CHAPTER - X

CONCLUSION

Indian Philosophy is a combination of philosophy and religion, thought and practice. Every system of Indian Philosophy combines within itself both the philosophical and religious aspects and attempts to offer guidance to attain the goals of perfection in life through practical methods, suggested by it. Though influenced by the Western Philosophy where religion has been separated from philosophy since the Modern period, Radhakrishnan, true to the traditions of India, recognizes the significance of philosophy and religion and considers true philosophy to be true religion, without any conflict between faith and reason. He, therefore emphatically states that religion can be true only when it is philosophical. Out of the various types of philosophical schools and trends, Radhakrishnan was attracted to Absolute Idealism. It was his strong conviction that absolute Idealism, is the true philosophy. His knowledge of absolute idealism which was on top of its glory during the last quarter of 19th century and the first decade of 20th century in the West and his knowledge of most of the Idealistic systems in India and China including Advaita Vedānta of Sankara and the Idealistic schools of Buddhism, above all the Idealism of the Upanisads revealed to him that there is no second to absolute idealism to be identified as true philosophy. However, his idealism does not appear to be either as subjective idealism or as an objective idealism as understood in the West, but is spiritual idealism which includes both the subjective and the objective and yet transcends them. His idealism finds firm
foundation on the *Upanisadic* and *Vedantic* Idealism. It has been called as 'Institutional Absolute Idealism' by George conger. He is an avowed absolute idealist who judged every system of Philosophy from its standpoint including the Pluralism in the West and the Buddhism and the theism in the East.

10.1 THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF RADHAKRISHNAN'S PHILOSOPHY

The essential aspects of Radhakrishnan's philosophy centre around the acceptance of the whole of reality, the organic unity of the universe including human life and the recognition, conservation and furtherance of human values. In his view, philosophy in the present age must be made more dynamic, creative, practical and universal in scope. It should insist on modern scientific and rational approach to problems of humanity. Radhakrishnan was deeply concerned with the problems facing the modern man and took into consideration, not merely the spiritual and philosophical but also social, economic, educational, and political problems facing the modern society.

He also wanted philosophy to be made synthetic in its outlook, ready to adopt to various cultures and convictions of the people belonging to various countries. By doing so, he sought to bring about unity, understanding and a spirit of oneness in fellowship with the people of other religions and cultures of the world. He did not hesitate to take ideas from other religions and philosophies when he felt that he could accommodate them into his system. He adopted many Western philosophical terms and concepts especially from the Anglo-Hegelian tradition of Absolute Idealism and borrowed many theological
notions from the Christian religion. Spiritualism is the basic note of his philosophy in width he included idealism and realism, rationalism and mysticism, monism and theism. One finds a liberal dose of Humanism in his system, and his social philosophy is reformative and revolutionary.

10.2 RISE OF SYNCRENETIC (SYNTHETIC) RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

Brahmo Samaj was founded by a liberal Hindu, Raja Rammohan Roy who had a fairly sound knowledge of Semitic Religions and the religions of India. It is a society of the worshipers of one Universal God of all religions. A number of liberal Hindus, Muslims and Christians worshiped together at the Brahmo Church. American and British Unitarians had a combined worship service with Brahmos Revd. Adam, the Unitarian christian missionary officiated as a minister of the Brahmo Church at Calcutta for sometime, Brahmo Samaj was a syncretic religious movement with a noble aim of bringing people of different religions to worship together the one God almighty with the hope that such combined prayer and worship might strengthen their perception of other religious traditions to move gradually towards the centre of Universal convergence. It is an example of a Universal Religion, though it was not a popular one.

Theosophical Society was founded by Madame Blatsky at Madras but developed by Annie Besant by starting a number of theosophical lodges in different parts of India. It is also a syncretic religious society which respects all ancient and modern religions of the world, many Hindu and Buddhistic
doctrines are found accommodated in it. It is also an Universal Religion, where people of different religions meet and have fellowship together.

Ramakrishna Mission was established by Swami Vivekananda and his associates with the aim of propagating the gospel teachings of Ramakrishna, their Master, to the people of all lands and cultures, through its various Vedāntā centres in Europe and America. The Hindu doctrines have been interpreted in the light of Modern Science and Technology and incorporated the organisational patterns of Western Christian Mission, in the maintenance of educational, medical and philanthropic societies to serve the people all over the world. It propagated the Ideal of a Universal Religion as conceived by Hinduism of the East.

10.3 PROPHETS OF UNIVERSAL RELIGION IN INDIA

Apart from the leaders of Brahmo Samaj like Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chandra Sen who wanted a synthetic syncretistic religion as a Universal Religion, the Hindu leaders who came after the Brahmo leaders showed interest in an Ideal of a Universal Religion different from them. Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Radhakrishnan are some of them.

10.3.1

Swami Vivekananda realized that a syncretic religious movement like Brahma Samaj was a failure. He found that many unsuccessful attempts were made during the earlier centuries in India, Alexandria, China, Japan and other places to formulate a harmonious religious creed, to make all religious to come
together in love. To solve the problem of religions to come together in love. To solve the problem of religious conflicts Swamy suggested a plan for an Ideal of Universal religion. He said:

If it be true that God is the centre of all religions, and that each one of us is moving towards Him along one of these radii, then it is certain that all of us must reach the centre. And at the centre, where all the radii meet, all differences will cease; but until we reach there, differences there must be. All these radii converge at the centre... all roads lead to Rome.¹

This view pre-supposes that all the religions of the world, whether small or large, polytheistic or monotheistic are true and equal in the sight of god Almighty.

10.3.2

Mahatma Gandhi, believed that all the religions of the world are one at the bottom. That there is a unity among the variety of the world religions is the ideal of universal religion to Mahatma Gandhi who did not mention much on universal religion. He said:

I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are God-given... If only we could, all of us, read the scriptures of different faiths from the stand point of the followers of these faiths, we should find that they are at bottom all one².

The soul of religions is one but it is encased in a multitude of forms.³
I regard the great faiths of the world as so many branches of a tree, each distinct from the other though having the same source.¹

Mahatma asserts the equality and unity of all religions and characterises them as more or less perfect but not absolutely perfect. Gandhi organized combined or joint prayers for Hindus, Muslims and Christians through bajans.

10.3.3

**S.Radhakrishnan**: In one of his books published in 1925, C.C.J. Webb suggested that among the principal religious systems in the world which enjoy the allegiance of great number of people, Christianity and Hinduism may be considered especially capable of developing unto a religion for all mankind. Out of these world famous religions, Radhakrishnan felt Hinduism as better suited to be considered as a world religion. With this motive in mind, thinks Webb, Radhakrishnan has set forth his arguments in *Hindu View of Life* to prove Hinduism as a better religion for this purpose than Christianity.⁵

In *Hindu View of Life* published in 1927, Radhakrishnan suggested a Hindu solution to the problem of religious pluralism and conflicts among religions. This solution seeks the Unity of all religions, not in a common synthetic or syncretistic creed, but in a common quest. This unity is only of the Spirit, which provides freedom for every organized religion and its adherents to have their own partners of worship own patterns of worship and other external forms of religion. No creed need be absorbed by any other
religion nor any uniformity need be enforced. Radhakrishnan was so confident of this Hindu solution to the problem of conflict among religions that he prophesized of its possible future acceptance. "That the Hindu solution to the problem of the conflict of religions is likely to be accepted in the future, this seems to me to be fairly certain".6

10.4 RADHAKRISHNAN - A WORLD PHILOSOPHER AND PROPHET OF THE AGE

Radhakrishnan has been hailed as a World Philosopher, Wiseman of the East, a Prophet of the Age, Champion of the World Religions, a philosophical bi-linguist to interpret East to the West and the West to the East and a Thomas Aquinas of the 20th century. However many scholars ask the question whether Radhakrishnan constructed an independent system of philosophy of his own, apart from the Advaita Vedānta of Sankaracharya which according to some, he has followed sincerely. Many of his critics consider him only as a historian of Indian philosophy and a faithful interpreter of Advaita School of Sankara to the West in their own categories of philosophic thought, religion and culture.

Several scholars hailing from the East and the West expressed different opinions regarding the answer to this question raised. There are four different kinds of opinions to determine the philosophical status of Radhakrishnan in the Indian as well as the Western, traditions.
10.4.1

Some scholars claimed him to be the true follower of Sankaracharya whom he admired most, inspite of his deviations from the traditional *advaitic* School of thought which he himself pointed out. Prof. R.P. Singh upheld the view that Radhakrishnan: "was traditional to the core" in the reconstruction of Sankara's *Advaita*. According to T.M.P. Mahadevan, Radhakrishnan sought "to expound Sankara's *Advaita* in the light of the idealistic tradition of the West", characterising *Advaita* as Absolute Idealism.

10.4.2

There are some who consider him to be more a follower of some of the post-Sankara *Advaitins* than Sankara himself. Prof. P.T. Raju refers to some scholars who think: "That Radhakrishnan has followed some of the latest followers of the Sankrite tradition than Sankara himself."

10.4.3

There are some others particularly from the West who affirm that Radhakrishnan was a follower of Ramanuja and his school of *Visistadvaita* than Sankara’s *Advaita*. They claim him to be a true monotheist having found theistic elements appearing predominantly in his thought. The following are some of their opinions.

His (Radhakrisnan) standpoint is much nearer to our own than that of Sankara and his attitude seems to be nearest to the great sage, Ramanuja.
Though he (Radhakrishnan) regards Sankara as the greatest of Indian thinkers yet... he is following Ramanuja.

... in Radhakrishnan a large body of interpretation of mystical experience is largely a personalistic pluralism nearer to Ramaja than to Sankara.

The Advaitins led by Sankara try as hard as they can to be uncompromising: Brahman the one is one without a second. Others deviate some what from this and following Ramanuja discover more contrast within the One and develop what amounts to be the values of theism there. It is the letter tradition which Radhakrishn has championed and spread throughout the world.

Radhakrishnan claims to be an Advaitin or a follower of Sankara but his theistic bias marks him out more as a follower of Ramanuja as has been noticed by many in India.

As the cosmos is no hallucination for our philosopher (Radhakrishnan), he constructed his absolute as hardly other than the concrete God-head of the great theistic systems". "...He raises the status of God above that of Ishvara in the traditional Advaita.

10.4.4

There are still others who after a deep study of the writings of Radhakrishnan discovered that he has followed neither Sankara’s Advaita nor Ramanuja’s Visistādvaita but upheld to a position which combines the best elements in both Advaita and Visistādvaita as found embedded in the
Upanisads. This position is maintained by several other scholars who think that Radhakrishnan has deviated from Sankara's Advaita and verged on Ramanuja's Visistādvaita. P.T. Raju finds justification in the guess of a great pandit who said that: "Radhakrishnan was steering a middle course between Sankara and Ramanuja." 14 R.C. Zaehner said that Radhakrishnan is a mediator: "In the Western tradition Radhakrishnan mediates between Hegel and Bergson, in the Eastern between Sankara and Ramanuja." 15 "Radhakrishnan always, tries to reconcile the different points of view of Sankara and Ramanuja." 16 E.S. Brightman wrote: "We shall find reason to regard Radhakrishnan as inclined philosophically towards non-dualism and its impersonal absolutism, but practically towards the Bhakti with its dualism and its emphasis on the personal and the social." 17

In the words of P. Nagaraja Rao:

Radhakrishnan's idealism differs in some respects from Sankara's. His is essentially Upanisadic idealism in its comprehensiveness. He accepts the monistic and theistic strands of the Upanisads and does not sub-ordinate one to the other. 16

He does not accept the Sankarite position that Brahman is a homogeneous, noncomposite entity. It is dynamic and not immobile. "He accords unlike the traditionalists an equal status to both the phases of Brahman viz., Nīrgūṇa (static) and Sāgūṇa (Dynamic)." 19
H.N. Singh Opines:

Radhakrishnan has accentuated the positive elements in the negative metaphysics of Sankaracharya and has thus come very close to the philosophical thinking of Ramanuja and hence we can say his Vedānta certainly has struck a new ground.  

Through his interpretation of Advaita and Visistādvaita

Radhakrishnan has left the scholars to express divergent opinions concerning his philosophical status as an interpreter. He himself said thus: "While the general spirit of Sankara’s philosophy is commended in my writings, on many essential points I have developed on independent lines". Further he made it clear that his scheme of thought is not that of the Advaita of Sankara nor his Idealism that of Bradley, though there are similarities between them. Convinced of the plausibility and coherence of his own doctrines which are an original adaptation from the Upanisads, Radhakrishnan emphatically stated that: "The way in which the relation between the absolute and God is here indicated is not the same as that of either Sankara or of Bradley though it has apparent similarities to their doctrines."

Radhakrishnan has sincerely tried to do full justice to the Upanisads as containing both the theistic and absolutistic trends. He was inclined to discover a single point of view which could reconcile the main principles of Sankara and Ramanuja that could be traced to the teachings of the Upanisads which speak with a double voice in describing the nature of the Ultimate Reality. He wrote thus: "Many of my critics were puzzled by my discussion of
the *Upaṇisads*, since I did not fly a banner and fix a label to my view. My criticism of the theory of illusion generally associated with Sankara's metaphysics and supported by Deussen, led some of my critics to imagine that I was opposed to Sankara's view. My indifference to personal theism made it equally clear to some others that I was not friendly to Ramanuja's interpretation. The *Upaṇisads* are generally interpreted in the light of one or the other of the great commentators. My endeavour was to show how the *Upaṇisads* lent themselves to divergent developments and if it was not possible to give a coherent account of their teaching which would do justice to the main principles of the two chief interpreters, Sankara and Ramanuja. If we can find a single point of view from which the different interpretations can be reconciled and understood - it may be that no such point of view exists - but if one can be found it is likely that we can understand the teaching of the *Upaṇisads* better".  

10.5 IS RADHAKRISHNAN AN ORIGINAL THINKER

Some Indian scholars hesitate to offer Radhakrishnan, the credit of being an original thinker. However, a number of Western scholars and a few Indians do consider him as an original thinker. It is a pity that some Indian scholars take him for granted as a mere historian and a systematic interpreter of our ancient wisdom in the philosophical and cultural language of the West. But, it must be said of Radhakrishnan's writings that some of them were undoubtedly interpretative and others were certainly creative. Commenting on his creative work, *An Idealist view of life*, Bernard Philips pointed out that:
His (Radhakrishnan's) philosophy falls within the tradition of Philosopher Perennis and seeks claim for originality of a thinker especially in the manner in which the ideas have been presented for out times, though, the underlying ideas were not his own or original.²⁴

The original contribution according to D.M. Dutta lies in: "The way in which Radhakrishnan weaves these concepts into a philosophical and theological theory".²⁵ Datta places him as one of the few foremost modern thinkers who have attempted to construct comprehensive philosophies of their own, out of the assimilated elements of Indian and European systems of thought.²⁶ Referring to his An idealist view of life, C.E.M. Joad said: "Taken as a whole the system is indeed, an admirably ingenious attempt to reconcile claims of the two (East & West) opposed and apparently irreconcilable concepts of change and eternity".²⁷ According to Arapura, Radhakrishnan is a mediator. "He is also in no small way an original thinker".²⁸

Prof. K.S. Murthy, commenting on the question whether Radhakrishnan has anything original in his thought, said that Radhakrishnan has inspired many and he has lifted up the beacon light higher, which cannot be denied by anyone. Prof. Murthy also remarks that the originality cannot be identified with novelty and inventiveness alone, but it also lies in discovering the importance of what has already been said and in making others realise, this, which Radhakrishnan has done abundantly. Ideas already known have come alive in his writings.²⁹
What is said by Radhakrishnan about Sankara holds good for his own achievements in philosophy. His interpretations are also in the form of a new creation: The advisory Board of "The Library of the Living Philosophers" honoured Radhakrishnan by editing a volume, *The Philosophy of sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, in their series which included the philosophies of such great living philosophers as John Dewey, A.N.Whitehead, G.E.Moore, Bertrand Russel etc. Twenty three eminent scholars, thirteen of whom were from reputed Western Universities, contributed lengthy, critical and appreciative articles on the Philosophic, religious, ethical, social and Political aspects of the Philosophy of Radhakrishnan. The very title of the volume "The Philosophy of Radhakrishnan" upholds and testifies that Radhakrishnan has an independent philosophy. The Editor of this volume Dr.P.A.Schilpp wrote in his preface thus:

It was inevitable therefore that an oriental philosopher of such world wide reputation as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, should become the subject of a volume in this series. And this perhaps all the more so, because he also is one of the foremost living Absolute Idealists, representing the philosophy which thus far, has had no representation in our library.\(^{30}\)

H.N.Singh is of the view that originality was denied to Radhakrishnan by his own countrymen because of the use of ancient ideas presented in the modern context. He points out how the Westerners appreciate the originality of Kant and Hegel though their ideas and doctrines, at least a good share of them, are based on Platonic Idealism. They did not, according to him, deny Kant and Hegel, the honour of being original thinkers on the ground that their ideas have been carried into their philosophies from Plato.
10.6

A deep study of Sankara's Advaita and Radhakrishnan's philosophy through his writings very clearly reveals that each has an independent philosophy different from the other. Though both of them derived the concepts mainly from the Upanisads, their interpretations have been different. Whereas Sankara was influenced by the Buddhistic schools of thought of his time, Radhakrishnan was influenced by Absolute Idealists and Christian Personalities of the Western world. Besides the superior civilization of the west with its independent culture, religion, science, politics etc., had a special bearing on the sensitive mind of Radhakrishnan.

Radhakrishnan thought that there need not be only two interpretations of Sankara and Ramanuja for the Upanisads, the Bhāgavādgītā and the Brāhma Sūtra. A third interpretation could also be a possibility. Hence he attempted to develop a system of thought, taking a middle way between Advaita and Visistādvaita, which could do justice to the jñāni and the Bhakta, the Philosopher and the common man, the Personal God and the absolute. His scheme of thought also takes a middle position between the absolute idealists and personalists of the West, who were clashing with each other during the later part of the 19th and early part of 20th century. For practical purposes the philosophy of Radhakrishnan appears from Eastern side as one version of Vedāntā, interpreted on the basis of the Upanisads, Bhāgavādgītā and the Brāhma Sūtra and from the Western side, the same appears as a perfect system of Absolute Idealism in "Eastern dress", as G.J.Conger puts it, as an Eastern version of western absolute idealism.
Radhakrishnan made it very clear that his system of philosophy does not belong to any system or thinker or any nation, though he was influenced by many a system and thinker of the world. Hence he said his is one Universal and perennial philosophy belonging neither to East nor West but all lands and cultures - Upanisadic seers, Buddha, Plato, Plotinus, Hillel, Philo, Jesus, Paul and mystics of Islam. Therefore, one cannot say that his system is made up of exclusively either Indian or Western, advaitic or Visistādvaitic, Realistic or Idealistic, Theistic or Absolutistic, Rational or Mystical, Monistic or pluralistic, Abstract or Concrete, Intellectual or Intuitional, Personal and impersonal other worldly or this worldly Transcendental or Immanent. All these extremes, as stated by C.A.Moore, have been reconciled by Radhakrishnan into a veritable synthesis, by taking a middle path. These extremes are not exclusive, but by being inclusive, they are transcended in order to find a synthetic whole. This synthesis is not mere eclecticism or moderation. The spiritual insights attempt at a synoptic vision (Samanvaya) a synthesis where the extreme doctrines lose their extremity and fall within the synthetic frame work (scheme of thought) for a world system of philosophy. Radhakrishnan named the version of his scheme of thought at first as An Idealist View of Life, later he called it as a "Spiritual View of the Universe". Finally in The Fragments of a Confession, he showed his preference to call it "The Religion of the Spirit", offered as a world philosophy to meet the World’s needs and the demands of the Modern man.
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