CHAPTER VII

THE INDIVIDUAL SPIRIT AND THE LIFE ETERNAL

INTRODUCTION

The world and the individual souls which have emanated from the Supreme Being, move towards their testing with a definite purpose and goal, through the process of Creative Evolution. As part of the world, the individual souls participate in the various stages of evolution to attain higher levels towards perfection.

The human individual, according to Radhakrishan, is a composite of body, mind and Spirit. Like the world, the individual self is in a process of continuous change. It is not a false appearance but a real body and mind undergoing change and progress in the Creative Process of evolution. It is a self-variation of the Spirit, a spark from a great flame.

The human Individual, is a complex of five elements, anna, prāna, manas, vijnāna and ānanda and partakes the different stages of the cosmic evolution. He also possesses a gross physical body (stula-sarīra), the subtle body (sūksma-sarīra) and the causal body (kārana sarīra). According to Natural Science which treats man as an object of inquiry, he is a link in the chain of living beings and is one among many, with a body and mind. Man is nothing more than the sequence of physical and mental processes, a chain of
events, a series of thoughts, perceptions and other responses to impressions received from outside.

7.2 THE NATURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL SELF OR SPIRIT

Human individual has reason, self-consciousness and freedom. Each individual is a spark from a great flame, a ray of the one light, differentiated within the body of the cosmic spirit. 'The spark' is an enclosure of the Divine potentialities which becomes manifest through life in the empirical world. At this stage of its present unfoldment, it utilises on the physical plane, a structural form containing mental, emotional and physical aspects. Collectively, these are called as personality. Though the structure is used as a tool, it gathers experiences for the growth of the soul or spirit personality, for Radhakrishnan includes not only body and mind, but also the spirit. The Primal Reality is behind the body and the mind and is more authentic than anything, objective in the world. Radhakrishnan says that: "Atman is the foundation of the empirical self and the kernal of the personality". ¹

Human individuals are centres of experience or processes of becoming through a creative synthesis of their relations. The growth of each human individual is possible through the influence and interaction between different individuals and the environment. The individual and the world co-exist and subsist together. What is called human progress lies in unceasing awareness of the Universal, working in man. By exploring the Nature, by striving after the wisdom and seeking God, the human individual struggles to achieve a harmony between himself and his environment. He realises that his
fragmentariness will be cured only by his devotion to the whole. So he strives after values, formulates ideals and attempts to build up an unified World of harmony. He forms various associations with common interests by organizing families, tribes and churches, countries etc. Knowledge, morality and religion are the various devices man employs for the realization of his destiny as a member of the spiritual fellowship or community. The individual self is a mixture of Being and Non-being, conscious of his finitude and limitations, his imperfections and incompleteness. This condition enables him to aspire for perfection and to attain the ultimate Goal. Man is both a temporal and an eternal being.

Radhakrishnan assets that there is a double self in man, the empirical or the human self and the transcendent self, which is the subject or spirit. The empirical self is called by Radhakrishnan variously sometimes as organized self or as Purusa, Jiva, or ego.

7.2.1 The Individual Self as an Organized whole - A Western Notion

According to Radhakrishnan, the distinctness of self-hood lies in the specific organisation with which it is united. The self is not merely a collection of mental states but characterized by systematic organisation. It is through this organization, it is active as a whole. As a result of the unity of its parts, its plans and purposes could be achieved.

It is the manner in which the self organizes itself that makes individual selves different from one another. Each individual self is a unique
entity with a historical reality having multiplicity of functions and temporal character with birth and death at the physical level. It is this uniqueness with certain amount of free choice as its essential feature that constitutes what is called personality of the individual. Personality is the union of our acts and potential ties, a complex unit of body, mind and spirit.

In the West, the nature of the self is described more in physiological and psychological terms. The certainty of the self has been established by Descartes through his method of doubt (cogito Ergo Sum). It is from this certainty that Descartes attempted to explain the other notions. What Descartes attempted to establish was the thought and the will of the self. But Radhakrishnan finds both of these as the expressions of a deeper whole, which includes the self and its objects.

The Self as an organized whole has interaction with other individuals, possesses the knowledge of the other objects and draws social relations with one another, since all these are found in one single system. It is sometimes called as the empirical self.

Radhakrishnan is not satisfied with the explanations offered by the Western Philosophers concerning the nature of the self described as one of the organisms contained in the creative process of the cosmos. In his views, this explains only the objective side of the Individual. There is a reality behind it, which is more genuine and authentic than any object. This he calls as the subject or Spirit.
7.2.2 The Individual Self as the Subject - an Eastern Notion

The Self as an organized whole has to be distinguished from the self as the subject. While the former is the problem for the study of psychology and sociology, the latter is concerned with metaphysics. The self as the subject is the substratum persistent through our thinking and experiencing, making our knowledge, recognition and retention possible. This true subject is not the object that can be observed in knowledge. While it is connected with the body, the senses and the empirical self, it is distinct from them. It is the essence and the substance of the empirical self, the absence of which makes every relation meaningless. The true subject for Radhakrishnan is the simple self-subsistent, Universal Spirit which cannot be directly presented as an object.

In order to describe the nature of the self as the subject, Radhakrishnan refers to the several similar terms found in Western Philosophy such as the 'transcendental Self' of Kant, 'Mind in man' of Plato, 'Active Reason' of Aristotle. For the vedāntin the ātman as distinguished from Jīvātman, (empirical self) is the transcendental self. Thus Radhakrishnan synthesized the two notions of the self in the East and the West.

Every human being is a mixture of being and Non-Being. It is the condition of earthly existence. The self comes from God and goes back to Him. The purpose of man's existence is to ascend to the highest creative consciousness. To fulfil the purposes of existence, man must regain his perfection.
The spiritualized man is a new genus of man, exhibiting a new quality of life. His self becomes as wide as world itself, as he feels that the One Spirit is present in all minds, lives and bodies. The superman, the masters of life, enter into conscious possession the master of life, enter into conscious possession of this truth, and act from it. They represent the eternal norm of the humanity. They are the saved souls. 

Radhakrishnan calls them 'Free-Spirits' who have vital contact with Reality, which is the source of all values.

7.3 THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE ETHICAL LIFE

7.3.1 The Law of Karma - Its structure and function

The law of karma is the organic nature of life where each successive phase grows inevitably from what has gone before. It is a moral law with a firm faith in the ethical soundness of the universe. Just as there is a physical law for the ordered cosmos, it is presupposed that there is a moral Law to determine the character of the living beings. The law emphasizes the importance of the conduct. Our actions determine our character and in turn determine our actions. Each action has a definite consequence. The law of karma has two aspects; one the retrospective and the other prospective, which explain the continuity with the past. Law of karma is not a blind necessity or a mechanical rule. It is not a hedonistic theory or a juridical theory of rewards and punishments. It is not a principle of retribution, for it emphasizes the great importance of right action.
Karma literally means action, deed. Every action produces its effects which are recorded in the organism and the environment. Though the physical effects of the action may last for a short period, their moral effects (samskāras) are supposed to work out into the character of each individual. Each single thought, word and action enter into the living chain of action and results in the formation of the character of the individual. Every action in the world, results in causes and effects. They embody the energy of the past and exert energy on the future.

7.3.1 Freedom of will can alter one's future life

Radhakrishnan maintains that the law of karma provides freedom for the individual even though it is bound by determinism. Though the self is not free from the bonds of determinism, he trusts that it can subjugate the past to a certain extent and turn it into a new course. The future can be moulded by the human individual instead of passively suffering the past. Every individual can make or unmake his future, for life is not bound to move in a specific direction. Radhakrishnan thinks that there is freedom of will for individual and the life is not fixed by the part. Though the future is the sequel of the past, one cannot say what the future would be. Radhakrishnan believes in the growth of life and to him growth is undetermined in a measure.

Radhakrishnan compares the freedom exercised by man in his life to a game of cards called "Bridge", where the cards are distributed to the players who do not select them. They can be traced to the past karma of individual players, but they are free to make any call as they think fit and may lead to
any suit, win or loose. There is the freedom for each individual in the universe marked by order and regularity. It is the rules of the game that limits us. Radhakrishnan says: "We are more free when we start the game than later when the game has developed and our choices become restricted. But till the very end there is always a choice. A good player will see possibility, which a bad one does not. The more skilled a player, the more alternatives does he perceive. A good hand may be cut to pieces by an unskillful player. Sometimes wind and tide may prove too strong for us and even the most able may come down."³

Faith in the law of karma, says Radhakrishnan, induces in us the mood of true justice. He believes that man has limited freedom with which he can change his future. "If the present state of man is the product of a long past; he can change what he has made. This past which he has built for himself and his present environment may offer obstacles to him, but they will all yield in the end to the will in him, in proportion to his sincerity and insistence."⁴

7.3.1.2 Rejection of the notions of Pre-destination, Mercy or grace of God

Radhakrishnan points out that the law of karma does not subscribe to the popular teaching in Christianity, that rewards and punishments are dependent on the arbitrary will of God. "If God pre-destines us for weal and woe, regardless of what we do, it is no use bothering about what we do".⁵
Radhakrishnan rejects the notion of pre-destination and affirms the right of every man for liberation to be achieved through actions. He does not seem to accept such notions as grace and mercy of God or free gift or forgiveness of God which are more explicit in all the theistic religions. He writes: "God has so ordered the world that if a man lives rightly, he will achieve salvation, but there is no grace, no free gift of God to enable him to do so". 

Radhakrishnan attaches high ethical value to the law of karma, for it enables man to overcome despair and it helps him to remake his life fighting against fate with the hope that future is not a finished product like the past.

7.3.2 The Hypothesis of Re-birth: Its Mechanism and Movement

The law of karma and the hypothesis of re-birth are closely associated with one another, while the law of karma has a sway over the moral actions of the individual, judging according to the right and the wrong, the notion of re-birth accompanies this law for the fructification of the actions, since a single life in many a case is not enough for achieving perfection.

Re-birth is not an eternal recurrence leading nowhere, but is a movement with meaning. According to Radhakrishnan, it is a genuine growth into personality and character from the humblest beginnings in the sub-human world. "It recognizes that the values won and character achieved are conserved as mind and purpose which accompany us even through death."
Human souls have two features - one of continuity with the past (karma) and the other, creative advance into the future (freedom).

The hypothesis of re-birth pre-supposes that the soul is eternal with a past and a future before it. The emergent view of the self makes the hypothesis of re-birth, a reasonable one. Every individual should have a past and enters into life with a certain form of nature as inheritance. Many unique characteristics are of the individual variations. It is not possible to believe that the rise of the self, with a definite nature and character, is simply fortuitous, basing on certain facts which are not explicable in any other way. For these, Mc Taggart finds no other possible explanation. He thinks that re-birth has a say over such facts. Sometimes we acquire certain skills through so much of toil and struggle, while others possess certain skills as natural gifts. There are a number of cases of infant prodigies in the East. All these facts according to Radhakrishnan find explanation in the faculties acquired by them in their earlier lives. Basing on such facts, Radhakrishnan justifies the hypothesis of pre-existence of the human individual.

7.3.2.1 The Mechanism of re-birth

There are different views held in the modus operandi of re-birth. Since the continuity of life is necessary from one birth to another, there is the necessity of assuming a subtle body which carries the impressions of its past tendencies. At the time of death, the gross body dissolves and the soul accompanied by the subtle body carries the karmas to the next body. The subtle body is the reflex image of our personality in all its phases.
Radhakrishnan considers the belief in *re-birth* as the least unsatisfactory of the views held concerning the future of the human being after death.

### 7.3.2.2 Creation of the soul at birth rejected

While admitting the pre-existence of the soul, Radhakrishnan rejects the theory that the soul is created at the time of the birth of the infant, on the ground that it is difficult to understand why there is such a difference in the nature and character imposed on each and every soul. "Creation of soul at birth", in Radhakrishnan's view, "leads to fatalism based on the caprice and cruelty of God who places us in different circumstances and judges us as if we are responsible for our actions".

### 7.3.2.3 The Mechanism of Re-birth and Hereditary Principles

Every child born to parents resemble the latter in body and mind. The resemblance in their facial forms and emotional and rational behaviour reveals the hereditary characteristics. This is not the whole explanation. In Radhakrishnan's view, it is the soul which plays a major role and not heredity. If the soul is created by God at the time of birth, it need not resemble the parents either physically or mentally. The self attempts to appropriate the physical body derived from the parents as per the laws of heredity. The self selects the frame of bodily structure which fits it in re-birth. "The deciding factor is the nature of the self but not the parents of the body. A soul by itself draws around it the necessary forces for its proper embodiment".
7.4.3 The Individual and the Life Eternal

The question of human destiny and future life has engaged the attention of many speculative Philosophers in the past. Most of the religions maintain that the soul is immortal and that there is life after death. Millions of people believed in future life, lived wholesome lives with the hope of an Eternal Life after death. Though the body and mind perish, the immortal soul in man, it is believed, still continues to exist beyond the grave. Radhakrishnan says: "... the denial of future life is inconsistent with the emergent view of the self".10

But there are many difficulties to explain the future life of man. Different religions have described the future life as Kingdom of God, Moksha, Nirvana, Heaven etc. But most of these are very vague and we do not know clearly what the future is, since this dimension is not yet open to man.

But many religions believe that there is what is called 'personal immortality' which means that the individuality of the person is preserved for eternity. Some religions believe that, liberated soul enjoys heavenly bliss in the Kingdom of God or in the state of Moksha, but these are only beliefs since no one has thorough knowledge of these states.

7.4.1 Jivanmukti (Individual Liberation)

Liberation, according to Radhakrishnan, is not a state of existence to follow the physical death, but an all-satisfying present experience which one can have in his own life. He calls this as the condition of Jivanmukti. Release,
for him, is not a state after death, but the supreme state of Being in which the spirit knows itself to be superior to birth and death, and will be able to assume forms at its pleasure. *Jivanmukti* is final release, but the individual continues to have individuality till the cosmic process is dissolved or redeemed. What we call as personal immortality, is the continuance of the released soul till the dissolution of the primary elements, and the transfiguration of the world before its return to the Spirit.

7.4.1.1 The nature of the Liberated souls or Free Spirits

Radhakrishnan describes the liberated souls with different names such as *Mukta Purusas* or "Free Spirits" etc. The released ones do not remain as solitary beings away from society. The liberated souls devote their energy to the spiritualization of the world and they are engaged in the task of raising the higher levels of spirituality among men in whose midst they live. They return to the world after enlightenment to serve their fellowmen. As enlightened men, "the Free Spirits" know, no frontiers, no barriers of sex, class or race. They love and live with every one amidst every one. The liberated souls are free from egoistic tendencies and sensuous desires. They have enlarged their heart convinced of the unity of all and hence seek after love and service for others. Their task is to work for the good of others.
7.4.1.2 The loss or retention of self-identity of the soul in the Life Eternal

There were a number of questions raised, relating to the state of the soul in the Eternal Life. The main question is whether the self loses its identity or retains its individuality in the state of Moksä or kingdom of God. Such questions take us to the area of a difficult subject. One will have to admit that our speculation and thinking in these areas of future life have limits. However, Radhakrishnan thinks that an inquisitive mind and hopeful heart seeks after general and tentative considerations, which are possible though not quite self-consistent.

7.4.1.2.1 Communion with God

Majority of the religious believers in the world are of the conviction that the soul will have communion with God, and enjoy the presence of God in the state of Moksä or in Heaven. Man in his empirical condition who suffered under transitory conditions of the world and struggled hard under imperfections, hopes after a peaceful and joyous life in the future. Some of the religions have described that experience of communion of the soul with the Divine, as direct contact with the Supreme Being (sāyujiyatā) as proximity to the Supreme (sālokyata) and as likeness with the Self (sahātmaka).

7.4.1.2.2 Loss of self-identity

There are others who believe in a state of union of the soul with the Absolute, which is indescribable. In this state, it is believed that the individual
soul loses its self identity, like the river into the sea. In other words it is complete identity of the finite with the infinite and nothing remains of the individual either in name or likeness.

7.4.2 Sarvamukti - The World Redemption

_Sarvamukti_ means salvation of the entire mankind. It does not exclude any one. Every human individual is a pilgrim in the world, a way-farer seeking and surging towards the divine kingdom. The world will not come to an end till such time the entire mankind obtains salvation. Even if there are a few remaining who have not been perfected, the released souls will make every effort to gain them perfection, through their love and service. The released souls working in the world selflessly may do different kinds of works in different forms, but all of them are treated equally, irrespective of their vocation whether a performer of ceremonies, a king, a house holder or a wanderer. They have only to renounce the desires of the heart, but not the world. The emphasise his point, Radhakrishnan refers to the similar idea in Mahāyāna Buddhism, "Where Avalokiteswara, a future Buddha, looks downwards on all the less elevated beings, helping and expecting them to rise" [1]

It is the compassion which impels the Free Spirits to build for themselves new bodies and mind to uplift the ill-privileged by teaching the saving wisdom. It is pointed out that there are two conditions that are essential for final liberation (a) Inward perfection through intuition or spiritual
experience and (b) outward perfection possible through the salvation of all. Those who obtain the first condition will remain working for the second.

7.4.2.1 Continuation of the state of liberation for eternity is a useless luxury

The Sarvamukti (world redemption) according to Radhakrishnan is not earthly paradise or millennium of the Christians, but it is the kingdom of God consisting of a society of saved or liberated souls. Radhakrishnan is highly critical of the notion of Heaven where the perfect individuals dwell enjoying the presence of God. In his view such a conception leaves the perfected souls to remain in eternal idleness without any use to anyone. A simple continuation of such a state of the released souls is a useless luxury. When the plan and the purpose of the world is achieved, when the perfection of individuals is attained, there should follow a rest without a perpetual effort. A pilgrim in the world cannot be a perpetual traveller without arriving at the destination. There is no meaning in having continuous singing without a completion of the song. There must come a time when all individuals will become sons of God to be received into the glory of immortality. There is no use of sitting down in Heaven praising God, doing nothing, remaining there all the time. Hence Radhakrishnan, believes that the time process comes to an end when the world is redeemed and the individuals saved and there remains nothing. Even the scientific description of the nature according to him takes us gradually out of the world of matter, life, mind and intelligence to a spirit utterly transcendent. In his view, “human quest ends and human thought cannot go beyond it”.
Just as the curtain is drawn, soon after a drama is played the world comes to an end with its drama played to give place for some other drama to commence. Radhakrishnan does not believe in the threat of scientific views which express that the world would be wound up one day.\textsuperscript{33}

He thinks that this will not happen and so it should not depress us. In his view, the end of time comes only with the perfection of humanity when the earth becomes full of perfected spirits.

7.4.2.2 The loss of Individuality of the Soul in the Divine is a purposeless Drive

These are several criticisms against the view that the identity of the soul with the Divine, losing its individuality, is a purposeless drive, for the Divine Spirit has brought into existence millions of individual souls and spent infinite pains on their education. It is meaningless to disintegrate the souls at the end, after passing through innumerable and difficult processes. It is a futile business to allow the individual souls whose personalities have a motto of love and service to disappear in some infinite sea of undifferentiated being. To this criticism Radhakrishnan states that such a demand has many implications. When we regard that the world reaches its final perfection as it ends, there would be nothing for progress and activity nor there would be any work for beings to think or will.
GOALS OF PERFECTION

The Hindu tradition provides different ways for attaining the goal of perfection. The *Upanisads*, the *Bhāgavādgītā* and the *Brāhma Sūtra* are emphatic about it. Radhakrishnan mentions three different methods for attaining *Moksā* (1) a knowledge of Reality (*Jnāna Mārga*) (2) an adoration and love of the supreme (*Bhakti Mārga*) and (3) by the subjection of the will to the Divine Purpose (*Karma Mārga*). They have been provided, according to the temperament of different men, some of whom are reflective, some emotional and others active. These are different types, but they are not exclusively so, for knowledge, love and action mingle together at the end.

The three *mārgās* which represent different aspects of the one movement in the concrete life are cognition, will or feeling. Though these three are logically distinguishable, they are not really separable, for it is the one movement of the soul.

The Supreme being is described as *Satchitānanda* Reality, Truth and Bliss. The Supreme is Eternal Light to those seeking knowledge, is Eternal Righteousness to those struggling for virtue and is Eternal Love, and Beauty for those who are emotionally inclined. While the Supreme has all the features, man with his cognition, will and feeling attempts to arrive at an integral life of the spirit.
REFERENCE

1. *The Brahma Sutra*, P.144
2. *An Idealist View of Life*, P.222
4. *The Brahma Sutra*, P.196
5. *Ibid.*, P.196
7. *An Idealist View of Life*, P.239