

Radhakrishnan's Critique of Māyā as Illusion

"Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan's approach to philosophy was syncretic ... He was searching for a common bond, an underlying unity amidst the divisive philosophical disputations, amidst warfare and the gradual disintegration of creeds, sects and socio-political order. He was looking for a synoptic vision, and he thought it was the business of philosophy to discover it."¹

Radhakrishnan was educated in Westernized atmosphere but was a great exponent of eastern culture in the very core of his heart. The christian atmosphere in the Madras Christian College strengthened his religious outlook, and provided him an opportunity to acquaint himself with Western literary Classics and European Philosophy especially of Plato, Plotinus, Kant, Hegel, Bradley and Bergson. Latter caused a great influence on his world view as well his philosophical outlook. On the otherhand in the college the teachers used to criticize Hindu traditional ideas a lot, to which Radhakrishnan reacted with some positive standpoint. As he reminisced later, "The challenge of christian critics impelled me to make a study of Hinduism and find out what is living and what is dead in it. The spirit of the times, in which India, so to say, was turning in its sleep, strengthened this resolve"² This challenge helped him for awakening from his 'dogmatic slumber' a state in which he was unreflectingly following Hinduism in tradition. As he recalled later, "A critical study of Hindu ideas was thus forced upon me ... The need for philosophy arises when faith in tradition is shaken."³

In the department of Philosophy at Madras Christian College among the eminent professors like Principal William Skinner, William Meston and others Alfred Hogg was for Radhakrishnan "My distinguished teacher" He no doubt left a permanent mark on the minds of those who came under his influence. "In view of his influence on Radhakrishnan some of his ideas deserve discussion. Philosophy, according to him, (Hogg) seeks, "to achieve an integration of personality, by detecting and responding to the one that exists through the many, the harmony that resolves the discords, the infinite that makes the finite possible, and bestows on it its degree of worthiness."⁴ The underlying assumption of this view of philosophy is the postulate that there exists such a harmonious unity, and it can be discovered. Though he was not a biased Christian Missionary he however, held the view that such harmonious unity could be discovered by anyone who had faith in Jesus Christ. Hogg suggested that to make Christianity acceptable to the Hindu mind, it was needed to replace old christian ideas by new ones which have reliance to the Indian situation and thought. In this synthetic approach which might be called, Indian Christian Theological approach the Hindu can be made to feel that Christianity has solution to real problems with this aim in mind. Hogg made comparative study of Hinduism and Christianity and advocated the supremacy of the latter over the former.

Whereas "Hinduism offered to save men from the world which is thought of as incurably finite and unsatisfactory. Christianity offers to save the world, from itself - to save all that is precious in our world order from all in it that makes for decay and consumption."⁵ He supported

the view that while the Hindu ideal is the salvation of the individual soul, Christianity believes that God is intent on rescuing from evil, not merely the human soul but the whole of human life in its concrete unity. Hogg's ideas of Philosophy, faith and universal redemption had considerable role in shaping Radhakrishnan's thinking.

Radhakrishnan was not swayed away by this type of pro-western discussion nor was he indifferent to it. He took the task of showing that philosophy in India, particularly Advaita philosophy "is not an abstract study, remote from the life of man."⁶ He even as a student was dissatisfied with the generally prevalent exposition of Advaita Philosophy. In his dissertation on the Ethics of Vedānta he attempted a reply to the criticism levelled by teachers that Hinduism in general and Advaita Vedānta in particular provide no firm basis for practical conduct. In respect of this controversy Radhakrishnan wrote "The world has no existence in the absolute sense of the term. It has no existence in the sense of 'unchangeable', 'immovable', 'infinite' and uncaused. Such is the meaning which the Hindu philosophers attribute to the expression "Jagan Mithya" though it has given rise to many misconceptions which are unwarranted and which a systematic study of the vedānta doctrine would have saved. 'Māyā' is just a name which is given to the world to designate its relativity."⁷ In all his lectures and writings Radhakrishnan wanted to establish that, Hinduism is not a rigid set of doctrines of imperatives fixed once and for all, but a way of life, caring more complex and mobile social order.

Radhakrishnan was influenced by his contemporaries like Gandhiji and Rabindranath Tagore's creative writings, Tagore's intuitive understanding of the synthetic philosophy of what we may call "universal humanism" inspired Radhakrishnan to uphold a world oriented art of living and philosophy which might well be called as humanism. Another humanist philosopher to whom he made occasional references and was also influenced was Sri Aurobindo, Thus, in order to appreciate Radhakrishnan's philosophy it is not only sufficient to follow the background of the classical philosophical tradition. In fact, we should realise his close ideological proximity with Rabindranath, emphasis on ethical life and temptation to reconstruct traditional views with Sri Aurobindo. Thus, in Radhakrishnan developed a syncretist Advaitism which incorporated into it a belief in emergent evolution, in the spiritual progress of human history, and of the cause of liberal social morality. Three major issues are reflected in Radhakrishnan's writings : the redefinition of the Advaita Vedānta, the relationship between Brahman and the world, and the place of action in human life. However, in discussing his ideas regarding "Māyā", we should first keep in mind this background.

Radhakrishnan could not discard away the significance of worldly life, scientific development and struggle of life, but he could not at the same time accept a pure naturalistic mechanical views of evolution." "True humanism tells us that there is some thing more in man than is apparent in his ordinary consciousness, something which frames ideals and thoughts, a finer spiritual presence, which makes him, dissatisfied with mere earthly pursuits."⁸ This spiritual side which was called by

Rabindranath Tagore as the Surplus man is not to be detached from the bodily side." The oldest wisdom in the world tells us that we can consciously unite with the divine while in this body, for this is man really born." ⁹ Now this, Svasiddha (self proven) true self is itself the background of all our faculties of our action and existences. However, "Body, mind, and the world are almost arbitrary restrictions imposed on this consciousness. This universal self is in our ordinary life obscured by psychological impurities and fluctuations becomes confused with the empirical self"¹⁰ Radhakrishnan thus making a distinction between transcendentl and empirical self explains the denotation of the word māyā as the phenomenal character of the empirical self and the world answering to the empirical self. Māyā signifies the fragility of the universe. ... But "māyā does not mean that the empirical world with the selves in it is an illusion for the whole effort of the cosmos is directed to and sustained by the one supreme self, which though distinct from everything is implicated in everything"¹¹ The Supreme Truth, the Absolute One is not null or void it is in fact filled with things which live, breathe and move each according to its nature. This interpretation of 'māyā' might be called as objective.

Again, in respect of the individual-subjectively 'Māyā' is a term employed also to indicate the tendency to identify ourselves with our apparent selves and become exiled from our spiritual consciousness with its maximum of clarity and certainty." This may also be called as avidyā or deformation of true knowledge which has its natural result in selfishness those who

have no contact with reality, no insight into truth except the relative reality for the absolute truth. Referring to the episode of Yājñavalkya and Maitreyē and Maitryīś famous assertion, Yena na amṛtasyam, Kiṁ tena kuryām," Radhakrishnan reminds us "If we take our stand in unreality we may grow better or worse, but not perfect",¹² We can be perfect and can enjoy a life worth living only by overcoming selfishness. Jñāna, or seeing through the veil of māyā, is the spiritual destiny of man. Māyā in this context is explained as the deceptive power which leads a man to regard multiplicity as ultimate and to live separate and independent lives. Māyā keeps us busy with the world of finitude and causes a certain restlessness in our souls and tempts us to accept as eternal which are mere temporal. But, "If this life were all, if our brief little existence on the little lighted stage were the grand reality, if there were no invisible sphere, no great communion of minds, no shared adventures of spirit, we would not have the feeling of moving through a haunted world."¹³ To a man like Radhakrishnan who emphasized on social activities and universal brotherhood, such an outlook to insist isolated life was a matter of bondage, from which wisdom liberates and the inner change is essential to perfection.

Māyā is thus used for ignorance which we do not recognise as the principle of the universe. It is a sort of not - knowing - which is avidyā. If it attains either reality or merges into nothingness there would have been no tension no process. But the tension causes a certain restlessness in our souls, fever in our blood. The world is said to be sat-asat-vilakṣaṇa form real and unreal.

Again the world is a derived being, an expression of the Absolute but not the absolute itself. The world is dependent on the Absolute - the former is Māyā. Māyā shows the distinction between the Absolute and the dependent existences. However the relation between the two cannot be logically explicated. To the metaphysicians māyā is a riddle, sphynx which invalidates all attempts at probing into its nature. To the logicians māyā is a puzzle. The relation between the world and the Brahman is inexplicable anirvacanīya. The inexplicability is māyā - though it does not repudiate the existence of the world. "It does not say that the world is not, though it appears to be."¹⁴

In this context it should be reminded that the relation of dependence among the Brahman and the world was explained by the Advaitins as one sided dependence. They employed the term vivarta or appearance, not pariṇāma or transformation. The immutable unchangeable Brahman could not be accepted as modified into this changing world. For we cannot say that a part of the Absolute is modified, whereas the reminder is intact. Such a relation is sometimes explained with the help of the analogy of snake in the rope, siler in the shell, which was resulted into a misconception of world is a dream or an illusion. the Absolute is the Eternal Being, while the world is temporal being whose existence might be limited - this essential temporality of the world is indicated by the word 'Māyā'.

Again the unmanifested prakṛti is also called 'māyā', "As the dualities between the Divine and the matter, which is used as a means for the

unfoldment of the Divine, are not ultimately two separate entities, māyā is not dissociated from the world spirit."¹⁵ All the things of this world are sat-asat-ātmaka. This dual character is sometimes indicated by the word māyā.

In explaining different meanings of māyā as employed by different thinkers and as it was adopted by Radhakrishnan himself, the latter has made a distinction between Divine Being and Divine Action as Absolute in repose and the Absolute as active or energising. From worldly view (yabhārika) Brahman is conceived as Īśvara-and as possessing māyā or power of manifestation. It delights in manifesting.

Radhakrishnan thus explicitly expresses his intention that "In my writings, I have interpreted the doctrine of māyā, so as to save the world and give to it a real meaning."¹⁶ The "real meaning" here refers to the criticism of the principle of māyā as resulting in something illusory - the world is illusion. Before discussing Radhakrishnan's own interpretation in this respect, a brief reference may be made of the origin of such an idea of illusion as Radhakrishnan himself dealt with in the Introduction of the Principal Upaniṣads viz. the status of world - Māyā and Avidyā.¹⁷

The Upaniṣads occasionally make reference to the duality of this world and thus address it as mere seeming reality. On the other hand we also feel that the world is full of imperfections and in contrast to the bliss achieved by union with the Absolute the realisation of its ecstasy one tempts to disregard this world as full of troubled and unhappy dream

- "a phantasmagoria dancing on the fabric of the pure being."¹⁸ It is an innate tendency in human being to take refuge in the spirit - to avoid the stresses of everyday life by believing that there is something beyond, which is the Real, Truth and Bliss. This tendency is being reflected throughout the Upaniṣads - through the prayer "Tamoso mā Jyotirgamaya, mṛtyormāmṛtyagamaya," "lead us from the unrealities to the reality, from the darkness to light, from death to immortality." The Katha Upaniṣad, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, the Bṛhad-āraṇyaka and the Íśa Upaniṣads, emphasize that the Real remains veiled by something unreal.

By reflecting on His being (Hara - the Lord) more and more, there is complete cessation from the illusion of the world. Here one can find reference to illusory world. The existence of duality is not to be admitted as absolutely real. This view that the world is an illusion - māyā results in unreal existences was thus substantially backed by the Upaniṣads. Advaita Vedāntists developed the idea that the truth being one Absolute - the world becomes something illusory.

Though Radhakrishnan traced the origin of the idea of māyā as an illusion, it was not supported, by him as an acceptable dictum either in Upaniṣadic context or in Śaṅkarite metaphysics. He clearly stated that though spiritual awareness was emphasized, indifference to the world is not however the main feature of spiritual consciousness. Śaṅkara has stated that Brahman is to be apprehended in two ways as the Absolute and the personal God. Both of these according to Radhakrishnan are real,

only the former is the logical prius of the latter. "The Soul when it rises to full attention knows itself to be related to the single universal consciousness, but when it turns outward it sees the objective universe as a manifestation of this single consciousness. The withdrawal from the world is not the conclusive end of the spiritual quest. There is a return to the world accompanied by a persistent refusal to take the world as it confronts us as final. The world has to be redeemed and it can be redeemed because it has its source in God and final refuge in God."¹⁹

Brahman is the basis of the world, this fact is stated by the acceptance of Māyā as a creative energy. It is no doubt the fact that the cause is logically prior to the effect. But this does not mean that effect is nothing but mere illusion. Again it is no doubt the fact that unless we overcome the erroneous view that the world is independently real the highest good will not be realised. Still it is not to contrast between these two - it is not a question of either pure consciousness or dynamic consciousness" These are different statuses of the same Reality."

Radhakrishnan also makes references of the Upaniṣadic Texts, which clearly states this world is not mere illusion - a fragile bubble out of an eternal Truth. "The Bṛhad - āraṇyaka Upaniṣad argues that satyaṁ consists of three syllables, sa, ti, yaṁ, the first and the last being real and the second unreal, madhyato anṛtam. The fleeting is enclosed on both sides by an eternity which is real."²⁰ The world is the self-projection and self limitation employed by Brahman Himself.

Radhakrishnan however, to some extent expressed his bent towards Sātkāryavāda. He says that "The supreme is both transcendent and immanent. It is the manifest and unmanifest, Vyāktāvyaaktaḥ, ... It is the real and the unreal, sand asat"²¹ In the formless Brahman Māyā, initiates form. Religious experience, one's upliftment towards the Spiritual development in this world, is possible because this evolving universe is a progressive manifestation of the power of the Supreme Spirit. The idea of God is though intermediary step towards the realisation of union with the Absolute is no doubt a declension from the pure monistic idealism of upaniṣadic thought. Metaphysically speaking the Absolute is not a mere abstraction or void or silence. "What is subject to change and growth in the world of becoming, reaches its fulfilment in the world of the Absolute. The beyond is not an annulling or a cancellation of the world of becoming, but its transfiguration. The Absolute is the life of this life, the truth of this truth." If the world were altogether unreal, we cannot progress from the unreal to the Real."²²

We can realise our drawbacks, our limitations. We strive for development. We being rational beings can realise that not the matter but something spiritual must be attained. But this does not mean body is detached from the soul, matter is devoid of spirit. "The ignorance of the mind and the senses and the apparent futilities of human life are the material for the self-expression of that being, for its unfolding."²³ The world is real since it is dependent on the original cause - the Brahman but it is unreal also - since it is not independently existent. The creation of this world leads Brahman to realise his own creativity which is said

to be delight on his part - ॐ Radhakrishnan questioned immutability as the criterion of Reality. If the real is to be nothing other than immutable, the world of manifestation will have no claim to reality. The significance of reality lies with the temptation to be merged with the Absolute which can be attained in no other place than this world of change. This world is not mere dream. The Upaniṣads make difference between waking and the dream state. The object of this world of our waking are in relation with other things - they are not mere illusion. They are related in a spatio-temporal order, which is not dependent on the time when we perceive them. They subsist during the time we imagine i.e. Kalpana Kāl and during the time while we do not perceive them - bāhyas ca dvayakāla.

The nature of māyā is indescribable i.e. anērvacanīya. The concept of māyā is not offered as an explanation of the world process but to show that any explanation thereof is bound to be failed. Metaphysically to be conceived, logically to be derived māyā becomes a riddle to a mind who attempts at comprehension. This world baffles any clear-cut division of reality and unreality which is characterised in the concept of māyā - unreal is illusory. Radhakrishnan clearly declares that "Unreal the world is, illusory it is not."²⁴ To the eternal question why the transcendent pure being - the monistic ideal of Reality and Oneness makes individual souls and the world arise from itself, Radhakrishnan declares, "As to how the primal reality in which the divine light shines everlastig can yet be the source and fount of all empirical being we can only say

that it is mystery māyā."²⁵

Any attempt to solve the problem even conceiving God as the immediate creator of this world makes it more difficult. The question arises whether it is good or bad - whether the world is something other than God i.e. Good. In fact, the two together God and the world make up the total reality. Still the question remains, if the world were needed to God, He no longer remains an object to be worshiped as perfect being. To solve this problem Śāṅkarāchārya introduced the notion of onesided dependence or vivarta. It is not modification or pariṇāma. The Supreme being modified as world will necessarily involve decay. "So it is said that it does not itself become many but seems to have become many through māyā."²⁶ To this doctrine of one-sided dependence and the role of māyā as just projecting invalidly the unreal as real, Radhakrishnan raises here the question of insufficiency of organic relationship which is essential in case of religious experience. In fact Upaniṣads also reconciled the monistic ideal with the conception of many in One. He points out that Śāṅkara wrongly conceived that there are different doctrines in the Upaniṣads, one representing the esoteric truth that Brahman, is the God who manifests Himself in Universe. The Upaniṣads believed that there was only one doctrine. The creation of the world of manifold in no way employs limitation to the limitless but is just play which suggests the free overflow of the divine into the universe.

In Advaita Vedānta as the Absolute truth was conceived as Pure being, Consciousness and Bliss - the Perfect Being led the Monistic Philosophers to deny truth of anything other than the Brahman which resulted in explaining the world and māyā as illusion. Western thinkers like Schweitzer raised the objection that māyā being illusion, world being just play, Hindu philosophy consequently could not emphasize on the reality of the world, the value of life, and the necessity for social service, on which Christian thought insisted a lot. The ideal man of the Hindu religion is raised above the ethical distinctions of good and evil. The ethics of inner perfection insisted on by Hindu thought, conflict with an active and wide-hearted love of one's neighbour. The doctrine of māyā, which declares that life is an illusion, contains the flaw of world and life negation, and in consequence Hindu thought is non-ethical. "Man cannot engage in ethical activity in a world with no meaning." "For believer in the māyā doctrine ethics can have only a quite relative importance."²⁷

To these objections Radhakrishnan took great effort to reply that Schweitzer's argument is based on the antagonism of the two attitudes which he calls 'world life affirmation', and 'world and life negation.' But according to Radhakrishnan, it is difficult to know why we should regard perfection and action as antithetical. He also denied the view that the ethical life followed by Great Hindu Idealists like Gandhi or Tagore was to be traced merely to their contact with the Christian West.

In Upaniṣads and the further development on it, specially the theistic tradition holds, "All existence finds its source and support in a supreme reality whose nature is spirit. The visible world is the symbol of a more real world. It is the reflection of a spiritual universe which gives to it its life and significance. However the mutuality of things which is the part of connotation of the word māyā is an accepted theme of only in Hindu religious - philosophical ideas but in western countries and their culture." Radhakrishnan has made several quotations from English Literature, of writers like Shakespeare, Milton, Shelly and so on in this context. Moreover, Achārya Śāṁkara the chief exponent of māyāvāda could not deny that the world has empirical being, which is quite different from illusory existence. "he warns us, however, against the temptation to regard what is not completely real as utterly illusory."²⁸ The world is not a phantom, though it is not real. So long as we are in this world of duality - the world is there determining our perceptions and conduct.

Māyā as ignorance or avidyā is natural (naisargika) to human mind and the world being organically connected with it is not mere dream or unreal phantasmagoria." Māyā is not solipsism. It does not say that Suns and universe are the invention of the solitary mind. Śāṁkara proclaims his opposition to Vijñānavāda or mentalism"²⁹ The world no doubt is always changing, still it has a unity and meaning. "These are revealed by the reality present all through it. This reality lies not in the facts

but in the principle which makes them into a whole."³⁰ Mankind tends to realise a definite goal in life which can never be attained if the world were an empty dream or an eternal delirium. We are though imperfect, potentiality inherent the same absolute throughout the whole of one's life, one should realise Advaitic Mahāvākya 'That art thou' (tattavamsi) which is bound up with ethics of active service. In western thought social service is preached since neighbours are one's own like but in Indian Philosophy the basis is far more stronger : "You shall love your neighbour as yourselves because you are your neighbour."³¹ Such a normal standard of action can never leave this world of body and mind in vain, but would insist on a sort of cultivation and control of it towards the highest spiritual goal.

Monism was taken as an inevitable thesis for illusionism. If one is real-no many is truly real. But for Radhakrishnan one and many, being and becoming were not antagonistic. There remains no doubt some order or degrees of reality but both of them are real." Everything everywhere is based on reality ... Reality and existence are not to be set against each other as metaphysical contraries."³² Life in this world is not fruitless. The theory of māyā only warns us against our total absorption and misconception that this world of empirical objects and earthy desires are of independent value. "When the Hindu thinkers ask us to free ourselves from māyā, they are asking us to shake off our bondage to the unreal values which are dominating us. They do not ask us to treat life as an illusion or be

indifferent to the world's welfare. They are asking to escape from the illusion which holds us by the throat and makes us pursue physical satisfaction or corporate self seeking as the highest end."³³

In 'An Idealistic View of Life' Radhakrishnan also dealt the problem "If the universe is essentially spirit, how do we account for its appearance as non-spirit? Our world of ordinary experience is full of tension, discord and disharmony, still "For the spirit, the harmony is the experienced reality". Harmony supersedes over disharmony though we should realise, that the world of ordinary experience is a feeble representation of the perfect world. "The hasty logic which declares because the one is real, the many are illusion, is corrected in the view that the one reveals itself in the many."³⁴

Radhakrishnan's interpretation of māyāvāda bears a reflection of an amalgam of the idealistic thought of Upaniṣadic origin and the ethics of action. He could make a successful synthesis of the message of Advaita with our everyday experience of living - a reconciliation of transcendentalism and practicalism. His works undoubtedly accepted the original Upaniṣadic assumption that Reality is basically one, all comprehensive, luminous and the source of multiple manifestations. Thus, he could not accept categorically that the phenomenal world in which man operates with various interests, desires, attachments plans, and so on is illusory.

Thus, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan rejected outrightly an interpretation of *māyā* which says that the world is an illusion and accepts an interpretation which says that '*māyā*' has six meanings Viz. *māyā* as inexplicable mystery, *māyā* as power of self-becoming, *māyā* as duality of consciousness and matter, *māyā* as primal matter, *māyā* as concealment and *māyā* as one-sided dependence. Radhakrishnan summarizes the meanings of *māyā* five times. Indian Philosophy, volume one, P-546-547. Indian Philosophy, volume two 573-574, The Bhāgavadgītā P 42-43, History of Philosophy Eastern and Western, Vol-one, P-279, and Paul Arathur Schilpp, ed. The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, P-800-802. Each of these descriptions contains six parts. Though he did not employ the word '*māyā*' in exactly the same six meanings in each description, it is traceable and reasonable to conclude that Radhakrishnan thinks the term *māyā* has six meanings. Radhakrishnan's view in this regard has been clearly stated in his translation of the Bhāgavadgītā. It helps one to understand his analysis of *māyā* hermeneutics.³⁵

Radhakrishnan was convinced that the unchangeable reality expresses itself in the changing universe, the result is something mysterious, though not a mere mirage. He, we have already noted that, did not believe that reality in its entirety can be grasped by the discursive intellect. *Māyā* signifies the inexplicable mystery surrounding the relation between Brahman and the world.

However, mystery and mirage do not have identical meanings. Radhakrishnan clearly stated that *Māyā* does not indicate that the world is an

illusion. Though the inexplicability of māyā i.e. the relation between Brahman and the world somehow recommended that we adopt an attitude of wise agnosticism. Inexplicability was referred as 'incomprehensibility' "We can never understand how the ultimate reality is related to the world of plurality, since the two are heterogeneous and every attempt at explanation is bound to fail. This incomprehensibility is brought out by the term māyā".³⁶ It parallels the relation between one and many which was declared by Radhakrishnan as logically inexplicable.

Radhakrishnan thinks the inexplicability of the logical relationship between the absolute and the World does not repudiate the existence of the world. He repeatedly declares that the world exists even though we cannot say exactly how. He confesses that, "We do not and cannot know the why of this world. It is this fact of its inexplicable existence that is signified by the word māyā."³⁷ Māyā thus as inexplicable mystery refers to the relation between Brahman and the world. Again, we should be reminded traditional Indian Philosophical trend of thinking that Ātman and Brahman are identical. Then the relation between Ātman and the world is identical to the relation between Brahman and the world - it is also mysterious to understand the relation between the universal self (Ātman) and the particular self ātman this relation between the Ātman and the psychological self is inexplicable, māyā or mysterious."³⁸ In Radhakrishnan's writings māyā signifies the inexplicability of any relation. This however resulted in the concept of māyā which is coherent with his view that there is an ultimate oneness of things which dissolves

all relations and relate though māyā - the inexplicable remains there between the One and the many.

Inexplicability of māyā undoubtedly leads one to assume as Radhakrishnan himself suggested that we are "bound prometheus like to the rock of mystery by the chains of our finite mind."³⁹ This is an epistemological issue. An attitude of mere agnosticism was recommended in this respect. "The real is the supreme spirit, the actual multiplicity is rooted in the real. How, we do not know. It is Mystery which we cannot penetrate and a wise agnosticism is the only rational attitude"⁴⁰ Radhakrishnan as a traditionalist rsi suggests that "the word māyā" registers our finiteness and points to a gap in our knowledge."⁴¹

Māyā is being used as to express our inability to know the answer of our most persistent questions and that's why try to conceal our ignorance by the use of the word 'māyā'.

The concept of inexplicability and the reality of the world were harmonised in Radhakrishnan's writing in a unique way. "When the Absolute is taken as pure being, its relation to the world is inexplicable, anirvacanīya. We know that without the background of being, there can be no world. The relation between the two cannot be logically explicated. This inexplicability of the logical relationship does not repudiate the existence of the world. It does not say that the world is not, though it appears to be."⁴²

Radhakrishnan sometimes refers to the "power of self-expression" as *māyā*. This appears as a cosmogenic concept which tends to explain the theory of creation. He thinks that an Absolute self requires the power of self expression in order to produce the world. He states that primal consciousness must have the capacity to limit itself, to break itself into the objects of the world. He refers to "the self-sundering of the Eternal which calls into existence the universe of men and things."⁴³

This self-limiting power of the Absolute he says, in Indian philosophy is called *māyā*.

Māyā is the objectifying tendency leads the Absolute to manifest. It is the dividing force of self-distinction residing in the heart of reality, which finites the infinite. In a word *māyā* in the second sense might be called as the power of manifestation of the Absolute. It is important to notice in this context that the objectification or manifestation of the Absolute does not affect its unity or integrity. The ultimate oneness, the indispensable feature of monism is not to be shattered by objectifying *māyā*. The Absolute is the one resides beyond the duality of subject and object.

The power of self expression was in other words expressible as the power of creation. In order to explain his interpretation of *māyā* to Western audiences, Radhakrishnan often refers to *māyā* as the power of creation,

though he did not think there is any real difference between the created and the creator. Māyā as the creative force bears the real significance of the Vedas. "The Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad describes God as māyā in, the wonder-working powerful being, who creates the world by His powers. Here māyā is used in the sense in which the Ṛg Veda employs it, the divine art or power by which the divinity makes a likeness of the eternal prototypes or ideas inherent in his nature. Indra is declared to have assumed many shapes by his māyā. Māyā is the power of Īśvara from which the world arises."⁴⁴ Māyā in this regard as a self-expressive and self-becoming force in no way supports the theory of world illusion. Radhakrishnan's use of the phrases like wonderful creation, 'ātmabibhuti' etc. clearly states his positive attitude toward the created world "The creative power by which God fashions the universe is called yogamāyā. There is no suggestion that the forms, the event and the objects produced by maya or the form-building power of God, the mayin, are only illusory."⁴⁵

Māya was also explained by Dr. Radhakrishnan as duality of consciousness and matter. In this respect his philosophy bears an impact of Sāṃkhya Philosophy, while he tried to unite the idea of this school of philosophy with Advaita Philosophy. Māyā was employed and understood to solve the riddle between the dualism and monism from Radhakrishnan's own point of view. He says "All things in the world participate in the characters of this duality. They are sad-asad-ātmaka. They are real as well as unreal. The dual character is sometimes indicated by the word māyā.

The world and the world Spirit are both equally real."⁴⁶ This dual character is indicated by the third meaning of māyā. Māyā calls attention to Radhakrishnan's view that duality of consciousness and matter, being and non-being is inherent in all things. He also holds that the world process is dual : a mixture of self and not-self, Spirit and nature, consciousness and matter. He remarks that "All things partake of the duality of being and non-beings from puruṣottama downwards. Even God has the element of negativity or māyā though he controls it."⁴⁷ All things in the universe lie somewhere on māyā itself. Māyā signifies the duality inherent in all things. It is important to notice that Radhakrishnan mentions the world (Vérāt) and the world Spirit (Hiraṇyagarbha) in the context of māyā to express the inherent duality of consciousness and matter in all things." If we turn to the world process which is a perpetual becoming, it is a mixture of being and non-being, sat and asat, the divine principle and prakṛti. Hiraṇya-garbha and his world are both subject to time, and should be distinguished from the eternal. But the temporal becoming is by no means false."⁴⁸ Māyā is sometimes explained by Radhakrishnan as primal matter. From māyā all existences arise. In this respect we can find out that he agrees with the Sāṃkhya position that all existence arises from primal matter and that primal matter is not illusion. But he does not share the pluralistic Sāṃkhya view that puruṣa and prakṛti are independent, nor he agrees that Puruṣa is an independent deity, a separate power. Though Radhakrishnan has accepted that maya is an inexplicable mystery, yet he wants to present a theoretical

explanation regarding the controversial view how Brahman becomes the world (virat). This led him to synthesize the main tents of Adnaitism, Saṁkhya philosophy and also Vaiṣṇavism.

There are various statements which depict the direct evidence that Radhakrishnan uses the word māyā to mean prakṛti, primal matter. However, in his 'Introduction' to the Bhāgavadgītā he has remarked that, māyā gradually came to mean lower prakṛti. He thinks that the phrases like lower prakṛti and primal matter are of the same meaning and all existences arise from it.

Māyā was also explained by Radhakrishnan as concealment. He advocates the view that phenomenal things conceal "some thing more" which is behind them. The world deludes when the perceiver fails to perceive it as it really is related to Brahman. The world is a source of delusion but that does not mean that it is an illusion. This implies a subjective attitude that falsity lies with the persons who perceive not with that which is perceived.

However Radhakrishnan thinks that one function of māyā is to conceal, to hide. His metaphorical affirmation that "God seems to be enveloped in the immense cloak of maya" has already been noted and the function of a cloak is cover. He also refers to the "veil of māyā."⁴⁹

Māyā in this context was also treated by Radhakrishnan as the source

of a persistent and false belief about the human self. It is the source of delusion. The persistent and false belief about the self, in his view is the belief that the true self (Ātman) is the same as the apparent self (Ātman). Māyā is a term employed also to indicate the tendency to identify ourselves with our apparent selves.⁵⁰

However, he clearly states that, "The Phenomenal character of the empirical self and the world answering to is denoted by the world māyā, which signifies the fragility of the universe. Māyā does not mean that the empirical world with the selves in it is an illusion, for the whole effort of the cosmos is directed to and sustained by the one supreme self, which though distinct from everything is implicated in everything."⁵¹ The doctrine of māyā declares that the world is dependent on and derived from the ultimate reality. He clearly declares that the created world is of changing character while Brahman is exempt from change and hence the former is of lower status. Still "In no case is its existence to be confused with illusory being or non-existence. Even Śaṅkara (Sic), who advocates the theory of māyā, carefully distinguishes the phenomenal existence of the world from the being of Brahman and the non-being of dreams, illusion etc. Besides many other interpreters of the Vedānta repudiate the doctrine of Māyā even in this limited sense."⁵²

Radhakrishnan understood the need for constructive philosophy, an articulation of ultimate presupposition about the process of events entire.

In Radhakrishnan's system, māyā is one such ultimate presupposition about the phenomena of nature and the drama of history. In explaining this he discussed the ontological issue that, is reality growing ? His etymology of Brahman, the theological parallel for reality asserts that reality grows, expands, and evolves. Radhakrishnan clearly stated the etymological difference between him and Śaṅkara. He reported "The Upaniṣads raise the question; (Sic.) what is that reality which remains identical and persists through change ? The word used in the Upaniṣads to indicate the supreme reality is Brahman. It is derived from the root brh, 'to grow, to burst forth'. This derivation suggests gushing forth, bubbling over, ceaseless growth, brhattvam. Śaṅkara derives the word Brahman from the root bṛhati to exceed, atisayana (see) and means by it eternity purity. For him 'Brahman means reality which grows, breathes or swells.

In realising Radhakrishnan's concept of māyā in relation to his own interpretation of Reality, it is essential to understand first the most vital ontological concept that, unity is most important tenets of his philosophy. In fact no background concept is more central to Radhakrishnan's ontology than unity. "The insistence on the unity of the supreme Self as the constitutive reality of the world and of the individual souls does not negate the empirical reality of the latter."⁵³

Unity was realised by Radhakrishnan in a special meaning. It is not

mere oneness. It is inclusive than exclusive, though differing from identity. He explained that, "the unity is not one which annuls the distinctions but one which includes them all"⁵⁴

As he accepts unity manifests diversity, he could not but reject the meaning of 'māyā', as illusion. However in this context it is to be reminded that, the related are absolutely independent. We have already discussed that Radhakrishnan accepted māyā as one sided dependence. In Radhakrishnan's mind, māyā eliminates the possibility of a mutual independence between the one and the many.

Again, Radhakrishnan's concept of unity is closely related to the concept of continuity. He viewed the world as a whole which displays continuity and unity at all levels. Continuity is a closely related concept to the temporal aspect of his atemporal unity and closely related to Karma-samsāra. Eternity and temporality are substantiated by each other in the concept of reality which is identical with truth, which has four states, which might be discussed as the concept of Reality in four poises.

Radhakrishnan affirmed the identity of Ātman and Brahman (tattvamasi). In his 'introduction' to his translation of The Principle Upaniṣads he dealt with the concept of reality in four poises. "We thus get the four poises or statuses of reality, the Absolute, Brahman, (2) the creative Spirit, Īśvara, (3) The world Spirit, Hiraṇya-garbha and (4) the world.

This is the way in which the Hindu thinkers interpret the integral nature of the Supreme reality. Māndūkya Upaniṣad says that Brahman is catus-pat, four-footed, and its four principles are Brahman, Īśvara, Hiraṇya-garbha and Virāt,"⁵⁵ which in English was described by Radhakrishnan i) as the Absolute, the one, beyond all dualities and distinctions, ii) the self conscious subject confronting the object, iii) the world soul, and iv) the world.⁵⁶

In this explanation it is to be noted in coherence with other aspects of Radhakrishnan's philosophy, that the fourth poise, i.e. the world (virāt) is as more important and valuable as the other poises are. It has the assurance that, the world is quite real. This has also been referred by him as "We have thus the four sides of one whole : i) the transcendental universal being anterior to any concrete reality ii) the causal Principle of all differentiation; iii) the innermost essence of the world and iv) the manifest world. They are co-existent and not alternating poises where we have quiescent Brahman or a creative Lord. These are simultaneous sides of the one Reality."⁵⁷

It is also to be noted that the real is not the sum of four parts but 'an ineffable unity'. It was warranted to identify reality with any one poise. However Radhakrishnan stressed that the distinction between the Brahman i.e. the first poise which signifies transcendentality is different from the second poise i.e. Īśvara i.e. personal or in other words Saguna and Nirguna Brahman are different in logic not ontologically.

The poise four i.e. virāt is to signify world, cosmos. If poise three is the world-soul or Hiranyagarbha, poise four is the world. In short it is the material world. "This Hiranyagarbha is looked upon as related to the universe in the same way as the individual soul is related to its body ... The world in which live has its own mind, and this mind is hiranyagarbha. This conception of world soul appears in the Upaniṣads under various names and forms. It is called Kārya Brahma or the Causal God of Īśvara ... This effect God is the totality of created existences of which all finite objects are parts."⁵⁸

Radhakrishnan was highly influenced by Jainism i.e. anekāntavāda. In his concept of reality no priority is discernable for Brahman, the immutable or transcendental. Radhakrishnan's four poises conception was deliberately designed to unite the views of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. This point is of very importance in understanding the fourth poise i.e. the world and specially in reference to it the significance of māyā hermeneutics in Radhakrishnan's philosophy. The non-exclusiveness of poises one and two logically extends to poises three and four. The poise one i.e. the transcendental Absolute Brahman does not exclude the world i.e. the poise four. This is the main way of approach and reasoning by which Radhakrishnan argued against the illusional hermeneutics and the unreality of the world.

Radhakrishnan's views of māyā hermeneutics as non illusional is closely related to his theory of ethics. He took the task to correct the impression

of both Western and Eastern philosophers (specially of Schweitzer) that advaita vedānta is essentially non-ethical and implies world-negating ethics. In this respect firstly we may discuss some of Radhakrishnan's beliefs which are in the area of ethics. His māyā hermeneutics is directly related to his interpretation of Hindu Social ethics. He had the attitude of conviction that there is a mode of consciousness which carries with it self evidence and completeness. He affirmed his faith in the identity of one's own true self with the larger environment. He advocated sanatana dharma, the eternal religion, the religion of spirit. He adhered to monism though the ultimate Absolute is in his philosophy both an ontological fact and teleological ideal. His faith consists of a complex network of inter connected symbols including four poles of reality i.e. Brahman, Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha, and virāt. He also insisted that the relation between an individual and society is shaped by the threefold discipline signified by puruṣa-artha, varna and āśrama.

In Radhakrishnan's view non-attachment to objects of the world is the spirit which should motivate all human action. He raised the question "Is the moral ideal a dream and am I fighting only a sham fight against the tremendous forces of evil and wickedness?"⁵⁹ In 1908 when Radhakrishnan submitted his M.A. thesis entitled Ethics of the Vedānta, Radhakrishnan argued that the Vedānta system includes room for a positive ethical ideal. He clearly stated his objective for establishing the ethical character of the Hindu religion.

Radhakrishnan formulated his *māyā* hermeneutics in order "to save the world and give to it a real meaning." The phrase "to save the world" in this context means to articulate an ontological vision of the world in which the world has value and meaning. Radhakrishnan proclaimed that "One who has completely shaken himself free from selfishness is at liberty to take upon himself the task of the world. His attitude will be not world-seeking or world fleeing, but world-saving"⁶⁰ Ethical responsibility is a glorified stage between desire for and indifference and inactivity towards the tasks of the world. Man should bear within himself the conviction that, the world is not an illusion. This will help him to understand the moral "Sanctity or holiness is not unworldliness, it is participation in the agony of the world with a proper frame of mind."⁶¹ Radhakrishnan was convinced that the man who remains aloof from the activities of the world can never be called as behaving wisely. A truly moral man bears the responsibility of upliftment and transformation of his environment, but this cannot be done unless he lives in it with the belief that the world is not a mere illusion.

The aforesaid conviction of Radhakrishnan's philosophy led him to recommend action in a spirit of non-attachment to objects of the world. He held the faith that action in the world should be taken without forgetting the ultimate oneness of things. Monism implies that there is no real distinction on the onehand between Brahman and Ātman and between the world and us on the ohter. Action inthis world being non-attached

to the fruits of action is the ideal. Radhakrishnan thinks desire for or aversion from anything violates the spirit of non-attachment to objects of the suffering of the world. He explains "Hindu thought points out that what binds is not action but the spirit in which it is done. It is the desire for or aversion from the result that binds the individual soul."⁶² Thus Radhakrishnan found an organic relationship between the religious spirit and an active life. In *Religion and Life*, commenting on the ascetic life of India he wrote.,

"Man of these are poor beggars who deceive the public by putting on the ascetic's garb ... But a large proportion of these three millions will be men of a fairly high degree of intelligence, a good deal of self-control (sic) and a deeply religious bent. They could be of great service to India in her present transition. But even a stray visitor will be struck by the amazing and deplorable waste of energy which daily takes place in those veritable castles of indolence, otherwise known as monasteries and mutts where these ascetics lead a life of torpor and satisfied and dreamful ease. But they are not to blame. They are slaves to a superstition. They sincerely believe that strenuous life is opposed to spiritual perfection."⁶³

CONCLUSION :

World negation and illusionism are denied in Radhakrishnan's philosophy. He clearly stated that "the world is not a deceptive facade of something underlying it." In other words, Radhakrishnan denied India's other worldliness. In the "Preface" to Indian Philosophy, Volume one, he exclaimed "to the modern mind Indian Philosophy means two or three silly notions which include 'māyā', or the delusiveness of the world."⁶⁴ He counteracted the common belief in the west (which was specially reflected in Schwitzer's view) that Hindu thought regards the world as an illusion we have to escape from.

The problems of Hinduism's alleged other worldliness is related to the question of ethics. If the world is illusion, as generally interpreted to mean 'Māyā' ethical seriousness becomes impossible. It can be asserted with justification that the sole purpose for Radhakrishnan's non-illusionist interpretation of māyā is to reject other-worldliness in favour of this worldly action. Never did Radhakrishnan share the view that ethical effort and human struggle are unreal. Radhakrishnan's re-examination of the meaning of māyā in his own Hindu Tradition is motivated in part by his declaration. "In my writings I have interpreted the doctrine of māyā so as to save the world and to give it a real meaning."⁶⁵

The specific aim of this chapter was to share that Radhakrishnan tried

to reject the interpretation of māyā which says that the world is an illusion and accepted an interpretation of māyā which says that the term Māyā has six other meanings. These six types of meanings have been discussed with reference to the summary given by Radhakrishnan himself, in the Bhāgavadgītā (P42-43).

Firstly māyā as inexplicable mystery is a concept which expresses Radhakrishnan's position that we cannot explain the relation between Brahman and the world. He portrayed this relation as inexplicable. Basically māyā in his hermeneutics signifies any relation inexpressible. Māyā is also used to mean the mystery behind the process of world creation. Consequently there remains the mystery which we cannot penetrate and for which agonisticism is the only rational attitude suggested by Radhakrishnan. This is the aspect of mystery which appeals to the imaginative side of human nature. This reminds us to Rabindranath Tagore's opinion "art is māyā". However this is noteworthy that Radhakrishnan clearly stated that the inexplicability of māyā in no way implies the non-existence of the world. It deserves a particularly positive valuation for distinguishing between mystery and mirage. Secondly māyā has been described as power of self-becoming or ātmabibhūti. In this respect of māyā it reflects Radhakrishnan's conviction that Brahman becomes the world. The world is the result of the growth or the bursting forth which is Brahman. Māyā is the dividing force and finitising principle and self-limiting power of the Absolute, Radhakrishnan refers (specially Ṛgveda) and the Upaniṣads (The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad) to explain the

Absolute as māyin and māyā in the sense of self imposed divine art or power. He categorically asserts that without this power of self-expression, the power of creation is a power of illusion.

Thirdly, māyā is explained as duality of consciousness and matter. We have already noted that, Radhakrishnan's system of Advaita Vedānta, a system in which non-duality and unity are the ultimate principles. Inherently he tried in this respect to unite both the Sāṃkhya and Vedānta darśanas.

Fourthly, for Radhakrishnan māyā is to be interpreted as primal matter. As the followers of Sāṃkhya darśana he insists that existence arises from primal matter and the primal matter is not an illusion. But he disagrees with them that duality or plurality is the ultimate. With reference to Radhakrishnan's 'Introduction' to the Bhāgavadgītā in our mind we can explain (as he himself also did) māyā to mean lower prakṛti. Thus he thinks the phrases lower prakṛti and primal matter are identical. In this respect also māyā does not imply illusion.

Fifthly, Māyā has been explained as the power of concealment which hides the phenomena of nature and manifested world. This however is a subjective emphasis which signifies that the problem of māyā is inherent in the attitude of those who perceive, not in that of objects. In this respect māyā can also be described as avidyā. "When we look

at the problem from the objective side, we speak of māyā, and when from the subjective side, we speak of avidyā."⁶⁶ Māyā is the distortion of vision, still it is delusion or source but not illusion. It is the chain of ignorance which fetters humankind from a vision of "Something more (the reality)." In anycase, Radhakrishnan clearly states that māyā is concerned with the world's meaning, not its being.

Sixthly, Radhakrishnan uses the word Māyā to signify the one-sided dependence to the world on the Absolute. While the world is dependent on Brahman, the latter is not dependent on the world. It is the real significace of Vedāntin's concept vivarta i.e. appearance. It also can be cited as the real meaning of snake and rope illustration. Again māyā indicates the maintenances of the integrity of the cause. The one-sided dependence between the world and Brahman in other words reminds Kant's distinction between phenomenon and noumenon. This theory also supports the view that the One becomes māyā without being affected by the many. It also signifies the maintenance of the integrity of the casue. In this respect māyā hermeneutics includes the denial of the illusionist theory as in other cases also.

Radhakrishnan discusses the problem of māyā by associating it with his conception of reality in four poises. 1) Brahman (the absolute) 2) Īśvara (the personal deity) 3) Hiraṇyagarbha (the world spirit) and 4) Virāt (the world). Radhakrishnan exphasizes equal importance of all the four poises, which in other words gives basis of conceiving the Absolute and

the world has no exclusive contradiction within themselves. He himself has stated in the section, 'The status of the world' in the Principal Upaniṣads "If we keep in mind the fourfold character of the Supreme, we shall avoid confusion in regard to the status of the world." This confusion regarding the status of the world gives rise to the problem of māyā. This confusion can be avoided, Radhakrishnan suggests, by conceiving reality in four poises. The world is not an illusion, he protests, because no poise of supreme reality in an illusion. If the world is viewed as separate from Brahman the inference of the unreality of the world from the sole reality of Brahman is legitimate. The reality of Brahman everywhere instead of implying the unreality of the world, logically involves its reality. It is rather a false logical approach, according to Radhakrishnan which introduces the falsity of the world in case of conditioned reality. It is a mere logical separation not an ontological distinction.

Radhakrishnan questions whether the concept of māyā is later graft or an essential feature of Indian Philosophy or traditional culture. According to him, the doctrine of māyā in the sense of illusion, is not a tenet of the original Vedānta. This bears a reflection of Sri Aurobindo as the later introduced a distinction between original Vedānta and the later Vedānta.

Radhakrishnan was highly influenced by Rabindranath Tagore's vision

of māyā and ethics. Radhakrishnan writes, "In regard to my views on Hindu ethics and the doctrine of māyā, I found great support in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore."⁶⁷ He was no doubt loyal to traditional ideas though he wanted to evaluate them from some modernist approach. In a sense he tried to unite the views of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. Jaina logic also to some great extent influenced him greatly in conceiving that reality is many-sided.

Radhakrishnan is arguing that the meaning or value of the world, not its existence is related to the problem of māyā. The earthly life has a positive value since for the evolution of the soul it is the place unavoidable. Hence the earthly life is not to be regarded as illusory.

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