CHAPTER - IV

Communism and Humanism

References and Notes
"An ideology" writes Edward Shils, "is the product of man’s need for imposing intellectual order of the world. The need for ideology is an intensification of the need for a moral map of the universe....." Roy’s quest for an adequate ideology began during his youth in Bengal and continued throughout his next phases of his life. His search intensified for "a cognitive and moral map of the universe" in his philosophy of Radical Humanism, which ended not in satisfaction, but only with his death in 1954. "So far as the evolution of the social, political and economic ideas of Roy is concerned, it can be safely asserted that there occurred two stages violent mutations—first when he became a Marxist in 1916 and second when he replaced it by his Radical Humanism in 1946." He changed his position at successive stages of his career and repudiated the distinctive tenets of his old philosophy in response to his hard experiments with political truths.

When the fundamental principles of scientific Politics of Radical Democratic Party failed, Roy concluded that either politics cannot be scientific or scientific politics cannot be practice. He realized that party
politics was a futile effort and wastage of time and energy in Indian situation, where a major section of electorate was illiterate. He thought that until and unless the urge for freedom has kindled in a large number of people, even a great mass movement, can be misled and that has been the case in India. The cultural backwardness of the Indian masses has lent itself to their emotional regimentations and he thought, enlightenment, rationalism, alone can take Indian people out of this vicious circle. A philosophical revolution is necessary to provide moral and spiritual incentive to great social upheavals, which will set Indian people free. So, at an important study camp of Radical democratic Party held in 1946, at Gadhi near Dehradun, Roy expressed his heretical views regarding Communism and Marxism. He summarized the Philosophy, which he was propagating in a number of theses, which came to be known as the 22 theses of Radical Humanism. The theses outlined the principles of personal and social philosophy of Radical Humanism. The theses emphasis the in severability of political and economic freedom and indicate how the comprehensive ideal of political and economic freedom may be achieved. "Overcoming the present crisis, civilized mankind will open a new chapter in its history. A new age requires a new philosophy, based on a revolution of old values, to encourage resistance to creeping paralysis of pessimism and to light up the path in to the darkness of the
Roy had founded such a philosophy on Radical Humanism or New Humanism. These ideas led to the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party is an All India Conference held in December, 1948 and the launching of a movement called the Radical Humanistic Movement which latter became the Indian Radical Humanist Association.

Roy thought that philosophical revolution is necessary to meet the crisis of India, during his time. The crisis is moral crisis. It is the situation, which has compelled many thinking people to re-examine the philosophical moorings and theoretical premises guiding their views on social and political problems. Roy maintained that based on a critical appreciation of the state of affairs, man should reject some of his old values or revises them in the light of new experience and knowledge and thinks out and evolve new ideas and ideals, as guide and inspiration for the further. Before establishing this philosophy, Roy was a communist. But his attitude to Marxism was critical from the very beginning and his attitude towards Communism is equally critical. Roy held that it was erroneous to identify the two. Marxism is a philosophy and Communism is only a political practice, which follows Marxist philosophy. For its uncritical adherents Marxism had become a religion and communism had regarded by its votaries as utopia. He had never been an orthodox
Marxist. So, when he attempted to solve the problems of his life with the help of Marxism, he realized that communism also was not a cure-all. He thought that only a critical view of Marxism and sceptical attitude towards Communism could have include people to get out of the beaten track of orthodox revolutionary practice and strike out a new path to goal of freedom. So, Roy concluded that until intellectual, cultural and spiritual atmosphere of the country was changed, it was not possible to bring about a political and economic reconstruction of the country such as would promote popular welfare, establish democratic freedom and social justice. Roy preferred to call his Radical Humanism a revision of Marxism rather than a negation of it, because to it he had so many sentimental ties. As a point of departure, Roy took Marx’s statement that “man is the root of mankind” and asserted that society must be based on, individual man and not on abstractions. Communism he said, by losing itself in the abstraction of the collective ego of the proletariat, had gone the way of fascism, which built on the collective ego of the nation. Communism is no longer the road to the freedom and revolution must take place under another flag. Thus “Ideological changes came in him he was to reassess the entire communist principles. The more he thought about them the more he realized that communistic way was not the proper
Roy held that there is no intellectual freedom in the communist movement; proud of its proletarian composition, it has no use for the capitalist culture and bourgeois morality. The Proletarian culture is contradiction in terms as the cardinal principle of it is ‘everything is fair in love and war’; ‘the end justifies the means’. Roy held that the working class is in the thick of a civil war, which is the worst of all wars. But he also argued that until now there is no other culture and morality. The contemporary world engaged in a struggle for the salvation of the total heritage of human civilization, which alone can be the foundation of a new order of greater freedom and higher culture. So caught in the throes of a moral crisis, the civilized world is looking out for a better leader with a moral rational attitude towards the problem to be solved, and a nobler philosophy. Again he also thought that the communist were unable to gather together in one movement all the progressive and revolutionary forces. “A new philosophy of revolution suitable for our age is yet, to arise as the beacon light for civilized society”\textsuperscript{14}. However, he also maintained, “No revolution has not been betrayed. It has unfolded itself according to the dogmas of the orthodox neo-Marxism of Lenin and
Stalin. The fallacious and inadequacies of the old philosophy of revolution are thus exposed by experience, to inspire efforts for blazing the trail of a new revolutionary philosophy.\textsuperscript{15}

Roy explained that Marxist conception of freedom meant the slavery for the individuals, and society composed of voluntary slaves could not be free because Marxist held that man willingly surrendered his right to freedom.\textsuperscript{16} But for Roy, there cannot be any experience, other than the experience of individuals. Freedom is a matter of direct experience. It is experienced in choices, which are mental acts that is individual acts. Therefore, if the statement about the freedom of a social group has any meaning it must be analyzable into individual freedoms. A society cannot literally choose, only individuals can choose and therefore, ultimately it is only individuals, who can be free.\textsuperscript{17} Roy’s Radical Humanism stated from the dictum that “man is the measure of everything”. (Protagoras) or “man is the root of mankind” (Marx), and advocated the rebuilding of the world as a fraternity of free men. So, to Roy freedom meant freedom of individuals.\textsuperscript{18}

Roy maintained that the 22 theses of Radical Humanism are the result of an examination of Marxism in the light of experience in the
fields of social and historical development. Roy tried to rescue what is abiding, what is stable and permanent, in Marxism by analyzing it on the basis of experience. Roy says "that is not rejecting, or even revising, Marxism; which not being a closed system of thought is capable of enriching itself continuously with the lessons of new experience." "We are perhaps the only loyal followers of Karl Marx in our days."¹⁹ Roy held that Marxism originally breathed the liberating tradition of Renaissance Humanism. Marx celebrated man as the maker of the world, before the teleological aspect of Marxism scarified man at the alter of the imaginary collective ego of society, because Marxism has two sides— one materialistic and other teleological. Roy had inspired by the Renaissance humanistic aspect of Marxism. According to teleological aspect of Marxism, everything is, determined by the means of production. Roy held that before Marxism, it was, thought that every thing in this world had traced to some superhuman power and Marx traced it to the means of production. But Roy was against the communistic view of means of production, because it was asked that who created the first means of production²⁰. Roy's Radical Humanism is free from such teleological attitude of Marxism. Roy thought that Renaissance was revolt of man against that fatalistic attitude. Therefore, he held that human brain was the most powerful means of production, which was, inherited from his
animal ancestry. Man is greater than any means of production, which are his creations. That was the defects of Marxism and Roy proposed to free Marxism from its basic fallacy in his humanistic Philosophy. Roy accepted that Marxism was the guide to show him the way, but his critical approached towards Marxism showed some differences. Roy's concept of Fascism was also different from Communistic concept of Fascism. When Roy published his book "The philosophy of Fascism", The Marxist asked whether Fascism had a philosophy. They claimed communism as perfect philosophy, and Fascism as monopoly capitalism. But, Roy maintained that it was a mistake to think that Fascism had no philosophy. To Roy those who made such a stupid view could not be a true Communist, because as a scientific method of explaining history, Marxism must give a rational and convincing explanation for all events. Even he thought that every political party has some philosophical principles, just as Communist Party, which is called Marxist party, and Marxism is a philosophy. So regarding his transition from Party Politics to Radical Humanism, Roy asserted that a sound philosophical attitude is bound to inspire rational action, which is ultimately more powerful and therefore more effective.
As Roy's Humanistic philosophy opposed to Communist concept that historical events are determined, only by economic relations, so he also denied the Marxist doctrine that moral value, cultural patterns, aesthetic tastes, are all ideological superstructure of economic relations. Roy held that if these are super-structure of the economic relation of the bourgeois society, then they are the outcome of capitalism. But, actually modern idealism rose before the establishment of capitalist social order. Therefore, Roy criticized Marx that he was a prophet of the ideology of the proletariat. He disagreed with Marx that ideology is the creation of the class. Roy held that no doubt, ideas are influenced by social experience, but they have a logic and dynamics of their own. Ideologies are not super-structures, but they are structures standing by themselves. Ideas can be traced through the entire process of biological evolution down to the monistic conception of the physical universe. That is the ideology of Roy's Radical Humanism. Ideas are not simply given. Just as man's physical structure grows out of his inanimate nature, similarly man's reason and emotions can also be traced down the pre-human biological evolution. Roy Said, Man's mind is free and creative. "The Root is Man" is a half-forgotten Marxian formula, which expresses the new insight. Thus, Roy abandoned the Marxian relativism, the idea that man cannot obtain truth. Roy henceforth laid much more stress on truth,
as one of the great ultimate aims, the things that make life worthwhile and by implication as a necessity in practical affairs\textsuperscript{24}.

Roy thought that the communistic concept could not be fully applicable in the Indian society. He held that during his period Communism became fashionable with a section of the students in India, because it appeared to be the most extreme form of nationalism. But the people who called themselves communist had forgotten Communism. The political programme of the so-called communist party of India had for years been United National Front which included the capitalist patterns of nationalism. Even literature of C.P.I. dealing with Indian political situation, had little to say about communism, it was anti-imperialism. The communist had been playing the game. The concept of anti-imperialism, was not Marxism, it was Leninism. Marx appreciated Imperialism as a revolutionary factor and to him the British conquest of India had historically a revolutionary significance\textsuperscript{25}. So, Roy held that there are possible courses of development open before society other than that of Marxian scheme. The entire political life of our country stood on a very shallow foundation. They talked about socialism and communism, about classless society and economic reconstruction, but no body raised the questions such as why should we sacrifice so much for national
independence, or for the abstract ideal of freedom? Again, how would the transfer of the ownership of the means of production from individuals to a National State or Class State solve all our problems? Such questions were, simply ignored. Roy thought, such views as superficial, which were not applicable in the political and social re-construction of India. Roy said that the problem of freedom and social reconstruction of India, as the rest of the world, would place politics on profound foundation of an appreciation of human values. Political practice must be concerned with the requirements of man, instead of the fraudulent concept of the nation or a class. Roy criticized that after the establishment of socialism or communism, classes would disappear, and dialectic also would cease to operate and as a result, social progress would come to standstill. “So if we are consistent dialecticians, we shall have to say that on the attainment of Communism, humanity commits suicide; because if mankind does not progress any more, if there is to be no further room for social evolution, then there is stagnation and under conditions of stagnation, life disintegrates. So, India needed a philosophical revolution, because he thought that without philosophical revolution no social revolution is possible and philosophical revolution is not possible with fallacious theories, striking to exploded dogmas and running after false ideas.
But Roy thought that the distinguishing feature of Marxism was its dynamic nature. It was pragmatic and empiricist. Marxism held that ideas are determined by experience, and Marx did not say that all human experience and knowledge came to a stop in 1851. Roy held that any body who says that Marxism must not be revised is anti-Marxist, because Roy confidently said that by quoting scriptures he can also prove that revision of Marxism is inherent in Marxism. Even Marxism has enriched Marxism by incorporating all new scientific knowledge gained since the days of Marx\textsuperscript{29}. So to Roy, his philosophy of Radical Humanism not a departure from Marxism, but it builds its structure on the foundation of Marxism. Roy called himself the spiritual descendant of Marx only in the sense that Marxism can be the philosophy of the future and claim to be the only system of human thought, which defies the danger of dogmatism and can development of human society. However, he did not recognize the Marxian scriptures and scholasticism\textsuperscript{30}. Roy held that his philosophical views as well as his Radical Democratic Party is Marxist whereas the orthodox communists are non-Marxist; philosophically as well as politically\textsuperscript{31}.

Roy gave much importance on freethinking. Even while addressing the followers of Radicalism, Roy asked them to think freely about his
philosophy and not to accept it blindly. They have right to think out their own thoughts boldly and act honestly according to their ideas. Roy said, "You shall have the fullest freedom to do your own thinking; only please think freely, do not try to measure Radicalism by the standards of a less adequate, partially adequate philosophy. If that philosophy still satisfies you, you are free to stick to it"32. Roy claimed that even his departure from communist international is also due to his freethinking. So, he thought that free thinking unfettered judgment and a tolerant but critical regard for others’ opinions are essential for any fruitful discussion33. He asked his follows if they really appreciated his discussions, then only they had to follow his philosophy. He says, "I have given you some intellectual food. Chew well, and try to digest. If you cannot, vomit it out. But do not go about and feed others with your undigested food."34

Thus freed from Marxian determinism, and recalling the liberal background of pre-humanist Marxism, Roy proposed a re-organization of Indian society, which could retain the values of the liberal tradition and yet lead to higher material standards and less equality. As Roy himself confessed that his transition from politics to humanistic phase is due to "My whole political life, which is now nearly forty years old, has been nothing but a tormented soul’s search for freedom .........As a matter of

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fact, I may tell you that I feel very uncomfortable in politics. I feel like a fish out of water.”35 Thus divorced from politics, Roy became a full-fledged humanist. Observing communist revolution, which was materially different in Russia, China and elsewhere Roy found a new way for Indian situation. He says, “New way to revolution, however, is not a Mantra for us. It being a new way, there is no cliché about it, no set pattern; it will be different in every country. Our new way will not be exactly on the pattern of the Chinese or the Polish or the Yugoslav way; it will be an Indian way.”36

While working in the Indian field, Roy perhaps influenced to some extent by Indian tradition and Gandhian ideology. Originally Roy as a Marxist approached materialism denying the existence of soul, God etc. But minute observation showed that may be he was influenced by spiritualism of Indian tradition which he found in the concept of freedom, i.e. the search for freedom. Thus, search or struggle for freedom of individual was the central theme of his Humanistic philosophy.

One of the main reasons of Roy’s transition from Communism to Humanism may be his awareness for his country. Even when he was in abroad and worked as a communist, he never forgot his country. He was
the person who tried to establish Communist Party in India, because the members of Berlin Committee of Indian revolutionary did not want to set up Communist Party in India before India became free\(^{37}\). Even in his supplementary thesis regarding colonial country, he had specially mentioned about India. While he had worked in India as a communist, he observed that Indian situation is different from other developed countries. He tried to find out the reasons of India’s backwardness and he did not find it that it was suitable with communist social order. Communism as a purely economic system based on the ideology of the thinkers like Marx, Engels and Lenin which they derived partly from previous thinkers and partly from economic situation of their time. Moral and cultural values had excluded from their ideology\(^{38}\). But Roy gave much importance on moral values for social and cultural development. Therefore, he preferred philosophical revolution instead communistic revolution for Indian social order.

The fundamental problem as he found in Indian economy was population, poverty and illiteracy. Industrial backwardness is other cause as majority of people in India were peasants, so the main sector of Indian economy is agriculture. Communistic or Socialistic solution (to meet the crisis) is applicable in advance societies with a high degree of
industrialization. Therefore, he says, "These are the facts and realities of the Indian situation, which must be faced in order to find a solution, and as this is a novel situation, we must have a fresh approach to the problem which will be more suitable to the conditions of our country". He found such a situation in Radical Humanist Movement. He wrote about his new way, as "What we need is a new way of life, which is a human way of life, where the qualities of the human beings will become decisive and will be allowed to determine the system under which they will work and live".

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