

NATURE OF HUMAN DESTINY IN VIEW OF RADHAKRISHNAN'S REFLECTIONS

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The subject matter of human destiny is quite complex and it is not straightaway simple to put forward generalizations about human nature and the world. It is complex for the nature and personality of human individual is not evident as it appears. The range of human individuality is vast and cannot be abridged in simple formula and statement. As Dr. Radhakrishnan is an idealist he formulates a comprehensive and largely synoptic view of human life and consciousness. In present article I intend to elucidate the idealistic view of human individuality, self and the destiny of human personality and show plausibly various data of human consciousness which may support and modify the views of Radhakrishnan and idealist philosophy in general.

INTRODUCTION :

With regard to human destiny Radhakrishnan undertakes several topics for consideration and reflection such as self, freedom, Karma, future life, consciousness, immortality, rebirth and integration of personality. Of course, there are significant distinctions expounded by Radhakrishnan and they are employed in propounding the subject such as between fate and destiny, chance and necessity, freedom and determinism, personal and conditional immortality. In order to elucidate and evaluate these issues adequately it is proper to deal with them in sequence and context.

Chance, necessity, determinism, freedom, immortality, sin and destiny are terms in need of distinct meaning and connotation in the metaphysical framework of Radhakrishnan's philosophy. It is true that Radhakrishnan's approach to man and his destiny is largely idealistic, However, his treatment of each problem involves

at times consideration of several realistic, historical, pragmatic and rational methods as well as data of comprehensive value.

As regards the method of treating the problem of human destiny it should be made clear that it is by grafting the individual or member into the whole system that the truth of the member can be judged and evaluated. He writes, "Individual nature finds his goodness in what is more than himself. He realizes that his fragmentariness will be cured only if he is devoted to the whole. Fullness of life means service to the whole. Knowledge, art, morality and religion are devices employed by man to realise his destiny as a member of a spiritual fellowship, a kingdom in which each is in the whole and the whole is in some measure in each."¹ It is understood that this is the special privilege of human individual that he can join and work for the whole. The whole for the individual is to be regarded as fellowship where members can live in harmony and collaborative endeavour. Such a union is based on knowledge, love and service. It is closer and intensely intimate than any represented by the lower orders of existence.

Of course the degree of adjustment and intimacy of relationship between individuals and the whole depends upon the potentiality and equipment of the individual. There are differences among individuals and souls. As some individuals are not able to grow and expand towards universality and they do not grow their uniqueness with the result that such individuals belittle themselves whereas those who fulfil their functions in the whole obtain real value and dignity. They approximate themselves to universality and wholeness.

NATURE OF KARMA :

Radhakrishnan observes that self of the individual is not limited to psychological, logical and rational subject of reflective insight. It is true that self knowledge and self-subsistence are certain and knowledge of self is capable of ensuring knowledge of rest of entities of the philosophic world. Such a self is not abstract subsistence, logical premise or mere object of speculation. Self is dynamic, living and valuational reality and experience embedded within the individual.

Such a dynamic and living self is determined and constituted by 'Karma' according to Hindu systems. The meaning of Karma is human and active relationship with the past. It is not possible to deny one's past, so it is not possible to eradicate the 'Karma'. Karma is not only physical action and reaction but it is morally intentioned activity also. Owing to the ethical orientation of activity it

determines the constitution of self. Human life is an organic whole where each successive phase grows out of what has gone before. Human growth is an ordered one and its orderedness is indicated by holding that it is governed by the law of Karma.

Karma is not to be understood as retributive punishment and reward for merit of human actions. Karma indicates the chain continued from past events to present life and it builds up its relationship with future course of events. Karma shows that historicity not only of the individual but it is the repository to be carried forward and if possible to be used and changed by rest of the members, circumstances and society as a whole. It is to be observed here that Karma does not negate the potential freedom of the individual will and activity. Radhakrishnan says in this connection, "We cannot deny the free action of human beings however much their origin may be veiled in darkness. The self has conative tendencies, impulses to change by its efforts the given conditions, inner and outer, and shape them to its own purpose." ²

Karma is inextricably connected with the state of freedom. Apparently it seems that Karma is determination while freedom is non-imposition or non-constraint from external source upon the will of individual. Individual consists of animal as well as the human and rational parts. So long as animality is predominant within human person he is determined from within as well as from without by forces making individual mechanical and automatic. Individual is not to be regarded as free inanimistic part of personality. Individual is free in thoughtful, willful and rational aspects of personality. Habit, impulse, infatuation and greed are as much deterministic as mechanical propellers and engineering gadgets. Freedom consists in rational decision and willful effort of self. Individual acquires and derives bodily, vital and other organic functions and parts from environment, heredity and evolutionary forces. There is a grain of truth in determinism according to which activity and course of life of individual is beyond the control and he is not free in selecting his body and its various parts. Although individual is partly determined in so far as the heredity, bodily factors and biological propensities are provided from past and other antecedent events, he is free with regard to present happening and selection of future turn of events. Radhakrishnan holds that "Karma or connection with the past is not inconsistent with creative freedom. On the other hand it is implied by it. The law that links us with the past also asserts that it can be subjugated by our free action." ³

The significant point to be emphasised regarding the law of Karma is the amount of energy in form of intention which is put forth in action performed by individual. "The universe will respond to and implement the demands of the self."⁴ There is an interaction between individual self and the external world which is again a field of cause and effect. No sincerely willed action remains unanswered by nature and universe. If there is determinism of action, there is also creative freedom in prospective life to be shaped by individual. As Radhakrishnan argues with the analogy of the game of Bridge, the cards are already distributed but the game to be played by the players provides ample opportunity and freedom of choice to player up to the last card to be played in the game.

FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM :

The world is regular and marked by order. Our freedom is to be reconciled with objective order and regularity. The self of individual is not active in fragmentary manner but at any phase of its working it is involved wholly. There are possibilities and opportunities left open for the self to improve or mar the character. "Self determinism means not determination by any fragment of the self's nature but by the whole of it."⁵ Unless the individual employs his whole nature, searches the different possibilities and selects one which commends itself to whole self, the act is not really free.

If self is the whole, self-determined and conscious being then it includes the bodily basis of the entire superstructure, goes beyond it and continues through several births of life maintaining its spiritual value and core of Reality. There are no definite located places as heaven or hell in any part of inhabited world. Sin and merit, heaven and hell are indicative of internal enlightenment, darkness, ignorance and knowledge. Such a soul is potential enough to pass through several meaningful lives, fulfilling several varied dimensions of personality and values.

The nature of destiny is related with future life. Just as past determines the present and future course of life but there is ample freedom which is given to the individual to choose different alternatives for betterment of life, in like manner it is left to himself to prolong and take another next birth for heightening the ascent of life. The death of physical life is not the end of moral and spiritual life of soul. The problem of future life becomes grave in face of injustice, sin, suffering and evil.

On account of ill-will, criminal mentality and evil exercised by human beings certain religions such as semitic ones have thought of conditional immortality in which souls are punished or rewarded as consequence of demerit and merit of individuals. Radhakrishnan thinks that all souls are potentially capable of earning heaven or places of joy if they merit of which they are not deprived for ever. Radhakrishnan takes into consideration the distinction between personal immortality and conditional immortality. According to personal immortality there is a desire for the whole personality to survive. The whole personality includes bodily presence as well as mind and purpose. According to conditional immortality there is the last day of judgement when certain souls are awarded heaven depending on their merits whereas certain others are condemned for ever into hell. Immortality is not the possession of every human soul but it is a prize to be won. Certain beliefs of Christians and Catholic religions are referred to and it is held that those who have merit alone will be saved while those who commit sins will be permanently damned to hell. They will not have any chance to improve themselves.

Radhakrishnan holds that there is neither eternal heaven nor hell. There is no person who is a permanent sinner. Every person has a chance to improve and correct the errors committed. Actually speaking immortality should not mean survival only but eternal life. In order to achieve eternal life a person should make personal effort. It depends on the active co-operation of the selves. It is an optimistic assertion that spirit is omnipotent and the character of goodness is all-compelling. No being is wholly evil or impenetrable by good.

POSSIBILITY OF REBIRTH:

The above view of destiny is reinforced by the view of rebirth of human soul. Different objections regarding the view of rebirth are taken into consideration and they are rejoined to make it compatible. As human self is potentially good and member of cosmic whole it is destined to incarnate either with body or without body. Radhakrishnan holds that there is a state of self and being of human individuality where it is not required to embody itself and have birth. At the same time it is maintaining its continuity and necessary essential character by incarnating new birth with adequate vehicle of physical body on earth.

The view of personal immortality and conditional immortality advocated by Lotze and Pringle Pettison are taken into consideration. They are rejected in favour of the view of rebirth. Of human souls as ultimately all selves can get

opportunity for becoming good and attain happiness in course of several lives. As regards the relationship between mind and body, self and body, heredity and qualities of mental and bodily development, Radhakrishnan is holding the possibility of interaction and continuity of essential characteristics of those already developed in self. Parents give birth to physical body but the material qualities work as instruments of subtle mental and organic qualities of individual self. Individuality is not an alien element in the evolution of bodily, intellectual and spiritual elements of the cosmic universe. Besides the gross body in individual development of material body and sense-organs, there are subtle (sukshma) body and ethereal characters partaking of the gross body in individual development. There are intentional, moral and inwardly aspiring urges which take longer time for fruition in which case the self continues to acquire better and still higher levels and achievement of blissful and divine qualities of soul and individuality. The contemporary psychical research is undertaking investigation regarding memory, carrying forward the past merits and achievements, apparitions and integration of personality. It supports the view of continuity of life and rebirth.

It is true that happiness and virtue, reward and endeavour are intimately related. This intimate relationship reflects the inherent nature of self which it expresses in the development and realization of harmony, knowledge and divinity. God is not only a moral governor to look after the reconciliation between happiness and virtue, bliss and goodness materialized in each individual. If God is conceived as love and perfection it is the inherent potentiality of self to approximate and attain the love and perfection of God. Moral effort of the individual seeks its fulfilment in spiritual unity with the ultimate. Goodness is essential quality of individual reflecting and attempting to fulfil the universal attribute of purity and goodness embedded in Absolute.

INDIVIDUALITY OF PERSON :

Individuality is the expression of the Absolute. Although there are multiple persons admitting of varying degrees, higher and lower, weak and strong, ignorant and wise, they are not to be denied of having essential unity and character of divinity however dim it is lying hidden in the self. In order to understand the explanation of rebirth it is essential to understand the nature of self and individuality. Self has innate urge and inclination to develop wholly and in an integral way. It has coveted affiliation with the past. As it is said analogically that just as calf catches the udders of the mother-cow as if automatically out of the

herd of cattle, similarly the inward self remembers the past developing subtle self, joins it and continues to reap the results of own actions. Gross and subtle bodies combine as the result of heredity as well as contribution of universal subtle consciousness. Consequently there is the direction towards the further progress of individuality. Conditional immortality is not satisfactory explanation as certain number of souls cannot be deprived of ultimate goodness and bliss. If God is attributed as love then no individual can be totally negated as undeserving of the compassion and love of God. Moreover heaven and hell are not specific places where certain souls are inhabited permanently and certain other souls condemned. They lie within the mind and souls of individuals.

Individuality, self and progress are not mutually incompatible with heredity. The choice of physical body, parents and family is innately done by self according to its inward capacity, level of development and implicit memory. The necessary conditions are selected by self by its innate interest. Radhakrishnan says, "We are reborn in families where the qualities we possess and seek to embody are well developed. In rebirth the deciding factor is the nature of the self and not the parents of the body. The soul draws around it the forces necessary for its proper embodiment. It is therefore natural that the child should be like the parents."⁵ At times it is believed that rebirth and total absorption in divinity are against the moral endeavour of human individual. But this objection is improper. The Catholic doctrine of purgatory is sometimes conceived as continued moral progress after death. It teaches that those who are not yet prepared for heaven are purified in purgatory. Radhakrishnan criticises the idea of eternal hell as it is against the nature of human goodness and nature of self. "While the best of us are not quite prepared for the sudden splendour of bliss the worst of us are not so bad as to be cast aside into eternal doom."⁶ Immortality is not to be presupposed for award and damnation. There cannot be eternal heaven and hell and there cannot be permanent praise and punishment for good and evil activities.

There is an end to evil activity done by individual and society at large. "None of us is so completely dead to the divine in us as to deserve eternal hell."⁷ William James raises an objection against immortality as such a state would involve production of innumerable souls and create inconvenience on earth. "The very heavens themselves and the cosmic times and spaces would stand aghast...at the notion of preserving eternally such an ever-swelling plethora and glut of it."⁸ This is how F.H. Bradley expresses doubt at the idea of increase of souls on earth.

Radhakrishnan holds that the supposition of rebirth can remove this apprehension as the same soul is to take new birth.

Materialist view of soul is not tenable as it is invalid to hold that soul is created by the birth of the body and then the death of the body destroys it. It is believed that the soul dies with the body and the two are raised again by miracle. This view is invalid as it fails in distinguishing adequately between plurality of material sense organs and unity in knowledge and moral experience. Necessity of supposition of soul arises to account for unity in cognition and action in moral life. Self accounts for memory, intellectual grasping of phenomena and asserting psychic experiences. Moreover if soul dies with the death of the body then good and evil activities are not adequately accounted in life. It is not to be believed that there is retribution regarding judging of good and evil. However, good and evil are to be understood as power, aspiration and intention of living soul and their manifestation is to be fulfilled,

NATURE OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE :

Spirit and spiritual experience are facts and given truths of the highest levels of human life. It is true that rare and selected number of people reach and attain this level of knowledge and supreme effort. However, on account of its rarity it need not be denied its reality. If it is denied it would be at the cost of ignoring the most valuable treasure of human achievement and knowledge. Radhakrishnan in this context distinguished between consciousness, self-consciousness and spiritual consciousness. Even animals possess consciousness as they can perceive and they can act. But they lack in self-consciousness as human beings alone can introspect, recognise their errors and can know their intellectual as well as creative mental states. There is thirdly the spiritual consciousness a level of experience in which new facets of Reality reveal themselves. While in the first case we have psychological unity between the animal and environment, in self consciousness there is logical unity and in the third there is a spiritual unity. At the spiritual level the individual becomes aware of the substance of spirit not as an object of intellectual cognition but as an awareness in which the subject becomes its own object, in which the timeless and spaceless is aware of itself as the basis and reality of all experience. The spirit which is inclusive of both self and object is self-subsistent.⁹ Spirit alone satisfies our total desire and whole intelligence. It is all that there is, all being and all value.¹⁰

Philosophy to become comprehensive cannot ignore the datum of spirit and spiritual experience. People at large may not be able to understand it fully. This does not entitle them to deny the validity and reality of spiritual experience. Just as vital, moral, intellectual and creative levels of experience are contributory and valuational for enrichment of human personality, similarly the spiritual experience according to Radhakrishnan is the climax and fulfilment of varied human effort and experience. The spiritualised man is new genus of man exhibiting a new quality of human life. His self becomes as wide as the world itself as he feels that the one spirit is present in all minds, lives and bodies.

As spirit and spiritual experience are final fruition and aim of human effort, it is not to be believed that moral effort is neglected and there is no need of ethical zeal and aspiration. Salvation is the fruit of painstaking effort although it would appear to be formal, dry and resisting without divine grace. Radhakrishnan distinguishes between survival and salvation, rebirth from liberation, eternity from durational continuance. Like Bradley, Radhakrishnan holds that moral effort and struggle are endless and it is bound to face self contradiction. "So long as the self occupies the human standpoint it is bound to a task which is self contradictory and cannot therefore be realised." According to Kant moral plane is the highest and therefore he looks upon moral life as an unending process of becoming perfectly morally virtuous. The self can never attain the goal though it is perpetually tending towards it. The self is always in a state of development and self-extension. In case there is a possibility of reaching the target others are already waiting and the series of targets is unending.

PSYCHIC INDIVIDUALITY :

Of course Radhakrishnan holds that moral process ends into spiritual liberation and once liberation is attained moral struggle appears to be terminating. Individuality is inseparably related with moral effort. With the advent of spiritual consciousness the struggle of moral effort ceases and individuality merges into the Absolute. Individuality presupposes centre of activity and so moral effort is an integral part of individuality. The plane of freedom from rebirth which is salvation is above the moral plane of human effort. In Hindu thought this is said to be salvation from rebirth. Of course this is a mistaken view in view of the possibility to have psychical immortality and individuality supporting the truth of moral effort and human activity. So in spite of rebirth there could be a state of salvation. This is the import of Geetā and Isāvāsya Upaniṣad wherein the doctrine of non-

attached action as advocated by Lord Krishna. "Na Karma Lipyate nare" (Íśa.2) which again supports the view that ultimately it is possible to act after salvation if not for ego and self but for the larger welfare of society and world.

Perfect non-attachment is the essence of salvation. Besides spiritual immortality there is the possibility of psychical immortality where the soul is perfectly blissful and fully surrendered to Divine Reality. As the soul is fully non-attached it is not obstructive to moral effort and aspiration. Essence of moral aspiration is to seek righteousness which is the expression of inward psychic being.¹¹

It is supposed that rebirth is subject to time and it is inevitable so long as one sticks to individualistic position. If one transcends individualistic state one rises superior to the phenomenon of time and thus get relieved of rebirth. "When the Hindu thinkers ask us to attain release from rebirth, they are asking us to transcend the standpoint of mere individualism and rise to an impersonal universalism."¹² Radhakrishnan thinks that to seek for liberation from the wheel of rebirths and deaths is nothing more than to rise to the spiritual level from the merely ethical. This distinction between ethical and spiritual is evident from the view that spirituality is a transcendent level of realisation. However, it is to be noted here that the psychical level of individuality is that of the spiritual aspirant expressing moral value.

MORAL VALUE AND SPIRITUALITY :

Radhakrishnan is emphatic on the distinct plane of spirituality and clearly demarcates it from moral stage of human effort. "The spiritual is not the extension of the ethical. It is a new dimension altogether dealing with things eternal."¹³ Salvation appears to be going beyond the cycle of birth. This is the conventional meaning attached with the term 'salvation'. However, there is its real meaning when the datum of psychic immortality and individuality are taken into account. It is not inconsistent with moral effort and aspiration. As moral effort involves activity and birth it is associated with antecedent and consequent utility and pleasure. Therefore it is believed that to go beyond morality and attain spirituality is to break the cycle of birth and attain eternity.

There is indeed a view of Hindu thought where total surrendering to will of God and divinity is not to identify with inactive universal spiritual consciousness but to manifest consciousness and activity in individual and social life. Devotees,

saints and seers throughout India have chanted and lived Godly and divine life. They have aspired for rebirth so as to live totally surrendered, consecrated and devoted life to God. This instance of spirituality is not opposed to moral endeavour and rebirth. It is the psychic consciousness which expresses activity and life uniting with eternity and universality.

In the end Radhakrishnan defends and interprets Śaṅkārāchārya's view of Individuality and finitude. So long as the cosmic process continues the released soul retains its centre of action and universality of spirit. The loss of individuality happens only when the world is redeemed, when the multiple values figured out in it are achieved. The freed soul, so long as the cosmic process continues, participates in it and returns to embodied existence not for its own sake but for the sake of the whole. Coherence within the individual and harmony with the environment are both essentials for salvation. If we establish harmony within ourselves, overcome the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, we fulfil the first requirement. But harmony with the environment is not possible so long as there are unredeemed elements in it. We are not truly saved until the warring elements of our nature and the rivalries of individuals are both subdued into unity of life and spiritual fellowship.

Destiny of person is necessarily related with destiny of the world. So long as there is wrong to be set right, error to be corrected and ugliness to be banished from life, noble souls and saints will continue to work in the world. As Reality is at once transcendent, universal and individual, individuality of person is not the limitation but its legitimate dimension. Salvation of individual and society, self and world lie in manifesting its individuality in collaboration with cosmic world.

NOTES

1. S. Radhakrishnan : *Idealist View of Life*, Allen and Unwin Ltd. Great Britain, Second Edition, Fifth Impression, 1970, Ch. VII.

In this article I have taken support of other books by Dr. Radhakrishnan such as "*Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, 1920."

2. *Ibid.*, p.220
3. *Ibid.*, p.222

4. *Ibid.* P. 222
5. *Ibid.*, p235
6. *Ibid.*, p. 236
7. *Ibid.*, p. 236
8. Bradley F.H. : *Appearance and Reality*, Oxford University, Press 502.
9. *Op.Cit.*, IVL, Radhakrishnan , p. 239.
10. *Ibid.*, p.240.
11. Sri. Aurobindo : *The Life Divine, Pondicherry*, First University Edition, 1955.

Note : Here I have made use of the chapters in the 'Life Divine', Vol. I., Ch. VII and XVII.

Sri Aurobindo holds that Psychic being is the direct manifestation of Sacchidananda in the Individual Person. Just as it is said by Lord Krishna in the Fifteenth Canto of Geetā, "Mamaivansho Jivaloke Jivabhuto Sanatanah"(V.7) similarly it may be pointed out that individual soul is the portion of Reality. Although Reality is Transcendent it is Individual as well. Psychic Being is at once individual and manifestation of Divine capable of doing moral activity for self and the world. It takes rebirth in the world and it is totally surrendered to Divine Reality. It is liberated and it aspires for moral righteousness. It does not negate salvation.

12. *Idealistic View of Life* p.241.