International organizations though composed of nation-states, or other collectivities, inevitably function through individuals. They are conceived in the minds of men as instruments for satisfaction or achievement of defined objectives or goals. They reflect the philosophy or thinking that pervades the times and at the same time that inspires and motivates the individuals who set out to build the organizations. The functionaries and the employees in the organizations shape and sustain these organizations, of course.

But there is another set of individuals - far fewer in number, and indeed rare - whose distinction borders on greatness because their ideas, acumen and concerns transcend time and embrace the whole world. Such individuals leave a deep imprint on the organization they associate with, enrich its content and give direction to the organization in the service not only of declared objectives but also of the mankind at large. But for such individuals the stature and role of the organization in question would remain at best routine, or commonplace.

Indeed, instances in the history of international affairs as also in regard to the affairs within a country are not wanting where the role of the personality has
made a qualitative difference in the policy or performance of a public office or institution. Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, Jean Monnet, De Gaulle, Nasser, Tito, Mao-Tse-Tung, and quite a few other personalities of the recent past at once come to mind in this context. If many of these great men made of their office much more than a mere routine, this was by the sheer dint of their towering personalities: they elevated the position they held from ordinary to eminent. The performance and the achievement of the charge they held has been of such a high order that it endures in eloquent testimony long after these persons left the scene.

Our essay is in this sense a modest attempt at examining the role of an individual in the work of an important, unusual international organization, and its impact on the world at large. Role of personality in international politics has long been a matter of interest and conjecture both to the scholar and the layman, but not much literature on the subject has appeared. But the need for such studies cannot be over-emphasised. Hence this essay.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) is one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations established to achieve international unity and peace. Whereas the United Nations
provides a mechanism for settling political disputes, for encouraging disarmament, for protecting human rights and for solving economic problems, Unesco endeavours to promote mutual understanding and goodwill among peoples. It seeks to promote peace through international communication and collaboration in the fields of culture, education and science. Mutual understanding among the nations of the world is sought to be fostered by propagating the history and knowledge about the peoples and educating them by removing misunderstandings and misconceptions about nations. In other words the Organisation aims at developing the attitude among the peoples of the world which is most conducive to peace.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a philosopher, educationist and statesman of great eminence, excelled not only in these areas but also in the realm of science and culture. Called 'a bridge between East and West', Radhakrishnan was a man of all seasons: gifted and brilliant, he was the natural choice for representing India in an international body like Unesco. Our study aims at assessing his contribution and impact specifically upon and in Unesco.

His internationalism flowed logically from his 'religion of spirit' which lays stress on the unity of man. Deeply spiritual, he believed in the 'spirit of man';
according to him international organisations instead of confining themselves merely to the conduct of nations needed to go deeper and beyond and deal with the souls of men. He was deeply impressed by Gandhi’s non-violence and faith in peace in peaceful methods. Divine, he believed, is not only Truth (Satyam), Beauty (Sundaram), and Perfection (Sivam), but also Peace (Santam). A firm supporter of the U.N., its aims and objects, he sincerely and passionately believed that the kind of work the Unesco envisaged was of tremendous and enduring importance which would eventually promote peace, freedom and progress in the world. In a word, Radhakrishnam was perfectly in tune with the spirit of Unesco.

The declaration of Unesco that "wars begin in the minds of men" and "it is in the minds of men that defences of peace must be constructed" inspired Radhakrishnam to interpret the 'minds of men' thesis in a way totally different from that held in the West. It is worthwhile examining his ideas in this regard and evaluating his theory of causation of wars. Curiously, not much work seems to have been done in this regard so far.

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Government of India, apparently as a measure of their esteem and faith in Radhakrishnam’s ability, left virtually the entire decision making of India’s conduct and policy in the
Unesco to him. Rarely are the same delegates returned to the Organisation's General Conferences by the governments of member countries, but Radhakrishnan attended these almost consecutively for more than a decade. His active participation and association in the organization was at a time when neither the United Nations nor its specialized agencies had their priorities or the thrust of their activities well defined. No wonder Unesco was sometimes described as an organization "in search of a purpose". Under the circumstances, Radhakrishnan's role and contribution in the Organization, to the world environment in the service of man - and correspondingly for India - becomes particularly valuable and worthy of investigation.

Employing a historical-analytical method, the following pages analyse, it is hoped adequately, that contribution.