no major point of similarity much less a clever use of the Nyāya theories.

The same is the case with Sāṅkhya. There is a vast difference between the Sāṅkhya concept of *puruṣa* and Dvaita concept of *jīva*. Svatantra-God, the central doctrine of Dvaita, is totally absent in Sāṅkhya. The two differ in respect of the theory of causation as



will as the theory of knowledge. So far as the evolution of matter from *prakṛti* is concerned, all schools of Vedānta have adopted it in one way or the other. But the important difference found in Dvaita is that *prakṛti* is the material cause guided by God. Dvaita has overcome certain deficiencies found in the Sāṅkhya in respect of the theory of causation, functions of *puruṣa* and the concept of liberation.

Another point that requires our attention in Radhakrishnan's exposition of Dvaita is his comments on the concept of *viśeṣa*. To understand the concept of *viśeṣa* in Dvaita, one has to first understand the difference between the concept of *viśeṣa* in Nyāya and that in Dvaita. In Nyāya, *viśeṣa* is intended to account for the difference that exists between two things, while in Dvaita it is intended to account for making a difference where difference does not exist. For instance, there is no difference between *guṇa* and *guṇī* according to Dvaita and, therefore, we have to account for making a difference between the two in linguistic usage. This is managed by *viśeṣa*. The relation between *guṇa* and *guṇī* is '*sa-viśeṣabheda*' according to Dvaita. *Viśeṣa* is intended to cover those cases where there is no difference, but a distinction is made in linguistic usage. It is a speciality that characterises a thing. While *viśeṣa* is required to distinguish between *guṇa* and *guṇī*, etc., that have no difference, no further *viśeṣa* is necessary to distinguish *viśeṣa* from *guṇī*, since it is the very special characteristic of that *guṇī*. If this special nature of *viśeṣa* is kept in mind, the inapplicability of the criticism made by Radhakrishnan, viz., "If *viśeṣa* is different from the Supreme, it breaks the integrity of the Supreme; if it is non-different from it, we cannot call it *viśeṣa*", can be clearly seen.

The very purpose of *viśeṣa* is to distinguish the non-different for the purpose of linguistic usage, and it does so in its own case also. Therefore, the question whether *viśeṣa* is different from the Supreme or not does not arise. Radhakrishnan's criticism may apply to some extent to *viśeṣa* in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika which has also found out a way out.

It may be concluded that Radhakrishnan has given a compact and lucid exposition of Dvaita with very useful critical reflections in a wider context. The summary of his exposition and the clarifications of the Dvaita position in respect of his reflections are given here as a tribute to his great services to Indian philosophy.



# RADHAKRISHNAN ON THE VISISTĀDVAITA PHILOSOPHY

M. NARASIMHACHARY

## I

Radhakrishnan, in his *Indian Philosophy* deals with the Śrīvaiṣṇava religion and philosophy under the title: 'The Theism of Rāmānuja'. His perspicuity of thought, coupled with a scientific analysis and masterly exposition have brought out the cardinal tenets of the school in a unique manner. One remarkable feature of Radhakrishnan's approach is the fullness and frankness with which he probes into the subject, without undue bias or prejudice for any particular school of thought. He set the way as it were, for an impartial treatment of different schools of thought since he always understands and interprets systems from the viewpoint of their original promulgators. His chaste language has become a potent means of expressing the thoughts in a clear and candid manner. In the following pages an attempt has been made to assess Radhakrishnan's treatment of this important school of philosophy, bringing out its strong points. Attention has also been paid to answer some questions raised by the great philosopher pointing out here and there a few deficiencies that have crept into his assessment.

Radhakrishnan discusses the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita under several heads such as the Āgama and the Purāṇa tradition, the Sources of Knowledge, *Cit* (the conscious self), *Acit* (inanimate matter) and *Īśvara* (the Supreme Self) called *Tattvatraya*, Creation of the world and Liberation. In his Introduction, Radhakrishnan observes that Rāmānuja's philosophy rose in response to the day-to-day



problems of human life. If a philosophy does not "comfort us in our stress and suffering, it could at best be a mere intellectual diversion and not serious thinking."<sup>1</sup> "The Absolute of Śaṅkara, rigid, motionless, and totally lacking in initiative or influence, cannot call forth worship. ... Śaṅkara's view seems to be a finished example of learned error."<sup>2</sup> It is Rāmānuja that has offered a system of thought which, for the first time in the annals of philosophical activity, was dear to the human heart. More than anything else, Rāmānuja lays emphasis on *bhakti* as an effective means of salvation, which made his school acceptable to many. Many later theistic systems owed their inspiration to this concept of *bhakti* propounded by Rāmānuja. Again it is Rāmānuja who emphasised that in *mokṣa* the individual soul does not 'lose' its selfhood in God, but that it moves in fellowship with Him.

Tracing the origin of the Śrīvaiṣṇava thought, Radhakrishnan rightly observes that the *Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā* played an important role in this regard.<sup>3</sup> Rāmānuja had to his credit, a deep study of the Ālvārs' *Prabandham* and the training under his *ācāryas* which helped him develop certain principles which otherwise would have remained latent in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtra*. While he propounded his system, Rāmānuja felt he was but expounding the wisdom of the wise men of all times.<sup>4</sup>

## II

On the epistemological side, Rāmānuja accepts perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*) and scripture (*śabda*) as valid means of knowledge. For him all knowledge is real (*satkhyāti*), including that of delusion (*bhrama*). If we see the mother-of-pearl (*śukti*) as a piece of silver (*rajata*) under certain conditions, this knowledge is also real in its own right, says Rāmānuja. According to the process of quintuplication (*pañcīkaraṇa*), each element has a fraction of other elements also in it. Thus in the example under consideration, he argues that there is some portion of silver in the nacre; but it is so negligible that we cannot serve a real purpose with it, which is responsible for its name (*bhrama*).<sup>5</sup> Thus again when the white conch is seen yellow by a person suffering from jaundice, the yellowness of the eyes is transmitted to the conch along with the rays of the organ of sight, and the white colour of the conch is obscured. This argument, Radhakrishnan points out, as quite unscientific.<sup>6</sup> Different schools of



thought have their own theories of knowledge and error and sometimes the expounders try to justify these theories from logical grounds, for the sake of doctrinal coherence and scriptural sanction.

For Rāmānuja an immanent necessity operates in the nature of knowledge. All our judgments attempt to relate the subjects to the larger whole. When knowledge reaches its goal, we shall have a single organised experience including a number of parts with their specific activities. For Śaṅkara a bare identity cannot be grasped by thought and thought need not be blamed for not achieving the impossible.<sup>7</sup> But Rāmānuja affirms that while a judgment speaks of the identity of the subject and the predicate, the subject and the predicate are actually two different things. For him, identity is a relation and every relation involves two terms. God and the world of *cit* and *acit* are equally real for him, and each must be real through the other. This is possible only if we regard the system as a single experience of the personal type.<sup>8</sup>

### III

The categories, according to Rāmānuja are: *Prakṛti*, *kāla*, *śuddhasattva*, *dharmabhūtajñāna*, *jīva* and *Īśvara*. Radhakrishnan rightly observes that the concept of *dharmabhūtajñāna*—knowledge being a unique adjunct of the self—is an important tenet of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school.<sup>9</sup> This concept helps explain how the individual soul, though essentially characterised by knowledge, is at times found to be influenced by ignorance, since it is accepted that this *dharmabhūtajñāna* can expand and contract (*saṅkoca* and *vikāśa*).

For Rāmānuja, consciousness can never be devoid of qualities (*nirguṇa*). Even Śaṅkara attributes qualities like eternity, self-luminosity etc. to it. Rāmānuja argues that consciousness can also become an object of knowledge and that it is not necessary that everything known must be a non-conscious object (*jāḍa*).<sup>10</sup> Even during deep sleep (*suṣupti*) the self remains as the entity called “aham”, since we have a judgment to this effect: “(when, in deep sleep) I was conscious of nothing.” Knowledge cannot be known except in relation to an object and in deep sleep it does not function since there is no object.<sup>11</sup>



Regarding the concept of God in Viśiṣṭādvaita, Radhakrishnan aptly remarks that a conservation of the finite self and an admission of the infinite self as a personal being, is demanded by religious experience and that this infinite being is accepted as full of auspicious qualities of which compassion (*karuṇā*) is the most important. The concept of *nirguṇa Brahman*—that Brahman is devoid of any quality whatsoever—may be the culmination of intellectual perfection in philosophy, but it has no appeal to the ordinary man. The *nirguṇa Brahman*, which stares at us with frozen eyes regardless of our selfless devotion and silent suffering, is not the god of religious insight.<sup>12</sup> Brahman is a synthetic whole, with animate and inanimate things as its modes (*cidaacid-viśiṣṭa*). The qualities of Existence (*sat*), Knowledge (*cit*), and Bliss (*ānanda*) impart to Brahman, a character and a personality.

The concept of body-soul-relation (*śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*) between the world of inanimate and animate things is another important tenet of this school. Rāmānuja defines a body as a substance which a conscious soul is capable of completely controlling, supporting for its own purposes, and which stands to the soul in an entirely subordinate relation.<sup>13</sup> This definition clarifies the above doctrine of *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*. As the *jīva* is not in essence affected by the imperfections of his body, so is God, though thus embodied, not influenced by the imperfections of the human soul. It is clarified further that souls and matter are related to the Lord as attributes to a substance and as parts to a whole. The former are *prakāras* or modes, *śeṣas* or accessories and *niyāmya* or the controlled, while the latter is the supporter, controller and the principal entity.<sup>14</sup> Rāmānuja in a masterly way appropriates the intuitions of the *Upaniṣads* and other scriptures in all their richness and propounds his thesis that Brahman owns the world of finite selves and Nature as its *vibhūti*, *viśeṣaṇa*, *prakāra*, *aṁśa* or *śakti*. This involves a truly philosophical definition of the body-soul complex, which maintains unity in and through diversity. This is the significance of the term *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, the sole and secondless unity of the infinite shining forth through an infinity of attributes.<sup>15</sup> If the *jīva* is an *aṁśa* and if the *aṁśa* stands for a part, it follows that there must be difference as well as identity between the *jīva* and the Brahman, which is the *aṁśin* or the whole. But it should be noted that the *aṁśa* does not mean 'part' as something cut out of a whole. For Rāmānuja, it is an integral attribute, an inseparable character, which



implies a dependence of the part on the whole, or of the attribute on the substance. So it is in the sense of 'belonging' that the finite self is called an *aṁśa* of the Supreme.<sup>16</sup> Again the whole is not a mere arithmetical sum of parts. There is some mysterious power, some integrating principle, which makes the sum a whole. The physical body, for instance, is a whole of parts but the integrity of the living body is due to an inner principle, which alone animates it and gives a wholeness to it.<sup>17</sup> Radhakrishnan says that God is not a mere immanent ground of world existence; He is the transcendent ground as well. So He cannot be confused with the thinking *jīvas* and the objects of their thoughts.<sup>18</sup>

Through this concept of *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* the Viśiṣṭādvaita finds the key to the apparent contradictions in Upaniṣadic texts which speak of *bheda* and *abheda*. The *ghaṭaka-śrutis* bridge the gulf between these two extremities of *bheda* and *abheda*.<sup>19</sup> Rāmānuja accepts the *saguṇa*-texts which describe the Brahman as an abode of all perfections. He holds the *nirguṇa*-texts also equally valid since they, according to him, only deny imperfections named *guṇas* in the terminology of Sāṅkhya. The credit of solving the apparent contradictions of different classes of scriptural passages thus goes to Rāmānuja alone.<sup>20</sup>

Sāṅkara interprets the *maḥāvākya* 'Tat tvam asi' (*Chāndogya*, VI. 8.6) as declaring metaphysical unity between Brahman and *jīva* by ignoring the special characteristics produced by *avidyā*. But Rāmānuja points out that to understand the identity between two entities, we should eliminate 'this'-ness and 'that'-ness. Otherwise, two things can never become identical and the sentence would only turn out to be self-defeating. Every judgment is a synthesis of distincts. When the Brahman and *jīva* are thus placed in a relation of subject and predicate (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) it follows that there is a difference between the two.<sup>21</sup>

Referring to the concept of Śrī which is another important landmark in the Śrīvaiṣṇava theology, Radhakrishnan says that while Īśvara symbolises justice, Lakṣmī stands for compassion, the two qualities being united in the godhead. Lakṣmī, the *śakti* of the Lord, has two aspects: *kriyā* (the principle of regulation and control) and *bhūti* (the principle of becoming). These two aspects answer to



force and matter and enable Viṣṇu to become the efficient and the material causes of the universe. Elaborating, Radhakrishnan says that Rāmānuja's God is not impassive absolute who looks down upon us from the height of heaven, but joins us in the experiences of our life, shares our ends and works for the upbuilding of the world.<sup>22</sup>

#### IV

The individual soul (*jīva*) according to Viśiṣṭādvaita is atomic in size; still it can feel the pleasure and pain all over the body because of its attributive knowledge which expands and contracts. The analogy is the flame of the lamp, which though tiny in itself, illumines many things by means of its light which can also contract and expand. In *pralaya* or dissolution of the world, the particular forms of the souls are destroyed but the souls themselves are not destroyed.<sup>23</sup> The consciousness as "aham" (the ego-principle) or self-distinction constitutes the very being of the self. This 'ahamārtha' is not to be confused with the mundane sense of "I" involving the identification of the self with the not-self.<sup>24</sup> But for it, there would be no point in striving for liberation. This character of knowership continues in the state of release also.

Radhakrishnan says that in Viśiṣṭādvaita, as opposed to the Sāṅkhya system, *prakṛti* or matter is caused and controlled by the Lord alone. Explaining the process of creation, he says that it takes place on account of the will (*saṅkalpa*) of the Lord and that subtle matter becomes gross and the souls enter into relationship with material bodies corresponding to the degrees of merit or demerit acquired by them from the previous births.<sup>25</sup> Creation of the world is a mere sport (*līlā* or *kṛīḍā*) for the Lord. This metaphor, says Radhakrishnan, brings out the disinterestedness, freedom and joy underlying the act of creation. This conception enables Rāmānuja to insist on the absolute freedom and independence of God.<sup>26</sup>

As for the doctrine of *karma*, Radhakrishnan observes that the individual souls depend entirely on God for their activity, who has set up the order of *karma* (*karmādhyakṣa*). God declares what is good and what is bad, provides them bodies, gives them the power to employ them. Still if the world has in it much suffering and misery, it is not God that is responsible for it, but the man who has the power to



work for good or evil.<sup>27</sup> As for the concept of evil, Radhakrishnan, quoting Yāmuna says that in this school, great emphasis is laid on the conviction of sin and man's responsibility for it.<sup>28</sup>

As for the means of release, Radhakrishnan says that in this system salvation is possible, not through *jñāna* and *karma* but through *bhakti* and the grace of God. *Bhakti* is man's reaching out towards a fuller knowledge of God through quiet meditation. There are several steps in *bhakti* like *viveka*, *vimoka*, *kriyā*, and *abhyāsa*. By *bhakti* mere emotionalism is not meant; it involves training one's will and intellect. Stress is also laid on *prapatti* as another means of release. While *prapatti* is the only way to salvation according to the Teṅgalai school, the Vaḍagalai school holds that it is one way of liberation but not necessarily the only way. Human effort is an essential factor in salvation. One wins the favour of the Lord through *karma*, *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *prapatti*. Radhakrishnan points out that for the southern school, *prapatti* once done is enough and that it need not be repeated, while for the northern school, continuous offering of the soul to the Lord is a must.<sup>29</sup>

Radhakrishnan further observes that the Vaiṣṇava devotion uses the idea of intimate relations as symbols for man-god relationships. The Lord is viewed as the teacher, friend, father, mother, child and even as the beloved.<sup>30</sup> The relation as the beloved is likely to be misunderstood. In true love, there is little of sensual attraction. There, the two souls trust each other more than all others they have met or known before. The stories of Sītā and Sāvitṛī, Damayantī and Śakuntalā have impressed this lesson into the heart of India.<sup>31</sup>

Now we shall examine some remarks made by Radhakrishnan in the course of his exposition. While referring to the āgama traditions of the Vaiṣṇava thought, he mentions the *Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā* as its scripture.<sup>32</sup> It should be stated that the Vaiṣṇava religious lore has two main branches, the *Vaikhānasa* and the *Pāñcarātra*. The *Vaikhānasa-āgamas* enjoyed wide popularity and unquestioned authority since they are based on the *sūtras* of Vikhanas, a Vedic sage. The authority of the *Pāñcarātra* texts was questioned by Kumārila, Śaṅkara and others, in reply to whom Yāmunācārya wrote the *Āgama-prāmāṇya*.<sup>33</sup>



Radhakrishnan observes that Rāmānuja's faith was influenced by the *Bhāgavata* and the *Viṣṇu-purāṇas*.<sup>34</sup> While there is no doubt in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* exerting a profound influence on Rāmānuja, the case of the *Bhāgavata* seems doubtful, and this has been pointed out by many scholars. The reference to the Drāviḍa saints found in the *Bhāgavata* does not suggest an early date to the *purāṇa*.<sup>35</sup>

While listing the works of Rāmānuja, Radhakrishnan omits the *Gadyatraya* and the *Nityagrantha*<sup>36</sup> which according to several scholars are his own works.

Regarding the sources of knowledge of the school, Radhakrishnan states that *smṛti* or remembrance is regarded as valid and is given a separate place.<sup>37</sup> The *Yatindramatadīpikā* says that though recollection is accepted as a *pramāṇa*, it has to depend on the latent impressions only (*saṁskāras*). Since perception is the origin of *smṛti*, it is brought under perception itself and is not treated as a separate means of knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

As for *anumāna*, Rāmānuja says that there are three members in the syllogism, points out Radhakrishnan.<sup>39</sup> It has to be pointed out that according to the *Yatindramatadīpikā*, which codifies the views of all early writers on the school, there can be no fixing of the number of members in a syllogism. Depending on the grades of intellect of the persons, the number of members in *parārtha-anumāna-vākya* could be five, three or even two.<sup>40</sup>

In the section on the ethical and religious Life, Radhakrishnan observes that the Śrīvaiṣṇava faith does not encourage *tapas* or austerities.<sup>41</sup> We do not know on what grounds he makes this observation. It is true that in the Vaiṣṇava philosophy great emphasis is placed on the conviction of sin and man's responsibility for it. This does not mean that the Vaiṣṇava faith does not recognise or encourage *tapas*. Yāmuna in his *Gītārthāsaṅgraha* brings *tapas* under *karmayoga*<sup>42</sup> which consists of penance, resorting to holy places, acts of charity, performance of sacrifices, etc. *Karmayoga* along with *jñānayoga* results in *bhaktiyoga*.<sup>43</sup>

In the same section Radhakrishnan remarks that Rāmānuja "preaches equality in worship and proclaims that *bhakti* transcends



all caste distinction. But it is by no means clear that he was prepared for a wholesale defiance of the accepted order. We cannot say that he was in full sympathy with the logical implications of his teaching.<sup>44</sup> This statement is rather strange because Radhakrishnan has himself recognised that Rāmānuja admitted the *pariahs* into the temple at Melkoṭe. Is it not proof enough to show that in his very life-time Rāmānuja implemented what he preached? Perhaps Radhakrishnan has in mind Rāmānuja's *bhāṣya* on the *Apaśūdrādhikaraṇa* of the *Brahmasūtra*, I. iii. 33-39, where the *śūdras* are declared not eligible for Vedic study. *Bhakti* as a feeling of love for God is accepted to be present in all. In fact, this is the very basis of Rāmānuja's admitting the *pariahs* into the temple even in those days. But *bhakti* as a practical discipline involves certain restrictions governed by one's station in life, which cannot be violated. Those of the three higher communities are eligible for this aspect of *bhakti* since they are entitled to a study of the sacred text and the consequent performance of certain rituals. But *prapatti* which is free from all such restrictions and reservations, is open to one and all, irrespective of caste, creed or sex.<sup>45</sup> This is what Rāmānuja means by the distinction among castes in regard to *bhakti*.

Referring to the ideal non-worldly body of God in this system Radhakrishnan says that it is 'a sort of plastic stuff', through which He displays His boundless power of appearing diverse and multiple, though He is inwardly one and the same<sup>46</sup>. This comparison is rather amusing since it only attributes material character to the body of the Lord. We cannot conceive of the *aprākṛta* form of the Lord since it can be realised only by the *yogins* through their spiritual *anubhava*. That is why the *Upaniṣad* declares that the form of the Supreme is beyond the ken of words and thought.<sup>47</sup>

On the ontological side, Radhakrishnan remarks that the *saguna* Brahman of Śaṅkara and the *brahmaloka*, answer to Rāmānuja's Viṣṇu and Vaikuṇṭha. Śaṅkara, he says, pressess the point that these conceptions, though the highest open to us, are not the highest in themselves. Also such a reservation makes little difference so far as life is concerned.<sup>48</sup> This criticism is beside the point because fundamentally the Viṣiṣṭādvaita as a philosophy of religion identifies the Absolute of philosophy with the God of religion and does not believe



in the theory of two Brahman. The concept of *nirguṇa* Brahman propounded by the Advaitins is inconceivable since it is only a concept which transcends conceptual life at the same time. Moreover, not only Śaṅkara but every Vedāntin transcends the logical level and relies on intuition. As such it is not fair to state that Rāmānuja occupies the logical level and Śaṅkara the intuitional height.<sup>49</sup>

The next charge levelled by Radhakrishnan is that Rāmānuja does not tell us how exactly the attributes of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* are organically related to the Absolute.<sup>50</sup> It has already been pointed out by us that in Viśiṣṭādvaita the Absolute of philosophy is identified with the God of religion. As such the attributes of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* can be understood as bringing out the essential nature of the Supreme. Apprehension of the Brahman is the comprehension of what He is and so Brahman becomes *saguṇa*, and is defined as the real, the inner subject of all thinking beings and the ever-blissful Self. As the *sat*, the Brahman exists in itself and for itself and is thus self-contained.<sup>51</sup>

Radhakrishnan then points out that relation between Brahman and the soul in terms of substance and attribute is not satisfactory. An eternal relation between them, be it essential or accidental, will be an inexplicable mystery.<sup>52</sup> It has already been pointed out that for Rāmānuja Brahman owns the cosmos of finite selves and Nature as Its *vibhūti*, *viśeṣaṇa*, *prakāra*, *aṁśa* or *śakti*. The acmé of this conception is that *jīva* is the *śarīra* of Brahman. The relation of *viśeṣāṇa* and *viśeṣya* has been brought in by Rāmānuja to show that the *jīva* is totally dependent on Brahman for his name and form (*nāma* and *rūpa*). There is no question of the two becoming identical since they are essentially different from each other. Then the relation need not be held as purely external since the Viśiṣṭādvaita recognises both *bheda* and *aprthaksiddhi* and combines the two in a metaphysical unity. The Viśiṣṭādvaita re-interprets the theory of external relation in terms of internal relation, and the latter in terms of the organic relation of *śarīra-śarīrin*.<sup>53</sup>

The next question raised by Radhakrishnan is as to how the finite selves with their respective consciousness, values, etc., are sustained by the Absolute.<sup>54</sup> As Prof. P.N. Srinivasachari points out,



the Absolute pervades the many but does not pass over into the many. In other words, it is the fact of facts and the true of the true. It includes *cit* and *acit* and exceeds their content and value. As *ādhāra* Brahman becomes *Īśvara*, the *niyantā* (controller).<sup>55</sup>

The next point raised by the critic is that in the Viśiṣṭādvaita God, spirits and matter are the Absolute and not God alone. Yet, Rāmānuja identifies God with the Absolute beside which and beyond which nothing else exists.<sup>56</sup> It may be pointed out in reply, that the absolute, for Rāmānuja, is not Brahman and the sum total of *cit* and *acit* in the mathematical sense, but is Brahman in the world in the metaphysical sense. We can distinguish *cit*, *acit* and *āśvara* but not divide them; they are eternal but not external. Brahman enters into the world of the animate and the inanimate as its immanent cause, but is unaffected by the world process and is therefore transcendental in character.<sup>57</sup>

Radhakrishnan then finds fault with the concept of Brahman being both the material and efficient cause of the universe. Rāmānuja believes that the changes of the body do not affect the soul of God. 'What then, is the essence of God which remains unchanged?' asks the critic.<sup>58</sup> He also points out that the theory which says that *cit* and *acit* forming the body of God is the material cause and the soul of God is the efficient cause, is like saying that 'we take half of a fowl for cooking and leave the other to lay eggs'.<sup>59</sup> Again we may reply in the words of Prof. P.N. Srinivasachari that the critic has mistaken the metaphysical view of *viśiṣṭa-advaita* for a mathematical one.<sup>60</sup> The question of the changeless Brahman becoming the changing universe, again raised by Radhakrishnan, has indeed been the subject of enquiry of all Vedāntic schools of thought. Each school relies on its own *sāstra* in explaining this phenomenon. Rāmānuja follows Bādarāyaṇa, the author of *Brahmasūtra* in asserting that Brahman is in the changing world but not the changing world. Brahman is pure and perfect and the imperfections of human life do not affect it. The evils of life are traceable to the moral autonomy given to the *jīvas*.

We may note one more remark made by Radhakrishnan that Rāmānuja gives us beautiful stories of the other world, which he narrates with the confidence of one who had personally assisted in the



origination of the world.<sup>61</sup> Here again we can note the tendency of the critic to mistake cosmology for mythology. We must keep in mind here that Rāmānuja's description of Vaikuṇṭha is based on the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*. For Rāmānuja, only *viveka* and *vairāgya* lead to *mukti* which is beyond space and time. The poetic language of the *Upaniṣad* is mistaken by the critic in this context. It may be noted that the *Upaniṣad* speaks of *Brahma-gandha*, *Brahma-rūpa*, *Brahma-rasa* and *Brahmānanda*. But the significance of the texts is lost when stress is laid on mere *gandha*, *rūpa*, *rasa*, etc., omitting the term *Brahman*.<sup>62</sup> So there is nothing wrong with the description of the *Paramapada* given by Rāmānuja on the basis of the *Upaniṣad*.

Thus we may note in conclusion that in spite of the apparent contradictions and criticisms raised by Radhakrishnan, his assessment of the Viśiṣṭādvaita religion and philosophy is quite impartial and authoritative. He recognises the fact that "Rāmānuja had the greatness of a religious genius. Ideas flowed in on him from a variety of sources—the *Upaniṣads*, the *Āgamas*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Divya-Prabandham* and he responded to them all with some side of his religious nature ... He gave us the best type of monotheism conceivable, inset with touches of immanentism."<sup>63</sup>

## REFERENCES

1. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (IP.) by S. Radhakrishnan, p. 659.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 662. For a detailed discussion on the validity of the *Pāñcarātra*-texts, see *Āgaṃpramāṇya*, ed. by M. Narasimhachary, (Baroda: GOS. 160, Oriental Institute, 1976).
4. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 667.
5. *Yatīndramatadīpikā* (YMD), I, p. 15 (with Svami Adidevananda's translation). For the process of *pañcīkaraṇa*, see *ibid.*, p. 65.
6. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 675.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 677.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 678.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 679. For a complete discussion of the concept of *Dharmabhūtajñāna* as given by Yāmuna, see *Contribution of Yāmuna to Viśiṣṭādvaita* by M. Narasimhachary, (Madras: 1971), pp. 178-188.
10. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 680.



11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 683.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 684. Vide *Vedārthasaṅgraha* (VS) (with English translation by S. S. Raghavachar), p. 76 :  
 “*sarvātmanā ādhāratayā niyantrīyā śeṣitayā ca āpnotiti ātmā ; sarvātmanā ādheyatayā, niyāmyatayā, śeṣatayā ca apṛthaksiddhaṁ prakārabhūtamiti ākāraḥ śarīram iti cocyate*”.
14. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 685.
15. Cf. S. S. Raghavachar, “An outline of Rāmānuja’s Philosophy”, *Śrī Rāmānuja Vāṇī*, (Madras: Sri Ramanuja Vedānta Centre, 1977) p. 19.
16. See K. Seshadri, “Aspects of Viśiṣṭādvaita”, *Śrī Rāmānuja Vāṇī*, p. 30.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
18. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 686.
19. *YMD*, IX p. 129. Two examples of *Ghaṭakaśrutis* are :  
 “*ya ātmani tiṣṭhan ātmano ’ntaro yam ātmā na veda, yasyātmā śarīraṁ ya ātmānam antaro yamayati, sa ta ātmā ’ntaryāmyāmyamṛtaḥ*”  
 (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, V. vii. 22)  
 “*yaḥ pṛthivyāṁ tiṣṭhan pṛthivyā antaro yaṁ pṛthivī na veda, yasya pṛthivī śarīraṁ, yaḥ pṛthivīm antaro yamayati*”  
 (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, V. vii. 3)
20. *VS*, p. 90:  
 “*evam ca sati abhedo vā, bhedo vā dvyātmakatā vā vedāntavedyaḥ, ko ’yamarthaḥ samarthito bhavati? sarvasya vedavedyatvāt sarvaṁ samarthitam...*” etc.
21. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 688.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 689.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 691.
24. See S.S. Raghavachar, *Śrī Rāmānuja Vāṇī*, p. 16.
25. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 698.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 699.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 693.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 703. Vide *Stotraratna*, śl. 48.  
*aparādhasahasrabhājanaṁ*  
*patitaṁ bhīmahavārṇavodare*  
*agatiṁ śaraṇāgataṁ hare*  
*kṛpayā kevalamātmāsātkuru*
29. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 706.
30. Cf. *Stotraratna*, śl. 60:  
*pita tvaṁ mātā tvaṁ dayita tanayastvaṁ priyasukṛt*  
*tvameva tvaṁ sarvaṁ gururasi gatiścāsi jagatām etc.*
31. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 707.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 662.
33. See *Āgamaṣrāmāṇya*, *GOS.* 160, pp. 7-8.



34. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 665.
35. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. XI. v. śls. 38b-41a.  
*kalau khalu bhaviṣyanti nārāyaṇaparāyāṇāḥ*  
*kvacit kvacin mahārāja draviḍeṣu ca bhūriśaḥ*  
*tāmraparṇi nadī yatra kṛtamālā payasvinī*  
*kāverī ca mahāpuṇyā pratīcī ca mahānadī*  
*ye pibanti jalam tāsām manujā manujeśvara*  
*prāyo bhaktā bhagavati vāsudeve 'malāśayāḥ*
36. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 666.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 673.
38. *YMD.*, I, p. 11.
39. *IP.*, Vol. II, pp. 673-74.
40. *YMD.*, II, p. 30.
41. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 703.
42. Cf. *Gītārthasaṅgraha* of Yāmuna, śl. 23a :  
*karmaṃyagāḥ tapasīrthadānayaājñādisevanam*
43. *Cj. ibid.* śl. 1a:  
*svadharmajñānavairāgyasādhyabhaktyekagocaraḥ*
44. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 709
45. *YMD*, VIII, pp. 113-114.
46. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 686.
47. *Cj. Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 4.1:  
*yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*
48. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 721 fn.
49. See P. N. Srinivasachari, *Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita (PV)*, p. 585.
50. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 713.
51. *PV.*, p. 576.
52. *IP.*, Vol. II, pp. 713-14.
53. *PV.*, p. 576. See also K. Seshadri, *Śrī Rāmānuja Vāṇī*, p. 29.
54. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 714.
55. *PV.*, p. 576.
56. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 714.
57. *PV.*, p. 577.
58. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 715.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *PV.*, p. 585.
61. *IP.*, Vol. II, p. 720.
62. *PV.*, p. 589.
63. *IP.*, Vol. II, pp. 720-21.



## RADHAKRISHNAN AND THE CONCEPT OF MAYA

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Writing of Śaṅkara, Radhakrishnan says: "The abstract expression of this phenomenality (of the world) is *māyā*."<sup>1</sup> "Both unity and multiplicity cannot be *equally real*."<sup>2</sup> We can say that it cannot be that both unity and plurality are *real*. One is the contradiction of the other. Plurality, according to Śaṅkara, is the very negation of reality. Untruth and the unreal conceal the truth and the real. Śaṅkara insists that plurality must have to be denied and transcended. This is by a philosophical and direct insight into truth in immediate realization.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, to say that oneness and plurality are not equally real, as Radhakrishnan does, is an understatement which suggests that plurality is, in some way, only less real but not unreal. Such a statement may be meaningful in a system in which several realities are admitted to co-exist without contradiction as in the case of Bradley and Rāmānuja, for instance, where the contradictories are merely contraries.<sup>4</sup> Hierarchy of realities is intelligible in a system, an interrelated whole. But Śaṅkara's reality is not a system or a whole of parts. The term *non-dualism* expresses the absence of another even in the relation of contrariety. Contrariety involves difference and every kind of difference is denied in Brahman (*sajātīyavijātiya* and *svagatabheda*). Nor is it again that plurality is just left behind or gathered up in a higher synthetic transcendence. The total denial is the *sine qua non* for the possession of truth. Even to speak of transformation, transvaluation or transmutation does



violence to Śaṅkara's *motif*. The fact is that there is nothing to be transvalued, much less transformed.

One criterion for pronouncing something as illusory is that it is objectively presented.<sup>5</sup> Reality is consciousness which could have no tinge of objectivity in it. To be objective is to be outside consciousness, set over against it. Even to say, as Rāmānuja does, that consciousness could be an object, is to that extent, to deny consciousness *qua* consciousness. It becomes the content of consciousness at that moment, divided and alienated from its own essential nature. Neo-realists like G. E. Moore have argued that an object of consciousness cannot be consciousness. The Vijñānavādins have held that consciousness is the object of consciousness with its consequent stance of subjectivism. To both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, it is not acceptable that object could be reduced to the subject. This must be true even if consciousness were to be treated as an object of consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

Śaṅkara's presupposition that consciousness can never be objectified without falsifying itself rests on such considerations as above. The very division of knower and known which is the starting point of all life and experience is therefore a falsification of the unity of consciousness.

And yet, the essential nature of unity can never be destroyed. That one's essential nature can never be destroyed is another postulate of Advaita. Hence the falsification cannot be a real process. It follows that duality is an illusion; that is, it is something that appears but does not truly exist.

This is a position fundamentally and diagonally different from the one which says that the world is only phenomenal or transitory and is not its own explanation. These properties follow from the illusory character. Otherwise, it is difficult to say how the phenomenality and temporality came to be at all if they presuppose their explanation in something that is not phenomenal or temporal. If the phenomenal and the temporal remain as ultimately real then there is no reason why they should not be self-explanatory. If they were not, their contingent character must be different from the self-explanatory character of that which they presuppose and which should



not lose that character of being their explanation and being self-explanatory all the time they appear. Radhakrishnan points out that "the real is what is free from self-contradiction but the world is full of contradictions."<sup>7</sup>

Contradiction should mean internal instability and contingent incompatibilities will exclude each other. Such an exclusion is not self-contradictory among the contingent pluralities. But reality should be free from such self-contradiction because there is no contingent in it. Only for this reason reality is said to be uncontradictable. No contingent fact could be uncontradictable. In fact, it is contingent because of its contradictability. To say that reality is contradictable will be a self-contradiction. Śaṅkara admits no duality in reality for the fear of such contradiction. If, therefore, duality appears anywhere, it should be an illusion.

As Radhakrishnan observes: "The world of diversity will collapse into a single unit",<sup>8</sup> because it is such an insupportable and precarious presentation. In his words, again, "the world is said to be unreal since it is sublated by true knowledge."<sup>9</sup> What is sublated by knowledge can only be an illusion. Removability by knowledge is one of the marks of illusion.<sup>10</sup>

Temporality and phenomenality of the world are the *consequences*, not the *ground* of its illusory character, though these consequent characteristic marks appear first in knowledge from which we then infer the illusory character of the world. Radhakrishnan tends to write sometimes that the reverse is the case. Thus he writes: "The world of experience is not present at all times and is *therefore* not real."<sup>11</sup> (*italics mine*). The temporal is only a sign of the unreal.

Śaṅkara states: "As soon as consciousness of non-duality arises in us, the transmigratory state of the individual soul and the creative quality of Īśvara vanish at once, the whole phenomenon of plurality which springs from wrong knowledge being sublated by perfect knowledge."<sup>12</sup>

The object of such sublation by true knowledge is the wrong notion that the world which is really unreal is real. Illusion is only that presentation in knowledge cancelled by the dawn of truth. Its stability



is only in so far as it is not dispelled.<sup>13</sup> Here, as Madhusūdana puts it, the world and its knowledge alike are illusory.<sup>14</sup>

Sometimes a distinction is sought to be made between illusion and unreality. Radhakrishnan himself makes this distinction when he declares "unreal the world is, illusory it is not."<sup>15</sup> But when that which is really unreal appears as real, it is an illusion. And this is precisely the inexplicable character of the world. Inexplicability is the mark of illusion.<sup>16</sup>

*Māyā* is the *pariṇāmikārāṇa* of the world and as such the world is only *māyā* on the principle that the effect is not different from the cause. This *māyā* itself is only based on Brahman which is its *vivarta upādāna*.<sup>17</sup> By this concept of *vivarta*, we understand that Brahman, without undergoing any modification, appears as the world. The reality of the appearance is only the appearance of the reality. Hence the reality and its appearance are of unequal status (*viśamasattā*). Yet the appearance itself owes whatever being it has (that it has some kind of being is not denied), to its basis in reality. Considered in itself, the world is neither total being nor total non-being. In Brahman, however, it is total non-being.<sup>18</sup> In other words, there is really no change in Brahman for all the projections of plurality. Only in illusions, a thing appears as another without being modified in any manner. Hence the world is only an illusion.

Another feature of an illusion is that at one time either the illusory object or its real basis will appear, not both. But in a hierarchy of realities, all of them can appear alongside each other. In illusion there is no choice between simultaneous presentations. The real is concealed by the false projection. To get at the real, there is no means other than the negation of the projection. The illusion distorts the real beyond recognition. To this extent its content is the unreal because it is different from and in contrast to the real. It is all that the real is not. So the illusory is unreal though the unreal need not be the illusory. The category of the unreal is wider than that of the illusory. It includes also non-entities which are logically self-contradictory and therefore cannot appear ever in illusion, like the barren woman's son. Illusions have their basis in some reality and are therefore logically and empirically possible. But non-entities can be neither of these. In the world-presentation, illusoriness and



unreality coincide in the above sense. That is, illusion is a presentation in and of some reality and is dissoluble without remainder in that reality.

Consequently, to speak of "ultimate unreality" is not also tenable because an unreality of the illusion is just here and now even when and where it appears. On the fatal touch of truth it collapses into nothing leaving the real. The world does not become progressively unreal. If it is unreal, it is so all the time. Even assuming that the world is ultimately unreal, its claim to be ultimately real is precisely the illusion. What is true is always true and what is false is always false.

Radhakrishnan writes: "At the logical level it is an impossible feat to force non-being into the equivalence of being. The world-process is enlarged in this interminable task." But this is a hopeless task "because it only recedes but never disappears."<sup>19</sup> Within the world itself the elements of being and non-being are found together at once antithetic and correlative." They are in polar opposition but not in "mutual exclusion." Yet logically this is an impossible position. Being and non-being can never go together in any method of combination. This is the reason why the world is described in Advaita as *sad-asad-vilakṣaṇa* (neither real nor unreal) and not as *sad-asat* (real-unreal). "Yet no system till today has logically articulated the relation between the real and the unreal."<sup>20</sup> The logically impossible can never be a reality in however tenuous a form except in an illusion. The impossible appears as possible. While Brahman is pure being, a process of becoming with being and non-being in polar opposition in its structure is an apparent fact. How does the pure being appear as becoming without becoming at all? Hence, either pure being of Brahman must be denied or becoming must be declared as illusory. The former course is the more undesirable.

A puzzled logic tries to isolate elements of reality and unreality in the composition of the world but this is a useless task because the pure being is in fact the only constitutive cause even in the so-called apparent becoming. No relation between being and non-being could possibly be conceived, much less constructed, to establish the reality of becoming. But becoming cannot be without the element of non-being



admixed with being. Non-being *ex hypothesi*, cannot be a relatum.<sup>21</sup> Hence it follows that non-being as such is not a constituent of the world-process. To deny being to world is not to accept non-being. Being non-being polarisation is highly inadequate to the character of the world-presentation. The world "illusion" or *māyā* is used to bring out this categorial inadequacy. Illusory the world is, unreal it certainly is not. As Radhakrishnan observes: "If the world seems to be independent of Brahman then we must say that it is not what it appears to be."<sup>22</sup>

In an illusion, what is presented is the substratum while what is perceived is some other thing. Shell, for instance, is presented but silver is seen. Of all the various attempts to give an explanation of this phenomenon, the Advaitin alone postulates the appearance of the silver in the place where it appears. Others have tried to place it either inside the mind as ideation or memory or outside the mind in a shop or elsewhere or have tried to reduce it to merest non-existence. The Advaitin has tried to give an ontological status to silver as befits its peculiar presentation. The poignancy of an illusory situation is that it is a direct presentation as much as a veridical one. And it is cancelled in the same place where it appeared. Any appearance, *qua* appearance, must have some ontological status because there is no means of distinguishing between appearance of a real thing and a false one to begin with. Knowledge must have to start with appearances only which engender a belief at the moment. Hence the appearance as immediately given must be accorded an existential worth though this worth is not its own but of the thing of which it was a distortion and as such it is a worth that is denied of the appearance itself. This existential worth is not an independent worth. Apart from the reality of which the appearance is the distortion, the appearance can have no *ratio essendi*, nor *ratio cognoscendi*. This is what Śaṅkara means when he says that the world-appearance is nothing independent of the reality of which it is a distortion.<sup>23</sup> And it has an existential worth that is consistent with its character of an appearance, however distorting it might be of reality, and till it is appraised as a distorting appearance by a correct knowledge. The world-appearance is sufficiently long so as to produce the illusion of a reality for all practical purposes.



Radhakrishnan sums up the various connotations of the term *māyā* in Advaita literature. (a) That the world is not self-explanatory shows its phenomenal character which is signified by the word *māyā*. (b) The problem of the relation between Brahman and the world has meaning for us who admit the pure being of Brahman from the intuitive standpoint and demand an explanation of its relation to the world which we see from the logical standpoint. We can never understand how the ultimate reality is related to the world of plurality since the two are heterogenous and every attempt at explanation is bound to fail. This incomprehensibility is brought out by the term *māyā*. (c) If Brahman is to be viewed as the cause of the world, it is only in the sense that the world rests on Brahman while the latter is in no way touched by it, and the world which rests on Brahman is called *māyā*. (d) The principle assumed to account for the appearance of Brahman as the world is also called *māyā*. (e) If we confine our attention to the empirical world and employ the dialectic of logic we get the conception of a perfect personality *Īśvara*, who has the power of self-expression. This power of energy is called *māyā*.

This energy of *Īśvara* becomes transformed into the *upādhi* or limitation, the unmanifested matter (*avyākṛta-prakṛti*) from which all existence issues. It is the object through which the supreme subject, *Īśvara*, develops the universe.<sup>24</sup>

It is noteworthy that Radhakrishnan does not use the word "illusion" anywhere in this summary. He uses rather the words "phenomenal" and "incomprehensibility". If the world had any status of its own, it ceases to be "phenomenal" and "incomprehensible." A thing that is both phenomenal and incomprehensible can only be an illusion.

Let us now examine Radhakrishnan's other views on *māyā* covered by the summary. This refers to Śaṅkara's treatment of *māyā* as the power of God. Here, we are on a less controversial ground. So far as *māyā* as the world-illusion is concerned even the concept of God is not free from the tinge of *māyā*. As Radhakrishnan himself observes: "Even the highest principle in the world-process, the personal God, has in him the shadow of non-being."<sup>25</sup> Again:



"strictly speaking, even God *becomes*. The contradiction of being-non-being appears in his own inward nature".<sup>26</sup> Śaṅkara says: "The distinction between the infinite Īśvara on the one side and the individual souls on the other is a distinction of different members of a whole, analogous to that between the kingdoms of Magadha and Videha which belong to the same world."<sup>27</sup>

Radhakrishnan writes: "When Brahman the real is conceived as Brahman the *samsāra*, God, man and the world become the chief elements."<sup>28</sup> Īśvara is the Logos, the one-many. He struggles with the darkness and overcomes it. He shares the natures of both Brahman and the world. Thus, He is a little less than pure being. *Māyā* then is considered as God's own power and is synonymous with *Prakṛti*.<sup>29</sup> It is, however, not independent of God. He uses it for His purpose. *Māyā* is even said to be the loving consort of God, *para-brahma-mahiṣī*.

Now, the concept of God as the *māyin*, one who wields *māyā*, has relevance to the problem of the illusoriness of the world only if it could be shown that God's *māyā* is itself a power that deludes.

It is evident that the world, according to Śaṅkara, is not a revealer of but only a veil over truth. The plurality is a distortion of reality. If God has wielded *māyā* to project this plurality, it cannot be for the purpose of revealing the truth. Even to the best of intellect, the world is a riddle. The *Gītā* is replete with references to *māyā* as a deluding and difficult power.<sup>30</sup>

Even the conception that creation is God's *līlā* does not improve matters. God's *līlā* cannot be meant to inflict *real* suffering on the creatures. If it were sport, nothing serious or real could be supposed to take place. The souls that are the characters in this dramatic diversion do not seem, however, to know that they are characters in a play whose beginning and end are already determined by God.

It may be a play but only the souls do not know it. In other words, it is *māyā* of the Lord which has projected this show but the souls are ingeniously made to believe that it is all stark reality. That is, they are labouring under an illusion. It is altogether a different thing to say that it is after all an illusion wrought by God and as



such is tantamount to reality so far as human purposes and goals are concerned. Such a proposition could be truly accommodated into the Advaita conception of the *vyāvahārika*. This does not in the least affect the basic theory that the world is an illusion albeit engineered by God.

### *On Avidyā*

Though later Advaitins have made some distinctions between *māyā* and *avidyā*, Śaṅkara makes *avidyā* the cause of superimposition which brings about the confusion of the self with the not-self. Such a confusion is epistemic and as such could take place only in a sentient centre. *Avidyā* is appropriate only in a conscious soul, not in the inert object. It is not the physical world that is in bondage and is released. It is only an occasion for such a bondage. Even the body-mind complex is only the scene of such confusion and illusion.<sup>31</sup>

Śaṅkara asks: how can the knowledge of unity remove the knowledge of manifoldness if both are true?<sup>32</sup> He quotes the Upaniṣadic declaration: "He goes from death to death who sees in it, as it were, diversity."<sup>33</sup> This clearly shows that the plurality is only an illusory appearance.

Radhakrishnan writes, "This world is not an illusion; it is not nothingness for it is willed by God and therefore is real."<sup>34</sup> This position is perfectly in accordance with Advaita where the world in so far as it is considered as the creation by God is real. In this, Advaita is one with any other theistic account of the world. God is the first cause in this cosmological order. Yet, this involves God in a causal scheme where the effect is as real as the cause. On an account like this, the world is a dependent reality, not illusory.<sup>35</sup> Reality, however, should be free from a causal network, beyond relations to anything which is a term over and above God. A relational view of God makes him to that extent dependent on that relation and the relatum. Reality in itself must transcend causality which is not always accepted even in empirical matters. Otherwise the world will become necessary to God. And, the criticism like that of W.R. Inge<sup>36</sup> that on Radhakrishnan's showing God is bound



up with the world of time and therefore is subject to the same vicissitudes as the world is, becomes justified.

Radhakrishnan is emphatic that without God's presence and activity the world would collapse into nothing.<sup>37</sup> The word "nothing" should mean that apart from God the world could have no substance. God is the constitutive and the efficient cause of the world. There could be nothing like the world at all if God were not. The world is not an evolution of pre-existent *Prakṛti* but a creation by God out of himself. In this sense, God is the *jagad-prakṛti*, *jagad-upādāna*. And, Advaita holds that the effect is not different from the cause in its substance. In other words, the world-effect does not have a reality over and above that of God. As Radhakrishnan observes: "The world is not organic to God."<sup>38</sup> These considerations will clearly show that (a) the world is not essential to God; (b) the creatorship of the world is not the essential definition of God; (c) there must be therefore a definition of God quite without any reference to any world-creation; (d) the dependence of the world on God is an one-sided relation; (e) this is what is stated as *viśama-sattā* as distinguished from *sama-sattā* in Advaita; (f) an effect that is not different from the cause can only be an appearance of that cause; (g) such a nondifference is not a causal relationship at all but only a relation of appearance and reality; (h) but this is not a relationship at all because appearance is not different from the real to be related to it; (i) and therefore, God lapses into the Absolute which is unrelational non-dual reality, the merest being. This will preclude any differentiation in that being.

Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Śaṅkara has gained the reputation of somehow accommodating the world in the reality of Brahman. There is some excuse for this view because Radhakrishnan himself has said<sup>39</sup> that he has interpreted the doctrine of *māyā* so as to save the world and give to it a real meaning. Thus Lawrence Hyde in his article in *P.S.R.*, has this to say: "My own non-professional view is that his standpoint is much nearer our own than that of Śaṅkara...The world is not an illusion but an appearance." Again: "As to the Supreme, Radhakrishnan's attitude would seem to be nearest of all to that of the great sage Rāmānuja, and closely allied with



that which has been so suggestively developed in recent years by Śrī Aurobindo."<sup>40</sup>

Radhakrishnan's statement in his *Bhagavad-gītā* : "*Māyā* does not imply that the world is an illusion or is non-existent absolutely. It is a delimitation distinct from the unmeasured and the immeasurable."<sup>41</sup> is quoted by Lawrence Hyde to draw the above conclusion. There is consequently the danger of Śaṅkara being interpreted as holding an absolutism like that of Rāmānuja or Aurobindo; if, of course, it were Śaṅkara's doctrine of *māyā* that Radhakrishnan is interpreting.<sup>42</sup> Such statements<sup>43</sup> as : "*Māyā* does not mean that the empirical world with the selves in it is an illusion, for the whole effort of the cosmos is directed to and sustained by the one supreme self, which though distinct from everything is implicate in everything" (which reads more like Rāmānuja than Śaṅkara if we mark the words "selves" "one Supreme Self" "distinct" and "implicated") do give the suspicion whether all difference between Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja is not belittled. Again, when Radhakrishnan avers : "The different theistic systems adopted by the large majority of the Hindus do not advocate the doctrine of *māyā*. The theory is held by Śaṅkara who is regarded often as representing the standard type of Hindu thought"<sup>44</sup>, the suspicion increases whether the doctrine of *māyā* is accommodated to the theistic systems of India which do *not* advocate the doctrine of *māyā*.

We have already in the early part of this paper shown that the world *is* an illusion in the sense in which the Advaitin uses it. If the idea will bear repetition, it may be pointed out again that "illusion means not "not-being" but a being of a *lower order*." Brahman and the world do not have *sama-sattā* but only *viśama-sattā* or unequal reality. This is the characteristic of *vivarta* where one thing appears as another. Supreme reality is reality *par excellence*, while the world is, not a dependent or relative or derived reality, but the same as the supreme reality appearing as what it is not. It is an illusion with a substratum. We can take the world as we see it and as without a basis, an independent existent in its own right or we can see the basis for it in Brahman when all at once the world is no more the thing it was but Brahman through and through. The world is such stuff as Brahman is made of. There is nothing in it that is not



Brahman. If we could indulge in a paradox, the world is real precisely in so far as it is Brahman. "All this is Brahman" is the Upaniṣadic declaration. "There is no plurality *here*" is the text where the word "here" means the place where plurality is seen. "All this was *sat* at the beginning" means that all this is *sat* even now.

Appearance is of "lesser reality" than its substratum and its dependence is one-sided. As Radhakrishnan himself observes: "This one-sided dependence and the logical inconceivability of the relation between the ultimate Reality and the world are brought out by the word *māyā*."<sup>45</sup> The world "cannot be defined as either being or non-being".<sup>46</sup> This is the *anirvacanīyatva* or the inexplicable character of the world to which Śaṅkara draws our attention by illustrations like rope-snake illusion.<sup>47</sup>

Radhakrishnan thinks that the purpose of these analogies is "not to suggest that the world is a dream or an illusion, but that the relationship is such that the world exists without any change in the being of the Absolute."<sup>48</sup> Certainly the world is not a dream or an illusion of a private kind. Private illusions like the rope-snake are models to convey what takes place when something appears otherwise than what it is without being modified in any way by that appearance. And if the Absolute appears or expresses itself as the world, as Radhakrishnan says, and yet nothing really happens to it by this appearance, what else should one call it than illusion? That reality appears as otherwise than what it is and thus creates an occasion for deception is admitted by Radhakrishnan.<sup>49</sup> Radhakrishnan limits the word "illusion" only to the *prātibhāsika*. Śaṅkara urges the *vyāvahārika* also shares the same indeterminability of appearing but yet not being real, leaving us unable to say whether it is real or unreal. The *Chāndogya* declares that everything other than Brahman is only name and speech (*vācārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyaṁ mṛttikā ityeva satyam*). Compared with those who have seen the truth of things, the awakened spirits, we are sleep-walkers.<sup>50</sup>

But the illusion itself cannot properly belong to the world or the body-mind complex. In these cases, it may be said that *avidyā* is peculiar to the soul and not to the world. As such, it may be thought that there is a distinction between *avidyā* and *māyā* which is the matrix of the physical world also.



But this is a distinction without a difference. *Māyā* deludes by projecting the names and forms of the physical world. *Avidyā*, too, deludes by bringing about the confusion of the soul with that which is not, like the body etc. It is true to say that, according to Śaṅkara, the sense of duality is the direct result of non-discrimination (*aviveka*) which in its turn is caused by *avidyā* of which only the soul could be the locus, not the physical body or the world outside.<sup>51</sup>

But the point is that such a non-discrimination bringing in its wake *a priori* all the categories of thought and action is precisely the illusion of the world, perhaps in a more intimate epistemological sense with the individual soul as the standpoint. Śaṅkara is seen to use the words *avidyā* and *māyā* in one and the same phrase.<sup>52</sup>

The duality is as much brought about by *avidyā* as by *māyā*.<sup>53</sup> The peculiarity of *avidyā* is its reference to the soul deluding itself as the limited creature. The term as such is not applied to God who has no conceit in a body.<sup>54</sup> To the soul, on the contrary, the illusion is the result of non-discrimination of itself from body etc., which is brought about by *avidyā*.<sup>55</sup> Not only is the identity with the not-self an illusion but also the very notion of being an individual soul. To suggest that the world of duality is due to the *avidyā* of the individual soul with all its subjectivist consequences will not be able to explain Śaṅkara's statements like this where the very nature of being a soul is said to be the work of *avidyā*.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, *avidyā* is not a subjective force at all. Śaṅkara states that the world of name and form is projected in Brahman by *avidyā*.<sup>57</sup> This world of name and form is constructed in a twofold manner as the body-mind complex and the world outside.<sup>58</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that to Śaṅkara, *māyā* and *avidyā* are substantially the same forces or twofold operation of the same force.

Radhakrishnan quotes Śaṅkara as follows : By that element of plurality which is the creation of *avidyā* characterised by name and form, which is evolved as well as non-evolved, which is not to be defined either as existing or non-existing, Brahman becomes the basis of this entire changing world, while in its true nature, it remains unchanged beyond the phenomenal universe.<sup>59</sup> And he proceeds to comment: "This view, when exclusively emphasised, suggests that there is no plurality at all apart from the individual *avidyā*."<sup>60</sup>



I think that this conclusion is not justified if we bear in mind the considerations we have urged earlier to show that *avidyā* is *not* the individual aberration. It is as cosmic as *māyā* but its reference is specifically to the conscious soul. Some of Śaṅkara's statements quoted earlier go further and make *avidyā* the cause of the external world also, thus rendering *avidyā* practically indistinguishable from *māyā*. In other words, both *māyā* and *avidyā* are ontologically indeterminable forces that bring about the world of plurality as an illusory projection. The sentient soul understands this projected plurality and takes it to be real because it has in it the principle of *avidyā* or *māyā* vitally intertwined. The sentient soul and the insentient world face each other and the world-process goes on. The world-process itself is not a projection of the sentient soul. Both of them derive their predicament from a common source. When the percipient experiences the world, that experience is epistemically a veridical one. That Śaṅkara was epistemologically a realist will be shown in the sequence.

Śaṅkara's attempt is to pursue the truth to its logical ultimacy. As reality must be differencelessly one, the fact of plurality should have to be explained only on the model of illusion. Again, Śaṅkara's chief interest is in the truth as a value. Hence, the problem is not so much the illusion of the plurality as the illusion of soulhood and individuality. Every other part of the illusion is subordinate to the fundamental predicament of self-alienation. When that is dispelled, every other thing is at once settled.<sup>61</sup>

### *Śaṅkara and Subjectivism*

Radhakrishnan makes the well-known statement: "Unreal the world is ; illusory it is not".<sup>62</sup> This statement if taken in the sense in which the Advaitin uses it will be just the opposite of what the Advaitin holds as true. "Unreal" means "non-being" in his vocabulary. The unreal cannot be a datum either in reality or in illusion.<sup>63</sup> The world, on the contrary, appears as something and has that much being. In the analysis of error, where, for example, shell appears as silver, it is the silver that is the product of the nescience of the shell, while the shell is the comparatively real basis of that illusory presentation. In the work-a-day world, only the illusory presentations are brought about by *avidyā* while the things which are their substratum are real. Advaitin's realism in the epistemological



sense postulates even the object of silver, though it be illusory, as actually presented for the time being.<sup>64</sup> This shows how the idea of subjectivism is reprehensible to him. The inviolable principle is that there could be no idea without an object. Knowledge always follows the nature of the object and has no freedom of choice in this. Thought is not creative. The subject-object dualism is impregnable at the epistemic level and the objective world consists of either occasional private illusions which are products of *avidyā* like that of shell-silver, or, more commonly and normally, the public objects of sense-experiences which are *not* products of *avidyā*.

### *Māyā in the Brahma-sūtras*

That the world is illusory is stated categorically in the *Brahma-sūtras*. For instance, the *sūtra*: *tad-ananyatvam ārambhaṇa-śabdādibh-yaḥ* (B.S. II-1. 14) makes out that the world is not different from its cause, *viz.*, Brahman and that, therefore, its appearance is of the nature of indeterminability as either real or unreal. The basic support for this declaration is the scripture though reason also is adduced to strengthen that declaration. Against those who hold that the world is real on the ground that it is so concretely given in experience and perception, it is urged that scripture is of greater authority than perception and the scripture declares that the world is illusory. The *locus classicus* in this regard is the *sadvidyā* in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Uddālaka tells Śvetaketu that the effect is not different from its constitutive cause. Yet the effect seems to have a novelty. Hence we are obliged to conclude that the effect is indeterminable when it appears, as either different or non-different from the cause. It is clear that the effect is nothing more than mere speech. In all the pots made of clay, clay alone is real.<sup>65</sup>

Vācaspati says that, as in the expressions "the sentience of a person" or "Rāhu's head" where the sentience *is* the person and Rāhu *is* the head alone, the world is only a name corresponding to which there is no reality.<sup>66</sup>

In the expression, "clay alone is real" the word 'alone' amply bears out that both the cause and the effect, clay and the pot, Brahman and the world are not real but only the cause is real. It follows that the world is illusory. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* declares that



*māyā* is the *prakṛti* (IV-10), indicating that the substance of the world is *māyā* and therefore illusory. Further, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text "There is no plurality whatsoever here" (VI-4-19) establishes the fact that the world is only *vācārambhaṇa*. Again, "where there is duality as it were" (VI-5-15), condemns duality as an illusory presentation.

The *Brahma-sūtra* (II-1.28) "*ātmani caivam vicitrāśca hi*," makes it plain that the world is only an illusory presentation in Brahman. In dream, the dreamer creates a variety of objects without any change in his own identical oneness. Similarly, the world-projection takes place in Brahman without any loss of its identity and integrity.<sup>67</sup>

In the *sūtra* : "*bhāve ca upalabdheḥ*" (or *bhāvācca upalabdheḥ*),<sup>68</sup> the illusory character of the world has been clearly brought out. In the example of the illusory silver appearing in the shell, the sublating knowledge demonstrates the negation of silver in the shell. Illusoriness is only the non-existence in the locus of shell where it appeared.<sup>69</sup> The meaning is that silver was *not* the shell even when it appeared. This same perceptual evidence shows that the world is illusory like the silver that appeared in the shell. Brahman is the reality that is referred to by the expression "is". When we say that "pot is," we are referring to the appearance of pot in "is" which is Brahman's reality. When the pot is destroyed, we refer to that pot as "pot is not". Here the non-existence of pot in Brahman is brought out. It is perceptually evident, therefore, that the pot is absent in the place where it appeared. Hence its illusoriness. The persistent reality of Brahman is shown by the fact that while the entities appear and disappear, the *isness* continues as basic. Its knowledge also does not vary.<sup>70</sup> Hence, the perception of pot as existing does not prove the reality of pot so much as that of Brahman. This is stated by the *sūtra* : "*sattoāt ca avarasya*."<sup>71</sup>

The critics very often forget the difference between the unreal and the illusory. These terms have a technical meaning in Advaita which the *Brahma-sūtras* make clear in the *sūtra* : "*asad-vyapadeśāt na iti cet na dharmāntareṇa vākya-śeṣāt*" (II-1.17). The argument of the *sūtra* is that the world was not non-existent or unreal in the sense of nothingness or *tuccha* at the beginning because there is the contextual declaration : "It was existent."<sup>72</sup> The meaning is that it was not



manifest in name and form. The *Nāsadiya-sūkta* in the *Ṛg-Veda* makes out that the world was neither *sat* nor *asat* but only *tamas* suggesting it was indeterminable *māyā*. A totally non-existent nothing can never do any thing. But the world is efficient in producing results, though prior to manifestation it does not do anything. A cloth when spread covers the body but does not do so when it is rolled up. The vital airs do not function when they are controlled.<sup>73</sup>

The indeterminability of the world is the result of its material cause which is *māyā*. Both Brahman and *māyā* are the material cause of the world.<sup>74</sup> Only Brahman is the *vivartopādāna* while *māyā* is *pari-ṇāmopādāna*.

The world is illusory and it has practical efficiency, while if it were unreal it can have nothing of this kind. Bādarāyaṇa has proved this by the illustration of the dream stating that even a dream though illusory can produce results far beyond the dream.<sup>75</sup>

Again Bādarāyaṇa has talked about the soul as the reflections of Brahman where he gives the illustration of the one sun reflected in the waters of the pool, river etc.<sup>76</sup> The plurality of souls, therefore, is only an illusion as much as the plural nature of the physical world.

That reality is differenceless has been declared by Bādarāyaṇa in more than one place.<sup>77</sup> Not only is it that there are no differences even in the shape of attributes, but also the very absence of these differential attributes is itself not a positive attribute. Bādarāyaṇa says that absence of a thing in its locus is the same as that locus and not a differential property.<sup>78</sup> He explicitly states that everything other than Brahman has been negated.<sup>79</sup>

Śaṅkara is categorical in his assertion that the world is not a fantasy of the individual mind. He positively indicates the subjective idealists of slowness of understanding. Objects are not cognitions. No cognition is itself a pillar or a wall. It is always a cognition of a pillar or a wall. All the methods of knowledge prove that there is a world of objects outside us. The invariable coexistence of the cognition and the object does not prove that they are identical but only proves that one is the instrument and the other is what is known through that instrument. Cognition which is of one uniform nature



does not and cannot be said to know itself. We can as well say that fire burns itself. There cannot be action in the intrinsic nature of anything. Subject-object distinction is inviolable in knowledge.

Dream-analogy does not help to show that the world also is a dream though it appears to be external. Śaṅkara shows that the illusoriness of the dream could be established only with reference to and in comparison with a real world of waking.<sup>80</sup> Otherwise we will be involved in a logical seesaw. The public world of science has a comprehensiveness and consistency which a dream conspicuously lacks. The public world is not contradicted by anything empirically more comprehensive. The visions of dream, again, are pieces of remembrance while the waking life is lived by acts of immediate awareness. Moreover, dreaming that one is going to Pāñcāla country, he should, on waking, find himself in Pāñcāla, not in his bed. Again, dream itself negates what it created. Things in the dream shift their shapes and standards. The criterion for a difference between dream and waking life is one of sublatability.

Above all, the dream-analogy is only an analogy and Śaṅkara did not elevate it into a metaphysical theory as the Vijñānavādin did. Śaṅkara's categorical rejection of subjective idealism is the conclusive evidence of this. The usefulness of the dream-analogy lies only in the fact that in dream we have a common experience of something appearing to be non-mental object while all the time it is only a modification of mental stuff. The apparent presentation of objects in space, time and causality is illusory and a make-believe. And we do not have any means to know that it is till we wake up. Similarly the world of plural objects and subjects appears, while Brahman, the reality, is of the nature of uniform consciousness. The objectivity of the presentation makes it unreal and this criterion will apply equally to the object and the subject. Secondly, the concreteness and the cocksureness of a subjective feeling is no guarantee to the reality of things.<sup>81</sup>

Śaṅkara, while commenting on the *Kārikās* of Gauḍapāda,<sup>82</sup> says that Gauḍapāda's arguments are not subjective idealism but are only the arguments to make dents in the cocksureness of the realist's belief in the reality of the world. "The teacher agrees with the idealists only thus far."



*Gauḍapāda on Māyā*

Radhakrishnan shows that Gauḍapāda establishes the unreal character of the world of experience : 1. by its similarity to dream-states, 2. by its presented or objective character, 3. by the unintelligibility of the relations which organise it and 4. by its non-persistence for all time.<sup>83</sup>

Gauḍapāda's sole purpose is to demonstrate that the Self is self-luminous principle of consciousness and is the only reality in which both mind and matter are appearances. Thus Gauḍapāda<sup>84</sup> is neither a mentalist nor a materialist, neither an idealist, nor a realist nor a nihilist; nor a neutral monist. He shows by dialectical reasoning that the world of mind and matter is an appearance pointing to a reality that underlies it.

This is Śaṅkara's position pure and simple and a restatement of the Upaniṣadic doctrine. Gauḍapāda puts one dogma against another and shows the hollowness of both. No dogma could be adequate to the fact of the world-presentation because any real explanation is relevant only to real things. But the world is an illusion which defies analysis.<sup>85</sup>

Reality must at least be permanent. If changes are observed, it is a falsification of the real. It is obvious that the real could not be actually falsified without losing the title to reality. The principle that he lays down is: "that which is cannot not be; that which is not cannot also be."<sup>86</sup>

This establishes the truth that reality is never involved in any actual change that is creation. The realists like the Śāṅkhyas are refuted by the *asadvādin* on the ground that the real is not born; the *asadvādin* is refuted by the realists on the ground that the unreal cannot be born. Hence, it follows that if the world be born, it can be neither of these. Yet, it is presented in experience so as to occasion an inquiry into its reality. Gauḍapāda concludes that the world-appearance is therefore inexplicable. Reality appears as plural through *māyā*.<sup>87</sup> The world is not an utter non-being like the barren woman's son who cannot be produced either in reality or through *māyā*.<sup>88</sup> Just as the existent rope appears as snake,<sup>89</sup> so the real Brahman appears as the world. These considerations clearly show that Gauḍapāda places the status of the world as



indeterminable, neither real nor unreal. This is precisely the connotation of the word "illusion" in Śaṅkara.

Radhakrishnan has summarised the various senses in which the term *māyā* has been used by Gauḍapāda : (a) The inexplicability of the relation between the Self and the world. (b) The nature or power of God. (c) The apparent dreamlike character of the world.

Then Radhakrishnan says that the first connotation is brought into greater prominence by Śaṅkara who is indifferent to the third. But it appears to us that all the three connotations point to one and the same doctrine of the "illusoriness" of the world precisely in the same sense in both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara.<sup>90</sup>

## REFERENCES

(List of abbreviations used)

*B.G. Bhagavad-gītā*

*Bṛh. Up. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*

*B.S. Brahma-sūtras*

*Chānd. Up. Chāndogya Upaniṣad*

*E.R. Eastern Religions and Western Thought*

*G.K. Gauḍapāda's Kārikā*

*H.V.L. The Hindu View of Life.*

*I.P. Indian Philosophy (Vol. II)*

*P.S.R. Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan ed., P.A. Schillpp,*

*S.B. Sūtra-bhāṣya of Śaṅkara*

*S.B.G. Śaṅkara's commentary on The Bhagavad-Gītā.*

1. *I.P.*, p. 564.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 561. Even those philosophies which assert that both unity and plurality are real do not assert that they are real in the same sense equally. Unity is accorded a greater, more fundamental, independent reality. Unity informs and sustains the plurality while transcending it. The manifold is in a very real sense constituted and directed by the unity. In Rāmānuja, for instance, Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the plural world. He is the soul of souls.
3. *S.B.*, II-1, 14.



4. Yet in Rāmānuja, the world of insentiency (*acit*) is not a contradictory, nor even the contrary opposite but, in a vital and organic sense, the very attribute of Brahman which is consciousness (*cit*).
5. *G.K.*, II. 4. See also *Advaitasiddhi*. The inertness (*jaḍatva*) is not so much physical inertness as objectivity. *Dṛśyatva* (perceptibility) is the same as *jaḍatva* (inertness). Any division by objectivity is to introduce limitation (*paricchinnavatva*). Hence the world-presentation is a falsification of reality, according to Advaita.
6. Somehow Rāmānuja did not realize this inconsistency. He is far from being an epistemological idealist.
7. *I.P.*, p. 562.
8. *I.P.*, p. 562.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 562-3.
10. *jñānanivartyatva*.
11. *I.P.*, p. 562.
12. *S.B.*, III-2. 4.
13. It is of *dṛṣṭa-naṣṭa-svarūpa*; see *S.B.*, II-1. 14. Śaṅkara uses here the example of mirage and says that the world is unreal apart from Brahman.
14. *viśaya iva jñānepi aviśeṣācca*.
15. *I. P.*, Vol II, p. 583.
16. *anirvacanīyatva*.
17. *pariṇāma* is *anyathābhāva* while *vivarta* is *anyathābhāna*.
18. As the *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* puts it: the world is *brahma-niṣṭha-avyanta-abhāva-pratīyogī*.
19. *I. P.*, p. 564.
20. *I. P.*, p. 568. See *S.B.*, II-1. 24-26. "The word *māyā* registers our finiteness and points to a gap in our knowledge" (*I.P.*, p. 569). "The riddle of the rope is the riddle of the universe. Why does the rope appear as the snake is a question which schoolboys raise and philosophers fail to answer." We can only say that Brahman appears as the world even as the rope appears as the snake. See also *SB*. II-1.9.
21. The real is never known to have any relation with the unreal. See *S.B.*, II-1. 18.
22. *I. P.*, p. 567. See also *S.B.*, II-1. 14, II-3. 6 and II-3. 30.
23. *S.B.* II-1. 14.
24. *I.P.*, pp. 573-574. See *S. B.*, I. 4. 3, II-1. 14, II. 2.27.
25. *I.P.*, p. 564.
26. *I.P.*, p. 561.
27. *S. B.*, III-2.31.
28. *I.P.*, p. 554.
29. *iśvarasya māyāśaktiḥ prakṛtiḥ*, *S.B.*, II-1.14. See also *S.B.*, I.4.3.



30. *mama māyā duratyayā ; māyayā apahr̥tajñānāḥ; ajñānena āvṛtaṁ jñānam; prakṛti-guṇa-sammūḍhāḥ; bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā; mohinīm tanum āśritāḥ; parambhāvam ajānantaḥ.*
31. See *S.B.*, II-1.14; II-1. 22; II-3.48; III-2.6.
32. *S.B.*, II-1.14.
33. *Bṛh. Up.*, IV-4.19. Śaṅkara uses the expression *dr̥ṣṭa-naṣṭasvarūpa* while referring to the world which brings out the fact of the illusory character of the world. See *S.B.*, II-1.14.
34. *P.S.R.*, p. 41.
35. In contradistinction to this, the absolute alone has non-created divine reality; all else is dependent, created reality. This is one significance of the doctrine of *māyā*, according to Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan uses the ambiguous expression, Absolute-God. See *P.S.R.*, p. 41.
36. In his book *God and the Astronomers*, where he refers to Radhakrishnan's view of God and the world. Also his article "Radhakrishnan and the Religion of the Spirit" in Schilpp, *op.cit.*, pp. 323-333.
37. *P.S.R.*, p. 44.
38. *P.S.R.*, p. 44.
39. *P.S.R.*, p. 800.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
41. *B.G.*, p. 38.
42. Thus Charles Moore writes that even Śaṅkara has given, "by his particular manner of presentation" possible justification for the objectionable interpretation of *Māyā*. See *P.S.R.*, p. 302. The suggestion is that *māyā* has been interpreted objectionably and that Śaṅkara has been unwittingly a party to it.
43. *E.R.*, p. 27.
44. *H.V.L.*, p. 61.
45. *B.G.*, p. 38; *E.R.*, p. 90. *H.V.L.*, p. 668.
46. *B.G.*, p. 40. Śaṅkara uses the phrase *tattva-anythingābhyām anirvacanīya*. (See *S.B.*, I-1.5; I. 4. 3; II. 1. 14; II-1.27.)
47. *S.B.*, II-1. 14. Other illustrations are *dvicandra*, *jalasūryaka*, *marīcyudaka*, *gandharvanagara*, dream. See *S.B.*, II-2. 28.
48. *P. S. R.*, p. 800.
49. "The view which regards multiplicity as ultimate is deceptive (*māyā*)". *E.R.*, p. 94.

Radhakrishnan gives different interpretations in *P. S. R.* of *māyā*; (a) One-sided dependence of the world on Brahman. (b) Essential temporality. (c) Creative power of God. (d) Incomprehensible mystery of creation. (e) Interaction of the Divine with *prakṛti*. (f) Ignorance of the principle of the universe. *P.S.R.*, pp. 800-801.



*Māyā* also means: (a) The phenomenal character of the empirical self and the world. (b) Self-limiting power of God. *E. R.*, p. 27.

50. Radhakrishnan quotes Goethe: "Error stands in the same relation to truth as sleep to waking. Gauḍapāda said that life in the world is metaphysical sleep. The *Gītā* (II.69) speaks of the metaphysical night and metaphysical day."
51. *avidyā-pratyupasthāpita-nāma-rūpa-saṅghāta-upādhy-aviveka-kṛta*. *S. B.*, II-1.22.
52. *avidyātmikā hi sā bijaśaktiḥ avyakta-śabda-nirdeśyā parameśvarāśrayā māyā*. *S. B.*, I-4.3. See also I. 3. 19 and II-1.14.  
Again: *avidyā-pratyupasthāpita-nāma-rūpa-māyāveśa-vaśa*. *S. B.*, II.2.2.
53. *avidyā-pratyupasthāpita-dvaita*. *S. B.*, II.3.40.
54. *na evaṁ parameśvarasya dehādyātmabhāvaḥ duḥkḥābhīmāno vā asti*. *S. B.*, II.3.40.  
*avidyā-pratyupasthāpita-dvaita-samprkta ātmā kartā, duḥkḥi bhavati*, *S. B.*, II. 3.41.
55. See *S. B.*, II-3.46.
56. *avidyā-nimitta jīva-bhāva*. *S. B.*, II-3.46.
57. *avidyā-kṛto brahmaṇa nāma-rūpa-prapañcaḥ*.
58. *avidyamāno'yam, prapañcaḥ dehādi. lakṣaṇa ādhyātmiko-bāhyaśca pṛthivyādi lakṣaṇaḥ*. *S. B.*, III-2.21.
59. *S. B.*, II-1. 27.
60. *I. P.*, p. 579.
61. *niṣprapañca-brahma-āmatva-āvedanenaiva ubhaya-siddheḥ*. *S. B.*, III-2.21
62. *I. P.*, p. 553.
63. Śaṅkara on *G. K.*, 1.6; III. 28.
64. The illusory silver is not given in sense-contact; it is manifest to the Witness-Intelligence which is different from the ego or the mind. Thus illusory silver is not mental, much less physical. As different from this object, the real shell is given in sense-experience.
65. *mṛttikā ity-eva satyam*. The word 'iti' means *ādi* or etc. That means that ultimately Brahman alone is real.
66. *Bhāmātī*, p. 455. The principle is: *śabda-jñānānupātī vastu-śūnyo vikalpaḥ*. Brahmanand Sarasvati has said that both that which is an effect and that which is not a visible effect are alike illusory. For instance, *avidyā* is not an effect and yet it is illusory. Though beginningless, it is destructible. Hence it is a *vikārā* and *anādi*. A pot, on the contrary, does have a beginning and is destructible.
67. *B. S.*, II-1.27.
68. *Ibid.*, II-1.15.
69. *pratipannopādhanau traikālika-niṣedha-pratīyogitvaṁ mithyātvam*. This is the *Vivaraṇa* definition. As Citsukha puts it, it is also *svāśraya-niṣṭha-alyantābhāva-pratīyogitvam*.
70. This is called the *adhiṣṭhāna-annvedha*, or *anugatapralītiḥ*.



71. *B.S.*, II-1-16.
72. *Chānd. Up.*, III-19.1.
73. See *B.S.*, II-1.19 and II-1.20.
74. See Appayya Dīkṣita's explanation of *B.S.*, I.4.27 in *Nyāyarakṣāmaṇi: na kevalaṁ brahmaiva jagad-upādānam . . māyā api upādānam.*
75. *B. S.*, III-2.3 and III-2.4.
76. *B.S.*, II-3.50.
77. *B.S.*, III-2-14; III-2.15; III-2.16.
78. *B.S.*, III-2-16; III.2. 17. *nirviśeṣatvaṁ brahmaṇaḥ tat svarūpamātram, nātiriktam.* The *Bhagavad-gītā* is referred to in this *sūtra*, *na sat tat na asad ucyate*, (XIII-13).
79. *B.S.*, III-2.36
80. *jāgrad viśayāpekṣaṁ tad-anṛtatvam.* Śaṅkara on *Chānd. Up.* VIII-5.4. *kiṁ punaḥ vaidharmyam, bādhābādhaḥ iti brūmaḥ.*, *S.B.*, II-2.9.
81. See on *G. K.*, IV-10; IV-28; IV-61.
82. IV-21, 25-27; Again, commenting on *Kārikā* (IV-99). Śaṅkara writes :  
"The theory (of Buddhism) wears a semblance to the Advaita but is not that absolutism which is the pivot of the Vedānta Philosophy."
83. *I.P.*, p. 458.
84. See *G.K.*, IV. 4.
85. See Śaṅkara's commentary on *G. K.*, IV. 4.
86. *G.K.*, IV. 4: *bhūtaṁ na jāyate kiñcit; abhūtaṁ naiva jāyate.*
87. *I.P.*, p.461.
88. *Ibid.*
89. See *G.K.*, IV-45 where the word *ābhāsa* is used by Gauḍapāda. See also *S.B.*, II-3.50 : *ābhāsa eva ca eṣa jīvaḥ paraśya ātmanaḥ jalasūryādivat pratipattavyaḥ;*
90. *na sa eva sākṣāt, nāpi vastvantaraṁ, paramārtha-avasthāyāṁ sarva-vyavahārābhāvaṁ vadanti vedāntāḥ*, *S.B.*, II-1.14.



## RADHAKRISHNAN ON SAIVA SIDDHANTA—A NOTE

V. A. DEVASENAPATHI

Professor Max Muller in the Preface to his *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* published in 1899 wrote : 'What we want are texts and translations, and any information that can throw light on the chronology of Indian Philosophy. Nor should their (native students') labour be restricted to Sanskrit texts. In the South of India there exists a philosophical literature which, though it may show clear traces of Sanskrit influence, contains also original indigenous elements of great beauty and of great importance for historical purposes. Unfortunately few scholars only have taken up as yet, the study of the Dravidian languages and literature. But young students who complain that there is nothing left to do in Sanskrit literature, would, I believe, find their labours amply rewarded in that field.' Dr.S. Radhakrishnan has, in the second volume of his *Indian Philosophy* published in 1927, a chapter on The *Śaiva*, The *Śākta* and the Later *Vaiṣṇava* Theism, wherein he gives a glimpse of the wealth of this area. In a footnote in this chapter (on page 722) he says, 'Mādhava's S.D.S (*Sarva Darśana Saṅgraha*) refers to four schools of Śaivism : *Nakulīśa-pāśupata*, the *Śaiva*, the *Pratyabhijñā* and the *Reśeśvara*. The last is not of philosophical interest. For the central principles of the first, see his *Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, pp. 488-489. He takes up in the chapter under reference in Volume II, *Śaiva Siddhānta* (*Śaiva*) and the *Pratyabhijñā* systems. He observes that Dr. Pope who gave much thought to the *Śaiva Siddhānta*, regards it as



“the most elaborate, influential, and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all the religions of India.” Radhakrishnan goes on to say : ‘While there are striking similarities between the *Siddhānta* and the *Saivism* of Kashmir, we cannot say that the former owes its general structure or essential doctrines to the latter. The earliest Tamil works, like the *Tolkāppiyam*, refer to the *Arivārs* or the seers, who chalked out the path to freedom and bliss. These latter were influenced by the Vedic conception of *Rudra* and the *Rudra-Śiva* cult of the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. Besides these, the twenty-eight *Saiva Āgamas*, especially the parts dealing with *jñāna* or knowledge, the hymns of the *Saiva* saints, and the works of the later theologians, form the chief sources of Southern *Saivism*’ (pp.722-723).

Under the section entitled *Literature*, Radhakrishnan mentions some of the important devotional works (*Panniru tirumuṟai*) and doctrinal works (*Siddhānta Śāstiram Patinānku*). In a third section of about seven pages, entitled *Doctrines*, Radhakrishnan gives a brief account of the *Siddhānta*. He says that ‘some proofs of the existence of God are mentioned’ and gives one of them. Even as a potter, clay, wheels and staff are necessary for the production of a pot, God, *Śakti* and *māyā*, are required to account for the world which is subject to changes. Incidentally, he says that the material cause is *prakṛti* (line 17 of page 724), though in subsequent references he gives it as *māyā* and also notes that according to the *Saiva Siddhānta*, the *mūlaprakṛti* of the *Sāṅkhya* is itself a product (p.727). Remarking that creation receives great attention in this system, he gives some details. He observes that the *Saiva Siddhānta* does not support the illusory conception of the world. ‘The world has a serious moral purpose, and cannot be dismissed as a mere error or jest’. Śiva is full of grace and is ‘engaged in the rescue of souls from bondage’. ‘Śiva’, Radhakrishnan says, ‘is not only the absolute of metaphysics but (also) the God of religion’. Radhakrishnan refers to the classification of souls, according as their impurities are three, two or one. These impurities are *āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā*. The nature of the soul to reflect its environment is noted thus : ‘it becomes one with the thing in which it dwells for the time being. In the world of *samsāra* it concentrates on worldly things, while in the state of release it centres its consciousness on God.’ (p. 726) The role of God, in the moral and spiritual



evolution of the soul is brought out in the following words: 'The Lord helps the impurities to manifest themselves, and sustains the whole course of their development for the ultimate good of the souls dependent on his grace. He takes note of the activities of the souls and helps them in their onward pursuit. Respect for the law of *karma* is the means he employs.' (p. 728). The insistence of the *Siddhānta* on the ethical virtues and on the need for love of all mankind is noted (p. 730). Radhakrishnan refers to the *Saivite* spirit of toleration thus: 'There was, at any rate, in the early form of *Saivism*, a spirit of toleration.' (p. 729). He makes the following reference to Tirumūlar: 'Tirumūlar held that there was only one caste even as there was only one God.' (p. 730). He describes the content of the *Tiruvācagam* in the following memorable words: *Tiruvācagam* depicts in beautiful hymns the progress of the soul from the bondage of ignorance and passion into the liberty of light and love, its first awakening, its joy and exaltation, waywardness and despondency, struggle and unrest, the peace and joy of union.' A verse from Saint Appar translated by Kingsbury and Phillips, given in a footnote on p. 729 and another, from Maṇikkavācagar on the same page, will whet the appetite of those interested in Tamil devotional literature. There are two footnotes containing quotations, one from Barnet's *The Heart of India* and another from Sir Charles Eliot's *Hinduism and Buddhism* on pages 723, and 729 respectively in high appreciation of *Saivite* Tamil devotional literature. Radhakrishnan notes that for the *Siddhāntin*, non-dualism (*advaita*) does not mean oneness (*ekatva*), but inseparability (p. 725).

Radhakrishnan has given an account of *Saiva Siddhānta* in a way which will encourage those interested in this system to study it in greater detail. He has drawn his materials from the following: the *Pauṣkara* and *Mṛgendra Āgamas*, Nilakaṇṭha's (Śrīkaṇṭhas's) *bhāṣya* on the *Brahmasūtras*, the *Śivajñānabodham*, the *Śivajñāna Siddhiyār*, the *Śivaprakāśam*, the *Tiruaruḷḷayan*, the *Tirumandiram*, the *Tevāram* (translation), and the *Tiruvācagam* (translation). He has also referred to a journal in English called *The Siddhānta Dipikā* (now defunct), and J.M. Nallaswami Pillai's work in English on *Saiva Siddhānta*.

It may be mentioned here that while Nilakaṇṭha Śivācārya is held in high esteem by the *Siddhāntins*, his views are not



accepted in *toto*. For example, on the authority of Nīlakaṇṭha, Radhakrishnan says, '*karma* and *jñāna* conjointly produce release.' (p. 730). The *Siddhāntin*, while aware of the role of *karma* in spiritual life, insists on *jñāna* as the ultimate means to release. Likewise Radhakrishnan's remark, again on the authority of Nīlakaṇṭha, that 'freed souls may exist in an embodied or disembodied condition', calls for a close study with reference to *Śaiva Siddhānta* literature. The *Śivādvaita* of Śrīkaṇṭha by Professor S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri may be studied in this context. Attention is invited to the following in this work: 'In spite of the many doctrinal differences noted between *Śivādvaita* and the *Siddhānta*, there are attempts made to claim Śrīkaṇṭha as a *Siddhāntin* of sorts. This is particularly noticeable in Śivajñānayogin's commentary on the *Śivajñānabodham* (*Māpāḍiyam*, p. 125).' (Note B. entitled Śrīkaṇṭha and the *Siddhānta*, p. 69). Professor Sastri notes the differences between the two in regard to the following: (a) Conception of *āṇava* (b) The Lord as the material cause (c) The notion of *tādātmya* (d) *jīvanmukti* (e) The value of Reason and (f) The *aṇutva* of *jīva* (pages 19-24). The *Siddhāntin*'s criticism of the *aṇutva* of the soul in the *Śivajñāna Siddhiyār* is taken by Śivajñāna Yogin to be directed against the *Pāñcarātras*. Professor Sastri observes in this connection as follows: 'If, as we believe, Śrīkaṇṭha belonged roughly to the same period as Rāmānuja, it is not improbable that the author of the *Siddhiyār* intended his criticism to apply to Śrīkaṇṭha as well. So far as the doctrine of atomicity is concerned there is nothing distinctive in Śrīkaṇṭha's exposition, as compared with Rāmānuja's; and whatever may be said of the latter philosopher may well hold of the former too.' (p. 235). The *Siddhāntin*'s criticism of *aṇutva* is considered in some detail by Professor Sastri (pages 234-238). A comparative study of *Śrīkaṇṭhabhāṣya* with the *Siddhānta* will be very rewarding. Incidentally, the inclusion of Vemana in the section on *Śaiva Siddhānta* is a little puzzling. Perhaps, Radhakrishnan was thinking of 'later *Śaivas* as a whole', not merely those of Tamilnadu, when he wrote, 'Though Māṇikkavāṣagar did not develop a defiant attitude towards the caste rules, the later *Śaivas*, Paṭṭinattu Piḷḷai, Kapilar, and the Telugu poet, Vemana, are critical of the caste restrictions.' In this context, Radhakrishnan has the following remark about *Vira Śaivism*, which is a living faith today. 'The reform movement of Basava (middle of the twelfth century) is



marked by its revolt against the supremacy of the Brahmin, though Basava himself was a Brahmin. This sect does not accept the hypothesis of rebirth.' (p. 730). Also, this: 'Though the *Liṅgāyata* reformation started with a vigorous protest against the caste system, the *Liṅgāyats* today observe caste divisions.' (footnote on p. 730).

Radhakrishnan deserves the gratitude of *Saiva Siddhāntins* and students interested in *Saiva Siddhānta* for having included this system in his work which has gained international recognition. Obviously, he had to limit his treatment to a bare outline lacking time to go to the Tamil originals and the Āgamas. Thus while he makes a reference to *citsakti*, he does not elaborate its significance in the context of *Saiva Siddhānta* epistemology. The *Siddhāntin's* arguments for the existence of *Pati paśu* and *pāśa* are worthy of a more detailed consideration than Radhakrishnan has bestowed on them. He refers in some detail to the argument given by Vyāsa in the *Yoga* system as one 'which reminds us of the classical ontological argument'. (p. 369). Likewise he deals in some detail with the *Naiyāyika's* argument for the existence of God. One wishes that he had found it possible to spare some more attention to the *Siddhāntin's* arguments for the existence of God in comparison and contrast with the *Nyāya* and *Yoga* arguments and also in relation to the *Vedānta*, absolutistic and theistic. Had some research scholars worked on *Siddhānta* texts under his guidance, there would have been a double gain, one to the scholars concerned and another to *Siddhānta* literature by the reactions of his luminous mind. 'Loyalty to the spirit of the previous systems of thought, as well as the mission of philosophy, requires us to possess an outlook that always broadens', he says in the concluding paragraph of his *Indian Philosophy* (pp. 780-781). Let this be our inspiration for the study of *Saiva Siddhānta*.



## RADHAKRISHNAN'S VIEWS ON JAINISM: A REVIEW

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S. GOPALAN

### I

In this paper it is proposed to review briefly Radhakrishnan's discussion of Jainism as found in the first volume of *Indian Philosophy*. The pioneering nature of Radhakrishnan's work is such that a review of his treatment of *any* system of Indian philosophy requires to be done with great care. And, reviewing his analysis of Jainism is no exception.

Though Radhakrishnan broke new grounds by his publication of *Indian Philosophy* (two volumes), his 'claims' have been modest and his approach to the stupendous task undertaken by him has been characterised by extreme humility. The humility does not seem to be born out of a conventional admission of 'the limited scope' of 'the work', to ward off possible criticisms, but out of the recognition that the world of scholarship requires that a scholar at work adopts an objective approach to his subject-matter and keeps an open mind which readily accepts that contributions made may be improved upon by works of specialists. Such a humility of approach, especially when considered alongside other accepted criteria of assessment of the value of an author's work make a cautious appraisal even more necessary. It is universally accepted that it is not fair to judge the views expressed by an author without considering carefully what he intends to do in it. It is unfair too, to evaluate a piece of scholarly writing without noting down its purview, especially when it is clearly stated.



Indicating the nature of his presentation of Indian philosophy in contradistinction to those presented earlier on, Radhakrishnan writes :

Particular parts of Indian philosophy have been studied with great care and thoroughness by many brilliant scholars in India, Europe and America. Some sections of philosophical literature have also been critically examined, but there has been no attempt to deal with the history of Indian thought as an undivided whole or a continuous development, in the light of which alone different thinkers and views can be fully understood. To set forth the growth of Indian philosophy from the dim dawn of history in its true perspective is an undertaking of the most formidable kind, and it certainly exceeds the single grasp of even the most industrious and learned scholar ... This book proposes to be no more than a general survey of Indian thought, a short outline of a vast subject. Even this is not quite easy. The necessary condensation imposes on the author a burden of responsibility, which is made onerous by the fact that no one man can attempt to be an authority on all these varied fields of study, and that the writer is compelled to come to decisions on evidence which he himself cannot carefully weigh.<sup>1</sup>

Hence it is evident that Radhakrishnan was keen on presenting Indian thought by considering concisely the different traditions of Indian philosophy, — both orthodox and heterodox — and was not unaware of the limitations his task imposed on him. No wonder, therefore, when his views on the various systems are considered, especially in the light of the wealth of material that has become available since the publication of his two volumes, scholars are able to add a few more thoughts. It is in this spirit that a review of Radhakrishnan's treatment of Jainism is attempted here.

We shall consider briefly Radhakrishnan's presentation of the historical details of the tradition, some aspects of his treatment of Jain metaphysics and only one aspect of his analysis of Jain ethics.

Radhakrishnan's attempts at 'situating' Jainism in the larger perspective of the Indian religio-philosophical traditions evidence a three-fold analysis: (i) surveying briefly the history of Jainism, particularly



in its earlier phase, (ii) considering more elaborately the relationship between Jainism and Buddhism, and (iii) outlining the relationship between Jainism and the classical schools of Hindu philosophy.

In view of the importance of (ii) we shall consider that alone in this section. The importance of this aspect of analysis of Jainism seems to stem from three basic facts: (1) the misunderstanding by some scholars that Jainism was nothing but an offshoot of Buddhism, (2) the remarkable similarities we find in the ethical ideas characterising the two heterodox systems and (3) the contiguity of the geographical locations 'associated' with the two traditions. Radhakrishnan pays special attention to the misunderstanding that Jainism did not have an independent origin and quotes at length the view that Buddhism deserves to be considered the 'original'. He makes but a brief reference to the opposite view which he himself accepts.

The long citation regarding the 'claims' of Buddhism (rather than Jainism) reads:

The legend of Vardhamāna ... presents so many ... points of contact with that of Gautama Buddha, that we are instinctively led to conclude that one and the same person is the subject of both. Both are of royal birth; the same names recur among their relations and disciples. They were born and they died in the same country and at the same period of time. Coincidences quite similar occur in the course of the two traditions. Like the Buddhists, the Jainas claim to have been patronised by the Maurya princes. A district which is a holy land for the one is almost always a holy land for the other, and their sacred places adjoin each other in Behar ... as well as elsewhere. If we collate together all these correspondences in doctrine, organisation, religious observances and traditions, the inference seems inevitable that one of the two religions is a sect, and in some degree the copy of the other. When in addition to this we think of the manifold relations which there are between the legend of Buddha and the Brahmanical traditions, relations which are wanting in the legend of Mahāvīra; when we reflect, moreover, that Buddhism has on its behalf the testimony



of the edicts of Aśoka ... while the most ancient testimonies of ... Jainism do not go farther back than the fifth century after Christ; ... when we add to all these the conclusions, very uncertain it is true, ... which are furnished by the internal characteristics of Jainism, such as its more mature systematisation, its tendency to expatiate, and the pains it is always taking to demonstrate its antiquity, we shall feel no hesitation in admitting that of the two, Buddhism is the one which is best entitled to the claim of originality.<sup>2</sup>

The brief reference to the 'earlier origin' of Jainism is the contention that Jainism is older than Buddhism since it adopts the animistic belief that nearly everything is possessed of a soul.<sup>3</sup>

Though the researches of Hermann Jacobi (which go to show that Jainism was *not* an offshoot of Buddhism) are taken into account by Radhakrishnan, it is significant that without expatiating on them he refers to the Indian tradition which looks upon Jainism and Buddhism as two distinct faiths.<sup>4</sup> Such a reference seems to be an additional evidence offered by Radhakrishnan to contend the view that Buddhism had an earlier origin. The argument here is clearly designed to confirm the independent origin of Jainism. Radhakrishnan explicitly states:

It is conclusively established that Vardhamāna was an historical person distinct from Gautama Buddha and Jainism a system quite independent of Buddhism.<sup>5</sup>

It seems to us that an earlier phase in Indian thought which might have contained ideas which were later on to take a more definite shape in Brahmanism and which also provided root-ideas for the more precise development of later Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism must well have been visualised by Radhakrishnan. Our surmise here is based on his usage of the term 'Indian tradition'. More precisely, Radhakrishnan's avoiding the usage of the term 'Hinduism' even to show that Jainism is not to be considered only in the context of its relationship to Buddhism, is notable.

Today when we refer to the religions of India we do refer to Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism as if they were, right from the



beginning, three religions distinct from each other with their own histories and phases of development. It also needs to be emphasised that the three major religious traditions of India (Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism) in their formative stages, were more or less indistinguishable from one another and are understandable only in terms of the earliest phase of the Indian religious tradition, what has come to be referred to as Brahmanism. It is thus evident that the term 'Hinduism' itself refers to only a particular phase of development of the Indian religious tradition.

What is significant here is that it is not improbable that the term Hinduism was a blanket term, covering people belonging to the three dominant religions of India, as a renowned scholar points out.<sup>6</sup> He maintains that the term 'Hindu', as a religious designation, was developed by the Muslims after they had invaded the country in the second millennium A.D. He writes:

For the Muslims it served to designate these aliens whom they conquered, and whose not being Muslim was now for the first time significant. It retained for some time its geographical reference: 'Indian', 'indigenous', 'local', virtually 'native'. And the indigenous group themselves also began to use the term, differentiating themselves and their traditional ways from those invading Muslim foreigners. It covered all such groups: those whom we now call Hindus, but also Jains, Buddhists and all the others.<sup>7</sup>

If the above contention is accepted, it follows that the origin of Jainism cannot justifiably be traced to Buddhism alone but is to be studied alongside the complexities in delineating the various strands of the Indian religious tradition. This is not to undermine the research-findings of scholars who have been interested in particular traditions. This seems to be the reason why Radhakrishnan acknowledges the value of the evidences gathered by Jacobi to maintain that Jainism was older in origin than Buddhism. Though Radhakrishnan does not spell this out, it is obvious, he wants to argue for this position from the point of view of the beginnings of the Indian tradition as a whole.



## II

Coming now to a consideration of some aspects of Radhakrishnan's treatment of Jaina metaphysics: Some of the views expressed by Radhakrishnan on the Jaina theory of Reality are unacceptable to us. Though Radhakrishnan shows a clear insight into the epistemological and metaphysical positions of Jainism, his analysing certain important concepts like *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* under epistemology rather than metaphysics leads him on to an under-estimation of the significance of the Jaina view of Reality. We concede that the close-knit relationship between the metaphysical and the epistemological aspects of any system of philosophy precludes a compartmentalised treatment of them; as such, issues characterising either of them may well be dealt with under the other. Notwithstanding our appreciating the reasons for Radhakrishnan's dealing with some aspects of Jaina metaphysics under the section on epistemology and logic, we have some reservations regarding the interpretation arrived at.

We shall confine our attention to Radhakrishnan's analysis of the 'theory of relativity' which has often been a source of misunderstanding of the Jaina philosophy as a whole. Radhakrishnan carefully outlines the *syādvāda* theory and explains its significance as will be evident from the following passages:

It is the use in seven different ways of judgments which affirm and negate, severally and jointly, without self-contradiction, thus discriminating the several qualities of a thing.<sup>8</sup>

It emphasises the extremely complex nature of reality and its indefiniteness. It does not deny the possibility of predication, though it disallows absolute or categorical predication. ...Every proposition is true, but only under certain conditions...<sup>9</sup>

This doctrine insists on the correlativity of affirmation and negation. All judgments are double-edged in their character. ...According to this view, all negation has a positive basis... It emphasises the fundamental truth that distinction is necessary for thought. The absolute devoid of distinctions within as well as without is truly unthinkable.<sup>10</sup>



Radhakrishnan even goes to the extent of 'defending' *Syādvāda* against the criticisms of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. Answering the criticism that contradictory attributes cannot co-exist in the same thing, Radhakrishnan observes :

The Jains admit that a thing cannot have self-contradictory attributes at the same time and in the same sense. All that they say is that everything is of a complex nature, an identity in difference. The real comprehends and reconciles differences in itself. Attributes which are contradictory in the abstract coexist in life and experience.<sup>11</sup>

But the effectiveness of the above statements is lost since Radhakrishnan has interspersed them with others which reduce *syādvāda* to a mere epistemological theory. To concretely illustrate the theory of Reality that *syādvāda* primarily is, examples such as the seven blind men trying to give a description of an elephant and that of a pot (*ghaṭa*) may be given. But if the accent of emphasis is shifted on to considering the relationship between the object that is known and the subject that knows, the thrust of the argument of *syādvāda* cannot be fully gauged. Radhakrishnan's interpretation of *syādvāda* seems to be because of such an approach. With his own focus of concern, Radhakrishnan observes:

A plurality of reals is admittedly a relative truth...If Jainism stops short with plurality, which is at best a relative and partial truth, and does not ask whether there is any higher truth...it throws overboard its own logic and exalts a relative truth into an absolute one.<sup>12</sup>

Our inability to accept Radhakrishnan's criticism is due to the fact that *syādvāda* is to be considered along with other theories which together provide us an insight into the Jaina view of Reality. Furthermore, in Jainism itself there is no mere stopping short with the relative—with no concern for a view-point which may be referred to as absolutistic. We shall briefly consider the two points.

### III

There is a two-fold consideration of the complex nature of Reality in Jainism. The *syādvāda* theory is indeed significant for its



emphasis on the complex nature of Reality. The basic thesis of *syādvāda* is that *no one proposition is adequate to reveal* the nature of Reality. The inadequacy of the various propositions, however, does not point to the denial of the value of any of them but rather to the assertion that they together sustain a meaning-structure for Reality. This in effect signifies that no absolute affirmation can warrant a correct interpretation of Reality. The 'relativistic theory' of *syādvāda* is paradoxically geared towards synthesising the various view-points that can be taken of Reality. The seven-fold predication (*saptabhaṅgī-naya*) we find in *syādvāda* is not to be understood merely as pointing to an analytical consideration of Reality, as laying bare seven propositions that can be formulated to explicate the nature of Reality. It is to be considered as providing a synthetic approach to Reality. However, as analysis and synthesis go together, we find both the elements in the *syādvāda* theory, though the accent of emphasis is on *synthesis* rather than *analysis*.

This aspect of the *syādvāda* theory becomes clear from the fact that it complements the *nayavāda* theory which emphasises the need for an analytical approach to Reality. The *nayavāda* theory is clearly indicative of the pluralistic realism of the Jains. In *nayavāda* we have a clear recognition not only of the 'manyness' (*aneka*) into which Reality can be analysed but also of the manifoldness (*anekānta*) of Reality. Jainism admits many reals but is careful to point to the complex nature of each of them. The infinite number of qualities characterising the complex reals and the infinite number of relations into which they enter signify that different view-points (*nayas*) are required for comprehending Reality. The *nayavāda* theory thus provides the frame-work for *syādvāda* since it clearly points out that Reality can be looked at from many divergent angles and that none of the latter can claim absolute validity for itself. The upshot of our argument then is that since *syādvāda* is primarily a theory of Reality which does not deny the efficacy of an absolutistic standpoint, Radhakrishnan's criticism 'loses its punch'.

#### IV

Coming now to consider Radhakrishnan's view that Jainism complacently stops with relativism, pure and simple : we would suggest that the 'relativism' of *syādvāda* does not assert that relativism contains



absolute truth. We have been concerned to argue, on the other hand, that absolute validity is denied to the various propositions formulated. We would add that the denial of absolute validity to the 'partial views' does *not* signify that Jainism denies an "absolute standpoint."

Apart from this logical argument, we would urge that factually too there is a clear assertion of an absolute standpoint in Jainism. In the context of our discussion in this paper, reference to two standpoints, the absolutistic and the relativistic, seems to be necessary to stem the argument that the logic of the Jaina view goes against its pluralistic realism.

The basic argument in Jainism is that a proper understanding of Reality consists in comprehending consciousness and matter, for they both exist. If either of these is overlooked, it amounts to an incomplete understanding of Reality. The emphasis on considering *jīva* and *ajīva* as aspects of Reality on the ground that they both exist points to the fact that the individual soul, matter, space, time and the principles of motion and rest found in the universe are all *Real*.<sup>13</sup> These constitute the *existent reality* and are respectively referred to as *jīva*, *puṅgava*, *ākāśa*, *kāla*, *dharma* and *adharma*.<sup>14</sup>

The last five together are referred to as *ajīva*. It is obvious how Jainism may be referred to both as dualism and also as pluralism. It should be noted however that while the pluralistic realism of Jainism can be neatly summed up in the identification of Existence with Reality, Reality is also identified with Substance. This is the significance of the cryptic proposition "All is one because all (things) exist."<sup>15</sup>

It is significant that the identification of Reality with Substance is valid only from the transcendental point of view, — what is referred to by the Jainas as the *dravyārthika-naya*, and not from the empirical point of view, — the *pariyāyārthika-naya*, in the terminology of the Jainas. For our purposes here it will suffice to state that the term *dhruva* is made use of by the Jainas to indicate the aspect of *identity* and, the terms *utpāda* (origin) and *vyaya* (decay), refer to the aspect of *change*. It also needs to be reiterated that the term substance (*dravya*) refers to all the six ultimate categories we mentioned above.



Since all the six categories are existent, are capable of assuming different modes and exhibit varying qualities, the pluralistic-realistic position of the Jainas does not run counter to the ultimate conception of Reality in Jainism.

## V

In regard to Radhakrishnan's consideration of the ethical aspects of Jainism : we shall restrict our comments only to the concept of non-violence (*ahimsā*). Here again our concern is with Radhakrishnan's not providing us with a more detailed, in-depth study of the seminal concept.

Radhakrishnan, in trying to visualize as to how the doctrine might have got so much of importance in the tradition, observes :

The doctrine of rebirth enunciated in the *Upaniṣads*, sometimes in an extravagant form, led to the idea that all things in the world possessed souls. Naturally the Jaina believed that every material thing, fire, wind and plant, also had a spirit in it. On such a view the simple joy of the earlier peoples in sacrifices could not last. The times were ripe for revolt. The belief that all things, animals and insects, plants and leaves, were possessed of souls, when coupled with the idea of rebirth, led to a horror of taking life in any form.

It seems to us that such a reference (alone) to the significance of *ahimsā* does not bring out the deeper meaning of this important ethical principle of the Jainas.

The prime reason for the Jainas attaching supreme importance to the 'ethics of *ahimsā*' is to be gathered from their philosophy of consciousness. Consciousness is the most distinguishing characteristic of *jīva*, but the term *jīva* does not refer to the human soul alone. Consciousness, according to Jainism, is discernible in four different states of existence. The different levels of consciousness representing the various states of existence are that of the animals, the humans, the infernal beings and the celestial beings. Thus Jainism believes in what may be referred to as 'continuity of consciousness'. Leaving the infernal stage (*nārakī*) out of account here it needs to be pointed



out that the other stages represent the progressive steps through which the *jīva* passes before attaining perfection. Hence no *jīva* has any right to interfere with the 'spiritual prospects' of any other *jīva*. More specifically, man has no right to interfere with the (spiritual) progress of *any* being—even of the one-sensed. Even injury involves 'a positive interference' and so taking of life is strictly prohibited. Thus when we consider the philosophy of *jīva* in depth, the inner meaning of *ahiṃsā* comes to the fore.

## VI

The restricted confines of this paper has prevented us from making references to the positive contribution that Radhakrishnan has made to the study of Jainism. But since this paper is not meant to *merely eulogise* Radhakrishnan's understanding and interpretation of the Jaina tradition, we have, within the short span of this paper, not focussed our attention on those aspects of Radhakrishnan's presentation of Jainism as found in his *magnum opus*.

Before concluding, however, it should be mentioned that Radhakrishnan's open-minded approach is transparently evident in his treatment of Jainism. Even though his own predilection seems to be for a Vedāntic type of approach, it is notable that even where his 'biases' reflect themselves, we find him consciously attempting to 'balance them' by stating and re-stating what the Jainas have to say in regard to their own tradition. Radhakrishnan's chapter on Jainism is certainly a remarkable piece of philosophical writing — not merely in the sense of a scholarly treatment of a tradition but in the more important sense of how, *objective writing* 'on philosophies' should be.

Our own venturing to present this paper, as we indicated earlier on, has been with a view to adding a few more thoughts to those of Radhakrishnan. But our approach has not been simply accepting all of Radhakrishnan's views and supplementing them with a few stray ideas. We have, true to the spirit of Radhakrishnan's own method of reviewing a tradition, pointed to the ways in which the inner meaning of an important philosophical system should be comprehended.



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