

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's Comparative Philosophy: An Inquiry into Eastern and Western Thought

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Abstract

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan occupies a significant position in modern Indian philosophy for his endeavour to reconcile the philosophical dialogue between Eastern and Western traditions. During the colonial period, cultural conflict and intellectual misunderstanding were at its peak. Radhakrishnan aimed to elucidate Indian philosophy in a manner that would be intelligible to the modern Western world while at the same time preserving its spiritual essence. This paper examines Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy with the interpretation of Eastern spirituality and Western rationalism. Eastern thought is characterised by its emphasis on spiritual intuition of the ultimate reality through inner experience. In contrast, Western thought is distinguished by its commitment to rational enquiry, scientific investigation, and critical analysis of human experience. It also explores how he sought to synthesize the spiritual insights of the East with the scientific and rational spirit of the West, where he aims to develop a universal and humanistic philosophy. Through systematic analysis and comparative inquiry, the paper studies Radhakrishnan's major philosophical writings and evaluates his contribution to intercultural understanding and comparative philosophy. The paper further analyses the strengths and limitations of his philosophical approach by underscoring its contemporary significance in the global context by exemplifying its cultural tensions, religious conflicts, and ethical crises. The study proposes that Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy continues to offer significant insights for fostering dialogue, tolerance, and cultural harmony in modern society.

Keywords: Comparative Philosophy; Eastern Thought; Western Thought; Cultural Harmony; Intercultural Dialogue

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Introduction

The convergence of Eastern and Western philosophies fostered new intellectual perspectives in modern philosophical discourse. Emerging most prominently during the colonial and postcolonial periods, this encounter generated not merely a confrontation between two geographical regions but a deeper epistemological and cultural tension. His philosophical project emerged during a period when Indian thought was often misunderstood or undervalued in Western academic circles.¹ It was concerned with different conceptions of reality, knowledge, religion, and human existence. Western philosophy, influenced primarily by the traditions of Greek rationalism, Enlightenment humanism, and scientific empiricism, emphasized analytical reason, individualism, and material progress. In contrast, Eastern philosophical traditions like the Upanishads, Buddhism, and Vedanta placed greater emphasis on spiritual intuition, metaphysical unity, ethical self-realization, and human consciousness. The intellectual challenge of the modern age was to ascertain whether these traditions embodied fundamentally incompatible worldviews. At the same time, it sought to examine the possibility of bringing them into a meaningful philosophical dialogue.

It was within this wider historical and intellectual framework that Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan emerged as one of the foremost interpreters of Indian philosophy in the twentieth century. Writing during a period marked by colonial domination and cultural subordination, Radhakrishnan undertook to demonstrate the philosophical legitimacy of Indian thought against widespread Western misconceptions. It was perceived as mystical, irrational, or lacking systematic rigor. At the same time, he did not advocate a rejection of Western intellectual traditions. Rather, he attempted to construct a comparative philosophical framework through which the spiritual insights of the East and the rational achievements of the West could be understood as mutually enriching facets of human civilization. His project was therefore neither narrowly nationalist nor exclusively traditionalist. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan sought to demonstrate that Eastern and Western traditions are not mutually exclusive but can engage in a fruitful philosophical dialogue.² It exemplifies a broader philosophical endeavour to articulate a universal humanism grounded in intercultural understanding.

Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy was deeply influenced by Advaita Vedanta, notably its conception of the unity of existence and the ultimate identity between the self and the Absolute. However, his interpretation of Vedanta differed significantly from purely orthodox formulations. He reinterpreted Indian philosophy through the language of modern philosophy, comparative religion, and global ethics to articulate it in a manner relevant to contemporary audiences, especially in the West. In doing so, he engaged critically with major Western philosophical traditions including Idealism, Rationalism, Existentialism, and Humanism. Thinkers such as Plato, Hegel, Kant, and Bertrand Russell formed important points of dialogue within his writings. Rather than presenting Eastern and Western thought as mutually exclusive systems. He argued that both traditions reflected different yet interconnected embodiments of humanity's enduring search for truth.

¹ S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923).

² S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), vii.

The significance of Radhakrishnan's philosophy extends beyond the academic field of comparative philosophy. His philosophical enquiry extends to broader questions concerning religion, morality, civilization, and global coexistence in a rapidly globalizing world. He believed that the crises of modern civilization like materialism, spiritual alienation, communal conflict, and ethical conflict, could not be overcome through scientific progress or political mechanisms alone. Instead, he argued for a synthesis of spiritual wisdom and rational inquiry potentially facilitating deeper human solidarity. His philosophical framework strives to reconcile faith with reason, spirituality with modernity, and cultural particularity with universal. Comparative studies have shown similarities between Radhakrishnan's ideas and Western philosophers such as Plato, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Scholars argue that he combined Western rational and idealistic approaches with Eastern spiritual philosophy in order to create a bridge between the two intellectual traditions.

Radhakrishnan's Interpretation of Eastern Thought

The philosophical framework of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was deeply rooted in the spiritual and philosophical traditions of India, especially Advaita Vedanta. The East, especially the Indian philosophical tradition, is characterized by its emphasis on spiritual experience and the inner realization of truth. The spiritual heritage of the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, in his view, reflects a profound concern for the unity of existence and the interconnectedness of all life. Radhakrishnan regarded this spiritual orientation not as a rejection of reason but as an attempt to transcend its limitations in the pursuit of ultimate truth.³ He regarded Indian philosophy not merely as a speculative intellectual pursuit but as a living spiritual discipline concerned with the realization of ultimate truth. Among the various schools of Indian philosophy, Advaita Vedanta had the most profound impact on his intellectual outlook. Advaita Vedanta exercised the most significant influence on Radhakrishnan's philosophical thought. He interpreted the doctrine of non-dualism not merely as an abstract metaphysical system but as a dynamic philosophy capable of promoting ethical responsibility, religious tolerance, and the spiritual unity of humankind.⁴ Following the teachings of Adi Shankaracharya, Radhakrishnan accepted the principle of non-dualism. It states that the individual self (Atman) and the Absolute Reality (Brahman) are fundamentally one. He asserted that this doctrine of unity serves as the philosophical basis for universal brotherhood, moral harmony, and spiritual freedom.

The Upanishads also contributed significantly to shaping Radhakrishnan's philosophy. He considered them to be the highest expression of Indian spiritual wisdom because they engage with fundamental questions of reality, consciousness, and human existence. The Upanishadic emphasis on inner realization, self-knowledge, and the search for ultimate truth significantly influenced his interpretation of philosophy and religious thought. Radhakrishnan argued that true religion cannot be reduced to ritual practices or rigid dogmas. It is based on direct spiritual experience and personal realization. Through this interpretation, he attempted to present Indian philosophy as both rational and universally relevant.

³ The Hindu View of Life (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927).

⁴ S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927). Radhakrishnan presents Advaita Vedanta as the culmination of the Indian philosophical tradition.

A further notable aspect of Radhakrishnan's thought was the concept of spiritual intuition. He maintained that reason alone cannot fully comprehend ultimate reality because the deepest truths of existence transcend conventional intellectual analysis. While he valued logic and rational inquiry, he argued that intuition provides a higher and more direct form of knowledge. It is through this process that individuals apprehend spiritual truth. According to Radhakrishnan, intuition does not oppose reason but completes it by enabling a deeper understanding of reality. This emphasis on spiritual intuition distinguished his philosophy from purely rationalistic systems of thought. A distinctive feature of Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Indian philosophy is his emphasis on spiritual intuition as a valid source of knowledge. While acknowledging the importance of rational inquiry, he argued that ultimate reality can only be fully realized through direct spiritual experience, which transcends the limitations of purely intellectual understanding.⁵

The metaphysical concept of the unity of existence formed the philosophical foundation of Radhakrishnan's comparative approach. He believed that all human beings, religions, and cultures ultimately share a common spiritual reality in spite of their external variations. This perspective enabled him to promote religious tolerance, cultural harmony, and universal humanism. For Radhakrishnan, the recognition of spiritual unity was vital for overcoming divisions based on race, nationality, or religion. Thus, Indian philosophy, especially Advaita Vedanta and the Upanishadic tradition, provided the intellectual and spiritual basis for his attempt to bridge Eastern and Western thought.

Engagement with Western Philosophy

Radhakrishnan undertook a thorough engagement with Western philosophical traditions and valued their role in the advancement of modern intellectual discourse. He held in high regard the Western emphasis on rational inquiry, scientific progress, individual freedom, and critical thinking. At the same time, he believed that Western civilization had become excessively materialistic and spiritually fragmented. His engagement with Western philosophy therefore involved both appreciation and criticism, as he attempted to reconcile Western rationality with Eastern spirituality.

One of the major Western influences on Radhakrishnan was philosophical Idealism. He was influenced by thinkers such as Plato and Hegel. It emphasized the supremacy of spirit, mind, and ultimate reality over material existence. Radhakrishnan admired Plato's conception of eternal truth and Hegel's idea of Absolute Spirit, although he approached these ideas from a Vedantic perspective. He contended that reality cannot be understood solely in material terms because spiritual consciousness constitutes the essence of existence.

Radhakrishnan also engaged critically with Rationalism, especially the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. He acknowledged the significance of Kant's emphasis on morality, reason, and the limitations of human knowledge, especially the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. However, Radhakrishnan believed that rationalism alone could not explain the deeper spiritual experiences of humanity. Therefore, he maintained that reason is an important instrument of knowledge, but it must be

⁵ S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932). The author discusses intuition as an essential dimension of philosophical and religious experience.

complemented by intuition and spiritual realization. In this way, he attempted to harmonize rational thought with spiritual insight.

Another important influence on Radhakrishnan was Humanism and Pragmatism, particularly the philosophy of William James. Radhakrishnan recognized the significance of James's emphasis on religious experience and the practical significance of belief in human life. He argued that religion should be understood not as rigid dogma but as a living and transformative expression of spirituality. This perspective contributed to the development of his universal and humanistic interpretation of religion that transcended sectarian boundaries.

Although Radhakrishnan valued Western scientific inquiry and intellectual progress, he criticized the excessive materialism and spiritual emptiness that he believed characterized modern Western civilization. Although Radhakrishnan appreciated the achievements of Western philosophy, he was critical of excessive materialism and the tendency to separate scientific progress from ethical and spiritual values. He argued that modern civilization could attain genuine human fulfilment only by integrating the rational and scientific spirit of the West with the spiritual and ethical insights of the East.⁶ He argued that science and technology alone cannot solve the moral and existential crises of humanity. Therefore, he proposed a synthesis in which Western rationality and scientific advancement would be balanced by Eastern spirituality and ethical consciousness. Through this philosophical reconciliation, Radhakrishnan sought to establish a more harmonious and universal vision of human civilization.

Synthesis of East and West

The central objective of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy was to establish a meaningful synthesis between Eastern spirituality and Western rationality. He believed that neither civilization was complete in itself and that both embodied valuable intellectual and ethical insights essential for the progress of humanity. According to Radhakrishnan, the East emphasized spiritual realization, inner consciousness, and metaphysical unity. On the other hand, the West excelled in scientific inquiry, rational analysis, and material advancement. Rather than treating these traditions as contradictory, he asserted that they should be understood as complementary dimensions of human civilization. His philosophy therefore aimed at creating harmony between the spiritual and rational aspects of human existence, making "Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam"⁷

Radhakrishnan's reconciliation of reason and intuition is one of the most notable works for him and the very central theme of this paper too. He appreciated the Western commitment to logic, critical thinking, and rational inquiry, considering them essential for intellectual development and scientific progress. However, he also argued that reason alone cannot fully comprehend ultimate reality because the ultimate reality of existence transcends purely analytical understanding. As a result, he emphasized the importance of spiritual intuition, which enables individuals to experience truth directly through inner realization. Radhakrishnan maintained that intuition does not oppose reason but rather completes and enriches it. A balanced civilization must therefore integrate rational knowledge with spiritual wisdom.

⁶ S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939).

⁷ Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam" ("The whole world is one family"), *Mahā Upaniṣad* VI.72.

Another important aspect of his synthesis concerned the relationship between religion and science. Radhakrishnan recognized the achievements of modern science and accepted its role in advancing human civilization. Religion is a kind of life or experience.⁸ At the same time, he challenged the dominant tendency of modern society to reduce human life to material and mechanical processes. He believed that scientific progress without moral and spiritual guidance could lead to ethical deterioration, alienation, and societal conflict. Religion, in his view, should not be understood as superstition or dogma but as a transformative spiritual experience capable of providing ethical direction to humanity. Thus, Radhakrishnan sought to establish harmony between scientific inquiry and spiritual consciousness rather than conflict between them.

The idea of universal humanism also occupied a central place in Radhakrishnan's philosophy. He argued that all human beings share a common spiritual foundation regardless of differences in religion, culture, nationality, or race. This conviction enabled him to advocate religious tolerance, moral cooperation, and global ethics. Influenced by Advaita Vedanta, he believed that the recognition of spiritual unity could overcome divisions and promote a deeper sense of human solidarity. His universalism therefore extended beyond philosophical speculation and became a moral vision for peaceful coexistence in an interconnected world.

Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy further highlighted cultural reconciliation and intercultural understanding. Writing during a period of colonial tension and civilizational conflict, he rejected the idea of cultural superiority and proposed that every civilization contribute to the common intellectual and moral development of humankind. He believed that Eastern and Western traditions should engage in dialogue rather than competition. Through mutual understanding and the exchange of philosophical ideas, cultures could enrich one another and overcome prejudice, intolerance, and misunderstanding. In this sense, his philosophy signified a sustained intellectual pursuit to bridge the cultural gap between East and West.

Ultimately, Radhakrishnan argued that the future of humanity depends upon integrating Eastern spirituality with Western rationality. He maintained that modern civilization could achieve true progress only when material advancement is balanced by ethical and spiritual values. Without spirituality, rationality becomes empty and destructive. Without rationality, spirituality is liable to become dogmatic and irrational. His synthesis therefore sought to create a more holistic vision of civilization grounded in reason, morality, spirituality, and universal human unity. Even in the contemporary global context marked by cultural conflict and moral uncertainty, Radhakrishnan's philosophy continues to offer valuable insights for promoting dialogue, harmony, and global coexistence.

Critical Evaluation of Radhakrishnan's Comparative Philosophy

The philosophical synthesis of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan occupies a prominent place in modern philosophical discourse for his attempt to establish harmony between Eastern and Western intellectual traditions. One of the greatest strengths of his philosophy lies in its emphasis on intercultural understanding. In the era shaped by colonial subjugation, cultural conflict, and intellectual misunderstanding, Radhakrishnan argued

⁸ S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 20.

that no civilization possesses a monopoly over truth. Instead, he argued that different philosophical and religious traditions represent diverse expressions of humanity's common spiritual quest. His philosophical framework thus encouraged mutual respect and dialogue among cultures.

Another major strength of Radhakrishnan's thought is his advocacy of religious tolerance and universalism. He believed that all religious traditions ultimately strive toward the same spiritual truth, even though they differ in symbols, doctrines, and practices. By recognizing the essential unity that underlies religious diversity, Radhakrishnan promoted a universalistic understanding of religion that transcended sectarianism and dogmatism. This perspective made a substantial contribution to the advancement of comparative religion and interfaith dialogue in the modern world.

Radhakrishnan's philosophy also possesses a strong humanistic dimension. He emphasized the spiritual dignity of the human person. He argued that ethical values such as compassion, cooperation, and moral responsibility are fundamental to the promotion of peaceful coexistence. His idea of spiritual humanism attempted to bridge individual freedom with universal ethical consciousness. Viewed in this light, his philosophy made a significant contribution to wider intellectual discussions concerning global ethics and the moral foundations of global harmony.

An equally significant contribution of Radhakrishnan was his defence and reinterpretation of Indian philosophy before Western audiences. During the colonial period, Indian philosophy was often dismissed as mystical or irrational by many Western scholars. Radhakrishnan challenged these assumptions by presenting Indian philosophical traditions, especially Advaita Vedanta, as intellectually rigorous and philosophically sophisticated. His writings helped restore confidence in India's philosophical heritage and introduced Indian thought into global academic discourse.

Perhaps the most important achievement of Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy was his attempt to make efforts in promoting inter civilizational dialogue. Rather than presenting Eastern and Western traditions as oppositional systems, he emphasized their complementary nature. He appreciated Western rationality, scientific inquiry, and individualism while also defending Eastern spirituality, intuition, and ethical consciousness. Through this synthesis, Radhakrishnan transformed comparative philosophy into a means of cultural reconciliation and human unity. Radhakrishnan consistently argued that philosophy should have practical significance for human life and society. He believed that the recognition of the spiritual unity of humankind should inspire ethical values such as justice, compassion, cooperation, and social responsibility. His comparative philosophy therefore extends beyond abstract metaphysical speculation and seeks to cultivate a moral consciousness capable of addressing the challenges of war, inequality, intolerance, and social conflict. This ethical dimension remains one of the most enduring and relevant aspects of his thought.⁹

Critiques and Limitations

Despite its significant contributions, Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy has also been subjected to critical examination by several scholars. One major criticism

⁹ S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1947).

concerns the excessive idealism present in his philosophy. Critics argue that his emphasis on spiritual unity and metaphysical harmony sometimes overlooked the concrete social, political, and economic realities that shape human life. His philosophical outlook often prioritized spiritual reconciliation over practical analysis of inequality, power, and conflict.

Another criticism relates to his interpretation of Western philosophy. Some scholars argue that Radhakrishnan selectively interpreted Western thinkers in ways that supported his own philosophical synthesis. While he appreciated aspects of Idealism, Humanism, and Pragmatism, critics contend that he simplified or overlooked certain complexities and differences within Western philosophical traditions. As a result, his presentation of Western thought has occasionally been viewed as partial rather than fully comprehensive.

Scholars have also criticized Radhakrishnan for overgeneralizing the categories of “East” and “West.” Contemporary comparative philosophers argue that neither Eastern nor Western traditions are philosophically uniform or culturally homogeneous. By presenting the East primarily as spiritual and the West primarily as rational and materialistic, Radhakrishnan sometimes relied on broad civilizational distinctions that may oversimplify the diversity within both traditions.

Another important limitation identified by critics is his heavy dependence on Advaita Vedanta. Thinkers such as Daya Krishna have argued that Radhakrishnan tended to present Advaita Vedanta as the central essence of Indian philosophy while giving comparatively less attention to other schools such as Buddhism, Jainism, Nyaya, and materialist traditions. Despite its significant contributions to comparative philosophy, Radhakrishnan's thought has been criticized for its strong idealistic orientation. His emphasis on spiritual reality and intuition as the highest forms of knowledge has led some scholars to argue that he underestimated the importance of empirical, social, and historical factors in shaping human experience. While his idealism provides a comprehensive metaphysical framework, critics suggest that it occasionally distances philosophy from the concrete realities of political and social life.¹⁰ Consequently, his interpretation of Indian philosophy has been criticized for not fully representing its internal plurality and complexity.

Postcolonial scholars have further suggested that Radhakrishnan's philosophy was shaped partly by colonial intellectual frameworks. According to these critics, his effort to defend Indian philosophy before Western audiences sometimes led him to reinterpret Indian traditions using categories derived from Western philosophical discourse. Moreover, his writings offered limited engagement with socio-political issues such as caste oppression, gender inequality, and structural injustice. For this reason, some contemporary scholars believe that his philosophy, while spiritually profound, lacked sufficient attention to material and political realities. Another criticism concerns Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Western philosophy. In his effort to establish common ground between Eastern and Western traditions, he sometimes emphasized points of similarity while paying less attention to their fundamental differences. Some scholars argue that this comparative method simplifies the

¹⁰ Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

complexity of Western philosophical systems and presents them primarily through the lens of his own idealistic framework.¹¹

Nevertheless, these criticisms do not diminish the importance of Radhakrishnan's contribution to comparative philosophy. Rather, they highlight the complexities and challenges involved in constructing a universal philosophical framework across cultures. Even critics acknowledge that his work opened important possibilities for intercultural dialogue, religious understanding, and philosophical exchange between Eastern and Western traditions.

Relevance of Radhakrishnan's Thought in a Globalized World

The philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan remains highly relevant in the contemporary globalized world. It is characterized by rapid technological advancement, cultural interaction, and increasing interdependence among nations. Globalization has created new opportunities for communication and economic development. But it has also given rise to the proliferation of identity crises, cultural conflicts, and socioeconomic disparities. In many societies, tensions between tradition and modernity, nationalism and globalism, continue to create political and ethical challenges. In this regard, Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy provides an important framework for promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Radhakrishnan believed that civilizations should not exist in isolation or hostility toward one another. Instead, he argued that different cultures represent varied expressions to the diverse creative and spiritual impulses of humanity. His philosophy encourages respect for cultural diversity while emphasizing the underlying unity of humanity. By advocating harmony between Eastern spirituality and Western rationality, he attempted to overcome rigid cultural divisions and create a universal outlook grounded in cooperation and coexistence. His emphasis on human unity therefore remains valuable in an age increasingly affected by ideological polarization and cultural intolerance.

Furthermore, Radhakrishnan's thought challenges the excessive materialism and spiritual emptiness that often characterize modern global culture. He warned that technological progress without ethical and spiritual values could deepen alienation, competition, and conflict. His philosophy thus calls for a balanced civilization. Scientific advancement is guided by moral responsibility and spiritual awareness. In this sense, Radhakrishnan's ideas continue to offer meaningful insights for building a more humane and peaceful global society.

One of the most enduring aspects of Radhakrishnan's philosophy is its emphasis on religious harmony and tolerance. Living in a period marked by communal tensions and religious misunderstandings, he argued that all religions ultimately seek the realization of the same spiritual truth. They share a common ethical and spiritual foundation. This idea formed the basis of his philosophy of religious pluralism.

Radhakrishnan strongly opposed sectarianism, fanaticism, and dogmatism because he believed they create division and conflict within society. According to him, true religion is not confined to institutional authority or rigid doctrines but is based on inner spiritual experience and moral transformation. His concept of universal religion does not imply the elimination of individual religious traditions; rather, it encourages mutual

¹¹ Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990)

respect and recognition of shared spiritual values. In the contemporary world, where religious extremism and communal violence continue to threaten social harmony, Radhakrishnan's philosophy remains particularly significant. His thought encourages dialogue, tolerance, and compassion as essential foundations for peaceful human coexistence beyond sectarian boundaries.

Radhakrishnan's ideas on education and ethics also retain enduring relevance in modern society. As an educator and philosopher, he believed that the true purpose of education transcends the mere acquisition of technical knowledge and professional proficiency. According to him, education should contribute to the development of the whole person by nurturing both intellectual capacity and moral consciousness. He argued that a society focused solely on material success risks moral decline and spiritual emptiness.

One of the central themes in Radhakrishnan's educational philosophy is value-based education. He believed that moral values such as honesty, compassion, discipline, tolerance, and social responsibility are essential for the development of a healthy society. Education, therefore, should cultivate ethical awareness and character formation rather than merely preparing individuals for economic competition. His emphasis on human dignity and ethical responsibility remains highly relevant in the present age, where corruption, violence, and moral uncertainty continue to affect social life. Radhakrishnan regarded education as a process that should cultivate the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the human personality. He argued that the true purpose of education extends beyond the acquisition of technical knowledge or professional skills and includes the formation of character and ethical responsibility. In an age marked by rapid scientific progress and technological innovation, his educational philosophy reminds us that knowledge should be guided by moral values and a sense of social responsibility. This holistic approach to education continues to influence discussions on value-based learning and human development in the contemporary world.¹²

Radhakrishnan also stressed the importance of spiritual and humanistic education in promoting global citizenship and peaceful coexistence. He believed that students should be encouraged to develop respect for different cultures, religions, and philosophical traditions. His educational vision therefore continues to inspire discussions on moral education, human development, and responsible citizenship in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

The present study has examined the comparative philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan with particular emphasis on his interpretation of Eastern and Western thought. The analysis demonstrates that Radhakrishnan attempted to establish a philosophical dialogue between two major intellectual traditions that were often viewed as fundamentally opposed during the colonial and modern periods. Deeply influenced by Advaita Vedanta and the Upanishadic tradition, he emphasized spiritual intuition, metaphysical unity, and ethical consciousness as essential dimensions of human existence. At the same time, he appreciated the Western commitment to rational inquiry, scientific advancement, individual freedom, and critical thought. Rather than

¹² S. Radhakrishnan, *Education, Politics and War* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1944).

treating these traditions as contradictory, Radhakrishnan sought to synthesize them within a broader framework of universal humanism and spiritual philosophy.

One of the major findings of this study is that Radhakrishnan transformed comparative philosophy into a means of intercultural understanding and civilizational dialogue. His philosophy challenged colonial assumptions regarding the inferiority of Indian thought and demonstrated that Eastern philosophical traditions possess intellectual depth and universal relevance. Simultaneously, he recognized the achievements of Western philosophy and science while criticizing excessive materialism, moral fragmentation, and spiritual alienation in modern civilization. Through this balanced approach, he attempted to reconcile reason and intuition, science and religion, individuality and universality.

The study also reveals that Radhakrishnan's comparative philosophy contributed significantly to the development of religious pluralism, cultural reconciliation, and global ethics. His belief in the spiritual unity underlying all religions and cultures enabled him to advocate tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and mutual respect among civilizations. In an age increasingly characterized by ideological conflict, religious extremism, and cultural polarization, his philosophy continues to provide an important intellectual foundation for intercultural dialogue and human solidarity.

At the same time, critical evaluation of his philosophy indicates certain limitations. Scholars have pointed out his excessive dependence on Advaita Vedanta, his broad generalizations regarding "East" and "West," and his limited engagement with socio-political realities such as inequality and power structures. Nevertheless, these criticisms do not diminish the enduring significance of his philosophical project. Instead, they highlight the complexity of constructing a universal philosophical framework capable of addressing diverse human experiences and traditions.

In the contemporary global context, Radhakrishnan's philosophy remains deeply relevant. His emphasis on ethical responsibility, spiritual awareness, and cultural harmony offers valuable insights for addressing the crises of modern civilization. He believed that scientific and technological progress alone cannot ensure human fulfilment, unless accompanied by moral and spiritual development. This idea continues to possess philosophical significance in a world struggling with violence, environmental destruction, ethical uncertainty, and cultural fragmentation.

Ultimately, Radhakrishnan envisioned a civilization grounded not merely in material progress but in the harmonious integration of rationality, spirituality, and ethical wisdom. His comparative philosophy reminds humanity that genuine progress must include both intellectual advancement and moral consciousness. A civilization based solely on material achievement cannot sustain humanity without spiritual and ethical wisdom. Therefore, Radhakrishnan's synthesis of Eastern and Western thought continues to serve as an important philosophical resource for promoting global harmony, human dignity, and the search for universal truth.

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