



## **Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan: An Influential Educationist of Modern India**

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**Abstract** - Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan is a pioneer of the wholesome and boom of the educational philosophy and he flagged it on the heart of educational sphere. A multi-dimensional creative genius, he made his original contributions in all diverse fields of life. Once upon a time a reporter asked to Radhakrishnan regarding the happiest moment of his life. He said the happiest moment of my life is when I am in the classroom among the students. It was very difficult to present in any language on account of the towering stature of personality of Dr. Radhakrishnan and successive stages of his creative contribution in philosophical, educational, social, diplomatic and political field. He is also a great exponent of Hindu Philosophy.

**Keywords** - Dr. Sarvapalli, Radhakrishnan, Influential, Educationist, Modern, India

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### **Introduction**

One of India's most influential scholars of comparative religion and philosophy, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan is considered through his efforts to have built a bridge between the East and the West by showing that the philosophical systems of each tradition are comprehensible within the terms of the other. To him, philosophy was a way of understanding life and his study of Indian philosophy served as a cultural therapy. By interpreting Indian thought in Western terms and showing that it was imbued with reason and logic he was able to give Indians a new sense of esteem, who were overcome by inferiority complex by imperial forces. But he also made clear to them that their long and rich tradition had been arrested and required further evolution and he exhorted Indians to cast off much that was corrupt and abhorrent. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who was one of his closest friends throughout, said about Dr. Radhakrishnan: he has served his country in many capacities. But above all, he is a great teacher from whom all of us have learnt much and will continue to learn. It is India's peculiarity in itself showing the kind of men we honour and respect.

**A Brief bio-graph of Dr S Radhakrishnan:-** Dr. Radhakrishnan was born into a middle class Telugu Brahmin family at Tirutani in Tamil Nadu state. A town in Madras Presidency, British India, 64 km to the northwest of Madras (now Chennai). His early years were spent in Tirutani and Tirupati. His father was a subordinate revenue official in the service of a local Zamindar (landlord). He didn't want his son to learn English, instead wanted him to become a priest. His primary education was at Primary Board High School at Tirutani. In 1896 he moved to the Herman burg Evangelical Lutheran Mission School at Tirupati. Dr. Radhakrishnan was awarded scholarships throughout his academic life. He joined the Voorhee's College in Vellore but switched over to the Madras Christian College at the age of 17. He graduated with a Master Degree in Philosophy from the Madras Christian College in 1906, being one of its most distinguished alumni. Radhakrishnan wrote his thesis for the M.A degree on Ethics of the Vedanta and its Metaphysical

Presuppositions. He was afraid that his M.A thesis, would offend his Philosophy Professor, Dr. A.G Hogg. Instead, Dr. Hogg commended Radhakrishnan on doing an excellent job. Radhakrishnan's M.A thesis was published when he was only 20. Radhakrishnan studied philosophy by chance rather than by choice. Being financially constrained student at that time, when a cousin, after graduating from the same college, passed on his textbooks in philosophy to Radhakrishnan, it automatically decided his academic course. Later on he developed deep interest in his subject and wrote many acclaimed works on philosophy, both Eastern and Western. Dr. Radhakrishnan stated that western philosophers, despite all claims to objectivity, were influenced by theological influences of their own culture. He wrote books of Indian philosophy according to Western academic standards, and made all efforts for the west to give serious consideration to Indian philosophy. In his book **Idealist View of Life**, he made a powerful case for importance of intuitive thinking as opposed to purely intellectual forms

of thought. He is well known for his commentaries on the Prasthanas namely, the Bhagavadgita, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutra. Radhakrishnan was married to Sivakamu, a distant cousin, in 1904 at the age of 16. As per tradition the marriage was arranged by the family. The couple had five daughters and a son, Sarvepalli Gopal. He went on to a notable career as a historian. Sivakamu died in 1956. They were married for over 51 years. In 1918 Radhakrishnan was selected as Professor of Philosophy by the University of Mysore. By that time he had written many articles for journals of repute like *The Quest*, *Journal of Philosophy* and the *International Journal of Ethics*. He also completed his first book, "the Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore." He believed Tagore's philosophy to be the genuine manifestation of the Indian spirit. Dr. Radhakrishnan's second book, "the Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy" was published in 1920. In 1921 he was appointed as a Professor in Philosophy to occupy the King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science at the University of Calcutta. Radhakrishnan represented the University of Calcutta at the Congress of the Universities of the British Empire in June 1926 and the International Congress of Philosophy at Harvard University in September 1926.

In 1929 Dr. Radhakrishnan was invited to take the post vacated by Principal J. Estlin Carpenter in Manchester College, Oxford. This gave him the opportunity to lecture to the students of the University of Oxford on Comparative Religion. For his services to education he was knighted by the British Government in 1931, but he never used the SR title in his personal life, preferring instead his academic title of Doctor. He was Vice - Chancellor of Andhra University from 1931 to 1936. In 1936 Radhakrishnan was named Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford, and was selected a fellow of All Souls College. In 1939 Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya invited him to succeed him as the Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). He continued as

its Vice Chancellor till January, 1948. When India became independent in 1947, Dr. Radhakrishnan represented India at UNESCO and was later Ambassador of India to the Soviet Union, from 1949 to 1952. He was also elected to the Constituent Assembly of India. Along with Ghanashyam Das Birla and some other Social workers in the pre - independence era, Dr. Radhakrishnan formed the Krishnarpan Charity Trust. Dr. Radhakrishnan moved beyond being a more academic and sought to engage his philosophical and religious studies in the political and social developments of the contemporary context. He believed that in India, the philosopher's duty was to keep in touch with the past while stretching out to the future. His commitment to society, the crusading urgent tone in his scholarly writings, the modern note in his interpretations of even classical texts and his intellectual resistance to the deforming pressures of colonialism gave Dr. Radhakrishnan a distinct public image.

He was a coin minted differently from the usual run of politicians and academicians. Far from being a stern and severe intellectual remote from the world, Dr. Radhakrishnan was a very humane person. Exceedingly popular among his students right from his early days as a Professor at Presidency College, Madras he was an evocative teacher. He was offered the professorship in Calcutta University when he was less than 30 years old. His mastery on his subject and his clarity of thought and expression made him a much sought after teacher. But what made him even more popular was his warm heartedness and his ability to draw out people. This aspect of his personality continued to win him countless admirers throughout his long and illustrious public life. In the last decade of British rule, his was the most sophisticated and exalted analysis of Gandhi's work and thought and in free India he provided the

Ideological armour for Nehru's foreign policy. His commitment to high principles and unfilling dignity and moral authority to all the offices which he held.

If in India Dr. Radhakrishnan was highly respected figure, abroad he became one of the best- liked public figures of his time. He earned very early international recognition as a philosopher. In 1952, the Library of Living Philosophers, an institute of world- wide repute, brought out a massive volume on the philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, devoted wholly to a critical appreciation of his philosophical doctrines. After independence, this philosophical luminary, who personified the essence of India yet had a universal vision, became an ideal ambassador to the Soviet Union, for the nascent nation poised to establish itself in the international arena. In 1952, Dr. Radhakrishnan was chosen to be the Vice President of the Republic of India and in 1962, he was made the Head of the State for five years. It was the glory of Indian democracy that educationist aloof from politics but

having an International acclaim as a profound scholar was placed in the position of the President. And it was an advantage for a young country like India to have him to interpret its domestic and foreign policies abroad to expound its outlook and aspirations emphatically and in the right way which was much needed in a world of uncertainty and disbelief among nations. His appointment as President was hailed by Bertrand Russell who said, "It is an honour to philosophy that Dr. Radhakrishnan should be President of India and I, as a philosopher, take special pleasure in this. Plato aspired for philosophers to become kings and it is a tribute to India that she should make a

Philosopher President." History reserved for Radhakrishnan's term of office as President much suspense and surprise. Within months of his ascendancy in 1962 there was the Chinese invasion. The nation's morale was dealt a blow but Radhakrishnan's voice, firm and resolute came on the air to reassure a shaken nation: "Owing to the difficult terrain and numerical superiority of the Chinese, we suffered military reverses. These have opened our eyes to the realities of the situation. We are now aware of our inadequacies and are alive to the needs of the present and the demands of the future. The country has developed a new purpose, a new will." In 1965, Pakistan violated our

Western frontiers. Dr. Radhakrishnan in his broadcast to the nation on September 25, 1965 said, "Pakistan assumed that India was too weak or too afraid or too proud to fight. India though naturally disinclined to take to arms felt the necessity to defend herself when attacked. Pakistan also assumed that communal disturbances would occur in the country and in the resulting chaos she could have her way. Her miscalculations must have come to her as a rude shock." Dr. Radhakrishnan had great faith in Indian democracy. In his farewell broadcast to the Nation on May 12, 1967, he said that despite occasional forebodings to the contrary, the Indian Constitution had worked successfully so

far. But democracy, he warned, was also more than a system of the Government. "It was a way of life and a regime of civilized conduct of human affairs. We should be the architects of peaceful changes and the advocates of radical reform," he said. Dr. Radhakrishnan was s elected as the fast Vice- President of India in 1952. He was elected as the second President of India (1962- 1967). When he became President, some of his students and friends requested him to allow them to celebrate his birthday, 5th September. He replied, "Instead of celebrating my birthday, it would be my proud privilege if 5th September is observed as Teachers Day." His birthday has since been celebrated as the Teachers Day in India. It was a tribute to Dr. Radhakrishnan's close association with the cause of teachers. Whatever position he held, as President or even as Ambassador, Dr. Radhakrishnan essentially remained a teacher all his life.

The teaching profession was his first love and those who studied under him still remember with gratitude his great qualities as a teacher.

**Review of literature:-** Santhosh Kumar Behera (2015) studied on Educational Thoughts of Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan and it is accomplished that Radhakrishnan's educational thoughts – concepts and functions of education, aims, curriculum, methods of teaching, discipline and the role of teacher are very relevant in the 21st century. Though Radhakrishnan is no more in the world but the volumes of work done and left with us will inspire the human civilization forever.

There are very few men who have so deeply influenced the mortals in every nook and corner of the world and have so universally loved and respected as well. Every Indian will salute this great personality forever.

His bequest can be doubted and debated upon by the contemporary critics, but his long -lasting impact cannot be wiped out from the mind of the modern man. Indeed, he will remain exponents of the modern Indian education. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan is a pioneer of the wholesome and boom of the educational philosophy and he flagged it on the heart of educational sphere. A multi-dimensional creative genius, he made his original contributions in all diverse fields of life. Once upon a time a reporter asked to Radhakrishnan regarding the happiest moment of his life.

Anand (2011) studied on Dr Radhakrishnan's Contribution to Contemporary Thought and revealed that Dr. Radhakrishnan is, indeed, a versatile genius - a great scholar, philosopher, seer, writer, orator, statesman, administrator and above all, a great man; contributions are relevant to contemporary India.

**Contributions to education:- Concepts and Functions of Education:** The educational thoughts of Dr. Radhakrishnan are not merely idealistic but also very much pragmatic. Dr. Radhakrishnan is an Idealistic philosopher but his educational thoughts are influenced by the Pragmatic philosophy also. Dr. Radhakrishnan defines education as the instrument for social, economic and cultural change. For social and national integration, for increasing productively, education should be properly utilized. He believed that, "The importance of education is not only in knowledge and skill, but it is to help us to live with others." (Bhatia, S. & Sarin, A., 2004, p.239). Dr. Radhakrishnan opined that only the right kind of education could solve many problems of the society and the country. He wants that education which will help us to see the other world, the invisible and intangible world beyond space and time. Education has to give us a second birth, to help us realize what have already in us. The meaning of education is to emancipate the individual and we need the education of the wholeness- mental, physical, intellectual and spiritual. Education should develop in the minds of students a love of sustained thinking, adherence to truth and the power of resistance to popular sentiments and mob passion.

**Education- Training of Intellectual, Heart and Spirit:** Radhakrishnan desires, education to be complete, must be humane, it must include not only the training of the intellect but the refinement of the heart and the disciplined spirit. No education can be regarded as complete if it neglects the heart and the spirit" (Occasional Speeches and Writings, 1956, p.142).

**Humanism in Education:** No nation in this world can hold its place of primacy in perpetuity. What counts is the moral contribution we make to human welfare. Let us, therefore, try and develop the qualities of charity in judgment and compassion for people who are suffering. If we adopt such an approach, the tensions of the world will diminish rapidly (Occasional Speeches and Writings, 1956, p.142).

**Education for Democracy:** Education must be developing democratic attitude. Educational institutions should train people for freedom, unity, and not localism, for democracy, not for dictatorship.

**Education to Develop Scientific Spirit:** Science is to be used for productive work. We should develop spirit for inquiry and dedication in the pursuit of science and scholarship.

**Education and Human Values:** There is a great deal of intellectual and technical skill but the ethical and spiritual vitality is at a low ebb. Man's completeness results from the pursuit of truth and its application to improve human life, the influence of what is beautiful in nature, man and art, and spiritual development and its embodiment in ethical principles.

**Education and Spiritual Values:** Education is the means by which we can tide up our minds, acquire information, as well as a sense of values. A true democracy is a community of citizens differing from one another but all bound to a common goal (Occasional Speeches and Writings, Second Series, 1957, p.88).

**Education – A search for Integration:** Education aims at making us into civilized human beings, conscious of our moral and social obligations. We must know the world in which we live, physical, organic and social. We must have an idea of the general plan of the universe and the search for truth. When we attain truth our burdens are lightened and our difficulties are diminished. It lights up our pathway with the radiance of joy (Occasional Speeches and Writings, Third Series, 1963, p.87).

**Education – A Capacity for Discernment:** Education has for its aims not merely acquisition of information but the capacity for discernment. Judgment is more important than cleverness. In our country today we have many men who are clever but not many who are upright. We should cultivate respect for integration. Purity is essential in daily life and administration.

**Education to Develop the Spirit of Enquiry:** We should develop the spirit of enquiry and dedication to the pursuit of science and scholarship. We waste our years in college in trivialities and inanities. We need education in character

**Aims of Education:**

**Development of Personality:** A satisfactory system of education aims at a balanced growth of the individual and insists on knowledge and wisdom. It should train the intellect, and furthermore, wisdom can be gained by the study of literature, philosophy and religion that interpret the higher laws of the universe. Education should develop in the minds of the students a love of sustained thinking, adherence to truth and the power of resistance to popular sentiments and mob passion. (Bhatia, S. & Sarin, A., 2004, p.239). The guiding motto of an education system should be the development of personality and faith, formation of character, cultivation of social, moral and spiritual values. In Radhakrishnan's opinion, the aim of all education is man-making.

**Development of Character:** According to Radhakrishnan, Character development is an important aim of education. Education for character building has been advocated by Dr. Radhakrishnan. To him character of a man is the aggregate of the tendencies of his mind or the sum-total of the impressions created by his action and speech. Real character of a man can be judged from his common actions and not from his great performance. Radhakrishnan said, character is destiny and integrity of character is necessary in every walk of life (Choudhury, S., 2006, p. 80).

Education will be incomplete if it does not initiate in the child the values of love, truth, goodness and beauty. He felt that character building is key to all education.

**Preservation, Enrichment and Transmission of Culture:** Radhakrishnan defines culture as the transformation of one's being to produce sweetness of temper, sanity of mind and strength of spirit. Radhakrishnan attached great

importance to cultural aspect of education. Man has created his culture at a great cost of time and labour. A country enriched in culture is advanced in many respects. Education has to play a key role to preserve, enrich, transmit and modify the culture of a country. Education makes the culture fruitful. (Choudhury, S., 2006, p.81).

**Development of Spiritual Values:** Radhakrishnan has given a right place to education for developing spiritual values among the people. Radhakrishnan has attached great importance to spiritual education. He thinks that education which does not inculcate spiritual feelings in students is not true. Without a spiritual bent of mind, the physical and intellectual development of a person remains stunted. This situation is detrimental to the progress of mankind. Radhakrishnan said, human development should not be confused with the acquisition of mechanical skills or intellectual information. It is the development of spirit in man. Education should develop human attitude and manly spirit through the refinement of heart and development of good habits.

**Development of Vocational Efficiency:** Radhakrishnan emphasized education for the development of vocation efficiency. This aim of education is to enable the child to attain certain skills in order to become economically self-sufficient. In order to enable him to become self-reliant, education should aim at imparting vocational courses. He viewed that by increasing his own income through involvement in national farms and factories an individual can increase the wealth of the nation (Choudhury, S., 2006, p. 84).

**National Integration:** National Integration is an important aim of education. It is also one of the basic needs of India. Religious education, mass education programmes like social services, community living, and study of social services were emphasized for the development of nationalism.

**Curriculum:** - According to Radhakrishnan curriculum must be related to life. Radhakrishnan has defined his concept of curriculum in his university commission report published in 1949. He wants that a student should study a number of subjects such as: Languages, Literature, Social Studies (Geography, History, Economics etc.), Philosophy, ethics, theology, Morality, politics, civics, Science (Natural, Human etc.), Mathematics, Art/Music/Fine Arts, Vocation /Profession Subjects, Sports and Physical Education, Yoga, and Religion. Dr. Radhakrishnan has suggested the study of three languages like Mother tongue / Regional Language, Federal Language Hindi and link language English. He has attached importance to the study of Sanskrit on the logic that the knowledge of Sanskrit is essential to understand indigenous culture and also the noble ideas described in Vedas and Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures. He stressed the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at lower level and replacement of English from higher classes gradually by mother

tongue (Choudhury, S., 2006, p. 90). In order to expedite intellectual development Radhakrishnan has suggested the subjects like, History, Geography, Economic, Philosophy etc. The knowledge of the above subjects is essential for the students to use it for the development of society and the human race (Choudhury, S., 2006, p. 91). Radhakrishnan also suggested Religious and Spiritual education, Vocational courses, Women education and mass education in curriculum. In the curriculum for women education, Radhakrishnan wants to include some subjects which may be particularly useful for their specific duties in life. For women education, he suggested the subjects like Literature, History, Science,

Religion, ethics, Puranas, Housekeeping, Arts, Sewing, Domestic work, home science, child rearing, worship, meditation and studies inculcating ideal characters in the women. Education should make her familiar with the problems of home management and attainment of skills in meeting them. In his view, no society can progress satisfactorily with the backwardness of woman race (Choudhury, S., 2006, p. 113). Dr. Radhakrishnan was an idealist. His curriculum is based on idealistic thoughts. Intellectual and moral activities which form base of Dr. Radhakrishnan's curriculum, poetry, and art mathematics must be taught.

**Discipline:** Radhakrishnan believed that lack of self-control results in a deterioration of standards of scholarship, character and integrity. Yoga and spiritual activities are not possible without discipline. He believed in discipline that only would lead to self-realization. He stresses that the students should be trained to approach life's problems with fortitude, self-control and a sense of balance which the new conditions demand. There should be adequate provision for games and other corporate activities.

**The Role of Teacher:** Emphasizing the important of teacher, Radhakrishnan said, "Teacher is the corner stone of the arch of education". Really, without quality and effective teacher the educational institution, curriculum, teaching aids, Educational planning etc. are meaningless. Dr Radhakrishnan's views on an "ideal teacher" are contrary to many of the common teaching practices today. He warned against idolizing teachers as gurus and becoming a congregation of faith without openness of mind. He encouraged the students to question and criticize their teachers.

**Conclusion:** Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan is a pioneer of the wholesome and boom of the educational philosophy and he flagged it on the heart of educational sphere. A multi-dimensional creative genius, he made his original contributions in all diverse fields of life. Once upon a time a reporter asked to Radhakrishnan regarding the happiest moment of his life. He said the happiest moment of my life is when I am in the classroom among the students. It was very difficult to present in any language on account of the towering stature of personality of Dr. Radhakrishnan and successive stages of his creative contribution in philosophical, educational, social, diplomatic and political field. He is also a great exponent of Hindu Philosophy.

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