

CHAPTER-III

RADHAKRISHNAN'S CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

3. 1. Influences that shape the religious idea of Radhakrishnan:

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was a great Indian religious philosopher. His basic philosophical position is an outcome of synthesis between the eastern and western traditions. Naturally he combined the two traditions with perfect ease, and is able to evolve a philosophy of synthesis. He synthesizes Advaita Vedānta especially of Śāṅkara and Absolute idealism of the west. He brings out monastic character of the Vednātic reality and combines it with some of the important aspects of absolute idealism. His philosophy can broadly be described as a philosophy of monistic idealism. Besides, Radhakrishnan also combines past with present in order to have a comprehensive outlook towards World. He has given a touch of reorientation of traditional Indian thought; particularly of Vednāta philosophy. Thus the spirit of Radhakrishnan's philosophy consists fundamentally in the attitude of synthesis or the concept of organic unity. As Charles A. Moore observed "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 he provides an

interpretation of the philosophy which does justice to intuition and reason, philosophy and religion and this world and the other world. So it is clear that he provides inevitably a synthesis of the old and the new and of the east and the west in order to construct a philosophy of perennial type based on absolute idealism of Indian origin.

Among the contemporary interpreters and exemplars of India's eternal, ancient cultural ideas and philosophic wisdom, harmonized with the best in modern thought, S. Radhakrishnan occupies vital position. It is commonly a matter of fact that past tradition plays an important role in our conduct and manners. Radhakrishnan has indebtedness to the past. He is intensely aware of this fact as he says "Human mind does not draw up sudden stray thought without precedents or ancestor....There is no such things as utterly spontaneous generation. Philosophic experiment of the past has entered into the living mind of the present Life goes not only by repudiating the past but by accepting it and weaving in to the future in which the past undergoes a rebirth. The main thing is to remember and create a new" ²

Radhakrishnan himself says about the influences on him which lead him to develop philosophy, profounder and more living than either endowed with great spiritual and ethical force, which will conquer the heart of man and compel people to acknowledge its sway. He says " I studied the classics of Hinduism, the Upanishads, the *Bhāgavad- Gītā* , and the commentaries on Brahma-sūtra by the chief Acharyas, Śaṅkara , Rāmānuja, Madhva and Nimbārka and others, the dialogues of Buddha as well as the scholastic works of Buddhism and Jainism.

Among the western thinkers, the writings of Plato, Plotinus and Kant and those of Bradley and Bergson influence me a great deal. My relation with my great Indian contemporaries, Tagore and Gandhi were most friendly for nearly thirty years, and I realize the tremendous significance they had for me.”³

Besides, he has said that he has learned a great deal from the others though he is not a follower of any. To understand clearly how far the theological experiment of the past have entered into the dynamic mind of Radhakrishnan and in what way he has created them anew, it is necessary to describe a little of his theological ancestry. Radhakrishnan has two ancestral lines in theology, one in India, the other in the west ⁴ from which he develops his idea of religion. First we will outline very briefly main Indian tradition which he has inherited. Indian religious thought begins with the Vedas in which five distinct religious current running through this period: vague primitive monotheism, phenomenal polytheism, philosophical monotheism, pantheism and monism.⁵ In the “*Brāhmanās*” sacrifice was considered the most important aspect of religion. In *Āranykas* sacrifice lost its importance, and meditation and asceticism substitute it. In the Upanishad, Brāhmanās was considered the ultimate principle which spontaneously manifests itself as the universe. *Ātman* Was conceived of as the inner principle in man. The supreme discovery of the Upanisad was that the ultimate ground of reality (Brāhman) is one with the ultimate ground of being in the soul (Ātman) ⁶. This identification of *ātman* and Brahman is one of the essential teachings of Upanisad.⁷ which is expressed in the great saying “tat tvam asi”(that art thou) and the “Aham Brāhman asmi”(I am Brāhman). So the goal of life consists in discovering this identity. Only in a direct intuition, where the

distinction between Ātman and Brāhman disappears, this identity is realized and spiritualized.⁸ Hence it reveals that seers of the Upanisads were not seeking a speculative knowledge of the truth but a mystical and spiritual experience of it. Radhakrishnan has taken a firm stand on this mystical experience as he says “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” .⁹

There are six orthodox schools of Hindu thought. The most important of them is the *Vedānta* , *Bādarayana* composed Brahma-sūtra which took up the spirit of Upanisads. Scholars in Hinduism are of the opinion that “it is perhaps the truest exponent of the habit of thought of intellectual Hindu for all time”.¹⁰ Among the six orthodox schools *Vedānta* , had the greatest influence on Radhakrishnan. In course of time this system was interpreted differently by different authors. Śāṅkara (788-820 AD) gave a non dualistic interpretation to it. *Rāmānuja* (1050-1137AD) based his qualified non dualism on the *Vedānta*. *Mādhva* (1198-1780AD) interpreted the *vedānta* in a dualistic way. Among these interpreters of *Vedānta* , Śāṅkara seems to have influenced Radhakrishnan more than others.¹¹ In others words it can be said that Śāṅkara laid the metaphysical foundation of Radhakrishnan’s philosophy of religion. According to Śāṅkara reality is one (Brāhman) without the second. Brāhman is pure being (sat) pure knowledge (cit) and pure bliss (ānanda).

Radhakrishnan was also influenced by reform movements in Hinduism right from the foundation of Brahma Samaj in 1828 which tried to free Hinduism from polytheism and image worship and who first preached that basic principles of all

religions are the same and that they only need to be stressed.¹² In 1875 Dayananda Swaraswati (1824-1883) founded Arya Samaj, which preached that the Veda is the key to the solution of all problems.

Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886) claimed to have attained direct experience of the ultimate reality by his ascetical discipline. He believed that he had realized the identity of his self with the Brāhman and finally he came to the conclusion that all religion is essentially one.¹³ Swami Vivekananda,(1862-1902) a disciple of Ramakrishna, who founded the Ramakrishna mission, spread this doctrine not only India, but also in Europe and America. He seems to have greatly influenced Radhakrishnan.

Rabindra Nath Tagore laid special emphasis on the idea of one world built on a universal religion. Mahatma Gandhi added non violence and social service to the essentials of religion. Such were the religious movements in India that Radhakrishnan encountered in his search for universal religion.

Radhakrishnan's religious philosophy was greatly influenced by the western philosophical and religious movement, particularly at oxford and in England where he was a professor there. P.T Raju says "this movement of thought did certainly influence him in some measure"¹⁴. The semi Hegelians like Thomas Green (1838-1882), F.A Bradley (1846-1924), Edward Caird (1835-1908), A N Whitehead(1861-1947) influenced significantly on Radhakrishnan's idea of religion. Green believed that the supreme consciousness is the absolute, and man is a subject in whom the eternal consciousness reproduces itself as the spiritual principle¹⁵ F.H Bradley admitted that all the inconsistencies seen in the appearances vanish in the ultimate

reality. The contradictions they expose come from our incomplete perception. Truth must be experience, and what cannot be experienced is not truth. He recognized the soul or a finite centre of immediate experience, which transcends the given moment and raises itself into the world of eternal verity. This finite centre is not an object but a “basis on and from which the world of objects is made”¹⁶. These idealistic conceptions of ultimate Reality certainly influenced Radhakrishnan in developing his idea of religion.

Albert Einstein’s formulation of the theory of relativity, philosophic thought took a new trend. A kind of space time philosophy was evolved by Sir James Jeans (1877-1946), Sir Arthur Eddington (1882-1947), Samuel Alexander (1858-1938) and A N Whitehead. Among these Whitehead builds up a philosophy of relativity, this very much impressed S. Radhakrishnan. Whitehead defines religion as “what the individual does with his own solitariness”. This is a definition which Radhakrishnan very often repeats.¹⁷

Radhakrishnan was also influenced by the religious thought of the intellectuals in England. Among these intellectuals there were two kinds of movement regarding philosophy or religion, a rational one and a mystical one. There was a tendency in England to rationalize Christianity and to play down the concept of mystery. According to them reason alone was the judge of truth in religion.¹⁸ Besides, there was also a feelings of uneasiness about organization in religion and an insistence on mysticism. These tendencies are perhaps best represented by Baron Friedrich (1852-1925) and William Ralph Inge (1860-1954) and they have influenced to some extent Radhakrishnan’s view on organized religion.¹⁹

In developing his idea of religion Radhakrishnan observed the contemporary religious confusion in England. To him modern civilization “suffers from the defect of being soulless. Politics and economics do not take their direction from ethics and religion”²⁰ According to him many who openly professes religious belief seem not to take measure to translate those beliefs into practice in their lives. So he says “almost all of us are atheists in practice, though we may profess belief in God”²¹ Radhakrishnan observed that there are number of religious sects. Each one claiming absolute truth and superiority over the others. Every one claim that its views alone were the right ones. Radhakrishnan describes this situation as, “A few of us who happened to be in oxford some years ago felt that the contemporary religious situation was like a house divided against itself”.²² Thus it seems that Radhakrishnan come to the conclusion from his experience in England that so long as we set forth a doctrine dogmatically, religious rivalries and persecution were bound to drive. In his third Beatty lecture at Mc Gill University he declares “we shall have heresies and persecution of heresies so long as we have sacred doctrine and an authorized body of interpreters. If dogmas are the expression of final and infallible truth we cannot escape from doctrinal controversies and inquisitorial methods. During the early century of Christianity, seven councils were held to define the true doctrine and pronounce against heresies”²³ but so long as the religious rivalries continued, it would be impossible to ward of the growing materialism”²⁴ Therefore according to Radhakrishnan fellowship of religions, discarding the dogmas and authorities, and emphasizing only the experimental aspect constitute the only way towards the religious progress.

3. 2. Metaphysical basis of Radhakrishnan's conception of religion:

S. Radhakrishnan located his metaphysical basis of religion within the Advaita (non-dual) *Vedānta* tradition. Like other *Vedāntins*, he wrote commentaries on the *Prasthānatrayas* (main text books of Vedanta): the Upanishad (1953), *Brahma-Sūtra* (1954) and *Bhāgavad – Gītā* (1948). As an Advaitin, Radhakrishnan embraces a metaphysical idealism which recognized the reality and diversity of the world of experience (*prakṛti*), while at the same time preserving the notion of a wholly transcendent absolute *Brāhman* that is identical to the self (*Ātman*). According to Radhakrishnan while the world of experience and of everyday things is certainly not ultimate reality as it is subject to change and is characterized by finitude and multiplicity, it nonetheless has its origin and support in the Absolute (*Brāhman*) which is free from all limits, diversity and distinctions (*Nirguna*). *Brāhman* is the source of the world and its manifestation, but those modes do not affect the integrity of *Brāhman*.

Radhakrishnan did not merely reiterate the metaphysics of Śaṅkara, the most prominent and enduring figure of *vedānta*, but sought to reinterpret Advaita for present need. In particular, Radhakrishnan reinterpreted what he saw as Śaṅkara's understanding of *Māyā* strictly as illusion. Commenting on Dr. Albert Schweitzer's interpretation of Śaṅkara's *Māyā* he 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"²⁵ Again he

says “religious consciousness bears testimony to the reality of same thing behind the visible, a hunting beyond which both attract and disturbed in the light of which the world of change is said to be unreal”.²⁶

Śaṅkara, rightly credited with the systematic formulation of the doctrine of *Māyā*, tells us that the highest reality is unchangeable, and therefore that changing existence such as human history has not ultimate reality (*paramārthika – sāt tvā*). He warns us, however, against the temptation to regard what is not completely real as utterly illusory. The world has empirical being (*vyabahārika – sāt tvā*) which is quite different from illusory existence (*prātibhāsika – sāt tvā*). Human existence is neither ultimately real nor completely illusory. For Radhakrishnan the empirical world is between being and no-being²⁷ it is only a ‘dependent and derived’²⁸. Hence it reflects that Radhakrishnan distinguishes two order of reality: 1. Order of the spirit or the real in which everything is united to being as one; and 2. Order of the *Māyā* or empirical order where we find multiplicity. It has no absolute validity, only empirical²⁹.

Being an idealist Radhakrishnan believed that the natural outcome of a neutral and unprejudiced philosophy can only be monistic idealism. “The ultimate oneness of things is what the Hindu is required to remember every moment of his life”³⁰ According to Radhakrishnan every other form of philosophy must be subordinated to Absolute monism. Absolute monism is therefore the completion of dualism with which the devotional consciousness starts. In his introductory essay to his edition of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* he holds against the general trends of

interpretation that “the *Gītā* does not uphold a metaphysical dualism; for the principle of non-being is dependent on being.”³¹ This monistic belief of Radhakrishnan can be seen in all his published work. It is from this monistic idealism that Radhakrishnan begins his religious quest to arrived at “Religious idealism”³²

3. 3. Basic characteristics of Radhakrishnan’s idea of Religion are as follows:

- I. Perennial religion
- II. Spirituality-essence of religion
- III. Societal aspect
- IV. Evolutionary or Dynamism
- V. Science and religion
- VI. Humanism
- VII. Religious experience

I. Perennial religion:

The idea of perennial philosophy has great antiquity and can be found in many of the world’s religion and philosophies. This idea was current among many others early Christians including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Leo the Great as well as Augustine.³³ The term perennial philosophy was first used by Agostino Steuco(1497-1548) to title a little treatise known as “De perennis philosophia” published in 1540.³⁴ Agostino Steuco was the

strongest defender of the tradition of perennial philosophy and his treatise was the most sustained attempt at philosophical synthesis and harmony. It is a complex work which only contains “one principle of all things, of which there has always been one and the same knowledge among all people.”³⁵

Perennial philosophy is the philosophical concept, which states that each of the world’s religious tradition shares a single truth. It asserts that there is a single divine foundation of all religious knowledge referred to as universal truth. Each world religion, independent of its culture or historical context is simply different interpretation of this knowledge of universal truth. Although the different scriptures of this world religion are undeniably diverse and often oppose one another, they are the different versions of same reality. Therefore perennial philosophy maintains that each world religion has flourished from the foundation of the same universal reality.

The term perennial philosophy is popularized in more recent times by Adlous Huxley in his book “ Perennial Philosophy” in 1945 by Harper and Row. The idea of perennial philosophy sometimes called perennialism is a key idea of debate in the academic discussion of mystical experience. Writers such as W.T. Stace, Huston Smith and Robert Forman argue that there are core similarities in mystical experience across religion, culture and eras.³⁶

Apart from the European tradition of the philosophia perennis, one of the best known traditions to propose a similar idea of common truth, residing within all religion is *Sanātan* Dharma of Hinduism. It is eternal law, which refers broadly to human identity, our relationship to God and path to salvation. It also contains a sense of universal religion that eclipses sectarian divisions. The *Sanātan* Dharma

includes a wide variety of beliefs, encompassing both the existence of a personal Deity and an impersonal Absolute. The unity of all religions was a central impulse among Hindu reformers in the nineteenth century who in turn influenced many 20th century perennial philosophies.

Religious philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan is a landmark in the history of philosophy of religion since he has given a panorama of central core of religion, apart from giving a authoritarian as well as institutional interpretation of religion. According to Radhakrishnan the mandate of religion is that man must make the change in his own nature to let the divine in him manifest itself. He admitted that religion is a man search for his greater self and is not satisfied in accepting any creeds as final or any law as perfect. It is eternal and ever-growing. AS he observes, “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.”³⁷ From the above observation of Radhakrishnan regarding the history of religion he

categorically admitted that a true religion is a perennial wisdom, it is eternal behind all religions that is “*Sanātan Dharma*”; a timeless tradition of human race.

According to Radhakrishnan if we survey the historical view of different religions, we will be able to obtain a more comprehensive vision and understanding of the spiritual truth. This spiritual unchanging substance of religion is the evolution of man’s consciousness. He admitted that witnesses of this spiritual consciousness were not only by great religious teachers and leaders of mankind, but by the ordinary street man, in whose inmost being spirit is set deep. He has given more emphasis on universality of religion by scrutinizing different living religions of the world. Being an idealist he insisted upon the spiritual unity of mankind. He says, “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”.³⁸ So it very distinctly observed, religion is the most universal aspect of human life which influences the life of man living in a society. According to Radhakrishnan it is our duty to get back this central core of religion, this fundamental perennial wisdom which has been obscure and distorted in the course of history by dogmatic and sectarian development. So it is observed, in the light of Radhakrishnan’s conception of religion, like many modern thinkers both in India as well as abroad he insisted upon eternal religion which is free from any kind of sectarian outlook. J.G. Arapura has commented on significant of Radhakrishnan conception religion in this way: “The significance of Radhakrishnan thought lies in

that he had attempted, with considerable success, to restate certain aspects of Vedānta, and recapture the eternal meaning of religion for modern man. He has related the imperishable truth of religion to modern enquiry, setting them in vivid contrast to the grand and magnificent structure of modern man's ignorance which he is pleased to call knowledge, and has addressed his message to contemporary man in his predicament"³⁹ Thus it is clearly noticeable that Radhakrishnan conception of religion reflects the eternal meaning of religion. As he observed, "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."⁴⁰

II. Essence of religion : spirituality

Radhakrishnan was a world-wide acknowledged idealistic philosopher who specially brings out certain influential development regarding the understanding and interpretation of religion. According to Radhakrishnan it is not easy to find out an exact definition of religion. He basically emphasizes the universal aspect of religion. As he observes "Religion has been identified with feelings, emotion and sentiment, instinct, cult and ritual, perception, belief and faith and these view are right in what they affirm, though wrong in what they deny"⁴¹ In any attempt to understand the nature of religion one must pre-suppose a working idea of what the word "religion" stands for. As such Radhakrishnan tries to define religion thus, "Religion is that knowledge of the essential nature of reality, that insight or penetration which satisfies not only a more or less powerful intellectual impulse in us, but that which gives us to our very being the point of contact which it needs, for its vital power for the realization of its true dignity, for its savings"⁴² Thus according to Radhakrishnan

religion is an impulse towards something higher, a constant aspiration towards higher and spiritual value. Radhakrishnan admits that religion essentially has mystical element in it, due to which religion exercises both a charm and emotional faith on its believers.

Radhakrishnan holds that the essence of Religion is not in the dogmas and creeds, in the rites and ceremonies which repel many of us, but in the deepest wisdom of the ages, the philosophies perennis, *Sanātan Dharma*, which is the only guide through the bewildering chaos of the modern thought. He tries to show how the experience of the mysterious, is the fundamental character underlying all religions.

Influenced by absolutism and theism of Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja respectively and absolute idealism of Bradley and creative Evolution of Bergson, Radhakrishnan asserts that spirituality is the essence of religion. Of course spirituality is also the essence of Indian tradition. According to Radhakrishnan in essence religion is the attempt of man to express his notion about perfect being, a perfect world, and a means by which we can have the experience of God. Radhakrishnan says “Religion is not creed or a code but an insight into reality.”⁴³ This insight will reveal that man is always confronted with something greater than himself which is somehow immanent in man himself. This absolute reality which is immanent as well as transcendent universally present in every man which is the secret ground of human soul and can form the bridge between finite and infinite; insight into this reality as well as truth is the essence of religion.

According to Radhakrishnan religion “is an attempt to discover the ideal possibilities of human life, a quest for emancipation from the immediate compulsion of vain and petty modes. It is not true religion unless it ceased to be a traditional view and become personal experience.”⁴⁴ For Radhakrishnan in essence religion summons to spiritual adventure. Religion which unifies all values and organizes all experience is the reaction of the whole man to the whole reality, which Radhakrishnan called spiritual life. It is the essence of religion, as distinct from a merely intellectual or moral or aesthetic activity or a combination of them. As he observes, “the spiritual sense, the instinct for the real, is not satisfied with anything less than the absolute and the eternal. It shows an incurable dissatisfaction with the finiteness of the finite, the transience of the transient. Such integral intuition is our authority for religion.”⁴⁵ Thus it reflects that spirituality requires an initiation of its own kind, an understanding of the fact that there are realms which cannot be fathomed just by empirical way of intellect but by intuition which can experience the reality. Spiritual as distinct from mere a dogmatic view of life remains unaffected by the advance of science and criticism of history. Hence it may be observed that Spirituality is the core of religion and its inward essence, and mysticism emphasized this side of religion.⁴⁶

Religion, Radhakrishnan states “is native to the human mind , integral to human nature itself; everything may also dissolve, but belief in God, which is the ultimate confession of all the faith of the world, remains.”⁴⁷ He tries to use his interpretation to tell us that religion emphasizes mainly *Abhayā* or freedom from fear and *Ahimsā* or fellow feelings. He maintains that *Abhayā* and *Ahimsā* , awareness

and sympathy, freedom and love are the two characteristics, the theoretical and practical, of religion

Like Whitehead, Radhakrishnan holds that soul in its solitude is the birth place of religion.⁴⁸ Everything that is great new and creative in religion rises out of the unfathomable depths of the soul, in the quiet of prayer, in the solitude of the meditation. Religious forms without religious experience do not satisfy man's longing for spirituality. True religion means whole hearted commitment and dedication, in moment of devotion and prayer; we offer our whole being to an integral reality without claiming any reward for ourselves. Religious experience unites rather than divides, in it the sense of separateness is transcended⁴⁹

III. Societal aspect:

Sociological approach to religion is a later development, initiated in the early part of last century under the leadership of French sociologist Emile Durkheim who emphasized the part play by the social group in the origin and growth of religion. John H. Hick observed that "we humans are social to the roots of our being and are deeply dependent upon our group and unhappy when isolated from it. It is a chief search of our psychic vitality, and we draw strength and reinforcement from it when as worshipers we celebrate with our fellows the religion that binds us together."⁵⁰

Radhakrishnan believes that the true religion, however, agrees with the social idealist in affirming eternity of human life on this earth life as well as society. Love of man is basic to religion as worship of God. According to Radhakrishnan we must seek our evolution through life itself, by transforming it, by changing our self. Faced

by the sorrow and suffering of the world, Buddha endeavored to banish them; he did not ignore or explain them away, but as profound revolutionary tried to overcome them. This is one of the concrete evidence among many to establish the social utility of religion.⁵¹

Religion has a double dimension, inner and external. The inner is the God and outward is the service to fellow men. The love of God express itself in the love of neighbour in the service of man.⁵² For the divine that is within us is also within neighbour. The inner feelings of immediate experience of God is bound to issue in the service humanity. The very life of service is the inevitable outcome of the experience of the divine and the proofs of its validity.⁵³ Thus service to fellow man is a religious obligation, as Radhakrishnan says “ we affirm in loud tones that the service of man is the worship of God...no temples should be raised in the country which permit social discrimination. Temple should foster social discipline and solidarity.”⁵⁴

British philosopher Bartend Russell, in his book “Education and social order” says “Religion is a complex phenomenon, having both an individual and a social aspect. At the beginning of historical times, religion was already old: throughout the history, increase of civilization has been has correlated with decrease of religiosity.⁵⁵ According to Russell religion as its advocates are the source of the sense of social obligation.

Like many modern thinkers Radhakrishnan’s approach to religion has also a very strong social aspect. According to him religion has a vital role in moulding the society and conserves the order of the society. He admits that religious sanction

seems to be more effective for keeping man loyal and law abiding than any other technique such as prison and police. Radhakrishnan says “Religion is the device to give an emotional stimulus to the socially beneficent activities.”⁵⁶ According to him forms of social group possess for the individual a relatively independent or objective character. Like language he holds that religious belief arises from the interaction of many minds and is only as objective as illusory as language itself. He says “our sense of God is due to the pressure of society on us. An unapprehended God is invoked in support of current ethics.”⁵⁷ In other words God is the product of society. As Hick observed “The encompassing human group exercises the attribute of Deity in relation to its members and give rise in their mind to the idea of God , which is thus, in effect, a symbol for society.”⁵⁸ Thus Radhakrishnan maintains that religion is an integral element of a society and it represents the whole aspect of human being. As he says “A religion represents the soul of the people, its peculiar spirit, thought and temperament. It is not mere theory of supernatural which we can put on or off as we please. It is an expression of the spiritual experiences of the races, a record of social evolution, an integral element of the society in which it found.”⁵⁹ Hence it reveals that religion is integrally related to society. Growth of society is the growth of religion or vice-versa.

Radhakrishnan, though he recognized that “spirituality” is the essence of religion, by the word spiritual actually he does not mean that religion is a sort of a withdrawal from the world as well as society. He admitted that religion is not an escape from the social responsibilities and duties of the world, which is detrimental to the growth of religion. According to him religion summons us to discharge the

duties and responsibilities of society. He remarks “Religion is social cement, a way in which man express their aspiration and find solace for their frustration.”⁶⁰ Therefore it can be observed, according to Radhakrishnan, there is no sharp distinction between religion and social life. He admits that social organization rests ultimately on a series of decision taken by human beings as to the manner in which they and their followers shall live. These decisions taken by the human beings are the matter of spiritual discernment and to implement them requires technical knowledge and social sense.

In India religion is understood as “Dharma”. The term “Dharma” is one of complex significance. It stands for those ideals and purposes, influences and institutions that shape the character of man both as an individual and as a member of society. It is the law of right living. Radhakrishnan encouraged by ancient Indian idealist tradition, particularly of Vedānta philosophy, asserted that religion insists on behavior more than the belief. Religion is not irrelevant to life; it has some guidance and help for a generation which is perplexed at its failure to find satisfaction. Only living faith in God will enable man to overcome the paralyzing sense of despair and create a less imperfect society.⁶¹

According to him we must live religion in truth and deed and not merely profess it in words. Like Buddha he also recognizes religion as a means for the improvement of the individual and society. Radhakrishnan’s observation in this respect is significant as he says “Religion may start with the individual, but it must end in a fellowship. The essential interpretation of God and the world, ideals and facts is the cardinal principle of Hinduism, and it requires us to bring salvation to the

world. In the great days the burning religious spirit expresses itself in a secular culture and a well established civilization. The religious soul returned from contemplation of ultimate reality to the core of practical life. This fact is illustrated in the lives of the great teachers like Buddha and Śaṅkara who shared in the social and civilizing function of religion.”⁶² It reveals that Radhakrishnan’s interpretation of religion has a strong social appeal which is reflected throughout his writings. But though he recognizes the social dimension of religion at the same time he says “In all religion there is a trans-social reference. No religion can fulfill its social function adequately if it is only social”.⁶³

IV. Dynamism:

Change is the most fundamental reality of the world process as conceived by Greek philosopher Heraclitus who insisted that being is nothing- it is becoming. In other words according to him change is the reality. Like Heraclitus Radhakrishnan also observes these universal phenomena of world process as he says “change is the law of life. Man has to adapt himself to the condition about him”.⁶⁴ Radhakrishnan has clearly noticed this evolutionary as well as dynamistic character of religion. As Sunity Kumar Chatterji observed, “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 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.”⁶⁵

According to Radhakrishnan the aim of religion is identification with the current of life and participation in its creative advance. Religion is a dynamic

process, renewed effort of the creative impulse, seeking to uplift mankind to a new level. Every religion according to Radhakrishnan “is passing through self analysis and self criticism and is developing into a form which is sympathetic to other religions”.⁶⁶

So Radhakrishnan’s exposition of religion brings out dynamism as the very nature of religion. According to him religion has the capacity to adjust with the changes taking place around society. He says “If religion is to continue to have their original appeal, they must adapt themselves to the needs of the time. For religionthere is no such thing as standing still. Stagnation is bound to overtake a religion, unless it is alive to the changes taking places around it”.⁶⁷ He also admitted that so long as any religious system is capable of responding creatively to every fresh challenge, it is progressive and healthy. But when it fails to do so it is on the decline. He asserted that the breakdown of a society is generally due to the failure to make adequate responses to new challenges. Regarding the progressive nature of religion Radhakrishnan observes, “if religion is not dynamic and progressive, if it does not penetrate every form of human life and influence every type of human activity, it is only a veneer and not a reality”.⁶⁸ Hence it is observed, according to Radhakrishnan true religion should undergo a radical transformation for the needs of the time. The world is groping not for the narrow stunted religion of the dogmatic schools, not one of fanaticism that is afraid of the light but for a creative spiritual religion. It should not be inconsistent with the spirit of science. It should foster humanist ideal and make for world unity.⁶⁹

Since Radhakrishnan was very much concerned about social aspect of the religion, he admitted that every religion is attempting to reformulate its faith in accordance with the modern thought and criticism. According to him stagnant and stereotype religions are at variance with the psychology of modern life. If religious code or a creed is inconsistent with the modern knowledge, which proved this code or creed to be untrue, large number of people wish to refuse to accept this devitalized doctrine. Every religion is growing through the inspiration of the Divine spirit of truth in order to meet the moral and spiritual ordeal of the modern mind. Religion is a progressive concept it grows to meet the challenges of the world. As Radhakrishnan says, “this process of growth is securing for our civilization, a synthesis on the highest level of the forces of religion and culture and enabling their followers to co-operate as members of one great fellowship”.⁷⁰

He admitted that since the principle of religion is eternal, its expression requires continual development. Religion, the living faith of mankind according to Radhakrishnan carries not only the inspiration of centuries but also the encrustation of error. The profound intuition of religion requires to be presented in fresh form, more relevant to our own experiences, to our own predicament.

V. Science and Religion:

It is generally observed that at the dawn of civilization, religion, science, art, morality was found intermingled together. The conflict between science and religion is due to historical circumstances.⁷¹ According to Radhakrishnan it is untrue to believe that there is an opposition between science and religion. Emile Durkheim in his book “Elementary Forms of Religious Life” promoted the idea that religion and

science are similar. In Durkheim's thought religion and science were closely linked. Religion evolved first, and then science split from it⁷² Radhakrishnan admits that there is a common platform regarding the origination of religion and science. As he observed, "Both in India and the west, science and religion had a common origin. The Seers and scientist were the same for the Vedic Asrama and in the Pythagorean brother hood".⁷³ He holds that science which is known as 'Natural philosophy' and its history is an essential part of the spiritual history of mankind. Science and technology as well as ethics and religion were sundered in the later stages, creating the problem of faith vs. reason, ethics vs. technique. Radhakrishnan says, "the conflict between two is a symptom of the split consciousness which is so characteristic of the mental disorder of the day. The question is so often asked, whether we can preserve our ethical and spiritual value in an increasingly technological civilization".⁷⁴

Radhakrishnan often speaks about revelation in science and religion. For Christian theologian there is a world of differences between the two which is not accepted by Radhakrishnan, he insist that whatever be the differences between the two, it is only apparent, not real. He says, "If we look deeply, we find that the revelation we are said to have in religion is not distinct in kind from that we have in science. We assume that scientific knowledge is the result of logical deduction and analysis of accumulated data, whereas religious knowledge is by revelation."⁷⁵

According to Radhakrishnan science is based on the study of empirically observable facts, not on authoritative sources such as revelation or tradition. The method of science is empirical while the method of religion is dogmatic. Science

does not rely on authority, on the other hand it appeals to communicable evidence that any trained mind can evaluate. He says, “those who attempt to construct by reason argument for a theory of ultimate being from a survey of the fact of nature are adopting the scientific method,”⁷⁶ on the other hand religion is based on some kind of experience technically known as “religious experience”. He holds that the creed of religion is as real as the theories of sciences. Man’s assumption of God is like the hypothesis of electron of the physicist. He observes “we have certain experiences which we try to account, for by the assumption of God. The God of our imagination may be as real as the electron but is not necessarily the reality which we immediately apprehend”.⁷⁷ Radhakrishnan admits that spirit of science does not suggest that the ultimate beginning is matter. We may split the atom. The mind of man which splits, it is superior to the atom. The achievement of science stands as a witness to the spirit in man. According to Radhakrishnan the nature of the cosmic evolution with its order and progress suggests the reality of an underlying spirit. The spirit of science leads to the refinement of religion. Besides, science requires us to adopt an empirical attitude. But human experience is not confined to the limited data of perception and introspection. Experience, Radhakrishnan holds, embraces such kind of divine experience in which all religions are rooted.

Science is related with the fact and religion is related with value. Scientific statement is factual judgment, which can be verified empirically on the other hand religious judgment is value oriented; mystic in nature. In science mind alone works but in religion our whole personality works intensely. Y. Masih, observed “in science we try to find pearls of fact but in religion a seeker wants to become a thing

of value, a pearl of great price. In religion knowing is subordinated to the supreme task of becoming gold fit for heaven. After all cognition has an instrumental value for subserving the biological and spiritual end of life. Hence knowing and becoming are complementary, and so religion and science are complementary and are not opposed".⁷⁸

According to Radhakrishnan the greatest thinkers of the west and east have felt the need for science and religion as well as spiritual life. Civilization is intended to make us aware of the creativity in us. The freedom of the individual should not be reduced to physical and spiritual slavery. The development of science and technology carried on by man became a problem, an enigma to man himself as asserted by this great Indian philosopher. But he admits that this problem can be solved only when we turn to the inner life of the individual which is associated with religion. Radhakrishnan says, "science will triumph over ignorance and superstition, and religion over selfishness and fear, and nation will come together to build a great future for humanity, the brotherhood of which has been the vision of the prophets since the beginning of time".⁷⁹ So it is observed in the light of Radhakrishnan's religious philosophy that science and religion are complementary to each other. Religion has to be based on scientific view of life on the other hand science has to be managed by religion as well as spiritual motives of the man.

Radhakrishnan in developing his religion of spirit, he was quite acquainted with scientific developments of that time, particularly in western country. He treats both religion and science as instrumental in realization of progress of human civilization. He observes "both religion and science affirm the unity of nature. The

central assumption of the science is the intuition of religion that nature is intelligible. When we study the process of nature we are impressed by their order and harmony and are lead to a belief in the divine reality.”⁸⁰ Thus it exhibits that according to Radhakrishnan scientific assumption are ultimately validated by intuition of religion. Radhakrishnan believes that under the influence of the universal experience of religion and modern science and technology, mankind is being molded into a single community.

VI. Religion and Humanism:

Generally humanism is understood as a secular philosophy which embraces human reason, ethics, and justice while specifically rejecting religious dogma, supernaturalism. Humanism’s central concern is man and his development. The word humanism suggests that it is concerned with what is to be human, and the world is human being centered. Humanism is a fact based philosophy that emphasized the importance of reason and the indispensability of both evidence and compassion for others for the formation of value. The humanist believes that the purpose of life is found in the meeting of human needs whether it is mental or physical. He holds that the chief end of human life is to work for the happiness of the human upon this earth and within the confines of the Nature, which is our home.⁸¹

Though humanism is a philosophical movement that represents a turn towards the satisfaction of human needs, both material and spiritual, and the fulfillment of human potential, it does not reflect that humanists are necessarily atheists. Humanism is a religion that has universal appeal. Humanism is a quality of

religion. On the other hand religion should be encouraged by humanistic impulse of man. The god of humanism is man himself.

Radhakrishnan in developing his idea of religion was quite inspired by the traditional as well as contemporary Indian thought on the one hand and on the other by the western rational thinking. He was of the opinion that humanism had a long history, in the east Confucius held that the highest good was the proper maintenance of a well balanced system of human relationship⁸². The Greek view of life was essentially humanistic in insistence on measure, order, and proportion. Radhakrishnan says “In the Renaissance we had a widespread revival of humanism. Kant defends a rational and ethical life as against mystical religion”.⁸³ According to Radhakrishnan the positivist identifies religion with the service of humanity. The ethical movement is inclined to equate God with the moral ideal and Emile Durkheim relates religion as a social phenomenon. He was of the opinion that many of our skeptical thinkers today adopt humanism as the creed of common sense, where it is felt to be the only hope of salvation for a world dominated by the tyranny of scientific ideas and threatened by a mechanization of spirit.⁸⁴ Radhakrishnan observes that “self sufficiency of natural man, the belief that only values that matter are human values is the central faith of the humanist. Plato and Aristotle, from whom this faith derived its inspiration, are clearly aware that the deeper needs of the soul required to be satisfied. We are not really human if we do not feel that we are related to something that is transcendent and the inconceivable.”⁸⁵ In other words according to Radhakrishnan a mere improvement of the world is not the aim of life, but an ideal transfiguration of it. He says, “we cannot live up to the full height of our

potential being without drawing upon the deeper resources of the spirit. The roots of man's being are in the unseen and eternal, and his destiny is not limited to the duration of his life on earth."⁸⁶ Hence according to Radhakrishnan humanism is confessedly rationalistic, and ignores elements in life which cannot be dealt within an intellectual term. But the higher will in man becomes identified with the spirit in man. Without the recognition of such a spiritual centre, which helps us to coordinate the variety of unlike elements which help human nature consistent our life have no integrity. So he says, "we cannot apply a mere mechanical rule, we must develop a living adjustment, a sure taste in any concrete case".⁸⁷

Thus, Radhakrishnan was not in a position to accept humanism as substitute for religion. In Radhakrishnan's view humanism lacks that indefinable touch, that *élan* of religion which alone can produce that majestic faith, whose creativity is inexhaustible, whose hope is deathless and whose adventures are magnificent.⁸⁸ According to Radhakrishnan when the humanist admits the ultimateness of value, he is empirically accepting the spiritual view of universe. For him the ethical is a power above the ordinary self in which all men may share, in spite of the diversity of personal temperaments. So humanism according Radhakrishnan thus leads to a view of itself as rooted in a reality deeper and comprehensive, in which it finds completion. Humanism is concerned with value, religion relates value to reality, human life to the ultimate background against which it is set.⁸⁹

According to Radhakrishnan naturalism is right in its insistence on man as body and humanism is right when it exalts man as mind; but man is not merely body or mind, it is spirit. So according to Radhakrishnan humanism cannot work for an

adoring life which identifies with mind of God and manifests it in the selfless service. But he was also of the opinion that there is no conflict between religion and a reasonable humanism. He says, “the truly religious act in this world; the inner feelings of the relation between God and man is bound to issue in the service of humanity.”⁹⁰ Hence it is observed that humanism has to encourage by belief in a spiritual reality, the goal of human civilization.

Radhakrishnan believes that four ends of life (*Kāma*, *artha*, *Dharma*, *moksa*) point to the different sides of human nature, the instinctive, and the emotional, the economic, the intellectual and the ethical, and spiritual. There is implanted in man's fundamental being a spiritual capacity. He becomes completely human only when his sensibility to spirit is awakened.⁹¹ According to Radhakrishnan so long as man's life is limited to science and art, technical invention, and social programs he is incomplete and not truly human. The everlasting vagrancy of thought, the contemporary muddle of conflicting philosophies, the revival ideologies which cut through rational frontier and geographical divisions are a sign of spiritual homelessness.⁹² He observes that the unrest is in a sense sacred, for it is the confession of the failure of a self-sufficient humanism with no outlook beyond the world. According to Radhakrishnan we cannot find peace on earth by economic planning and political arrangement. Only the pure in heart, by fostering the mystical accord of mind, can establish justice and love.

Though Radhakrishnan developed his conception of religion entirely from the spiritual point of view, yet he did not ignore the humanistic appeal of religion.

He admits that religion should have the capacity to arise in human mind the fillings of human fellowship. He admitted that religion and humanism are interconnected. Humanism is secularized religion. He has succeeded in showing that man the most central concept of his religious philosophy. In other words he humanized religion. He says, "Religion and humanism are not opposite, each needs the characteristic gift and grace of the other."⁹³ Radhakrishnan tried to give a humanistic emphasis on religion by showing that a spiritual regeneration is expedient from the human and practical point of view. For this reason he insisted on the equality of all men. He says, "we must believe in the equality of man not only in the soul but in the flesh. It is true that we cannot fall in love with a telephone directory. Love of humanity must be defined in terms of man and woman which whom we are brought into contact".⁹⁴ So according to him the greatness of man does not lies in his wealth or social position but in his kindness, love, and sincerity towards others. Thus, Radhakrishnan maintain that ultimate harmonious interrelation of all individuals with one another is the aim of religion. As Radhakrishnan observes "Sanctity and holiness may imply service, and fellowship, but cannot be equated with them. Religion today has to fight not only unbelief and secularism, but also the subtler rivals in the guise of social reforms."⁹⁵

According to Radhakrishnan religion reflects both man and god. He admits that true religious life must express itself in love and aim at the unity with mankind. He says, "Bead necklaces, rosaries, triple paint on forehead, or putting on ashes, pilgrimages, baths in a holy river, meditation, or image worship does not purify man as service of fellow creatures does".⁹⁶ So it is observed that religion, according to

Radhakrishnan, does not only suggest observance of rituals and ceremonies, it arouses in human mind a feeling of humanness; that universal unity of mankind is the aim of every religion. In others words religion has a humanistic base.

VII. Religious experience:

Generally religious experience is understood as a spiritual experience, a subjective experience, in which an individual reports contacts with transcendental reality, an encounter or union with the divine. Many religions and mystical traditions see religious experience as real encounter with God.

In the history of philosophy of religion, “religious experience” has been discussed by many religious philosophers as well as different religious traditions. Religious traditions of the world admit that we can apprehend the eternal being with directness and immediacy. According to Radhakrishnan religious experience is as old as our smiling and weeping, loving and forgiving; the sense of God is induced within us in several ways, through communion with nature, through worship of goodness even through natural events like sunset and death. It ranges all the way from the gentle heightening of life to the intense degree of ecstasy.⁹⁷ Radhakrishnan observed, “when the Upanishad speaks of *jnāna* or gnosis, when the Buddha speaks of the truth that will make us free they refer to the mode of direct spiritual apprehension of the supreme, in which gap between truth and being is closed. Their religion the testimony of the holy spirit, on personal experience on mysticism as defined by St. Thomas Aquinas, cognition dei experimentalis”.⁹⁸

According to Radhakrishnan religion is essentially an experience of living contact with ultimate reality. It is an apprehension of something that stands over against the individual. Reality of God cannot be proved in the manner as we proved the existence of a table or chair. He holds that God is not like the other object of the world, it is a spirit. He says, "Spirit is life, not things, energy, not immobility, something real in itself and by itself, and cannot be compared to any substance subjective or objective. The Divine is manifested in spiritual life or experience. It is given to us in life and not established by ratiocination".⁹⁹

The nature of ultimate reality is quite different from the experience of it. An idea remains a stranger in the mind, however friendly our perception of it may be, until it receives the stamp of our endorsement by personal experience. Radhakrishnan admits that logical argument by them may not be able to demonstrate the existence of god in a way that would satisfy the seeking mind. They only reflect the idea, determine its content and state its function in man's inner economy. But religious experience is not only a concept or an idea, it is more than that. He believes that when rational thought is applied to the empirical data of the world and of the human self, conclusion of a supreme who is pure Being and free activity is reached, but it can be argued that it is only a necessity of thought, a hypothesis, however valid it may be. He says, "There is an ancient and widespread tradition that we can apprehend the supreme reality with directness and immediacy. Many people separated by distance of time and space have borne personal testimony to the experience of the Supreme Being, which humbles, chastens and transports us."¹⁰⁰

Radhakrishnan holds that existence of God means the real or the possible experience of these beings.

According to Radhakrishnan religious experience is unique and autonomous; it cannot be identified with other manifestation of spiritual activity such as scientific genius, artistic creation or moral heroism. It satisfies every side of our being .As Radhakrishnan observes, “in it the mind becomes irradiated with the divine light and obstinate questions of reason find an answer. The will loses its irresoluteness as it becomes one with the Divine will. Spiritual genius’s possesses the highest that man can possess, constant contact with the creative principle of which life is the manifestation, coincidence with the divine will, serene calm, inward peace which no persecution can dismay”.¹⁰¹

The effort of religion according to Radhakrishnan is to enable man to realize the divine in him, not merely as a formula or as a proposition, but as the central fact of his being, by growing into oneness with it. In other words religion is rooted on some kind of special experience known as religious experience. Radhakrishnan says, “all seers whatever be their sects or religions to which they belong, ask us to rise to the conception of a god, above god, who is beyond image and concept, who can be experienced but not known, who is the vitality of the human spirit and the ultimacy of all that exist, this is the highest kind of religion – the practice of the presence of God.”¹⁰² For Radhakrishnan religious experience is not merely a form of knowledge as other ordinary experiences; it cannot be expressed just in a body of certain codes and rules of behavior. It is above all this. It is a kind of undivided consciousness in which there is no differentiation between subject and object. As he says, “in this

fullness of felt life and freedom, the distinction of the knower and the known disappears".¹⁰³

Radhakrishnan does not accept the view of Hegel and Kant about the nature of religious experiences. According to him religious feelings is distinct from any other kind of feeling. As he observed, "Nor it is to be identified with a sense of creaturely dependence, for then Hegel might retort that Schleiermacher's dog may be more pious than his master. If we assimilate religious experience to moral consciousness, as Kant is inclined to do, we over look the distinctive character of the two activities".¹⁰⁴ He admits that religious experience is not mere "consciousness of value" (as Kant has said) nor it is a "form of knowledge" (as Kant has said), Enriched with Indian tradition he maintains that in religious experience there is a mystical element, an apprehension of the real and an enjoyment for its own sake.

On the basis of observation of religious philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan, it may be said that religion embraces every aspect of human life and the world. He treats the concept of religion not from any particular point of view, in other words his conception of religion is wholly free from any kind of institutional as well as authoritarian interpretation of religion. In fact he insists upon a kind of religion which can encompass as well as unite people of the world right from the emergence of the civilization which he calls "perennial wisdom".

Though "spirituality" is the essence of religion, Radhakrishnan holds that the word "spiritual" refers not only to "beyond this world" but also "within this world". Hence according to him religion has a very pivotal role in maintaining the order of the society. Religion has an instrumental value regarding the problem rooted in the

complexities of modern life. He admits that any attempt to slip away from the social responsibilities and duties of the world is detrimental to the growth of religion. Thus according to Radhakrishnan religion is not a dogma or creed, it is man's insight into the reality, which is ever-growing as well evolutionary. Religion has the capacity to meet the challenges that come in course of time in the society. He emphasizes very clearly that growth of society is intimately related to the growth of religion. Religion gives security to value and meaning to life.

Radhakrishnan interpretation of relationship between science and religion is very significant as he observes that science and religion are not opposed each other, though their fields of discussion is apparently differ. According to him science deals with human intellect on the other hand, religion deals with intuition. He holds that science is ultimately validated by religion. Scientific achievement has to be guided by true sense of the word "religion" in order to secure this civilization. It is observed that, according to Radhakrishnan religion reflects both man and God. He says that, a true religion must express itself in love and aim of religion is the unity of mankind. His philosophy of religion reflects very clearly humanistic aspect of religion. In other words man and his development are the central as well as the core issue of discussion in his concept of religion. He actually humanizes religion.

It is observed in the light of Radhakrishnan's religious philosophy that religion is a living contact between god and man as well as among men. Man actually experiences the contact of God, which he calls religious experience. He admits that this experience of God is reflected through the life of man, which

influence the order of the society since society is the manifestation of relationship among men.

Religion is that power which can inspire our life and offers a way of life in which the individual organizes his inward being and responds to what is envisaged by him as the ultimate reality. Radhakrishnan conceives man as a Sparta of the divine spirit. So long as man's attention is limited to his surroundings and takes himself as product of objective nature, he is subject to the forces around him. When he is aware of his true being he becomes superior to those forces and seeks to realize the nature of the Absolute. According to Radhakrishnan, this Absolute is " Pure alone and manifest, nothing and all things, that which transcends any definite form of expression , and yet is the basis of all expression, the one in whom all is found and yet all is lost."¹⁰⁴ It is aptly observed, "The essence of life is creativity, it is a living creation of something new, not a dead connection of cause and effect. The inner compulsion which lies behind that which visible to our eyes is an urge to create, germinate, to make alive, to bring forth something new out of the hidden treasure of being. We shall never be able to analyze the source of the creative spirit. If the real is a genuine becoming, then the highest knowledge can only be an insight."¹⁰⁵

3.4 Radhakrishnan's idea of God:

S. Radhakrishnan based his idea of God on vedantic tradition of Indian philosophy. In a sense his conception of God is unique, on account of his studies of the Indian and Western ways of thinking. According to him, the supreme reality is apprehended in a two-fold way, as personal and impersonal. The personal aspect is

known as God whereas impersonal aspect is known as Absolute. In the early prose Upanisads, *ātman* is the principle of the individual consciousness and Brahman the super personal ground of the cosmos.¹⁰⁶ God is not merely the transcendent numinous other, but it also the universal spirit which is the basis of human personality and its ever-renewing vitalizing power. God is both the wholly other, transcendent and utterly beyond the world and man, yet he enters into man and lives in him and becomes the inmost content of his very existence. Radhakrishnan explains that the different between the supreme as spirit and the supreme as person is one of the standpoint and not of essences. When we consider the abstract and impersonal aspect of the Supreme, we call it the Absolute; when we consider the supreme as self-aware and self-blissful being we get God. The real is beyond all conceptions of personality and impersonality. We call it the ‘Absolute’ to show the sense of inadequacy of all our terms and definitions. We call it ‘God’ to show that it is the basis of all that exists, and the goal of all personalities is a symbol and if we ignore its symbolic character, it is likely to shut us from the truth.¹⁰⁷ The distinction between Brahman in itself and Brahman in the universe, the transcendent beyond manifestation and transcendent in manifestation, the indeterminate and determinate, *nirguna guni*, is not exclusive. The two are like two sides of one reality. So according to Radhakrishnan, Absolute and God are two different standpoint of the same reality.

The Absolute, according to Radhakrishnan is the total spiritual reality, manifested and unmanifested, actual and potential realized and unrealized. It is the reality underlying the entire range of phenomenon. Radhakrishnan says, “The

Absolute is the foundation and *prius* of all actuality and possibility.”¹⁰⁸ According to Radhakrishnan, the distinction between phenomena and Noumena does not involve any dualism. He is a strict monist. For him, reality is one and whatever exists, exists in that one. The world is an attempt to realize one of the infinite possibilities contained in the Absolute. Radhakrishnan clearly says “one of the infinite possibilities is being translated into the world of space and time¹⁰⁹” Though this world is an actual manifestation of the Absolute, it is not necessary for the Absolute to have this very world. God is that aspect of the Absolute which is responsible for the phenomena of change and becoming. It an agent, for the actualization of a particular possibility out of the infinite number of possibilities in the Absolute. Hence, God is the principle of activity or change. Radhakrishnan says “There are two sides of the supreme. Essential transcendent Being which we call Brāhman, free activity which we call ‘*Īsvara*,’ the timeless, spaceless reality and the conscious active delight creatively pouring out its powers and qualities, the timeless calm and peace and the timeful joy of activity freely, infinitely expressing itself without any laps into unrest or bondage. When we refer to the free choice of this specific possibility, we deal with the *Isvara* side of the Absolute”.¹¹⁰ God, thus, is the Absolute considered as the ground of the world. He is the Absolute from human end. He further says “We call the supreme the Absolute, when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view¹¹¹”. While the Absolute is the transcendent divine, God is the cosmic divine. Thus, Radhakrishnan clarifies the distinction further by saying that God is the truth of our intellect and the

Absolute for our intuition and does not make God merely a principle of unreal creation as Sankara does.

Radhakrishnan regards God as a person. Personality involves self-consciousness and self regulation. As he says “the personality of God is possible only with reference to a world, with its imperfections and capacity for progress. In other words the being of a personal God is dependent on the existence on the existence of a created order.¹¹²” Personality is being ascribed to God since there can be communion with God only if he is regarded as a person. That is why, Radhakrishnan says “God is conceived as a personal being, towards whom the individual stands in a relation of cooperation and dependence.”¹¹³ Though God is a person, he is not personal in the ordinary sense of the term. Radhakrishnan emphasizes this point when he says “God is regarded as a supreme person. He is certainly higher than anything he has created. He is personal but not in the sense in which we define personality. As he says, “ We are person (purusa) and God is perfect personality (Uttama purusa)” According to him Saguna Īsvara alone can respond to the call of prayer since there are certain value religion which are met by the character of God as wisdom, love and goodness.

Thus, it is observed that Radhakrishnan in his description of God leans on Theism, and not on Deism. According to him, God is not an indifferent creator. He is the principle behind creation and therefore, lives and grows with creation. He is the store house of all the possibilities that are to be actualized in this creation. This process goes on, and thus God also continues to be in creation throughout its history.

Radhakrishnan holds that the reality of God as experienced by the mystic is quite compatible with scientific truth. As Radhakrishnan observes “we have certain experiences which we try to account for by the assumption of God. The God of our imagination may be as real as the electron but is not necessarily the reality which we immediately apprehend. The idea of God is an interpretation of experience.¹¹⁴” God is not an ethical principle, nor an intellectual concept, or a logical idea, but a perceived reality present in each man. Man expresses his very intuition of reality through concrete forms, he responds to the eternal reality. Radhakrishnan says, “By reference to things that are seen we give concrete form to the intuition of the reality that is unseen. Symbolism is an essential part of human life, the only possible response of a creature conditioned by time and space to the timeless and spaceless reality.”¹¹⁵ Radhakrishnan thinks that to use concrete symbols for unseen reality is to impoverish the Absolute. God is a symbol in and through which religion sees the Absolute.

Radhakrishnan was of the opinion that the world is the free determination of God. The power of self-determination, self-expression belongs to God. In *Isvara* we have the two elements of wisdom and power, *Siva* and *Sakti*. By the latter the supreme that is unmeasured and immeasurable becomes measured and defined. Immutable being becomes infinite fecundity, Pure being, which is the free basis and support of cosmic existence, is not the whole of our experience. Between the Absolute and the world soul is the creative consciousness. Thus, according to him God is the creative consciousness by which the world springs into existence. God is the ground of the world.

Radhakrishnan was against the so called “proofs” for the existence of God which cannot actually demonstrate the existence of God. Casual argument fails to prove the ultimate reality of God. Teleological argument which suggests that God is creative will or purpose, also fails to prove the ultimate reality of God. According to him these proofs for the existence of God are merely descriptions of God and do not afford any evidence for his existence. Radhakrishnan says, ‘We cannot prove the reality of God in the same way in which we prove the existence of a chair or a table. For God is not an object like other objects in nature. God is spirit which is distinct from the knowing subject or the known object. All proofs for the existence of God fail because they conceive of God as an objective reality. Spirit is life, not thing, energy not immobility, something real in itself and by itself, cannot be compared to any substance subjective objective’¹¹⁶ The existence of God can be realized or is proved in the spiritual experience of man. Spiritual experience is primary and positive. According to him, it is possible to have a glimpse of Divine nature in some intuitive experience. Radhakrishnan clearly says, “When the individual withdraws his soul from all outward events gathers himself together inwardly, strives with concentration, there breaks upon him an experience sacred, strange, wondrous, which quickens within him, lays hold on him, and becomes his very being. The possibility of this experience constitutes the most conclusive proof of the reality of God.”¹¹⁷

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