

A critical Analysis of “The Hindu View of Life” by Dr.Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

P Sreenivasulu Reddy

Asst. Professor of English GITAM University Visakhapatnam AP, India

Abstract

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was an Indian philosopher and statesman.. He is one of India's best and most influential twentieth-century scholars of comparative religion and philosophy. He had always defended Hindu culture against uninformed Western criticism and had symbolized the pride of Indians in their own intellectual traditions. He believed that Hinduism as a scientific religion based on facts, apprehended via intuition or religious experience. His work “The Hindu view of Life” is a relic in the world of philosophy and it is based on the Upton Lectures delivered at Manchester college , oxford. It is his analysis of the basic concepts underlying the Hindu attitude to life the present article explains how Dr.Radhakrishnan is an interpreter of Hindu thought through his work “The Hindu view of life”.

KEYWORDS:-The Hindu view of life, Religious Experience, Conflict of Religions, Hindu Dharma

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was an Indian philosopher and statesman. He was the first Vice President of India and the second President of India. He is one of India's best and most influential twentieth-century scholars of comparative religion and philosophy. He had always defended Hindu culture against uninformed Western criticism and had symbolized the pride of Indians in their own intellectual traditions. He believed that Hinduism as a scientific religion based on facts, apprehended via intuition or religious experience.

His philosophical approach is marked by range of thought and depth of perception. He does not think of Hinduism in isolation but in relation to the modern context. He emphasises the relevance of the value of Hinduism in a world which is by conflict of ideas.

His work “The Hindu view of Life” is a relic in the world of philosophy and it is based on the Upton Lectures delivered at Manchester college , oxford. It is his analysis of the basic concepts underlying the Hindu attitude to life. It is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter “Religious Experience, Its nature and concept “gives us a vivid account of the essential characteristics of Hinduism. Actually the term 'Hindu' was a geographical term and did not refer to a religion. It is derived from the Sanskrit word *Sindhu*, the historic local name for the Indus River in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. It refers to the land of the aboriginal tribes and many other communities with different systems of worship and belief who live across the River Indus..By the end of 12th century and earlier 13th century *Hindustan* emerged as a popular alternative name of India, meaning the "land of *Hindus*".

As per Hinduism Religion is a felt inner experience of the entire personality. Religious experience is of a Self-certifying character. Religious faith is not a matter of blind acceptance religious experience is stated and confirmed in intellectual terms.

Faith is a matter of spiritual conviction. Hinduism admits points of view other than its own. Divine relation is not the prerogative of any individual or community. It is available to all. This truth has been recognised in Hinduism. Hinduism does not characterise ideas about God as true or false. It recognises the fact that mankind seeks God at different levels and in different directions. It is appreciative of human effort to seek God. Hinduism has graded different levels of worship. Hindu saints see God in the self and not in images. Temples and religious centres alone should not be counted to be the places of prayer and worship. They should become capable of providing spiritual direction to the Hindus.

In the second chapter "Conflict of Religions: the Hindu Attitude", Radhakrishnan explains how every group within the Hindu fold is allowed to enjoy its freedom and preserve its individuality. It is not the group which we belong to that counts. What matters is ourselves and our evolution. Hinduism calls upon everyone to think clearly and steadily on the ultimate purpose and mystery of life. It does not seek to interfere with the individual's way of thinking. It makes allowances for error of judgement and weakness of understanding. It does not lay down a single uniform method nor does it seek to establish a stereotyped system of belief and worship.

A known fact of Hinduism is that it has no common creed and it has not prescribed a uniformed system of worship. The early Aryans worship consisted in the worship of forces of Nature. This gave a way to image worship. Hindu worship is primarily an individual act rather than a communal one, as it involves making personal offerings to the deity. Worshippers repeat the names of their favourite gods and goddesses, and repeat mantras. Water, fruit, flowers and incense are offered to God.

The third chapter "Hindu Dharma" is a discussion of the two aspects of Hinduism, the philosophical and the practical. There are two sides to Hinduism, the philosophical and the practical. Some objections to the conceptions of Hindu epics are raised. Ethical system and relations are dismissed as irrelevant in view of doctrine of Maya which repudiates the reality of the world. Radhakrishnan says that the Upanishads emphasise the relative reality of the phenomenal world. All things in the world are of value as they contribute to the realization of the self. Eswara (Lord Shiva) held the world as Maya. The real will qualify to be called real only when it is exempt from all change and is ever-enduring. The ultimate purpose of life is liberation from the cycles – birth – death – rebirth.

Coming to the practical side of Hinduism, Radhakrishnan says that Hinduism is merely a way of life rather than from a thought. Life according to Hinduism is regulated against a Four-fold scale -Dharma, (righteousness), -Artha, (wealth)-Kaama (Desire)- Moksha,(Spiritual Freedom). It will be seen that Artha and Kaama are interposed between Dharma and Moksha, suggesting that the fulfilment of material needs is subject to Dharma and final goal of life is spiritual liberation.

The fourth chapter Hindu Dharma-II focuses on the caste system in India. Though the caste system has been exploited and has a symbol of exclusiveness, it has originally been designed to foster co-operation, tolerance, and trust. The institution of caste is man-made and has no divine sanction. It is meant to regulate social function. The caste system is based on the principle of division of function. Each caste has its

social purpose, its code, and tradition. Each group enjoys freedom in matters of food , customs, marriage etc. The foster caste –Bramhana,KshatthiyaVaisya, Sudhara were not mean to work at cross purposes. They were meant to form part of an organic whole. Thus the complementary character of the caste system was emphasised.

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