



RADHAKRISHNAN'S MORAL EDUCATION AND PEACE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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ABSTRACT

The world is quite familiar with the public image of President Radhakrishnan as an Acharya of patriarchal eminence and universal veneration. By his side all class distinctions disappear; indeed, in his presence there is no room for 'gradations' and 'degradations'. All are equal: it is a true Socialist society in a spiritual sense. Rarely do we come across another who can so readily put a visitor at ease, whether he is a dignitary or one from the proletariat. Radhakrishnan wrote not only for scholars but also for the general reader with an interest in spiritual matters. He believed that great works such as the Bhagavad Gita must be understood anew by each generation, in a way that provides insight into the problems of the time. Radhakrishnan constantly stressed that the peaceful coexistence commended by India was not a policy of passive and negative co-existence but one of active and fruitful cooperation among the people of the world. Radhakrishnan brought about a new outlook for Indians to look at themselves as a people with a confident future. Thus, his contributions in various fields, in education particular have to be seen in the broad historical perspective. He did achieve a confident intellectual outlook for Indians to take their world forward. As an educator his pervasive influence still persists with us. An education charter as such can be constituted only on the theme of creating men and women, from the schools and the colleges and our universities by training them to become responsible citizens of their respective living spaces. Today the scenario is that we have a six billion of common humanity, bound inextricably into a common destiny. The very economic integration, the telecommunications technological growths, Information Technology, the Internet growth is the latest technological integrating force and of course the negative forces, nuclear threat, degradation of the environment. He gave four lectures, speaking without the assistance of any notes, presenting Hinduism not as a set of fixed dogmas and rituals but as a tolerant faith with a wide vision and moral values that was relevant for contemporary life. These lectures were published as *The Hindu View of Life*, a small volume that has had lasting importance as an interpretation of Hinduism to Western readers an alert mind, so much so that nothing of any importance escapes his attention.

KEY WORDS: Moral values, Education for peace, spirituality, international co-operation.

INTRODUCTION:

In a world which is primarily torn between a few 'haves' and majority of 'have nots' in a highly disproportionate manner, tensions, diversities, inner-vision, violence, terrorism, consumerism and the like are creating a dreadful scenario. Twentieth century has given very clear signals to the human race that it must initiate all round efforts to achieve global peace as the only other alternative is in the annihilation of human race from the face of the earth. Today, Radhakrishnan is a Titan—perhaps even on a global scale—but his rise to the present patriarchal position is replete with revelations that both illustrate and establish the uniqueness about him. He is, a versatile genius - a great scholar, philosopher, seer, writer, orator, political leader, administrator and above all, a great man. The method adopted by Radhakrishnan in all his writings is the comparative method. An attempt is made, while exposing and representing the systems of the past, to grab them in the terminology of Western philosophy. Radhakrishnan justifies this method, as, in his view, the differences in emphasis between East and West are only complementary and not contradictory.

In a country contemporaneously swayed by the spiritual splendour of Sri Aurobindo, the intellectual effulgence of Rabindranath Tagore, the moral grandeur of Mahatma Gandhi and the political dynamism of Jawaharlal Nehru, we find Radhakrishnan unobtrusively but decisively emerging as a cultural ambassador, in his own right, and in a stride as authentic as it is synthetic. At the end of the First World War, he distinguished himself as the author of the philosophy of Tagore, by the time the Second War ended, he shattered the academic calm of the universities in India as well as abroad, by his exposition of Gandhism as the only answer to human hatred and violence, without prejudice to his purely individual contribution to contemporary thought in philosophy and religion. He states:

"The most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavor to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it the powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals. In the present context, education policies and strategies have to reckon with emerging challenges and opportunities that come from increasing globalization."

Radhakrishnan clearly distinguishes the concept of violence from nonviolence and also heroism from cowardice. In his words, "Nonviolence is not doing nothing. We can resist evil by refusing to cooperate with it." As explained by Radhakrishnan, defensive violence is better than cowardice. And whatever the causes, religious, psychological, economic or organizational, only pressure on governments can prevent them from fighting one another. We must build up institutions through which we can develop the habits of goodness and peace. Those who go to war are not criminals, but men who nourish real grievances. They reply to our injustice by violent injustices of their own. Instead of getting angry, we must try to discover and remove the motives of their crimes.

Radhakrishnan's views on Education:

For Humanism Radhakrishnan states "No nation in this world can hold its place of primacy in perpetuity. What counts is the moral contribution we make to human welfare. We must therefore try and develop the qualities of charity in judgment and compassion for people who are suffering. If we adopt such an approach, the tension of the world will diminish rapidly" and states that Education according to Indian tradition is not merely a means of earning a living; nor it is only a nursery of thought or a school for citizenship. It is initiation into the life of spirit and training of human souls in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. "Civilizations are measured with the values they stand for, not the machines they invent and use". Radhakrishnan regarded education as an instrument to help man to understand and control himself, to relate himself rightly to nature and society, to serve his country and at the same time progress a world outlook. Education can be the only hope. Education can contribute immensely to a culture of peace, cohesion and collaboration.

Radhakrishnan deploras an education which merely stimulates the mind without satisfying it. He is also against all unintegrated and specialized types of knowledge. The end or aim of education is to impart self-knowledge to the pupil. Education should integrate the different elements in the individual to live well. It should harmonize the various conflicting elements in man. Universities must put forward a conception of life based on eternal values and responsive to historical events. They must nourish spiritual values. As Radhakrishnan states that "Education is the means by which we can tide up our minds, acquire information as well as a sense of values. Education gives to us that bent of mind, that attitude of reason, that spirit of democracy which will make us responsible citizens of our country. We must therefore train the young to the best possible all around living, individual and social. We must make them intelligent and good. They observe unwritten laws of decency and honor felt by good men but not enforced by any statute." Education is man's perennial birth in the spirit and it is the road to the inward light. Education hence presupposes the selection of, and adherence to, supreme values.

An Ideal society:

The withering away of the state means the displacement of coercion by habit, discussion and argument, the building up of a system of law, liberty and peace. As we have, for the lawless violence of the robber or murderer, a legal application of force, we must have it also for the wanton aggression on a peaceful neighbor. The ideal for which we work must be better than the actual state of affairs, and yet not remote from the conditions of human life. The world cannot be suddenly transmuted into obedience to the law of love. We say that our enemies are fighting to dominate, and we to liberate, a new age. We are fighting not merely for freeing the world from the yoke of Nazism, but for creating the positive conditions in which the different peoples can affirm their own essence, and make their specific contributions. Hitler is an effect, a symptom, not a cause. He is no accident, but the natural, inevitable outcome of the present order. To avert Hitlerism we must

resolve that all men, irrespective of race, creed or colour, shall have the basic opportunity to work and earn a living wage; that education, wealth, decent shelter and civil liberties shall be available to all. Domination is the product of insecurity in the face of difference. If there are no strong people to oppress the weak, there will be no room for coercion. Those who fight against the Axis powers are on the side of Revolution. If we will the end of freedom and democracy, we must will the means to it. There is no other way to a peace that is enduring.

Religious and Moral Education:

Education for peace and for a culture of peace is being globally accepted and adopted by the nations, and more so by the education systems worldwide. The implications and imperatives need to be understood in right perspectives. In India, the social cohesion, adherence to moral and ethical values and commitment to the society have been the hallmarks of socio-cultural ethos. The need to sustain this ethos in the emerging context has been highlighted in the reports of various committees and commissions on education. The University Education Commission (1948-49), took a comprehensive view of education in India, and made significant recommendations on religious and moral education in the educational content in the higher education sector, which was its mandate. It made a very significant recommendation that "Unless morality is taken in a larger sense it is not enough. If we exclude the spiritual training in our institutions, we would have to be untrue to our whole historical development." It recommends a short period of silent meditation, every morning before the class starts for it frees the mind from daily life distraction. Values can be built into the human mind through suggestion and persuasion and not through instruction and imposition. It has been the belief of Dr. Radhakrishnan that nothing opens out a man's mind or broaden his horizon as study of great classics. The classics endow us with new eyes to look at the world. In addition a reverent study of the essentials of all religions would be very much rewarding. It would be a step towards harmony between religion. It would show the Divine unity in the human mind in different places and times. To him, the world is a continuous and dynamic spiritual experience therefore, led to believe that the moral force is at the centre of all human affairs. That is to say, its the universal moral principle which constitutes Man's vision of freedom. Without moral force no progress can be achieved, because "the change necessary is not in the surface of things, but in the foundation of human nature."

Radhakrishnan is universal in his religious outlook. But he also considers religious tolerance as a major factor to world progress. "The barriers of dogmatic religions are sterilizing men's efforts to coordinate their forces to shape the future", asserts Radhakrishnan in Fellowship of the Spirit, "If religions are to heal humanity's divisions, if they are to bring peoples nearer one another, they must take themselves seriously, forget their partisan strife, affirm that religion is a matter of spirit and not form and its loyalty is to the whole world and not simply to the members of any one community. Such a view of religion will help us to develop the quality of tolerance."

According to Radhakrishnan, "the future of civilization depends upon the return of spiritual awareness to the hearts and minds of men." The civilization, which he has in mind, is to be a "fellowship of Man" sustained by a philosophia perennis. For Radhakrishnan, the primary aim of politics lies in its service to the moral improvement of each individual as a social being. That is to say, quite simply, "If a durable peace and stable world are to be built out of the wreckage of this war, we must have a positive conception of the values for which we stand. The fate of the humane race depends on its moral strength, and moral power consists here as elsewhere in renunciation and self-limitation."

Man is bound to progress morally, spiritually and politically. In other words, as a philosopher Radhakrishnan emphasizes on the unity of Man, both as an individual and as a human community. While believing in the reality and authenticity of spiritual experience in "the lines of Uddalka, Buddha, Samkara, Socrates, Plato, Muhammad, St. Paul, Plotinus, Porphyry, Augustine, Dante, Eckhart, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. John, Spinoza, Blake, Ruysbreck and other seers and sages of humanity",

Radhakrishnan is a thinker and a practitioner who engaged in an open cross-cultural understanding. Time and again, he insisted on the idea of interdependence of nations. "This is an age of interdependence and our way is clear," he wrote in Towards a New World, "We must surrender a part of our sovereignty, work together for the elimination of every kind of injustice wherever we find it... We must have this sense of world community that we must give our young people, our students, in the plastic years of their lives. You must make them feel that they all belong to one human family. There is no such thing as this nation or that nation superseding the claims of the human community." For Radhakrishnan, there can be no solidarity without spirit and truth. This spirit is the principle of life itself. It is capable of lifting the world off its hinges and transforms the particular Man into universal Man.

As his Education Commission of 1949 indicates Moral education must respond to individuals, groups, religions, cultures and modern challenges. Its importance lies in knowledge of value issues, a sensitivity towards others and ability to reason about social and moral issues that enable learners to consider and act for personal development and about social and moral concerns. To fulfill any of the above functions of moral education, a well planned curriculum is a must. If it is

not implemented effectively it remains a theory not a useful means to achieve a fruitful end. Central Ministry of Education and Educators hope to impart moral values to the students. Since moral education has become a matter of increasing concern due to rapid social and cultural change, which includes the decline of the traditional extended family, religious tolerance, community living, respect for traditional values and social consensus.

Individuality, selfish interests, negligence of cultural values, extreme modernity and violence rule the day. However, in an age of rapid and far reaching social change it is useless to impose readymade traditional rules of conduct. Instead moral education should come as the integral part of their studies in the schools as recommended by government of India.

The Commission quoted extracts of the 1945 "We believe that education cannot stop short of recognising the ideals of truth and beauty and goodness as final and binding for all times and in all places as ultimate values. Our belief is that education from its own nature must be ultimately conceived with values which are independent of time or particular environment."

Radhakrishnan, for all his emphasis on the spiritual side of life and moral values, has not only neglected, but shown supreme concern for, a new social order which alone could ensure material contentment and healthy all-round development. At the Asian Relations Conference in 1946: he states....there is no such thing as a spirit working in a vacuum and it is impossible for us to have any kind of spiritual life or development where our bodily health is so weak and when society is so unhealthy. Unless you build up a great social world, where all ordinary men and women irrespective of their status and economic position are given the fundamental rights which are open to all human beings, it will be impossible for us to have any kind of spiritual development."

Radhakrishnan's views on World Peace.

"The world needs a soul: it may not be an identity of outlook but it must be a unity of spiritual aspirations." Radhakrishnan

During his terms in office he saw an increasing need for world unity and universal fellowship. The urgency of this need was pressed home to Radhakrishnan by what he saw as the unfolding crises throughout the world. The Korean war was already in full swing. Political tensions with China in the early 1960s followed by the hostilities between India and Pakistan dominated Radhakrishnan's presidency. Moreover, the Cold War divided East and West leaving each side suspicious of the other and on the defensive. For Radhakrishnan, "If a durable peace and stable world are to be built out of the wreckage of this war, we must have a positive conception of the values for which we stand. The fate of the humane race depends on its moral strength, and moral power consists here as elsewhere in renunciation and self-limitation." He gave four lectures, speaking without the assistance of any notes, presenting Hinduism not as a set of fixed dogmas and rituals but as a tolerant faith with a wide vision and moral values that was relevant for contemporary life. Radhakrishnan is convinced that Hinduism has a universal spirit and that such a spirit can become a vital element for bringing world peace.

Radhakrishnan constantly stressed that the peaceful coexistence commended by India was not a policy of passive and negative co-existence but one of active and fruitful cooperation among the people of the world. It was to him that the Prime Minister invariably turned, for carrying to the different parts of the globe the message of India, as a Secular State with Socialist goals, and as a country pledged to Peace. Radhakrishnan ties both universality and tolerance to the idea of peaceful co-existence which is inherent in his definition of Hinduism and Indian culture. As he states "We have had in our country peaceful co-existence of different religion."

Dr. Radhakrishnan in his charming autobiographical essay entitled "Fragments of a Confession" He argued that just as our political problem is to bring East and West together in a common brotherhood, so in the world of philosophy we have to bring about a cross-fertilization of ideas in the history of modern thought." He always emphasized the basic unity of all religions, the common factors between the philosophies of the East and the West, and the need to build up a world brain, a world mind or a world culture. He greatly emphasised on intellectual, artistic and spiritual values. Freedom of thought is the nerve centre, so to say, of every kind of higher life, intellectual and artistic and make the World safe for diversity, for peace, for cultural cooperation, and for international understanding.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's greatness lies in the fact that he always emphasized the need to realize the truth of the world's by a free interchange of ideas and the development of a philosophy, which combine the best of European humanism and Asiatic religion, a philosophy profounder and more living than either, endowed with greater spiritual and ethical force." On the political and economic situation in India, Ambassador Radhakrishnan said "But we wish to adopt peaceful parliamentary methods to achieve our aims, because our whole history has taught us that enduring progress should be of a peaceful character." Time and again, he insisted on the idea of interdependence of nations. He firmly believed that the end of life was to turn a particular individual into a universal Man. Radhakrishnan's faith in India and Indian philosophy made him a lover of mankind who considered that humanity's destiny was "to become more human, more spiritual, (and) more capable of sympathetic understanding."

"The concept of a community has grown from a narrow tribal basis to the Nation State. There is no stopping short of a world community...Thus we rejoice that there is an institution like the United Nations, for it is the symbol and hope of the new world, of the light dawning beyond the clouds, clouds piled up by our past patterns of behaviour, past ways of speaking, judging and acting, which do not answer to the deep desire of the peoples of the world for peace and progress. We owe it to ourselves to find out why the light does not spread and disperse the darkness, why the sky is still clouded by fear and suspicion, hate and bitterness"

As he said "If we are to shape a community of spirit among the people of the world which is essential for a truly human society and lasting peace, we must forge bonds of international understanding. This can be achieved by an acquaintance with the masterpieces of literature, art and science produced in different countries. When we are in contact with them, we are lifted from the present and immediate passions and interests and move on the mountain tops where we breathe a larger air... For out of the anguish of our times is being born a new unity of all mankind in which the free spirit of man can find peace and safety. It is in our power to end the fears which afflict humanity, and save the world from the disaster that impends. Only we should be men of a universal cast of mind, capable of interpreting peoples to one another and developing faith that is the only antidote to fear. The threat to our civilization can be met only on the deeper levels of consciousness. If we fail to overcome the discord between power and spirit, we will be destroyed by the forces which we had the knowledge to create but not the wisdom to control."

CONCLUSION:

With his unique appointment at Banaras and Oxford, like a weaver's shuttle, he has gone to and fro between the East and West, carrying a thread of understanding, weaving it into the fabric of civilization." And one heard the voice of a prophet of a new world order in his appeal to the alumni of his own University at Banaras: "Wherever men love reason, shun darkness, turn over towards light, praise virtue, despise meanness, hate vulgarity, kindle sheer beauty, wherever minds are sensitive, hearts generous, spirits free, there is your country. Let us adapt that loyalty to humanity instead of a sectional devotion to one part of the human race."

He achieved a confident intellectual outlook for Indians to take their world forward. As an educator his pervasive influence still persists with us. We naturally invoke his name when we think of Indian philosophy or religion or seek for a modern interpretation of Hinduism. Also Radhakrishnan brought the wider public wherever they were closer to Indian thought and religion. His achievements are in fact multi faceted and multi-layered. As the preeminent modern interpreter of Indian philosophy to the West and as a lifelong exponent of the "perennial philosophy," Radhakrishnan bridged the gap between two cultures and fostered the growth of universal spiritual values. As a man of south India in a government dominated by people of the north, he is a symbol of national unity a person with deep knowledge of both Indian and Western philosophical thought, he is the model of the "meeting of East and West." A true world citizen.

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