

M. N.ROY (1886-1954)

Manvendra Nath Roy, whose original name was Narendra Nath Battacharya was born on 1886 and died on 1954, in his early years M.N Roy was influenced by the writings of Swami Vivekananda, Bakim Chandra, Daynanda Saraswathi, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and V.D Savarker. In 1910 Roy was sentenced to imprisonment in connection with Howrah conspiracy case. Roy had the unique distinction of working with Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky. He began his political life as a militant nationalist and ended a radical humanist.

M.N Roy paved through at least three phases in his career. In the first phase, he was a national revolutionary, smuggling arms for the terrorists of Bengal. In the second phase, Roy was a Marxist engaged in active communist movement first in Mexico and then in Russia, China and India. In the final phase, Roy emerged as a radical humanist, completing his journey from Nationalism to communism and from communism to Radical Humanism. In 1922, M.N Roy made a sociological study of contemporary India in his 'India in Transition in which differed from the proposed solutions of the problems of India in transition. Towards the end of 1922, he has published India's problem and His solutions. In this work he criticized the medievalism and conservatism of the Gandhi an social theology. In addition to these books, he has written several books and published several articles in reputed journals. By 1936 Roy has further intensified his campaign against Gandhism. He condemned Gandhism as a reactionary social philosophy teaching the impracticable concept of social harmony. In 1937, he founded his weekly Independent India which was later renamed Radical Humanist in 1949. He regarded the Gandhian concept of Nonviolence as subtitle intellectual device for concealing the capitalist exploitation of the country.

HUMANISTIC CRITIQUE OF MARXISM

The philosophical writings of Roy indicate a breakaway from his Marxian affiliations. As a person, Marx evokes great praise from Roy. He regards Marx as a merciless critic of social injustice. He considers Marx as

a humanist and a lover of freedom. Hence, Roy wanted to restate the humanist, libertarian, moralist principals of Marxian after freeing it from the dogmas of economic determinism.

According to Roy, the materialism of Marxism is dogmatic and unscientific. Roy is critical of the empirical account of knowledge that Marxism provides thus neglecting the creative role of the human beings. Roy believes that the dialectical materialism of Marx is materialist only in nature. According to Roy, the Marxian interpretation of history is defective because it allows slender role to mental activity in the social process. History cannot be interpreted solely in the reference to materialistic objectivism. The intelligence of human being and their cumulative actions are very powerful social forces. Roy also criticizes the Marxian economic interpretation of history. Roy also criticises Marxian theory of class struggle. According to Roy, Marx's theory of class struggle has subordinated individual consciousness. He was also critical of Marx giving too much importance to the working class. Roy believed that polarization of capitalist society into the exploiting and the working class never takes place. Again, Roy did not regard surplus value as a peculiar feature of capitalism. He believes that the creation of surplus value and accumulation of capital were also in a socialist society.

RADICAL HUMANISM

In the later years of his life (1947-1954) Roy became an exponent of New Humanism. Humanist elements of thought can be traced to several schools and epochs of western philosophy. There were humanist trends in Protagoras, Erasman, Buchanan and Herder. Roy felt that the advance of science was a factor for the liberation of man's creative energies. Science had enhanced the creativity of man and emancipated him from the domination of superstitions and fears. Though Roy influenced by the scientific materialism of Hobbes, Ethics of Spinoza and secular politics of Locke, he reconciled all these to propound a rational idea of freedom with the concept of necessity. The central purpose of Roy's Radical Humanism is to coordinate the philosophy of nature with social philosophy and ethics in a monistic system. It is for this

reason that Roy claims it a humanist as well as materialist, naturalist as well as rationalist, creativist as well as determinist

Roy theory of New Humanism revolves around Man. Man is the product of physical universes. It is the man who creates society, state and other institutions and values for his own welfare. As a Radical Humanist, his philosophical approach is individualistic. The individual should not be subordinated either to a clan or to a nation. According to Roy, man has two basic traits one reason the other, the urge for freedom. The reason in man echoes the harmony of the universe. He states that every human behavior is rational, though it may appear as irrational. Man tries to find out the laws of nature in order to realize his freedom. This urge for freedom leads him to a search for knowledge. While rationality provides dynamisms to amen, the urge for freedom gives him direction. The interaction of reason and freedom leads to the expression of cooperative spirit as manifested in social relationship.

According to Roy, humanity is passing through a period of crisis. The fundamental problem is to ensure individual freedom against the encroachment of the state. Roy is aware of the coercive power of the state. He defines state as the political organization of society. The functions of state are the welfare of people. According to him, the state must exist and discharge its limited functions along with other equally important and autonomous social organizations. Thus, Roy reduces the functions of the state to the minimum. He pleaded for decentralization where maximum possible autonomy should be granted to the local units.

Roy distinguishes his new humanism from the French and German schools of Humanism of the 19th century. New Humanism is based on the researches of physical science, sociology, philosophy and other branches of knowledge. Its philosophical foundation is provided by materialism and its methodology is mechanistic. It professes confidence in the creative power of man. Man derives his sovereignty from his creative achievement in the understanding and partial conquest of nature. New Humanism, according to Roy, claims to reassert the sovereignty of man by emphasizing that history is the record of man's activities and state or society has no power to impose absolute power of

man. New Humanism is based on a mechanistic cosmology and materialistic metaphysics. Man derives rationality from nature through biological evolution. Thus Roy claims that humanism is a philosophy based on a synthesis of the achievement of modern knowledge.

Roy was in favour of abolition of party system in India. He advocates humanist politics. This will lead to purification and rationalization of politics. According to Roy "party politics has given rise to power politics". He laments about the evils of party politics that exist where innocent and ignorant people are exploited in the elections. Thus he favored the abolition of party system which will enable politics to operate without the incentive of power. Roy's New Humanism is cosmopolitan in its outlook. New Humanism is pledged to the idea of a commonwealth and fraternity of freeman. He advocated a world federation. In his well known work, Reason, Romanticism and Revolution, Roy wrote thus: New Humanism is cosmopolitan. A cosmopolitan commonwealth of spiritually free men would not be limited by the boundaries of national states- capitalist, fascist, socialist, communist or any other kind which will gradually disappear under the impact of the twentieth century renaissance of Man'

M.N Roy makes a distinction between cosmopolitanism and internationalism. He pleads for a spiritual community or a cosmopolitan humanism. Internationalism postulates the existence of separate nation states. Roy believes that true world government can be built only the decentralization of nation states

M.N Roy has been one of the most important political thinkers of the modern Indian political thought. His work 'Reason, Romanticism and Revolution' is a significant contribution to the history of western thought. He began his academic pursuit as a Marxist, but gradually restated all the propositions of Marx. He gave a moral restatement of Marxism

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