

Pujya Dr. K.C. Varadachari - Volume - **2SRI RADHAKRISHNAN AND** **COMPARITIVE RELIGION**

If Svami Vivekananda wished to develop a college for the study of comparative religion, it was left to Dr Radhakrishnan of Madras to fulfil that wish by devoting himself to realise it. His own valuable writings on the reign of religion in contemporary philosophy, written very early in his professorial career, as well as his stimulating studies on Eastern religions and Western thought, have shown how continuously he has been at work to make clear the basic nature of religion, and its realisation in the different cultures of the world. The studies reveal how greatly he had been influenced by the deepest spiritual movements in India and elsewhere through the centuries. This had led to a dispassionate appraisal of all of them, both in what they had contributed to the stream of human evolution as well as in the directions in which each one of them lagged behind in achieving the spiritual goal.

The spiritual goal is infinite and infinity itself. No terrestrial limit could be applied to it, nor does it depend on it as such. Individual saints have stepped out of this terrestrial limitation and presented the eternal. The comparative study of the lives of these saints would yield

very important and striking material for defining the spiritual levels of each culture and religious pattern. It is true that all religions, when sincerely pursued as ways of spiritual attainment, would lead to the goal, would reach God; some however are long and strenuous and devious. Indeed it is likely, as Hindu sages knew, that one reaches the goal contrary to the manner by which it has to be reached, avidhipurvakam. The old story in which God offered alternatives to reach him either through friendliness (maitri) or through enmity (dvesa) to his most excellent servants Jaya and Yijaya who had been cursed by some sages to take birth, shows that one could attain God through either path. Though the former is prescribed in yoga, the latter is contrary to it. This is of course catholicity and tolerance, or could lead to it. No doubt the several religions aspire to reach God, and tolerance of the paths chalked out is helpful and experimental, and above all supremely democratic and individual.

The world is in need of a new approach. Hindu thinkers or sages had seen that is almost a continuous demand for new events; and an awareness of the new dimensions of the human problems provoke constant search for harmonious solutions in each age. We find that men cry out to God to take birth, or to send his prophets and messengers to establish righteousness, to punish the wicked and to save the faithful. In certain literatures we

find that extreme urgency expressed with all anguish and pain of the soul, as if the world is engulfed and awaiting destruction. However each age is answered and each nation is assured by the birth of a saint; but it is a phenomenon that leads to the study of the many ways in which man prays for a new world and a new life.

The problems of religion remain, despite all attempts to establish a new relationship with God or the Absolute things which are understood in a terrestrial sense, or rather ‘a human’ sense. There is of course all the certainty that there are super-human or super-manic senses, but they belong to an select sect and man is unfortunately not included in it. In what manner those persons know and see, touch, taste and hear, one hardly can know, though descriptions are not wanting in all mystical and religious literature. In fact Sri Aurobindo devotes quite a few chapters to delineate the ‘gnostic man’ or superman. To the man for whom religion exists or is established as a path to liberation, as a means to his emancipation from all binding and limiting bonds and misery and death, there is necessary a pragmatic or human understanding of his place in the universe, a place to which he might legitimately aspire and attain. **Peace in the soul, prosperity in all things, and harmony with all mankind is an undoubted trinity of interests that every man, whatever his station in life is, seeks.**

Man seeks fullness. He is always sure that though what

he seeks is not always attainable he should still strive after it; and ethical life for him is a means towards this realisation of the good.

In his brilliant series of lectures on Eastern Religions and Western Thought, Dr Radhakrishnan throws out pregnant criticisms not only of the ways of thought to which the rationalists have accustomed the present age, but also the ways of religion which promises to succeed it. But after the rational treatment which in a sense happened again and again in the history of mankind, religion is not likely to be the same again. However there are certain broad axioms of his thought on religion which could be shown to follow naturally from the beginnings made by Svami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, his great master.

1. The Reality is spiritual. Reality of the Unseen.
2. Man is moving upward towards this realisation.
3. Humanity is striving after Unity - this is the direction of its aspiration, the light and the law that moulds its direction or the direction of its life-force.
4. Intellectual thought is insufficient, but historical or human history is important : (European thought's contribution). The Kingdom of God is not of this world.
5. Religion and humanism are not opposites : The divine and the human are ever interrelated.

‘Humanism is the religion of the majority of the intellectuals today’.

6. ‘Hinduism adopts a rationalist attitude in the matters of religion’. (p.20. ER & WT).

7. Religions are religions of object and religions of Experience. The former depend on faith and conduct directed to a power without; the latter attaches importance to the experience of God. Hinduism and Buddhism belong to the second category.

8. A rationalist attitude means a study in a scientific spirit, and religion is also studied in this spirit of inquiry, not by faith but by experimenting, observing, and discovering laws of inner life through experience in the deepest levels. God exists means God is experienceable or attainable, (p. 22)

9. Knowledge is awareness. This is different from logical knowledge which is comparable to a finger which points to an object and disappears when the object is seen. (p. 24)

10. ‘Philosophy and religion are two aspects of a single movement.’

11. Religion is a natural development of a really human life, (p, 25) . In this sense it is humanism, ‘in a deeper sense.’ True humanism tells us that there is something more in man than is apparent in his ordinary

consciousness, something which frames ideals and thoughts, a fine spiritual presence which makes him dissatisfied with mere earthly pursuits, (p. 25)

12. Maya does not mean that the empirical world is illusion. It is only 'fragile'.

'Reality and existence are not to be set against each other as metaphysical contraries.'

13. "The fundamental truth of a spiritual religion is that our real self is the supreme being which it is our business to discover and consciously become, and this being is one in all." (p. 32)

14. Mankind is still in the making. Human life as we have it is only the raw material for human life as it might be. (p. 34)

The above axioms of his thought reveal his wide perspective, distinct indeed from those of the preceding thinkers. There is absolute agreement on the nature of reality as spiritual. It is also agreed that man must become aware of this spiritual nature, and more and more realise it in his person, so to speak. His whole nature must become spiritual. Spirituality means liberation or freedom, and this spirituality is at the heart of every thing in the universe to which he aspires. Religion means this attainment through spiritual experience.

But there are some who consider that man is always perfect, being spiritual, and his ignorance and imperfection are not real. They hold that there is no evolution of man into a spiritual being. There is no birth and no realisation. The whole is unborn, cannot be born. Dr Radhakrishnan's view is that the world's soul, as yet unborn, will be born even as man is in the making. So he does not accept the ajata vada and the illusion-theory of becoming, or of creation etc., Nor does he accept the theory that maya is the power of creativity in matters material. Maya represents or explains the fragile nature of the manifest world which is constantly changing, or rather coming into being and passing out of being. The fact of transitoriness of material things and bodies is incontestable. The bodies change but the spiritual nature goes on interminably. Bodies age but the spiritual nature experiences and goes on from one body to another after fulfilling its desires in each one of them, and therefore there is a continuity of births and deaths. However we are not concerned so much with the nature of the body in its perishability but in its being the vehicle of experience (anubhava). Religion has concern for the soul of man, his immortal spirit playing in and through the mortal and the changing nature.

Dr Radhakrishnan's great contribution to comparative Religion is contained in his Oxford lectures on Eastern Religions and Western Thought. it is about the only

book today which presents succinctly and lucidly the Eastern or Indian approach to Comparative Religious study. If Svami Vivekananda tried to show how Hinduism is the Mother of all Religions - all religions are eastern not european - and how by shedding certain aspects each religion had developed its own emphasis, and thus separated itself from the parent; if Mahatma Gandhi, following Sri Ramakrishna as it were, tried to establish a catholic egalitarianism between the religions which could be permitted to claim similar developments independently of the alleged source in Hinduism or Vedism; Dr Radhakrishnan's approach may be said to lead to a hierarchy of religion based on the levels of intuition and levels of intellect. The Eastern religions are all intuitive, inspired, and spiritually allied to the Ultimate purpose, whereas the Hellenic religions are over-intellectualised rationalisations of the intuitive. However it is clear that Dr Radhakrishnan himself seems to feel that spiritual religion, which is Hinduism, had very early in World History inspired and guided the lines of development of Christianity and Islam in their spiritual theories and practices.

A consideration of not only the philosophical bases of these religions but also of the self-limitations which they had imposed on themselves for the making of a better life here on earth clearly indicates the causes of the divergences in goals, A yearning for the Divine in

Himself or Itself does promote a vision that transcends the earth and its perfection. Perfection itself has to be considered in the light of purification of the spirit through experience, till it reaches its perfection beyond the transient bodies or matter. This is true of the spiritual religions whose look is turned to the beyond. But it is not so but turned around one's surroundings when adaptation to it and survival in it is the goal. This is the goal of religions which seek for perfection of adaptation and harmony with it alone. In either case it is the necessity of man to discover the power or illumination which transcends his present powers, but which he somehow feels is immanent in him.

Early enough in the millenium before Christ, Greece underwent change in its beliefs, thanks to the influx of ancient Hindu thought through the Mysteries of Orpheus and the philosophies of Pythagoras. Clearly, Eleatics were influenced by the 'abstract' speculations of the Hindus. (p. 134). It has been an unbroken influx before and after the invasions of Alexander, perhaps more before than after. Though Dr Radhakrishnan insists that his endeavour is limited to showing or indicating their affinity of type rather than their identity of origin, it is nonetheless a pointer to the mutual influence of a higher religious stream on the lower Homeric religions. Remarkable indeed are the affinities. The

Aryan names adorn almost all the pages of their history of ancient religions, and perhaps it is clear that it is in the Indian formulation that these Aryan gods and goddesses attain a purity and perfection in their qualitative holiness or numinous nature. “The mystic tradition in Greece is definitely un-Greek in its character.” (p.135) As quoted by Dr Radhakrishnan

“Prophetic austerity and mystic indifference are alike foreign to it (Greece). « (p. 136 note 3.)

The nearness or identity of practices and beliefs about the soul and its immortality reveal more than mere natural coincidence.

“The beliefs held in common are those of rebirth, the immortality and godlike character of the soul, the bondage of the soul in the body, and the possibility of release by purification. If we add to them the metaphors like the wheel of birth and the world egg, the suggestion of natural coincidence is somewhat unconvincing.” (p. 138)

Initiation was also considered to be of great importance. To have initiation is to be twice born. The first birth is the physical one, the second is unto what is real in us, to be changed in nature. The yearning of religion is the desire for union with our true self. ...

The ideal of Dhyana or theoria was inculcated, and that meant contemplation of the divine reality. “For

Pythagoras, pure contemplation is the end of man, the completion of human nature.” (p.141). There are so many things in common between the Upanisadic teachings and the Greek Platonics that we could assert their interconnection. But whether or not we accept the hypothesis of direct influence from India through Persia on the Greeks, a student of Orphic and Pythagorean thought cannot fail to see that the similarities between it and Indian religion are so close as to warrant our regarding them as expressions of the same view of life. We can use the one system, to interpret the other. “ (p. 143)

Professor Radhakrishnan’s exposition of the characteristics of a universal religion have the supreme merit of clarity and charity which are brilliantly combined. His wide acquaintance with the several features of world mysticism and ethics and philosophy has made him a unique personality. Idealism and practical wisdom coupled with a deep piety for the ultimate values have made for his knowledge of man and his destiny, in and through the several avenues of knowing and tradition. This has produced a humanism that made it a laughing stock in ancient philosophy.

Philosophy and religion are for man, and man is not to be conditioned and regimented into the schemes of philosophy and religion. This is not subjectivism on the

contrary it emphasizes that our knowledge is essentially governed by our mind, which is human at the level of our education and It is very difficult to ask for a divine way when all that we have is only a human vehicle and instrumentation. The most flattered human is not divine but human. The concept of man has been of course beautifully explained even in India as in the Bhagavad Gita which, called the Divine only the Highest or the Best Human (Purusottama). No doubt that all religion is human, and for the human, and it may lead to the best that could evolve out of the human - his highest possibility or potentiality. The basic Upanisadic statement could be made to show that the Brahman is what the atman could attain to - and the potential and the manifest expression of it are an organic unity — a process of growth or evolution or unfoldment or even the breaking of the obstacles to the self-revealaent of the self. All these terms of human understanding of the gap or the gulf between the Ideal and the Actual is bridged firstly by the recognition of the Reality of the equation between these two terms. Their separation by whatever reason brought about, illusory self-limitation or creative dialectic, is the fact to be recognised and overcome. Religion tries to do this through the several religions, each of which is suited to the fact or feature or mode of separation, that exists between the Atman and the Brahman, - the individual and the Divine All. It is

certainly possible even to hold that the several expanding individuals may grow to such vast dimensions that one begins to include the rest, but then these inter-pervasive universes, or individuals, or mahatmas, do need a common universe of discourse and being which may produce or creatively recognise the One that is indeed the all. Man has infinite potentiality, and it may be that the divine nature is also his possibility, even as the human itself has been the possibility of the animal before him, so far as he is concerned. Hindu thought therefore is a problem or adventure of infinite manifestation of the infinite potentiality of the microcosm - the atman or anvatma or life - to become Brahman or universal life - visvatma or purusottama. Professor Radhakrisnan's most rewarding chapter in his work *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, from the point of view of comparative religion forging ahead to a universal religion, is entitled "Meeting of Religions" (pp. 306-343).

India has been historically known to have been the meeting place of almost all religions: perhaps it has also sent out from ancient times its own religion to other parts of the world. Whilst other religions, especially those developed in Europe as well as the Arabic sematic, developed a zealous attitude to convert others to their way of thinking, which they were convinced was the best for all the rest of the world, whether they were advanced

or fitted or otherwise or whether all things are the same for all men differently constituted, India tried its level best most of the time to foster inward understanding of the goals of not only oneself but also of others as well, and knew the wisdom that to each is best that makes for his realisation.

Today we have the well-devised slogan : to each according to his need, from each according to his ability : an axiom of economic socialism, put forward by one who seems to have known the mystic truth that multiplicity, in order to be, must remain multiplicity. Democracy would wither if individuals coalesce or get absorbed in others. Indian thinking, so beautifully expressed by the Bhagavad Gita, has stated that each individual has his own svadharma which he should develop according to his svabhava - his own line of growth, and to attempt at exchanging it with others is fraught with great misery to all concerned. The maxim of svadharma and svabhava of Hindu Gita thinking is almost identical in import with the slogan or axiom of 'to each according to his need and from each according to his ability.'

But this perception is not possible unless one gets out of his net-mesh of doctrinairism and dogmatism. Traditional development has helped individual growth and evolution by and large, and Utopian population shifting has uprooted people and has

provided for their extermination through atavism, and decay.

Professor Radhakrishnan says “The different religions have now come together, and if they are not to continue in a state of conflict or competition, they must develop a spirit of comprehension which will break down prejudice and misunderstanding and bind them together as varied expressions of a single truth.” (p. 306)

All religions have come together in the world, but long ago they did come together in India, and India then decided that this comprehensive spirit is good for man despite all provocations made, and insults heaped and brutalities committed against its religion of One Reality, One God that merely permits the many but helps them and sustains their growth and evolution as exemplars of the One Supreme Brahman.

What was achieved in those early times of Asoka * could well bear implementation in the vaster arena

* Asoka’s dictum : “ He who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own, with intent to enhance the splendour of his own sect, in reality, by such conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own sect.” (quoted on page 309)

of a world meeting of religions, the globe itself that has, whether we like it or not, shrunk in terms of time and

space because of the modern discoveries of science. “Obviously, says Professor Radhakrishnan ‘the different races and religious cults lived in harmony and adopted an attitude of live and let live’” (p. 307), Despite conflicts which did take place, it became clear that the Vedas realised that “ever since the dawn of reflection the dream of unity has hovered over the scene and haunted the imagination of the leaders “ of that age. The theoretical explanation was put forward in the Rig Veda for this attitude of acceptance of other cults. “The real is one, the learned call it by various names Agni, Yama, Matarisvan.” (I. 164.46) And again “priests and poets with words make into many the hidden reality which is but one” (X.114). “The oneness of the Supreme is insisted on, but variety of description is permitted.” Dr Radhakrishnan holds that “In the boundless being of Brahman are all the living powers that men have worshipped as gods, not as if they were standing side by side in space, but each a facet mirroring the whole”; though he seems to concede that these may be considered to be ‘refracted’ formations or just ‘symbols of the fathomless’. In ancient times this attitude of comprehensive tolerance was adopted by the Chinese where the three religions of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism have so far “melted into one another that we cannot separate them easily.” (p.309). It is but fair to say that this attitude was not gained in a day. Conflicts had

taken place till men have begun to see reason - human reason. Even today the atmosphere for comprehensive spiritual understanding of awareness has been brought about only through revolutions and two World Wars, and under the current threat of a Third one. The sanity of man gets a chance when it is suicidal and homicidal to indulge in insanity.

Reason, human reason, might not grant stable insights, revelations from above to all, but it does grant a sense of expedient good behaviour. We know how the social contract theory was an invention of the human rationality to save man from fratricidal war which was but another name for collective suicide of humanity. It may not be a sovereign force but potent enough.

Sectarian squabbles there always have been, in India as elsewhere, but whilst in India there have been attempts at a positive integration of divine ideas and concepts, in other parts of the globe there has not happened anything more than an armistice, a recognition of difference, an agreement to differ, and that too when men seemed to lose their attachment to spiritual truths or God. The industrial age and economic determinism have more and more begun to dictate a socialistic pattern of society based on cooperation and corporation. This is a basic differential between the Indian or Hindu mind and the Western Mind, Dr Radhakrishnan points out how Brahma, Siva and Visnu were integrated as the three

poises of the One Divine.

Srsti sthityantakaranam brahmavisnuaisvabhidham /
sa samjnam yati bhagavan eka eva Janardanah //

Or the other famous verses

Yah puman Samkhyadrstinam

Brahma vedantavadinam

vijnana matram vijnanavadinam ekantanirmalam
yah sunyavadinam sunyo bhasako yo'rkatejasam
vaktamantartam bhokta drasta karta sadaiva sah
purusah samkhyadrstinam Isvaro yogavadinam
sivah sasikalankanam kalah kalaikavadinam

(Yoga Vasisista Quoted by Dr Radhakrishnan. p. 319)

All names may be given or invented to refer to the Sane Being in the different darsanas or philosophies or religions, and it is good to recognize this significant fact. It is also known how Udayana in his Kusumanjali, written to prove the existence of God, had discerned this truth. Determined by the approach to the Divine, One receives his vision from that point of approach. Even the atheist and materialist is received in the Hindu fold as they also reach the Divine in that way.

It is a truth that is being slowly recognized by the mystics of other religions whether Christian or Islamic, but more by the former, for their windows of knowledge are much more open to the breezes from eternity.

Dr Radhakrishnan vigorously points out that it is necessary for religious experience to be experienced and recognized through the test of evolution of the human spirit. “Let us frankly recognize that the efficiency of a religion is to be judged by the development of religious qualities such as quiet confidence, inner calm, gentleness of the spirit, love of neighbour, mercy to all creation, destruction of tyrannous desires, and the aspiration for spiritual freedom.” (p. 323) This is a serious practical test which every one should apply, and then perhaps we will all know that religion is yet a far off ideal. Some may even draw the pessimistic conclusion that it is an Utopian dream to be truly spiritual or religious.

And spiritual goods are not to be confused with the world’s currency, as Dr Radhakrishnan says. The Christian missionary had been much more obsessed by his excellences which were in fact, undermining his own nature. The brilliant replies Dr Radhakrishnan has given, will reveal an underlying lack of humility on the part of the missionary writers, suffering under the burden of their evangelical mission to save their own souls rather than that of the other people who are less well placed in the material plane of life. It is true that some of the reformers in India were equally obsessed by wordly values and sought to remedy the situation of the people of India, especially the downtrodden and the dispossessed, and spoke a language of depreciation of

the spiritual values. This is also the modern obsession among the educated people as also the pandits seeking equality with the materialistic comrades. Perhaps it has invaded even the spheres of the monks and sanyasin and brought cynical sneers from all those who see them as the exemplars of the spirit of jnana vairagya.

This inversion of valuations of the age of mystic renunciation and service and Oneness of all Being has led to the depreciation of the present age and loss of faith in every one. The intolerant voice of the missionary zealot is matched by an equivalent fanaticism of the proselytizer with the superiority complex making him say things which are barren of all meaning and reality. At any rate the Christian religion has no universal possibility for humanity, unless it begins to shed its institutionalised behaviour patterns, whether Protestant or catholic. One must realise 'that different creeds are the historical formulations of the formless truth', and also that religious mystics or rather. Svami Vivekananda spoke bitterly against the fanatical ideas of a One God and of One Creation also.

Dr Radhakrishnan pertinently says "Unfortunately even as faith in one's nation kills faith in mankind, faith in one religion seems to kill faith in others." (p.329). One's faith must give faith to others in their own faiths. Just as one's manifestation of love and sympathy to others seems to make others feel the necessity to love in return

and adore the Supreme who has made this possible. Further Dr Radhakrishnan says “Those who believe in an immanent Logos are obliged to admit the value of other faiths.” (p. 331)

The secret of tolerance and love stems out of this recognition of the immanent Logos, the Antaryamin in each and every human being, whether of one’s own race, sect caste or otherwise. The immanent Reason in all is Universal Reason itself, *

* It is usual to criticise Hegel for having asserted that what is, is right, because it meant also that he was justifying the Prussian Military State. The deeper meaning could be elucidated that it has to be understood along with the other dictum that the real is the rational.

It is on the plane of human rationality that we discover that reason itself is universally present in all humans, and works on an identical set of laws of thought. A science of religion would discover the uniformities of spiritual experience and the Uniformities of thinking processes, as well as the mythical and emotional psychologies. Thus it is by showing the different ‘distortions’ ‘refractions’ and ‘inversions’ and evolutions of the several truths of religion in the different climates and traditions of humanity sprawling on the face of the globe, that we seize upon the essential elements of universal religion, and also develop a charity and positive tolerance to all

religious manifestations. It is then that, as Dr Radhakrishnan says “a religion embraces all mankind; For in a religion like Hinduism, which emphasizes Divine Immanence, the chosen people embraces all mankind; not merely those of the semetic or aryan or any tribal and national type of men alone.”

Professor Radhakrishnan emphasises that religion at least must remain the home of liberty, in this , following Rousseau whoa he quotes; but he also perceives the wisdom of Plato who insists that liberty has only one law to obey, that is the law of beneficence to society, or rather should we say the beneficence to one’s own evolution to higher and wider liberties open to him. The Hindu has always recognised the need for the formation of fellowships or Samgha or sat-sangha which promotes the evolution of man towards his liberty (moksa) as well as his harmony with humanity. Men live from one community to another entailing change of attitudes - “sat-sanghatve nissanghatvam, nissanghatve nirmohatvam” a true objectivity develops along with a dispassionate attitude. Hinduism recognizes that each religion is inextricably bound up with its culture. This poses the problem of association and fellowship between individuals belonging to apparently different religions, but seeking the same goal of liberty in God, or dharma.

Dr Radhakrishnan’s great work has been to answer the critics of Hinduism, as also to direct criticisms against

them from a real and dispassionate standpoint. Tall claims made by Christianity by followers of modern Christianity are shown to be hollow and pretentious. Whilst “we cannot dismiss as negligible the sense of majesty of God and consequent reverence in worship which are conspicuous in Islam, the deep sympathy for the world’s sorrow and unselfish search for a way of escape in Buddhism; the desire for contact with ultimate reality in Hinduism; the belief in moral order in the universe and consequent insistence on moral conduct in Confucius, it is unfortunate that claims are made for the exclusive salvation device of Christianity by its leading expounders.” (p. 342) However, wise men abound every where and the light of God is pouring on them from above.

There is always a necessity for instructing each other among good men as counselled by the Bhagavad Gita Acharya (bodhayanti parasparam) even as Jesus seems to have instructed, “But go then and publish abroad the Kingdom of God,” even as Asoka sent to all directions messengers of freedom (moksa) from misery; but this task could well be done with imperialistic designs. As it was earlier remarked, conquerors of nations were accompanied, by missionaries to convert the conquered by force. fraternity; those deeply universal mystic truths absorbed by the Hinduism from remote ages. And this recognition of equal rights for all has compelled the

ethical conscience - but not of all missionaries - to dedicate themselves to these triple goals of human existence. More disastrous has been the attempt to undermine, subvert other peoples faiths, and this too is being exposed by modern thinkers.

Dr Radhakrishnan's services to the emancipation of Hinduism, both from its critics and its friends and followers, have been singularly successful. His massive knowledge of, and minute acquaintance with the practices of religions has helped him to help them to purify themselves before they attempt exporting their religions.

Splendidly has he presented the picture of the future of religion -the religion in the making -

“Each religion has sat at the feet of teachers that never bowed to its authority, and this process is taking place to-day on a scale unprecedented in the history of humanity, and will have profound effects upon religion. In their wide environment religions are assisting each other to find their own souls and to grow to their full stature. Owing to cross-fertilization of ideas and insights, behind which lie centuries of racial and cultural tradition and earnest endeavour, a great unification is taking place in the deeper fabric of men's thoughts. Unconsciously perhaps, respect for other points of view, appreciation of the treasures of other

cultures, confidence in one another's unselfish motives are growing. We are slowly realizing that believers with different opinions and convictions are necessary to each other to work out the larger synthesis which alone can give the spiritual basis to a world brought together into intimate oneness by man's mechanical ingenuity. " (p. 348)

The realisation of the Universal Religion cannot but be on the lines of a wider awakening of the consciousness to its cosmic and global tasks. The Eastern Religions and Western Thought was the work of Professor Radhakrishnan, Professor Spalding at Oxford. They bear the scholarly impress on every line, that detachment that is appropriate to the task of exposition. His only concern was to present Hinduism as the best synthesis of the basic aims of humanity as a whole, and it has stood that test through long centuries.

Since then Professor Radhakrishnan has moved towards the active life of a Statesman, ambassador, Vice President and President of Indian Republic. The philosopher professor has become the philosopher Ruler or President. Does this mark any change? Yet it does. The same catholicity and tolerance persists in all that he has been doing. His has been a healing but firm touch. The ideals have given him the challenge to execute them. The ways of liberty, equality and fraternity have broadened to permit a freer movement of

the mass of mankind.

The Constitution of India embraces these ideals as instruments of execution. Socialism, not of the dialectical materialism but of the liberalistic kind, has been found to be capable of promoting the fundamental freedoms of man. Though these freedoms have been stated in the language of materialism yet at bottom the spirit of spirituality and mystic unity of mankind has dictated their declarations again and again. The march of dictators of the Left and the Right on the world stage only high-lighted the magnificent dream to be a thing to be realised. The magnificent obsession of spirit to clothe itself in the mantles of materialism or matter has begun to be realised.

Dr Radhakrishnan has been able to affirm that though God is the concern of the religions, it is now Man who is the concern of God, and spirit must explain itself in terms of materialism. The paradox seems to be the vengeance that spirit takes against the logics of contradiction. Or is it its disquieting laughter after all ?

Can secularism in politics be the expression of spirituality? This question has been answered by

Dr Radhakrishnan in the positive affirmation he makes, in his latest speeches. Is this a dichotomy, a hypocrisy or is it a legitimate spiritual mode of apprehension of the opposition between materialistic secularism and spiritual aspiration ? Or is it a kind of choice we have to make

between materialistic and spiritual secularisms ?

Some modern research professors have raised a furore over this secularisation of spirituality, by equating with non-action, non-political life, whilst dubbing all activity to be secular.

Dr.B.G. Tiwari considers secularism as the “deification of activity, self-fulfilment, success, fame, accomplishment, possessions, excitement, risk and the relentless striving to push ahead, and the ethical theory which professes to regard search for worldly goods as the true or the highest goal of man’s efforts” (p.i. *Secularism & Materialism in Modern India*). And under this omnibus definition he brings all the reformers including Svami Vivekananda- the patriot Monk, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jawaharlal Nehru and so on. He however includes under the spiritual, as contradicting the secular, exponents like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who he considers expounds Indian Ethics from the Sankara point of view. (p. 17 *ibid*).

The axiological point of view of ethics is one thing, and to mix it up with a metaphysical and epistemological point of view is another. Axiologically the world is valueless and phantasmic from the point of the ordinary man, who seeks the Ultimate meaning of his own existence or of his dear ones who have been snatched away. The renunciational opportunities are precisely

enumerated by the Indian seers as the point of death, of birth-pangs or moment of child-delivery, which psychoanalysts call the trauma; after the cessation of hunger and sex-hunger after satisfaction. But the metaphysical reality of the world, once denied, cannot be practised consistently except by denying all karma whether vaidika or tantrika. If there are two orders of being, one an illusion and the other the Reality, the renunciation of the former is the logical step to be taken and Sankara did take it. The practice of illusion of the world - the sadhana of considering all to be illusory, like the counterpart all is duhkha or misery, only inculcates the liberation of the individual from his world. It may enjoin him to join others equally convinced about the unreality or illusory nature of the world. Such an ethics would certainly not seek to maintain this world illusion but to destroy it or negate it this would be nisprapanchikarana - naughting the world. One may proceed to naught the world of vyavahara. Even the practice of the four ends in order would not achieve this: in any case the criticism of the Western Critics against Advaita or Sankara Mayavada ethics cannot be answered.

It is neither consistent with the metaphysical assumptions nor is it necessary to hold on to this with a zeal meant for a better purpose. What Svami Vivekananda saw clearly was that Advaita is much more important as a concept that can relate the two

axiologically different realms - the realms of transience and the realms of permanence, ie of change and stability. Maya then need not be emphasized, nor is it necessary to say that the world is real in itself, and has to be sought for its own sake. The sole aim is whether one could confer on the changing world a semblance of order and cosmos, a unity that would give meaning to this whole process. Despite the extraordinary ingenuity of the mayavadic philosophers to prove the self-contradictoriness and so on of the world of change and appearance, and despite the impossibility of knowing anything as it is in itself through the means of knowledge available to man, yet the necessity to act as if there is order and design or meaning makes ethics possible. Deny this and then one denies all activity. There is nothing at all preventing one's giving up one's entire work, effort and goals and all, and enter into that condition beyond all change and cosmos or anything of the limiting concepts of the ordinary man.

Advaita, as the search for Oneness or unity, is a highly spiritual and ethical endeavour, and it is an instrument of liberation of man from his terrific insecurity in a world of change and chance. Science does attempt this systematisation or unification of all objective knowledge. It is not doing it under the impulse or motivation of escape from maya or illusion or deeming all these as just illusion. The experience of Selfness or

Sarvatmabhava or Bhuma or omnipervasive Reality would entail the abandonment of the maya-concept, whether of the Yoga Vasista or the pure metaphysical Sankara type.

The attempt to make Maya a pivotal concept in the sense of cosmic or metaphysical illusion is on the whole basically irremediable if one wishes to substantiate the existence of the human world, or the values that one really seeks here. That is why it is quite likely that though the intellect of Svami Vivekananda was tuned to the metaphysical Maya of Sankara, his own spiritual bias was for the heart of Ramanuja which embraced both the world here and the world beyond, the transcendent. The bhakti of Ramanuja was not for this world and its enjoyment, though some eminent followers of Sri Ramanuja almost gave expression to the view that the Divine experience in this world is equal to that of liberation, moksa, from which there is no return to this world at all. Dr Tiwari's definition of secularism is too extensive in one sense and too restrictive in another sense, and suffers from definitional failure to make sense of his secularism.*

Radhakrishnan himself steers clear of the dilemma of Maya and Sankara's brand of it. It is spirituality that furnishes the light in regard to what it is by which men get deluded, and what it is by which one does not. His treatment of the doctrinaire principles of Caturvarga,

caturvarna, and ashrama is according to the principles underlying the Vaidiki dharma. But he, no less emphatically than Svami Vivekananda, affirms the need to instil the spirituality that pure advaita or oneness can provide. Multiplicity has its own basic values even as Oneness has, but it is the measure of the spirituality of our ordinary life as to whether multiplicity has tendency to move towards oneness or oneness has the tendency to preserve and maintain the many.

* B.G. Tiwari : Secularism and Materialism in Modern India.

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