Chapter III

FORMULATING THE IDEALS

A philosopher and a statesman, Dr Radhakrishnan had definite ideas on the manner in which an organisation like Unesco could and should achieve its purpose. He thus naturally contributed significantly to the working philosophy of the organisation. Indeed, there is little doubt that the early idealism of Unesco flowed from the body of his ideas.

The preamble of Unesco states that "since wars occur in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". This single sentence is the key to an understanding of the ideals and goals of Unesco.

Radhakrishnan's attitude and orientation to the declared objectives of Unesco, is encapsulated and reflected in the 'minds of men' thesis. But let us first examine the preamble.

The preamble assumes that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world have too often broken into war and that a common cause of that suspicion and mistrust has been 'ignorance of each other's ways and lives'. It then turns specifically to the second world war and attributes it to the denial of democratic principle of dignity, equality and mutual respect of men
and by the propagation of the doctrine of inequality of men and races. From these general assumptions the preamble concludes that the "wide diffusion of culture and education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constituted a sacred duty which all nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern". Finally, the preamble reaches a conclusion of which Radhakrishnan took particular notice: that a peace based exclusively upon political and economic arrangement of Governments would not be a peace which would secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world and that peace must be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind".\textsuperscript{1}

Thus at this stage in the history of international organization the statesmen came to recognize the inadequacy of their efforts at the diplomatic plane alone. And the "Unesco idea"\textsuperscript{2} emerged, which assumes that political and economic cooperation among peoples would be impossible without cooperation in educational, scientific and cultural fields. Radhakrishnan's perception of the "Unesco idea" would help us understand the task he expected Unesco to perform.

\textsuperscript{1} UNESCO CONSTITUTION.

\textsuperscript{2} Sathyamurthy: THE POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 24 and 179.
In fact, Unesco was born with the controversy in regard to the role it should play. Individuals and countries had their own respective conceptions of Unesco's role and methods of building peace in the minds of men which were reflected in their statements and the positions they took in the General Conference and the meetings of the Executive Board of the organisation.

Radhakrishnan's image of the goals and activities of Unesco evolved from both subjective and objective factors. Among the subjective factors is included his predominantly idealistic approach to the whole issue of world order and world peace, and the objective factors embraced the diversity of views prevailing in the initial years, and even afterwards, about the role that Unesco should or could be expected to play.

The diversity of views related to three main issues: (1) What is the correct interpretation of the "minds of men" thesis? (ii) Peace-keeping and peace-building operations of the United Nations system and the role assigned to Unesco in this regard; whether it should function as a subsidiary of the United Nations assisting the latter in the achievement of its political objectives? and (iii) What should be the working philosophy of Unesco? Radhakrishnan had definite views on all these which he expressed in different meetings and conferences of the Unesco.
The "Minds of Men" thesis

The idea of the relationship between war and the minds of men was given expression by The British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee at the 1945 London Conference. These words were readily incorporated into the preamble.

Mr. Attlee shared with others the sense of horror of German Nazism. Thus the founders of Unesco, not unnaturally, seemed to be more conscious of the causes of the Second World War, and the character of Unesco, accordingly, was bound to be influenced by the belief that Nazism was the chief cause of the just concluded war, and, it would seem, all war.

The founding conference duly showed a firm resolve that oppressive systems such as German Nazism should never rise again. The predominant view at the conference was that the Second World War was the result of the German ideology of racism and aggressive nationalisms, which tendencies developed in mind. Feeling was therefore strong that minds of men must be corrected and purified of such aberrations by means of education, so that people would not allow themselves to believe in, and act according to, the ideology of aggressive nationalism. Ignorance, and a lack of understanding among people, was made out to be an important cause in the emergence of the German ideology of exaggerated nationalism. It was thus considered necessary to use
education as an instrument in the creation of understanding among peoples.

Radhakrishnan found this to be a rather "narrow and backward looking interpretation" of the thesis. At the very first General Conference in Paris in 1946, he argued that the role of Unesco should be the creation of "a world brain, a world mind, or a world culture" and that the organisation must work for "a new way of life, a new outlook, a new philosophy which will inspire humanity" leading to the creation of a new world community. This approach thus rejected the narrow interpretation which the western countries gave of the minds of men thesis.

Indeed, he saw in Unesco an international agency which would facilitate the evolution of a new world order characterized by human and spiritual values. Such an order, according to him, could not be achieved if Unesco concentrated merely on the re-education of Germany. Evolution of a peaceful international order, which was the basic objective of Unesco, could be brought about only if plans of educational reconstruction were based upon a broad and forward-looking approach to the question of international understanding and cooperation. Education,

3 Mahendra Kumar, op. cit., p. 56.
5 GC First Session, p. 27.
he believed, must therefore refashion itself to mould the whole world and not just a particular country or countries.

In the programme of reshaping of the world by means of education, he was convinced, all countries must participate. From the very beginning he laid stress on this aspect of the formulation of Unesco programmes. At the First General Conference, he was the first person to point out to the need of universal membership of the Unesco. So, defeated nations of Germany, Italy and Japan were very much a part of his plan for the educational sweep for the new world. At the root of this was his firm belief that Unesco should devise such programmes of educational reconstruction as would cover all men and the whole world, and ensure the participation of every country in the execution of these programmes.

In his speech at the Second General Conference held at Mexico City (1947) Dr Radhakrishnan made a pointed reference to Unesco's various programmes of re-educating Germany, and at the same time urged,

"May I in all humility suggest that what we require is a re-education of the whole humanity today... Unless we are able to re-educate man, make him attach himself to another kind of environment that which is called the environment of nature and necessity, unless we are able to re-educate him to realization of spirit and freedom, the decline of humanity could not be arrested...”

6 Ibid.
He reiterated forcefully these very views while inaugurating the First Conference of the Indian National Cooperation with Unesco.  

His views on the "minds of men" thesis were clearly at variance with the western interpretation. According to him, the real meaning of the thesis was that we should inculcate in the minds of men respect for all cultures of the world. This would mean that no nation should have a right to dominate over other cultures or to have a sense of superiority about itself.

Reiterating this approach at the Second General Conference, he stressed that every culture of the world had the potentiality to contribute to the nourishment of the spiritual life of man, and that any effort to impose a particular way of life on Germany or any other country would amount to undue dominance.

Radhakrishnan's interpretation of the thesis arose from his own theory of causation of wars, by his view of the potentialities of cultural cooperation in the maintenance of peace and by his insistence that the need of the times should constantly be kept in view.

The ideal of Unesco, he thus pleaded, ought to be to remove from the minds of men the evils of fear,

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9 GC Second Session, Vol. 1, p. 16.
suspicion and jealousy which bred wars. This could be done in two ways. One was by observing certain human and spiritual values, and the other by guaranteeing man freedom from hunger and starvation. A new purpose should coordinate the education, science and culture, and make them integral elements of a view of the world.

Radhakrishnan canvassed earnestly for his views and succeeded in his efforts in good measure. Unesco eventually started working along some of the lines suggested by him.

Rather than the nations, Radhakrishnan always wanted that Unesco should address itself more to the individuals. In many of his speeches and writings he pointed out to the revolutionary change that according to him had come in the outlook of individuals, and that the world had become a world of the common man. Every effort should keep the human angle constantly in view. This, he maintained, was the need of the time, and a basic fact of contemporary history which must be recognised. This very theme was highlighted by Jawaharlal Nehru at the First Conference of Indian National Commission.

10 Report, Ist GC of INC, pp. 14-17
11 GC Third Session 1948, p. 57.
12 Ibid.
Peace-keeping and Peace-building

Unesco is a senior member of what is known as the United Nations family. From its very inception the United Nations system has worked in the belief that there are two kinds and levels of approach to the problem of peace and war. The first is the short-term political role of the United Nations, especially the Security Council while the second is the long term approach of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The work of the former is supposed to be consisting of solving specific political problems and resolving situations which endanger peace. The work of the latter, on the other hand, concerns specific somewhat technical aspects of nations (like, e.g., health, education etc.) which provides or creates slowly, painstakingly economic, social and cultural foundations for the future system of peaceful international relations.

The United Nations thus would maintain peace, while the specialized agencies would then build on that. The history of Unesco, however, shows that it has been difficult to put these two functions in strictly water-tight compartments. It is ever so difficult to clearly decide as to whether a thing or a situation is political or non-political. As a result, there have been times when Unesco has found itself involved in things rather political. Extreme political situations dragged Unesco in, any way.
Radhakrishnan's attitude towards the role of Unesco in this regard seems to have varied depending upon the state of the changing international environment: if, in the grip of the cold war, the world was tense and the atmosphere volatile, he advocated one approach; and if, on the other hand, the world situation had relaxed, he advised another. This is borne out by his statements in normal times, and those given when international environment was passing through a crisis.

At the preparatory conference of Unesco in 1946, the times which can be described as normal, he had explicitly stated: "the political organs of United Nations are engaged in the negative task of preventing acts of aggression. We are assigned the positive function of building peace in the minds of men".  

Similarly, at the Second Conference he had stated that "we are a non-political organisation".

But his attitude and utterances acquired a new tone as the Korean Crisis engulfed the world. In an article in the New Republic (July 1950), he wrote that till then it was still a cold war, but now with the Korean crisis the threat of actual war had become real and immediate. In this time of crisis Unesco could not

14 GC First Session, p. 27
be content with tasks which are academic and technical in character.16 "It would be splendid", he stated, "if Unesco could confine itself to cultural matters, to the methods of intellectual solidarity. Unfortunately, that does not seem possible. Unesco must concern itself with politics".17

Unesco had, perforce to concern itself with politics. Even though Unesco GC wanted that controversy or conflict within the organisation be avoided and there was hardly ever any discussion of political issues in it, the EB was not so particular. The Board, for instance, decided in a secret session that the Director-General of Unesco be authorised to use all the resources of the organisation to help the United Nations in repulsing the North Korean aggression.

Unesco's Working Philosophy

Another question on which there was some controversy was as to what exactly should be the enduring or fundamental element in the working philosophy of the organisation? No doubt, different individuals would strive differently to realise Unesco's ideals and initiate or indulge differently in its activities in light of their own attitudes, inclination

16 Ibid., p. 16.
17 GC Second Session.
and experience. Different Directors-General of the organisation, therefore, tried in their own ways and style to shape its activities: a DG's own conception of the minds of men thesis influenced his functioning and the manner in which he chose to work towards Unesco's ideals.

As one of the foremost prominent personalities, who were long and intimately associated with Unesco, took a deep personal interest in its functioning, and were totally committed to its ideals, Radhakrishnan took keen interest in the question of its working philosophy.\(^\text{18}\)

As an absolute idealist of his times, known to the world as a philosopher, statesman and a bridge-builder between East and West, Radhakrishnan brilliantly expounded and expressed Unesco's early idealism. Unesco's ideology of a dynamic humanism stemming from its constitution, which proclaims that the organisation should achieve its highest objectives in the minds of men, was akin to Radhakrishnan's passionate belief in the sanity and supremacy of the mind and spirit of man. He embodied in himself the very aims and principles of Unesco. Through his life, person, writings and activities he had endeavoured -as Unesco aimed- to

\(^{18}\) See Sathyamurthy, *POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION*, op. cit.
resolve the seeming *contradiction* between national sovereignty and the intellectual and moral solidarity of the mankind. He believed in the spirit of man and in the supremacy of ideas, and his vision of history coincided with the springs of Unesco's evolution and establishment. Accordingly, he was of the opinion that the working philosophy of Unesco should be based on a steadfast devotion to the ideals of peace, understanding and happiness of man.\(^{19}\) He was a votary of truth and non-violence. Like Unesco he had belief in the perfectability of human nature.\(^{20}\)

In the face of conflict and controversies which marred Unesco from the very beginning, he tried to keep up its optimism, idealism and spiritualism. Writing in the *Unesco Courier*,\(^{21}\) he expressed himself in the

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19 GC Tenth Session, p. 39
21 "The Days of Cultural Tribalism are over", Dec 1958, p. 6.
following words:

"We constantly speak of the inward presence of the divine in the human being, all the great religions are an invitation to human beings to grow and change their nature; though our nature may be limited, we are capable of intimate unlimited developments. They tell us that human nature need not be what it happens to be at the present movement. There is a capacity for self renewal in the human being. This assertion of the spirit in man is the hope of the world.

"Have we not rid ourselves of many pestilences which devastated humanity, of cannibalism and head-hunting? There was a time when we thought that God would be pleased if we sacrificed children on the altar. We thought religion could progress by massacres ... We have grown out of all those ideas, so also the idea that war is essential is something that we can outgrow. There is no doubt that if human nature asserts itself... this greatest pestilence of all ages will also be driven out".

Unesco, for Radhakrishnan, represented the "conscience of United Nations".22

Radhakrishnan's approach to the issue of the working philosophy of Unesco was the result, to a considerable extent, of his almost total detachment from things political and thus political rivalries, and a correspondingly sympathetic concern for the economic backwardness of the Third World countries. His approach to the working philosophy thus bordered -and was usually considered- the idealistic. He believed that Unesco had a much more far-reaching and long-range objective than the

political organs of the United Nations. Unesco was to perform a positive task, that of building peace. And positive peace, to him, meant ensuring the fundamental rights of equality of educational, political and economic opportunities for all human beings everywhere. Unesco must stand for a new way of life, a new philosophy. Its philosophy, therefore, must be one devoted to spiritual values.

But the appeal of spiritual values to be fostered by Unesco would remain hollow and uninviting as long as these values lacked the requisite material and economic foundations. Peace, through the hearts and minds of men, constituted the subjective aspect and domain of Unesco. Hearts and minds of men were the product of, rooted in, and conditioned by their socio-economic conditions. Unless these were touched, transformed and improved, the hearts and minds would remain immune and indifferent to the new framework of Unesco’s spiritual values, and the root causes of war would persist — unaffected inflammable and explosive. Conditions must, therefore, be created within and among nations, argued Radhakrishnan passionately, where social and economic injustice, oppression and ignorance had

23 GC Seventh Session, p. 49.
24 Ibid., also First Session, p. 27.
25 Ibid., Seventh Session, p. 49.
been eliminated. Only then will an enduring peace—the ultimate, unalloyed, eternal objective of Unesco—would come into existence.

Radhakrishnan was fully conscious of the great, ever-simmering and all pervasive divides of the world of his times: (a) the scientific and the philosophic approach to issues and events; (b) the developed and the under- or un-developed world; and (c) the ideological divide between the East (Communist) and the West (liberal-democratic).

In regard to (a), in so far as the material conditions of life the world over had to be improved and brought to a uniform level—economically, educationally, physically, and in matters of health and sanitation—science and technology had a great contribution to make for achieving desired results in this regard. But positive transformation of the material conditions of life will be of no avail unless awareness of the ultimate purpose of science was constantly deepened by a simultaneous use of philosophy and sociology to eradicate fear, suspicion, distrust, prejudice and hatred. He was convinced that it is only through the philosophical approach that parochialism and prejudice can be eradicated and a world-mindedness,

26 GC Second Session, p. 58; 10th Session, p. 40.
so to speak, created in its place. He was also very confident that the use of philosophical approach by Unesco could greatly undo the alienation of man brought about by growing mechanization and automation.  

The gross economic inequality between the developed and underdeveloped countries of the world was, in the opinion of Dr Radhakrishnan, a major and serious obstacle to peace and progress; no stable or sound basis in this regard could be formed as long as the categories -aid-givers and aid-receivers- persisted. For one thing this sort of transactions promoted unhealthy and stultifying dependence among nations, killing whatever initiative and creativity they were capable of -another kind of slavery. For another, it never solved the basic problems and maladies afflicting the receiving nations.

Assistance, Radhakrishnan firmly believed, must be mutual and at the level of equality. So, if the economically affluent gave material aid, the poorer under-developed had a great deal to offer by way of culture and spirituality. The aid-givers should therefore realise that they had much to gain from the spiritual foundations of some of the ancient cultures of Asia and Africa. Only when such a balance is reached can there by any sustained and all-round improvement in

28 Ibid.
the condition of the world. He wanted Unesco to work with that spirit and thus be a true leader in the material development of the East and the spiritual awakening of the West: "the so called advanced countries need self-education as much as others require reeducation".

And, for meeting the mischief being ceaselessly perpetrated by the ideological bipolarity of the world, Radhakrishnan's remedy was to make Unesco a meeting ground of nations from the antagonistic and "warring" blocks - East and West. Since it had not been possible to solve the conflicts at a political plane, Unesco could be the instrument for resolving them at an intellectual plane and thus "discover the road to peace". He was, accordingly, very pleased when the Soviet Union, Byelorussia and Ukraine joined the organisation in 1954, for this was followed by Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia who resumed active participation after previously withdrawing.

29 UNESCO DOCUMENTS 50/Proceedings, p. 374.
30 GC Fouth Session, p. 60. Fifth Session, pp. 178-180. Also see Sixth Session, pp. 152, 153 & 747.
31 "We are very glad to welcome the delegates from Soviet Russia, which has, for the first time, joined this organisation. I venture to hope that their presence here will contribute to the dissipation of the mists of misunderstanding, the dissolution, so to say, of frozen attitudes, of rigid postures, of fear, suspicion and distrust, and contribute to the development of world understanding which is one of the great objectives of this organisation.

"Not only Soviet Russia, but other countries have also joined: Byelo-Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, who were with us for some time, then left us, now, like prodigals, have come back to us. I do hope that their presence here will also help to promote world understanding". OCCASIONAL SPEECHES AND WRITINGS, first series, op. cit., p. 134.
Whatever his idealism, Radhakrishnan was not entirely devoid of practicality and pragmatism. He was fully aware of the tensions and conflicts gripping the world of 1940s and 1950s; functioning of Unesco was not rendered any easier by the distortions thus produced. The way out, in his opinion, lay in adoption by the organisation of the twin principle of universality of membership and decentralisation in functioning.

His pleadings for admitting the Peoples' Republic of China as a member of Unesco are particularly pertinent in this regard:

"While we are glad that the outstanding questions are being tackled, it is unfortunate that in many of these matters the United Nations Organisation has been by-passed. In the Geneva Conference about Indo-China, we had discussion with the People's Government of China, and their attitude was co-operative and helpful and yet that Government is still unrepresented in the United Nations, so the Indo-China Conference had to be held outside the auspices of the United Nations, thereby weakening the strength of the United Nations itself".32

On the question of decentralization of the activities of Unesco, Radhakrishnan pleaded that the organization can acquire a global character by following the principle that every culture has the capacity to nourish the spiritual life of man.33 Unesco should recognise that

32 OCCASIONAL SPEECHES AND WRITINGS, first series, op. cit., p. 137.

33 For example see, GC Third Session, pp. 41, 58; Tenth Session, p. 40.
each region had something of value to contribute to the rest. He recognized that the principles of universality and internationalism were inextricably bound together. In developing the modalities of action he always emphasized the role of National Commissions, and the universalization of international non-governmental organizations related to Unesco.34

On the role of Unesco in the progress of mankind, Radhakrishnan asserted that the organisation was meant to serve everyone, and that its raison d'etre was rooted in its educating the peoples of the world. He stressed that Unesco should work for large masses of men and women "who are neither school pupils nor scientific specialists".35 Unesco should take into account the real ambitions of the people36 since the ideals of peace and friendship among nations are not merely the concern of governments and diplomacy; these ideals must well from the impulses and emotions in the hearts of men and women.37

On the Goals and activities of Unesco

Radhakrishnan envisaged that Unesco will build loyalty to the world community in men's hearts and minds.

34 Ibid., Second Session, p. 58.
36 OCCASIONAL SPEECHES AND WRITINGS, First Series, op. cit., p. 42.
37 GC Third Session, pp. 56-57.
He recognized the role of Unesco in raising the intellectual standards, in spreading science and preserving culture. He always stressed that the activities of Unesco should be directed towards the multi-faceted development of the countries that subsequently came to be known as the 'Third World'.

He was ardently inclined to expand the Unesco's programme, in general as well as particularly in these parts, and argued for a corresponding budgetary allocation for the purpose. He laid maximum stress on the cultural aspect of the programme. Even in his interpretation of the various programmes of Unesco in the areas of education, social sciences and mass communication to be implemented through technical assistance, the emphasis was largely in terms of culture.

The cultural aspect must envelop the entire work of Unesco, for Radhakrishnan felt that ancient cultures of the East, enshrining the spiritual values desperately needed by the contemporary world, were perhaps the only contribution the under-developed countries could make for the time being. This conformed fully to his belief that Unesco must represent a two-way traffic instead of becoming a centre from where the

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., Second Session, p. 58; Third Session, p. 58.
economically backward peoples received doles from the rich nations. In accordance with the total view he took of culture, he was keen that equal emphasis be laid on both its material as well as the spiritual aspects. He often talked of culture as material-oriented, and as frequently of it being spiritually-oriented. This seems to be somewhat self-contradictory, as we shall occasion to discuss in our next chapter. (Infra, pp. 124-132).

Radhakrishnan forcefully supported the application of Science and Technology in development. He helped in the crystallization of the opinion in favour of technical assistance to the underdeveloped countries and took a very special interest in the technical assistance programme when it was launched eventually. He also argued for creating funds for development by different means and methods. The whole idea was that Unesco should devise its programmes in such a way as to meet the needs of the underdeveloped countries.

In the field of education, Radhakrishnan's greater stress was on fundamental education, and on education for International understanding, in which the social sciences had a vital role to play. In social

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., Second Session, p. 58; Sixth Session, p. 172; Eighth Session, p. 37.
42 Ibid., First Session, p. 28; Fifth Session, p. 94; Eighth Session, pp. 35-37.
sciences the priority was to be given to the removal of tensions both national and international, and to the elimination of all kinds of discrimination, particularly the racial.

Resolving of East-West tension held a special interest and a challenge in his view, for these constituted the greatest and the most fundamental of all tensions, he believed. In this task, Unesco by its very nature and intent could easily become something of a bridge-builder across continents and races by mitigating -if not undoing- the yawning psychological gulf of suspicion and hatred among peoples and places.

In sum, then, Radhakrishnan saw Unesco spearheading a sustained campaign for the minds of men, purified of the perversions of suspicion, mistrust and fear to come together for pursuit and preservation of peace-lasting, fulfilling and enriching. Differences of culture divided the mankind and created misunderstandings. Education was the means to remove the ignorance and indifference among peoples, and Unesco could -and should- contribute crucially in this through

43 Ibid., Fifth Session, p. 94.
44 Ibid., Second Session, pp. 59-60.
a two-way interaction. The task for the Unesco was thus clearly cut out: unless it wanted to face frustra-
tion and futility, Unesco must develop a particular thrust in the bulk of the mankind, which lived in the 'Third World'.