CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF RENAISSANCE

Framework

This chapter, which discusses the concept of renaissance, consists of four sections. In the first section, we have noted the different connotations which the term "renaissance" holds for Roy, and probe what might have motivated him into giving so much importance to the concept. In the second section, we have analysed Roy's understanding of the renaissance within his theory of Radical Humanism. The third section deals with the Radical Humanist interpretation of history and Roy's historiographical account of European history. In the last section, we have elaborated on the programme of the renaissance as Roy conceived it for India.

SECTION I

Introduction

Having discussed the concept of reason in the previous chapter, its significance and centrality to Roy's theory of Radical Humanism, we now proceed to the next key concept in Roy's theory. For Roy, 'renaissance' is the reassertion of reason; logically therefore, the concept of renaissance is very closely related to the concept of reason.
We shall take up for analysis the concept of renaissance as understood by Roy, examine what connotations it held in the theory of Radical Humanism, and consequently what political significance it has for Roy. Before taking up the theoretical compulsions that led Roy to place so much emphasis on the concept of renaissance, let us briefly identify some of the expediental or prudential factors, which are logically external to the theory, that might have propelled him towards attaching so much significance to renaissance.

Some of Roy's correspondence is suggestive of his turning to the programme of renaissance as a matter of prudence. In a letter to his associate Jadugopal, dated 15th September 1939, there are indications of his realisation that active political work may not be possible if the war continued. He writes,

"In any case if this war becomes serious and continues, not much political work will be done. We shall have to devote more time to educational work. Anticipating this difficulty, we started the Renaissance Association. Incidentally, we expected to earn livelihood from it. . . . It is still in a very primitive condition offering absolutely nothing for hard work. To be frank, I feel overwhelmed by the situation and don't know what is going to happen."  

It is interesting to note here that Roy still claimed to be a Marxist in 1939, while he was also talking of the importance of renaissance.

Secondly, it is clear that Roy continued to have an interest in active election politics even in his latter days, right upto 1949. The
Radical Democratic Party had been dissolved in December 1948, with the intention of activists devoting all their energies to the spread of the ideas and values of Radical Humanism through a widespread movement, rather than through election politics. However, two years later, Roy toyed with the idea of contesting elections and putting up independent candidates. This idea was not received positively by many of the Radical Humanists; in fact there were heated exchanges on this issue. Many of the party members were against such re-entry into electoral politics. Most of them felt it more appropriate to continue working independently. Roy, however, was keen to reorganise the old Radical Humanist group mainly for the purpose of contesting elections. This fact seems to suggest that Roy's interest in active politics continued to exist, even though he had declared to withdraw from active politics. Of course, in the face of practical difficulties, the lack of mass following and the absence of an organisation, Roy was finally forced to confine his activities to the spread of rationalism and the education of the people, or in other words, renaissance.

Thus it may be suggested, that having reached a dead end in active political career, Roy turned to the renaissance as an alternative political career. He had attempted to make a dent in the mainstream nationalist politics, first under the Communist flag and later under the Radical Humanism banner. Having failed miserably both times, he withdrew into total seclusion and launched a full-fledged renaissance.
Roy's Two Interpretations Of The Renaissance

Roy's usage of the term "renaissance" implies different things at different phases of his political career. Roy seems to have two distinct usages of the term in his writings -- the first coinciding with his Marxist phase, and the second with his later Radical Humanist years.

Roy's 'Marxist' Understanding Of Renaissance

An analysis of the notes on European history, made by Roy while in prison, reveals his understanding of the renaissance in the first phase of his political career to have been derived from his understanding of Marxism. According to the materialist interpretation of history, to which Roy subscribed, change in society is understood basically as a consequence of a change in the base. From this, Roy derived that Renaissance, which marked the beginning of the modern European civilisation, served the need of a new social class. As he notes, "The modern western civilisation grew out of the background of antiquated and medieval culture. But as a condition for its development, it had to destroy the old forms and create new ones to suit its purpose." With the growth in trade, a new social force came into existence.
This new social force, Roy argues, destroyed the feudal material base and its superstructure, namely the spiritualist mode of thought. Roy writes,

"The progressive social forces that functioned as the lever of modern European civilisation were necessarily antagonistic to the spiritualistic doctrines of Christianity. These forces arose to liquidate the decayed feudal social order which provided the material basis for the towering structure of the medieval spiritualist philosophy. The ideological reflex of these revolutionary forces was a new philosophy which rejected the traditional notions of orthodox Christianity," (Emphasis ours).

These progressive forces which Roy refers to are none other than the bourgeoisie. Roy clearly states this, "While struggling against feudal absolutism the bourgeoisie attacked religion as the ideology of reaction......."  

Thus, Roy's understanding of the renaissance and history at this stage, that is while he was in prison, was a Marxist one though he was no longer a part of the 'official Communist Party'. He still understood the processes of history as being determined by objective forces, which he identified at different times.

**Roy's Humanist/Latter Day Understanding Of Renaissance**

Roy's Marxist understanding of the renaissance underwent a drastic change by 1946, for he had by then bid farewell to Marxism. Roy's departure from Marxism did not, however, leave him in a theore-
tical vacuum. For he had already evolved to a new position, formulated a new theory -- 'Radical Humanism'. This new theory was a reflection of Roy's changed understanding of history, of social change, of human nature, and of the role of ideas. And this new theoretical formulation, naturally, also affected Roy's understanding of the renaissance.

The renaissance was no longer for Roy, the expression of the new social class, i.e. the bourgeoisie, brought about by the structural change in society. Refuting the Marxist interpretation of the renaissance that he had earlier held, Roy says, "...there was no causal connection between the rise of the trading class and the renaissance; that humanist individualism was not a mere super-structure, nor a justification, of any particular economic system." According to Roy,

"The intellectual resurgence at the close of the Middle Ages cannot be directly connected with the rise of the bourgeoisie. It's root can be traced...through the movement of ideas taking place long before the appearance of the bourgeoisie to struggle against the lords, temporal and spiritual, who amongst themselves dominated the economic life of Europe. The economic life of Europe was stagnant; but the movement of ideas was not suspended......" (Emphasis ours).

The renaissance was in fact, according to Roy, "...the resumption of man's struggle for spiritual freedom and search for truth undertaken at the dawn of civilisation, but confused and partially interrupted by the religious mode of thought which prevailed for more than a millennium." (Emphasis ours).
There is a period of a few years, from 1937 to 1946, when Roy still considered himself to be a Marxist, that we find him first use the term renaissance. In his first public address to the youth at Sitapur in U.P. in 1937, soon after his release from prison, Roy declared the need of a renaissance or what he also referred to as a 'philosophical revolution.' To quote from his speech,

"A political revolution takes place only as a prelude to a social renaissance. So, if politically the nationalist movement is revolutionary, its social purpose must be to clear away the established order of decayed institutions so that a new structure could be raised in the place of old. Conversely, the nationalist movement demands a radical change in the political constitution of the country because such a change will create legal sanctions for the re-adjustment of property relations necessary for a social renaissance."^{12}

It must be noted here that though Roy was talking of the need of a philosophical revolution, or renaissance, he still considered himself a Marxist. At this juncture, however, it was in a rather mechanical way that Roy was arguing for a renaissance.^{13} His argument was that India was still a backward country, i.e. feudal. Therefore, the ideology that prevailed was also a feudal one, namely religion and spiritualism. Therefore, before the masses could understand Marxism, which was the most advanced and revolutionary theory of civilisation and which would bring freedom ultimately, the masses must first go through a stage of pre-Marxist thought, or in other words, bourgeois thought. Roy argued that the communists must lead this movement not under the banner of Communism but under the banner of 'Philosophical Radicalism'. This is why he referred to the Royist group as
"20th century Jacobins". Another point to be noted at this juncture is that Roy uses the term "renaissance" rather loosely and non-rigorously. For historically the term "renaissance" is laden with several meanings and implications. Roy's usage seems to be rather ambiguous.

He seems to have toyed with the idea of renaissance since the early years, even in his differences with Lenin on the question of the path and strategies to be followed in the colonial countries. Though Roy has not, it is true, used the term "renaissance" in any of these debates, his concern primarily with ideas and culture may be seen as an indication of what might have been brewing in his mind, which was to find expression many years later. That this might have been something in his mind all along is also suggested in a letter which he wrote to Ramgopal Mohatta in 1950. Roy writes,

".... Experience has confirmed the opinion I held for many years that for a long time in India work in the cultural and intellectual field is much more important than political activity, or economic reconstruction. The foundation of a truly free and democratic society has still to be laid. I desire to devote the rest of my life to this work...."\(^{13}\) (Emphasis ours).

Thus we find that though Roy had been talking of the need of a renaissance right from 1937, what he implied then is very different from what he finally implies 1946 onwards. It was a complete volte face.

Our concern here is with the latter interpretation of the
renaissance, the one that Roy arrived at in his theory of Radical Humanism. Let us analyse this second interpretation, its significance, the values that Roy attaches to the renaissance, the explanations of its origins and his overall understanding of it.

SECTION II

Roy's Radical Humanist Conception Of The Renaissance

Roy's second interpretation of the renaissance, differentiated from his earlier Marxist interpretation, shall henceforth be referred to as the 'humanist interpretation'.

Roy defines the renaissance thus,

"...phase of man's age-old struggle for freedom and freedom is an ideal concept, it was a chapter in the cultural history of mankind which had its own logic and own momentum...."  
(Emphasis ours).

Further, in keeping with his humanist position, Roy argues,

"It was thus neither an afflorence of the Italian national culture, nor the ideology of the bourgeoisie. It was the revolt of man, the universal man casting off the fetters of religion, claiming the heritage of the entire human culture whose vision and creativeness could not be confined to national boundaries.... the brilliant galaxy of human genius who together composed the man of the renaissance -- the universal man, the archetype of the future of a free humanity did not belong to any class, any age...."  
(Emphasis ours).

For Roy, the renaissance was a significant moment in the history of
humankind. Further, he perceived the history of humanity as an on-going process, which had its own logic and momentum. This process was nothing but the struggle for freedom. On what basis does Roy claim that the renaissance is a part of universal history, i.e. the history of all humanity, or that it has its own logic and momentum? What exactly does he mean by arguing that the renaissance is a part of a struggle for freedom? To understand all this we have to turn back to Roy's ontological argument and his understanding of history. Though it has already been dealt with in detail in the previous chapter we shall briefly resurvey it for the purpose of clarifying our understanding of his concept of the renaissance.

Following the Darwinian interpretation, Roy argues that man is a natural being who has evolved through a long process of biological evolution. This process of evolution is marked by a struggle for existence of different species. Man emerged as the supreme being, or the highest stage of evolution. At this juncture, Roy adds that this struggle for existence at the biological level is nothing but the struggle for freedom at the human level. As he confidently asserts,

"The essence of the struggle for existence is the urge for freedom. The early ancestors of the human race had to struggle against the wild forces of nature which threatened to crush them. They wanted to be free from those forces. That urge for freedom is a continuation of the biological struggle for existence. It is the basic incentive of all subsequent human progress. Thanks to that urge for freedom, mankind organised itself into a society with the object of carrying on the struggle
for existence on a higher level. It is not rational to hold that the instrument which man created in his struggle for freedom should ultimately deprive him of his freedom. On the other hand, it is indeed a fact that in the course of time society did forge chains of slavery for man. But the biological heritage of the urge for freedom could not be altogether throttled. Man struggled for freedom through the ages. He is still struggling. The record of that struggle is the history of the world...

Roy's understanding of the renaissance now becomes a little clear. A pattern emerges which is in total compliance with his radical humanist position. The renaissance, it may be argued is, for Roy, a reassertion of the biological urge for freedom which exists in man, all men, of all countries, and all classes. Being a biological urge it is common to all human beings. A universal man exists, for ultimately human beings are the same; and being derived from the same source of nature, human nature is the same everywhere. This human nature, which is biologically determined, cannot tolerate any kind of restriction on its growth for very long. It compels man to throw off the shackles imposed by the external world and to be free. And this is precisely what happened in the renaissance -- a reassertion of the biological urge for freedom. Logically, we may then conclude that the renaissance, for Roy, is in the last instance, determined by nature, that it is a natural phenomena.

Having answered the first question let us try and locate the
answer to the second, namely what does Roy mean by saying that it has its own logic and momentum? To answer this we have again to turn to Roy's interpretation of history. History, according to Roy, is nothing but the record of the struggle for existence which, at the higher human level, is a struggle for freedom. And freedom, as we have already discovered, is for Roy a "progressive disappearance of the manyfold impediments to the unfolding of the potentialities inherent in man...." Man is able to achieve this freedom, through knowledge of nature for, as Roy argues, "....expanding knowledge of nature increases man's power to conquer nature. Truth being the content of knowledge, its relation with man's quest for freedom is again evident...." Thus the history of human civilisation is, for Roy, the history of biological evolution, which is also the struggle for freedom. This evolutionary process bears no relation to the external material forces and processes, by which Roy implies material forces, whether economic, social or political. For him, this implies that there is no causal relation between these different processes, biological and non-biological; that one is not determined by the other. Therefore, the process of history, which is linked with biological evolution has its own logic, its own momentum. Since the renaissance is a 'chapter in the cultural history of mankind' it is a part of this biological evolution.

The renaissance then, being a part of the evolutionary process of history, Roy argues, it was in no way connected with the new trading
class, the growth of capitalism, nor the peculiar national genius of
the Italians, as was held by Burckhardt.21

The Significance Of The Renaissance For Roy

Roy attached much significance to the renaissance for it repre­
sented to him a 'humanist revival'; and a humanist revival implied the
rebirth of certain old ideas and values, as well as the creation of
new ones. First and foremost, the renaissance, a 'humanist revival',
meant that man, as the highest being of nature, reasserted his rightful
place at the centre of the whole universe. This is explicitly stated by
Roy, "...a humanist revival, that is, restoration of man in his proper
place of primacy and sovereignty...."22

In the Western context, this revival of faith in man's creativity
and his supreme position in the universe, Roy argues, naturally led
to the dislodging of the Church and its supreme authority. Further,
this dislodging of spiritual authority, finally led to the liberation of
Europe, because as long as man was under the dominance of the Church
his struggle for freedom was arrested. Referring to this, Roy writes,

"... Europe liberated itself from the ecclesiastical authority. That
was the period of the Renaissance. A successful struggle
for spiritual freedom created an intellectual atmosphere con­
genial for the survival of science...."23

Roy argues that a free intellectual atmosphere was able to come into
existence and man could pursue his struggle for freedom through the development of science only because the Church and its intellectual authority was successfully overthrown.

Thus, the significance of the renaissance, for Roy, lies not so much in the revival of science, but in the fact that "....it created an intellectual atmosphere in which the germs of scientific knowledge could again fructify."24

The creation of a free atmosphere through a humanist revival and an overthrow of Church authority, Roy summarised as the liberation of "reason from yoke of teleology."25 Renaissance thought, which was essentially rational, brought about the spiritual liberation of man, for the revival of reason led to the growth of scientific discoveries. Roy puts it in a nutshell,

"It (renaissance) declared the spiritual liberation of man, and ushered in the era of modern civilisation, which immensely expanded the scope of human activity. Growing knowledge of nature increased the power of man to prosecute the struggle for freedom more effectively than ever before..."26

Roy associates freedom and the search for truth with man's growing knowledge of the forces of nature and his ability to control them. Science and reason, therefore, are the solvents, of dogma, irrationality and ignorance, the heralders of freedom. Naturally then, the growth of science is one of the most important aspects of the renaiss-
ance. During the Middle Ages, the growth of science was stunted, Roy argues, because of the domination of the religious and ecclesiastical authority. The domination of this authority meant that truth and knowledge were determined by the Church. The scriptures were considered the most authoritative source of knowledge, and their dominance did not allow the growth of knowledge of the different natural phenomena. Religion, Roy argues, which was born out of a need to satisfy man's spiritual craving, became a hindrance later. It thwarted man's struggle for freedom. It dominated Europe for more than a thousand years and it was only by the revitalisation of science that the European mind could be liberated.27

Roy goes on to assert that the renaissance is generally considered significant and remarkable for its afflorence of art. However, renaissance art, Roy says, is significant not in itself so much, as for the fact that it represents man's search for truth and freedom. The naturalism of renaissance art was not a mere imitation of nature; renaissance artists were interested in the study of nature itself, and therefore, the significance of this art lies in the search for understanding the laws of nature.28 According to Roy, "Renaissance art was not a mere imitation of nature, but a discovery of reality which, for Humanism, was the moral truth...."29 The knowledge of natural laws then, leads to morality. This can be understood by referring back to Roy's moral argument, for according to him, causality is morality, and therefore, the knowledge
of natural laws is moral truth.

Besides this, Roy considered the renaissance significant for it laid the basis for the development of a secular ethics in the future. As he argues,

"The renaissance humanists were not indifferent to morality; but they refused to practice vice as virtue; they set up a new standard of ethics and created new moral values in their works of art.... They rejected old standards, which claimed supernatural sanction; but they did not discover, any alternative sanction for morality.... They suggested the theory of a spontaneous secular morality, which could be elaborated only on the basis of the subsequently acquired biological knowledge...." (Emphasis ours).

Thus, it was only the lack of biological knowledge, argues Roy, that disallowed the working out of a total humanistic secular morality. Nevertheless, he holds that the foundations were laid as the earlier sanction for morality, based on scriptures and God, were thrown overboard and humanism, i.e. the faith in the creativity and intelligence of man, was asserted.

The renaissance was important, for Roy, because it led to the creation and subsequent establishment of certain new values. One of the most important of these values was individualism. Roy clarifies that individualism was a principle of even early Greek thought and also of early Christianity, but it was the renaissance that, "... first gave the highest development to individuality...." The renaissance was, according to Roy, a highly individualistic age and became the source
of inspiration for all hitherto movements for liberty.

Along with this value of individualism, Roy states, came the importance of merit as against 'birth'. It was only learning and talent that secured one any recognition as an individual and not one's birth. Roy observes,

"It (renaissance) held that birth decided nothing as to the goodness or badness of a man... In the Middle Ages, man was conscious of himself only as a member of race, people, family or a guild. The renaissance taught him to realise his individuality...."

One of the new values that was generated by the renaissance, according to Roy, was the value of cosmopolitanism. This came along with humanism. For although there was the rise of nationalism, particularly in Italy, there was also the creation of cosmopolitanism. Roy identifies some men who were cosmopolitan -- Machiavelli, Dante, and Petrarch, among others. Cosmopolitanism enabled men to identify with humanity as such and not simply with an identity within the national boundaries. Therefore, a Dante could sing, "My country is the whole world" argues Roy. Thus, "Humanism and cosmopolitanism were the two logically interlinked strands of the renaissance culture...."

Roy attributes certain values to the renaissance, but does not, however, provide any ontological basis for these values. He does not explain in what the roots of these values lay, for values do not have
any relation to reality, for Roy.

It is interesting at this point, to refer to the work of Wallace Fergusson which is considered to be a landmark in the Renaissance studies. Fergusson has argued very perceptively that the renaissance is an idea which has been interpreted differently by different ages and different thinkers. Fergusson argues,

"...though the idea has enjoyed so long a life, conceptions of the nature of the Renaissance, of its sources, its extent, and its essential spirit, have varied from generation to generation. Confined at first to a rebirth of art or of classical culture, the notion of the Renaissance was broadened as scholars and each successive generation added to it what they regarded as the essence of modern, as opposed to medieval, civilisation...."

Fergusson, demonstrates how each century or age, according to its preoccupations, has seen something different in the renaissance. Fergusson further argues that the reconstruction of the past by the historian, "...is conditioned by the intellectual environment of his time and place and also by his own character, interests, and experience....the historian's view of the past is also conditioned constantly by the works of his predecessors...."

Johan Huizinga, another very important historian of modern times, has also pointed out some of the problems that exist in our understanding of the renaissance. He warns us of the attempt to sim-
plify and reduce the complex phenomena of the renaissance to any one explanation. Huizinga argues,

"The picture displayed by the Renaissance is one of transformation and hesitation, one of transition and of intermixture of cultural elements. Anyone seeking in it a total unity of spirit capable of being stated in a simple formula will never be able to understand it in all its expressions. Above all, one must be prepared to accept it in its complexity, its heterogeneity, and its contradictions, and to apply a pluralistic approach to the questions it poses. Whoever casts out a single scheme as a net to capture this proteus will only catch himself in the meshes...." 36

So, Roy's attributing Renaissance with these values of individualism and cosmopolitanism is, therefore, to be understood in the tradition in which he places himself. Roy, as stated by himself, 37 considers Burckhardt's interpretation his guiding spirit. Though Roy's interpretation or understanding of the renaissance is in the Burckhardtian tradition, he does not accept Burckhardt's interpretation regarding the cause of its genesis in Italy. As Roy argues,

"It was thus neither an afflorescence of the Italian national culture nor ideology of the bourgeoisie. It was the revolt of man -- the universal man casting off the fetters of religion, claiming the heritage of entire human culture, whose vision and creativeness could not be confined to national boundaries...." 38

To conclude, the Renaissance, for Roy, emerges as a natural phenomenon, born out of a biological urge for freedom. It is inevitable, and determined by the very process of culture itself, for the biological urge has to assert itself. Renaissance was a phase in the process of
history which, for Roy, is the history of the natural evolution of man.

To understand what this means, we shall now examine Roy's interpretation of history and see how his interpretation of the Renaissance emerges from it.

SECTION III

Roy's Radical Humanist Interpretation Of History

Roy's interest in history and attempt at re-writing it, is neither accidental nor peripheral. It is fundamental to his very system-building activity, in which he claimed to be going beyond Marxism. History was put to work by Roy to fulfill certain tasks essential for his theory of Radical Humanism to sustain itself. Thus, by re-writing history, Roy was only seeking a justification for his theory.

The re-writing of history was, for Roy, an essential part not only of his theory building, but also his political activity. For Roy's programme of renaissance was derived from his understanding of history. We shall examine the different purposes that might have motivated Roy in re-writing history.

Through his humanist interpretation of history, Roy was really
trying to demonstrate the validity of his theory of human nature. In reality, what Roy does is to apply his theory of human nature to European history and then demonstrate how it is the correct interpretation of history: for it reaffirms his theory of human nature. As already stated, human nature according to Roy is essentially rational. What distinguishes man from other animals is his rationality which, Roy explains, as his capacity to think. Man is the only creature who by thinking, questioning, seeks to know the truth. And truth, according to Roy, is the knowledge of the physical world. As Roy states, "...human nature is not to believe, but to struggle for freedom and search for truth, the latter manifesting itself in homo sapiens." Logically therefore, for Roy, the history of civilisation is nothing but the history of thought. Roy states clearly, "The history of thought is the key to the history of civilisation, because it can be logically reconstructed." Roy is able to make such an assertion because for him, ideas have their own internal dynamics and are not, as a result affected or determined in any way by anything external which is physical or social reality. Therefore, according to Roy, ideas (or in other words history) can be logically reconstructed.

Since Roy credits an essential characteristic to human nature, i.e. rationality, through his re-writing of history he tries to show how all other conceptions of human nature, which postulate 'belief' as the fundamental characteristic of human nature or those that deny any
essential nature (especially that given by history), are fallacious. Roy insists on making the distinction between 'reason' and 'belief' and says that, ".... The distinction is fundamental. Belief in supernatural beings or mysterious metaphysical forces would make submission to the object of belief the essence of human nature...." However, Roy fails to provide a satisfactory explanation of 'belief'. All that he terms it is a product of ignorance of the truth.

Through his reinterpretation of history, Roy was trying to demolish another concept, of human nature, which he argues is fallacious, and therefore, leads us to a completely wrong understanding of history. Thus, according to Roy, at the basis of Marx's misconceived perception of history, was an erroneous conception of human nature. For, Marx had, according to Roy refused to accept any 'essential' human nature as such. Instead he had argued, says Roy, that human nature is a product of social relations or that it lies in the 'ensemble of social relations'. However, according to Roy, "....rationalism is the essence of man .... The aggregate of social relations presupposes existence of individuals, who entered into relations. They did that because of their essence of rationality...."

The problem with Marx's materialism, according to Roy, lay in his historical sense. As he argues, ".... Marx was unable to appreciate the importance of religious criticism. Religion provided the moral sanction for the continua-
tion of the political and social status quo. To undermine its authority, therefore, was a revolutionary act of fundamental significance. The Young Hegelians did that. But Marx failed to appreciate the revolutionary significance of their bold attack on religious tradition and ecclesiastical orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{43}

According to Roy, Marx fails to appreciate the defeat of religion, which for Roy was a necessary step in the attainment of freedom and truth. Roy argues that Marx's materialist interpretation of history did not represent the truth, and therefore, was not liberating. In fact, Roy regarded it as a regression. His conception of human nature being fallacious, his understanding of history is wrong Roy feels. In other words, Roy implies that Marx did not see history as a conflict between reason and faith.

The other purpose of re-writing history for Roy was to justify his own materialism, which he claims to be a monist materialism. Materialism appears the only true philosophy for it embodies truth, which as already stated, is the knowledge of reality. Roy demonstrates through his rewriting of history, that all philosophies or thought systems or history have attempted to answer the question -- what is 'thought' and 'being' and what is their relation. And according to Roy, the philosophers of the 17th and 18th century had given the most correct answer to this question. Particularly, Roy holds Spinoza's formulation to be fundamental and correct. For, according to Roy, Spinoza had solved
the problem of explaining both body and soul or thought and being.$^{44}$ Though Descartes had shown the way, Roy maintains, a dualist fallacy persisted and this was the stumbling block in man's path to freedom and truth. Spinoza's greatness says Roy, lay in the fact that he was able to show a way out of this problem of dualism. Roy argues,

"Spinoza maintains that body and soul (matter and spirit) are both real. They are not independent entities, but correlative attributes, which constitute the Substance. God and nature, mind and matter, soul and body, can all be traced to a common denominator -- a simple, primal Substance. That supreme principle cannot be the Absolute Spirit; because then there could be no creation. Therefore, it could only be a substance having extension, the property of motion being inherent in it. It is a material substance capable of developing mind."$^{45}$

Roy claims his own theoretical formulation to be a monist materialism.$^{45(a)}$ He argues that 'body' and 'mind', or 'subject' and 'object', are both ultimately reducible to matter. Only through a monist materialist theory, Roy argues, can freedom be achieved. For, as long as any doubt remains about the nature of mind and body, man will succumb to his ignorance, and thereby, revive his belief or faith in God. Roy further argues that if man owed his existence to some other source than himself, then he would not be free.

Thus, by arguing that Spinoza's was the only theory that explains both body and mind, or subject and object, as being ultimately the same thing, Roy sought legitimation for his own theory.

Roy addresses himself to the problem, which he correctly
Identifies as the problem of philosophy, namely the relation of 'thought' and 'being'. According to Roy, this problem was conceived of in the Middle Ages as a problem of reconciling faith and rationalism. Later, the humanist resurgence during the renaissance period, raised the same problem and it was now posed as a problem of the relation of thought and being. As he states, "...it was posed as the question of the relation of human thought and the world itself: can the human mind really know the world? Do man's notions and perceptions contain a picture of reality? ..." Through his re-analysis of history, Roy attempts to justify his own answer, which is derived from his understanding of science and the philosophies of the 17th and 18th century, especially that of Spinoza's.

Roy points out that several important philosophers contributed to the formulation of modern philosophy, among them Descartes, Francis Bacon, and Hobbes. A mechanistic model of the universe was formulated on the basis of natural laws. Thus, Roy says, natural law had displaced the law of God, but at the same time the Natural Law deprived man of the limited degree of freedom that religion had given him by its doctrine of free will. For, according to the mechanistic conception of the universe, man was simply reduced to a part of the mechanical clockwork, totally determined. Roy succinctly poses the problem,

"Modern philosophy......was confronted with the problem of reconciling, on the one hand, a rationalist metaphysics with
a mechanistic cosmology, human reason with physical nature and, on the other hand, the idea of freedom with the concept of necessity. The naturalist Humanism of the Renaissance appeared to be in conflict with the mechanistic naturalism of science, and the latter with the sovereignty of human reason and freedom of human will, although all of them united in challenging the tyranny of theology. To put it differently, the problem was to harmonise human reason, including will, with physical determinism.......

Here once again, Spinoza's philosophy, Roy feels, provides the correct answer for it harmonises the concept of necessity and freedom. According to Roy, in Spinoza's ethical theory, morality, was volitional and at the same time determined, for it was rooted in the natural evolutionary process. As he states,

"Morality is volitional; in ethics, freedom of will is unrestricted and it is there that freedom really counts. At the same time, Spinoza traces the roots of morality to the determined processes of the operation of biological faculties. The instinct of self-preservation governs all human behaviour.... Spinoza thus laid the stable foundation of a secular ethics by tracing the roots of morality in the evolutionary process...."

Thus, Roy identifies the problem both correctly and precisely, that of freedom and determinism, but his own answer, derived from Spinoza's theory, is rather untenable. Roy falls into the very pitfall that he identifies as the bane of the philosophy of modern times. Roy's magnum opus, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution* is his interpretation of European history wherein Roy is really trying to solve the problem he so correctly identifies. Yet his answers fail to convince.
Roy's re-writing of history seems to be motivated by his basic purpose -- to establish reason as an ontological reality. Throughout his recording of the history of Western thought, we find that Roy keeps driving home this point. Therefore, for Roy, the prevalence of Christianity does not mean that reason is defeated. For, even religion is a form of rationality: it seeks to answer man's questions regarding the Universe. As Roy states, "As a matter of fact, even the mysticism of a revealed religion is but a perverted form of rationalism inherent in human nature...." According to him, religion is the '....refuge of the frustrated rationalism of the savage....' Therefore, Roy maintains that the prevalence of Christianity, or spiritual belief, does not disprove his basic contention that reason is inherent in man. Reason being innate in man, it cannot be submerged by belief and faith. Therefore, the Dark Ages were not all that dark, says Roy, nor did they last very long as is generally believed.

Thought, which embodies truth, is for Roy, the determining factor of history, and therefore, the humanist history which Roy sets out to write is nothing but the history of the conflict of reason and belief. Reason, according to Roy, leads one to materialism which embodies truth while belief leads one to spiritualism. Therefore history, for Roy, is also the history of the conflict of two philosophies or systems of thought, materialism (or science) and spiritualism (or religion).
Roy's Eurocentric View Of History

Roy clearly suffers from a Eurocentric perspective of history and the world. But then, Roy was truly only a child of his times. It was taken for granted by his generation of intellectuals that the pattern of development and progress, or history of the western civilisation, was universally applicable and valid. Roy states clearly that the evolution of thought of the western civilisation must be taken as the model or the pattern of human evolution. The justification which he tries to give is peculiar to him, or rather, to his Radical Humanist position. Roy argues that, "In the present stage of world history, pending the composition of a universal history the evolution of thought in the western world has to be taken as the general pattern." So Roy's humanist interpretation of history is nothing but the history of western thought.

Sudipto Kaviraj in his long essay on "The Heteronomous Radicalism of M.N. Roy" makes a similar point. According to Kaviraj, Roy was in the tradition of that nationalist trend which was Eurocentric, of which Dadabhai Naoroji was the best example. According to this viewpoint, Kaviraj argues,

"Precedence reigned in history; thus the moves and rhythms of Indian history were bound to follow the European. As a basic premise, this was at work in both phases of Roy's intellectual development. It was this subtle Eurocentricity of his historical vision which the nationalists instinctively, rather than consciously, opposed."
Roy's Historiographical Account Of European History

Though Roy covers the whole span of Western thought -- from Hellenic times to the 20th century -- we shall not cover all that ground in detail. We shall only take up the significant points of conflict between reason and faith or belief, which he identifies as such.

The Early Greek Civilisation

Roy begins with the Hellenic civilisation. This civilisation, according to Roy, marked one of the most advanced periods of human civilisation, because it is here that the first rational system of thought prevailed. As he illustrates,

"More than six hundred years before the rise of Christianity, there developed in Greece an intellectual life which laid the spiritual foundation of modern civilisation. Full of vigour it survived the onslaught of an organised religion which completely dominated the European mind for more than a thousand years. Ancient Greek thought was rationalist, and consequently the earliest philosophy was materialist."

According to Roy, beginning with Thales' prediction of an eclipse in 585 B.C. began the process of 'spiritual emancipation'. As Roy asserts,

"That epoch-making experience suggested to the bold Ionian thinkers the idea that physical phenomena were not brought about by the caprice of countless Gods. With the awakening of an insatiable curiosity, they began to enquire into everything, including the past of the human race...."

Roy is attempting here to illustrate how his theory of human nature
is confirmed, for according to him, it is the essential quality of human beings to question that led to man's exploration of the natural processes. It is this which marks for Roy the beginning of the process of 'spiritual emancipation.

According to Roy, all subsequent thinkers of the Hellenic civilisation were also rational for they sought explanations to the universe without going outside nature. Thus Roy tries to establish that this period of human history was great because all the thinkers were rational. Or in other words, human nature's urge for truth had asserted itself and these thinkers had arrived at scientific ideas of a law-governed universe.

It is important to note here that Roy does not even mention in passing, the other ideas that prevailed in those times. For instance, the ideas about slavery -- for slavery was considered to be natural, even by such great 'rational' thinkers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Roy only traces those ideas and practices that fit into his theory of human nature and ignores others which do not. Since ideas, for Roy, have no relation to social reality, he does not in his historiography even attempt to locate the breakdown of this great rational civilisation and its social conditions.

True to his logic and understanding of history, Roy refuses
to accept the most commonly acknowledged reasoning of the series of slave revolts as being responsible for the genesis and form of early Christianity. In fact, Roy's explanation for the rise of Christianity is very different. According to Roy, Christianity arose to satisfy an ethical need. The rational thought of the Greeks, he asserted, had successfully dislodged natural religion and animism, but it could not provide an alternative faith and ethics necessary for tackling the problems of human life. It created an atmosphere of demoralisation and therefore there arose the need for an alternate philosophy. And this, Roy says, was provided by Christianity.

"It (Christianity) arose to satisfy an intellectual need and moral craving of the time. A common misfortune had overtaken the peoples of the Roman world. Their faith in the Gods of natural religion was undermined by the fact that they could do nothing to help their devotees. In the absence of any faith, demoralisation spread far and wide. In that depressing atmosphere, Christianity rose to declare the equality of all men before God. It was naturally hailed throughout the Roman world, and very soon penetrated every department of public life...." (Emphasis ours).

It is interesting to note here, that though Roy accepts that Christianity declared equality and therefore become popular, he refuses to see any connection between the rise of Christianity and the slave revolts. In fact, Roy goes to the extent of denying any relation between the two. As he clearly says, "Early Christianity, thus was not the ideology of the slave revolts; nor later on, of Roman Imperialism...." Instead, Roy accounts for the rise of Christianity to yet another factor, besides ethical need, in his peculiarly Radical Humanist manner. Christianity,
he says, resulted

"...from the set-back which Greek science and philosophy suffered in the intellectual atmosphere of the ancient world which set a limit to the possibility of acquiring positive knowledge..." (Emphasis ours).

Roy concludes therefore, that to the early Christians, reason ceased to be an activity wedded to the pursuit of concrete science and truth but appeared as an abstract, empty, metaphysical conception of the universe as a law-governed system. Roy further argues that for Christianity, 'reason' could not explain reality and this led to scepticism.

Roy concludes that the treatment of 'reason' in this sceptical and metaphysical manner, made it possible for Christianity to incorporate the idea of 'reason' in their 'belief-system'.

According to Roy, despite the Roman and Christian interlude, 'reason' once again triumphed in history. The wisdom of the ancient Greeks somehow managed to survive the onslaught of belief, though it did so outside Europe. Why it could survive there is not explained by Roy. This knowledge of the Greek rationalist thinkers according to Roy, was brought to Europe by the Arabs. Roy states this clearly,

"It is through the Arabian philosophers and scientists that the rich patrimony of Greek learning reached the fathers of modern rationalism and the pioneer of scientific research, Roger Bacon, was a disciple of the Arabs... Experiment and measurement are the great instruments with the aid of which they made a path for progress, and raised themselves to a position of the connecting link between the scientific achievements of the Greek and those of the modern times."
Along with the Arabs, says Roy, came also Islam which dealt a staggering blow to Christianity, which had degenerated into miracle-mongering idolatory and relic worship. Islam was different from Christianity, according to Roy, basically because it was a monotheistic religion. It was the monotheism of Islam that changed the outlook of the European Christians. Roy states this explicitly,

"The severe monotheism of Islam made that grand achievement possible. The Almighty God of a monotheistic religion creates the world out of nothing, thereafter he leaves it alone to go its own way. Interfering with secular affairs, he could come under the purview of the laws of the world, and thus compromise his position."

Thus, Roy held that it was the monotheism of Islam and the science and philosophy of the Greeks brought by the Arabs that together stimulated Europe and led to a radical change in the conception of the world, and therefore of civilisation. According to Roy's conception of history, Islam played a crucial role in bringing about the Renaissance, which was the next significant point of conflict of reason and belief.

**The Renaissance Period**

Roy regards the second most important period in the history of western thought, as the 'revolt of man', or what is known as the Renaissance. Roy dates this as taking place over a period of two hundred years -- from the middle of the 14th century to the 16th century. The characteristic feature of this period is that man's urge for ration-
ality, or what for Roy is truth, reasserted itself, aided by the rational thought that had come down through the ages, mainly through the Arabs and Islam.

Roy observes,

"For a thousand years, the European mind was dominated by the religious mode of thought. Eventually, Arab scholars laboriously collected the scattered records of knowledge left behind by Thales, Pythagoras, Democritus, Hippocrates, Euclid, Archimedes, Aristarchus, Hipparchus, Galen and other forerunners of science. It ultimately reached Europe to stimulate the age-long struggle for spiritual freedom and search for truth. The expansion of social and political freedom -- modern civilisation -- resulted from that struggle." (Emphasis ours).

During the renaissance, man's urge for freedom and truth led to his questioning of the scriptures and challenging the authority of the Church. The renaissance thought was reflected in all spheres of life, in ethics, in politics, and in art. It replaced supernaturalism with naturalism, according to Roy, and this led to freedom. For, naturalism represented man's refusal to accept any transcendental authority or mystery behind nature or reality. The Renaissance men, Roy says, argued that if man was God's noblest creation, then godliness was inherent in him, and therefore, he was free to pursue any activity and enjoy the creations of nature. Such an assertion, says Roy, allowed the Renaissance men to explore the mysteries of nature and thus arrive at truth. To conclude, according to Roy, "... the rational essence of human nature successfully weathered all vicissitudes, to
to reassert itself ultimately as the revolt of man against the Almighty God and his more powerful agents on earth.\(^{69}\) (Emphasis ours). Thus, man's urge for freedom and truth surged up from the depths it had been pushed down into, by the dominance of faith and religion. The Renaissance, according to Roy, laid the foundation for the modern civilisation by allowing for the growth of science and technology.\(^{70}\)

Following the Renaissance, however, there came a period when it appeared that the spirit of humanism it had generated was likely to be defeated. This was the period of the Reformation. The Reformation was essentially a clash of religion and rationalism. This 'counter-revolution' Roy explains in the following manner,

"Human mind had been accustomed to the religious mode of thought for a whole millennium. Even when a new vista was opened up by the revolt of man against the age-long spiritual stagnation, it would not easily come out of the rut. Because religion had become a mental habit. As such, it persisted even long after it had ceased to be a spiritual necessity. That cultural and intellectual atavism was evidenced by the Reformation, which appeared to eclipse the Renaissance."\(^{71}\) (Emphasis ours).

However, Roy insists that, "The fire of man's resurgence kept on burning beneath the surface of theological pedantry, spiritual abasement and wanton ignorance in general...."\(^{72}\) The spread of humanist education had its positive effects. The foundation of the Jesuitic order by Loyola, Roy states, also helped in the spread of humanistic knowledge. The Reformation, Roy says, ultimately destroyed the
decayed Christian Universal Order. The Holy empire was broken up and the laws of the Church were replaced by secular laws. The Reformation was restricted, according to Roy, only to Germany meanwhile, great progress was made in France, England and Italy. Roy identifies the important thinkers as Descartes, Francis Bacon and Hobbes. He points out that Natural law was no longer just a philosophical concept, it was established as an empirical law. Descartes had formulated a mechanistic cosmology which, Roy says, was the basis of the new philosophy. Francis Bacon's inductive method of reasoning from experience and Hobbes' sensationalist theory were very important contributions in man's search for the answers to his question: what is truth. However, Roy argues, the formulations of these philosophers were not complete answers to man's queries and certain problems still persisted before man could arrive at the truth.

Descartes, whom Roy considers the founder of modern philosophy, had attempted to answer the question of the relation of thought and being, but according to Roy, it was not a perfect answer, for a dualist fallacy prevailed. Roy identifies the source of this fallacy thus, "The Cartesian psycho-physical parallelism resulted from the arbitrary postulate of a "rational soul" superimposed on the fully mechanistic biological organism of man." Nevertheless, Cartesian philosophy, Roy argues, changed the outlook of man fundamentally: the world was a cosmos but not a teleological order serving a divine
purpose. On the other hand, man is a rational being who has the capacity to acquire knowledge of the mechanism of nature and through this knowledge gain power to manipulate nature for his own purpose.

Descartes' dualist fallacy, which for Roy was a problem in man's progress towards freedom and truth, is solved by the successive thinker -- Spinoza.

Spinoza solved the dualist problem of body and soul, Roy argues, by showing that both were ultimately derived from the same source. Such a formulation, according to Roy, made it possible to trace man's relation to nature. A unitary concept of creation of both the mind and body from that one substance revolutionised philosophy. It marked a great step in the process of man's struggle for freedom, and these ideas were ultimately a product of nature. As Roy states,

"But Spinoza's first principles were not a priori, given in consciousness. They resulted from the reason in nature, and could be conceived by human intelligence because it was a manifestation of the universal rationality. Being in harmony with reason in nature, human reason is capable of grasping the fundamental truths of existence." (Emphasis ours).

Thus, once again Roy seeks to establish that his theory of human nature is confirmed: man is rational, he seeks to know the reality, and therefore, truth. According to Roy, Spinoza had arrived at the final truth, namely that reason is an ontological reality. Roy expresses this explicitly, "But in his (Spinoza's) system, reason ceases to be
a metaphysical category, in the transcendental sense; it becomes an ontological entity." (Emphasis ours). This is precisely what Roy himself is trying to establish.

The other contribution made by Spinoza in man's search for freedom and truth, Roy argues, was his ethical theory. According to Roy, Spinoza had traced the roots of morality to the determined process of nature and man's biological faculties, and shown that self-preservation governs all human behaviour. Thus, for Roy, man could now finally do away with any kind of belief-systems as the basis of morality. Morality was now established on a secular basis and thus freed man from the need of any kind of God for being moral. Roy goes on to illustrate that this secular foundation of morality was never built upon by subsequent philosophers. (Roy does not explain why this was not done.) In fact, he argues, it was subjected to utilitarian interpretations and later led to moral nihilism in Marx.

It is important to note that since Roy builds his own theory on the basis of Spinoza's arguments, he has no criticism to offer at all. He merely points out that it was the failing of the subsequent followers that they did not see the significance of Spinoza's philosophy, and therefore did not carry forward the liberating philosophy of Spinoza.
The Enlightenment

The next important phase in the history of the conflict between reason and faith was the 'Enlightenment' or the 'Age of Reason'. Man's urge for truth and freedom had discovered that reason was an ontological reality. And the next step towards freedom, argues Roy, was to apply this knowledge to man's social life and explain existence as a whole.

Vico, according to Roy, marks a very important point in the history of man, for he was able to explain man's being and becoming in the context of the social world. Vico's main contribution in the struggle for freedom was, according to Roy, his theory that history is the history of humanity creating itself.¹

Vico starts from the natural law, says Roy, but in interpreting it differently, he is able to show that human society is also a part of the evolutionary process and therefore determined. Vico, Roy states,

"...traced the origin of law in the human mind, and explained historical changes in terms of the evolution of man's mind, which was itself a natural process. Therefore, he came to the conclusion that, if physicists sought to discover laws of nature by the study of natural phenomena, philosophers must seek the laws of historical change and social evolution in the events of human life and in an understanding of the operation of the human mind. Laws are born in the conscience of mankind...."²

Thus, once again we find that Roy is trying to stress his concept
of human nature: that the idea of law, rationality, is inherent in man because man is a rational being. The concept of a universal law, Roy argues, is an abstraction based upon the experience of human life, and therefore, Vico's historical law is a creation of the reason in man.  

Vico's ideas on history made it possible, says Roy, to conceive reason as a regulative factor of social, human life itself. Thus, the age of reason, according to Roy, made reason into a regulative factor of everyday life.

Roy goes on to narrate that science made tremendous progress and led to the defeat of belief in a decisive way. Naturalism, says, Roy, could now call itself a scientific system of thought for great advances were made in all branches of science and not physics alone. New advances were made in the study of anatomy and physiology. Condillac, a sensationalist, went far beyond Locke and suggested rightly, according to Roy, that the function of the mind or soul must be understood as a physiological function only. Cabanis had "brought reason down to the earth as a function of higher biological organisms...."

This new philosophy of scientific naturalism, Roy goes on to say, was embodied in the Encyclopedia, which was the work of
several philosophers, i.e. Helvetius, de la Mettrie, Condillac, de Tracy, Cabanis, Diderot and a whole lot of other philosophers "...a galaxy of intellectual giants unparalled since the golden age of Pericles..." (Emphasis ours).

The idea of a natural law, a mechanistic universe and faith in the creativity of man, which were the ideas thrown up by the renaissance -- by man's urge for freedom, Roy argues, now find their fullest development. And therefore, according to Roy, "The renaissance found its culmination in the Enlightenment." 87

The Enlightenment marks for Roy the decisive victory of reason in the struggle between reason and faith, between superstition and science. Scientific investigations had proved that man was a part of nature, that there was no such thing as a soul, nor a God. Man's natural urge for freedom and truth had found its fullest expression in this Age of Reason.

After the Enlightenment, Roy argues, some attempts were made to revive faith, mysticism and religion in different ways. The French revolution which was a product of the philosophy of the Enlightenment had, due to its excesses, led to a reaction and that was natural. 88 This was the Romantic rebellion led by Rousseau and then later by Herder and others, where they tried to show that man was
essentially emotional and not rational. The other rebellion against the age of reason was the one launched by scepticism. It was also created, Roy argued, by the excessive emphasis on empiricism, which was the principle of the Enlightenment. Scepticism, led by Hume and later Kant, raised doubts about the possibility of absolute knowledge through reason and also whether ethics can be derived from the natural law. Kant also brought in the idea of a duality of phenomena and noumena and thus brought in an element of mysticism. However, Hegel attempted, according to Roy, to solve this problem by showing how there is no such divide between phenomena and noumena, that both were ultimately one or derived from the same source, namely, the 'Idea' or 'Consciousness' or 'Universal Reason.'

This, however, created a problem, says Roy. By arguing that truth and reality is ultimately the Absolute Idea, Hegel, denied that reality was matter. It led to Idealism and a denial of material reality as the truth.

**Post-Enlightenment Period**

The post-Hegelian German materialists combatted the orthodoxy which was reviving religion on the basis of the Idealism, which was resurrected by Hegel. Feuerbach, a critical student of Hegel's.
showed that matter comes first and then thought. Roy argues,

".... in Feuerbach's philosophy, thought becomes the result of organic conditions and the organic conditions of human existence, in their turn, crystallise out of the entire process of physical nature. Therefore, thought cannot be self-contemplation of the ego; it has external reference. Philosophy came out of the vicious circle of subjectivism and at the same time provided an objective rational basis for Humanism. The Hegelian system, thus gave birth to a humanist naturalism.

Thus, the developments made by the 19th century materialists were in line with the Enlightenment, "....marking a highly significant stage in man's endless struggle for spiritual freedom..."94

Karl Marx, who came after them could not, however, appreciate these efforts, argues Roy, and has wrongly called these Young Hegelians 'mechanical materialists'. Marx had inherited, according to Roy, the wrong elements of the Hegelian dialectics. Roy writes,

"....Marxian dialectical Materialism dehumanised humanity by subordinating its entire history, political, social, cultural and intellectual to a secular telos, and rested an ill-conceived romantic view of life on a soulless, mechanistic materialism which it claimed to have rejected."95

The fundamental problem with Marx's materialism, according to Roy, was his misconception of human nature. Marx had rejected, Roy says, the materialism in the tradition of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, which for Roy was the correct materialist conception. For Marx, Roy points out, there was no essence to be located in man; it was in the 'ensemble of social relations' outside man. Roy argues
that man is essentially rational, a sovereign moral entity.

SECTION IV

Roy's Programme Of Renaissance

Having analysed his concept of renaissance and his interpretation of history, we can now place Roy's political programme for a renaissance movement in a Radical Humanist perspective.

Roy's programme of the renaissance is derived essentially from his understanding of history. In fact, it might even seem that history itself becomes Roy's political programme.

The present crisis that confronts the world which Roy identifies and addresses himself to is, as G.P. Bhattacharya aptly puts it, "....a new flare up in the age-long struggle between religion and science." Or in other words, it was a crucial struggle between "....a basic biological impulse and the superstructure of a predisposition of human psychology...."

Although the crisis confronts the whole world, that is even the Western civilisation, Roy's programme of action is formulated for India, for that was his arena of activity since his return to India.
In this perpetual struggle for freedom, Roy points out, reason had been defeated in India centuries ago when materialist thought was overpowered by religious thought. Since then India has, according to Roy, been languishing in this backward state of thought, and therefore, there was no freedom. Logically, for Roy, India could overcome this crisis only by reviving the rational spirit or the spirit as was manifested by the European renaissance.

The European renaissance, which was marked by man's rebellion against faith and religion, resulted in man's freeing himself from the fetters that denied him freedom and prevented him from pursuing his essential activity of discovering truth.

As already argued earlier, it was this historic victory, (i.e. renaissance) of man's urge for freedom and truth, that consequently led to the creation of the great European civilisation.

Similarly, Indians too must fight the deep rooted religious prejudices and belief in God. Then alone could their biological urge to pursue truth assert itself and lead India to freedom, prosperity and modernity. And it is this programme of combatting faith and religion with reason and science, of reviving faith in man's creativity through a scientific humanist philosophy, that Roy calls his programme of Renaissance.
B. Banerjea has rightly enumerated Roy's programme of the Renaissance in his article in *Thinkers of Indian Renaissance*. From an elaboration of the programme's objectives he concludes, "This was evidently a cultural educational venture, the legacy of a war-weary thinker who appeared to be keen on delving even into ancient Indian lore...." Banerjea is of the opinion that Roy may have been occupied with the idea of completing what he refers to as the 19th century renaissance of India. Banerjea remarks, "Perhaps Roy was keen on picking up the threads of India's abortive Renaissance of the nineteenth century and bringing about the unfulfilled revolution in society...."

D.C. Grover is also of a similar opinion. Grover places him in the tradition of the 19th century progressive thinkers, or what he refers to as the Indian renaissance. Grover argues that a renaissance would have occurred, or taken root in India, but for the intervention of British imperialism. This led to the destruction of the progressive forces in the form of the rising middle classes. Thus Grover states, "Indian renaissance was deprived of its native origin; it lacked the vigour and buoyancy of the European renaissance." What exactly he means by saying that the Indian renaissance was deprived of its native origins is not at all clear. Grover identifies three stages of the Indian renaissance. The first, according to him, is when the British colonisers brought the progressive ideas that challenged the old order. The second stage, according to him, was marked by an attempt to
synthesise the old and the new ideas. This manifested itself in the formation of institutions like the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj. At the close of the nineteenth century, says Grover, began a third stage which is characterised by the reaction of the native forces who believed that the Indian culture was superior to the West, and consequently, they become the prophets of Hindu nationalism. According to Grover, the most striking thing about Indian nationalism is that it lacked what he calls an ideological foundation. Indians could never be free, says Grover, till they are free of old ideas and till they have acquired new progressive ideas. It is at this point in history that "M.N. Roy appeared on the scene with his philosophy of Radical Humanism...."\(^{104}\) (Emphasis ours). The task before India, argues Grover, of completing her abortive 19th century renaissance could be accomplished by Radical Humanism. Roy, is for Grover, an important link with the 19th century intellectuals, whom he considers as the thinkers of the Indian renaissance. Grover concludes,

"Thus, the Renaissance in India will take place under the banner of a philosophy, in which reason will function as arbiter in all disputes in the field of knowledge and values. Roy advocates a new renaissance which will be based on rationalism, individualism and cosmopolitanism, and, which is essential for democracy to be realised and is capable of defending itself. And for it, he endeavours to propound the philosophy of Radical Humanism; which links up social and political practice with a scientific metaphysics and ethics."\(^{105}\) (Emphasis ours).
Roy puts forward a concrete programme and sets certain tasks for the renaissance movement in India. The first and most important task that the renaissance movement must address itself to is the education of the people. By education Roy does not imply any kind of formal process or system of education. In calling for education of the people Roy is basically implying the dissemination of scientific knowledge and an appeal to the reason of people. This dissemination of scientific ideas and knowledge was, according to Roy, the only way of overthrowing the deep-rooted spiritualism that dominated Indian minds.

The spread of scientific ideas entailed for Roy the dissemination of the following ideas:

(a) That the universe is a law-governed system which has its own laws of causation; that there is no creator or God. Further, that there is nothing mysterious about creation and life for living matter grows out of dead matter.

(b) That man is an integral part of nature, and therefore, his mind, will, intelligence and emotions are all determined by nature that there is nothing mysterious about man's consciousness, because it is a product of natural biological evolution.

(c) That man's mind being determined by nature is essentially rational, for nature is a determined process or a rational process and
man is an inseperable part of it.

(d) That man can determine his own life, that he is the maker of history, and therefore, he need not subjugate himself to some supernatural power like God. The implantation of these ideas in the minds of Indians would, according to Roy, create an urge for freedom and the desire to rely on themselves and not God. This would enable man to regain faith in himself, in his creativity and in his ability to make his own destiny.

The Programme Of Rewriting History

The second task that Roy sets for the renaissance movement was that of re-writing history in India which, as already stated, was the history of ideas. So the re-writing of history in India would entail the re-writing of the history of Indian philosophy. This would be necessary so that the Indian people would be aware of their own tradition, of scientific or materialist schools of thought. These materialist schools must be revived according to Roy, so that the Indian people will be able to revive their faith in themselves. Thus, the task of re-writing of history in India is essential, according to Roy, for salvaging and reviving the scientific ideas and values that had existed in the early years of Indian civilisation before the Brahminical schools dominated Indian minds.
Roy states this clearly in an article in *Radical Humanist* titled "The Lost Heritage",

"The history of Indian philosophy is still to be written (some have been written) but none of them is a critical study of the entire process of the evolution of thought.... What is conventionally known as Indian philosophy is of comparatively recent origin. It was elaborated in the period of intellectual reaction which followed the defeat of Buddhism. The triumphant Brahminical orthodoxy not only falsified and vulgarised ancient philosophical thought which had disputed the authority of the Vedas, dared deny the existence of God so as to combat it conveniently but it actually destroyed the entire earlier literature expounding naturalist, atheist, nihilist and materialist views. Since then Indian intellectual life was dominated by theology, impersonal as well as anthropomorphic, being primarily concerned with the nature of God and soul and the relation between the two whose existence was simply taken for granted..."  

This task of revaluating and submitting to critical appraisal the existing systems of thought was a necessary task, according to Roy, and was carried out by the Renaissance men in Europe. Niranjan Dhar points out that, "....As a sponsor of the Indian renaissance movement, Roy knew that the present must be built upon the past..."  

and therefore, Roy attempts to sort out the scientific ideas from the non-scientific ones. Roy clearly states the need to revive the past, "We must draw inspiration from the past, but traditional ideas must be subjected to criticism, and their positive essence brought up to the standards of modern knowledge. Old values must be revaluated. That is Renaissance."  

Roy makes it clear that reviving the past was not for him reviving everything that existed in the past, as it was for those nationalists who, according to him, by throwing out the
British wanted to restore India to what they considered her old glory. Clarifying the position of the Radical Humanist from that of the nationalists, he says,

"They say it is to restore India to her old glory, to place India once again on the forefront of world civilisation. That is renaissance. But the crucial question is what is the inspiration of the past which we want to revive and again with what purpose? We cannot go back to the past; we can only seek an inspiration which will enable us to penetrate into the future...."

Roy explains why the religious mode of thought continued to exist in India even after it had served its purpose. According to him,

"In India, religious ideology retained its domination of culture even after its historical usefulness had been exhausted. Not subjected to the criticism born of scientific knowledge, in India, spiritualism was not exposed in all its absurdities, nor was it forced to rationalise its forms.... in order to adapt itself to changing social conditions, destroying itself in the process...." (Emphasis ours).

Thus, the task of rewriting history entailed, for Roy, a critical appraisal of all systems of thought with the scientific knowledge of the present century. And unless this was done, the religious mode of thought which was the obstacle in the path of freedom, would continue to prevail.

Thus, New Humanism or Radical Humanism seems, to Roy to embody all the scientific ideas that he believes, should be disseminated to rejuvenate the biological urge in man for freedom. New Human-
ism is the philosophy of the Indian Renaissance, for Roy, and it is therefore that Niranjan Dhar rightly comments, "It appears that Roy thought himself as the spiritual heir of the lost current of the Indian materialist thought. That is why he liked to call himself 'a modern Charvaka'...."^^*

That Roy considers the New Humanism formulated by him, in fact as the Renaissance, is suggested from the writing of his colleague and wife Ellen Roy. Ellen Roy attempts to clarify in an article the confusion that seemed to exist amongst people, whether the Renaissance and the Radical Humanist movement are the same. Ellen Roys states,

"The Radical Humanist Movement is objectively and historically an Indian Renaissance. The Radical Humanist movement is the essence and expression of Indian Renaissance. They are in this sense coincidental but not logically identical. Indian Renaissance is the historical evaluation of the Radical Humanist Movement, the designation of its historical significance......"But whether we get this recognition or not and whether we care to get or not, the Radical Humanist movement is an Indian Renaissance......"\[^{112}\] (Emphasis ours).

She goes on to point out what she considers the similarity between the two renaissance movements -- the European and the one formulated by Roy. According to her, they had adopted the same techniques as had been used by the European movement, that of drawing upon Indian antiquity for its rational and humanist thought and reviving it and enriching it. Sibnarayan Ray, another colleague of Roy who
was very close to him and a theoretician of the Radical Humanist movement, also argues that, "....the radical humanist movement is only another name for the renaissance movement of which we have been speaking for the last seventeen-eighteen years...." Ray goes on to explain that Roy had, as early as in 1937, realised the importance of changing the outlook, or the world-view, of the Indian people from being a religious one to a rational libertarian view of life. And Ray says, Roy "....called this reorientation renaissance and declared it to be the first need of the day for the Indian people. That was his fundamental point of departure from Marxian ideology...."

According to Ray, Roy came to the 'theory of renaissance' from his analysis of two 'most extraordinary phenomena of the twenties and thirties'. These, according to Ray, were the victory of Fascism in Western Europe and the emergence of Gandhi in India. Fascism could succeed in Europe, says Ray, because irrational thought gained resurgence in Germany.

In India, the Renaissance movement which began in the nineteenth century with men like Ram Mohan, Agarkar, etc., was thwarted by Gandhi. Gandhism succeeded in putting back the clock of history, for Gandhism stood for the charkha, obscurantism and authoritarianism. Therefore, Ray argues that Radical Humanism was posed correctly, by Roy, as the much required renaissance in India.
Conclusion

We are now in a position to make a critical appraisal of Roy's concept of the renaissance, having analysed his concept and seen how it emerges from his concept of history and his concept of human nature.

First of all, we may note that with Roy the renaissance does not remain just a historiographic term denoting a period of European history, it acquires ideological dimensions and becomes his political programme. A historical happening, or what happened in history, is converted into a plan of action. Therefore, it appears that history itself becomes Roy's political programme. What Roy really seems to be doing is using history to justify his political programme.

Secondly, Roy does not seem to have a holistic understanding of the renaissance, as it occurred in Europe. He merely seems to have an image of it, or impressions based on the works of certain historians, especially Jacob Burckhardt. Even in his understanding of Burckhardt, Roy seems to miss a point made by the former. Burckhardt notes,

"But the great and general enthusiasm of the Italians for classical antiquity did not display itself before the fourteenth century. For this a development of civic life was required which took place only in Italy, and there not till then. It was needful that noble and burger should first learn to dwell together on equal terms, and that a social world should arise which
felt the want of culture, and had the leisure and the means to obtain it...." (Emphasis ours).

Roy was aware of some of the controversies amongst historians regarding the interpretation and understanding of the European renaissance. However, Roy's understanding of the renaissance is totally unaffected by these historiographical debates, for according to Roy, it was determined by man's biological urge for freedom. So the debate, whether its origins lay in the Fransiscan revival or whether its origin go back to the medieval Christian ideas, is really not relevant for him. In fact the 'Medievalists' argument that the origins of the renaissance can be traced way back into the tenth century is used by Roy to strengthen his own argument that history is a continuous process of the unfolding of man's essential nature, and therefore, that there is a continuity of thought and ideas. Roy writes,

"....further research led to the conclusion that an intellectual ferment had been going on ever since the tenth century. The intellectual development of Europe was not completely interrupted during the Middle ages; there was a continuity ever since the dawn of civilisation."

Thirdly, Roy formulates his political programme on what he considers as the salient characteristics of the European renaissance and not on the needs of the present. For history was studied by Roy to give content to his political programme, rather than to understand the present. Roy identifies two salient features of the renaissance -- the defeat of religion and secondly the growth and spread of science.
Accordingly, religion is the main target of the renaissance movement for religion represents, for Roy, ignorance, prejudice, and therefore, bondage. So if freedom is to be achieved, religion must be destroyed. Logically then, for Roy, Gandhi is the main target, for Gandhian politics was based on the religious sentiments of the Indians. Secondly, science is seen as the solvent of prejudice and ignorance, and therefore, bondage. It is according to Roy the harbinger of freedom as was demonstrated by the European civilisation. Consequently, Roy's programme becomes essentially anti-religion.

Roy's argument that if religion prevails then science cannot grow, and therefore, there will be no freedom, seems to be based on an unsound logic. For, there is no necessary logical connection between the absence of religion and the growth of science, and therefore, of freedom. Roy's own account of European history of the Middle Ages shows us that though religion dominated, science and reason continued to prevail. Though not in a dominant position, nevertheless, it did not cease to progress.121

Fourthly, Roy's whole argument is so reductionist that even a historiographical phenomena is reduced to natural phenomena. For renaissance was, according to Roy, determined by man's biological urge, it was a reassertion of man's innate craving for freedom. Roy's concept of history itself is nothing but a part of biological evolution,
a conflict between man's essential nature, which is rational, and a
primitive psychological trait, which is faith.

Another problem in Roy's argument which is left unexplained
is the category of 'faith'. His argument is rather confusing. For at
one level he argues that it is ignorance of the 'truth' which perpetuates
faith and superstition. As ignorance decreases, so also will faith be
defeated. On the one hand Roy refers to faith as a primitive human
psychology, on the other hand he regards religion as also rational.
That implies that every thought is ultimately rational, and it seems
then that there are only levels of rationality. What then is faith?
Faith is something taken for granted by Roy and remains unexplained.

We shall now move on to an analysis of the concept of 'revo-
lution' which is related to the concept of 'renaissance'. Revolution,
for Roy, is to be brought about by a reassertion of reason, which Roy
calls a renaissance.
REFERENCES : CHAPTER III


3. Ibid.

4. Roy wrote extensively while in prison on several issues, European history included. In Book 4 (pg 1-140) Roy has made some notes on the European history from the Middle Ages, to 16th, century. Some of these pages 54(b) 56(a) 59(a,b) have been scored out in blue pencil indicating a rejection. This is his Marxist understanding of the European happenings, as is evident from his argument, which he later on comes to reject. All this unpublished material is available at the Nehru Museum Archives, Manuscript section, List No. 70.

5. Book 4 p. 53(a) of the Unpublished material.

6. Ibid. p. 54(b).

7. Ibid. p. 56(a).

8. Ibid. p. 61(b).
(Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1952), p. 65. Henceforth will be referred to as *R.R.R*.

10. Ibid. p. 57.

11. Ibid. p. 60.


17. Ibid. p. 84.


20. Ibid. p. 290.


24. Ibid. p. 60.

25. Ibid. p. 102.

26. Ibid. p. 102.

27. Ibid. p. 95.

28. Ibid. pp. 97, 98, 100.

29. Ibid. p. 80.


31. Ibid. p. 84.

32. Ibid. p. 86.
33. Ibid. p. 82.


38. Ibid. p. 84.

39. Ibid. p. 23.

40. Ibid. p. 6.

41. Ibid. p. 23.


43. Ibid. p. 180.

45. Ibid. p. 192.


46. Ibid. p. 166.

47. Ibid. p. 166.

48. Ibid. p. 164.

49. Ibid. p. 165.

50. Ibid. p. 194.

51. Ibid. pp. 33-34.

52. Ibid. p. 46.


57. Ibid. pp. 6-7.

58. Ibid. p. 46.

59. Ibid. p. 46.

60. Ibid. p. 43.

61. Ibid. p. 43.


64. Ibid. p. 41.

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66. Ibid. p. 52.

67. Ibid. p. 95.

68. Ibid. p. 62.
69. Ibid. p. 33.
70. Ibid. p. 102.
71. Ibid. p. 107.
72. Ibid. p. 126.
73. Ibid. p. 131.
74. Ibid. pp. 140-142.
75. Ibid. p. 154.
76. Ibid. p. 170.
77. Ibid. p. 170.
78. Ibid. p. 190.
79. Ibid. p. 190.
80. Ibid. p. 194.
81. Ibid. p. 206.
82. Ibid. p. 208.

83. Ibid. p. 217.

84. Ibid. p. 224.

85. Ibid. p. 230.

86. Ibid. p. 240.

87. Ibid. p. 250.


89. Ibid. pp. 8-9.

90. Ibid. p. 132.

91. Ibid. p. 148.


93. Ibid. p. 160.

94. Ibid. p. 171.
95. Ibid. p. 176.


100. Ibid. p. 252.


103. Ibid. p. 125.

104. Ibid. p. 126.

105. Ibid. p. 128.


114. Ibid. p. 247.
115. Ibid. p. 247.


121. Ibid. pp. 51-55.