



## Radhakrishnan's Concept of Religion: An Analytical Study

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### Abstract:

The great Indian contemporary philosopher, educationist, Dr. Radhakrishnan was the first Vice President and second President of India. He has contributed greatly to the development of Indian philosophical thought including philosophy of religion. His interpretation of religion is not merely a faith in the absolute, but a way of life. According to Radhakrishnan, religion is not a creed or a code but an insight into reality. He conceives that religion in its sphere includes cognitive element as well as feeling element also. Moreover, there is also ritualistic and moral element in religion. Radhakrishnan emphasizes on religious experience over all other human experience. Religious experience is the way of religion. In his view man can attain salvation through religious experience. It is a kind of inner satisfaction which consists in its attempt to discover eternal truths. He also emphasizes the mutual understanding of different religions.

This paper is an attempt to highlight his view on religion.

**Key words:** Religion, Religious experience, Humanism.

### I. Introduction :

Radhakrishnan is considered as one of the greatest philosophers in contemporary Indian philosophy. He had discussed different issues related to human society. The view of religion is one of them. His views on religion transcend all creeds and dogmas and develops a universal religion which could fulfil the religious aspiration of humanity. Radhakrishnan has interpreted religion not merely as a faith in the absolute spiritual values, but as a way of life to realize those values. For him, religion is not only a creed or a code, but an insight into reality. Religion in its sphere include cognitive, feeling, ritualistic and moral element.

### II. Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of this paper are :

- \* To analyse Radhakrishnan's concept of religion in general.
- \* To analyse Radhakrishnan's concept of religious experience.
- \* Assess how much it will help to remove the social conflicts of present day society.

### III. Methodology:

- \* In this study descriptive and analytical methods are used.
- \* To prepare this paper the data are collected from the books written by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. The books are - An Idealis View of Life, Eastern Religions and Western Thoughts, The Hindu View of Life, Religion and Culture etc.

### IV. Discussion:

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan has widely discussed the concept of religion which was scattered in his different writings. He has not only discussed the general concept of religion and religious experience, but also explained and compared the different living religions of the world. Generally, religion is defined as a belief in the supra-natural power as the creator, sustainer, destroyer and moral governor of the world together with the fillings of awe, reverence, trust, love and the voluntary acts of devotion, dedication, fellowship and worship. Some philosophers (for example - Schleirmacher) identified religion with feeling, emotion, rituals, faith etc. Radhakrishnan says that their views are right in what they affirm, but wrong in what they deny. Although there is a feeling element in religious consciousness, yet religious feeling is different from other kind of feeling. Again, religion, as Radhakrishnan conceived, neither be befined as mere moral consciousness of value nor a form of knowledge. Radhakrishnan admits whitehead's view of religion that it is not a mere social phenomenon,



but an attempt to discover the ideal possibilities of human life. Religion is some inward and personal which unifies all values and organizes all experiences. (c.f. - *The Idealist View of Life*,

p. 83-84). According to Radhakrishnan, man is always confronted with something greater than himself which is somehow immanent in the human soul and this is the eternal or the Absolute. Reality which is present in the soul. He says that religion is that discipline or the way of life which enables man to make a change in his own nature and to manifest the divinity that hidden in him. Religion implies a faith in the ultimacy of absolute spiritual values and a way of life to realize them. This faith involves an awareness of the beyond, therefore a conviction that such an awareness is possible. That is why great religions have often been prophetic. Thus we see that Radhakrishnan tries to establish religion in such a position which can enlighten man amidst of traditional dogmas and materialistic outlook. Radhakrishnan is a spieitualistic philosopher for whom spirit is the ultimate reality and ideal of human being. The realisation of this ideal according to Radhakrishnan must start with a faith i.e., a faith in religious experience. It is called religious because of its peculiar nature, a uniqueness that can not be reduced to any other form of experience. Unlike other experiences its aim is to discover the hidden and the ideal possibilities of human life. Radhakrishnan conceives religious experiences as an integral and undivided consciousness. There is a duality of the subject and the object in ordinary experiences. But in religious experiences, the subject-object duality is not existent.

Radhakrishnan had studied different living religions of the world and compared to each others, which is the basic aim of comparative religion. Comparative religion is the critical analysis of different religions which enables us to study faiths other than our own. A study of the various religions may serve to enrich and deepen one's insight into one's own religion. According to Radhakrishnan, our aim should be not to make converts Christians into Buddhists or Buddhists into Christians, but enable both Buddhists and Christians to rediscover the basic principles of their own religions and line up to them. The study of various religions teaches one to cultivate the virtue of toleration and to respect for other religions. tolerance implies an elementary right belonging to the dignity of every man. For Radhakrishnan faith for without wisdom, without tolerance and respect for others ways of life is a dangerous thing.

Radhakrishnan was aware about the

insufficiency of traditional religion and the modern challenges to religion. He recognizes that the traditional systems of religion fail to promote the best life and the cause of the present unrest is the moral ineffectiveness of religion. The religion, if it is practised in narrow sense, creates barrier and conflicts among the people. Again, scientific achievements and the increasing materialistic outlook create challenge to religion, as there is ever a negation of life in the depths of religion. Therefore, many substitutes of religion such as agnosticism, atheism, positivism, humanism etc. are come into existent. But, Radhakrishnan says that human needs cannot be satisfied by present substitutes of religion, even by humanism. Religion is not opposed to humanism, but humanism is only a part of it.

True religious life consists in love and unity of mankind. External worships like image or idol worships, baths on holy rivers, pilgrimages do not signify a person purely religious. True religion is not considered as that which one get from outside, from books and teachers. It is not the religion of routine which one adopts as a mater of habit. It is the aspiration of every human soul. However, Radhakrishnan emphasizes that prayer, modes of worship, rituals, the various religious rites and ceremonies, idol worship - these all play a signficatory role in different individuals. But the basic thing is silent meditation. And this meditation is called by Radhakrishnan as 'yoga', 'realisation', 'dhyana', intuitive apprehension, etc. As it is already mentioned that religious experience is the way to attain salvation. But it is not easy to have this experience. It involves an inner struggle, struggle against our passion. This struggle can be overcome through two stages of effort. The first stage consists of Doctrine, Devotion and worship and the second stage consists of Meditation, Contemplation and Love. Radhakrishnan speaks of ethical discipline which consists of a series of duties.

Radhakrishnan believes that the conflict of different religions is only due to the fact that emphasis is laid only on one aspect of religion and neglect the other aspects which are canally important. If we try to go deep into the nature of religions, we shall find that there is an unity among all religions. The conflicts do not touch the essence of religion. The conflicts are the results of mutual in comprehension. We use our own symbols and ways to represent the Absolute which are determined by our own age, upbringing and circumstances. So, religions may be many on account of the divergence of the forms, but the essence of them all is one and the same.



## **V. Conclusion:**

Thus it is justified to conclude that religion according to S. Radhakrishnan is humanist and spiritualist.

In modern era of science and technology, one can not accept any dogma and superstitious beliefs. Religion is believed as a binding force. But if religion is the cause of social conflicts then religion will not satisfy modern civilization. Radhakrishnan's view on religion (specially comparative religion) will definitely helps human being to free their minds from misunderstanding towards religions. The spirit of love, brotherhood, mutual understanding can bind people and it helps to uplift humanity to a better place. So, we may conclude that Radhakrishnan's view is relevant at present day.

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