



Radhakrishnan's Perennial Philosophy of Religion

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1. Introduction

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was one of the eminent and leading Indian philosophers and also one of the inspirational figures in Indian renaissance. He was not only a philosopher, but a teacher, scholar, administrator, statesman and also an Indian cultural ambassador.

He is one of India's most influential scholars of comparative religion and philosophy, Radhakrishnan's thought of as having built a bridge between the East and the West by showing that the philosophical systems of each tradition are comprehensible within the terms of the other. He has presented a synthesis of both east and west tradition in his teachings throughout his life that is better seen in his philosophical position. The Indian spiritual approach and Scientific attitude of the west can be seen throughout his philosophical thoughts and as well as in his writings.

Radhakrishnan in his philosophy of religion synthesizes the non-dual philosophy of Śāṅkara Advaita Vedānta and the notion of absolute idealism of western tradition. Thus, he presented much evolved amalgamated philosophy that consists of the finest elements of east and west both in order to put forth a reliable and universal philosophy among the modern minds. Radhakrishnan also had a comprehensive outlook of Indian tradition as his teachings are mainly grounded in classical Vedānta philosophy and reoriented the thought of Upanishads from modern frames to make them easily understandable to modern minds. Charles A. Moore also observed that "His basic approach to philosophy is the recognition of and demand for organic unity of the universe and its many aspects of the many sides of the nature of man, of man and universe, of the finite and the infinite, the human and the Divine"¹

Hence, the philosophical outlook of Radhakrishnan is wide enough that focused on religion and philosophy, reason as well as intuition, both the practical and transcendental world, and does justice to each of these complex notion to put forward to the contemporary generation in a very advance manner. So, he offered an amalgamation of east-west tradition from their past to present in order to form a perennial philosophy that can include each and every one in its umbrella irrespective of any man-made difference.

In this Paper, I will discuss in detail the influence of Vedānta philosophy in his teachings and views related to religion and how Radhakrishnan derived the idea of a universal religion from the Advaita Vedānta metaphysical grounds and tried to form a perennial philosophy of religion that could serve as a pill for all social evils as well as addresses all the religious dissensions and bind the plurality of religion into a thread of unity in order to establish peace and harmony for the better sustenance of human society as well as for the spiritual evolution of an individual. Radhakrishnan's approach towards the idea of Religion

¹ Charles A. Moore, "Metaphysics and ethics in Radhakrishnan's philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, ed. Paul Arthur schillip (U.S.A: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1952), 282.

Radhakrishnan derived his understanding and interpretation of the idea of religion from the metaphysical grounds of Upanishads. The philosophy of Upanishads presented by Bādarāyaṇa in his work Brahma-Sūtra which is popularly known as well as accepted as the essence of the teachings of numerous Upanishads, it has been later on interpreted by many scholars of Vedānta tradition in different ways that give birth to diverse sects under Vedānta philosophy such as Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, Dvaitavāda of Madhavāchārya, Ramānujan's Viśiṣṭādvaita etc. Among these all eminent and popular interpreters of Vedānta philosophy, Radhakrishnan was very much influenced by the non-dualistic philosophy of Śāṅkara more than the others.² He like other Vedānta followers wrote commentaries on the three main texts of Vedānta called 'Prasthānatrayī' which are the Upanishads (1953), Bādarāyaṇa Brahma-Sūtra (1954) and on Bhagavad Gītā (1948). Radhakrishnan's philosophy and understanding of the idea of religion is laid on the metaphysics of Śāṅkara's Non-Dualistic interpretation of Upanishads. Hence, Radhakrishnan put forth his non-dualistic vision of religion to present a different model of religion that can fulfill its due purpose of true religion which is to work as an instrument for an individual to realize the latent spirituality and divinity in himself.

As a follower of non-dualism philosophy originates from Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, he holds a metaphysical idealism which recognizes the idea of supreme reality and the diversity of the material world and at the same time also preserves the notion of absolute reality (Brahman) which is transcendental, that is identical to the immanent self (Ātman). The world and each of its manifestation is not ultimately real from a higher level as it is temporal and changes every moment, thus characterized as finite and varied, on the other hand Brahman is infinite, eternal and free from all limitations, diversity and distinctions. Brahman is the foundation of the world and each of its manifestation from which it originates, but all these temporal and finite things do not affect its source Brahman and its integrity.

Radhakrishnan didn't echo the content of the metaphysics put forth by Śāṅkara in exactly the same way, but reinterpreted its teachings as per the need of modern times and also in a more scientific way that can be simply understood by modern minds. In particular, he reinterpreted the understanding of Maya offered by Śāṅkara firmly as illusion. He comments on Dr. Albert Schweitzer's interpretation of Śāṅkara's notion of Māyā and says, "Religious experience, by its affirmation that the basic fact in the universe is spiritual, implies that the world of sound and sense is not final. All existence finds its source and support in a supreme reality whose nature is spirit. The visible world is the symbol of a more real world. It is the reflection of a spiritual universe which gives to its life and significance."³ Apart from the conception of Māyā, he reinterprets various other concepts of Advaita philosophy in a same way as per the need of time in order to make them easily comprehensible to modern minds.

Radhakrishnan was a true follower of Advaita Vedānta. The influence of Advaita philosophy can be grasped easily from his works. He does not only reinterpret but reconstruct the philosophical doctrines of Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta from the frames of developing modern science and technology and also from the point of view of western ideology. Ram Pratap Singh in his article 'Radhakrishnan's substantial reconstruction of the Vedānta of Śāṅkara' says that "Radhakrishnan has been a major force in giving this new direction to the Vedānta."⁴ He also says, "the history of this process of reconstruction has been the history of the Neo-Vedantic movement in contemporary Indian philosophy which was inaugurated by Vivekananda and which has culminated in Radhakrishnan."⁵ Thus,

² Paul Thomas Urumpackal, Organized religion according to Radhakrishnan, (Roma: Gregorian Biblical Bookshop, 1972), 4.

³ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religion and Western Thought, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 84-85.

⁴ Ram Pratap Singh, "Radhakrishnan's Substantial Reconstruction of the Vedānta of Śāṅkara," Philosophy East and West 16, no. 1/2 (1966): 5.

⁵ Ibid.

Radhakrishnan put forth the heritage of Vedānta philosophy to the contemporary world and imparted their teachings that are grounded in Indian classical tradition in order to bind the modern Indian minds to their roots, to provide various solutions of the social ills of their time derived from the wisdom and foresight of classical Indian seers and various intellectual persons, they also drew the attention of the whole world towards the rich culture of India.

For Śāṅkara, the ultimate reality is one (Brahman) which is without the second. Brahman has three vital features which create its very essence and they are pure being (sat), pure knowledge (chit) and pure bliss (ānanda). Radhakrishnan accepts this view of Absolute reality and the influence of Śāṅkara could also be traced from his conception of the nature of world and division of reality which is very much similar to Advaita conception. As for him, the experiential world is between being and no-being because it is real from practical level but from the absolute (Pāramārthika) level it is not real.⁶ It is only a “dependent and derived”⁷ entity that springs out from Brahman (Absolute). Hence, it shows that Radhakrishnan differentiates between two kinds of reality where the first is, the reality in which all the diversity is integrated to being as one that is real in every possible situation and from every level while the other is the empirical reality where we find so much diversity and differences but it doesn't have any absolute validity but is real from empirical level only.⁸

Radhakrishnan believes that religion is simply an insight into reality; it is not any certain kind of beliefs or practices. The insight which is integrally intuitive in nature as he thinks intellect and senses are not capable enough to lead us to the realization of the reality as they both have their limitations so, they are imperfect. The only perfect way to achieve that realization is intuition which is basically an integral experience. His religious ideas are based on the principle of integration not only within the self but also the integration of the self with the universal spirit (Ātman) which finally gets integrated with the Brahman. For him, religious life is primarily a process of spiritualization of soul. Such process will lead us to the knowledge which tells us certainly that everything is non-dual in nature and form; an essential unity, it is only our ignorance of such knowledge due to which we perceive things in fragments and remain dead spiritually.⁹ The realization provided by the notion of religion according to Radhakrishnan has double dimensions that reveal the identity between the absolute reality and the self which is the essence of man. These two dimensions are immanent and transcendent in nature where self is the immanent pole and absolute reality is the transcendental one. He believes that the difference between these two modes is based on the standpoints but essentially they are identical.

2. Disagreements over Religious Beliefs

Though religion is the force that integrates man, and has innumerable positive features but at the same time it has its other side which shows the negative features of religion such as it has also worked as a catastrophic force in human society. On the basis of its negative effects, Marx called it as ‘the opium of the masses’ which kept all the individuals in degrading subjugation. It can be observed from the history of religion in society is that it basically shows the history of oppression. We have witnessed several wars and so many cruel occurrences in the name of religion, also at times it shows itself as the major barrier in the development of any society. The fanaticism arising from religious faiths leads to innumerable differences, conflicts, riots and communal violence witnessed by all of us from ages to present day. Religion basically deteriorated by the conception of dogmatism and bigotry which narrows down the thought process of an individual where one doesn't think other way than his own

⁶ Charles A. Moore, “Metaphysics and ethics in Radhakrishnan's philosophy,” in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, ed. Paul Arthur schillip (U.S.A: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1952), 302.

⁷ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *My search for truth*, (Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwal & Co. Ltd., 1946), 13-14.

⁸ Paul Thomas Urumpackal, *Organized religion according to Radhakrishnan*, (Roma: Gregorian Biblical Bookshop, 1972), 25.

⁹ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 43-44.

religious beliefs as these both conceptions deny the freedom of thought. So, the role played by religion is multidimensional and also have positive as well as negative effects that can be easily witnessed from the history of mankind.

The concern that needs our attention related to the subject of religious conflicts is not just limited to the differences between religions based on any doctrines or disagreements over their practices but related to the very existence of the very idea of religion. Radhakrishnan pointed out to the necessity of a universal philosophy that could give us a direction or a hope through which the thought of the whole globe can be pulled together and the present scenario of purposelessness of the society should be replaced by a universal rational purpose. For this objective we seek a universally valid spiritual religion which has the complete understanding of the universal truth that lies in the essence of each religion of the world and bind them all in a single thread of unity.

To him, there are several flaws from which modern civilization is suffering. The central reason behind all kind disorder and conflicts we perceive in our world is because of different institutions of the society is not functioning on the models which has been given to us by ethics and religion. As he states, the contemporary society “suffers from the defect of being soulless. Politics and economics do not take their direction from ethics and religion.”¹⁰ Ethics and religion has their significant role in the well-functioning of the society as they put forth various models to live life and to promote peace and harmony in society. The purpose of ethics and religion will be only fulfilled when one not only believes in these ideas but also applies them in practice else they both are of no use if we will not translate them in our practices of day to day life. He further mentioned that, “almost all of us are atheists in practice, though we may profess belief in God.”¹¹ Hence, the flaws in society we witnesses is due to the fact that we know each and everything what is good or bad for us and also for the society but we are somewhere lacking in applying those models in practice which are not only beneficial for an individual only but also for the sustenance of entire society. Religion is one of the effective force that builds our social relations but there is an essential condition for its well-functioning in managing those relations which says that there should be no difference between the beliefs of an individual and his behaviour, they must go on hand in hand.

He pointed out various kinds of evils that prevailed in our society and in order to overcome these evils we must make some crucial changes in our social order. For Radhakrishnan, it is our necessary obligation to attain a social uprising and should eliminate all the social vices from our society. In order to fulfill these obligations of man in his life, one recognizes that apart from these evident evils there are some other vices concerned to our spiritual state and cannot be easily eliminated through the changes in social order. Thus, he observed that the crisis in contemporary society is grounded on the deficiency of spirituality in man. He firmly points out that spirituality is one of the most crucial and significant aspect of man’s life and as long as the individuals just limit themselves in the realms of science, art, technical developments and various social programs their lives will not be complete and lacks several things in which mutual understanding between individuals in the society is one of the major component. He observed that the diverse ideas presented by various religions which isn’t restricted by any territorial and national boundaries, the endless vagrancy of thought, and the contemporary jumble of inconsistent philosophies, are nothing but the signs of spiritual homelessness.¹²

¹⁰ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *My search for truth*, (Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwal & Co.ltd., 1946), 27.

¹¹ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The religion of the spirit and the world need: fragments of a confession*, Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (New York: Tudor Publishing co., 1952), 22.

¹² Robert A. McDermott, *The basic Writings of S. Radhakrishnan*, (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2007), 190.

He says, it is the effect of secularization of man that they have lost the direction and the worthy path to follow in their lives in spite of the ethical values and rationalistic criticism we have in our culture. Further he mentioned that, “our division is profound and no organized religion is able to restore the lost unity. We are waiting for a vital religion, a live philosophy, which will reconstruct the bases of conviction and devise a scheme of life which man can follow with self-respect and joy.”¹³ Radhakrishnan believes that there is nothing important work to do than providing an actual understanding and interpretation of the diversity of religion; it is the need of the hour. As he intensely affirms, “A new orientation is required to build a unity out of the division of races and peoples out of the rivalries of nations and conflicts of religions. This requires a courageous effort and a radical change in our outlook.”¹⁴ Radhakrishnan thinks that we need a solution which can promote the feeling of brotherhood and establish harmony between the adherents of various diverse religions of the globe, for that matter we need a philosophy that could supersede all the religious dissensions which gives birth to various disastrous effects such as the idea of religious exclusivism etc. To fulfill the void of such universal and perennial approach towards the idea of religion, he articulates his vision which not only addresses each and every problem springing out from religious dissensions but also binds the religious diversity into a thread of unity by highlighting the essence of each religion which is one and same for him.

His understanding of religion is completely grounded in the classical tradition of Indian philosophy which obliges him to see an essential inner harmony and unity among the different religions of the world. For him, all kind of religious dissensions are just based on the external facets of religion but in the core of all the diverse religion of the globe lies an identical universal truth and they all are just the numerous expression of that truth. As Radhakrishnan notes, “The different creeds are the historical formulations of the formless truth. While the treasure is one and inviolable, the earthen vessel that contains it takes the shape and color of its time and environment.”¹⁵ For him, all the religious dissension shows that we are not following the teachings of religion truly as no religion taught to fight over difference of opinions or in the name of religion. He says, “We suffer from sickness of spirit. We must discover our roots in the eternal and regain faith in the transcendent truth which will order life, discipline discordant elements, and bring unity and purpose into it.”¹⁶

3. Perennial Philosophy of Religion

Religion for Radhakrishnan is an instrument that transforms human life by providing man the ultimate realization of divine reality that which one wants to seek in his life and it also binds the society into a thread of unity. For him, true religion rises within the individual but it must set in the feeling of brotherhood. True religion stands for the unity of all the different religions of the globe as it gives rise to fellowship among various faiths. Therefore, he suggests that all the flaws and different ills prevailing in the society could be banished away with the help of practicing the religion sincerely and truly in our daily deeds that will discipline our desires of greed and egoism and organize the world into a new spirit.

According to Radhakrishnan, love and harmony can be established between different religions of the world by the departure of all kind of dogmas and also a sense of authority that gives rise to the feeling of supremacy. We should emphasize on the investigational aspect that will constitute our way towards the religious progress so that religion can fulfill its various purposes in the life of an individual as well as in the society. He thinks that to fulfill its due purpose religion has to become wider, inward and universal that can shade the whole humanity under its umbrella, to become the actual operational force

¹³ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Idealistic view of life*, (India: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 73

¹⁴ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of faith*, (New Delhi: Indus Publishing company, 1994), 7.

¹⁵ Robert A. McDermott, *The basic Writings of S. Radhakrishnan*, (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2007), 190.

¹⁶ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1948), 24.

in human affairs religion has to serve as the ground for the new emerging order of the world and a ignited flame which rinses the inner self of individual as well cleanses the human society. Radhakrishnan was very much sure about the dynamic implications of religion that will fulfill all its objectives and can contribute in the advancement of individual as well as the whole society.

Radhakrishnan also points out that in spite of the various modifications and dysfunction of religion takes place over a long period of time but its value and necessity in present day society can be proved from its persistence from the ages. It has been one of the most essential generators as well as the propagator of fundamental values and moral principles that integrate the different people of society in order to unite the society. This shows the force of religion in human life which still functions in order to benefit man irrespective of its negative usage by different people and institutions for their benefits, such usage can slow down the positive and cohesive force of religion but cannot stop it in any way. For that matter, we just have to take necessary steps in order to discontinue such negative approach with regards to usage of religion so that it can fulfill its purpose.

True religion for Radhakrishnan is that which is free from all the dogmatic sentiments, bigotry, and shackles of creeds. It upholds the essence of the reality in its core which evolves continuously over time. He says “he that does well is of God. To do justly, to love beauty, and to walk humbly with the spirit of truth is the highest religion”¹⁷ It is the universal religion which incorporates the essence of all religion in its core and is not restricted to any particular race, culture and territory. He also declares that, “whenever the soul comes to itself, in any land or any racial boundaries, whenever it centers down in its inward deeps, whenever it sensitively responds to the currents of deeper life that surround it, it finds its true nature and lives joyously, thrillingly, in the life of spirit. Through the birth of one, whose consciousness is absorbed in the supreme spirit, the infinite ocean of wisdom and bliss, the family become pure, the mother is of fulfilled desire and the earth gets sanctified.”¹⁸ Hence, religion has the potential to restore the arrangement of the human society as a whole, as it manifests the inner self and its true nature which binds the fragments (individual) of human society into a thread of unity. Radhakrishnan mentioned that, “The knowledge that the supreme spirit dwells in the heart of every living creature is the abiding root of all dharma.” Further said, “Know this to be the essence of Dharma and then practice it; refrain from doing unto others what you will not have done unto yourself.”¹⁹ He teaches that we must see others as identical to ourselves because there is no difference between any creatures of this world; each soul is filled with the same divine essence which strengthens the teaching of non-dualism imparted by Upanishads. For him, religion imparts us the virtues of life which shape our thoughts, speech and actions. It directs our social life and effectively recognizes that each of its members should grow higher in his life as an individual also helps in all around development of society. The life of all the individuals as well as the state of society always remains in a motion as they both continuously evolve on their due position.

The world we live is full of diversity not in any single way but in multiple aspects. The environment and nature we are surrounded with has innumerable races, cultures, religions, set of beliefs, practices, languages, philosophies and so on. For Radhakrishnan, man is rational and as well as spiritual from his nature so it is his task to create an order among the huge multifaceted diversity for the better sustenance of the society. As he says, “nature has made many races with different languages, religions and social traditions, and has set man the task of creating order in the human world and discovering a way of life by which different groups can live peacefully together without resorting to force to settle their differences.”²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid.,47.

¹⁸ Ibid.,48.

¹⁹ Ibid., 107-108.

²⁰ Ibid., 13.

He put forth the perennial philosophy of religion which not only erodes all the religious dissensions but also binds the diversity of world religions into a thread of unity as it conveys the message that all the different religions of the globe share the same fundamental truth in their core. It is universal truth that is the only divine foundation of all religious faiths asserted by the religious philosophy of Radhakrishnan. All the various religions interpret the same knowledge of this universal truth in different ways irrespective of their particular culture and historical backgrounds. Each different scripture offered by various religions are undoubtedly diverse and also opposes one another at times but they all are just the different versions of same universal truth.

Hence, the concept of perennial philosophy of religion is universal and all-inclusive in nature which maintains that every religion of the world has prospered on the basis of the same foundation that is one and the same universal reality. Radhakrishnan believes that although the idea of perennial philosophy originates from the European tradition but such idea existed much before in India that also proposes a same idea of collective and mutual truth, lies in the heart of each religion which was Sanātana Dharma of Hindu tradition. It is eternal law that incorporates a variety of set of beliefs, asserts the existence from the personal conception of god to the impersonal absolute and primarily focuses on the identity of man, his relation with God and also on the path to achieve our higher goal of life i.e. liberation. So, to show the unity behind all religions of the world is central impulse of the perennial philosophy of religion put forth by Radhakrishnan.

Radhakrishnan set a milestone by his religious philosophy since he has presented a complete outlook of the essence of each religion. For him, it is the mandate of religion that human being must evolve his nature in order to manifest the latent divinity and spirituality in him by which one could get the light of one's true nature. He admitted that religion is eternal and ever growing through which, man can satisfy their ultimate urge to search his true nature, the divine self exists within and for that matter he doesn't accept any particular creed or code as final and perfect. As he declared, "This is the teaching not only of the Upanishad and Buddhism but also of the Greek mystics and Platonism of the Gospel and school of Gnosticism. This is the wisdom to which Plotinus refers when he says, 'This doctrine is not new; it was professed explicitly; we wish only to be interpreter of the ancient sages, and to show by evidence of Plato himself that they had the same opinion as our self'. This is the religion which Agustin mentioned in his well-known statement; that which is called the Christian religion existed among the Ancient and never did not exist from the beginning of human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity'. This truth speaks to us in varying dialects across continent and over centuries of history."²¹ From his observation of the history of religion we should understand his standpoint, he admitted firmly that the perennial wisdom of religion is the only true religion; it is 'Sanātana Dharma' which is a timeless tradition of human species and lies behind all religions in their very essence.

Radhakrishnan perceives the true nature of man which is eternal and divine, he himself is the highest reality essentially but as long as man kept himself limited to one's surrounding and thinks himself as just a product of that objective reality and different from that reality, in other words until the dualism of I and Thou wouldn't vanish in man, he is subject to remain untouched from his latent true self. Once the dualism vanishes in man then one will realize his divine nature and the identity of self with the supreme reality (Brahman). For him, religion is that tool which alerts human to realize the supreme reality from where the world and it's all manifestations originates. That absolute supreme reality we call god, when we think about it in the cosmic scheme, the supreme ideal of all religious people. Such a view can remove every kind religious dissension among the world religions because it conveys that

²¹ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The religion of the spirit and the world need: fragments of a confession*, Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (New York: Tudor Publishing co., 1952), 80.

all the various religion are neither opponent to each other in any way, nor a competing forces, but these all perform the same function just in different ways.

According to Radhakrishnan, if we look back at the history of all the different religions, it will enhance our wisdom by providing us a huge and wide array of understanding of the spiritual truth. The primary and eternal constituent of religion is the advancement of man's consciousness from lower to higher spiritual truth. He asserts that the experience of the highest spiritual consciousness could not be attained by only pronounced religious teachers and by the influential leaders of humanity, but can be realized to any ordinary human being as the divinity and spirituality that is latent deep inside each human being. He analyses each different religion practiced and followed on the globe and intensely emphasized on the unity of all religions and their universality, also stressed upon the essential unity of menfolk. He said, "We may measure true spiritual culture by the comprehension and veneration we are able to give all forms of thought and feeling which have influenced mass of mankind. We must understand the experience of people whose thought eludes our categories. We must widen our religious perspective and obtain world wisdom worthy of our time and place."²² Hence, Religion is the most vivid force and universal constituent of our lives which guides the life of each man belonging to any society. Every true religion in the thought of Radhakrishnan "is passing through self-analysis and self-criticism and is developing into a form which is sympathetic to other religions."²³

According to Radhakrishnan, it should be our primary goal to revive the fundamental perennial philosophy of religion which was popularly practiced in our classical Indian tradition rooted in the philosophy of Upanishads. The universal philosophy of religion which has been distorted badly and lost in the course of history majorly by the development of dogmatism and sectarianism. Thus, one can observe that the conception of religion reflected in the views of Radhakrishnan provides us the eternal and universal meaning of religion. He said, "If religion is to become an effective force in human affairs, if it is to serve as the basis for the new world order, it must become more inward and more universal."²⁴

Radhakrishnan also points out that Hindu religion has such perennial approach to religion as it functions on the basis of its classical traditional heritage and rich philosophical and spiritual culture where each Hindu emphasizes more on spirituality or spiritual experiences, rather than any kind of doctrine or creed, and that is the reason why Hindu religion is said to be an 'eternal religion' (Sanātana dharma) because it accepts all the different kind of religious experiences and beliefs of other religions with an inclusive attitude.²⁵ He also believes that the philosophy of Vedānta is so much crucial for Hindu people as he says, "The ultimate oneness of things is what the Hindu is required to remember every moment of his life".²⁶ Radhakrishnan believes that Hindu religion presents a synthesis of diverse religious beliefs and values of life because it contains innumerable elements in it together which we can find in different religions of the world. Hindu religion in this way presents a universal doctrine that encompasses innumerable constituent of various religions together. Sunity Kumar Chatterji also observed that, "Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan stands unrivalled today as the most convincing exponent of a dynamic Hinduism which, true to its original character as a synthesis of diverse faiths

²² Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The religion of the spirit and the world need: fragments of a confession*, Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (New York: Tudor Publishing co., 1952),73.

²³ Paitoon Patyaiying, *Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's philosophy of Religion*, (Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2008), 37.

²⁴ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The religion of the spirit and the world need: fragments of a confession*, Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (New York: Tudor Publishing co., 1952),80.

²⁵ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Idealistic view of life*, (India: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 69.

²⁶ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, (Macmillan, 1918), 16.

and philosophies of life, is now offered as a universal Doctrine capable of embracing the whole of humanity— as a Sanātan Dharma or perennial philosophy.”²⁷

For Radhakrishnan, Hindu religion recognizes self (Ātman) as the inner principle resides in each man. The central idea of the teachings of Upanishads tells us that there is no difference between absolute reality and the self (Ātman). This identification (non- dualism) of the absolute and the self is one of the key features of the philosophy of Upanishads²⁸ that can be traced from the Mahāvākyas (great sayings) of Upanishads such as, “tāt tvam āsi” (thou art that) and the “Ahaṁ brahmāsmi” (I am Brahman). For Radhakrishnan, the final objective of religion is to comprehend the realization of such identity to man, because to experience this identity is the higher goal of life for each human being. Such realization is only possible in a direct intuition where all the distinctions between the self and the Brahman completely disappears, only then one can realize and also spiritualize this non-dualism.²⁹ Hence, it shows that the seers of the Vedānta were not looking for a speculative knowledge of the truth but a divine and spiritual realization of it. Radhakrishnan has taken a much firm stand on this spiritual experience as he declares that, “The Hindu attitude to religion is interesting. While fixed intellectual belief marks off one religion from another, Hinduism sets no such limits. Intellect is subordinate to intuition, dogma to experience, and outer expression to inward realization.”³⁰ Thus, Radhakrishnan gives an all-encompassing idea about Hindu religion and how it can serve as the true religion for mankind.

The interpretation of religion and its understanding of Radhakrishnan are very much significant in present day society as it presents a moral and spiritual path for the individuals in order make their lives more purposeful and meaningful in every way possible. The need of the path put forth by Radhakrishnan through his teachings is no less paramount in present day scenario when there is so much strain in the society, crime and violence are increasing day by day at a very alarming level. Such problem cannot be solved by any other means but only through seeking the latent spirituality within us. So, as long as these problems and suffering exists the values and spirit of religion in its true sense as interpreted by Radhakrishnan, presents one of the most significant solution. Following the true religion and seeking divinity in oneself and all other human beings will definitely erode religious exclusivism that has resulted in numerous conflicts through the ages.

4. Conclusion

From the above discussion one can easily submit that Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan put forth his understanding of religion in a wider and different frame from its common understanding. For him, religion is an insight into the reality. It is neither any code nor creed. The insight which touches the core (inner essence) of every human being, it is the realization that satisfies the spiritual needs of human being by revealing their true nature and the latent divinity and spirituality within each human self (Ātman). The aim of religion is not only the attainment of salvation but to transcend the spirit within itself from all the divisions and differences of world to spiritual pride. He didn't try to restrict the idea of religion by defining it in some sort as he recognized the complexity of the idea of religion as it incorporates various diverse constituents of human life. His fundamental focus was just to highlight the universal facet of religions without which religion ceases to be one.

²⁷ Sunity Kumar Chatterjee, “Dynamic Hinduism and Radhakrishnan,” in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, ed. by Paul Arthur schilpp (New York: Tudor publishing company, 1952), 483.

²⁸ Paul Thomas Urumpackal, *Organized religion according to Radhakrishnan*, (Roma: Gregorian Biblical Bookshop, 1972), 2.

²⁹ Ibid., 3.

³⁰ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Hindu view of life*. (India: HarperCollins publishers, 2009),4.

I have discussed the influence of Upanishadic philosophy especially the Advaitic version of Vedānta philosophy on Radhakrishnan, on the basis of which he put forth the universal and perennial philosophy of religion which not only erodes all the religious dissensions but also binds the diversity of world religions into a thread of unity as it conveys the message that all the different religions of the globe shares the same fundamental truth in their core. It is universal truth that is the only divine foundation of all religious faiths asserted by the religious philosophy of Radhakrishnan. All the various religions interpret the same knowledge of this universal truth in different ways irrespective of their particular culture and historical backgrounds. Each different scripture offered by various religions are undoubtedly diverse and also opposes one another at times but they all are just the different versions of same universal truth.

Radhakrishnan also points out that Hindu religion has such universal and perennial approach to religion as it functions on the basis of its classical traditional heritage and rich philosophical and spiritual culture where each Hindu emphasizes more on spirituality or spiritual experiences, rather than any kind of doctrine or creed, and that is the reason why Hindu religion is said to be an 'eternal religion' (Sanātana dharma) because it accepts all the different kind of religious experiences and beliefs of other religions with an inclusive attitude.

Radhakrishnan's philosophy of religion imparts that we should revive the fundamental universal and perennial philosophy of religion which was popularly practiced in our classical Indian tradition rooted in the philosophy of Upanishads. The universal philosophy of religion which has been distorted badly and lost in the course of history majorly by the development of dogmatism and sectarianism. Thus, one can observe that the conception of religion reflected in the views of Radhakrishnan provides us the eternal and universal meaning of religion, which could serve as a pill for all social evils prevailing in present day society and also supersede all the religious dissensions which at times get more intense and turn into a catastrophic force in the present society.

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