Chapter III

Marxist Phase

The main concern of the present chapter is to examine the development of Roy's political ideas during the 1920's. It has been already observed in the previous chapter as to how Roy shifted his position from a Nationalist to a Socialist and finally to a Marxist. In this chapter an attempt would be made to examine how Roy analysed various issues and problems in the light of Marxism.

Roy made his recognition in the International Communist movement at the 'Second World Congress of the Communist International' which was held in Moscow from July 19 to August 7, 1920, where he presented 'Original Draft of Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question.' Lenin had prepared in advance a 'Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions'. Here it would be pertinent to describe the main points of Roy's 'Original Draft of Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question'.

Roy argued that for the overthrow of the capitalist system in Europe, the breaking up of the colonial empire was necessary. According to him it was so because European Capitalism drew its main source of strength from the colonial possessions and dependencies. He added that without the control of the extensive markets and vast fields of exploitation in the colonies, the capitalist powers of Europe could not maintain their existence even for a short period. To quote him, "Superprofit gained in the colonies is the mainstay of modern capitalism and so long as it is not deprived of this source of superprofit, it will not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order."
On the basis of this argument, Roy asserted that the Communist International should establish relations with those revolutionary forces which were working for the overthrow of imperialism in the countries which were politically and economically subjected.2

Talking about the dependent countries and especially India, Roy argued that there had developed two distinct movements. These movements were contradictory to each other and were growing apart from each other, day by day. One was the bourgeois democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence. This movement was limited to a small middle class and did not reflect the aspirations of the masses. Thus the masses were not with the bourgeois nationalist leaders.3

However, according to Roy, the mass movements were also growing independently of the nationalist movements in the colonies. These consisted of ignorant and poor peasants and workers. The masses distrusted the bourgeois nationalist leaders who always led them astray and prevented them from revolutionary action. Roy argued that without the active support of the masses, the national freedom of the colonies could never be attained. According to him, in most of the colonies there already existed “organized socialist or communist parties, in close relation to the mass movement.”4 They reflected the desire of the masses and he believed that the masses would follow them to revolution.

Roy argued that whereas the bourgeois national democrats in the colonies were striving for the establishment of a free national state, the masses constituting the workers and poor peasants were revolting, even though in many cases unconsciously, against the system which permitted brutal exploitation.5

He further said that to support the colonial bourgeois democratic movements would amount to helping the growth of the national spirit, which would surely obstruct the awakening of class-consciousness in the masses. On the other hand to encourage and support the revolutionary mass action through
the medium of a Communist party of the proletariat would “bring the real revolutionary forces to action which will not only overthrow the foreign imperialism, but lead progressively to the development of Soviet power, thus preventing the rise of a native capitalism in place of the vanquished foreign capitalism, to further oppress and exploit the people.”

Admitting that for the overthrow of foreign imperialism, in the colonies, which according to him was first step for revolution, the cooperation of bourgeois nationalist elements might be useful, Roy argued that the Communist International should not find in them the media through which the revolutionary movement in the colonies should be helped.

Roy agreed that it was true that revolution in the colonies in its first stage was not going to be a communist revolution. But he asserted that if from the beginning, the lead of the revolution was in the hands of a communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses would not be led astray but would go straight ahead through the successive periods of development of revolutionary experience.

Thus Roy believed that the relation of the Communist International with the revolutionary movement in the colonies should be through the medium of Communist parties or groups, because they were the vanguard of the working class in their respective countries. He argued that “The Communist parties of the different imperialistic countries must work in conjunction with these proletarian parties of the colonies and through them, give all the moral and material support to the revolutionary movements in general.”

The perspective that Roy advanced in his theses was, however, in important respects different from Lenin’s. Points of difference between Lenin’s and Roy’s theses may be summed up as follows:

The main point where Roy and Lenin differed was about the particular social force in the colonial countries that should be assisted by the Communists.
In his preliminary draft Lenin recommended assistance to "the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement." Roy on the other hand recommended assistance to the "proletarian parties of the colonies" and through them to the revolutionary movement in general.

According to Roy, Lenin believed that the Communists must help the colonial liberation movement under the leadership of the nationalist bourgeoisie, regarding the latter as an objectively revolutionary force. On the other hand Roy pointed out that the bourgeoisie even in the most advanced colonial countries, like India, as a class, was not economically and culturally differentiated from the feudal social order. Therefore, according to him the bourgeois nationalist movement was ideologically reactionary in the sense that its triumph would not necessarily mean a bourgeois democratic revolution.

Lenin took the position that the national liberation movement in the colonies must be supported, though it was led by the bourgeoisie. But in defining the role and the tasks of the rising communist elements in these countries and of the Communist International vis-a-vis the national liberation moment, Lenin laid down certain conditions. In his preliminary draft in thesis No. 11, item 5, Lenin clearly stated:

The Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, i.e., those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations. The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form.

On the other hand, Roy was contraposing the spontaneously developing
workers' and peasants' movement to the general national movement in the colonies and proposed that the Communist International and the Communists should support the former and not the latter. According to G. Adhikari, this dichotomy pervaded "the positions and formulation of Roy . . . and it was the basis of a sectarian and self-isolation policy which was to prove disastrous later on."\textsuperscript{15}

Lenin's theses had referred to "future proletarian parties" in the colonies and to the fact that the proletarian movement there was still in its embryonic state. Thus Lenin believed that there were no proletarian parties of any consequence at that time in the colonies. On the other hand, Roy believed that there already existed important proletarian parties in most of the colonies.\textsuperscript{16}

Roy maintained that from the very beginning of the revolution, the communist vanguard must seize the leadership and not allow it to remain in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The idea that temporarily the Communists should allow the bourgeoisie to retain the leadership over the revolutionary movement was implicit in Lenin's theses.

Roy declared flatly that the fate of the European revolution depended entirely on the revolution in Asia. He believed that unless the latter triumphed, the Communist movement in Europe would simply count for nothing at all. However, in the colonial commission Lenin had sharply reacted to such ideas of Roy. Lenin said, "Comrade Roy goes too far when he asserts that the fate of the West depends exclusively on the degree of development and the strength of the revolutionary movement in the Eastern countries. In spite of the fact that the proletariat in India numbers 5 million and there are 37 million landless peasants, the Indian Communists have not yet succeeded in creating a Communist Party in their country. This fact alone shows that Comrade Roy's views are to a large extent unfounded."\textsuperscript{17}

Both Roy's "Supplementary Theses" and "Lenin's Theses on the National
and Colonial Questions' were adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern after introducing some alterations in them.

Overstreet and Windmiller have argued that Roy differed from Lenin and gave his own viewpoint about colonies because of sentimental and personal reasons. They have argued that as an Asian, Roy naturally felt that Asians were better able than Europeans to understand Asian condition. Moreover, they have argued that Roy’s ambition to establish his leadership over the communist movement in India might have also shaped his ideas. They have pointed out that Roy apparently had no important connections with the Indian National Congress. The Berlin Committee, on the other hand, had fairly good relations with the Congress. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, its leader, was the brother of Sarojini Naidu, the most important woman in the Indian nationalist movement and a close follower of Gandhi. Therefore, if the Comintern would have decided to give direct support to the Indian National Congress, then Chattopadhyaya was in a better position to serve as the Comintern’s agent than was Roy. Thus Overstreet and Windmiller have asserted, “As long as the Comintern was inclined to support bourgeois nationalism, Chattopadhyaya would be a threat to his leadership. In his own interest, Roy might have been tempted to minimize the value of bourgeois nationalism to the Communists, and to play up the importance of the proletarian movement.”

However, according to G.P. Bhattacharjee, it would be more reasonable to treat Roy’s viewpoint of the revolution in colonial countries under the proletarian leadership as a theoretical proposition without trying to discover personal motive behind it. He has argued that Roy maintained that particular view for a consistently long time. Moreover, according to Bhattacharjee, if personal leadership was the main concern of Roy, he should have sided with Lenin instead of opposing him. According to him it could not be believed that to oust Chattopadhyaya Roy went to the length of opposing Lenin’s thesis.
However, it can be argued that Roy did not give a very realistic picture of the Indian workers and peasants in his theses. O.V. Martyshin has rightly maintained that Roy "underestimated the influence of nationalist parties on the working masses and did not take into account the fact that during that stage most of the workers and peasants saw the bourgeoisie leaders and organisations as representatives of a nation, rather than the exponents of the interests of the bourgeoisie, and were, therefore, prepared to follow them in the battle for national independence."\(^{21}\)

It is observed that Roy in his theses was indulging in over-estimation of the role of the working classes in India. It will be shown in subsequent chapters that Roy's views with respect to the revolutionary potential of the Indian proletariat altered considerably over the years.

Roy made a significant contribution to Indian socialist thought by giving a Marxian interpretation to Indian history in his book *India in Transition* published in 1922 and *The Future of Indian Politics* published in 1926.

In *India in Transition*, Roy argued that the basic feature of the Indian society was the gradual decay of feudal economy and the slow but steady rise of capitalism. According to him feudalism, as the basis of social economics, received the first death-blow in the early years of the British possession in the middle of the 18th century, when the political power passed into the hands of the representatives of a foreign commercial bourgeoisie. The last vestiges of feudal power were shattered by the failure of the revolution of 1857, which in view of Roy was "the last effort of the dethroned feudal potentates to regain their power."\(^{22}\) According to him after the failure of the revolt of 1857, practically the whole country was brought directly under capitalist exploitation.

Talking about the class-structure of the Indian society, Roy said that it included the landed aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and intellectuals, the petty peasantry and the working class, including the landless peasants. The landed
aristocracy, according to him, was heart and soul pro-British as it was conscious of the fact that it owed its continued existence to the grace of the British Government.  

He argued that the modern bourgeoisie was derived from the landholding class and the Indian intellectuals. Both of these, according to him, were the creation of the British Government. The East India Company encouraged the growth of the landholding class, who were allowed to hold the land on the behalf of the Government. On the other hand, the modern intelligentsia had grown very rapidly, as a result of the introduction of modern education by the British Government, capturing the professions of medicine, law and teaching. The landholding class and the intellectuals wanted to invest their accumulated wealth more and more in commercial and industrial enterprises.

However, Roy asserted that the foreign government was opposed to it. The imperial capital of Britain wanted to hold India as a source of raw materials and as a market for finished goods. Consequently, the young native machine-industry was subjected to special taxations which seriously checked its growth, and in many cases, ruined it in the very beginning. This policy was vital for the exploitation of India by British capital.

According to Roy, the increasing wealth of the landholding class and the intellectuals and the absence of profitable means of investment made them discontented with the British Government. Economic necessity forced the intellectual bourgeoisie to begin its political struggle, which was initiated in the form of the Indian National Congress. “The object of this political movement was manifest—it was to replace or at least to curtail the power of the British Government, which was standing in the way of the economic development of the bourgeoisie.” This movement was headed by rich lawyers, merchants, mill-owners, physicians, or in other words, that progressive element of society which possessed capital to be invested.
Roy argued that World War I opened up a new era for the Indian bourgeoisie. Confronted with the war problems, England could not keep the Indian market supplied with manufactured goods. This provided an advantageous position to the Indian manufacturers, who were presented with a free field of development. Moreover, the British Government, which had so far followed the policy of keeping India backward, itself found it necessary to change its policy.27

In the political movement of India, Roy observed the presence of two factors. One was the bourgeois class fighting the British Government for its economic interest and the other was the mass of poverty-stricken people suffering under the policy of exploitation pursued by the foreign capital. Though socially contradictory, these two factors, could unite to bring about the destruction of the British Government. The British Government naturally wanted to prevent this union. Among the two factors, the bourgeoisie could be easily won over.28 So after the war the British Government did not revert to the old policy of obstructing the industrial development of India owing to the fear that such a policy might force the Indian bourgeoisie to make common front with the Indian masses in the anti-imperialist struggle. Moreover, it granted various concessions, political and economic, to the Indian bourgeoisie, through the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.29

Thus the economic and industrial advancement secured by the Indian bourgeoisie during the war was strengthened by the declaration of change in the governmental policy. According to Roy the British government not only recognised the Indian bourgeoisie as a factor to be taken into consideration, but also agreed to concede it the position of junior partnership in the exploitation of India.30 Consequently the Indian capitalist class entered a period of spectacular development from 1918. The growth of native industries was very rapid and commerce extended enormously. Writing in the early 1920's Roy asserted that
"Today the bourgeoisie in India is not a negligible factor."\(^\text{31}\)

However, according to him, the increase of wealth of the Indian bourgeoisie was not achieved by depriving British capital of the full benefit of Imperial exploitation. With the increase in the wealth of the bourgeoisie, the poverty of the Indian masses also increased thus widening the class-differentiation in the society. To quote Roy, "The more the country develops, economically and industrially, under the leadership of the native capitalist class, the wider will grow the class-cleavage."\(^\text{32}\)

However, it can be argued that on the whole Roy could not depict a true picture of Indian society. He made a number of factual errors and theoretical misconceptions about the development of capitalism in India. Roy himself later on admitted that he had overestimated the development of capitalism in India and relied on unconfirmed statistical data.\(^\text{33}\)

Turning his attention to the exploited masses in Indian society, Roy argued that when the British first came to India a prosperous artisan class existed. Not being able to compete with the imported machine-made commodities, that artisan class was forced to abandon its occupation and go back to the land. So ever since the British occupation, more people lived by agriculture than could under normal circumstances be provided for. Thus came into existence the large rural population living on agricultural wages. At least six months in the year they were without work or were employed very irregularly. The condition of these field workers, according to Roy, was very miserable.\(^\text{34}\)

Talking about the position of the Indian peasant, Roy said that 72 per cent of India's population engaged in the cultivation of the earth, to all intents and purposes occupied the social position of proletariat in the wide scheme of capitalist exploitation. He tried to prove that the British imperialism was not only responsible for the miserable condition of the Indian peasant, but the latter was also subjected to exploitation by the native capital, namely by the landlords,
usurers and traders. Roy asserted that the poverty of the peasantry had “become so chronic and the chances of any radical change so non-existent that a complete agrarian revolution remains as the only solution.”

According to Roy the city proletariat or the class of industrial workers living exclusively on wages earned in cities was “a comparatively recent phenomenon in Indian society.” This was due to the retarded industrial development of the country. Imperialism reduced the toilers of the country to the economic state of wage-slavery, but by denying the native capital the opportunity of exploiting the workers with the aid of modern means of production, the class-differentiation of the society was kept rather confused. However, he added, that the rise of a national bourgeoisie, after World War I, followed by the increasing exploitation of the worker by native capital, had broken the social stagnation.

Roy argued that with the rise of national bourgeoisie the economic basis of the country had changed. Along with it the corresponding redistribution of the population was inevitable. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, there had been a steady influx of workers from the village to the city. That movement was due to the growth of modern industries in many urban centres of the country. The working population of these industrial centres was mostly drawn from the ranks of the poor peasantry and agricultural proletariat.

According to Roy, the city worker led a miserable life. He was much worse off than the workers of any other civilized country. Since the growth of the new industrial cities was rather sudden, the housing conditions of the workers was horrible. The cost of living was much higher in the towns than in the village. Thus after coming to the city in quest of a more comfortable life, the worker became disillusioned. To quote Roy, “Driven from their holding on the soil, separated once for all from the village life and traditions, and rudely disillusioned in their pilgrimage to the shrine of urban industry in quest of higher wages, the Indian proletariat is bound to develop the psychology of its class, and
it is doing so amazingly fast." He added, "The class-cleavage in India is very wide and the objective force of the proletariat tremendous!" It is observed that Roy exaggerated the proletarianisation of the Indian worker. Even today, in India most of the workers in the factories are in a state of semi-proletarianisation. Indian worker has not yet been enslaved to the machine because for part of the year he goes back to the village. Tied to the soil, he is essentially a villager at heart.

Roy pointed out that Capitalism by exploiting India through the media of commerce and bureaucracy created another kind of proletariat which he called the petty intellectual workers. He argued that more than three-fourths of the intelligentsia, which consisted of 5 per cent of the total population, belonged to the rank of intellectual workers. The intellectual workers were the product of modern education introduced by the British Government and belonged to all castes. In social standard they belonged to the intelligentsia; by profession they were clerks, ministerial employees in the government offices, assistants in the large trading firms, teachers etc. The environment in which they worked developed a petty-bourgeois psychology in them. Depending on the bourgeois institutions for their means of livelihood, they were supporters of the present system of society, in spite of the fact that in the latter they could never be anything more than wage-slaves. In the early 1920's, Roy considered petty bourgeoisie to be a reactionary factor. According to Roy, the economic condition of those people was absolutely miserable. That class had been proletarianized in every sense of social economics but socially and psychologically it still clung to the bourgeois customs and traditions. However, Roy believed that the social prejudices of that class would definitely succumb before pressing economic necessities and soon they would realise that their salvation would be in taking the stand with the class of wage-earners.

Roy observed that class exploitation within the structure of the exploited
nation had become a social phenomenon, and the economic cleavage between the propertied and wage-earning classes of the bourgeois society was becoming wider. He argued that the unbearable economic conditions were making the patient Indian workers learn the necessity of fighting for their interests. The rebellious mood of the peasantry was becoming so manifest that it was causing alarm to the government and the landed aristocracy alike. Similarly the city proletariat had begun to fight for its economic betterment. The revolt of the wage-slave against the propertied rich was rocking the country.  

According to Roy, it could be observed from the innumerable strikes organised and led by Unions that the Indian worker was really fighting for his freedom from economic bondage and social ostracism, and that the struggle of the proletariat was an affair distinct from the national movement. To quote him, “National Struggle and class-struggle are going on side by side; the noisiness of the former cannot conceal the existence of the latter.”

K. Seshadri has rightly observed that Roy indulged in “Over-estimation of not only the strength of the working classes in India but also their political and class-consciousness.” In any and every skirmish he saw the flames of a class-struggle and thus took an unrealistic view of Indian society.

In *India in Transition*, Roy argued that, “The overthrow of the British rule will be achieved by the joint action of the bourgeoisie and the masses.” However, he held that the Indian bourgeoisie could not lead the struggle as it was very weak and unsteady in its purpose. He said that, it was “the organized, class-conscious proletariat aided by the pauperized peasantry, which will lead the national struggle to a successful end.” The worker, according to him, would struggle for national freedom to ultimately achieve his social and economic emancipation.

In the concluding chapter of this book, Roy further argued that there was a tendency of eventual divorce of the mass movement from bourgeois leadership.
"In that case, bourgeois nationalism will end in a compromise with imperial supremacy, and the liberation of India will be left to the political movement of the workers and peasants, consciously organized and fighting on the grounds of class struggle."\textsuperscript{47}

In *The Future of Indian Politics*, Roy asserted that there had been a complete compromise of the bourgeois nationalism with imperialism.\textsuperscript{48} However, according to him, the collapse of bourgeois nationalism did not indicate the end of the anti-imperialist struggle, it only shifted the social basis of nationalism from the bourgeoisie to the classes which had nothing in common with imperialism and which had nothing to lose but their chains of political slavery and economic exploitation.\textsuperscript{49}

According to him, the social elements that would now compose the movement for national liberation would be the workers, peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie (small traders, artisans, employees, students, petty intellectuals, etc.). All of them belonged to the oppressed and exploited class.\textsuperscript{50} To quote him, "The movement for national liberation will take place on the basis of the struggle between the exploiting and exploited classes. Henceforth the fight for national freedom in India becomes a class-struggle approximating to the final stage."\textsuperscript{51}

Roy emphasized the importance of a democratic ‘People’s Party’, which would be comprised of the above mentioned oppressed classes. Its objectives would be to pursue complete independence, establishment of a republican government, radical agrarian reforms, advanced social legislation etc.\textsuperscript{52}

According to him the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie would constitute the overwhelming majority, but the proletariat will act as the conscious vanguard of the democratic party. To quote him, "The proletariat, led by its own party—The Communist Party—will exercise hegemony in this revolutionary struggle for democratic national freedom."\textsuperscript{53}
Thus it is observed that whereas Roy in the early 1920’s argued that the liberation of India would be brought about by a movement of workers and peasants under the leadership of the proletariat, in the latter half of the 1920’s, and especially in his book *The Future of Indian Politics* he asserted that petty bourgeoisie would join the proletariat and the peasantry in the revolutionary struggle for national liberation. However, he continued to insist that the struggle would be carried out under the leadership and hegemony of the proletariat.

With the passage of time, there was a change in Roy’s attitude towards petty-bourgeoisie. In the early 1920’s, he considered petty bourgeoisie to be a reactionary factor and argued that they were the supporters of the present system of society. However, in the later half of the 1920’s, he dropped that evaluation of the petty bourgeoisie and argued that it would take its stand with the other revolutionary classes in the society.

It is observed that while analyzing Indian society, Roy did not take into account the role of caste-system, in spite of the fact that it is one of the most important determinants of social and political life of India.

One can agree with Tarapada Lahiri that Roy saw things through the coloured glasses of a dreamer and misjudged the character and consequences of political events occurring in India.54

It is found that Roy’s attitude towards the national bourgeoisie remained unchanged. He continued to doubt the revolutionary potential of the bourgeoisie. We have already observed that in his book *India in Transition* Roy argued that in the long run the divorce of the masses from bourgeois leadership was inevitable. He believed that there would be a compromise between bourgeois nationalism and imperial supremacy, and the liberation of India would be brought about by the political movement of the workers and peasants “consciously organized and fighting on the grounds of class-struggle.”55
Between 1922 and the convening of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928, Roy differed from time to time in his assessments of bourgeois relationships with the British and with the Indian masses, but he argued almost exclusively within the same general context.

In the 'Report on the Eastern Question' submitted by Roy to the 'Fourth World Congress of the Communist International' in 1922 talking about the revolutionary potential of the bourgeoisie he said, "The bourgeoisie becomes a revolutionary factor when it raises the standard of revolt against backward, antiquated forms of society—that is, when the struggle is fundamentally against the feudal order, the bourgeoisie leading the people. Then the bourgeoisie is the vanguard of the revolution."\(^5\)

However, according to Roy that could not be said about the new bourgeoisie in the Eastern Countries, or most of them. Although the bourgeoisie was leading the struggle there, it was at the same time not leading it against feudalism. On the other hand it was leading the struggle against capitalism. He said, "Therefore it is a struggle of the weak and suppressed and undeveloped bourgeoisie against a stronger and more developed bourgeoisie. Instead of being a class war it is an internecine war so to say, and as such contains the elements of compromise."\(^5\) He further pointed out that in most of those countries the national bourgeoisie were gradually trying to make some compromise with the imperial overlord and imperial capitalism. Roy thus argued that the national revolutionary movement in those countries was not going to be successful under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. He said, "It is under the leadership therefore, of the workers and peasants, a political party representing the workers and peasants, that the national revolutionary struggle can come to final victory."\(^5\)

At the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, in 1924, Roy again insisted that in the colonies the indigenous bourgeoisie was incapable of providing revolutionary leadership which must come from the organized and
class-conscious sections of the workers and peasants. He cautioned against the
danger of the fight for independence being sacrificed on the altar of compromise
between the native middle class and the imperialists, and urged the Comintern to
support not the colonial upper class nationalists but genuine revolutionary
movements and to help in organizing the workers and peasants in the colonies
into a party of their own. His speeches indicated that he upheld the position
which he had originally presented at the Second Congress, with some
elaborations but no amendments.59

He argued, “The Indian middle classes and the wealthy landowners, the
whole of the proprietary class prefer to develop slowly under the protection of
Imperialism rather than run the risk of a revolution where they are surrounded by
so much inflammable material. Indian society is facing acutely the possibility of a
gigantic class struggle. In the face of this peril the Indian bourgeoisie runs
straight into the arms of British Imperialism and will not, if necessary, hesitate to
creep under the throne of King George.”60

By 1926, Roy was writing to the effect that bourgeois nationalism in
India had ended in a complete compromise with imperialism. That compromise
with imperialism, according to Roy, was marked by two very distinct stages.
There were firstly, divorce of the bourgeois nationalist movement from the most
revolutionary social forces—workers and peasants—and secondly the schism
between the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie.61

Roy said that by the end of 1925 the schism between the big bourgeoisie
and the petty bourgeoisie became wide enough to split the Swaraj party, which
for two years had served the purpose of a bridge between the constitutionalism of
the big bourgeoisie and the revolutionary inclinations of the petty bourgeoisie.
The split in the Swaraj party according to him meant the burning of that bridge.
The split, he argued removed, “the last obstacle to a happy compromise between
the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism, of course under the hegemony of

75
Roy continued to express the same opinion about the national bourgeoisie in his resolution on ‘decolonization’, which he submitted to the Comintern soon after his return from China.63

The researcher considers it desirable to discuss Roy’s views on decolonization theory. While Roy was in China Saumyendranath Tagore—a new comrade from India—had submitted a report to the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of Communist International (ECCI) on the economic situation in India. In his report he emphasized the rapid development of modern industry in India. “In summarizing the debate on the report of Indian delegate, Bukharin suggested that the Commission set up for examining the question should report on the process of such ‘de-colonization’. (He used the term for the first time evidently in a tentative and relative sense).”64

On his return from China, Roy had been asked to draft a resolution on the basis of preparatory work of the commission. It was as the author of this document, prepared at the request of Bukharin,65 that Roy was condemned at the Sixth Congress. In it he employed the term ‘de-colonization’ in describing the process of gradual industrialization in India which he suggested might lead to dominion status.

According to Roy the process of the gradual ‘decolonization’ of India was produced by two different factors. These were firstly, post-war crisis of capitalism and secondly the revolutionary awakening of Indian masses. He said that in order to stabilize its economic basis and strengthen its position in India, British imperialism had to adopt a policy which could not be put into practice without making certain concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie. Thus Roy argued that the British imperialism changed its old policy of keeping India in industrial backwardness.66
He asserted that increased industrialization in India had created a manufacturing bourgeoisie which found itself competing with the imperialists in the exploitation of the masses. As it grew, the new bourgeoisie demanded concessions from the imperialists, and in order to win them threatened to side with the masses. This created a situation which forced the imperialists to grant concessions to the bourgeoisie. The new bourgeoisie were thus brought nearer to running their own affairs—hence the term ‘decolonization.’

Describing the process of decolonization in India, Roy said “The implication of the new policy is a gradual ‘de-colonization’ of India, which will be allowed to evolve out of the state of ‘dependency’ to ‘Dominion Status’. The Indian bourgeoisie, instead of being kept down as a potential rival, will be granted partnership in the economic development of the country under the hegemony of imperialism. From a backward, agricultural colonial possession India will become a modern, Industrial country—a ‘member of the British Commonwealth of free nations’.” He added:

India is in a process of ‘decolonization’ in so far as the policy forced upon British imperialism by the post-war crisis of capitalism abolishes the old, antiquated forms and methods of colonial exploitation in favour of new forms and new methods. The forces of production, which were so far denied the possibilities of normal growth, are unfettered. The very basis of national economy changes. Old class relations are replaced by new class relations. The basic industry, agriculture, stands on the verge of revolution . . . The native bourgeoisie acquires an ever growing share in the control of the economic life of the country. These changes in the economic sphere have their political reflex. The unavoidable process of gradual ‘decolonization’ has in it the germs of disruption of the empire.

According to Roy, a gradual advance of the Indian bourgeoisie from the state of absolute colonial oppression to self-government within the British Empire was taking place. Therefore, it was not necessary for them to travel the risky path of revolution. In other words, progressive “de-colonization” of their
economic and political status made the Indian bourgeoisie averse to revolution, and in the near future, when "de-colonization" of their class would go further, it would make them positively counter-revolutionary. Thus he said, "the process of 'de-colonization' is parallel to the process of 'de-revolutionization' of the Indian bourgeoisie."  

Roy added, "The policy of imperialism in this period of capitalist decline does not cut across the general interests of the bourgeoisie in the advanced colonial countries like India... On the other hand, common interests and the common fear of revolution draw them together ever-closer in a united front in the class-struggle—to exploit and oppress the working class." Thus Roy argued that Indian bourgeoisie was rallied on the side of counter-revolution. It could not and did not lead or participate in the struggle for national freedom.

However, the Sixth Congress of Communist International (which was held from 17th July to 1st September 1928) charged Roy with propagating Social Democratic belief in the progressive and liberating role of imperialism in the colonies. It concluded from Roy’s theory that the decolonisation policy of the British imperialism would lead to the weakening of and dissolution of the British Empire. It felt that the voluntary cessation of imperialism would obviate the revolutionary role of the communists. It was feared that the concept of decolonization, if allowed to stand, would have a devitalizing effect on colonial nationalist movements.

Kuusinen, who was the spokesman for the ECCI position at the Sixth Congress, attacked the views of Roy and said:

If any of the Indian comrades have doubts as to the anti-industrialization tendency of the British policy in India, I would like them to make up their minds on this question once and for all. It depends a great deal on this if the immediate main task of the Community Party of India is correctly understood, namely the task of relieving, by Communist agitation, the mass of the Indian peasantry and the proletariat of the illusion that the
policy of British imperialism can make the decolonization of India a reality, or even bring it nearer . . . Every Indian worker must realize that the British sahib is a robber and will never carry out the decolonization of India. The liberation of India is a mission for which history has destined the Indian proletariat and peasantry. The Communist Party of India is to play a leading role in this struggle, and its foremost task in the preparation of this liberation struggle is to dispose of any illusion in regard to decolonization through imperialism, and to expose and combat any illusions of this kind spread . . . before the eyes of the masses.”

The Sixth Congress ascribed to “de-colonization” a meaning, which Roy argued he had never intended, namely the voluntary cessation of imperialist exploitation. He said that he did not hold the opinion that “British imperialism will lead the Indian people by hand to freedom.” The term ‘de-colonization’ was used by him tentatively by way of indicating a tendency, and relatively, only in connection with the bourgeoisie who constituted a very small fraction of the entire population. Nowhere did he refer that the tendency affected the entire people. Much less was it even implied by him that there was the least possibility of the Indian people being free with the sanction of imperialism. On the contrary, it was clearly asserted by him that the process of certain improvement in the condition of the bourgeoisie was the result of a plan to intensify the exploitation of the nation as a whole.

The Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928 was followed by the expulsion of Roy from it in 1929. Roy’s contribution to the Brandler Press and his support to the Brandler Organisation were mentioned in the official statement of the Communist International as reasons of his expulsion. Since then the Communists in India persistently maligned him.

The continuing concern of the chapter would be to examine Roy’s views on the various tenets of Marxism during this period. As a Marxist, Roy believed that materialism was the only possible philosophy. For, it represented the knowledge of nature as it really existed. It represented the knowledge acquired
through the contemplation, observation and investigation of the phenomena of nature itself.  

He asserted that materialism was the explanation of the world without the assumption of anything supernatural. It was corroborated by the latest scientific knowledge. According to him, “It categorically rejects the shameful doctrine of ignorance—that there is a limit to our ability to know.”

According to Roy, philosophical materialism which was an antithesis of spiritualism had nothing to do with the vulgar characterization, eat, drink and be merry. He said, “It simply maintains that the origin of everything that really exists is matter; that there does not exist anything but matter, all other appearances being transformations of matter, and these transformations are governed necessarily by laws inherent in nature.” The human society according to him evolved out of a moving mass of matter.

Roy argued that a distinguishing feature of materialism was that it was not a closed system. The materialist philosophy did not passively interpret the world and impotently bewail its defects. It showed the way to rebuild it. It was not satisfied with contemplating what existed. It investigated the existing with the object of finding in it the germs of a future, higher state of existence. Thus materialism was the philosophy of revolution.

Roy further said that materialism was not the ideology of the capitalist Western civilization. On the other hand all the intellectual forces of the capitalist society were concentrated in fighting this philosophy of revolution which would bring in a civilization higher than the capitalist. So according to Roy, Indian nationalists by denouncing materialism “do not reject the capitalist civilization, but enter into an unholy alliance with it.” They placed themselves in such a position because of their erroneous notion about materialism. Roy also believed in dialectical materialism during this period.
Being a materialist Roy differed from the majority of Indian thinkers who were spiritualists in their outlook. He was critical of Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of 'Spiritual Communism'. According to him "Spiritual Communism starts with a new conception and experience of man—the realization of the supramental and spiritual being. It is indeed a novel conception; but it is a false conception at the same time." This conception, he added was wrong, because it did not take into consideration the realities concerning the evolution of man, individually and collectively. Roy further said that Sri Aurobindo prescribed 'the soul-being' to be the central and intimate truth of man's life and existence. However, according to Roy, human progress, had not been actuated by any eternal, abstract idea, nor by the inspiration of a soul-being. It had been done, was being done and would be done, by material forces. Roy added that the primitive man did not start his life for spiritual realization, but for preserving his existence against the overwhelming forces of nature that surrounded him. The mission of man was not soul-realization, but the conquest of the forces of nature. He said:

Our social philosophy teaches us . . . that material necessities give origin everywhere to variegated social customs and institutions; that human development all over the globe follows a uniform line modified but secondarily by local conditions; that social evolution and political awakening are determined by the stage of economic development of a particular people, and that the essence of the life of the human animal is an eternal struggle with the forces of nature, which overwhelm him in the primitive stages, but are conquered by him as he goes on evolving higher means of production. Every political movement is fundamentally a socio-economic struggle; therefore, it is determined consciously or unconsciously by the above law.

He argued that great ideas originated in and were determined by the prevailing material conditions. Roy during this period believed in the law of 'Economic Determinism'. He said that the political, social, ethical and intellectual evolution of every nation was determined by its economic evolution. In his opinion no community was ever involved in any political movement unless urged
by economic motives. He wrote that, "Politics is based upon economic interests and necessities. Consequently, the political movement in which we want the masses of our people to take active part must take into consideration the economic desires and necessities of the latter." 89

Roy argued that India was not immune to the imperious law of Economic Determinism. 90 He said that political movement in India was neither the expression of a spiritual awakening, nor a gigantic wave destined to sweep the world clean of material civilization. He wrote, "The Indian movement is the outcome of a great social upheaval brought about by changed economic conditions." 91 He added that those persons were mistaken who believed that Indian civilization was purely spiritual, and that Indian people were not subject to those material laws which determined the destinies of the rest of humanity. 92

Roy believed in class-differentiation and class-antagonism as a Marxist. He argued, "Our social philosophy teaches us to look for class-antagonism behind all political movements." 93 He was opposed to the Gandhian notion of class-collaboration. He argued that to organize the expropriated and exploited workers and peasants without the principles of class-interests and class-struggle was to deceive them. One could only perpetuate class domination by preaching to the victims of class tyranny, the 'Ideal of Human Unity' or 'Class collabor-ation' for the common benefit of the community. He added "No mass move-ment can be developed on the reactionary principle of class collaboration." 94

For Roy class war was the inevitable attribute of civilization, which did not differ fundamentally in different countries. According to him in a civilized society the primitive tools got evolved into more advanced means of production. Their ownership ceased to be communal and passed on to the hands of the few who possessed capital. The development of the means of production led to their concentration, and that, in its turn, helped the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the possessing class which grew smaller and smaller with the passage
of time. That accumulation of wealth was effected only by expropriating the ever-growing majority of workers, who were sunk into the depths of poverty. As soon as the exploited masses grew conscious of their interests, class antagonism became evident to them. The corollary of that situation was class war.  

Roy added that with the progress of human society the means of production became more advanced. And along with that, the interests of the classes also grew more conscious which led to a fiercer class conflict. The class struggle accentuated as the employer tried to exact the maximum amount of labour for the minimum amount of wages. On the other hand the working class grew more and more conscious of their rights as free human beings and thus demanded adequate value for their labour.

Thus Roy contended, “The entire society today stands divided into two hostile camps—exploiter and exploited. This class antagonism has always been the characteristic of civilized society. In fact, ‘Human history is a history of class-struggle’... The whole world is directly or indirectly in the great sweep of this struggle between the exploiting class of all the countries on one side and the toiling masses on the other. The vertical divisions of nationality, race, religion etc. are submerged in this great horizontal cleavage, which is growing wider and wider every day.” He added, “The struggle of classes is perennial in society. It can be suppressed, obliterated, for the time being; the consciousness about it may be backward; it can even be hidden by reformist measures for some time. But the fact is there, and in course of time the struggle sharpens, and ultimately it breaks out into an open clash, and society enters into a period of revolution.”

Roy argued that as India was advancing towards higher grades of civilization, class antagonism would intensify between the two sections into which the society was divided. According to him, the horizontal divisions of the Indian society; i.e. the division of society into two great hostile camps—that of the propertied exploiter and that of the expropriated and exploited proletariat—
would eliminate the vertical divisions of this society. Or in other words, the divisions of caste, creed and religion would be replaced by class-cleavage.99

Roy believed that the root cause of class struggle was the fundamental fact that there was private property. He said, “we communists stand for the abolition of classes and consequently of class-struggle; but classes cannot disappear unless private property is abolished.”100

However, the abolition of private property, according to him, became necessary and possible only when private property had exhausted all its possibilities as the lever of the progress of human society. He argued that once upon a time the creation of private property was a revolution. Only in course of time, private property ceased to be a revolutionary and progressive force, and became a check on further progress. And only under such circumstances could it be abolished.101

Roy argued that Capitalism itself had created the conditions that rendered the abolition of private property necessary and therefore possible. Originally private property had a moral foundation, which was subsequently given a legal sanction. The moral ground was human labour. Whatever one produced with one’s labour was his property. The origin of private property could be found in the invention of primitive tools which were individually owned by the man who made them from stone and wood. There was a clear moral foundation for his private ownership of whatever he produced with the tool belonging to himself as the creator. With the passage of time the tools developed into crude machinery, and its owner had to employ several people to work it, but he also worked himself together with them. Thus still there was some moral foundation of his ownership. After that man started owning a whole factory. He did not perform any manual labour, but acted as the manager. Even then there was a moral foundation for private property because the owner of the factory, as the manager was a useful factor in the process of production. But in the modern capitalist
society the owners of the industry could not be traced as a person could be a partial owner of an industrial enterprise, a joint-stock company, without even knowing where that enterprise was situated. Thus, according to Roy, there was no longer any moral foundation for private property, but still it was maintained by legal sanction. He added that the abolition of private property had become necessary because it lacked moral foundation.102

He further wrote, “Production is meant for use. What people need is to be produced, and there must be a relation between needs and production. But today, production is no longer for use; what people need is no longer determining production. Production today is meant for exchange, and there is no satisfactory relation between needs and production.”103 Roy said that the original purpose of production which was to provide men with the things they needed for use, to raise the general standard of living of human beings and thereby increasing national wealth and national welfare, had been altogether forgotten. The only purpose that remained for the owners of the means of production was to make profit. That was done by selling manufactured products at a price higher than the cost of production. In order to make more profit, the cost of production had to be kept as low as possible. For that wages had to be kept on the lowest level. Roy argued that “to make the maximum profit, the bulk of the working population must be kept on a very low, the minimum subsistence, level. Because, if they received the full value of their labour, there would be no margin for profit for the owners of the means of production.”104 Roy contended that so long as profit remained the sole purpose of production the majority of people would be condemned to live in poverty in midst of plenty. This led to a fatal contradiction. The people needed things for use but could not buy them. On the other hand, the capitalist produced things, but could not sell them. This contradiction ultimately made the abolition of private property a necessity.105

Roy asserted, “Our ultimate object, . . . is a complete social revolution,
which means the abolition of private ownership in the means of production, distribution and exchange.”

Roy’s Marxist stand also led him to criticize Capitalism. He argued that since everything of value was created by human labour, these should belong to all those who work. However, in a capitalist system the labourer was deprived by the employer of the greater part of the value that he produced. Criticizing Capitalism, Roy said, “Just so long as everything that is produced by the labour of the many remains the property of the few, just so long will the working class continue to be the slave of the capitalist class, of those who own private property.” Thus he argued that capitalism, based on private ownership led to the exploitation of human labour. To quote him, “As long as capitalism exists, so long as society is based upon private ownership, the working class will continue to be exploited by the possessing class.”

Roy argued that there was a time when Capitalism was a progressive force. It was undoubtedly an improvement on the patriarchal or feudal civilization. Capitalism, according to him, was necessary in as much as it abolished a more backward, antiquated system, which was obstructing the road to progress.

However, Roy added that as Capitalism developed as a necessary form of social order out of a decayed older system, similarly, in course of time, all the progressive possibilities of Capitalism would be exhausted and it was bound to be supplanted by a new system of social order. It would break down under the pressure of its own contradictions.

Roy further said that since Capitalism had played its role and had itself become an obstruction, therefore, its overthrow was necessary. He said, “The fundamental motive of our struggle is to abolish the source of human exploitation, which lies in the system of private property, of production for profit, in a word, Capitalism.” He added, “What we want is not only change...
of government, but the end of the system which permits the exploitation of man by man.\textsuperscript{112}

However, according to Roy, the cure for the evils of the Capitalism did not mean a return to savagery. On the other hand it meant to advance from capitalist civilization to a real civilization which was possible under Marxian Socialism.\textsuperscript{113}

As a nationalist revolutionary, Roy believed that revolution was generally associated with bombs, revolvers and secret societies. But as a Marxist, he began to feel that revolution was a much greater affair. He said, "an important historical event which marks the close of a given historical period and opens up a new one is called a revolution."\textsuperscript{114} He added, "According to my new faith, revolutions took place of necessity. No individual was indispensable. They were brought about by the operation of new social forces. The maturity of the latter was the objective condition for a revolution. Until that basic condition was created, no armed uprising should be undertaken because it was sure to fail."\textsuperscript{115}

Roy said that Karl Marx had proved that, from time to time, throughout human history, every social system based on certain relation of classes had decayed when all the possibilities of human development under that system had been exhausted, and then there was a revolution which brought about the subversion of the old decayed system and created a new system.\textsuperscript{116} Roy believed that a revolution could be carried out successfully only by one single revolutionary party which must be the party of the oppressed classes.\textsuperscript{117} He further argued that since the social factors, economic classes and political institutions that used to be benefited by the state of affairs existing in the closing period, would not permit a change that brought an end of their domination, their total annihilation, political violence and social convulsion were usually the features of revolution. Thus according to him revolution was not possible without violence.\textsuperscript{118}
Roy asserted that the character of a revolution was determined by the social forces involved in it. The leadership devolved upon different classes in different periods of history. It was also influenced by the peculiar structure of society in the throes of the revolution.\textsuperscript{119}

Talking about the Indian situation, Roy admitted that the nation was unprepared for an immediate socialist revolution. He argued that the way to Socialism lay through the national liberation struggle which would set up a democratic republican state. He believed that India had to first evolve through the stage of bourgeois democracy.\textsuperscript{120} He added, “Bourgeois revolution must precede the proletarian revolution. The success of the former creates conditions for the latter. India has not yet had her bourgeois revolution except by proxy. British conquest undermined feudal economy and introduced modern capitalist exploitation. But feudal patriarchal traditions still hang heavily on the Indian society. The work for socialist reconstruction cannot be begun before those debris of the past are swept away. A democratic republican state will do this preparatory work.”\textsuperscript{121}

According to Roy, because of the failure of the bourgeoisie to lead the bourgeois democratic revolution, that task would be performed by the proletariat. The proletariat along with the other exploited sections of the society would first strive for national democratic revolution and ultimately for socialist revolution.\textsuperscript{122}

Roy further argued that democratic revolution would be achieved by the proletariat not as an end but only as a means or a step towards socialism.\textsuperscript{123} However, Roy argued, “Whether the democratic revolution can be quickly transformed into a Socialist Revolution (as in Russia) remains an open question depending upon the class-relations in the particular society and on the political maturity of the proletariat.”\textsuperscript{124}

During this period Roy believed in the Marxian brand of Socialism. He
said, "it is only the philosophy of Historic Materialism and the programme of Marxism, Socialism, that can show the way out." 

According to him, "Socialism is not a cult which resulted from the inspiration of an individual. It is a system of philosophy which evolved in course of the development of human thought... Its cultural background is the replacement of faith by reason." 

Roy argued that Socialism stood for the end of all exploitation of man by man. It aimed at abolishing the vast discrepancy in the standard of living of the toiling majority and parasitic minority. He further said that Socialism aimed at creating such conditions under which man would not be required to perform more than a few hours of manual labour, so that the rest of his time could be devoted to the cultivation of the finer aspects of life. He added, "Men created the machine, but Capitalism has made man the slave of machine. Socialism proposes that the machine must be put in its place, at the service of man." 

According to Roy the establishment of Socialism required the overthrow of Capitalism. Thus Socialism would be opposed by Capitalism. It was not possible to establish Socialism in agreement or through some compromise with Capitalism and its state. What was necessary was the uncompromising struggle against the capitalist state because it was not possible to establish Socialism before the Capitalist state was overthrown.

Roy said, according to Socialism, "politics involves a certain amount of coercion. For, any kind of state is an instrument in the hands of a certain section of society, and the instrument is wielded only for one purpose, namely, the suppression of other classes. In order to liberate the majority of society, the seizure of power by the masses is required. That is to say, the masses must wrest the power from the hands of the ruling class." Roy added that the real advance towards Socialism could not be made unless the political power of the bourgeoisie was broken. And he believed that the bourgeoisie could not be
deprived of their political power except by an armed revolution.\textsuperscript{130}

According to Roy the fundamental economic programme of Socialism was the abolition of private property in the means of production, distribution and exchange. Elaborating the point Roy argued, "Socialism proposes to abolish only such private property the possession of which makes the owner an exploiter of others who would depend on him for their existence."\textsuperscript{131} He said that the nature of class-struggle entirely changed in its final stage. It ceased to be the struggle between two forms of property. It became the prelude to the abolition of private property and the foundation of the socialist order of society. On one side of the line stood Capitalism as the quintessence of private ownership, and on the other was marshaled the proletarian army which by its very nature did not represent a new form of property. The victory of the latter, therefore, led to the reorganization of human society, free from class domination. With the disappearance of property-right classes disappeared.\textsuperscript{132}

However, Roy asserted that Socialism was not a matter of desire. It would not come because some kind-hearted people did not like that the majority of mankind should remain in poverty, or that man should be exploited by man. Socialism would come as of necessity, only after all the progressive potentialities of capitalism had been exhausted. To quote him, "It will be established when it becomes a historical necessity."\textsuperscript{133} He said that the road to Socialism passed through successive stages of social development. The working class in countries, which had passed through those stages of social development, was engaged in struggle for the immediate realization of Socialism.\textsuperscript{134}

However, according to him, the situation in India was different. India was not yet ripe for Socialism. "She must evolve through the stage of bourgeois democracy which, as Marx says, will call into being its own grave-diggers in the shape of a strong, class-conscious and militant Indian proletariat."\textsuperscript{135}

Roy believed that India would have to go through the period of national
democratic revolution before coming nearer to socialism. India was engaged in the revolutionary struggle for democratic freedom. That would be realized through the overthrow of foreign domination and liquidation of the mediaeval socio-economic institutions. The working class must actively participate and lead that struggle for democratic freedom. Roy said that the working class party, therefore, should fight under two programmes: a minimum programme to be realized in the immediate future and a maximum programme the realization of which would depend upon the carrying out of the minimum programme. The minimum programme would contain the immediate demands of the working class and would be broad enough to rally around the working class all the other social elements whose interests demanded national independence and complete democratization of the country. Democratic republic, universal suffrage, protection for minorities, educational facilities, agrarian revolution, removal of obstructions to the forces of production, fulfillment of the immediate demands of the proletariat (wage, hours, conditions of labour etc.)—these would be main features of the minimum programme.\textsuperscript{136}

According to Roy although the realization of the maximum programme was a comparatively remote issue considering the conditions of India, its formulation was essential for the growth and guidance of the working class party. The maximum programme of the working class party was the programme of victorious class-struggle of Social Revolution, of Socialism. He added that minimum programme should be fitted into the framework of the maximum programme. It was a means to the end.\textsuperscript{137}

As a nationalist Roy was mainly concerned with national freedom, but now as a Marxist, he realised that national freedom in itself was not sufficient to liberate the common man. He believed that the overthrow of the British rule would not be enough to free the entire people of the country from economic exploitation and social slavery. He argued, "the national freedom that leaves the
majority of the people in their present condition of wage-slavery will not mean anything to them and will prove a hollow mockery.\textsuperscript{138}

Thus Roy said that "the political independence of the nation must be followed by the economic emancipation of the masses, because without economic freedom the labouring classes, which constitute the overwhelming majority of every community, cannot attain an all-round elevation on every plane, physical, intellectual and spiritual."\textsuperscript{139}

Roy no longer believed in political freedom without the content of economic liberation and social justice. Now he laid stress on social and economic freedom. He said, "Our ultimate goal is end of all exploitation. We want to break the age-long social slavery of all those who live by labour, who create all wealth."\textsuperscript{140} He added, "The real and lasting freedom of a people demands their complete and unconditional social emancipation."\textsuperscript{141}

However, he felt that in order to put an end to all economic and social bondage it was first necessary to attain national independence. He said, "The Indian people are fighting and must fight for Swaraj because political independence is the first step to economic freedom and social emancipation."\textsuperscript{142} He added, "We want to win national independence in order to put an end to all economic slavery and social bondage."\textsuperscript{143}

Roy argued that foreign rule must be ended. But the administration of independent India must not be allowed to fall completely in the hands of the native exploiting class. He said that the national government must be controlled by those who form the majority of the nation and on whom the economic life of the society depended. He further said that as the poor peasantry and the exploited workers constituted the majority of the nation, so the national government should represent their interests.\textsuperscript{144}

Roy gave a programme of national reconstruction which, according to
him, should be followed, after the overthrow of the foreign rule if the condition of the masses was to be improved. It contained the following measures:

1. *That our national State (Swaraj) will be based on the principle of Universal Sufferage.*

2. *That the principal means of production, distributions and exchange (land, mines, factories, railways, waterways, etc.) will be owned by the Democratic State and operated under the control of Workers’ Committees, elected by and from among the workers employed therein.*

3. *That landlordism be abolished, and the ownership of land be vested in the State, which will distribute it among those who cultivate it.*

Roy also made an attempt to analyse Gandhi and Gandhism from the Marxian perspective. During the 1920's he expressed his ideas about Gandhi and Gandhism in his books: *India in Transitition; India’s Problems and its Solution; One Year of Non-Cooperation: from Ahmedabad to Gaya; Political Letters; and The Aftermath of Non-Cooperation.* Besides these books, Roy, in a number of articles and pamphlets published in *The Vanguard* and *The Advance Guard* tried to explain certain defects and contradictions of Gandhism.

Roy believed that Gandhism was "the acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction." He attributed Gandhi’s criticism of capitalist society to feudal, rather than to democratic sympathies. He stated that his "Strong instinct of preserving property rights above all betrays the class affiliation of Gandhi in spite of his pious outbursts against the sordid materialism of modern civilization. His hostility to capitalist society is manifestly not revolutionary but reactionary. He believes in the sanctity of private property, but seeks to prevent its inevitable evolution to capitalism." Roy argued that in itself capitalist society had many defects; but it was undoubtedly an improvement on the patriarchal or feudal civilization for which Gandhi and his kind pined.
Roy further said that Gandhi’s criticism of capitalist civilization was correct, but the remedy prescribed by him was not only wrong but also impossible. Under the Marxian influence Roy argued that capitalist civilization was rotten, but it could not be avoided. It was also not permanent. In due course of evolution, it would pass away giving place to a higher order of society. The defects of the capitalist society, argued Roy, could not be removed by returning to a backward stage of society based on private property, but by eliminating property rights absolutely. However, before being altogether eliminated, private property had to go through successive stages of evolution the highest of which was Capitalism.149

According to Roy, Gandhism was nothing more than petty-bourgeois humanitarianism. He said, “The crocodile tears of this humanitarianism are shed ostensibly for the undeniable sufferings of the majority in capitalist society, but they are really caused by grief over the end of the old order, already destroyed or about to be so.”150 He said that Gandhism desired to return to that backward feudal society in which majority of the people were kept in blissful ignorance and a few people exploited the ignorant majority without any fear of the revolt of the exploited.

Roy argued that Gandhi preached the philosophy of poverty. However, according to him, “Such philosophy serves but one object, to guarantee the safety of the vested interests, whose character may differ in different epochs but which essentially is always the same, being based on the right of exploitation of man by man.”151

Roy said that it was no longer possible to exploit the Indian masses in the name of religion or culture as Gandhi was trying to do. He said that so far the Indian masses had remained apathetic to any movement for material progress under the influence of religious teachings and the tenets of spiritual culture. But the hardships of economic exploitation had brought about significant changes in
them, and they had lost their patience and religious calm. Exploitation had brought about awaking in the masses and they had started reacting against the age-long resignation. It was no longer possible to use them for a national movement tending towards the revival of the spiritual civilization of India which sanctioned exploitation as was being done by Gandhi. According to Roy here lay the contradiction in the orthodox nationalism as expressed in the cult of Gandhism. "It endeavours to utilize the mass energy for the perpetuation or revival of that heritage of national culture which has been made untenable by the awakening of this energy." Roy said that Gandhism would fall victim to its own contradictions. He added, "The imminent collapse of Gandhism will close a romantic and exciting chapter of the Indian national movement. It will demonstrate that a socially revolutionary movement cannot be influenced by reactionary forces."  

Roy reacted very strongly to Gandhi’s creed of non-violence. Gandhi believed in the termination of the British rule through peaceful means. However, according to Roy, the non-violent ideology of Gandhi was impractical, and there was bound to be bloodshed in the course of freedom struggle. As he said, "British rule in India was established by force and is maintained by force; therefore it can and will be overthrown only by a violent revolution." Roy maintained that it was altogether erroneous to think that there could be such a thing as a non-violent revolution, no matter how peculiar and abnormal the situation in India might be. The cult of non-violence was inseparable from an anti-revolutionary spirit. Those who did not want a revolution in India could pin their hope on non-violent methods. Thus Roy was opposed to the cult of non-violence, which according to him, "was a dangerous cult and must be exposed in its true sinister significance."  

Criticizing the Gandhian techniques of Khaddar and Charkha, Roy said, "Khaddar and Charka . . . cannot be the basis of a great political movement."
He argued that if the inauguration of Civil Disobedience would be made conditional upon the realization of the Charkha-Khaddar Programme as was being done by the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi, it followed that before the declaration of Civil Disobedience, Charkha must be introduced into every house and that Khaddar must be worn by all. However, he believed that that was not possible, because the price of Khaddar was higher than that of the mill made cloth and the average income of the Indian worker and peasant was so small that he could not afford to buy Khaddar.

Moreover, according to Roy, the propagation of Swadeshi, Khaddar and Charkha would serve the interests of the capitalist classes only. It would give impetus to the development of new mills in India as the Indian mills at that time were not in a position to produce more than half the textile needed for the consumption of the people. Roy argued that Charkha and Khaddar could have some scope only so long as the native mills were not able to fulfill the demands of the Indian people but once the native machine industry would be capable of supplying the entire demand of the country, Khaddar and Charkha would fall victim to it.

Comparing Gandhism with Marxian Socialism, Roy argued that there was nothing in common between the two. He said that the philosophy of Marxian Socialism was materialism which repudiated the teleological view of the universe and life. On the other hand Gandhi believed in God and said that it was only in prayer that the human being could find the strength and inspiration necessary for a correct guidance in the affairs of the world. According to Roy Gandhi regarded the world as a predetermined system in which man was nothing but the expression of the Universal Will. However, in the Marxian philosophy man was not an instrument either in the hand of some Providential Will or simply a cog in gigantic machinery. Man was the creator of the world in which he lived.
Roy added that the Marxian politics was the struggle for capture of power by the oppressed and exploited majority. However, Gandhi wanted to solve the problem by persuading the capitalists, landlords and other rich people to be kind to the poor. However Roy argued, “As long as there are two diverging interests to be reconciled—and your desire for reconciliation implies that there is antagonism—you cannot change the heart of capitalists.”

Roy argued that Gandhism had reached a crisis and said, “The impending wane of Gandhism signifies the collapse of the reactionary forces and their total elimination from the political movement.”

Thus it is observed that, throughout the 1920’s, Roy continued to criticize Gandhism and Gandhi’s role in the Indian nationalist movement. However, it can be argued that Roy ignored various positive aspects of Gandhi’s social and political programme. He had little or no knowledge about the varied Gandhian activities in India, including his attempts to bring about large-scale social reforms and removal of grievances of workers and peasants.

Roy underestimated Gandhi’s role in the Indian nationalist movement. He failed to realize the extent to which the nationalist movement was dependent on Gandhi’s leadership. He failed to appreciate Gandhi’s appeal to the Indian people and his revolutionary potentiality. He ignored Gandhi’s vast influence on the masses. He could not grasp the significance of the qualitative change that Gandhi brought about in Indian politics by changing the Congress from a narrowly based middle class organization to an all-India mass platform.

Roy was also wrong in regarding Gandhi’s role as transitory. His prediction about the imminent collapse of Gandhism was overturned by the course of events. Moreover, Roy failed to realize that non-violent revolution started by Gandhi was a historical necessity. It was the only effective weapon in the hands of a weak unarmed and demoralized nation. Roy ignored the concrete realities of the Indian situation. His strategy of violent overthrow of the British
power was untenable in the conditions prevailing in India.

Roy also failed to appreciate the cultural and spiritual values of India which were used by Gandhi to strengthen the national movement. Gandhi’s use of religious symbols shared by the overwhelming majority of Indians, played a positive role in developing the nationalist struggle. Roy underestimated the power of cultural elements in politics. Sudipta Kaviraj has rightly pointed out that, “It was perhaps, the stubborn rationalism of Roy’s thinking which made him incapable of understanding the cultural power of Gandhism.”

Since the Indian National Congress played an important role in India’s struggle for independence, it would be desirable to discuss Roy’s views on it. Roy argued that though Indian National Congress claimed to be a national organization representing the interests of the entire nation, in reality it was dominated by bourgeois leadership and advocated the interests of the bourgeoisie. Its every act betrayed its ignorance of or indifference to the material interests of the majority of the people. He said, “The Congress assumed the title ‘national’ as if the bourgeoisie whom it represented was ordained providentially to be the custodian of the popular welfare. The small number of government officials, merchants, manufacturers, progressive landlords and intellectual liberals constituting it, believed themselves to be natural and legitimate representatives of the inarticulate masses. The grievances of the office-seeking intellectuals were put forth as those of the people. The ambitions of the native capitalist class were identified with the right of the nation.”

He said that the working class had been abused, exploited, denounced and betrayed by the Congress. The Congress had never paid any attention to the removal of its immediate grievances. It had only exploited the ignorance of the people for its political ends and had expected them to follow its lead blindly.

He argued that the repudiation of the mass demonstrations during the Prince’s visit, the condemnation of the revolutionary actions of the poor,
peasantry in the United Provinces and the stout defence of landlordism contained in the Bardoli Resolutions, proved that the Congress was not the political party of the masses of the people, and that it did not stand for the entire nation, but for a certain class.\textsuperscript{166}

He opined, "\textit{If the congress makes the mistake of becoming the political apparatus of the propertied class, it must forfeit the title to the leadership of the nation.}"\textsuperscript{167}

Writing in the early 1920's, Roy argued that the complete national independence of India could be realized only by the efforts of the most revolutionary element of the society which constituted the workers and the peasants.\textsuperscript{168} So it was necessary to mobilise them in the struggle for the realization of the establishment of an Indian Republic. However, this mobilization of the workers and the peasants could not be achieved unless their immediate needs were taken into consideration. Thus Congress stood in need of a clearly defined programme. He said, "\textit{The Congress can no longer defer the formulation of a definite programme of economic and social reconstruction.}"\textsuperscript{169} He added, "The Congress should at once launch a programme advocating the fight for higher wages for the workers, an eight-hour day, better housing, recognition of Unions, right of strike, equal pay for equal work, abolition of landlordism, reduction of rents and taxes, strong measures for the abolition of usury and such other measures as will correspond to the immediate necessities of the masses."	extsuperscript{170}

According to Roy Congress had falsely claimed to be an all-inclusive national party based upon the principle of class-collaboration. However, Roy argued that "the organization of a mass party cannot be done except on the principle of class interests."\textsuperscript{171} He added, "the Congress cannot be the one and united political party of the entire Indian people."\textsuperscript{172}

He asserted that if the Congress was to be a political party, then it was
necessary for it to base itself on one or another of the three principal classes into which the Indian society was divided at that particular time. It should be either the party of the landlords or of the propertied upper and middle classes or of the exploited workers and peasants.\textsuperscript{173}

He argued that the whole National Movement was divided into three camps. There were the Right Wing, the Centre and the Left. The first contained the Moderates, Liberals or co-operators. In the Centre stood the Extremists, orthodox non-co-operators; and the Left was composed of the oppressed lower middle class, pauperized intellectuals and the masses of workers and peasants.\textsuperscript{174}

According to him at first the Congress was dominated by the Moderates. But Moderates, representing the upper classes, together with the landlords followed a policy of compromise with the imperialist exploiter. After that Extremists, who were the mouthpiece of middle class came to dominate the Congress. To quote him, "the Extremists or the non-co-operators do not represent the entire nation any more than do the liberals."\textsuperscript{175} He added, "The Extremists, who have always based their nationalism on the superiority of India's spiritual civilization, in the field of pure politics prove themselves equally ardent defenders of the material interests of the national bourgeoisie."\textsuperscript{176}

According to Roy, while the Moderates representing the interests of large vested capital found it convenient to follow a policy of compromise with the imperialist exploiter, the Extremists had also proved themselves unable and unwilling to risk a decisive struggle. The extremist nationalism came to an end of its rope, owing to its socially reactionary character and the consequent confusion in political ideology.\textsuperscript{177}

He argued that the reactionary tendencies inherent in extremist nationalism precluded the possibility of its ever becoming a dynamic revolutionary force, which alone could shake the foundation of foreign rule and
start the people on the road to further progress. Roy said that under the leadership of the latter the Congress inaugurated the Non-cooperation movement. However, he believed that the Congress failed to enforce the Non-cooperation programme because it ignored that the toiling masses were the body and soul of the movement, and only they could make it effective. To quote him, “Non-cooperation movement collapsed because the Congress refused to mobilize and lead those revolutionary social forces that alone could make it a success.”

Roy argued that the foundation of British domination was the exploitation of the Indian masses. The profit that British made out of their domination in India was not produced by the lawyers, doctors, or students. It was made out of the labour of the workers and peasants. He said, “the actual amount of profit made by the British is not produced by the native upper and middle classes; it is produced by the workers and peasants.” So it was only the latter that could cut into the roots of British domination by refusing to produce value for the British Capitalism.

Thus, according to Roy, though both Moderates and Extremists had taken their turn in leading the national struggle, they had failed in their job.

In 1922 he commented, “Today the National Congress as a political organization is dead. Its corpse waits either to be buried or resurrected by a new breath of life.” He argued that the time had come for the appearance of a party voicing the sentiments and aspirations of those sections of Indian people whose interests had not been taken into consideration by any of former political parties. He said that leadership of the national struggle should be taken over by a mass party consciously representing the immediate as well as ultimate interests of the workers and the peasants. The growth of such a party would again breathe vigour into Congress organisation, which was lying prostrate. He asserted, “Therefore what is wanted at the present crisis is a political party of the
masses based on the principle of class interest and with a programme advocating mass-action for carrying forward the struggle for national liberation.\textsuperscript{183}  

Roy suggested that the revolutionary factions believing in mass action should form an ‘Opposition Block’ within the Congress, with the object of criticising any attempt to lead the Congress away from the high road of revolution. “This Opposition Block, which will eventually grow into the revolutionary party of the people destined to be the leader of the final struggle, should put forth a programme calculated to give fresh impetus to the waning enthusiasm of the masses and thus draw them into the political struggle.”\textsuperscript{184}  

Roy proposed the formation of a Communist Party.\textsuperscript{185} Writing in 1923 he said, “It is only under the banner of the Communist Party that the masses can be organized and led into the national struggle as the first stage of a great revolutionary movement for liberation. So, those who sincerely stand for the interest and welfare of the toiling masses must swell the ranks of the Communist Party, the leader of the workers and peasants—the Vanguard of National Revolution.”\textsuperscript{186}  

He also favoured the formation of an open, vast, all-India political party of the workers and peasants, with a clear-cut programme of economic and social emancipation, and under the slogan of “\textit{Not the Masses for Revolution, but Revolution for the Masses.”}\textsuperscript{187} Roy said that there were two reasons as to why a revolutionary mass-party based upon the class interests of workers and pauperized peasantry should be immediately organized. According to him, “First, such a party is alone capable of leading the anti-imperialist struggle further; and second, such a party must come into existence in order to prevent the fruits of national freedom conquered by the workers and peasants, from being totally misappropriated by the bourgeoisie.”\textsuperscript{188} He said that the party of workers and peasants would be the conscious vanguard of the Indian working-class in its struggle, first for national and then for complete economic and social
Writing in 1926 Roy highlighted the necessity of a ‘People’s Party’ broad enough to cover all the forces of national revolution. According to him, that party would include the petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and proletariat. Roy argued, “The future of Indian politics will be an intensified fight for national liberation with revolutionary democratic ideals, under the standard of a people’s party. The proletariat, led by its own party—the Communist Party—will exercise hegemony in this revolutionary struggle for democratic national freedom.”

Whether the Indian National Congress could be transformed into the proposed ‘People’s Party’ or a separate parallel party of revolutionary nationalism with a minimum programme of national democratic revolution would have to be organized, was left open at this stage.

However, it can be argued that Roy went too far in his criticism of Indian National Congress. He underestimated the role played by Indian National Congress in the nationalist struggle of India. In fact both Moderates and Extremists, contributed in their own ways to the development of freedom movement of India. Roy failed to recognize that.

Similarly he took a every unrealistic view of Indian National Congress when he commented in 1922 that the National Congress as a political organization was dead and that its corpse needed to be buried or resurrected by a new breath of life. It appears that his knowledge of the political situation prevailing in India at that time was only superficial.

Thus it is observed that during the 1920’s Roy remained an orthodox Marxist. He regarded Marxism as a wonderful philosophy and argued that it had made history an exact science. He believed in the various tenets of Marxism, like materialism, economic determinism, class-differentiation, class-war, revolution and Marxian Socialism. He condemned class-exploitation and laid
stress on the elimination of social and economic exploitation. He also examined Indian society and politics from the Marxian perspective and argued that the salvation of India could be achieved through Bolshevism. However, his observations about the Indian society and politics were not free from defects. This was partly due to the fact that being an enthusiastic Marxist, Roy tried to see everything from the point of view of Marxism. Moreover, as he was away from India his knowledge about the Indian situation was not adequate.
Notes and References


2Ibid., p. 166.

3Ibid., p. 167.

4Ibid.

5Ibid., p. 168.

6Ibid.

7Ibid., p. 167.

8Ibid., p. 168.

9Ibid., p. 167.


13Ibid.


19Ibid., p. 32.

20For details see G.P. Bhattacharjee, Evolution of Political Philosophy of


23 For details see Ibid., pp. 190-91.

24 Ibid., pp. 192-93.

25 Ibid., p. 194.

26 Ibid., p. 195.

27 For details see Ibid., p. 198.

28 Ibid., pp. 198-99.

29 Ibid., p. 203.

30 Ibid., p. 205.

31 Ibid., p. 206.

32 Ibid., p. 208.

33 For details see M.N. Roy, Memoirs, p. 554.


35 Ibid., p. 243

36 Ibid., p. 247.

37 For details see Ibid., p. 273.

38 Ibid., pp. 279-80.

39 Ibid., p. 279.

40 Ibid., p. 288.

41 For details see Ibid., pp. 259-61.

42 Ibid., p. 280.

43 Ibid., p. 291.

44 For details see K. Seshadri, Contemporary Marxism in India (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1990), p. 27.

46Ibid., pp. 290-91.

47Ibid., p. 375.


49Ibid., p. 516.

50Ibid., p. 513.

51Ibid., p. 516.


53Ibid., p. 532.


57Ibid., pp. 476-77.

58Ibid., pp. 479-80.


62Ibid., p. 460.

63Roy was sent to China in 1926 by Stalin as chief of a delegation, where the Comintern was confronted by extraordinary difficulties in maintaining the alliance between the Kuomintang (The Peoples’ Party of China) and the Communist Party of China. The alliance was historic necessity for the Chinese revolution. Therefore, Roy was assigned the task to maintain the alliance between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China. However, he was not successful in accomplishing the task because of various factors and returned to Moscow in the middle of 1927.


Roy maintained that after the First World War, British Imperialism was faced with a severe crisis and a new economic policy resulted from its attempt to overcome the crisis. He argued that it was no longer profitable for Britain to hold India as a purely agricultural reserve. On the other hand, it was more profitable to industrialize her. Industrialized India could offer lucrative investment for British capital. Cheap labour and easily accessible raw materials could produce enormous profit; and the buying capacity of India could increase, thus helping British trade. For details see M.N. Roy, The Aftermath of Non-Cooperation in Selected Works of M.N. Roy, vol. II, p. 379.

For details see Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, Communism in India, p. 103.


Ibid.

For details see M.N. Roy, Our Differences, pp. 112-13.


Ibid.

For details see Ibid., p. 93.


For details see M.N. Roy, Our Differences, p. 45.

Ibid., pp. 33-34.

Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin have maintained that Roy was possibly sacrificed by Stalin as a major scapegoat for the China debacle. For details see Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, M.N. Roy’s Mission to China: The Communist-Kuomintang Split of 1927 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963). p. 1. However, Roy has argued that “I was a victim of some internal intrigue ... The desire of the Communist Party of Great Britain to establish its protectorate over the Indian Communist movement had a good deal to do with it. The internal struggle of the Russian Communist Party also contributed to my victimisation.” See M.N. Roy, “Preface” in M.N.

78 Heinz Brandler was a leading German Communist opposed to the policy of the Communist International. The Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) of which *Gegen den Storm* was the principal organ was founded in December 1928 by Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer. In January 1929 they were both expelled from the Comintern and from the German and Soviet Communist parties. For details see Sibnarayan Ray, "Introductory Editorial Note" in Sibnarayan Ray, ed., *Selected Works of M.N. Roy*, vol. III, p. 262.


82 For details see *Ibid.*, pp. 269-70.


110 For details see *Ibid*.


Ibid.


Ibid., p. 67.

Ibid., p. 75.

Ibid., pp. 69-70


Ibid.


Ibid., p. 526.

Ibid., p. 531.

Ibid., p. 527.

Ibid., p. 505.

Ibid. Italics in original.

Ibid., p. 510.

Ibid., p. 509. Italics in original.

147Ibid., p. 370.
148Ibid., p. 349.
149For details see Ibid., pp. 370-71.
150Ibid., p. 347.
151Ibid., p. 349.
152Ibid., p. 345.
153Ibid., p. 346.
154M.N. Roy quoted in Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 56.
155Ibid., p. 55.
158After the events of Chauri Chaura, the Working Committee of the Congress met at Bardoli in February 1922. It suspended the mass Civil Disobedience, and adopted the ‘Constructive Programme’ under the influence of Gandhi. One of the clauses of the ‘Constructive Programme’ was to popularize the charka (spinning wheel) and Khaddar (homespun) all Congress Workers should dress in Khaddar and learn to spin. For details see B.P. Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress: 1885-1935* (Madras: The Working Committee of the Congress, 1935), pp. 377-398.
161Ibid., p. 65.
166M.N. Roy, “What is a Programme?” (Part III) in *Selected Works of


168 Ibid., p. 60.

169 Ibid., p. 45. Italics in original.

170 Ibid., p. 62.


185 The details of his organisational proposals were provided in a series of confidential epistolary instructions to his communist contacts in India. Several of these letters were intercepted and copied by the Intelligence department before forwarding them to the addressees; they were subsequently produced as prosecution evidence in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. In them Roy proposed the formation of a secret and tightly knit Communist Party, which would be a


