

Module 5 : S. Radhakrishnan

Section 6 : Spiritual Life

There is only one mode throughout his writings irrespective of the fact that when he had written that. His philosophy is a call to an absolute idealism based essentially on immediate intuition, founded in and issuing in the life of spirit. These were the observations of a philosopher regarding Radhakrishnan. For Radhakrishnan knowledge is an ultimate fact incapable of being derived from anything else. Most probably this might have been due to the very nature that they represented vehemently the religious philosophy which makes a room for the non-natural and non-rational with an extreme bent towards that is intuited or meditated upon. This kind of philosophies will have the following characteristics.

1. All knowledge generally presupposes a knower.
2. The known is unsteady.
3. The world is not an illusion or deception despite the above stated fact.
4. But nature is not self-existent.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Paul Arthur Schilpp, **The Philosophy of Radhakrishnan**, Tudor Publishing Company, New York, Page 88

It is Radhakrishnan's famous argument for the existence of an absolute reality which forces us to have an experience of the corresponding object. He strongly claims that there cannot be a world without an absolute consciousness. Radhakrishnan tries to meet the problem of other minds, with the statement that individuals are able to have common experience, to know a real world as identical for all, and because there is an ideal self-operative in us.

Radhakrishnan thinks of a moral order operating itself in the world. He says that from the eternal values we pass to a supporting mind in which they dwell. Without this sanction, art, science and morality would lose their significance. The religious consciousness too bears its weighty witness. A sense of rest and fulfillment, of eternity and completeness requires the conception of a "Being" not limited by the cosmic process. This simply uplifts and brings to focus the state of being, as a being which transcends these cosmic processes⁵⁸. That becomes the Transcendental and Absolute Being.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Page 89

He condemns the very contentions of the logical positivists. We can observe from the arguments of the ignorant even. To state, that what our minds fail to grasp is unthinkable is not right⁵⁹ he is in favor of intuition which transcends intellect. Moreover it is an experience integrating the self with the Absolute in the realization of its reality the ultimate one. Finally he tries to bring in the following strong argument. As he says:

We have no right to deny what we do not understand, and our unconsciousness of the Supreme need not be conclusive proof of the non-existence of the Supreme⁶⁰

The very streaks of mysticism through his intuition certify that his experience is having a realm above the very perceptible world. This makes him as an exclusive spiritual being and his philosophy becomes spiritual philosophy. Leave back the fact of counter factual from the logical positivists. Radhakrishnan adhered mostly to the principles of ethics and morality. That kind of insight according to Radhakrishnan leads to the spiritual revolution within the perspectives of universal morality. He strongly believes that only by making use of man's spirituals potential, can a new type of mentality will be formed⁶¹.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Page 89

⁶⁰ Ibid., Page 89

⁶¹ History of Indian Philosophy, Page 205

Without this spiritual faith Radhakrishnan's world becomes a void, a meaningless existence of the individual. His philosophy is a metaphysical system conceived to introduce into faith a rational element. In short we have to understand that there should be a universal philosophy in addition to universal morality to form a universal religion is the bedrock of Radhakrishnan's philosophy. He is somewhat sceptical regarding the perfection of science. He challenges even the very claims of science.

His man is a faithful man. His man is a spiritual man. His religion is a spiritual religion. His ideas are spiritual ideas. And what he professed is nothing but the absolute spirituality. The world and the structure of religion become only the manifestations of this spirit. They are truly the claims of the spiritual philosophies.

His philosophy covers the relationship of consciousness to being. He adopts the notion of the primacy of being, but by "being" he implies some divine spirit, even Brahman, and not objective reality, which exists outside and independent of consciousness and is reflected by it. Reality is presented as secondary to Brahman, a derivative of it. Thus we can see that his philosophy is an objective-idealistic conception of being. It is not an objective reality. If it is objective it will not be independent of any will or consciousness. His reality is "a universe which was brought into being by God, who is the unique objective reality. God and spirit occupies an obsessive place in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan"⁶²

⁶² Ibid., Page208

The Absolute of Radhakrishnan expresses the world. It is not the expression of the absolute or its modification. He describes absolute as the Primary spiritual reality, and the universe as a secondary derivative reality. Radhakrishnan tried to describe the relationship between being and reality. He in that process approached the theory of cognition in a way which will be serving to substantiate the principles of perennial religion. He advocates the analytical approach denying at the same time the dogma and church fanaticism⁶³.

Radhakrishnan expressed a strong belief in the cognitive abilities of man. He rejected agnosticism, skepticism and regards being and reality as cognizable. He found the necessity and possibility of knowing the world by man's inherent aspiration for freedom and happiness, since man cannot be happy until he attains the truth. In his view happiness is the attainment of moral perfection in a religious sense. He sees that it is through the way of consciousness that man attains his freedom and happiness. Cognition thus is a necessity. It is not only individual but humanity as whole strives to attain this, he writes:

Truth is not the reflection of reality in sense and intellect. It is a creative mystery experienced by the soul in its deepest being. It is not a question of the subject knowing the object. It involves the realization that subject and object are one in a deeper sense than any physical analogy can make clear⁶⁴.

⁶³ Ibid., Page209

⁶⁴ Ibid., Page209

The above principles form the fundamentals of the theory of cognition. Basing on these grounds only the epistemic categories will depend. This comes out of the integral perceptiveness. This becomes the highest cognitive faculty of man. They will fall under three categories. They are:

1. The perceptual or the *Manas*.
2. The Intuitive or the *Ananda*.
3. The Logical or the *Vijnana*.

These three themselves are interrelated, inseparable and function as an integral whole. Sense perception is at the lower level than the intelligence. His philosophy did not ignore the significance of the sense and reason. Scriptural authority is not recognized as the only authority. He says that for us nothing is true by our faith if it is not true by reason. He also states that the idea that to abide by reason does not always mean that the ultimate reality should be regarded only as an object of reason.

Though reason may not be adequate as an organ for the apprehension of the divine, it is useful as a critic of claims to such an apprehension.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ibid., Page210

Further he considers the intellect to be an indispensable aid to support and clarify spiritual experience. Thus it becomes the spiritual instrument. It will also bring forward that consciousness is the distinctive feature of man. Yet he says that reason produced by this consciousness alone does not suffice⁶⁶. Finite of man fails to apprehend the infinite being, the Absolute.

These will be the epistemic premises of Radhakrishnan. He strongly feels that science which is developed out of the logical instrumentality cannot enable you to understand reality. And this reality is divine nature of the world. Science fails to understand this kind of essence which Radhakrishnan terms as the spiritual essence of being. And he calls it as the inner truth. According Radhakrishnan Science can only give us an idea of the formal structure of existence.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Page210

Important Question:

1. Discuss Radhakrishnan's view on Nature.
2. Critically evaluate the nature of man in Radhakrishnan's philosophy.
3. Discuss the role of religion in our life with special reference Radhakrishnan's philosophy.