



## RADHAKRISHNAN ON HINDU DHARMA

Shomaila Nasir

Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, A.M.U, Aligarh,  
Mobile no: +917900757151 Email Id- shomailanasir14@gmail.com

### Abstract:

Radhakrishnan has spent almost seven decades reflecting on Religion in journal and Hindu Religion in particular. For Radhakrishnan, Dharma is not a set of doctrines but a moral and spiritual quest. Religion is, in essence, experience, of or living contact with Ultimate Reality. Mystical experience, for Radhakrishnan is the essence of religion. The realization of 'Divine' is the goal of religious life.

While fixed intellectual beliefs mark off one religion from another, Hinduism Subordinates intellect to intuition, dogma to experience, outer expression to inward realization. Hindu thinkers have always preached and cultivated fellowship of faith. No account of God is full and find.

Hinduism, for Radhakrishnan, is primarily a way of life. Critics of Hinduism have wrongly one emphasized the doctrine of Maya to be central doctrine of Hindu thought, culture, ethics and metaphysics. On the basis of this wrong assumption, they have argument that for a Hindu ethical values are meaningless, the world of nature is unreal, human history is illusory and liberation from this illusory existence is the highest end of all over ethical and spiritual struggle. The various theistic systems adopted by majority of Hindus do not advocate the doctrine of Maya. Rather, they take a realistic view of the world. It is only Shankara who has advanced the doctrine of Maya. The critique of Hinduism also interpret law of karma as negation of human freedom. According to Radhakrishnan, The law of karma just signifies the Divine Supervision of justice.

Thus, Radhakrishnan tries to advance or project a concept of 'Dharma' or 'Religion', which is in tune with contemporary intellectual, philosophical and methodological on lieu. He is interpreting 'Dharma' or 'Religion' in keeping with the imperatives and challenges of a pluralistic global society. His interpretation of 'Dharma' or 'Religion' is also in accord with ongoing scientific research and technological advancement.

**Key Words:** Religion, Dharma, Hinduism, Vedanta, Experience, Realization, Maya, Illusory, Fellowship, Faith, Philosophical, Methodological, Interpretation, Evaluation.

The word 'Dharma' is one of the four purusarthas. It signifies 'religion', 'way of life', 'value-system', 'the mode of our being and behaving' etc. It signifies 'religion' as well as 'morality'. It signifies our individual ethos and collective culture. In a more restricted and popular sense, the term 'Dharma' means the duties we have towards ourselves, towards others or towards society. Thus, Dharma is an ideal not only for man but for society as well. Values such as Truth, Beauty and Goodness are not only to be individually realised but to be realized at social level also. Radhakrishnan writes:

“Dharma is right action. In the Rg Veda, rta is the right order of the universe. It stands for both the satya or the truth of things as well as dharma or the law of evolution. Dharma formed from the root dhr, to hold, means that which holds a thing and maintains it in being. Every form of life, every group of men has its’ dharma, which is the law of its being. Dharma or virtue is conformity with the truth of things, adharma or vice is opposition to it. Moral evil is disharmony with the truth which encompasses and controls the world”.<sup>1</sup>

The term ‘Dharma’ is one of complex significance. It stands for all the ideals and purposes, influences and institutions that shape the character of man both as an individual and a member of a society.

According to Radhakrishna, ethics and religion are intimately linked together. Dharma is both moral righteousness and religious perfection. Dharma is essentially a combination of religion and ethics.<sup>2</sup>

Dharma is nothing but virtue. Dharma is conformity with the truth of things. On the other hand, moral evil signifies not to be in conformity with the truth of things which encompasses and controls the world. Dharma is not a set of doctrines but a moral and spiritual quest:

“Though dharma is absolute, it has no absolute and timeless content. The only thing eternal about morality is man’s desire for the better”.<sup>3</sup>

Radhakrishnan is convinced that there is no difference between ‘true religion’ and ‘true morality’. The true religion, according to Radhakrishnan:

“.... Is spiritual certainty offering us strength and solace.... It is the conviction that love and justice are at heart of the universe.... It is the faith that though the waves on the shores may be broken, the ocean conquers nevertheless”.<sup>4</sup>

The English word ‘Religion’ comes from two words: ‘re’ and ‘ligare’. ‘Re’ means ‘again’ and ‘ligare’ means ‘binding’. Religion thus means what binds again. It is the binding force which brings into harmony the internal nature and external behavior of man. It harmonises the physical and spiritual nature of man. In this way, the Sanskrit word ‘Dharma’ and English word ‘Religion’ do share some measure of meaning. Radhakrishnan writes:

“Religion is, in essence, experience of or living contact with ultimate reality. It is not a subjective phenomenon, not mere cultivation of the inner life, but the apprehension of something that stands over against the individual.... Though religious experience is analogous in some respects to the other manifestations of spiritual activity such as scientific genius, artistic creation or moral heroism, it cannot be identified with any of them. It is unique and autonomous. The spirit is at home with itself in religion and its life satisfies every side of our being”.<sup>5</sup>

Radhakrishnan is in fundamental agreement with Hindu view of religion. Mysticism, for Radhakrishnan, is the essence of religion. The realization of ‘Divine’ is the goal of religious life. We need not necessarily go to hills and jungles to realize the ‘Divine’.

We can realize the 'Divine' by active participation in Absolutes' creativity. Religion, in essence, is a living contact with Ultimate Reality.

Hinduism as a religion, according to Radhakrishnan, has no dogmatic limits. It is more an inward realization than a dogmatic creed. Hinduism, as a religion, is not an advocacy of academic doctrines. It is rather a way of life:

"The Hindu attitude to religion is interesting. While fixed intellectual beliefs mark off one religion from another, Hinduism sets itself no such limits. Intellect is subordinated to intuition, dogma to experience, outer expression to inward realization. Religion is not acceptance of academic abstractions or the celebration of ceremonies, but a kind of life or experience. It is insight into the nature of reality (darsana), or experience of reality (anubhava). This experience is not an emotional thrill or a subjective fancy, but is the response of the whole personality, the integrated self to the central reality. Religion is a specific attitude of the self, itself and no other, though it is mixed up generally with intellectual views, aesthetic forms and moral valuations".<sup>6</sup>

The Hindu scriptures do rest on intuition of seers. However, Hinduism does not find any contradiction between reason and intuition:

"Blind belief in dogma is not the faith which saves. It is an unfortunate legacy of the course which Christian theology has followed in Europe that faith has come to connote a mechanical adherence to authority. If we take faith in the proper sense of trust or spiritual conviction, religion is faith or intuition. We call it faith simply because spiritual perception, like other kinds of perception, is liable to error and requires the testing processes of logical thought. But, like all perception, religious intuition is that which thought has to start from and to which it has to return. In order to be able to say that religious experience reveals reality, in order to be able to transform religious certitude into logical certainty, we are obliged to give an intellectual account of the experience. Hindu thought has no mistrust of reason. There can be no final breach between the two powers of human mind, reason and intuition. Beliefs that foster and promote spiritual life of the soul must be in accordance with the nature and the laws of the world of reality with which it is their aim to bring us into harmony. The chief sacred scriptures of Hindus, the Vedas, register the intuitions of perfected souls. They are not so much dogmatic dicta as transcripts from life. They record the spiritual experiences of souls strongly endowed with the sense for reality. They are held to be authoritative on the ground that they express the experiences of the experts in the field of religion. If the utterances of Vedas were uninformed by spiritual insights, they would have no claim to our belief. The truths revealed in the Vedas are capable of being re-experienced on compliance with ascertained conditions. We can discriminate between the genuine and spurious in religious

experience, not only by means of logic but also through life. By experimenting with different religious conceptions and relating them with the rest of our life, we can know the sound from the unsound”.<sup>7</sup>

The Hindu attitude to the Vedas is one of trust tempered by criticism, trust because the beliefs and norms which helped our fathers are likely to be of use to us also; criticism because, however valuable the testimony of past ages may be, it cannot deprive the present age of its’ right to inquiry. Precious as are the echoes of the God’s voice in the souls of men of long ago, our regard for them must be tempered by the recognition of the truth that God has never finished the revelation of His wisdom and love. Besides, our interpretation of religious experience must be in conformity with the findings of Science. As knowledge grows, our theology develops. Only those parts of tradition which are logically coherent are to be accepted as superior to the evidence of the senses and not the whole tradition.<sup>8</sup>

The Hindu religion is open-ended. It deems all religions as leading to the Supreme. All human beings are the children of God and directed by His Wisdom and Providence:

“Christian theology, for example, takes its’ stand on the immediate certitude of Jesus as one whose absolute authority over conscience is self-certifying and whose ability and willingness to save the soul it is impossible not to trust. Christian theology becomes relevant only for those who share or accept a particular kind of spiritual experience and they are tempted to dismiss other experiences as illusory and other scriptures as imperfect. Hinduism was not betrayed into this situation ..... The Hindu thinker readily admits other points of view than his own and considers them to be just as worthy of attention. If the whole race of man, in every land, of every colour, and every stage of culture, is the offspring of God, then we must admit that, in the vast compass of his providence, all are being trained by his wisdom and supported by his love to reach within the limits of their powers to a knowledge of the Supreme”.<sup>9</sup>

Hinduism recognizes the differences of taste and temperament. Therefore, it accepted all religions leading to the realization of God :

“When the Hindu found that different people aimed at and achieved God-realisation in different ways, he generously recognised them all and justified their place in the course of history. He used the distinctive scriptures of the different groups for their uplift since they remain the source, almost the only source, for the development of their tastes and talents, for the enrichment of their thought and life, for the appeal to their emotions and the inspiration of their efforts”.<sup>10</sup>

According to Radhakrishnan, Hinduism is a growing tradition. Historically speaking, it has been influenced by many forces: These forces either emerged within India or came from outside India. New conditions always stimulated Hindu philosophers. Accordingly, they responded to these new conditions. In this process new beliefs, values and ideals emerged and flourished in India. Firstly, Vedic Aryans faced the

native tribes across India. In course of time, they developed a synthesis between the Vedic beliefs, practices and rituals and those of the native tribes. When Aryans came into contact with highly civilized Dravidians, Vedism was transformed into theistic religion. The Jain and Buddhist movements also inspired radical reinterpretation of Hindu beliefs and values. From eighth to eighteenth century A.D. Hindu beliefs and practices were influenced by Islamic views and values. The Bhakti movement led by Ramananda, Caitanya and Kabir and Sikhism as it emerged from the teachings of Guru Nanak were inspired by Islam. The Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj movements in modern India were inspired by western impact on Hindu society.<sup>11</sup>

In view of this historical course of Hinduism, we should not come to the conclusion that it is a mere flow of opinions. Despite great variety of interpretations inspired by various cultural influences in and outside India, Hinduism is essentially rooted in Vedanta. For the last four or five thousand years, Hinduism has evolved within the broad framework of Vedanta comprised of three divisions; Upanisads, Brahma Sutra and Bhagvadgita. The Upanisads embody the experiences and intuitions of ancient rishis and sages. The Brahma Sutra attempts a logical presentation of the essential elements of Upanisads. The Bhagvadgita is primarily a yoga sastra. It provides us the basic means of attaining to a truly spiritual life. These three divisions, according to Radhakrishnan, together constitute the absolute standard for the Hindu religion.<sup>12</sup>

The Vedanta comprised of Upanisads, Brahma Sutra and Bhagvadgita are the standard-bearers of Hinduism. They may be said to be the original sources of Hindu beliefs, values and norms. The numerous Hindu sects have been interpreting Vedanta in the light of their religious views, for Vedanta is not a religion but the very universal religion which can be appropriated by various sects. The sectarian interpretations of Hinduism are inspired by the historical and cultural differences. Vedanta as the religion is universal and eternal:

“All sects of Hinduism attempt to interpret the Vedanta texts in accordance with their own religious views. The Vedanta is not a religion, but religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance. Thus the different sects of Hinduism are reconciled with a common standard and are sometimes regarded as the distorted expressions of the one true canon”.<sup>13</sup>

Radhakrishnan claims that Hindu scriptures have accepted the plurality of mystical visions. Upanisads say that God is fashioned by the heart, understanding and will.<sup>14</sup> Our visions and experiences of Reality are not unvarnished but impacted by our cultural presuppositions and our personal prejudices. The Divine is revealed to human beings in the light of their predilections. The religious or mystical genius is deeply influenced by our personal, social, cultural and historical factors. Man experiences God or mystery of God is revealed to him in the framework of his own presuppositions. There cannot be any pure understanding or interpretation of God. That we do have different concepts of God or that we describe God in different terms only indicates our understanding or interpretation of God is imperfect or inexact or untrue. It does not amount to any imperfection in God or denial of the Reality of God. The descriptions and symbols used by various religions are historical markers used by man to point towards God. However, God is beyond symbols and descriptions. He is indefinable, unanalyzable, indescribable and incomparable. He is beyond the

categories of human understanding. In view of the same, the Hindu thinkers point to God by the use of negatives. God is He who cannot be seen, cannot be spoken about, cannot be thought, cannot be known, cannot be understood etc. We can go on saying what God is not. We cannot say what He is. There are mystics who define God as Darkness or as Silence.<sup>15</sup>

Each religion has interpreted Reality either as personal God or as Absolute. Rationalists and mystics have tended to interpret Reality as Absolute. The ethical theists have interpreted Reality as personal God:

“The suprapersonal and the personal representations of the Real are the absolute and relative ways of expressing the one reality. When we emphasise the nature of reality in itself we get the absolute Brahman; when we emphasize its’ relation to us we get the personal Bhagavan”.<sup>16</sup>

Radhakrishnan claims that different conceptions of reality should not be supposed to be self-contradictory. They are various levels of interpretations of the same Reality. The polytheism of masses is not false and monotheism of classes is not true, just as green leaves are not false and crimson flowers are not true. Hinduism accepts all interpretations of Reality as human efforts to comprehend the incomprehensible. However, that does not mean we can go on encouraging or tolerating all kinds of superstitions in the name of Hindu liberalism. There is perennial need for spiritual evolution. It should become an ongoing educational mission to orientate Hindu masses towards higher levels of spiritual vision.<sup>17</sup>

Radhakrishnan is one of the foremost advocates and exponents of fellowship of faith. He is convinced of the essential oneness of all religions despite their doctrinal disagreements. He says that although theologians through their different dogmas and interpretations try to defend the identity and autonomy of their respective religions, mystics of all religions through their realization and love of One God bring out the reality and necessity of one Universal Religion. Radhakrishnan writes :

“It matters not whether the seer who has the insight has dreamed his way to the truth in the shadow of the temple or the tabernacle, the church or the mosque. Those who have seen the radiant vision of the Divine protest against the exaggerated importance attached to outward forms. They speak a language which unites all worshippers as surely as the dogmas of the doctors divide. The true seer is gifted with a universality of outlook..... He whose consciousness is anchored in God cannot deny any expression of life as utterly erroneous. He is convinced of the inexhaustibility of the nature of God and the infinite number of its’ possible manifestations”.<sup>18</sup>

Hindu religion has always recognized that there can be no final understanding or interpretation of God. All religious interpretations reveal various aspects of the same Reality:

“.....our accounts of God are likely stories, but all the same legendary. Not one of them is full and final. We are like little children on the seashore trying to fill our shells with water from the sea. While we cannot exhaust the waters of the deep sea by

means of our shells, every drop that we attempt to gather into our tiny shells is a part of the authentic waters. Our intellectual representations differ simply because they bring out different facts of the one central reality. From the risis, or seers of the Upanisads down to Tagore and Gandhi, the Hindu has acknowledged that truth wears vestures of many colours and speaks in strange tongues. The mystics of other denominations have also testified to this”.<sup>19</sup>

No creed or way of life can claim to be the only way to salvation. All people have the same spiritual status in the eyes of God :

“Hinduism does not believe in bringing about a mechanical uniformity of belief and worship by a forcible elimination of all that is not in agreement with a particular creed. It does not believe in any statutory methods of salvation. Its’ scheme of salvation is not limited to those who hold a particular view of God’s nature and worship. Such an exclusive absolutism is inconsistent with an all-loving universal God. It is not fair to God or man to assume that one people are the chosen of God, that their religion occupies a central place in the religious development of mankind, and that all others should borrow from them or suffer spiritual destitution”.<sup>20</sup>

Radhakrishnan maintains that Hindu approach to religion is slowly gaining ground in the contemporary global society. For Hinduism every person, every group and every nation has a distinct individuality which merits respect. Every human being, every cultural group and every society must be accorded fullest freedom to cultivate its’ distinctive individuality. Each one of us deserves the freedom to celebrate the distinct or characterizing features of our individual and collective existence. There is ample scope for religious, ideological and cultural pluralism across the globe.<sup>21</sup>

Presently, the world is emerging as a commonwealth of nations as it is also emerging as a commonwealth of religions. Scientific research and technological development is bringing nations together, so it is bringing religions together. We are trying to learn to live in harmony and peace both as political nations and as religious cultures. The harmony and peace cannot be achieved unless we fastly learn to give up the mindset leading to political colonialism and spiritual exclusivism. Fortunately, the political ideal of the modern world is the establishment of a brotherhood of free nations. Correspondingly, the religious ideal of the modern world is the establishment of global society based on fellowship of faith and cultural pluralism. Every nation, religion and culture is expected to freely contribute to world society while at the same time retaining, preserving and safeguarding its’ specific identity and character. The spirit of democracy cannot be confined to the management of political affairs of the world. It is extending to cultural and spiritual realms of mankind as well. From political self-determination we are graduating to cultural and spiritual self-determination as well. Radhakrishnan writes :

“The different religions are slowly learning to hold out hands of friendship to each other in every part of the world. The parliaments of religions and conferences and congresses of liberal thinkers of all creeds promote mutual understanding and harmony. The study

of comparative religion is developing a fairer attitude to other religions. It is impressing on us the fundamental unity of all religions by pointing out that the genius of the people, the spirit of the age and the need of the hour determine the emphasis in each religion. We are learning to think clearly about the inter-relations of religions. We tend to look upon different religions not as incompatibles but as complementaries, and so indispensable to each other for the realization of the common end".<sup>22</sup>

Hinduism for Radhakrishnan is primarily a way of life. Therefore, he offers a justification of Hindu way of life, its' ethical values and ideals and social structure. Radhakrishnan says that critics of Hindu view of life, Hindu philosophy of God, man and the world and Hindu ethical values and standards, have wrongly overemphasized the doctrine of Maya to be central doctrine of Hindu thought, culture, ethics and metaphysics. On the basis of this wrong assumption, they have argued that for a Hindu ethical values are meaningless, the world of nature is unreal, human history is illusory and deliverance or liberation from this illusory worldly or social, political and economic existence is the highest end of all our ethical or spiritual struggle.<sup>23</sup>

Radhakrishnan points out that Hindu scriptures and philosophical texts of various Hindu systems of philosophy do not advance the doctrine of Maya. The Vedas have adopted a realistic view of the world. The Upanisads emphasise on the relative reality of the world. In Upanisads all the objects of the world are considered significant for they are instrumental in our spiritual struggle for self-realisation. Even when some Upanisads call Brahman to be a great Magician, it means the world is a product of Brahman. The Upanisads do not advocate the illusionary view of the world.

The various theistic systems adopted by majority of Hindus do not advocate the doctrine of Maya. Rather, they take a realistic view of the world. It is only Shankara who has advanced the doctrine of Maya.<sup>24</sup> As Shankara sees it, the manifold of experience whether of co-existence in space or sequence in time is ever incomplete and partial and we cannot unify it. The fact that the 'space and time world' cannot be rounded into a systematic whole indicates that it is imperfect and unreal. However, Shankara does not advocate the theory of illusionism. Shankara advances arguments against the subjectivism of Vijnanavadins. He affirms the extra-mental reality of objects. He does not advance any subjectivistic account of the world. He does not advocate that existence of physical objects depends upon human perception. He distinguished dreams from waking experiences. He is a realist so far as our experience goes. Moksa for Shankara does not spell destruction of the world but replacement of a false outlook by a true one. The world is not denied. It is rather reinterpreted.<sup>25</sup>

Shankara like many more eastern and western thinkers admits the inability of human mind to grasp the mystery of the relation of God to the world. However, Shankara has never said that life is a dream and all experienced events are illusions.<sup>26</sup>

Critics of Hinduism have also alleged that for Hindus ethical rules are meaningless because the world is divine and everything is God. There is no criterion of good and evil. If God is immanent in everything, then we are divine and whatever we do is divine. Such a metaphysical or theological position cuts at the very roots of our ethical consciousness. Radhakrishnan does not accept such an interpretation of Hindu metaphysics. He admits that Hindus do not accept a wholly transcendental God who is

beyond the beyond and then beyond the beyond. The Hindus do not deem the world also to be absolutely separate from God. They accept or believe in an immanent God. They do not accept a cold and formal God. God does indwell in the universe. However, it does not mean identity of God with the universe. Hindus do emphasise on the transcendent character of the Supreme. He does bear the universe but is not lost into it. The world is in God and God is not in the world. The organic, the inorganic, the conscious, the unconscious, the animal, the moral man, the immoral man etc., all are reflections of the divine spark. However, God is more fully revealed in the organic, in the conscious, in the man and in the moral man than in the inorganic, the unconscious, the animal and the immoral man. There are divine potentialities even in the worst of men. However, it does not mean nothing is good and nothing is evil. All of us have to carry out the moral and spiritual struggle to ignite divine potentialities in ourselves.

The critics of Hinduism also interpreted law of Karma as a negation of human freedom and therefore a negation of all moral struggle. Radhakrishnan does not agree with this interpretation of law of Karma. He says just as scientists advance law of conservation of energy or law of universal gravitation as governing the universe, Hindus have recognised the law of Karma universally operating in the realm of morals and actions. While followers of other religions were indulging in immoral activities and justifying it as will of God, Hindus did recognize the law of Karma and insisted on the primacy of ethical. They identified God with rule of law. All is law yet all is God. Karma is not a mechanical law but a spiritual necessity. It is the embodiment of the mind and will of God. The law of Karma signifies the divine supervision of justice.

With reference to Hindu social order, Radhakrishnan emphasizes on various aspects of Hindu philosophy. The Rta or Universal Order demands that there be a moral law or law of Karma operating everywhere. The Hindu religion also accepts four purusarthas viz., Artha or pursuit of wealth, Kama or satisfaction of desires, Dharma or moral righteousness and Moksa or liberation of a human being from the cycle of birth and rebirth. It accepts four stages of life for the educational, moral and spiritual training of man. It accepts three pathways of devotion, knowledge and action as leading to liberation of man. It accepts four castes such as Brahmins spreading knowledge, Ksatriyas establishing government and defending law and order, Vaisyas producing and distributing wealth and Sudras working for the welfare of the society at large.

Radhakrishnan is a very great Indian philosopher. However, he is also a philosopher who has deep understanding of western philosophy. Joad writes about Radhakrishnan, "The function, the unique function which Radhakirhsnan fulfills today is that of a liason officer. He is to build a bridge between the traditional wisdom of the east and the new knowledge and energy of the west".<sup>27</sup>

Hinduism is free from fanaticism and exclusivism, according to Radhakrishnan :

"Hinduism developed an attitude of comprehensive charity instead of a fanatic faith in an inflexible creed.... Many sects professing many different beliefs live within the Hindu fold.... Hinduism is wholly free from the strange obsession of some other faiths that the acceptance of a particular religious metaphysics is

necessary for salvation, and non-acceptance there is a heinous sin”.<sup>28</sup>

The fight over dogmas is untenable. It is religious experience through contemplation that reveals the truth :

“When we dispute over dogmas, we are divided. But when we take to the religious life of contemplation we are brought together.... The hardness of the ego melts, the tentativeness of creed is revealed and intense focusing of all souls on Being is grasped”.<sup>29</sup>

Sometimes, Radhakrishnan goes too far in his critique of religious fanaticism:

“Sometimes Radhakrishnan seems to be taken aghast by the intolerance that the religions have displayed towards each other. Religious piety seems to destroy moral sanity.... Nothing is so hostile to religion as other religion.... The world would be a much more religious place if all religions were removed from it”.<sup>30</sup>

Radhakrishnan finally suggest that there cannot be any final interpretation of religion. All religious interpretations have to evolve in the light of fresh challenges and requirements :

“The scriptures of an earlier age cannot answer the problems of our time. The great representatives of Indian culture were men of mobility and ceaseless adventure. We are not loyal to their spirit if we mark time in a world of perpetual movement by sitting still and chanting ancient hymns. We cannot command the sun to stand still in the plains of the Hindustan”.<sup>31</sup>

Religion is a continuous spiritual and moral struggle. As followers of Dharma we have to be responsive to social, political and economic challenges. Only then can we be responsible followers of the values and ideals of Dharma.

The man of Religion is not an escapist. He does not fly from realities of life. He is both a man of action and man of conviction. He negotiates both depths of spirituality and heights of social, political and economic engagements. Radhakrishnan writes:

“Religion is not a flight from the world, a taking refuge in the ordered serenity of heaven, in despair over the hopeless disorder of earth. Man belongs to both orders, and his religion is here or nowhere. Life eternal consists in another kind of life in the midst of time. Religious life is a rhythm with moments of contemplation, and of action, of refreshment and restoration in the life of spirit, and of action with a sense of mission in the world. Action of the seer is more efficient since it springs from conviction and depth and is carried out with poise and serenity. The man of wisdom is interested in promoting the welfare of all created beings according to the Bhagavadgita (Sarvabhutahiteratah). Holiness is known by the happiness it sheds. The test of authentic spiritual insight is an increased integration of the personal life, quickened sensibility, heightened power, and universal tenderness. The fusing of the finite and the infinite, of the surface consciousness and the ultimate depths, gives the sense of a new creation. To live consciously in

the finite alone is to live in bondage, with ignorance and egoism, suffering and death. By drawing back from an ignorant absorption in ourselves, we recover our spiritual being, unaffected by the limitations of mind, life, and body, so that the finite in which we outwardly live becomes a conscious representation of the divine being. Thus does it escape from its apparent bondage into its real freedom".<sup>32</sup>

For Radhakrishnan, religion is not a performance of certain formalities or exercise of certain rituals. If we are really concerned with an authentic religious life, we have to ground it on authentic personal experience. The following words of Radhakrishnan bear it out :

“Religion as a way of life is the seeking of the eternal. It is more behavior than belief. If we believe in God we must act in the light of that faith. There are many who feel that outward conformity is all that is expected of them. We are said to be religious if we go through sound of ceremonies from our baptism at birth to solemn commitment of the body to the grave at death, even though this process is unaccompanied by any intense inward discipline or spiritual experience. If we repeat the phrases and make the gestures, we need not bother about the rest. Many of those who affirm belief in God or in the future life act as if neither existed. There is a difference between what we think we believe and what we really believe.... If religion is to revive, it must be founded on verifiable truth. The centre should shift from reliance on external direction, whose validity is becoming more and more questionable, to a trust in experience, intimate and personal. There is a fervent desire to replace the religion of dogma by a religion of life, and the worship of the Nation-state by loyalty to a world community”.<sup>33</sup>

Religion can not be reduced to a system of sanctions and consolations. We have to appropriate spirituality which is the essence and core of religion. Radhakrishnan writes :

“Religion begins for us with an awareness that our life is not of ourselves alone. There is another, greater life unfolding and sustaining us. Religion as man’s search for this greater self will not accept any creeds as final or any laws as perfect. It will be evolutionary, moving ever onward. The witness to this spiritual view is borne, not only by the great religious teachers and leaders of mankind, but by the ordinary man in the street, in whose inmost being the well of the spirit is set deep. In our normal experience events happen which imply the existence of a spiritual world. The fact of prayer or meditation, the impulse to seek and appeal to a power beyond our normal self, the moving sense of revelation which the sudden impact of beauty brings, the way in which decisive contacts with certain individuals bring meaning and coherence into our scattered lives, suggest that we are essentially spiritual. To know oneself is to know all we can know and all we

need to know. A spiritual as distinct from a dogmatic view of life remains unaffected by the advance of science and criticism of history. Religion generally refers to something external, a system of sanctions and consolations, while spirituality points to the need for knowing and living in the highest self and raising life in all its parts. Spirituality is the core of religion and its inward essence, and mysticism emphasizes this side of religion.<sup>34</sup>

Religion is neither born out of historical research nor out of scientific investigations. Religion is born out of the ultimate depth of the spiritual geniuses across history. Religion is not a function of intellectual evolution but a product of spiritual revelation. Radhakrishnan writes :

“The soul in solitude is the birthplace of religion. Moses on the lonely Mount of Sinai, Buddha under the Bodhi tree lost in contemplation, Jesus by the Jordan in stillness of prayer, Paul in the lonely sojourn in the desert, Muhammad on a solitary mount at Mecca, Francis of Assisi in his prayers in the remote crags of the highlands of Alvarno, found the strength and the assurance of the reality of God. Everything that is great, new, and creative in religion rises out of the unfathomable depths of the soul in the quiet of prayer, in the solitude of meditation”.<sup>35</sup>

The spiritual experience is especially central to Hindu approach to religion. It underlines personal realization as the ultimate fruit of our spiritual struggle. Creeds, dogmas, words and symbols have only an instrumental relevance. The following words of Radhakrishnan merit our serious consideration :

“The Hindu attitude is based on a definite philosophy of life which assumes that religion is a matter of personal realization. Creeds and dogmas, words and symbols have only an instrumental value. Their function is to aid the growth of spirit by supplying supports for a task that is strictly personal. Spirit is free being, and its life consists in breaking free from conventions and penetrating into true being. The formless blaze of spiritual life cannot be expressed in human words. We tread on air so thin and rare that we do not leave any visible footprints. He who has seen the real is lifted above all narrowness, relativities, and contingencies. When we are anchored in spirit we are released, in the words of the *Imitation*, from a multitude of opinions. Authority is no longer binding, and ritual is no longer a support. The name by which we call God and the rite by which we approach Him do not matter much. Karl Heim declares that for the mystic, ‘at the peak of ecstatic experience, all thoughts of the person of Jesus are lost and the soul sinks into the ocean of the divine unutterable’. The sense of the present reality of God and the joy of His indwelling make the mystic indifferent to all questions of history. Toleration is the homage which the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the Infinite.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Radhakrishnan tries to advance or project a concept of ‘Dharma’ or ‘Religion’, which is in tune with contemporary intellectual, philosophical and methodological

milieu. He is interpreting 'Dharma' or 'Religion' in keeping with the imperatives and challenges of a pluralistic global society. His interpretation of 'Dharma' or 'Religion' is also in accord with ongoing scientific research and technological advancement. He is not an irrationalist although his interpretation of 'Dharma' or 'Religion' is predominantly mystical and spiritualistic. Rational explanation or justification of religion can have only secondary importance in his scheme of interpretation. His 'Dharma' or 'Religion' is grounded on personal realisation. Like all great mystical philosophers of East and West, he has underlined the view that self-realisation is the only road to God-realisation.

### **Conclusion:**

According to Radhakrishnan, Hinduism has never claim to be a complete way of life or perfect code of conduct. If we trace the history of Hinduism, we shall find that it has been profoundly impacted by various forces; the internal forces and the external challenges. Hindu philosophers have always been responding to these forces and challenges. The new responses from ever-fresh stimuli. Hindu seers or risis have never underlined that faith and dogmas are essential to salvation or liberation of soul. Faith can be grounded on intuition and authenticated by rational standards of evaluation.

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