

## **Module 5 : S. Radhakrishnan**

### **Section 2 : The Nature**

Radhakrishnan's philosophy is influenced much by the humanism and spiritualism. He believes in the very necessity of a spiritual religion which unites the whole of mankind in evolving itself to the progress and perfection of the world. World had the following characteristics:

1. World is an ordered whole.
2. There is an unbroken continuity in this world order.
3. World exists in a complete unity and with an insulation from the movements of history to that of its fundamental elements called the psychic or social atoms.

The system of nature is a cosmos which pervades throughout the world. It is formed due to the system of nature in the cosmos. The world is thus a set with the system of natural relations intimately interdependent. In every part of being this system of relations are expressed in different forms. These systems of relations manifest through the levels of being. Every existent level of being is an organization with a specific mode of relatedness. The organisms in this world continue to exist in a greater interactive union with their surrounding environment.

Nature is one large whole with matter, life, mind and values. All the above are constituents of nature. They exist independently and interact together to form the events. Their coexistence only makes possible the world of events. These events are called the episodes. The expressions of these episodes are the material atoms, and their surroundings, the organism and its environment, the self and the non-self, the individual and the society. They all express the unity of their nature. We can understand their unity in our existence as well as our experience. Therefore they form the unity of our knowledge also. Plato recognizes this kind of unity. There will be the continuous flow of nature. There will not be any finality with any level of the nature it actually achieves. Each level tries to reach the other higher level in the hierarchy. We can understand the effects through the causes. But the same causes cannot repeat. As every effect becomes another cause there will always be a new effect. Thus the knowledge of the old cannot be sufficient to understand the present. It is always a new effect that emerges through its being. There will be the unique properties evolving through this emergence. They are in fact unpredictable to our imagination. These emerging properties reflect the intellectual genius in art, science, and morality. The evolutions are not meaningless. Natural changes and their effects are teleological in nature. The worlds of nature with its physical world objects are not participatory without any scheme in the story of this emergent evolutionary phenomenon. The formation of things will follow naturally and with the exercise of our control we are producing the things we desire. In this continuous evolution of emergence and counter emergent situations we can experience the formation of consciousness and human reason. All of this existence leads to the formation of a profound cooperative and spiritual common wealth with the marks of freedom and harmony. All will be leading to the betterment of life and spirit. There cannot be any stop to this phenomenon. There cannot be any backward step. This is only due to the universal tendency of the cosmic process we embody within every self of our life world. It will produce the personality with such experience of these cosmic processes.

Are these events related to our inner being, or the certain beings in the world? There will be different answers to this question. Naturalistic ideas show the ultimate reality of time. They refuse to transcend these temporal processes. He asserts that there cannot be any deeper process than the historic process. It exists within the process underlying those processes or beyond that process. Naturalism claims to explain every process within its purview. It automates every phenomenon of the world into a mechanical process. This mechanical process works in a blind manner. This naturalistic thesis reduces everything of the universe into unconscious forces. It makes life, consciousness, and value as the mere by products. It holds the belief that the world machine needs only to be taken to pieces to be comprehended. It changes or transcribes the stuff, matter and change into fixed laws. Matter differs only in number.

Naturalism conflicts with the results and canons of scientific investigations<sup>1</sup>.

Radhakrishnan feels dissatisfied with the developments of physical as well as the natural sciences. He feels the theories of Darwin and Herbert Spencer as inadequate in the context of his early twentieth century historic processes. As he argued in his ***Idealist View of Life***:

The utter inadequacy of the naturalist hypothesis becomes obvious if we consider its bearings on the general characteristics of the world.

The order of the universe is not a mechanical one. Scientific laws represent working hypotheses, abstract devices of understanding concrete facts of nature. They do not constrain or dictate to nature<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> S. Radhakrishnan , ***An Idealist View of Life***, Page 250

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Page 250

Radhakrishnan opposes freedom to causality and necessity in nature. He feels that the mechanical view of the naturalists and physicists espouse nothing more than the presence of effect in the cause. All relations will become the mere repetitions of fundamental clockwork. This appears to Radhakrishnan as a tyranny. He writes:

The endless versatility of nature conflicts with this view. Unlike those of a mechanical producer, the products of nature are infinite and formless. There is certainly orderliness in nature, but it is quite different from that of a mechanical tyranny<sup>3</sup>.

The change in the material world are not merely external ones of position, velocity etc. Though all the physical objects may ultimately be of the same stuff and possess the same properties, their sensible qualities which are different, whether present or actual, are not accounted for by the laws of pure mechanism<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Page 250

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Page 250

Radhakrishnan did not satisfy with the notions of the concepts of the mechanical processes. He says that if naturalism were true, time would make no difference to the facts. To think that nothing depends on time makes no sense to think of the possibilities, for then everything could have been realized. Nothing did happen of that sort. History marks the main coordinate of time. It makes the sense with exclusive configurations. Except its own course of actualization every other thing had been excluded. Thus time forms the main series of the events and the possibilities. Radhakrishnan writes:

Time introduces something new in the properties of things. The historical process has in it two elements of continuity and novelty. Every stage of it is at once continuity and a crisis. Nature has its own rhythm and cannot be rushed. Its processes are irreversible.

The view of mechanism that the world came into existence of its own and has come to be what it is, without any reason or purpose behind it all, does not seem to be quite satisfactory<sup>5</sup>.

The consideration of the world of these processes of mechanism will have to face the questions regarding the person who guides them and the person who sets them up into the process. The parts of the machines appear to be unintelligent. Then again there will be the other question regarding the self-sufficiency. If everything is dependent upon the other processes then such a mechanism cannot be considered as self-sufficient. As he says:

Each event is what it is because of its relation to other events. We seek for something that is its own explanation, but we never get it. The world is an infinite series of conditioned events, but science cannot say why it is what it is.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Page 251

The value of causal argument lies in that it insists that the finite universe demands a principle beyond itself to explain it.

Science is system of second causes which cannot describe the world adequately, much less account for it.

The mystery of all existence in time as a whole is only deepened by science and naturalism does not help to dissipate it<sup>6</sup>.

These were the ideas of Radhakrishnan regarding nature and science. As an idealist he considers the incompleteness of science and the ineffectiveness of nature. Time represents the major coordinate on which we can only have the historic projections. Even God was not exempted from this time advent. The whole world is now engaged in the production of deity. As time is the very substance of reality, no being can exhaust the future. Even God is a creature of time<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Page 251

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Page 255

Metaphysical thinking, which bases itself on experience, holds that nature is grasped with the concept of necessity and the nature of the self by that of freedom. Without this concept our understanding of man's nature will be deficient and distorted. While both man and nature are the creation of god, the being of man is made in the image of God and is therefore quite distinct from the being of nature<sup>8</sup>.

The above observation generally shows the tendencies of our philosophers who try to obtain certain ends as holy and higher in nature. Nature for them is the manifestation of the unintelligent and of the lower in quality. The so called freedom represents only their much glorified sanctity of symbol and the practice of the religious traditions. Idealism is one such philosophy which tries to bring into human life the actual designs of a social order with all the processes of construction, actualization and acquisition of power. The knowledge of the world and its mastery remains as an unachieved goal till the dawn of the twentieth century. Much of the scientific knowledge comes into being in this particular period. The basic beliefs in these transcendental ideas and their proposed sanctity of the traditions and the symbols all will lose their meaning. The world evolves with crystal cut clarity from the masks of any such superstitious mythological layers of the social fabric. Man in the myth is the constructed work of art by the powerful and the historically dynamic. Radhakrishnan's man is of the former type who tries to be the ever young and energetic. It amounts to the revisiting of a holy and the ancient ones for the perfection of its origination.

<sup>8</sup> **History of Indian Philosophy**, ed. by Marietta Stepanyants, Indian Council of Philosophical research, New Delhi, 1993. Page 204