Conclusion

M.N. Roy devoted his entire life to the cause of freedom. He joined politics in his teens with an ardent desire to achieve the freedom of his country. In his youth he was mainly influenced by Vinayak Savarkar and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. He was also influenced by Jatindra Nath Mukherjee. He believed in the politics of armed struggle and revolution. Deriving sanction from Bhagavadgita he justified any and every means for the liberation of the country.

He left India in 1915 in search of arms and money for bringing about an armed struggle for the freedom of his country. He expected some assistance from Germany. Expecting help in U.S.A., in order to go to Germany, he reached America in 1916.

In America, Roy could not further pursue the mission which he had in mind when he left India. He became disillusioned with the Indian revolutionaries in the United States, as they were divided and disorganised and were not ready to help him to go to Germany. Moreover, he also lost touch with revolutionaries in India. But the most important incident which brought about a change in Roy’s attitude and ideas was the remark of Lajpat Rai at a socialist rally in America that ‘it did make a difference whether one was kicked by one’s brother or by a foreign robber.’ This remark could not satisfy Roy. He began to doubt that whether it was possible to end all exploitation by attaining national freedom.

In the meantime he developed friendship with a number of socialists. He also read the works of Karl Marx. He was attracted towards socialism because of its humanitarian aspect and because of its anti-imperialist
connotations. All these factors resulted in his conversion to socialism. However, at this stage he did not believe in materialist philosophy. Culturally also he was still a nationalist.

In 1917 Roy went to Mexico and stayed there for two and a half years. His writings in Mexico represent some very important nationalist ideas of Roy. Roy advocated unconditional freedom of India. He differed from the Moderate section of Indian nationalist movement which believed that British connection was beneficial to India. He highlighted the exploitation and deterioration of India under British rule and revealed as to how England had become rich by exploiting India.

Roy believed that liberation of India was in the interest of the world. He argued that the world needed a social and economic revolution. According to him, British imperialism deriving power from the exploitation of India was the most powerful enemy of that revolution. So, he believed that to save the world from the exploitation of the capitalist system, the freedom of India was necessary. Thus, Roy argued that those countries which believed in the progress of mankind should help India to achieve freedom.

He justified violent means for the liberation of the country and firmly believed that India could not gain freedom by peaceful and constitutional means preached by the Moderates.

In Mexico further development of Roy’s political ideas took place. He was influenced by the study of the origin and development of the ‘Monroe Doctrine’ and observed how Mexican people were struggling against exploitation and U.S., imperialism. Poverty of the Mexican people further strengthened his belief that national freedom was not sufficient to solve all the problems of the people. He began to realise the inadequacy of the nationalist ideal, and decided to take up the struggle for the cause of socialism.
The last year of Roy's stay in Mexico was very important from the point of view of the subsequent development of his political ideas and his conversion to Marxism. He was influenced by the Russian Revolution which aroused great expectations in him. However, the most decisive influence was that of Michael Borodin. Roy's discussions with Borodin on the philosophical aspect of Marxism cleared all his doubts about Marxism and made him accept Marxism, including its materialist philosophy.

It is observed that during the 1920's Roy remained an orthodox Marxist. During this period he believed in the various tenets of Marxism. He was a staunch materialist and believed that materialism was the only possible philosophy. He also believed in dialectical materialism and economic determinism. He argued that the political, social, ethical and intellectual evolution of every nation was determined by the stage of its economic development.

He believed that class-differentiation, class-antagonism and class-war were the inevitable attributes of civilization. He stood for the abolition of classes and class struggle. However, he argued, that it could only be achieved by the abolition of private property.

Roy argued that capitalism created the conditions that made the abolition of private property necessary and possible. Because under it, private property lacked moral sanction. According to him, capitalist system was based on exploitation of human labour, because in it the labourer was deprived by the employer of the greater part of the value that he produced. He believed that capitalism should be replaced by Socialism.

Roy advocated Marxian brand of Socialism which, according to him, stood for the abolition of private property, classes and exploitation of man by man. However, he believed that it was not possible to establish Socialism through some compromise with capitalism and its state. He argued that the
capitalist state was a hindrance in the development of Socialism, because like any other state, it only defended the interests of a particular class of the society, which was the propertied class. Therefore, according to Roy, for bringing about Socialism it was necessary to overthrow the Capitalist state and capture political power by means of an armed revolution.

Now there was a change in his notion of revolution. He no longer believed that revolution was associated with bombs, revolvers and secret societies. On the other hand, he believed that the maturity of social forces was the objective condition for a revolution. He argued that as the class struggle sharpened it ultimately broke out in an open clash and the society entered into a period of revolution, which brought about the subversion of the old decayed system and created a new system.

As a Nationalist, Roy dedicated himself, heart and soul, for the attainment of national freedom. However, now he no longer believed in political freedom without the content of economic liberation and social justice. He was in favour of ending all exploitation and believed that political independence was not an end in itself but was the first step to economic freedom and social emancipation. Thus it is found that in the 1920's Roy upheld most of the Marxist ideas.

During this period, Roy gave a Marxian interpretation to Indian history. Analysing the Indian society he observed that there was exploitation within the structure of the exploited nation and the economic cleavage between the propertied and wage-earning classes was becoming wider.

He argued that after 1918 the bourgeoisie became an important factor in Indian society. However, according to him, the rise of native bourgeoisie was followed by the increasing exploitation of the worker by the native capital.

He said that the unbearable economic conditions were forcing the
Indian workers and peasantry to fight for their interests and added that the wage-slave was revolting against the propertied rich. Thus he argued that in India, national struggle and class struggle were going on side by side.

Roy believed that in India the way to Socialism lay through the national liberation struggle which would set up a democratic republican state. The democratic republican state, according to him, would do the preparatory work for the reconstruction of socialism by removing the feudal patriarchal traditions from Indian society. He believed that in India a bourgeois democratic revolution would precede the proletarian revolution. The former, according to him, would pave the way for the latter.

However, Roy doubted the revolutionary potential of the Indian bourgeoisie and argued that it was unable to lead the democratic revolution. On the other hand, he argued that the bourgeoisie would enter into a compromise with British imperialism. Roy argued that on the failure of the bourgeoisie to lead the democratic revolution that task would be performed by the proletariat. He was of the view that the proletariat with the help of pauperized peasantry would lead the revolution and bring national struggle to a successful end. He believed that the worker would struggle for national freedom to ultimately achieve his social and economic emancipation.

It is observed that Roy’s views on petty-bourgeoisie underwent a change during the 1920’s. In the early 1920’s he regarded them as reactionary in nature but during the later half of the 1920’s he argued that the petty-bourgeoisie would join the workers and peasants in the revolutionary struggle. However, he continued to argue during the 1920’s that the revolution would be brought about under the leadership and hegemony of the proletariat. During this period, Roy regarded the proletariat to be a significant factor in Indian society.

Roy’s Marxist stand made him criticize Gandhi and Gandhism. He regarded Gandhism reactionary in nature and argued that its creed of non-
violence was inseparable from an anti-revolutionary spirit. He differentiated Gandhism from Marxian socialism and argued that whereas Marxian socialism stood for the interests of the oppressed and the exploited majority and advocated the struggle for capture of power by them, Gandhism could not provide any practical method to solve their problem. Roy believed that Gandhism would not be able to misguide the people for long and even predicted its imminent collapse.

Roy also analysed Indian National Congress from the point of view of Marxism. He believed that any mass party could only be organised on the principle of class interests. He said that Congress had falsely claimed to be an all-inclusive national party based upon the principle of class-collaboration. In reality it was dominated by the bourgeois leadership and advocated their interests only. It had ignored the interests of the working class.

He argued that Congress was first dominated by the Moderates representing the upper classes and then by the Extremists who were the spokesmen of the middle classes. But both of them were unable to lead the national struggle. He believed that national independence of India could only be realised by the efforts of the most revolutionary element of the society which consisted of the workers and the peasants. Thus he believed that the leadership of the Congress should be taken over by a mass party representing the interests of the workers and the peasants. With this end in view he suggested that an ‘Opposition Block’ should be formed within the Congress by all the revolutionary sections believing in mass action. He was hopeful that the ‘Opposition Block’ would eventually grow into the revolutionary party of the people which would lead the struggle.

It is observed that from 1930 to 1946 certain significant changes took place in Roy’s ideas. Observation of the actual conditions prevailing in India made Roy revise some of his ideas. He found Indians to be steeped in
backwardness, ignorance and superstition. He observed that their belief in religion and spiritualism made the majority of the Indians reconcile themselves to their fate. Such an attitude, according to Roy, prevented the development of spirit of revolt in them.

Roy now realized the necessity of liberating the people from the bondage of religion, superstition, ignorance and spiritualism. So he emphasized the importance of spiritual freedom. Now he believed that there could not be any social or political revolution without philosophical revolution. He wanted the people to discard their faith in religion and spiritualism and to think in a rational manner. He believed that only a materialist philosophy and a scientific mode of thought could save India. Thus he criticized religion and spiritualism.

Now, Roy believed that India needed three revolutions. It needed a philosophical revolution, a bourgeois democratic revolution and a proletarian revolution. However, he also believed that there was a possibility that the bourgeois democratic revolution in India might create conditions favourable for a direct development of Socialism.

Talking about the bourgeois democratic revolution, Roy continued to believe that the revolution in India would be brought about by the joint efforts of the peasants, workers and the petty bourgeoisie under the hegemony of the proletariat. He distinguished between hegemony and leadership and argued that the proletariat would not lead the revolution. Now he asserted that the proletariat was an insignificant and negligible factor in the Indian society. On the other hand he argued that there was no sign of revolutionary consciousness in the Indian peasantry. He believed that the leadership of the revolution would come from the petty-bourgeoisie. Now Roy began to believe that the most important and decisive factor in the revolution was the subjective factor. And he believed that the petty-bourgeoisie was the most important subjective factor of the revolution.
Roy rejected the theory of a spontaneous development of revolution. He believed that in India capture of power could not take place in consequence of a spontaneous upheaval. It could not be a sudden event but it had to be an organised process. The most important problems of the Indian revolution, according to him, was the problem of building up the party which would organise and lead the revolution.

Roy realised the potentiality of Congress to develop into a revolutionary party and joined it in 1936. He highlighted the necessity of supplying a new, alternative revolutionary leadership to the Congress. He was also impressed by the countrywide net of primary Congress Committees and believed that these committees in a revolutionary crisis could function as the instruments of mass uprising and become the basic units of the revolutionary state. Thus he wanted to democratise and activise the Congress Committees.

During the Marxist phase Roy advocated the formation of progressive revolutionary parties within the Congress with a view to capture its leadership. But now he opposed the formation of any group or party within the Congress and regarded any attempt to weaken the Congress as counter-revolutionary. He asked his followers to work as simply Congressmen.

However, with the passage of time, Roy became dissatisfied with the functioning of the Congress. He realised that it was not possible to convert Congress into a revolutionary people’s party because of the influence of its reactionary leadership. He also learned that the Congress Committees could not become the organs of popular power and that no revolutionary struggle could be conducted through them.

Roy’s differences with Congress led him to form the ‘League of Radical Congressmen’—a non-party left wing inside the Congress in 1939. Finally he broke with Congress in 1940 because of his differences with it on the issue of the Second World War, and formed a new party.
It is observed that Roy continued to criticize Gandhi and Gandhism during this period also. He went to the extent of saying that Gandhism resembled fascism and argued that Gandhi's ideas appealed to the majority of the Indians as they were culturally backward and ignorant.

It becomes clear from Roy's writings in the later part of 1930's that he no longer understood Marxism in a narrow dogmatic sense. He gave a broader interpretation to Marxism and argued that Marxism implied rational approach to everything. He highlighted the necessity of elaborating, amplifying and even revising the teachings of Marx in the light of the knowledge of modern science. It is observed that during this period, he gave his own interpretation to Marxism which sometimes went against the entire spirit of Marxism.

During the 1940's Roy deviated more and more away from orthodox Marxism. He challenged certain fundamental principles of Marxism. He criticized the Marxist ideas of class-war, surplus-value, dictatorship of proletariat, revolution and withering away of the state. However, he admitted that he still accepted the positive contributions of Marxism.

Roy also criticized communism, fascism, nationalism and parliamentary democracy. He argued that they ignored the individual and denied freedom to him. Roy's disillusionment with the existing philosophies led him to develop his own philosophy of Radical Humanism.

In his philosophy of Radical Humanism, Roy continued to be a materialist. However, he deviated from Marxist materialism. He rejected dialectical materialism. He also criticized Marxism for its economic interpretation of history. Roy was of the view that the materialist philosophy must recognise the objective reality of ideas. Thus he proposed to make a synthesis between the dynamics of matter and the dynamics of ideas.

During the Radical Humanist phase Roy attached supreme importance
to the individual, who, according to him, was a moral and rational being. He
criticized the Marxian view that the essence of man was the ensemble of social
relations. On the other hand, Roy believed that the essence of man was reason.
He replaced the concept of economic man by moral man.

Roy regarded freedom as the supreme value of individual and believed
that the purpose of all rational human endeavour, individual as well as
collective, was the attainment of freedom, in ever increasing measure. Now he
talked of freedom neither in terms of nation, nor in terms of class, but in
context of individual. He believed that freedom to be meaningful should be
enjoyed by individuals.

He regarded society and state as means created by man to promote his
freedom. Therefore, he argued they had no right to subordinate the individual.
He differed from Marx in his views on society. He argued that Marx
disregarded the fact that society was an association of individuals. According to
him, Marx took society as simply given and regarded social relations as the
ultimate reality. On the other hand Roy was of the view that social relations
resulted from the activities of the individuals constituting the society and they
could be altered by man.

He was also critical of the Marxist notion of the withering away of the
state and believed that the state was indispensable. However, he wanted the
state to perform the limited function of only regulating and coordinating the
diverse activities of other autonomous social institutions.

During this phase, Roy argued that the existing political and social
institutions were not conducive to individual freedom. The centralisation of
power, either political or economic, was considered by him as inimical to
individual freedom. That was the spirit behind his concept of Radical
Democracy or Organised Democracy and Cooperative Economy. He believed
that to be real and effective democracy should be practised not simply in the
state legislatures or in the national parliament but in the local bodies, where people could actually participate in the affairs of the state. Organised Democracy suggested by Roy was a direct democracy, based on decentralisation of power and elimination of political parties. However, he believed that democracy could not be successful without a proper system of education.

Roy also talked about an economic reorganisation of society and developed the idea of ‘Cooperative Economy’, which aimed at ending exploitation of man by man and guaranteed a progressively rising standard of living to all the members of the society.

Roy’s views on revolution, during this phase, were quite different from the ideas held by him during the Marxist phase. Now, unlike Marx, he believed that the lever of revolution was not class struggle but philosophy. He no longer believed that revolution meant a sudden change from the past. On the other hand he favoured a gradual replacement of the old by the new social order. He no longer believed that violence was necessary for revolution. Roy no longer believed that capture of the power of state was necessary to bring about revolution. Now he advocated a philosophical revolution and stressed the importance of educating the people and appealing to their reason. He believed that to remake society it was first necessary to remake man.

It is observed that during the Radical Humanist phase, many ideas of Roy were analogous to those of Gandhi. Still several differences remained between the philosophies of these two thinkers. It is also found that during this period, Roy’s views on materialism, human nature, society, state and revolution were quite different from those of Marx. Now, it can be said, that his ideas resembled the doctrines of classical liberalism.