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INTUITION IN THE THOUGHT OF DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN

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Keywords	Abstract
<i>Intuition, Intellect, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Sens Experience, Integral Experience.</i>	This paper investigates the concept of intuition in the epistemology of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan in a way that it is a primordial source of knowledge that can be equated to other forms of knowledge such as sense perception and discursive thinking. Whereas empirical observation provides the immediate data, and rational inference provides the systematic knowledge, all of them are limited in grasping ultimate reality. Intuition, according to Radhakrishnan, is an instantaneous, non-sensuous and immediate way of ascertaining truth that provides a firsthand generative of truth. Instead of repudiating the intellect he emphasises the indispensability of intuition and reason, and submits that intellectual rigour is a necessary precondition of high intuitive insight. As a conceptualised notion of both the knower and the



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	<p>known, intuition reveals the integrity of both and leads to a sense of totality of reality. The salient characteristics of intuition, which are described in the paper and include intuition self-evidence, revelation and ineffability, and mystical intuition as the culmination of the integral experience are placed. Conclusively, the theory of Radhakrishnan generalises rational and spiritual epistemic modalities, making it a wholesome framework that cuts across the Eastern and the Western philosophies.</p>
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Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the foremost contemporary Indian thinker of the last century has developed a philosophy of synthesis of the two great traditions of the East and the West. Following the classical Vedantic traditions of India he examined all the important views of Western thinkers like Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Bradley and Bergson Radhakrishnan propounded an epistemological doctrine to justify metaphysical assertions. But Radhakrishnan was not only an interpreter of traditional Indian philosophy; he was also a philosophical thinker in his own right. Spirit, intuition, and religious experience are said to be the keywords of Radhakrishnan's philosophy.

The highest epistemological mode—called intuition, sometimes abbreviated as *anubhava* (integral experience) or *darshana* (insight)—is the highest form of epistemological modality called the knowledge by identity, where the human subject crosses over the duality of ratiocinative to the immediate and self-luminated apprehension of reality. A difference to the knowledge-pulled-apart, symbolic acts of the discursive intellect, it is the deepest rationality of an incorporative character, of that unique, indivisible, essence of the Absolute which logic can only congeal. This intuitive feeling is the main source of creative progression in the sphere of science, art and religion, representing itself as an intuitive flash which avoids the formal logic and forms the framework of certitude, on the basis of which further logical confirmation is anticipated.

Radhakrishnan defines intuition as a non-sensuous, immediate knowledge, and is the ultimate rationality of which human nature must be able to achieve. In contrast to the discursive intellect (*vijnana*), which offers only symbolic and relational information by going around an object, intuition is above logical and utilizes the entire self to have access to the inner nature of reality in its individual, palpitating oralness. He “asserts that we invent by intuition however the intellectual is later obliged to prove by logic that is to say that this innate intuition is the basis of certitude on which all developments that are scientific and mathematical are ultimately based.”¹

¹ An Idealist view of life (1932), p. 177.



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In his book *Recovery of Faith*, he said “*Anubhava* or direct experience, active participation in the eternal truth, is distinguished from the indirect and passive participation in religious knowledge by belief. In the case of integral insight, the individual does not possess knowledge as an individual but participates in it in his innermost essence, which is not distinct from the divine principle. The metaphysical certitude is absolute because the knower and the known are identical. This is *jnana*, the most perfect union between God and man”².

In Indian Philosophy Intuition is an important source of knowledge. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has considered a third source of knowing called Intuition that stands for self-evidence. This paper deals with the intuition of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan’s thought. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan believes Intuition is the source of philosophical and religious insight. According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Intuition is not the end, but part of an ever-developing and ever-dynamic process of realization. Cognitive intuitions “are not substitutes for thought, they are challenges to intelligence. Mere intuitions are blind while intellectual work is empty. All processes are partly intuitive and partly intellectual. There is no gulf between the two”. For Radhakrishnan, intuition is the ultimate form of experience. It is ultimate in the sense that intuition constitutes the fullest and therefore the most authentic realization of the Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*). According to Radhakrishnan, the ultimacy of intuition is also accounted because it is the ground of all other forms of experience.

He asserts, Spirit works in the matter that matter may serve the spirit. He further adds that ‘spirit is life not a thing, energy not immobility’. According to Radhakrishnan’s *An idealist view of life*, endows man with a destiny that is not limited to the world of senses. But he stoutly affirms the reality of the empirical world which, as pointed out earlier, is willed by God. This dominantly realistic trend of thought has persuaded some scholars to characterise Radhakrishnan’s philosophy as ‘spiritual realism’ rather than ‘spiritual idealism’. Radhakrishna’s basic claim is that the universe is not a blind process but a teleological one - that the course of evolution is not accidental but that it is in some way the expression of a purpose. In the flush of eloquence, he goes on to proclaim that the purpose of actuating cosmic history is “to make all men prophets, to establish a kingdom of spirit”.

Atma jnana (knowledge of self) is earned through learning that distinguishes *Vidya* (knowledge) from *Avidya* (ignorance). Intuition is the supreme source of knowledge that occurs in mental activity. This may not be the paramount source of knowledge, maybe just a transcendental sense as held by Spinoza, a contemporary of Samkara. In Radhakrishnan’s language “*Vidya* is *moksa*: *avidya* is *samsara*. And intuitive realisation is the means salvation.”³

² Recovery of Faith (1956), p.151.

³ An Idealist view of life (1932), p. 128



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Intuition literally means the ability to know something by using feelings rather than considering the facts. Intuition is an idea or a strong feeling that something is true although one can not explain why. For example, one says that I have an intuition that something awful is about to happen. Intellect is the ability to think in a logical way and understand things, especially at an advanced level. The Hindu thinkers believe that there is certainly something beyond understanding by which man can be at least conscious of his personal self and that can be philosophically termed as intuition. One cannot take an outward view of it. It is something inner that can be owned by the sheer in practice. One of the characteristics of Indian philosophy is that it lays emphasis on the wisdom that comes out of one's inner self. "The knowledge of self is possible only through intuition." Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says that in intuitive apprehension we become one with truth and one with the object of knowledge. However, the object seen the inseparable part of the self. Intuition once conceived does the functions of sense. It is a form of unified immediate knowledge. It is only an account of knowing reality. Immanuel Kant held that in our immediate awareness of ourselves we have an intuition, not mediated by the thought of the will as the ultimate fact of reality. Where "the archetypal Ideal of Plato, the a priori of Kant, are the contents of intuitive wisdom and the condition of human knowledge".⁴

Intuitive knowledge provides a major premise of the universal scale which remains without questions. Intuition indeed is the apprehension of the soul, not irrational assumption. Intuition avoids disbelief. Spinoza aptly says: "To know the essences of things, i.e. to understand them not in their general aspect as the Scientists dose, but so to say, as God does, from within, we need the higher grade of knowledge to which the scientific is said to point. "⁵. So, intuition is an important means of knowing the highest reality which cannot be apprehended by any other means.

According to Radhakrishnan, there are three ways of knowing reality: sense experience, discursive reasoning and intuitive apprehension. The knowledge of the sensible qualities of the external world is obtained through sense experience. It provides data to natural sciences by gathering impressions of the physical objects. Sense experience can provide only empirical knowledge; they are not able to apprehend the reality. But Radhakrishnan does not condemn sense experience. He holds that sense experience has a very important role to play in the knowing process. Discursive reasoning provides logical knowledge by the process of analysis and synthesis of the perceived data. So this kind of knowledge is indirect as it depends upon perception. It is symbolic in its character. And intuitive knowledge is non-sensuous, immediate knowledge. It is distinguished from indirect, mediate, rational or inferential knowledge. The role of discursive reasoning has never been nullified by Radhakrishnan. Intellectual knowledge is a pre-condition for the intuitive grasp of reality.

⁴ An Idealist view of life (1932), p. 123

⁵ An Idealist view of life (1932), p. 123



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Intuition reveals the inner truth and holistic knowledge about the superficial knowledge of reality that intellect gives us. Dr. Radhakrishnan personally uses 'intuition' to mean integral experience. He elucidates the nature and salient features of intuition as follows. Intuition reveals the knowledge of the thing-in-itself, Intuition has four-fold process, Intuition is knowledge by identity, Intuition carries with its own guarantee, Intuitions have the character of revelation, Genius and creative work depend on intuition, Religious Intuition is the highest type of intuition, and Intuition leads to salvation and Intuitions are ineffable.

Dr. Radhakrishnan uses intuition in the generic sense as a connecting link between reason, intuition in the special sense. Intuition implies a unity between the knower and the known. On intuition knowledge, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says that it is 'knowledge by coincidence or Identity'. This involves two things- (1) The reality with which unity is attained and (2) The degree of unity. Knowledge in any form is due to intuition. It seemed that all intuition is unity. J. G. Arapura holds: "Sense perception, reason and mystical experience represent the various degrees of unity."

Dr. Radhakrishnan is not an altogether enthusiastic intuitionist or an excessive intellectualist. An idea of reality may be provided by thought but an idea of reality is not a reality. There is a step called manana or deliberation that is a necessary process in the awakening of the true intuition. Dr. According to Radhakrishnan, philosophy is based not on dialectic and intellectual playing around, but an outcome of life and reflections of the same. The intellectual interpretation of experience is an essential step of discipline, which culminates in the utmost revelation. The reality is too real to be able to employ discursive thinking. Yet there must be something foregoing the utmost experience, a stern activity of the intellect. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has never invalidated the role of intellect. He says only that intellect is not purely repetitive, but creative and constructive. It is able to draw novelties and perceive novelties because it is not only a difference but also identity in difference. Even in the view of the Ultimate Reality, intellect has its part to play. It provides us with the symbolic awareness of the reality. The intuitive grasp of reality can only take place with intellectual discipline. To us intellect consists of the complication of conceptually thinking and intuitively seeing as Ruth Reyna notes: in his emphasis upon intuition as the process whereby the individual establishes the Supreme Reality and Oneness, Radhakrishnan does not defend against the intellect but merely make it a supplement.

Intellect as understood by Dr. Radhakrishnan is associated with intuition- association of interdependence. The findings of the intellect, he says, will be tame and empty, undefined and partial, without the assistance of intuition; intuitional perceptions, on the contrary, blind and mute, gloomy and alien, without intellectual verification. It is the thought in its high state which is achieved in the intuitive experience, because in the Supreme are all opposites reconciled. The intuitive experience according to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan leads to the fulfilment of the life and fulfilment of the entire spirit. the actual end of the intuitive experience lies in the mystical



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intuition, and integral experience centres itself about it. All other forms of intuition are based on mystical intuition.

Mystical intuition is considered as the core of what is referred to as Integral Experience in which synthesis of this happens with all other aspects of the mind. The last is the ultimate experience which carries an intrinsic wholeness of the whole by defining the composition of their elements. The self in this experience is submerged in the Ultimate Reality and conscious that he is the Ultimate Reality and that is where the meaning of *Tat Tvam asi* (That thou art) lies. We are so experiencing a unity of the 'Infinite' and the 'Finite' which is resolved in the spiritual reality and which is the ultimate Reality of the thought of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

We may well say, the account of intuition given by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan is not disjointed in the theorisation upon its side. The moment, when we stop the activity of our minds and attempt to meditate about our existences we may find out the divine centre of our consciousness. This divine consciousness is not other than one's realization of 'who am I and I am essentially That'. It's without any mediator, a first-hand experience. This experience is not in any way related to intellect and reason. It is the viable embodiment of non-dualism of subject and object or I and That. It is the significance of the intuitive experience of Dr. Radhakrishnan here.

But Reconciled by the means of intellectual and intuition, Radhakrishnan gives an intellectual more philosophical interpretation that underlines on the spiritual possibilities of human being and the chance of ultimate truth based on a severe line of thought which is holistic. Lastly, we may say that, Intuition is neither an abstract thought and analysis, neither a formless darkness; it is wisdom, the diffusive mental capacities of Dante. Intuition is beyond thought but does not refute it. Intuitive knowledge is, however, not non-rational; it can be called non-conceptual.

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