

**RELEVANCE OF THOUGHTS
AND IDEAS OF
DR. SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN
TO 21st CENTURY**



Edited by
Dr. Dipankar Malakar

Sapekhati College
Sapekhati, Dist. Charaideo 785692 (Assam)

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DR. SARVEPALLI
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Proceedings of the National Seminar on Relevance of *Thoughts
And Ideas of
Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan
to 21st Century*

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Dr. Radhakrishnan as a Spiritualist

Dr Anita Deka Bora
Assistant Professor
Department of Education
Lakhimpur Girls' College
North Lakhimpur, 787031, Assam

ABSTRACT :

The Realm of spiritual investigation of the ancient world Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan and Sri Aurobondo represent the whole world wide.

Dr Radhakrishnan uses the words "faith in the Lord" he definitely refers to the supreme personality of Godhead. By what logic does he say 'Lord' but mean the impersonal Brahman? His moral philosophy which is spiritual and integral in nature.

Radhakrishnan intends to apply his method of integral experience in all areas of human life, specially in the empirical field of science, art, and ethics. According to him moral and spiritual life performs its methodological function. Human beings by nature are always struggling in life for the realization of supreme values truth, Beauty and Goodness. For the development of value oriented personality these values are essential.

He says "personality is not along physical manhood or economic wellbeing or sensitive conscience without a spiritual center man's life has no integrity. "The great self of truth, goodness and beauty to which we give the name of God as spiritual presence, to rise our whole being and life to divine status is the ultimate purpose and meaning of human living.

Ethical endeavour assumes that life is worth living.

In today's context where materialism and consumerism are slowly gripping modern life, this sort of ethical endeavour and thinking assume more importance. Economic upliftment without a spiritual mind-set is likely to cause distress to the person and his surroundings in the long run.

Introduction :

When Dr. Radhakrishnan was a student, India was ruled by the British colonial masters. The colonial masters had great faith in their western civilization and did not spare any opportunity to make

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fun of ancient Indian civilization. For them, the ancient Indian civilization was nothing great to take pride. Taking inspiration from colonial masters, the Christian teachers too more or less took a very critical view of ancient Indian civilization and philosophy.

For them, Indian ancient civilisation means dark customs like untouchability, customs like Sati, animal sacrifice to please god and goddess,

There was a sinister design also behind this attitude of colonial masters and Christian teachers. They wanted to psychologically show to the Indians that culturally and philosophically, they are inferior to western civilization.

This was the experience of Dr. Radhakrishnan in early education life. His Christian teachers like Hogg had very low opinion about Hinduism and ancient Indian civilization. This made young Radhakrishnan resolute in his promise that he himself will study great Indian texts like Gita, Upanishad etc. and will then rectify the wrong impression of western world towards his religion.

This became a lifelong mission of Radhakrishnan since then. He studied lots of Indian old great books and learnt Vedanta philosophy. In later years, he became extremely successful in projecting the right picture of Hinduism and ancient Indian philosophy to the western world.

His intellectual sharpness as a student and wide reading habit helped him in his mission. He became so renowned in Indian philosophy

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that foreign universities made him visiting professor. He was also the first Indian vice chancellor of prestigious Benares Hindu University.

Thus childhood experience in the hands of western Christian teachers greatly influenced the entire personality and philosophical thinking of Dr Radhakrishnan in his entire life.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's philosophy was based on the broader definition of education. He believed that education can be an instrument of social, economical and cultural change. He firmly believed that the goal of education is not only acquiring knowledge or skill, but make us fit to live with others as well. He believed that education can bring us nearer to God by enabling us to broaden our mental horizon. This is one of the unique tenets of his philosophy and focus on spirituality.

He firmly believed that education can bring equality between man and man. It can foster universal brotherhood. He wanted education to be an instrument to make people live with the society rather than acquiring knowledge only. There is much to learn if one has to live with the society in line with universal brotherhood principle.

Dr. Radhakrishnan believed that education can enlighten us to see the invisible and intangible world beyond time and space. In that sense education gives us second birth. Without spiritualism, Physical and mental development of a person gets constrained.

Imparting moral values to students is one of the focus areas of his philosophical tenets. Observation of nature and society can make

one knowledgeable to live in society and contribute to it. Hence Dr. Radhakrishnan put lots of emphasis on natural learning rather than bookish type of learning. He was also a great proponent of meditation and yoga for proper mental and physical development of students.

For women, Dr. Radhakrishnan emphasized that some particular subjects should be introduced for them which are essential for a smooth running of the household. Hence he believed that subjects like cooking, home science, fine arts etc. should be available to girls. This emphasis on subjects for a smooth running of the household was another tenet of his philosophy.

Another notable tenet of his philosophy was somewhat less emphasis on modern science and technology, compared to liberal arts subjects. Dr. Radhakrishnan believed that liberal arts subjects and natural observation itself will usher in modern education in science and technology. But reality is different. Modern education needs as much science and technology as it requires spirituality and morality. Only spirituality and morality in education cannot guide us to take advantage of rapid development in science and technology in other parts of the world. It is beyond debate that modern science and technology has made human life easy in terms of communication, disease diagnosis and treatment, explore the electronic world etc. Not enough focus on modern science and technology is also one critical tenet of Dr. Radhakrishnan's philosophy.

Relevance of Dr. Radhakrishnan's spiritualism in modern India

Modern India is characterized more with consumerism and materialism rather than spiritualism. Like the rest of the world, materialism and consumerism have started dominating a large part of our modern life. In this context, it is only natural to think that spiritualism as propagated by Dr. Radhakrishnan has become less relevant.

But to think that is going to be a big mistake on our part. In fact, Dr. Radhakrishnan insisted on integration of individual personality with the society. Society does not exist in vacuum. It is the very embodiment of all individual personalities put together. He believed that politics should promote human welfare and happiness. A modern society can be prosperous yet unhappy. The most developed countries in the world are not necessarily the happiest. Hence to promote happiness along with advancement in prosperity, each one should introspect how he himself can be happier first. And this is where spiritualism as thought and propagated by Dr. Radhakrishnan can play a great part. Ethical politics is only possible through democracy and hence Dr. Radhakrishnan was a great supporter of democracy. But rather than confining democracy within natural boundaries, Dr. Radhakrishnan believed in world democracy. As per him, the world democracy based on ethics and welfare oriented politics only can enhance prosperity and happiness.

Without world democracy, conflict between different nations is inevitable. And with that there will be lack of universal happiness

and prosperity. This was the basis of Dr. Radhakrishnan's support for world democracy.

Despite all his vision and belief, Dr. Radhakrishnan could not visualize the growth of USA as a super power and hub of modern science and technology. Nor could he foresee the demise of communism in former USSR. Both these issues point to some sort of lack of practicality in some aspects of his spiritualism. Nonetheless, he was very successful in bringing ancient Indian philosophy to the western world and giving a respectable name in the eyes of western thinkers. That is one of his greatest achievements. The western world has got attracted to many tenants of Indian philosophy in last 100 years. Popularity of ancient Hindu philosophical texts like Bhagvat Gita etc. point to his success of lifelong effort to make western world realize Indian philosophy.

He was one of the most recognized and influential Indian thinkers in academic circles in the 20th century. Throughout his life and extensive writing career, Radhakrishnan sought to define, defend, and promulgate his religion, a religion he variously identified as Hinduism, Vedanta, and the religion of the Spirit. He sought to demonstrate that his Hinduism was both philosophically coherent and ethically viable. Radhakrishnan's concern for experience and his extensive knowledge of the Western philosophical and literary traditions has earned him the reputation of being a bridge-builder between India and the West. He often appears to feel at home in the Indian as well as the Western philosophical contexts, and draws from both Western and Indian sources

throughout his writing. Because of this, Radhakrishnan has been held up in academic circles as a representative of Hinduism to the West. His lengthy writing career and his many published works have been influential in shaping the West understands of Hinduism, India, and the East.

As an Advaitin, Radhakrishnan embraced a metaphysical idealism. But Radhakrishnan idealism was such that it recognized the reality and diversity of the world of experience (prak[ti] while at the same time preserving the notion of a wholly transcendent Absolute (Brahman), an Absolute that is identical to the self (Atman). While the world of experience and of everyday things is certainly not ultimate reality as it is subject to change and is characterized by finitude and multiplicity, it nonetheless has its origin and support in the Absolute (Brahman) which is free from all limits, diversity, and distinctions (nirguGa). Brahman is the source of the world and its manifestations, but these modes do not affect the integrity of Brahman.

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