CHAPTER 1
1.1 INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, the need for a restatement of Hinduism as a Philosophical system was deeply felt by a number of educated Indians. It is chiefly due to the following reasons. Hinduism, from time immemorial, has been regarded as the religion of the Indians. As it was not a founded religion, unlike that of Buddhism or Christianity, it developed no doctrine or organization. It had no specific creeds to be professed nor any rigid traditions to adhere to and thus giving room for many interpretations. Spiritual teachers called Gurus interpreted the Sacred Scriptures and guided the destiny of Hinduism, which was inalienably linked to the destiny of India. For many generations together, 'Hindus' and 'Indians' looked almost synonymous. Thus in the words of A.L. Basham, one of the noted historians of India, a Hindu "is a man who chiefly bases his beliefs and way of life on the complex system of faith and practice which has grown up organically in the Indian sub-continent over a period of at least three millennia."¹

However, it became increasingly clear that 'the Perennial Philosophy' of Hinduism would find it extremely difficult to get adjusted to the modern times, owing chiefly to the religious zeal of Christian missionaries on one hand, and the imperial domination of the British on the other. Particularly, the Christian

¹ Quoted in R.C.Zaehner (ed.), The Concise Encyclopaedia of Living Faiths, P. 225.
missionaries, certainly not all of them, viewed Hinduism as a religious system steeped in pantheism, fatalism and pessimism. Its pantheon of Gods and Goddesses appeared all 'mumbo-jumbo', and the doctrine of Karma unreasonable as it precluded man's freedom and responsibility.

The main charges levelled against Indian Philosophy have been those of pessimism, dogmatism, indifference to ethics and unprogressiveness. All these factors dominated the writings of the missionaries, through which they tried to assert the superiority of Christianity to Hinduism.

Therefore, there arose a desperate need for the Hindu intellectuals out of an historical inevitability to safeguard their religion as well as their culture. A string of patriots took upon themselves the task of rejuvenating Hinduism in order to make it meaningful and worthy of acceptance even in the modern times. Thus, the fossilized traditions of Hinduism were needed to be dug up and revitalized. This legacy of reviving the Hindu culture and philosophy was naturally inherited by Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

S. Radhakrishnan was not a mere individual, but a climate of opinions.
Charles A. Moore does not exaggerate when he writes:

2 See S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. 1. P. 49 (For the sake of brevity, only abbreviations of the books of Dr. Radhakrishnan and others cited on page vi have been followed throughout. Similarly the publication details of all the works cited are given only in the Bibliography).

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan is a versatile genius, universally recognised and acclaimed for his remarkable ability as a teacher, lecturer, scholar, an administrator, as philosopher, statesman, and India's cultural ambassador throughout the East and West. His deep learning, his brilliant style and his absolute tolerance have brought him recognition not only as the greatest living interpreter of Indian Philosophy, religion and culture, but also as an original and creative thinker of the first order.\(^4\)

If there is any one religion, apart from Hinduism, which stimulated and helped Radhakrishnan attain all that he could, it is undoubtedly Christianity. Destiny had it that Radhakrishnan's life at various places had been inextricably linked up to Christianity, its missionaries and institutions.

1.2 RADHAKRISHNAN AND MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Of all the Christian Institutions with which Radhakrishnan closely associated himself, the Madras Christian College richly deserves a uniquely worthy place. However, it is most unfortunate that many a biographer of Radhakrishnan either conveniently omit or distort the role of Madras Christian College in shaping his philosophic and religious thought. Many scholars felt compelled to portray the Christian missionaries at Madras Christian College as those who exercised only a negative influence on Radhakrishnan, hurting deeply his religious sentiments. Did the teachers of Radhakrishnan exert only a negative, baneful influence? Was there no positive contribution of the Madras Christian College and its teachers? A detailed account of Radhakrishnan's life and work at Madras Christian College would alone bring to light the influence of the latter on the former. Some of the vital details pertaining to the student life of Radhakrishnan at Madras Christian College, which have not seen light so far, are highlighted in this section.

Radhakrishnan was born on 5th September 1888 (However, according to Dr. S. Gopal, the son and biographer of Radhakrishnan, Radhakrishnan inclined to believe it to be 20th September 1887). Gopal narrates Radhakrishnan's early education thus:

Radhakrishnan joined the primary Board High School at Tiruttani at the age of four and spent about four years there, learning elementary English, Telugu, arithmetic, geography and Indian history. He was then, in 1896, shifted to the Hermansburg Evangelical Lutheran Mission School at Tirupathi.

It was here that he had his first lessons in the Bible, which were supplemented by the Hindu religious education through rituals at home and visits to temples. However, the introduction to both the creeds, according to Gopal, was mechanical with no noticeable impact. In 1900, after four years of schooling at Tirupathi, Radhakrishnan was moved over to Vellore, where he passed his matriculation examinations in 1902.

About his early influence during matriculation class, Radhakrishnan recalls,

When I was a student in one of the classes, in the matriculation or so, the letters of Swami Vivekananda used to be circulated in manuscript from among us all. The kind of thrill which we enjoyed, the kind of mesmeric touch that those writings gave us, the kind of reliance on our own culture that was being criticised all around - it is that kind of transformation which his writings effected in the young men in the early years of this century.

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6 See S. Gopal, *Radhakrishnan - A Biography*, P. 10. This book has so far been the most important and authentic source on Radhakrishnan's biographical details.

6 Ibid., PP. 10-11.

7 Ibid., P. 11.

Having secured a scholarship to Voorhee's College, Vellore, Radhakrishnan joined the Faculty of Arts (F.A.) Course in 1902. It was here that Radhakrishnan memorized passages from the Bible and even secured a certificate of merit for the proficiency in the Scripture. He also came under the spell of Vivekananda and V.D.Savarkar, who through their eloquent writings roused the feelings of nationalism in the youth. While dwelling on his early Christian education, Robert Minor observes,

At Voorhee's College, Radhakrishnan was introduced to the Dutch Reform Theology, which emphasized a righteous God, unconditional grace, and election, and which criticized Hinduism as intellectually incoherent and ethically unsound.9

In 1904, Radhakrishnan passed his F.A. examination in First class with distinction in mathematics, psychology and history.

Radhakrishnan entered the Madras Christian College in 1904 and took his B.A. final examination in December 1906.10 He was a graduate from the Department of Mental and Moral Science (as the Philosophy Department was then called) on 21.3.1907, having secured a first class.11 Later Radhakrishnan obtained his M.A. degree in January 1909, securing a second class.12


10 M.C.C. Calendar, 1908. P. 271, and P.274.

11 M.C.C. Calendar, 1908, P.185 and also P.274.

12 M.C.C. Calendar, 1910-11, PP.265-266.
1.2.1 Scholarships awarded by the College

Two Scholarships awarded by the Madras Christian College truly guided the destiny of Radhakrishnan. They were a) The Extra-collegiate Scholarship in 1905\(^{13}\) and b) The Aberdeen Studentship in 1907.\(^{14}\)

a. The Extra-collegiate Scholarship.\(^{15}\)

In the year 1904, the Madras Christian College, as always, conducted the district-level entrance examinations in order to award the Extra-collegiate Scholarship for the calendar year 1905. The examinations used to be held in many district centres like Madras, South Arcot, Vellore, Chengleput, etc. The Scholarship was awarded on the basis of performance in English and some texts prescribed by the Madras University. The award was for one 'who obtains greatest number of marks and will be tenable for four terms'. Radhakrishnan appeared at the South Arcot district and stood first in the entire district. As a result, he was awarded a scholarship of Rs.55/- for each of the four terms by the college authorities. Radhakrishnan who had 'no advantages of birth or wealth' accepted the scholarship, and entered into the portals of Madras Christian College as a young student of 17.

\(^{13}\) M.C.C. Calendar, 1906, P.67.

\(^{14}\) M.C.C. Calendar, 1908, P.95.

\(^{15}\) See M.C.C. Calendar, 1906. PP.63-64 for the conditions of the award of scholarship.
b. The Aberdeen Studentship\textsuperscript{16}

If Radhakrishnan’s admission into the B.A. course in philosophy is considered accidental,\textsuperscript{17} then his getting admitted into the M.A. course in Philosophy is even more fortuitous. This was because, as Radhakrishnan was contemplating leaving Madras Christian College to pursue a course in Law,\textsuperscript{18} he was providentially granted the Aberdeen Studentship of Rs.\textsuperscript{120/-} for each of the four terms by the college authorities. As stipulated under the conditions of the award, the student of Physics who gets the greatest number of marks in his final B.A. class should be awarded the studentship to enable him to do postgraduate studies in Physics. If, however, there were no suitable candidates in Physics, the award should go to the best student in the Philosophy Department proceeding to the degree of M.A. in philosophy. Thus, Radhakrishnan became a surprise choice for the Aberdeen Studentship in 1907 as there was no suitable candidate from Physics.\textsuperscript{19} But for this award, probably Radhakrishnan might not have continued his higher studies in Philosophy. Was it not the invisible hand of destiny guiding him gently and yet firmly?

\textsuperscript{16} See M.C.C. Calendar, 1908. PP.\textsuperscript{94-95} for the conditions of the award of studentship.

\textsuperscript{17} Reason given elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{18} See S.Gopal, Op.Cit. P.\textsuperscript{15}.

\textsuperscript{19} Although there is no direct evidence to this effect, this conclusion is arrived at solely on circumstantial evidence drawn from M.C.C. Calendar 1908, PP.\textsuperscript{94-95}. 
1.2.2 The choice of Philosophy

Radhakrishnan's choice of Philosophy as a major subject of study at Madras Christian College was more circumstantial than planned. The sole reason, as revealed by him later,\textsuperscript{20} was that his cousin who just graduated from Madras Christian College, had handed over to him G.F.Stout's \textit{Manual of Psychology}, J.Welton's \textit{Logic} (two volumes) and J.S.Mackenzie's \textit{Manual of Ethics}. Though it appears accidental, Radhakrishnan attributed it to the invisible forces, as he remarks,

To all appearances this is an accident. But when I look at the series of accidents that have shaped my life, I am persuaded that there is more in this life than meets the eye. Life is not a mere chain of physical causes and effects. Chance seems to form the surface of reality, but deep down other forces are at work.\textsuperscript{21}

Thus the momentous decision of Radhakrishnan embracing Philosophy at Madras Christian College only proved to be a tryst with destiny. Thus the study of philosophy became a life long pastime for him, which sustained him both intellectually and spiritually throughout.

The fact that no paper was offered on Indian Philosophy anguished Radhakrishnan and made him observe,

\textsuperscript{20} See his "Fragments" P.6.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
The Philosophy courses for the B.A. and the M.A. degrees in the Madras University did not demand any acquaintance with the Indian systems of thought and religion. Even today Indian Philosophy forms a minor part of philosophical studies in Indian Universities.\textsuperscript{22}

However, this disadvantage only proved to be blessing in disguise for Radhakrishnan. As professor Vanamali Vedantatirtha, who taught Sanskrit and European Philosophy, always advised:

If you want to do any work in Indian Philosophy read European Philosophy first.\textsuperscript{23}

Fortunately, the courses offered at Madras Christian College provided for a thorough understanding of Western Philosophy, a fact which contributed immensely to Radhakrishnan later in his life. D.M.Datta extols Radhakrishnan’s mastery over the Western Philosophers thus:

In a period when India, long subjugated by foreign rule, suffered from inferiority complex and could at best only muster enough courage for self-defence, it required exceptional boldness for a young Indian of about thirty years to measure by his own rod such a whole group of outstanding thinkers as Leibniz, Ward, Bergson, James, Eucken and Russell and to assess their shortcomings.\textsuperscript{24}


\textsuperscript{23} Quoted in D.M.Datta, "Radhakrishnan and Comparative Philosophy", P.S.R. P.675.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., P.671.
### 1.2.3 Subjects studied at the Department

The following is the list of courses offered in the Department during the years 1905-1908, the major period of Radhakrishnan's stay at M.C.C.\(^\text{25}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>SUBJECTS OFFERED AT THE DEPT. OF MENTAL AND MORAL SCIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>(1) Physiology (2) Psychology and General Philosophy (Spl. Philosophy of Berkeley), (3) Logic (4) Ethics (Spl. Lecky’s History of European Morals).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>(1) Physiology (2) Psychology and General Philosophy (Spl. Philosophy of Leibniz) (3) Logic (4) Ethics (Spl. Ethics of Naturalism).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>(1) Physiology (2) Psychology and General Philosophy (Spl. Philosophy of Locke), (3) Logic (4) Ethics (Spl. Recent trends in Ethics).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>(1) Physiology (2) Psychology and General Philosophy (Spl. Philosophy of Spinoza) (3) Logic (4) Ethics (Spl. Plato’s Republic).</td>
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### 1.2.4 The prizes won

Radhakrishnan exhibited brilliant scholarship winning every possible award. In 1906, he was awarded the Dr. Miller Gold Medal for having stood first in the B.A. course, and the Dr. Samuel Sathianathan Gold Medal for securing highest marks in Ethics. He was also the recipient of the Cooper prize.

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\(^{25}\) Collected from M.C.C. Calendars - 1904 (PP.41-49), 1905 (PP.41-49), 1906 (PP.41-49), 1907 (PP.41-49), 1908 (PP.42-50). Every year two special papers were offered one each in General Philosophy and in Ethics.
awarded for proficiency in the branch of Philosophy. It was unfortunate, however, that his brilliant academic performances could not instantly extricate him from the clutches of poverty. The grip of poverty over his household then was so firm that on one instance they were unable to afford even banana leaves on which food is served, washed the floor and ate off it.

Therefore, Radhakrishnan decided to sell his medals. The medals he won at Madras Christian College and the pride attached to them had to be auctioned in the Bazaar. But Radhakrishnan only stooped to conquer!

What kind of person was Radhakrishnan in his student days? N.K. Rangaswami Aiyangaar, who was a class-mate of Radhakrishnan recalls,

As a student he was friendly with all. Yet he spoke little but for occasional characteristic remarks.

Radhakrishnan by nature shunned publicity not only in his student days but in his fruitful years as well. As Prof. Naravane aptly puts it,

He seems to have inherited from his philosophic ancestors, the ancient Indian thinkers, a distaste for personal publicity.

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26 For details of these awards See the College Report of 1906 published in M.C.C. Calendar 1908. P.238, P.250, P.264.


28 See Ibid.

29 Collected from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Commemoration Volume presented on his 78th Birthday.

30 Modern Indian Thought-A Philosophical Survey, P.231.
It is hardly surprising that Radhakrishnan, while a student at Madras Christian College, was never an office-bearer or even an active member of the Philosophy Association or any other association of the college. Neither did he win any prizes in sports and games. Truly, "He had a meditative frame of mind and loved solitude."\(^{31}\)

Radhakrishnan, despite his serious involvement in his own academic study, was kind enough to give tuition to fellow students. Among those who benefited from his tuition were Sir Muhamed Usman, who later became the Vice-Chancellor of Madras University and an Acting Governor of Madras State, and Sri. V.L. Ethiraj, an eminent jurist and philanthrophist.\(^{32}\)

1.2.5 Teachers of Radhakrishnan

Radhakrishnan himself recalls the names of his teachers at Madras Christian College. They were European members such as Miller, Skinner, Meston, Corley, Russell, Hogg, Pittendrigh, Ross, Mackenzie, Moffat and Henderson. Among the Indian members of the staff who taught him were Rangayya Chetti, Lakshminarasu, Chinnathambi Pillai, Kandaswamy Chetty,

\(^{31}\) T.P. Urumpackal, *Organized Religion according to Dr.S.Radhakrishnan*, P.7.

\(^{32}\) See N.K. Rangaswami Aiyangar, "Dr.S.Radhakrishnan as a student of M.C.C.", *Dr.S.R.Commemoration volume presented on his 78th Birthday*. 
Joseph Muliyil and others, Radhakrishnan then makes a most generous comment about his teachers:

It is difficult to imagine a better team of European and Indian members of staff.\textsuperscript{33}

Among the teachers of Philosophy for whom Radhakrishnan developed a reverential admiration, Skinner, Meston and Hogg deserve special mention. Their personal lives and teaching must have intensely shaped the philosophic outlook of Radhakrishnan. Their interaction with the young Radhakrishnan is very briefly recalled below:

\textbf{Dr. William Skinner (1884-1921)}\textsuperscript{34}

Dr. Skinner had his theological studies at Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Gottingen, Germany. His specializations include philosophy, logic and ethics. In the words of S. Gopal,

Of the teachers of Philosophy, Radhakrishnan was touched by the kindness of Skinner, to whom he later dedicated one of his books.\textsuperscript{35}

Skinner's geniality and affection towards Radhakrishnan continued even after the student days of Radhakrishnan. It is as interesting as it is touching to learn that it was Skinner who helped Radhakrishnan secure his first job,


\textsuperscript{34} Years in parentheses refer to their stay at M.C.C.

\textsuperscript{35} S. Gopal, op. cit., P.15.
recommending him as 'one of our best men we have had of recent years.'

Thanks to the magnanimity of this missionary, Radhakrishnan opened his glittering career-innings as a sub-assistant inspector of schools. However, he was soon directed to fill a temporary vacancy as a Malayalam Master at Presidency College, Madras.³⁶

Dr. William Meston (1871-1933)

Meston's interests as a Professor include in its range Philosophy, Psychology, English language and literature and Scripture. Meston is better known for his religious commitment than Philosophy.

One act which demonstrates Meston's cordiality towards Radhakrishnan is his commendation of Radhakrishnan's M.A. dissertation titled 'The Metaphysical Presuppositions of the Ethics of Vedanta'. The commendation reads:

He has displayed a power of clear thought, an independence of judgment and a capacity of accurate and rapid assimilation of what he has read which mark him out as possessed of high intellectual bent and attainments. Whatever he deals with goes through the mill of his own mind, and undigested opinion has no place with him.³⁷

Dr. Alfred G. Hogg (1874-1954)

Of all the teachers of Radhakrishnan, it was Professor Hogg who carved a special niche in the heart of Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan described Hogg

³⁶ See S. Gopal, op. cit., P.19.

³⁷ Quoted in S. Gopal, op. cit., P.17.
as 'my distinguished teacher' and 'a thinker of great penetration in theological matters'. In the words of S.Gopal, both Skinner and Hogg imparted to Radhakrishnan

a sense of tolerance, the importance of accurate scholarship and a broad view of Philosophy as an understanding of the nature and the ends of human life, of the search for a synoptic grasp of reality and a man's place in it.\textsuperscript{38}

Sir Muhamed Usman, who was a classmate of Radhakrishnan, recalls,

In 1905 and 1906 he [Hogg] was our Professor of Philosophy. His lectures in General Philosophy and Ethics were very interesting and showed that he was a great thinker and a very learned and able professor. His relations with his own students was most cordial.\textsuperscript{39}


After his B.A. examinations, Radhakrishnan came into intimate contact with Prof.Hogg. The important factor, here, was the award of the Aberdeen Studentship to Radhakrishnan. Because under the terms stipulated for this studentship, the awardee 'must study under the advice of Professor Hogg and satisfy the Senatus that he was making satisfactory progress'.\textsuperscript{40} It was probably this unexpected turn of events that cemented the bond between the professor and his student.

\textsuperscript{38} S.Gopal, \emph{op.cit.}, P.15.

\textsuperscript{39} M.C.C.M. (Hogg Memorial Volume), Vol.XXV (New Series), March, 1955, P.55.

\textsuperscript{40} See M.C.C. Calendar, 1908, P.95.
As Hogg watched intently the amazing progress of his brilliant student, he is said to have remarked:

You have splendidly redeemed the honour of your motherland and if I have the gift of prophesy, I am sure you will one day lead the destiny of your dear country.\textsuperscript{41}

Hogg also awarded Radhakrishnan a testimonial commending his M.A thesis. It reads:

The thesis which he prepared in the second year of his study for this degree shows a remarkable understanding of the main aspects of the philosophical problem, a capacity for handling easily, a complex argument besides more than the average mastery of good English.\textsuperscript{42}

Even after Radhakrishnan left the college, his relations with Hogg remained as warm and cordial as ever. Such was the admiration of Hogg toward the brilliant scholarship of Radhakrishnan that, while Radhakrishnan was teaching at Presidency College, Madras, Hogg himself made it clear that his students would attend the lectures on Political Philosophy in the Presidency College only if Radhakrishnan delivered them.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} Quoted in Swaminatha Subramaniam (ed.), \textit{Hon'ble Dr.S.Radhakrishnan Commemoration volume} (No page numbers given).

\textsuperscript{42} See his "M.S.T.", P.40.

\textsuperscript{43} S.Gopal, op.cit. P.21.
Radhakrishnan was moved at the demise of his beloved teacher in 1954. In his condolence message he paid glowing tributes to Professor Hogg.\textsuperscript{44}

I met Prof. Dr. Hogg for the first time in 1906 when I joined Madras Christian College. I was in fairly intimate touch with him till he left this country after retirement. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest Christian teachers of his generation. His books are known for their philosophical penetration and religious sensitivity. He left a permanent mark on the minds of those who came under his influence. His memory will be long cherished by the number of students who were trained by him.

1.2.6 Initiation into Apologetics

It was on the soil of the Madras Christian College that the seeds of Radhakrishnan's apologetics have been sown. The circumstances which prevailed there and the encounters with the Christian teachers there shaped him into an apologist.\textsuperscript{45}

The Christian missionaries at Madras Christian College, apart from their classroom lectures, effectively used the Madras Christian College Magazine as a channel for proclaiming and propagating their Christian ideals. They published many articles which were highly intellectual and scholarly. But their real greatness consists in their allowing their opponents, if there were any, to freely express their feelings against Christianity. Thus the Magazine from the year 1883-84 became a hotbed for polemical literature involving especially the Christian and the Hindu apologists, with their allegiance to their

\textsuperscript{44} A message dated 23.1.1955 sent to the Guardian, Madras, reprinted in M.C.C.M. (Hogg Memorial volume), Vol.XXV (New Series), March 1955, P.53.

\textsuperscript{45} The reasons for calling him an apologist are given elsewhere in this chapter.
respective faiths. This war of words reached a pinnacle when young Radhakrishnan entered the portals of Madras Christian College. A brief account here, of the polemics published in the Magazine, would help in understanding how Radhakrishnan so naturally inherited the legacy of religious debate - a legacy which he made good use of throughout his entire career.

In the year 1883-84, Prof. Charles Cooper set the ball rolling. In his article, "The Philosophy of Upanishads", Cooper argued that Indian Philosophy was not a product of a pure Aryan race. The invading Aryan tribes had become Hinduized by contact and coalescence with indigenous Negroid and Tartar populations. He goes on to claim that the Upanishads, as theology as well as metaphysics, are undoubtedly pantheistic.

Also,

Pantheism negates morality, atleast in any real sense. It does away with personality, free will, and hence responsibility. Right and wrong become merely a phenomenal distinction. Whatever is, must be, is therefore right.\(^{47}\)

Mr.T.P.Ramanatha Iyer in his article, "The Philosophy of Upanishads"\(^{48}\) counters the criticisms of Prof.Cooper. While admitting that the Hindu Philosophy took many ages to be built up by thinkers belonging to periods separated by long intervals, he strongly refutes the allegation that the


\(^{48}\) M.C.C.M., Vol.I, 1883-84, PP.293-299.
Hindu temper is generally pessimistic. He takes pains to enlist as many as 17 arguments to rebut Cooper's criticism that Hinduism is pantheism based on fatalism.

Mr. Kuppuswamy Chetty continues from where Iyer left off. He answers Cooper's criticism that 'Hinduism is a coalescence of different races', by stating that historicity is not as important as the essence of the systems of Hinduism. He also disputes Cooper's distinction between Pantheism and Theism.⁴⁹

The Christian missionaries were not alone in speaking disparagingly of the practices and beliefs of others. The Hindu apologists were equally vocal and sarcastic in criticising various Christian practices and ideals. B. Krishna Singh, for example, asks an important question: Why has Christianity not conquered India spiritually as it has other countries? He himself answers,

In our opinion this is sufficiently explained by the fact that we have in India various systems of religion that satisfy the wants alike of profound philosophers and illiterate dunces.⁵⁰

Apart from the rancorous exchanges between Hindu and Christian, there were also some excellent comparative studies highlighting the spiritual proximity between the Hindu and Christian doctrines. Maurice Philip, for example, makes a comparative analysis of the Vedic consciousness of sin and the Biblical account of it. After exhaustively dwelling on the meanings of sin or pāpa in Sanskrit and other languages,


Philip comments,

What a striking confirmation of the fall of man recorded in the third chapter of Genesis, have we in the words used for 'sin' in the semitic, 'Aryan', and Turanian language.51

Thus, he richly illustrates the parallels between Biblical and Vedic concepts of sin.

William Skinner, one of the teachers of Radhakrishnan, in his article, "Christian Ethics", tries to demonstrate the superiority of Christian ethics over that of Hindu ethics. One acerbic remark against Hindu ethics reads:

His (the heathen's) attitude towards nature is not that of a free moral dominion over the same; It is of the nature of an unfree submission to a non-moral force. This description, though in various degrees, will apply to all heathen worship... to the religion of India in which the highest good is self-mortification, and losing of the personal life in the impersonal ground of all things.52

Before the time of Hogg, Prof. T.E.Slater examined the doctrine of Karma and found alleged inconsistencies in it. His biting attack on the Doctrine of Karma goes like this:

We have a merciless world of births and deaths, without beginning and, for all practical purposes, without end, with a ruthless law of necessity imposed on it. Who or what is responsible for all this - for those eternally existing souls suffering from a strange and hopeless injustice? It is of little use to say it is all maya - a dream of the absolute; for a bad dream is quite bad enough while it lasts.53

52 M.C.C.M., Vol.IV, 1886-87, PP.4-5.
Slater then attempts to show the coherence of the Karma theory in the Gospel, and its untenability and absurdity in Hinduism. Christianity alone according to him, answers problems like suffering, judgement, forgiveness and salvation and eternal life. And like other committed missionaries, Slater concludes his article asserting the superiority of Christian Gospel over Karma theory:

The Christian religion therefore while fully admitting the truth of karma - the persistence of the past - has something more, something priceless, to offer, which Hinduism has not.54

There is yet another article by Charles Cooper which attempts to demonstrate the incompatibility of moral responsibility and the pantheism of the Vedanta-Sara.55 Later, his own student H.V.Nanjundayya, while expressing his due regard for his teacher, challenges the exegesis of Vedanta-Sara by Prof.Cooper.56

The Polemical war triggered in 1883-84 reached its peak in the classic confrontation between S.Subramaniya Shastri and Hogg. Shastri in his article, "Hindu Philosophy"57 claimed that

55 C.Cooper, "Pantheism of Vedanta Sara", M.C.C.M., Vol.XVIII, 1900-01, PP.271-278.
...the doctrines of Karma and the transmigration of souls, which are the highest sanctions of Hindu morality, are also the cardinal principles of Hindu Philosophy.  

He also claimed that the sense of just recompense for all one's deeds, whether good or evil, was the highest conceivable principle of morality, since it abolished any necessity for explaining the mystery of unmerited suffering. These are the claims clearly advanced against Christianity.

Hogg's first reply to Sastri, in September 1904, in the article titled "Mr.Subramaniya Sastri on Hindu Philosophy" merely broached the subject. But beginning with December 1904, Hogg's detailed reply in the form of 'Karma and Redemption' was serialized in five parts. Hogg begins with distinguishing between faith and belief - faith being immediate and existential, whereas beliefs are the intellectual expressions of faith - and concludes that the contrasts between Christianity and Hinduism are in the area of belief. Hogg understands that the Hindu idea of Karma and the Christian doctrine of Redemption provide one point of departure between them, the earlier being predominantly judicial and the latter moral. He points out that God being Love and personally intervening in human affairs is conceivable in Christianity alone. Hogg however makes a passionate plea for an effective dialogue between Christian and Hindu intellectuals, and he even suggested that a Christian

59 Ibid., P.71.
60 A.G.Hogg, "Karma and Redemption", M.C.C.M., Vol.XXII, 1904-1905. This has been serialized in five parts : I(P.P.281-292), II(P.P.359-373), III(P.P.393-409), IV(P.P.449-469), V(P.P.505-522).
must cast off his alien mould and reconstruct and reshape his thought in order to be more acceptable to the Hindu, at the same time making the historical person of Jesus Christ and His Gospel the very centre of his thought.

It is very significant to note that this confrontation took place when Radhakrishnan just entered the portals of Madras Christian College. These polemical exchanges particularly between Subramania Sastri and his teacher Hogg, must have left an indelible impression on the mind of young Radhakrishnan. Eric J. Sharpe makes a very pertinent remark:

It may well have been Hogg's book, *Karma and Redemption* (1904-05 in article form), in which the ethical basis of Vedanta was subjected to criticism, which prompted Radhakrishnan to write his first work of Hindu apologetics, *Ethics of Vedanta* (1908).  

Thus, it is this legacy of polemics which Radhakrishnan inherited at Madras Christian College. He never wanted to be a mute witness to the intellectual battles fought between the Hindu and Christian apologists. And his third article contributed to the Madras Christian College magazine titled, "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine" (1924) is a classic example of his joining the polemical battle with Christian missionaries.

In this context it is pertinent to note that the M.C.C. magazine has had very appreciative book reviews of Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy*, Vol.I & II, *Hindu view of Life. Of Indian Philosophy*, Vol.I, A.S. Woodburne says,

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It is surely gratifying to the M.C.C. that one of our old boys should make such an eminent contribution to scholarship in the field of Indian Philosophy.  

Radhakrishnan remarked that the need for philosophy arises when faith in tradition is shaken. Indeed, the Christian missionaries who shook his faith, not only broadened his religious outlook but initiated him into the intricacies of comparative religion. For all of this, credit goes to his teachers at the Madras Christian College for awakening him from his 'dogmatic slumber' - a state in which he was unreflectively following the dictates of populist Hinduism.

1.3 RADHAKRISHNAN - A MULTIFACETED PERSONALITY

It is almost impossible to enlist all the major contributions of such a versatile personality as Radhakrishnan. However, within the purview of our topic, four most important facets of Radhakrishnan are briefly highlighted.

1. An East-West Synthesizer
2. A Neo-Vedantin
3. An apologist of Hindu faith
4. A harmonizer of different faiths.

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64 K.Satchidananda Murthy and Ashok Vohra, S.Radhakrishnan - His Life and Ideas, P.15.
1.3.1 An East-West Synthesizer

The most significant contribution of Radhakrishnan has been his attempt to synthesize the Eastern and the Western thoughts. On account of this, he has been aptly hailed as a 'liaison officer', 'a bridge builder', 'a philosophical bilingualist'.

P.T.Raju succinctly summarizes Radhakrishnan's East-West synthesis:

there are few scholars like him, who have grasped the spirit of the Eastern and the Western thought alike. Inspite of the opinion of many both in the East and the West that East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet, Professor Radhakrishnan maintains that the two can meet and have met.\(^5\)

A.C. Arapura maintains that Radhakrishnan consciously forged a greater understanding between the idealistic traditions of the East and the West. In his words:

(But) in Radhakrishnan we have a thinker who has set himself rather deliberately and purposefully to the task of creating some kind of a philosophical synthesis of the major streams of philosophy, Eastern and Western, particularly of the Idealistic traditions.\(^6\)

In trying to synthesise East and West, Radhakrishnan's initial task had been to reconcile the orthodox Indians, who have unrelenting faith in the ancient culture but developed a negative, cynical attitude towards the developments of the West, and the unorthodox Indians who try to glorify the developments of the West and in the process had been ignorant of their great culture. Radhakrishnan succeeded in correcting these extreme stands.

\(^5\) P.T.Raju, *Idealist Thought of India*, PP.331-332.

\(^6\) *Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience*, P.2.
As Naravane puts it,

There were some who suffered from a 'cultural inferiority complex' and did not see the richness of their own philosophical heritage. As against this, there were the revivalists who indulged in uncritical adulation of ancient India and - adopted a negative attitude towards the West. Radhakrishnan's task was to correct both these errors.\(^7\)

Radhakrishnan's firm conviction had been that the perennial wisdom of India has much to offer to the West. Having 'drunk deeply at Western wells', Radhakrishnan's task was made much easier in plugging the loopholes in both the systems. Therefore, he was eager to present to the West the wisdom of Hinduism, in a language familiar to the West. In his own words:

Today Indian wisdom is essential not only for the revival of the Indian nation, but for the re-education of the entire human race.\(^8\)

Radhakrishnan introduced what he called the Comparative Philosophy as a method to bridge the gulf between the Eastern and Western worlds. However, he believed, that this method was necessarily restricted in its scope, because it can be either a bane or a blessing. Yet he was not pessimistic about this approach, and asserted, "In the world of Philosophy we have to bring about a cross-fertilization of ideas."\(^9\)

\(^7\) V.S.Naravane, op.cit., P.259.

\(^8\) S.R., "Fragments", P.11. A.G.Arapura echoes a similar sentiment: "In the vision-ic function of philosophy, comparative study undoubtedly can be fruitfully employed. For in gaining a vision it is better to draw from the riches of the philosophical experiences of the whole of mankind than to depend exclusively on one particular tradition. Such is Radhakrishnan's position". (See his op.cit., P.9.)

The circumstances which prevailed at Madras Christian College, initiated Radhakrishnan's forays into comparative studies. Many scholars opine that Radhakrishnan's M.A. dissertation, titled "The metaphysical presuppositions of the ethics of the Vedanta", was the foremost attempt in this direction. To quote D.M. Datta,

This [dissertation] may well be regarded as his first attempt of comparative philosophy, in as much as he tried here to restate the Vedanta for the benefit of the Western mind and to justify it in terms of the Western conception of Ethics.\(^7^0\)

Datta also holds the Christian teachers of Radhakrishnan as partly responsible in drawing Radhakrishnan's attention to the comparative method. He states emphatically,

The method and means adopted by him in such writings were partly taken from the Christian critics and teachers and partly were his own. He must have learned to appreciate from the Christian teachers of that age, the absolute idealism and monism of Hegel and his followers. Because it was this philosophy which was at the height of its popularity then.\(^7^1\)

Also holding Christian teachers and education responsible for Radhakrishnan's East-West synthesis, E.S.Brightman observes,

In education and in temperament, Radhakrishnan is a combination of East and West.\(^7^2\)

\(^7^0\) D.M.Datta, op.cit., P.667.

\(^7^1\) D.M.Datta, op.cit., P.668.

\(^7^2\) E.S.Brightman, "Radhakrishnan and Mysticism". P.S.R. P.407.
Radhakrishnan effectively used the comparative method to draw the attention of mankind the true religion which transcends the barriers of caste, creed and colour. Religion is not an exclusive possession of any particular soil, Eastern or Western:

All true religions spring from the same soil of human mind and are quickened by the spirit.\(^73\)

Therefore, everyone should develop an attitude of mutual respect and sympathy. Radhakrishnan observes rhetorically,

[Comparative religion] induces in us not an attitude of mere tolerance which implies conscious superiority, not patronizing piety, not condescending charity, but genuine respect and appreciation.\(^74\)

Referring to his travel between Calcutta and Oxford, Radhakrishnan likened it to the movement of a weaver's shuttle. Truly, Radhakrishnan, moving to and fro like a weaver's shuttle, had woven a rich fabric of East-West synthesis, which is the most fascinating gift he presented to mankind.

1.3.2A Neo-Vedantin

The Philosophy of Radhakrishnan is usually placed in different categories-1. "Absolute Idealism", for he believes that the Ultimate Reality is the unknown and unknowable Absolute or the Brahman, 2. "Spiritual Humanism", as he believes that man is essentially spiritual in nature and in temperament and the realization of the spirit in man would liberate him from


\(^74\) S.R., E.W.R., P.32.
all bondages. 3. "Religion of the Spirit", as he himself calls it towards the end of his intellectual career, because true religion lies in allowing one's spirit to rule over one's self, and 4. "Universal Philosophy of Religion", as Radhakrishnan ardently tries to build up a universal religion which is based not on 'fusion' but 'fellowship of faiths'.

In all these attempts, Radhakrishnan exhibited unmistakable signs of a Neo-Vedantin par excellence. His supreme task right from his student days had been to make Vedanta relevant and meaningful to the present generation. "Roused by the eloquence and enterprise of Swami Vivekananda", Radhakrishnan took upon himself the task of reinterpreting the Vedanta system in the language of the modern world.

P.D. Devanandan examines the neo-Vedantic trend in Radhakrishnan's writings. He says,

"Today it [neo-Hinduism] is being expounded with considerable vigour and acceptance by Dr. Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan has no difficulty in accepting the wealth of meaning content that western thinkers put into such terms as personality and the community, but at the same time would claim that he sees no difficulties in reconciling them with the basic affirmation of Vedanta. What is more, he would go further and maintain that these modern concepts are in fact derived from the Vedanta view of life."75

According to Devanandan, the vital impetus to the neo-Vedantic movement was originally given by the Christian missionaries in India - a fact which was not acknowledged by the Hindu leaders.76

Radhakrishnan's neo-Vedantism is a result of his attempts to combine the cross-currents of traditionalism and liberalism in him. As an orthodox Hindu, he stoutly defended the system of Vedanta and as a liberal intellectual he made it meaningful to the contemporary times.

However, as Radhakrishnan's Neo-Vedantic stance carefully avoids the extremes of traditionalists and modernists, he, some critics feel, is likely to please neither of them. Fred Dallmyr observes:

Radhakrishnan may be regarded as chief philosophical spokesman of neo-Hinduism, an outlook precariously mediating between past and present, between ancient texts and contemporary understandings (and thus likely to displease both staunch traditionalists and radical modernizers).77

1.3.3 An Apologist of Hindu faith

There are strong, convincing reasons for describing Radhakrishnan as an apologist, and, therefore, a number of scholars have in fact described him so. However, in the first place, it is imperative to define briefly the discipline called "apologetics" and the characteristic features of an apologist.


The Encyclopaedia of Religions brings out the succinct nature of apologetics thus:

Any religion, monotheistic or otherwise, might adopt an apologetic posture under circumstances in which it perceives the need to defend itself against mis-understanding, criticism, discrimination, or oppression.\textsuperscript{78}

In the words of John Macquarrie:

Apologetics is not a branch of theology, but rather a style of theology, namely that style which defends faith against attacks.\textsuperscript{79}

Thus an apologist is one who perceives the need to defend a religious system against misunderstanding or criticism or caricature.

Radhakrishnan has not only defined Hinduism, but defended it stoutly. In doing so he had to answer the criticisms of Christian scholars and correct their misinterpretations of Hindu thought and practice. At times he used his writings as rhetorical devices to bear testimony to the non-believers, with the content of his writings being based on the Divine revelation, and its format on culture. These are all marks of an apologist.

Ninian Smart begins his article on Radhakrishnan in the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy by describing him as a great Hindu apologist.\textsuperscript{80} Henrik Kraemer describes Radhakrishnan as a thinker, a historian of religion and

\textsuperscript{78} Mircea Eliade (ed.), The Encyclopaedia of Religions Vol.1, Section on Apologetics, P.349.

\textsuperscript{79} Principles of Christian Theology, P.35.

\textsuperscript{80} Ninian Smart, "S.Radhakrishnan", in Paul Edwards (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vols. 7 & 8, P.62.
philosophy, a reformist apologist of Hinduism.\textsuperscript{81} Kraemer also describes Radhakrishnan as a modern liberal who happens to be an apologist of Hinduism, and an enormously erudite apologist of Indian spirituality.\textsuperscript{82}

Robert Minor observes that Radhakrishnan’s writings,

beginning with his master’s thesis, The Ethics of Vedanta and its Metaphysical Presuppositions, were a series of publications with an explicit apologetic motive in mind.\textsuperscript{83}

However, Robert D. Baird makes a moderate observation in his Category formation and the History of Religions, saying,

... but often his [Radhakrishnan’s] works intersperse statements of a normative and apologetic nature along with statements which are more characteristically descriptive.\textsuperscript{84}

That most of Radhakrishnan’s writings glowed with apologetic conviction is an inescapable conclusion. This is because, his defense of Hinduism necessitated his answering of the criticisms of the Christian missionaries and others advanced against his own religious convictions and commitments. A classic example is Radhakrishnan’s early work, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore. Here, Radhakrishnan responds to the criticism of Rev.Saunders, Rev.Urquhart and others that Tagore’s ideas were essentially

\textsuperscript{81} Religion and Christian Faith, P.100, Also P.119, P.131.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., P.135.
\textsuperscript{84} See the Section on Radhakrishnan (Page Numbers not given)
Christian, and that Tagore's God was the God of Christianity.\textsuperscript{86}

Radhakrishnan's firm reply proceeds from his apologetic mind:

The critics who make Rabindranath a borrower from Christianity betray an astonishing lack of "historical conscience" - a charge generally urged against Indians. The Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion have both a place in the Vedanta System.\textsuperscript{87}

1.3.4 A Harmonizer of different faiths

It had been the firm conviction of Radhakrishnan that all the divergent trends of philosophy and religion must be harmonized into unity. Conflicting approaches, according to Radhakrishnan, are no good in themselves, but they can be harmoniously blended into meaningful approaches to grasp the quintessence of reality. Samanvaya is the method which reconciles the extreme approaches in philosophy as well religion, thus ensuring a peaceful coexistence of religions.

Radhakrishnan expressed the hope thus:

Today Samanvaya or harmonization has to be extended to the living faiths of mankind.\textsuperscript{87}

Radhakrishnan firmly believed in bringing all the living faiths on the platform of Vedantic tradition. To quote K.Seshadri,

Radhakrishnan has by no means rejected or reversed the Vedantic tradition, but has filled it with additional substance, and rendered it

\textsuperscript{85} See his \textit{P.R.T.}, PP.1-7.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., P.56.

\textsuperscript{87} S.R., \textit{B.S.} P.249.
more vital, so as to meet the needs of a humanity moving towards the organization of a world community and universal fellowship.\footnote{88} 

Hailing Radhakrishnan as the 'St.Thomas Aquinas of our modern age', C.A. Moore paid rich tribute to the efforts of Radhakrishnan to find Samanvaya in the unity behind all diversities of religion and culture. He remarked:

He is the Thomas Aquinas of our modern age with his remarkable ability and determination to see things in their comprehensive entirety and thus to eliminate the sharp distinctions which to the narrow and smaller mind serve as the basis for isolation and even contradiction of the several cultures and philosophical traditions.\footnote{89}

In pursuing the method of Samanvaya, the Aristotelian Golden Mean is also put to most effective use by Radhakrishnan. He always avoided the extreme viewpoints. His task has been one of synthesizing the extremes. He firmly believed, as Aristotle advocated, that the middle path between the extremes is the best solution for all philosophical and religious problems. To quote Moore again:

His philosophy, throughout, is one of taking the middle path between extremes, but it is not the middle path of mere eclecticism or mere moderation, it is that of keen logical analysis combined with high spiritual insight which enables him to transcend and combine contrasts in significant synthesis.\footnote{90}


\footnote{89} "Metaphysics and Ethics in Radhakrishnan's Philosophy", \textit{P.S.R.}, P.282.

\footnote{90} Ibid.