INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

Political thinkers right from the time of Plato and Aristotle have had a lasting impact on contemporary political developments. In modern India, leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherseshah Mehta, Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak, Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru have contributed significantly to the political development. Many independent studies have already been completed about the political thought of these dignitaries. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, though initially a philosopher and an academician, was one of the leaders of Modern India who had himself thought deeply about the problems and other important aspects affecting the social and political field. His thoughts have also been influenced by his close acquaintance with Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru. He had held different political appointments since independence and was also an influential member of the Constituent Assembly. It is, therefore, important and necessary to get acquainted with his social and political thoughts. He had the capacity of thinking independently. He also had an excellent academic and philosophical background. Apart from his writings on Indian Philosophy which are classics in the field, he was known the world over through his learned works and his lectures at different places in Europe and
America. It is for this reason that like Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru, it is Radhakrishnan who is one of the world-renowned figures.

Even before he came into political field, Radhakrishnan was not merely a philosopher or a professor but was always in contact with current developments of the world. He was appointed a member of the International Committee for Intellectual Co-operation of the League Nations. He belonged to a generation which saw two world wars and the rise of new democracies in Asian and African countries. He was closely associated with the various problems of modern India, first as a member of the Constituent Assembly, then as an Ambassador to U.S.S.R. and later as Vice-President and President of the Indian Republic. At the same time he was actively associated with UNESCO. He visited most of the leading countries and was always listened to with deep respect and attention. He had several opportunities of expressing his thoughts on all contemporary developments in India and abroad. His mature writings and speeches are full of critical as well as constructive thoughts on democracy, communism, world peace, future of humanity, etc.

As a philosopher, he had studied Hindu social institutions especially in comparison with the West,
and was among the most suitable persons to express his social thought which has no less an impact than his political thought.

His reflections on culture and civilisation as a whole, especially of the West, deserve a critical study. He has drawn our attention to the failings and weaknesses of the Western society and social institutions. At the same time, he has been critical (especially during the later years) of Hindu social institutions. Hence his social and political thoughts offer us a rich field of a critical and comparative study of the East and the West.

In the present thesis, Chapter I includes Radhakrishnan's biography which points out his achievements in the different fields of activity and especially his impact on the social and political events in modern India.

Chapter II deals with his lucid exposition of Indian philosophy through which he has been successful in enforcing a rapprochement between East and West. This Chapter also includes some of his suggestions for improvements in Hinduism to suit modern times.

In Chapter III are summarised his thoughts on human freedom and liberation. It also attempts
a review of Radhakrishnan's interpretation of the
caste system in India, the four Ashramas and the
Purusharthaas. Lastly, his views on womenhood are
collected to show how he tried to strike a golden
mean between the orthodox traditions and modern
permissiveness.

Chapter IV explains Radhakrishnan's thought
on Education. This Chapter elucidates his ideas
about the proper aims of education and his suggestions
regarding the realisation of these aims. It also
includes the special importance he attaches to
women's education.

In Chapter V are compiled Radhakrishnan's
views on human civilisation, his analysis of the
present crisis as also his constructive suggestions
to correct the basic ills.

Chapters VI onward deal with his Political
thought.

Chapter VI explains his ideas about ideal
democracy which he feels can be worth the name only
if it brings social and economic justice.

Chapter VII analyses his gradual transforma-
tion from a critic of the Communist philosophy to a
thinker who appreciated with an open mind the
achievements of the Communist government and felt that co-existence with these States was essential.

Chapter VIII assesses his contribution to UNO and especially UNESCO. He strongly felt that the World Organisation should help to realise the ideal of humanity as a large family in which those who are better off should always be ready to help the down-trodden. He also believed that wars are rooted in the minds of men and that the citadels of peace must be built in the minds of men through proper education and through bridging the vast economic gaps between the advanced and the backward nations.

Chapter IX shows how Radhakrishnan was an internationalist with a firm belief in the world peace through methods of negotiation and arbitration. He particularly insists on the development of an international commonwealth in the light of the tremendous advance of science and technology which have made the world small enough to be annihilated by the vast destructive power of modern armaments.

In Chapter X are explained Radhakrishnan's views on the significance of the Third World and its relation to India. This Chapter emphasises the special religious-cum-cultural ties between the
nations of the Third World. It also brings out the importance he attaches to this group which can bring about a proper change in the outlook of the world powers and save the world from a catastrophe.

Chapter XI attempts evaluation of Radhakrishnan as a social and political thinker.

In such a study definite conclusions or positive assertions do not have much importance. However, every such study does have some significant material for further reflections, e.g. it is pertinent to ask some of the following questions: Was Radhakrishnan primarily a man of thought or action? Was he a conservative or a critical thinker? Was he unduly critical of the West? Was he over-enthusiastic in his pride of his Eastern religious traditions? What were according to him the blemishes of Indian society? How did he account for their appearance in the course of Indian History? How far, according to him, were the social institutions in India relevant? If he found them to be out of date, what remedy did he suggest to remove them? What was his assessment of the caste system, untouchability and women's role in Hindu society? Similarly, it is proper to ask what he thought of democracy in the present day India, how he proposed to improve its working,
what he thought of the Western nations, both capitalist and communist, how he viewed India's role in the third world, especially in the light of World Peace, and so on.

An attempt is made in the following Chapters to deal with the problems stated above.