MANABENDRA NATH ROY

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CHAPTER VII

MANABENDRA NATH ROY

M.N. Roy, one of the eminent thinkers of modern India, has propounded a philosophy, which is distinct from other traditional schools of Indian thought. He called it as Radical Humanism. Radical Humanism is neither materialism, nor idealism, but a scientific philosophy, insisting upon the freedom of the individual.

According to M.N. Roy, the function of philosophy “is to explain existence as a whole”. Roy considered that science and philosophy have different functions. Roy said “The function of Science is to describe and that of philosophy is to explain. Therefore, philosophy is called the science of sciences”.210

Thus Philosophy, according to Roy, should be based upon scientific foundation. According to him “Modern Scientific Philosophy is decidedly opposed to any dualist doctrine”. He said “Mysticism results from ignorance”. He is against all types of Mysticism, whether it is metaphysical, logical or spiritual. He considers that general laws of science have philosophical validity.

Science gradually explains philosophical problems. Scientific knowledge is the outcome of application of scientific method. This method utilizes experience and reason. He also considered that both being and becoming are important and says “Becoming is the essence of being”.213

210 Ibid
211 Ibid p 34
212 Ibid p 25
213 Ibid p 47
The world according to Roy is dynamic. Therefore it is becoming change and evolution. Criticizing absolute idealism, Roy said, Absolute idealism is a double-edged sword. It throws matter out of the front-door, only to let it by the back-door.”

He considered ‘Noumenon as well as phenomenon is projections of our consciousness. Consciousness is the sum of reality. Roy has condemned the subjective approach to reality.

M.N Roy’s metaphysical position may be called materialistic monism or monistic naturalism. While according to the former, matter is the only ultimate Reality; according to later the ultimate reality is nature. Thus the philosophy of M.N. Roy is monistic. Roy considered dualism to be the greatest problem faced by the philosophers.

M.N Roy presents a philosophical view which is based on latest findings of physical and social sciences. The values cannot be derived from facts. They are self-evident and no less objective than facts. The ultimate reality is nature or matter. Life has evolved from matter and from animal life has evolved man. Therefore man according to Roy is biological product. Man’s ethics, values etc are evolutionary in nature.

**Aims of Education**

The aims of life is to live or struggle for existence which is the basic drive in organism. Roy accepts Darwinian Theory of Evolution, in the human world, liberty is the highest value. So we have to establish a social system which strives to provide maximum freedom to the individual. He considers that values cannot exist apart from man. Knowledge, truth, liberty are meaningful only in human context.\(^{215}\)

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\(^{215}\) Indian Philosophy of Education p 165
According to first Rule of Radical Humanism “Man is the archetype of society, cooperative social relationships contribute to develop individual potentialities. But the development of the individual is the measure of social progress”.\textsuperscript{216}

Explaining social progress, Roy laid down the second principle. “Quest for freedom and search for truth constitute the basic urge of human progress”\textsuperscript{217}. Making liberty of Man the basic search in progress, Roy said “The purpose of all rational human Endeavour, individual as well as collective, is attainment of freedom, in ever increasing measure\textsuperscript{218}.

Man has a peculiar trait called Rationality. Man can make the world better with the help of his rationality and science. Real revolution requires full freedom of the individual. Therefore, Roy rejects the economic interpretation of history propounded by Karl Marx. Man is not an economic being, but a moral being. Intellectual and spiritual life is conditioned by instinct of reason.

Morality is not directly derived from religion. Even the savage has strong sense of good and bad. The quest for freedom distinguishes man from animal. Truth is a matter of human experience. According to Roy “the search for truth, therefore, is intimately associated with the quest of freedom as the essence of human nature”\textsuperscript{219}. This is the fundamental principle in the educational philosophy of M.N. Roy.

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    \item \textsuperscript{216} Roy M.n. New Humanism ( Calcutta. Renaissance Publishers. PVT LTD 1961) P.51
    \item \textsuperscript{217} Ibid P. 51-52
    \item \textsuperscript{218} Roy M.N. Reason, Romanticism and Revolution. Vol I P.23
    \item \textsuperscript{219} Roy M. N. Reason, Romanticism and Revolution. P. 51-52
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The purpose of Society

According to Roy there can be no other purpose of life than living. Since human Society is constituted by human beings; therefore its purpose is to serve the purpose of individuals. Thus human life itself is the aim of human collectivity.

Since, man has evolved out of animal; the purpose of human life may be initially interpreted in biological terms. Struggle for existence is the first purpose of human-beings. The human society makes the individual well versed in this study. The human reason contributes for the efficiency in this struggle for existence.

The aim of Education is to manifest the unmanifested capacities of human-individuals inherited as biological organisms. In the struggle for survival, the reason and the powers of judgment have evolved. The capacity of judgment is the basis of ethics and all moral values.

The society is the outcome of mans urge to liberty since without it the individual alone could not face natural calamities. He needs the cooperation of others for hunting, agriculture and to protect himself from wild animals and natural disasters. Because of these needs, he wants to form society. The aim of society is to help the individual. So any organization which impedes individual is not useful.

There is no problem in having individual freedom and leading collective life. There may be some regulations, which are also necessary for harmonious collective life. But it will not impede just individual freedom.

The individual development is the criterion of social development since the individual is prior to collectivity. The moral traits like liberty, progress, welfare etc. are
first achieved by the individual. Any welfare is ultimately individual welfare. In the words of Roy “collective well being is a function of the well being individuals”\textsuperscript{220}.

According to Roy the aim of education is liberty. He said “The purpose of all rational-human endeavors, individual as well as collective, is attainment of freedom in ever increasing measure. Freedom is progressive-disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals, as human beings and not as cogs in the wheels of a mechanized social organism”\textsuperscript{221}.

According to the third principle of Democracy the freedom of the individual is the only aim of the collectivity of the State. As it has been already pointed out, reason is the fundamental characteristic of human nature. Along with reason man has been endowed with emotions. The human will is the most potent element in human society. It is the determinant of human history.

According to M. N. Roy Marxist economic interpretation of history is born out of dualism. It is true that history is a determined process, but the factors determining it are not one but many, of which human Will is an important factor.

There for, according to the third principle of radical humanism the only purpose of the collectivity and the state is the liberty of the individual, according to radical humanist ethics, The Man’s freedom is the highest moral standard.

According to M.N. Roy “The Axiology of radical humanism deduces from the supreme value of life, because the urge for freedom is the essence of human existence”\textsuperscript{222}.

\textsuperscript{220} Roy M N, Radical Humanism P 17
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid
\textsuperscript{222} M.N.Roy-Radical humanism P.17
M.N Roy felt, humanist Ethics has evolutionary. In the process of evolution, moral values have evolved out of the animal traits. Radical humanist ethics does not require any religious or trans-mundane basis. He says “To be moral, one needs only to be human: it is not necessary to go in search of divine or mystic Metaphysical sanction. Humanist morality is evolutionary.”

Humanist educational values have evolved out of human needs. Besides liberty, there are other values. He says “The hierarchy of humanist axiology, thus is freedom, Knowledge, truth. They are not autonomous; they are interrelated, logically as well as ontologically”.

According to Roy viewed liberty and goodness are ultimately related. So also, Knowledge and virtue are related. Reminding the Socratic ethic. Roy said that “freedom cannot be attained by immoral means, nor can an enlightened man be a liar”.

**Value of Reason**

In Roy’s Philosophy, ‘Reason’, plays an important role. He thinks that the Reason is the Determinant of history as well as economics to quote his words “For creating a new world of Freedom, revolution, must go beyond an economic reorganization of society. Freedom does not necessarily follow from the capture of political power in the name of oppressed and exploited. Classes and abolition of private property in the means of production”. He thinks, a moral order will result from a rationally organized society, because viewed in the context of his rise of the back ground of a harmonious physical universe. Man is essentially rational and, therefore,

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223 Ibid
225 M.N.Roy,Politics,Power and Parties. P.72
226 Ibid p 58
moral. Education fulfills the rational desire for harmonious and mutually beneficial social relations.

Means of Education

Manabendra Nath Roy in his work ‘politics, power and parties, elaborated his educational thought. Like Plato, he insists that no ideal republic can be established in the absence of educated persons. Unless People are able to distinguish between right and wrong no good society can be established.

According to Roy it is scientific Knowledge that every human being possesses reason and Rational thought, a characteristic of intelligence a trait of human nature. Therefore what is required is to encourage reason in man. This is possible only through education. According to Roy those who want to put democracy in practice should feel that democracy is impossible without education.²²⁷

Manabendra is against compulsory Primary Education. Any compulsion is against liberty. An education which seeks to maintain status quo is not suitable for making the Community conscious of its inherent powers. Education should help man and women to think rationally and to decide themselves about the problems to be solved. Roy lamented that no government provides such an education.

The state governed education teaches the masses to sing songs of patriotism to salute the National Flag. To study History, edited by government and to work collectively to achieve success of the state. And no national-education provided by government in any country is the true democratic education.

²²⁷ Roy M.N. Politics,powers and parties
Types of Education:-

Roy says that there are important types of education. They are

(1) Education of citizenship.

(2) Political education.

(3) Education of freedoms

(4) Education for different sections of society in brief.

Education of Citizenship

Roy considered education, as the foundation for democracy. It is only through education, rational individuals can be created. Once the process of education is started, other steps may be taken, for the establishment of democratic structure. He considered that the education of citizens and the gradual building up of a political organization from below is the only guarantee against the dangers of party system.\textsuperscript{228}

Roy considered that scientific education will make people self dependent, rational and distinctive, and they cannot be misled by any self interested groups or parties. He thought a good education will give faith to a new institutional organization, which will be a guarantee against exploitation by an individual or a group of individuals.

Political Education

The expansion of education will make the citizen oppose are sorts of exploitation by an individual or a group. In the present situation victory in elections,
does not mean that the winning party is liked by the people. It also may mean that the candidate of the winning party has money, to spend or muscle power to coax the voters.

Educated voters, once they realize that a particular candidate is more after his self interest than the community welfare, will not get him elected again—thus the humanist political system gives importance to education of the citizens.

**Education of Freedom:**

According to M.N Roy, so long as the moral and cultural level of the people does not rise, the aim of education is not realized. The education provided in so called parliamentary democracies is not the education of freedom, but an education of slavery. These states provide compulsory fee primary education to create citizens supporting the state and not free individuals.

According to new humanism, it is not in the interest of the government or the state to curb the citizen’s freedom to grow their capacities, because ultimately a welfare state aims at making its citizens more and more free.

The aim of education is not merely to provide thee R’s but to create among the people a consciousness towards humanity, consciousness towards its right to be human beings and consciousness of its excellence and dignity. The purpose of education is to help them in utilizing their reason in this type of thinking.  

It is only such an education may create true democracies, in the world, thus strengthening freedom. But, he, feels, such education can be provided by the enlightened and free individuals and institutions and not by the state owned-educational institutions.

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229 Roy .M.N. politics, powers and parties. P121
**Education for different Sections of Society**

Roy feels that in the modern political and administrative structures there is no Freedom for the individual. Social Justice and equity requires that all individuals must be free and equal. Roy thinks man political democracy is not sufficient. There should be economic and social democracy, which are also equally important and necessary.

This democratization of intuitions social, political and economic is possible only through proper education, which gives importance to these values. Such education should be universally available accessible and affordable to all sections of society. Roy condemns the ancient Indian distinction between male and female. Brahmin and Sudra regarding the facility of education. He condemns all types of distinctions between different sections of society based upon political, economic or social considerations.

Roy thinks that the aims and ideas of education can be achieved only by realization of human values and the establishment of a humanist society. The sole aim of the state is to help in the achievement of this aim. Therefore, the state must arrange for the education of different sections of society. Sharma observes “During Roy’s time sufficient facility of education was not available to female and Backward Classes in India. Along with most of his contemporary, Indian philosophers of education Roy raised his voice against this inequality. The credit of the vast expansion of education among these sections of Indian society goes as much to Roy as to other contemporary Indian philosophers of education.”

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230 Sharma, Indian philosophy of Education. P - 172
**Critical Estimate**

According to M.N. Roy the crisis of modern civilization is a spiritual crisis. Man has lost faith in himself. Everywhere worship of group and collectivity has become a religion. All political parties worship power in which political leaders are the priests and the masses follow them blindly. Thus, humanist values have been lost in modern culture.

The humanist movement of M.N. Roy is not merely for India. It is for the world and for human values. He said “our appeal is to reason and moral responsibility. The response to this entirely distinguished appeal will be the measure of hope for the future not only of our country, but of the modern civilization” 231.

New Humanism, which is also called as Radical Humanism is scientific and integral philosophy. In it human being has been discussed not only in the context of society, but in that of the whole cosmos. Its central theme is the liberty of the individual. But it does not mean it is an individual and society according to Radical Humanism does not exist separately.

According to philosophy “Radicalism starts from the dictum that man is the measure of everything (Protagoras) or man is the root of mankind (Marx), and advocates reconstruction of the world as common wealth and fraternity of freemen, by the collective endeavour of spiritually emancipated moral men” 232.

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231 Roy M.N. New Humanism P – 97
232 Roy M.N. New Humanism P-59
New humanism rejects the hypothesis that man is basically guided by faith. On the other hand, he is basically rational in nature. Therefore, each human being is capable of attaining knowledge and solving individual and social problems.

New humanism makes morality the basis of educational philosophy since moral values are the chief values of human culture. It rejects authoritarianism and fascism which is found in many revolutionary social theories.

Radical Humanism considers equality and liberty equally necessary. The easiest means for social change is making men and women moral. It does not distinguish between means and ends and identifies them.

Radical Humanism convey that real education makes human being free. The new society of free individuals will not be limited to space and time. It will be realized only when it is realized everywhere. Thus a real social revolution will be a world revolution leading to a new humane, rational, and social order and for such a transformation education is the means.