

Dr. S. RADHAKRISHNAN: A PRECURSOR OF EDUCATION IN MODERN INDIA

Dr. Chandra Deo Yadav

Associate Professor & Head, Department of Education, Badri Vishal P. G. College
Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Education is a special discipline and theory and practice of education deserves to receive a special attention. According to Sathya Sai Baba, “An education system in country is a bank on which the people can draw a cheque for the upliftment of the society”. The organization of such a bank needs to be solemnised and progressive. It is only the contribution of great thinkers in the field of education can guide the planners to have this organization on sound footings. We in India have an ideal educational system in ancient time. It worked well for the society of that time. In such a system there were some basic principles and postulates some ideals, rules and regulations which we have implemented in the right earnest in ideal educational situations.

Great thinkers of contemporary India have given their verdict on the basic principles as well as needed reflections. One of the most important persons was a Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The crucial role that he played in the formative years of our republic and his contribution to the consolidation of our political and parliamentary traditions, and especially the significant role that he played as one of the most brilliant of our philosophy, acting as cultural ambassador to the west. Except for occasional cases like Janaka, Lord Krishna and Marcus Aurelius, Philosophers have never been kings and kings have never been philosophers. But here is an example during our own times of a Philosopher president. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan not only a philosopher but also a writer of repute, a scholar par-excellence, an orator with gift of the gab, an original thinker, an educationist, a spiritualist, a creative genius and briefly speaking a superman in the terminology of Aurobindo. As a philosopher he was equally an authority in Western and Eastern thought. Among the modern thinkers he is an authority of the modern world on religion, culture and philosophy.

Keywords :- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, A Precursor, Education, Modern, India

I. INTRODUCTION

DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN- A BACKGROUND

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was born on September 5, 1888 Tirattani of Madras, presidency in a Telugu Brahman family. He obtained his M.A. degree in philosophy at the age of 21 in 1909. He served as a teacher in the Presidency College, Madras, from 1909 to 1917. Here he earned a very high reputation as a teacher of the most difficult problems

of philosophy. After this he served for a year of the Arts College, Rajahmundry and then was appointed a professor of philosophy in the University of Mysore where he remained till 1921. At Mysore he wrote his two important books – “The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore” in 1918 and the “Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy” in 1920. The latter book made him famous in the world of Philosophy.

In 1921 Sir Aushutosh Mukherjee appointed Radhakrishnan the King George V Professor of Philosophy at the Calcutta University. He held this post for about 20 years and during this period with the permission of the Calcutta University authorities he served as a professor of comparative Religion in Manchester college of Oxford, as the Vice – Chancellor of the Andra University and as Splading professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics again at Oxford. In 1923, Radhakrishnan produced the first volume of this famous ‘Indian Philosophy’. In this book are surveys the philosophy of *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavat Gita*, Realism of the Jainism, Idealism of the *Buddha* and *Buddhistic* philosophy. In 1927, he produced the second volume of this book wherein he has described the six systems of *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Samkhya Yoga*, *Mimansa*, *Vedanta*, *Vaishnava*, *Shaiva* and *Shakta* systems of theism.

In 1926 Radhakrishnan delivered a series of Upton Lectures on philosophy at the Manchester College of Oxford. These lectures were published under the title “The Hindu View of Life”. This book was translated into many Indian and Foreign languages. This book made Radhakrishnan very famous. In 1929 he delivered in two series of lectures which were later published with titles “East and West in Religion” and “The Ideal View of Life”. It is in the latter book that Radhakrishnan has given his original contribution to the religious thought of the present age. In 1939 Radhakrishnan accepted the Vice-Chancellorship of the Banaras Hindu University. In this year, he produced two important books under the titles “Eastern Religious and Western Thought” and “Mahatma Gandhi”. The former book explains the Upanishadic Mysticism of India and shows how this mysticism has been a continuous influence of Western thought. Radhakrishnan wrote a long introduction to “Mahatma Gandhi”, which was presented to Gandhiji on his seventieth birthday. The other books by Radhakrishnan are “The Religion, We

Need’, ‘Kalki’ or ‘the future of civilization’, ‘The Heart of Hindustan’, and Freedom and culture. Radhakrishnan has been invited by various countries of the world to lecture on topics concerning religion, culture and philosophy.

In the independent India he was appointed the ambassador to the U.S.S.R. He was made the Chairman of the University Commission appointed in 1948 to examine the working of the various universities in the working of suggest remedies for reforms. In 1950 he was elected to the high office of Vice –President of his country and in 1962 the nation honoured him by electing him the president of India. He held this highest office till 1967 when he retired to devote his time to philosophical pursuits. At the ripe age 06 85 years, he left this world on April 17, 1975 for his heavenly abode.

RADHAKRISHNAN’S PHILOSOPHY

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, Philosophy is avoiding terms that includes logic, ethics, aesthetics, social philosophy and metaphysics. Metaphysics which is concerned with the ultimate nature of things is comprised of two main fields, oncology and epistemology. Science studies the different facts of experience, while philosophy develops the meaning and explanation of experience as a whole. Philosophy has two sides to it, an explanatory and a descriptive, a metaphysical and an empirical. Philosophy studies experience in a concrete form and reveals of the order and being of experience itself. It is a sustained attempt to understand the universe as a whole, if coordinates and interprets all significant aspects of experience the reports of scientists, the intuitions of the artists and the insights of saints. Any coherent Philosophy should take into account observed data, rational reflection and intuitive and insight, since human consciousness consists of the perceptual, the logical and intuitive awareness.

RELIGION

Radhakrishnan defines religion as the insight into the nature of reality (darsana) or experience of Reality (anubhava). This experience is the response of the whole personality, the integrated self to the central reality. Religion is the self-manifestation of the ultimate reality in man. It is the awareness of our real nature in God; Radhakrishnan defines religion also as a strenuous endeavour to apprehend truth. Religion holds that man exists on the level of super nature and also that of nature. The philosophy of religion as a distinct from dogmatic theology is based on experience and it attempts a reasoned solution of a problem of the religious man who has direct spiritual intuition or who has sufficient belief in that experience. Religion is the reaction of the whole individual to the whole reality. The function of religion is to further the evaluation of man into his divine stature, develop increased awareness and intensity of understanding, and bring about a better, deeper and more enduring adjustment in life. Religion commands man to make the change in his own nature, to let the divine in him manifest itself. Radhakrishnan states that sravana, manana and nididhyasana (hearing, reflection and disciplined meditation respectively) are the three stages of religious life, and one has to rise from one stage to another.

ETHICS

Evil is a negative conception, the lack of good, and all conflict is between good and better bad and worse. Evil is caused by the abuse of one free-will, and God permits it because he does not interfere with the human choice. Suffering is not punishment, but is the reward of fellowship, an essential accompaniment of all creative endeavours. It often helps on to grow. The goal of the world process is a harmonious unity, and therefore moral life is the enrichment of life that is the outcome of the recognition of others and adaptation to them. To Radhakrishnan any form of life, where we have significance and social value, is

moral. Morality is the current brand of social custom and one who deviates from it is immoral, through his immorality is an ethical value in the next generation and becomes a part of the tradition in another. Life is great adventure and not a set scheme and so no progress is possible if moral rules are regarded as 'sacrosanct'.

ASHTHETICS

Art is the expression of experience in some medium, the experience 'is clothed in forms which appeal to the emotion through the senses'. The relation between the experience and the medium is closer in some forms of art such as in poetry than in others. The experience is released afresh by means of the work of art and the enjoyer becomes the secret sharer of the creator's mind. Radhakrishnan defines art as form knowledge, a disclosure of the deeper reality of things, and an imitation of inner reality. The aim of art is to capture the inner and informing spirit and it is by integrate insight or spiritual intuition that the artist attains to the power of artistic expression. Arts do not much represent as suggest, do not so much reproduce reality as create aesthetic emotion.

RADHAKRISHNAN'S EDUCATIONAL IDEAS AND AIMS OF EDUCATION

Dr. Radhakrishnan defines education as the instrument for social, economic and cultural change. For social and national integration, for increasing productively, education should be properly utilized. "The importance of education is not only in knowledge and skill, but it is to help us to live with others."

Radhakrishnan wants that for realizing the aim of education is to bring nearer to God. In this aim one should study the various aspects of education. Through education Radhakrishnan wants to establish a classless society in order to bring equality between man and man. He wants that education should develop universal brotherhood. The most important

aim of education is to help us to see the other world, the invisible and intangible world beyond space and time. Education has to give us a second birth, to help us to realize what we have already in us. "The meaning of education is to emancipate the individual and we need the education of the whole man – physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual". Education should enable one to imbibe attitude of simple living and high thinking. Radhakrishnan has attached great importance to spiritual education. He thinks that education which does not inculcate spiritual feelings in students is not true. Without a spiritual bent of mind, the physical and intellectual development of a person remains stunted. This situation is detrimental to the progress of mankind.

A satisfactory system of education aims at a balanced growth of the individual and insists on knowledge and wisdom. It should train the intellect, and furthermore, wisdom can be gained by the study of literature, philosophy and religion that interpret the higher laws of the universe. Education should develop in the minds of the students a love of sustained thinking, adherence to truth and the power of resistance to popular sentiments and mob passion.

THE NATURE OF CURRICULUM

Radhakrishnan has defined his concept of curriculum in his university commission report published in 1949. He wants that a student should study a number of subjects such as philosophy, literature, science, ethics, politics, theology, geography, history, agriculture, natural science, economics, human science and civics. In the curriculum for women, Radhakrishnan wants to include some subjects which may be particularly useful for their specific duties in life. They should also be given education in home science, cooking, fine arts, ethics and religion. Thus Radhakrishnan wants that curriculum must be related to one's life.

METHODS OF TEACHING

Radhakrishnan attaches great importance to observation, experiments and the relationship of nature and society in the method of teaching. He is of the view that teaching of moral values should be through real and living examples. He wants that the student should come close to society and nature in order to understand the same. In learning industrial subjects he recommends the use of imitation method. He thinks that man through regular practice in the Yoga and Meditation may be helped in reaching his goal. He also accepts the importance of internal knowledge for experience in different subjects.

INDIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION OR RADHAKRISHNAN COMMISSION (1948 -1949)

Inter –university board of education and central advisory board of education recommended to Government of India that an All India Commission of Education should be appointed to inquire into the requirements of the higher education in India and put forward commendations for re-organization of the University Education in the light of requirements of the country and its traditions. On November 4, 1948 the Government of India appointed university education commission with Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan as chairman. Hence, it is also known as 'Radhakrishnan Commission'. There were 10 member of the commission.

AIM OF APPOINTMENT

The commission was appointed, to report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future requirements of the country.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference of the commission were ways and means for the improvement and re-organization of the University Education, problems of the teachers, curricula, medium of instruction, religious education problem of discipline, health and residence of the students and such allied problems in

the perspective of the national and international conditions.

METHOD OF STUDY

The commission made a thorough study of the problems of Higher Education in India. It toured the country extensively.

It prepared a questionnaire which was sent out to about 600 persons who mattered in the field of education. It interviewed administrators, organizations of the students and other educationists. Thus it tried to gather information in regard to almost all the aspects of university education. Its report runs into two volumes. The first part of the report contains 18 chapters and about 747 pages. The second volume contains the statistics in regard to institutions and other educational problems and the evidence tendered by the witnesses examined by the commission.

RADHAKRISHNAN SEEN NOW

Now looked in retrospect, Radhakrishnan looks like a prisoner of his own time and space and his mental world also was very much conditioned by his upbringing and constraints. He was a traditional Indian, with only a rudimentary Indian education. He had certainly no Western education. Thus, his education thought and philosophy as such was very orthodox, thought it was cast in the pre-colonial mental makeup. When Independence came he had only a limited role to shape education policy. Also he knew England and India well, yet he didn't extend his horizon further. He didn't foresee the growth of America nor did he foresee the collapse of Communism. Radhakrishnan was given to an Indian view point and that too he was constrained by Gandhi's overwhelming presence. Hence he cast his thoughts in a rather, in my view restricted mental landscape. Thus, now at this time, in the new century, his education legacy as such seems to me honestly as nothing very much.

UNPRECEDENTED CHANGES: HIS REFORMS OVERTAKEN

Changes have been unprecedented and so large-scale and so fast. All his university education reforms have been overtaken by new demands, new responses. Even we can't have much help from Radhakrishnan's vast corpus of writings, much education content as such.

NEW EDUCATION CONTENT

Today we need more liberal arts courses, more mix of liberal and science and technology courses etc. Our basic education approach and attitude has to be to first make education widely accessible, create a more egalitarian approach, give students more choices, almost more like the American campus life style opportunities. In fact, as I see, events have overtaken even our present education practices. Students' aspirations have radically changed. There is a supply side, not a demand side to education today. Hence there is also a heavy emphasis on commercialization. In fact, a gross commercialization of education at all stages!

At another level are the current world education perceptions. No one, an educator or educationist or even a parent wants interference from the government! So there is the heavy rush to private schools and private schools under all sorts of streams, name have literally mushroomed! At another level, there is the great question of school or education quality. No one seems very much worried about this in India, as far as I can see. It is only a pious talk! There is now heavy rush and the chance to make quick big money.

CLASS EDUCATION V/S MASS EDUCATION

In England there is a furious debate. The highly rated Public Schools in England, the 241 leading fee-paying schools said "highly trained academic teachers" should be given special contracts and be allowed to focus solely on top-set groups. The chairman of these schools heads conference is none

other than a very expensive, 17,500 pounds a –year. St. Paul’s school in London says the demand must be conceded plus the government’s non-interference with the schools functioning! He wants a secondary school system run by a commission independent of politicians! Even in a highly divisive class conscious society, this demand is seen as “grossly politically incorrect”! But then, as in India, politicians can talk and do nothing!

SOCIAL REALITIES

The social realities are always different. The education world is evolving at its own pace and at its own set perceptions. In fact, we have to more and more look to the US education because what we have now is not a class education. It is a mass education all the way. The US has over 33,700 colleges and universities and offers a wide range of some 600 programs at graduate, post-graduate and doctoral levels. Indian students in US universities alone make 11.5 percent of foreign students. Even our university education is becoming more and more a quantitative expansion and a mass education.

So, the standards are what they are and there is, in my view too, not a big worry. This is the time of expansion and what India needs is a competitive edge, say, with China especially in high Tech fields. My real worry is the large scale migration of highly talented and trained students and faculty to American shores. This had now become the dominant education syndrome. Migrating at the first opportunity is the mind-set of an average student and the aspiration of every middle class family! Where this trend would lead to? What are the implications of this dominant trend for higher education? No one, not in the UGC nor in the HRD ministry or the education minister, the Prime Minister and the President of India talk on this sensitive issue!

QUANTITY V/S QUALITY

So let quantity dominate, so to say, the quality for some more time! Fortunately, we are now having

an edge. This we shouldn’t lose at any cost. India had emerged as a software dominant power. Let this advantage be always with us. So, I overlook, of course, sadly, the many short comings. We have to devise some radical concessions. We have to introduce some selective, exclusive and privileged courses in the Public Schools and also universities so that the students who go out in the world are always rich, privileged and self-employed! Anyway, let the education scenario evolve for some more time. As they say, time is the best healer!

RADHAKRISHNAN’S BREAKTHROUGH

Radhakrishnan did achieve a breakthrough in bringing the Indian philosophical traditions closer to the Western academic world. That was a very great achievement. Also Radhakrishnan brought the wider public wherever they were closer to Indian thought and religion. His achievements are in fact multi-faceted and multi layered.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Radhakrishnan was not only a philosopher, but also a writer of repute, a scholar, par-excellence, an orator with gift of the gab, an original thinker, an educationist, a spiritualist and a creative genius. A multi-dimensional creative genius, he made his original contributions in all diverse fields of life. It was very difficult to present in any language on account of the towering stature of personality of Dr. Radhakrishnan and successive stages of his creative contribution in Philosophical, educational, social, diplomatic and political field. He is also a great exponent of Hindu Philosophy. He was not obvious certain inherent religious and social evils and he was fully vocal for their education.

Education is an instrument of social, economic and cultural change and should aim at a balanced growth of the individual. In education Radhakrishnan insists on integration of personality and social integration. Politics should promote human welfare and happiness. It is a branch of ethics and thus

Radhakrishnan could advocate only democracy, though it is an ideal to him. The success of democracy depends upon its leaders; the representatives who should be integrated personalities. Dr. Radhakrishnan wished for world democracy. His mortal frame is no more present. But his prophetic messages for India as well as for the whole world make him immortal, and the future generations will get inspiration through his life dedicated to learning and service of humanity. As he lives in our heart, and as his thoughts are vibrating in our mind.

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