Chapter 4
Philosophical Ideas and Analysis of Indian Society

4.1 Introduction

Philosophical ideas of Radical Humanism (RH) as propounded by Roy are embedded in what has come to be known as ‘Twenty Two Theses’. The genesis of these ideas is not based on any speculation but they arose in response to the wide-ranging experience and crisis of the post-war international situation. Roy critically examined inadequacies of the existing theories and ideologies in the light of modern knowledge and experience, with a view to understand the terrible mess or crisis confronting the contemporary society. This critical re-examination led to the detection of flaws and inadequacies in the older theories and practices in different spheres of life. He came to the conclusion that at the root of our unhappy experience was the failure of philosophy. So Roy, not satisfied with the existing philosophies and solutions they propounded as regards the crisis of modern age, tried to evolve a comprehensive philosophy of life, ‘a philosophy which combines mechanistic cosmology, materialist metaphysics, secular rationalism and rationalistic ethic to satisfy man’s urge for freedom and quest for truth, and also to guide his future action in pursuit of the ideals’ (Roy 1955:220).

4.2 Philosophy of the Movement (22 Theses)

Humanism however is not ideal; it is perhaps as old as human philosophy. It is the words ‘New’, ‘Radical’ or ‘Scientific’ as used by Roy to qualify his humanism that puts it on a different footing. Radical means going to the root and root for Roy is human individual. The main focus of study of humanist philosophy is man. ‘Radicalism starts from the dictum that ‘man is the measure of everything (Protagoras)’ or ‘man is the root of mankind (Marx)’
and advocates reconstitution of the world as a commonwealth and fraternity of free men, by
the collective endeavor of spirituality emancipated moral men' (Roy 1953:59).

Along with sovereignty of man, Roy's philosophy proclaims the authority of modern
science. In the past due to lack of adequate scientific knowledge, humanism could not be
placed on a rational, scientific foundation. Modern science is the basis of rationalist
humanism. Therefore Roy calls it new humanism, 'new because it is humanism enriched,
reinforced and elaborated by scientific knowledge and social experience gained during the
centuries of modern civilization' (Roy 1955:282). Roy tried to interpret human individual in
the light of scientific knowledge, traced all social progress made by mankind to his ideas and
visualized a new social order conducive to the welfare and freedom of the individual. Roy
was a full-blooded materialist, and the Radical Humanism as propounded by him is a
monistic philosophy, which believes in materialistic interpretation of history. World by
nature is material and there is nothing transcendental or supernatural about it. So in order to
understand material, objective world, philosophy has to be a theory of life whose function is
to explain the existence as a whole. 'Function of philosophy is to solve the riddle of universe.
Philosophy is theory of life, because it was born of the efforts of man to explain nature and
understand his own being in relation to its surroundings' (Roy 1947:6). Roy maintained that
life came out of inanimate matter and man is the highest product of the process of organic
evolution. He observed, 'life itself is an outcome of the becoming of man, his present being
and future perspective can be formulated only in the light of a sufficiently clear
understanding of entire cosmic scheme. A comprehensive philosophy embracing all the
aspects of nature and life must, therefore, be based upon a cosmology' (ibid). Thus, Roy's
philosophy could only be understood in the light of proper understanding of the cosmos and
its modern science, which studies the world as a cosmos-a law governed system.
The philosophical consequences of modern science cannot be explained except on the basis of a fairly comprehensive scientific knowledge. So philosophy and science are interwoven. Science gives knowledge about the various phases of existence i.e. its function is to describe and the function of philosophy is to explain the existence as a whole and therefore philosophy according to Roy could be called 'Science of sciences'. Roy approaches the problem of existence of scientific basis and repudiates any religious and metaphysical basis of philosophy. For a long time, philosophy was associated with religion and was dominated by the doctrine of creation out of nothing. The metaphysical, the mysterious, the absolute was the sole concern of philosophy and it is the development of modern science and scientific outlook which placed philosophy on a scientific footing. ‘Imperious advance of knowledge enabled man to withdraw more and more phenomena from the inscrutable will of the supernatural agencies and trace their causes to immanent properties and mechanical laws of nature’ (Roy 1943: 51). Roy believed philosophy is older than religion. In the process of intellectual evolution of man, reason appears earlier than faith. Instinct is a primitive form of reason. In fact the faith in god has a rational foundation, its own logic. It is a consequence of the belief that everything must have a cause and that no creation is possible without a creator and therefore it rendered the idea of god as the creator of the universe. By stretching the same logic (that everything has a cause) a man who by nature is rational, was confronted with the question as to who created or what created god that led to the belief that something (god) may be self caused. This may apply to universe as well which gave way to the notion that the world is self-caused. By finding causes of the natural phenomena in nature itself, science progressively reinforces this logically tenable position (Roy 1947: 2, 3).

Since religion is a belief in some supernatural or transcendental power and does not study the natural phenomena in nature itself, it cannot stand the test of logic or reason and therefore Roy rejected it. With the rise of modern science religion got liquidated. Man is not
passive observer. His spirit of inquiry and inquisitiveness in his nature (which according to Roy is a biological function) has enabled mankind to conquer nature in increasing measure and move to the road to progress. In the 19th century we see "age long struggle between religion and science, between the religious mode of thought and scientific made of thought, between faith and reason, between mystic agnosticism and the empirically established belief in man's capacity to know" (Roy 1955:258) and therefore philosophy also "came to be the field of battle between the belief in reason and irrationalism, scientific naturalism and various forms of camouflaged supernaturalism -- in short between knowledge and faith" (Roy 1955: 249).

Ultimately we see the triumph of science over religion and replacement of religious philosophy by a philosophy with natural science as its basis. New humanism is such a philosophy which if accepted both as a personal and social philosophy can enable mankind to grapple with the existential crisis the humanity finds itself in. It is true science cannot still explain many mysterious things of the universe but there always remains the possibility that science may be in a position to solve these mysteries in future. So, there is nothing unknowable. 'Besides, perfect knowledge is an ideal, never to be attained, because when there will be nothing more to know, extinction will overtake mankind. Science has burst the bubble of absolute knowledge and eternal truth -- the only thing eternal and immutable is perpetual change, and that this eternal phenomenon of change is governed by mechanical laws inherent in itself. Thus science justifies its name by merging itself into philosophy and philosophy ceases to be idle and vain speculation to stand out in the fullness of the glory of the science of sciences' (Roy 1943:57).

After doing away with distinction between science and philosophy, Roy asserts only possible philosophy is materialism. It is logically perfect because it does away with dualism and makes monism possible. Earlier religious philosophies tried to explain the physical
nature in terms of mystical metaphysics dominated essentially by the idea of god. Therefore 'all systems of philosophy other than materialism are dishonest religion' (Roy 1946: 58).

Philosophers have tried to explain life in terms of religion, mysticism, idealism, teleology etc. but none of the above explanations are acceptable to modern man with a scientific outlook as none of them could ever prove its assumptions and verify its postulates. Materialism is the only and most plausible hypothesis and provides the soundest philosophical foundation of the humanist view of life because, 'by abolishing the supernatural, it sets man spiritually free, capable of creating a world of goodness and harmony' (Roy 1955: 302). Like all materialists Roy believed world is an objective reality.

Nature is self-contained and self-explained and there is nothing transcendental or mystical about it. Materialist philosophy seeks explanation of nature in nature itself as the laws governing it are inherent in itself. These laws are nothing but logical and coherent relation of events. It provides a rational explanation of life by logically coordinating all the branches of positive knowledge in a system of thought. He maintained that life came out of inanimate matter and man is the highest product of the process of organic evolution. He believed all the attributes of man including his intelligence and emotion have a physical basis and can be traced back to the lowest form of organic matter. There is no room for idealism and dualism in Roy's philosophy as he accepted monistic materialism without any reservations.

In his Jail volumes we find, Roy made a serious attempt to reconcile materialism with the latest developments in scientific knowledge. In his book 'Science and Philosophy', he tried to prove that the new challenges of modern Science, like the Theory of Relativity, the Quantum Theory, the electrical structure of matter etc. which revolutionized the traditional concepts of sciences (as represented by Newtonian physics) ultimately led to the strengthening of the foundation of materialism rather than blasting it. He wrote, 'the fallacies of Newtonian natural philosophy should be admitted. Materialism should be freed from the
fallacies and restated in terms, which would harmonize with the latest scientific knowledge about the anatomy and physiology of nature inanimate as well as living. He tried to establish that despite the fact that the old concept of matter was no longer tenable, nonetheless the physical reality remains.

Mechanistic cosmology is the foundation of materialism. Roy viewed men, with their mind will and intelligence, as an integral part of physical universe—a cosmos—a law governed system. Society, which the human beings have created for their welfare is also a part of cosmos and law governed. Therefore social sciences cannot be isolated from natural sciences. The knowledge derived from the two can be coordinated and integrated into a logical coherent philosophy. To coordinate the philosophy of nature with a social philosophy and ethics in a monistic system is the central purpose of New Humanist. It is a humanist as well as materialist, naturalist as well as rationalist, creativist as well as determinist. It deduces a humanist social philosophy and positive (non-relative) ethics, from a mechanist cosmology and a materialist metaphysics (Physical Realism) (Ellen Roy and Ray 1948: 1). So, New Humanism which can be practiced both as a personal and social philosophy, can be deduced from a general philosophy of nature; it is ‘a philosophy which will give an integrated picture of human existence and explain human existence, including desire, emotion, instincts, intuition, will, reason, without going outside the physical world, which is at least theoretically accessible to human comprehension’ (Roy 1955: 159). Thus we see, in order to find the solution of the problems man faces today, Roy adopted a multidisciplinary approach, seeking the insights and wisdom he could from different provinces of knowledge. What he was seeking was an understanding of man, ‘root of mankind’ i.e., to know what man was, what he, on his own was capable of, because such an understanding alone, could lead man to take charge of his own affairs and change his

1See, The Marxian Way, volume 11, p80, 1946-47. This Journal was renamed as The Humanist Way in 1950. From 1945 to 1952 it was issued as quarterly from Calcutta.
conditions for the better. A philosophy embodying in it an optimistic outlook (theory) and realistic practice was the need of the hour, the way out of the crisis. Roy recognized and understood the need, and tried to supply such a philosophy. And this is what philosophy of radical humanism contained in 22 theses is all about. Here an attempt will be made to briefly discuss basic postulates of Roy’s philosophy.

In the philosophy of radical humanism Roy emphasizes two basic traits of human nature: rationality and man's urge for freedom. He tries to trace their origin to the physical universe and to pre human biological evolution. In nature things don't happen in a chaotic or haphazard way, there is some regularity, some order, and some definite pattern. And since biological evolution is a rational process; human species, being a result of this organic evolutionary process, is endowed with rationality. According to Roy, 'Growing out of the background of a law governed universe, man must be a rational being' (Roy 1955:250). The reason in man is an echo of the harmony of universe. Thus reason is a biological property, an inherent attribute in all human beings primitive or civilized. Thus Roy identified reason in man with determinism in nature. All biological processes including man's mental activities take place in the context of law-governed nature. Therefore rationality can be regarded as a biological function, a property of physical existence. It is neither a metaphysical nor a mystic category. It is the consciousness of the harmony in nature and as such an empirical reality. Reason is the simple instinctive notion that objects of existence are usually related, which means animal species has always been aware of environments that is, it is characterized by the property of consciousness. In the process of biological evolution we see the growth of nervous system, which culminates in the formation of brain that physiologically is called mind and is essentially rational. Reason therefore is not just a property of modern civilized man but it is very much a part of animal species as well and in
fact it is inherited by human species as primitive instinct, from his immediate animal ancestry.

Thus, to a humanist Roy, rationality is very important and stable element of human nature and any progressive philosophy attempting to take humanity away from fatalism, orthodoxy, ignorance, blind faith, fanaticism, must evoke the authority of reason, otherwise not a bright future awaits mankind which, believed Roy, is 'bound to be ruled by the law of jungle' (Roy 1955:275). Therefore, 'the purpose of all social endeavor to be to make man increasingly conscious of his innate rationality' (Roy 1953:34). Here it is important to point out that even though Roy did not exclude human will and emotion in his analysis of human nature, nevertheless he attributed only secondary importance to him in so far as he believed they could be reconciled with reason. He asserted 'in as much as the entire process or biological evolution takes place in the context of the world of dead matter, human will cannot be an antithesis of the law governed ness of the physical universe. Reason harmonizes the two' (Roy 1952:16). Human individual with his reasoning power could control his emotion and direct his will. 'Reason being a biological property, it is not the antithesis of will. Intelligence and emotion can be reduced to a common biological denominator' (Thesis Four).

Morality is another important aspect of human nature. It has its basis in rationality as morality is envisaged by Roy, as mere translation of reason into social idiom. Since man is inherently rational, social relationships can be rationally harmonized and therefore, it can be expected that a moral order will result from a rationally organized society. So writes Roy, 'man is essentially rational and therefore moral. Universe is a moral order governed by laws inherent in itself. Morality emanates from the rational desire for harmonious and mutually beneficial social relations' (Roy 1953:34). For many traditional and reactionary thinkers, morality is essentially associated with religion. Roy did not recognize any causal relation
between morality and religion, as it is not borne by historical facts. We find, there exists a
certain code of conduct even among higher animals. These rules go into the composition of
human instincts. With savage morality was something instinctive because a savage without
the notion of God has a strong sense of good and bad. Morality is nothing but, common norm
for human behavior. This common normative pattern is accepted by majority of people, as it
is believed to be good for all. So, goodness can be the objective standard of morality and
only when goodness can be rationally conceived, we can talk about social morality.

Thus, for Roy morality has nothing to do with religion. He believed, ‘A secular
rationalist system of ethics can be logically deduced from the mechanist cosmology of
materialist philosophy’ (Roy 1955:258). A system of secular morality was of vital
importance as he believed in the ‘absence of secular morality, a modern secular state may
logically degenerate into a state without morality. Roy’s approach to problem of ethics is
essentially materialistic. He regards materialist mortality as the noblest form of mortality, as
it enables man to be moral without reference to any imaginary transcendental power. He
wrote, ‘the religious man’s morality is either hypocrisy or performed under duress. A
materialist is a moral by his own conviction. He practises virtue not as a payment for a place
in heaven or for the salvation of his soul, but simply because he cannot help it’ (Jail
Volumes, II, p123b). He further observed ‘to be moral, one needs only to be human; it is not
necessary to go in search of divine or mystic – metaphysical sanction’ (Roy 1955:307).

Humanist morality, unlike religious morality implies that in order to be moral man does not
have to be subordinate to some supernatural power. Man as man can be moral as mortality is
referred to innate rationality. Reason is the only sanction of morality, which is an appeal to
conscience so, ‘mortality being the dictate of conscious, it can be practiced only by
individuals, without moral men there can be no moral society’ (Roy 1952:8). To humanist
Roy, basic problem of our times in one of morality, i.e. of generating common norms,
common values, which can enable mankind to live in a harmonious way by rationally organizing social relationship. So, what is needed is not just revolution in economic and political sphere but a complete reorientation of social philosophy. With emphasis on the supreme importance of the moral values in public life, he wrote, 'the moral chaos of our time is not the nemesis of modern materialist civilization; it has resulted from the fallacies of traditional ethical doctrines and classical philosopher. A moral regeneration of the modern world, therefore, calls for a moral philosophy with no transcendental, super-natural extra-intellectual reference'.

In contemporary era when corruption, exploitation of man by man, conflicts, caste communal tensions and various other crimes in general and increasing at an alarming rate it is utopian to believe that mere discovery of new values and concepts will play the magic. Bhattacharjee rightly points out, 'the moral crises of our time is due more to the failure of man than to the failure of moral philosophies. The uncontrolled selfishness of man rather than his failure to find a sanction of moral values within himself lies at the root of the moral problem of our times' (Bhattacharjee 1971:127). Even during his Marxist days Roy believed that right knowledge will automatically lead to ethical conduct. He wrote, 'the materialist is virtuous not out of fear, by coercion, for greed; he is virtuous, because he can not be otherwise, and it is knowledge that enables him to be so'. Basic assumption being, that men will use that knowledge for enhancement of human happiness.

According to Roy the inherent attributes of human nature are rationality, morality and spirit of cooperation. He did recognize the existence of destructive human attributes like competition, ambition, struggle, jealousy, anger envy and other combative instincts but regarded them as secondary. He wrote, 'an unprejudiced study of history reveals that the

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The desire to be helpful to fellow-man is a more fundamental human trait than competition and conflict. The urge for freedom according to Roy constitutes another basic, stable trait of human nature. The origin of this urge was traced to the biological heritage of mankind. Freedom for Roy was not an empty, abstract concept. It was an empirical fact; a psychological urge for freedom is at the root of every man’s being. This urge can be derived from the process of biological evolution. Man has emerged out of law-governed universe. As soon as it appeared on earth, human species had to undertake the struggle with environment to survive. Man had been struggling to conquer nature with the purpose to live and to survive as human beings in the sense that human beings exist not merely as the physical plane but also at emotional and intellectual plane. Here the idea of freedom becomes important. In the last analysis, believes Roy, history is in fact the record of man’s struggle for freedom and social evolution is nothing but the continuation of biological evolution taking place on a higher level and therefore, the quest for freedom is the continuation on a higher plane of intelligence and emotion of the biological struggle for existence. In the case of human beings the struggle for existence develops into a quest for freedom as man is not content just with simply adapting himself to environment but tries to change environment in accordance with his own needs and desires to be free from the physical limitation. And therefore, ‘the search for Truth’, he writes further ‘is a corollary thereof (quest for freedom) Increasing knowledge of nature enables man to be progressively free from the tyranny of natural phenomena and physical and social environments. Truth is the content of knowledge’ (Roy 1953:51).

To know everything is man’s instinctive and primary endeavor, for increasing knowledge brings him freedom in greater measure. According to Roy, every individual, because of his developed brain is biologically endowed with certain intellectual and human

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1 See Jall Volumes, 1941, p.156a.
2 see The Marxist Way, volume II, 1946-47, p.195
potentialities and the essence of freedom lies not in its economic or political connotations, but in unfolding of these potentialities, 'therefore freedom must be defined as progressive disappearance of the manifold impediments to the unfolding of the potentialities inherent in man' (Roy 1955:288). So in order to be free man must be in an environment free from every kind of cultural, political regimentation, an atmosphere which is helpful to the development of his personality; an atmosphere which results in the realization of all intellectual and creative potentialities of man so that he can consciously and purposefully shape his world according to his own will, his own idea of a better society. Roy however did realize that the social context and the circumstances in which man lives set a limit to human endeavors. He emphasizes, that under adverse circumstances, the best of endeavors may not be fruitful, while under more favorable conditions they may bear fruit. He however does not believe in any causal relation between societal factors and urge for freedom, which has its basis in human nature, his mind and desires rather than in the external social environment. For Roy, freedom is the supreme value of life, because the urge for freedom is the essence of human existence. For him freedom is not an instrumental value. It is not a means to something, it is an end in itself. He rejected all those philosophies, which nullify the concept of freedom. He wrote, 'the axiology of Radical Humanism deduces all values from the supreme value of freedom. The hierarchy of humanist axiology is freedom, knowledge and truth. They are not autonomous; they are interrelated, logically as well as ontologically. Therefore, freedom can not be attained by immoral means, nor can an enlightened man be a liar' (Roy 1952:17, 18). Roy defined freedom as progressive disappearance of the manifold impediments to the unfolding of potentialities inherent in man. If freedom is conceived in such a way it can be concretely measured and it ceases to be an abstract concept. The freedom of any system, economic or political can be measured by the actual measure of freedom it affords to the individual. Free society will not result automatically from an economic reorganization of
society, so what is needed is not the Marxian revolution bringing about changes in the infrastructure of society but a philosophical revolution, revolution at a mental and a cultural level. Radical humanism at the philosophical level calls for such a revolution. It is a philosophy of life, of man, concerned with man and everything else to the extent that it concerns man's life. History is not just a succession of events brought about by the development of means of production. In the whole process of historical development man plays a very crucial role. Therefore radical humanism attributes central place to man, his intelligence, his ideas, his creativity and his activity in the process of social evolution.

The belief in creativeness and freedom is the essence of romantic view of life. The idea of Revolution for Roy is a romantic idea; at the same time it is rational because revolution takes place of necessity. Romanticism implying revolt against the established order, tradition, orthodoxy, has to be harmonized with rationalism for the success of a revolution. 'Romanticism tempered with reason, and rationalism enlivened by the romantic spirit of adventure pave the road to successful revolutions' (Roy 1952:15). This romantic view of life which attributes an important role to human will and human ideas in the process of revolutionary change leads to the doctrine that man is the maker of his own history. Man is not to be regarded as, `mere cog in the wheel of a mechanist process determined by the development of means of production, but as a sovereign force, a thinking being' (Roy 1955:205).

Man reacts to his surroundings and its stimuli with ideas instead of mere instinctive responses and this distinguishes him from lower animals. Ideas thus are a very powerful weapon in the struggle for existence. Roy believed, man's brain can be regarded as a means of production and produces the most revolutionary commodity-- ideas, which operate as the most iconoclastic force in history. Any philosophy denying the autonomous existence of ideas and their crucial role in history is bound to be theological or religious in nature. That is
precisely the reason as to why till middle ages, man’s struggle for freedom centered around
the problem of man’s relation with God and only in the 16th century, i.e. the age of
rennaissance man, with his scientific outlook and enlightenmenct could free himself from the
imaginary problem of predestination and it was replaced by a more realistic problem, one of
man’s relationship with society. Radicalism is a philosophy concerned with man and his
freedom. It revolves around the individual and individual is an end in itself. The society or
any collectivity like caste, class or nation is just a means and at no cost the end should be
sacrificed for the means. It is man who has created society, state and various other
collectivities for his own welfare and for the purpose of achieving his ultimate aim of
freedom. Therefore, ‘the purpose of all rational human endeavor, individual as well as
collective, is attainment of freedom in ever increasing measure’ (Roy 1953:51-52).

Two basic ideas on which the philosophy of New-Humanism rests are Marxian
dictum ‘Man is the root of mankind’ and ‘Man must be the measure of everything’, a
declaration made by Protagoras more than 2500 years ago. Yet, mankind seems to have
forgotten its soul. So, ‘Man comes first and then the mankind; individual is antecedent to
society which he creates as the means of unfolding of his potentialities’ (Roy 1952:6).
Individual is sovereign and not the collectivity and therefore he should not be made to suffer
tyranny of any living or non-living entity.

In spite of the fact that man is endowed biologically with the urge to freedom,
freedom still remains a far cry despite greater and greater knowledge attained. According to
Roy the core of the present crisis is the reversal of the relationship between ends and the
means and complete subordination of creator (the man) to his creation (society, state, God
etc.). The end has been forgotten and means have become an end in itself. All collectivist
doctrines and conflicting schools of political thought have merged the man in the mass and
have denied the possibility of individual freedom. Therefore, ‘a humanist revival, i.e.,
restoration of man in his proper place of primacy and sovereignty, is the only way out of the crisis' (Roy 1955:294). In spite of greater knowledge, man has become slave of his own creations and there by not attained the goal of freedom primarily, 'because he has had no clear and satisfactory picture of himself and his place in nature and that is why he has not been able to shape his own creation, society, in such a way as to live in environments which allow him to become free' (Ellen and Ray 1948:1).

Knowledge no doubt is conducive to man's freedom as it has enabled him to conquer nature and make tremendous progress, which again should be measured with reference to the position of the individual in the changed picture of the world. It is the advance made in the quest for freedom and research for truth. But basic problem is that knowledge still remains beyond the reach of majority and therefore people cannot derive from it the measure of freedom attainable even now. Due to lack of knowledge man has not been able to realize his own potentialities and has not become conscious of the fact that he is the archetype of society and he has the ability to change it, reconstruct it in such a way that will grant him freedom in greater and greater measure.

Man is the archetype of society and has the potentiality of evolving the entire pattern of social relationships. 'The function of these social relationships should be to secure for individuals, as individuals, the maximum measure of freedom. The sum total of freedom actually enjoyed by its members individually is the measure of the liberating or progressive significance of any social order. Otherwise, the ideal of social liberation and progress are deceptive' (Roy 1953:38). Roy further notes that 'no political philosophy or a scheme of social reconstruction can have more than a very limited revolutionary significance if it dismisses the concept of individual freedom as an empty abstraction. A political system and an economic experiment, which subordinate the man of flesh and blood to an abstract
collective ego can not possibly be the suitable means for the attainment of goal of freedom. It is absurd to argue that negation of freedom is the road to freedom’ (Roy 1953:38-39).

Thus we see that ‘The master of passion of Roy’s life was urge for freedom’ as one of his admirer says. Since it is the urge for freedom, which has resulted in the creation of society, the individual discharges his social responsibility voluntarily and not under any compulsion. His responsible behavior can be explained not in terms of homage to some God or collective ego but he does so out of moral conviction, which grows from the consciousness of freedom. For Roy the concept of individual freedom is not incompatible with the social responsibility. He was opposed to the theory of collective ego, group mind or any socio-political system that submerged man’s individual liberty in any collectivity or authority. He evaluated the system of parliamentary democracy and communism and reached the conclusion that first in Europe during the interwar period, the idea of democracy fell in disrepute, basically due to neglect of human individual and then proletarian dictatorship was meted with the same fate precisely because it subordinated the individual to the collective ego of class, which lead to the rise of fascism. However, later the ideal of democracy was revived but keeping in view the realities of the actual situation, the important question is –Is democracy possible? For Roy, ‘Radicalism’ alone offers a positive answer.

In chapter 3, we have already discussed the deficiencies of the communist philosophy and therefore here we intend to point out the shortcomings of the parliamentary system as perceived by Roy and the alternative offered by him. Roy cherished the values of liberalism and democracy in the real sense as a way of life, encompassing all aspects of social life. The ideal of democracy was the most desirable ideal as it incorporates the progressive principles of freedom, equality, justice and democratic cooperation. But in actual practice the practice of western democracy has been very disappointing, so it was felt by Roy that the limitations of parliamentary democracy could no longer be ignored. He points out that this system of
based on private monopoly of resources and means of production resulting in pauperization of large number of people. So it does not ensure economic democracy. ‘Liberalism is falsified or parodied under the formal Parliamentary democracy. The doctrine of laissez faire only provides the legal sanction to the exploitation of man by man. The concept of economic man negates the liberating doctrine of individual. The economic man is bound to be a slave or a slaveholder. This vulgar concept must be replaced by the reality of an instinctively rational being who is moral because he is rational.’ (Roy 1953:55).

3). Another reason which Roy was responsible for the debacle of democracy and rise of fascism was the absence of spirit of international responsibility and any action at the international level to safeguard the system and the democratic interest. Fascism was on the other hand organized into an international block and this solidarity at international level helped in considerably to the rise of fascism and debacle of democracy.

During inter-war period proletarian dictatorship through violent revolution was offered as an alternative to discredit Parliamentary democracy. As we have already seen, the practice of communism also did not produce any better results and therefore Roy abandoned communism as the theory and practice of any kind of dictatorship was repugnant to him. Roy from the very beginning was the upholder of sovereignty, freedom and dignity of human individual. This thread runs throughout his thought and it is with the individual as the measuring rod that he has tried to evaluate various philosophies and he rejected and condemned all those philosophies and systems of thought which nullified the individual freedom in theory or in practice. For the same reason he found the communist practice of Marxism also wanting and hence rejected it. Many critiques of Roy have pointed out that
humanist Roy and Marxist Roy are diametrically opposed to each other as the ideas he
advocated in his humanist phase and his basic philosophy of radical humanism is complete
negation of his earlier Marxian faith and Marxian philosophy. This however is not true. Roy
had never been an orthodox Marxist that is the reason he could cross the intellectual swords
even with the tallest of Marxists like Lenin.

It is true that Roy has been critical of some of the fundamental principles of Marxism.
He rejected economic determinism, attributed positive and independent role to ideas, was
against the subordination of man to class, was critical of socialism being consolidated at the
cost of democracy, planning being imposed at the cost of individual, efficiency at the cost of
experimentation and choice as one witnessed in USSR. He also brushed aside the Marxian
philosophy of withering away of state under communism as a mere utopia. Yet, being critical
of Marxism does not make him anti-Marxist as has been pointed out by his critiques. His
philosophy of radical humanism is not a negation of Marxism because it retains the stable,
the abiding elements of Marxism; it retains the humanist, the libertarian, the moralist spirit of
Marxism. As Roy observes, ‘Marx talked of socialism as the kingdom of freedom, where
man will be the master of his social environments. One who preached such a humanist
doctrine could not be a worshipper at the shrine of an exacting collective ego, even of the
proletariat’ (Roy 1955:219).

So Marx conceives of man essentially as a rational being who is capable of
controlling his destiny and this is very much the essence of radical humanism, a philosophy
that recognizes Marxian dictum that ‘man is the root of mankind’, primacy being given to
human individual. As Roy observes ‘freed from the fallacy of economic determinism, the
humanist, libertarian, moralist spirit of Marxism will go into the making of the new faith of
our time. It is a part of accumulated store of human heritage, which must be claimed by the
builders of the future, who will not belong to any particular class’ (Roy 1955:219). So we see
Roy's ideas were not inconsistent with fundamental principle of Marxism, though his interpretation and understanding of these principles was different from those of orthodox Marxist who believed Marxism to be a revealed wisdom and who were responsible for the degeneration of Marxism into a closed and institutionalized system. According to Roy the fundamental feature of Marxism is its dynamic nature. It is not ideology of any particular class, but is a philosophy, a system of thought, a heritage of humanity, which provides the basis for fighting for a better future. He was against any kind of dogmatism so he did not believe 'that spiritually enslaved people can lead the struggle for freedom' (Roy 1946:167), which is so crucial for the development and progress of humanity as a whole.

Fundamental principles of any theory must be continually put to test and readjusted in accordance with the experience and same should be done with regard to Marxian thought as well as the judgments found hundred years ago can not hold true today and for all times to come. According to Roy revision of Marxism is in fact inherent in Marxism. He writes, ‘Marxism is capable of enriching itself continuously with the lessons of new experience.... It is capable of being the philosophy of the future, provided it will not be debased into dogmatism approximating a religious faith’ (Roy 1947: 100-101). So, the fact that Roy proposed to free Marxism from certain fallacies does not make him anti Marxist. He stuck to some of the basic assumption of Marx till the end, what he was opposed to, was the communist practice of Marxism in so far as it enslaved the human individual. In practice individuals were utterly powerless. Idea was propagated that hope for oppressed and exploited lay only in the collectivity. Individual there was lost in the collectivity and they lost their dignity and sovereignty as individuals.

Thus we see Roy was disappointed both with the experiment of parliamentary democracy and communism and what he proposed as an alternative was organized democracy. As Sibnaryan Ray observes, ‘communism had emerged as a philosophy and a
movement as capitalist culture and democratic pattern began to show definite signs of exhaustion. Radical democracy emerged as a philosophy and a movement when communism had ceased to be a mere revolutionary utopia, had been put to practice, and found to be undergoing the process of obsolescence' (Ray 1946:71). Basic philosophical principles and values of Radical humanism can be traced back in the crude form to early rationalists and democrats. Though these ideas may be found in scattered way in the works of many important philosophers like Plato, More, Vico, Rousseau, Marx, Proudhon etc. as a movement for human progress and freedom it is definitely a contemporary movement which according to Sib Ray has emerged out of the requirement of the contemporary socio-cultural crisis, particularly during the inter war decades.

In his humanist phase unlike his Marxism Roy believed that the world is still bipolar, but it is no longer the issue between the socialism and capitalism but between dictatorship and democracy. Fascism that has resulted both from the decay of capitalism and from inadequacy of communism to lead the forces of progress, is no less cultural than a politico-economic phenomena, so the malady is not merely economic and what is required is not just a proletarian revolution bringing about new relations of production. As the crisis is largely cultural, a cultural revolution is the need of the hour. Therefore what is needed is a philosophical revolution, a revolution at the level of human values and attitudes. ‘For creating a new world of freedom, revolution must go beyond an economic reorganization of society’ (Roy 1953:53). Radical humanism emphasizes the need for a philosophical revolution or in other words a social renaissance must precede socio-economic revolution. It is in fact a precondition for any radical social readjustment to bring more freedom. Radical humanism can be regarded as a system of ideas, which enables one to understand the present and offers general ideas which indicate the problems of the future.
Essence of philosophical revolution is that individual with his potentialities, intelligence, creativity, sense of judgment is the maker of his destiny and he is not dependent upon any extra human agency for unfoldment of his potentialities as a man. Therefore he fully assumes his personal responsibility in historic work of achieving human fulfillment. He allows no other authority to influence or determine his judgment and belief except experience and reason. So, renaissance can only be brought about by the growth of scientific knowledge. It means regeneration of man, a man with scientific modern outlook is its essence. As Roy underlines, in an age of science most people believe that science has served humanity by producing electric light, motorcars, airplane etc. That is only a partial view. In fact few realize the outlook that science has produced during the last two hundred years. Science has given us a new view of the universe. He believed that the future of India depends on a courageous application of scientific knowledge. As man learns to apply the scientific method to the problems of everyday life, in that measure he will rise to and to reach his allotted height. Let the dogs of conservation, ignorance and fanaticism bark, but the glorious caravan of the Indian nation will move on with irresistible force. Thus modern science has its own philosophical consequences. Growth of scientific outlook is part of renaissance, which alone can enable people to outgrow the religious mode of thought and will free man from the imaginary authority of God, the supreme authority.

Thus, renaissance broadly meant the revolt of man against all the fetters, spiritual and temporal that restricted his freedom as man. Roy therefore called for the revolt against authority, revolt against tradition, and revolt against the intolerable conditions of life. Therefore renaissance is hostile to metaphysical, religious, teleological view of life. Man becomes aware that his survival, security and harmonious development depends not on any

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1 See C.V. Raman’s convocation address at the University of Bombay, 1932, undated quoted by Roy.

etaneous authority but it depends on his providing others with similar opportunities. So the
drance in outlook towards the problems of life and society evokes a revolutionary outlook in
man, which leads to growth of romantic confidence in man’s creative ability and potential to
change the world.

Thus we see that Roy’s radical humanism emphasizes the need for a social
renassance by increasing the number of men of renaissance. For Roy, the crisis of the
day world is cultural crisis, which can be experience only by men who are able to
alyze society with a rational and critical outlook. So intellectuals have a very important
role to play. The solution in the changed circumstances does not lie in bringing about any
armed revolution but essentially in the revival of man’s faith in himself i.e. in a humanist
revival. According to Roy ‘The new way of revolution is neither an assumption nor a theory,
it is a lesson of history’ (Roy 1946:195). As men make and remake the new world, solution
of the crisis lies first of all in creating a widespread consciousness of the crisis, as the victims
of the crisis are themselves not conscious of it. Only a group of conscious people, feeling the
urge with intensity to change the world can remake the world.

Since Roy was a humanist and for him individual is the center or the root, any effort
for reorganization of society must also begin from the root that is the individual. Therefore
the precondition of creating a free society is that, ‘there must be a conscious and integrated
effort to stimulate amongst the people the urge for freedom, the desire to rely upon
themselves, the spirit of free thinking and the will never to submit to any external authority
by exchanging their freedom for the security of the slave. A new renaissance based on
nationalism and cosmopolitan humanism is essential for democracy to be realized’ (Roy
1955:280-281). The source of inspiration of renaissance can be traced in the ancient pagan
culture of Greece and Rome. Renaissance was the revolt of man against God which ushered
in the philosophy of freedom.
In Roy's opinion what is needed is the creation of conditions under which democracy will be possible. In other words political revolution in order to be functional for both individual and society, as a whole must be preceded by Cultural Revolution. In Europe renaissance movement, which was a democratic humanist movement, preceded democracy and it placed human individual at the center of things. A congenial climate for democracy was created by the emergence of scientific and secular outlook, which resulted in the emancipation of people from the tyranny of Pope and also resulted in the growth of science and technology and thereby material progress.

In Indian context, we have had democracy at political level but due to lack of renaissance movement in India, the intellectual and social conditions congenial for proper functioning of democracy have not been created and that makes democracy at political level meaningless under present day Indian society, characterized as it is by orthodoxy, fatalism, rationalism, conservatism, castism, patriarchalism, regionalism etc. Democracy in the real sense is not possible and Roy believed that unless and until some revolutionary changes are brought about at cultural level, Indian democracy will pave way to fascism.

Alternative to parliamentary democracy is not dictatorship; it is organized democracy or radical democracy. One of the most vital instrumental forms of renaissance movement is the building up of a network of organized democratic political units connected in a pyramidal form to achieve coextensive and general identification with the society as a whole. Politically, the radical democratic state must ensure individual freedom against any form of power monopoly. The renaissance movement must go hand in hand with the process of politico-economic organization of people on democratic lines. The concept of democracy must be philosophically reoriented because, 'democracy is possible only on the basis of humanist philosophy, which suggests that a democratic society, including its political organization, can be built on the foundation of voluntary, intelligent and purposeful co-
operation of men consciously pursuing the ideal of freedom to be experienced individually' (Roy 1952:26). So individuals have to be organized into cooperatively functioning social bodies and by negating the tendency towards individualistic atomization, and bureaucratization of administrative functions. Concrete formulations of units of organized democracy are to be found in the concept of people's committees. RDP placed before the country the Draft constitution of Free India in which the basic idea of organized democracy was outlined. It advocates the idea that instead of lonely, helpless individuals the units of really democratic state should be small groups i.e. people's committees.

Cardinal principle of Radical democracy is that the power should remain vested in the people. These local republics will wield sovereign power in local affairs. The representatives of the local people on the basis of unrestricted adult franchise will constitute these republics. So, basic objective is to form such local committees in sufficiently large number distributed over the length and breadth of the country. This means the real power will be in hands of people and it will solve the problem of concentration of power in the hands of minority. State as it exists today will be liquidated and individual will no longer be subordinate to state. Roy did not believe in the Marxian utopia of withering away of the state. He advocated that state should be reorganized on the principle that sovereignty belongs to the people. State should regulate public relations in such a way that it should promote general welfare without curbing the freedom of individual, i.e. it should not be an instrument of coercion. Roy does not appreciate the notion that state is essentially an organ of coercion. Even during his Marxist phase he believed, that despite the division of society into antagonistic classes with diverse interest, cohesive forces are inherent in the society. Otherwise there could not have been any history of civilization. So one can visualize an idealized state when contradictory forces will disappear and society will be a homogeneous organization. Function of state in such a society would be limited. It would only be a coordinating factor, one of various social
Institutions and its main function will be to harmonize the functions of various other institutions to maintain social equilibrium and social solidarity in a society. Radical humanism believes in the 19th century liberal dictum that, that government is the best that governs the least. So the basic problem of democratic political practice is that of decentralization of power. Along with diffusion of political power, economy of modern society is to be decentralized as economic liberation of masses is an essential condition for their advancement towards the goal of freedom.

To survive the crisis of present day world and for proper functioning of democracy as way of life it is important that a political practice need not be motivated by the lust for power. A party working for the establishment of political order in which, power will actually be wielded by entire people will have to be composed of detached, selfless individuals who are not interested in power for the sake of power. For them, power will not be an end in itself; it will just be a means by which a free society can be created. For Roy, ‘intelligence, integrity, moral excellence and wisdom should be the test of leadership. The fundamental democratic principle-the greatest good to the greatest number-can be realized only when the conduct of public affairs will be in charge of spiritually free individuals who represent none but their own conscious’ (Roy 1946:251).

According to Roy, RDP was composed of such spiritually free individuals. He believed that once such a society is created, the party will mechanically liquidate itself and it will merge with the people and the state ultimately will be co-terminus with the society. After having undergone the bitter experience of party politics and defeat of RDP in elections he came to the conclusion that with the party system the politics is bound to become a mere scramble for power. Power becomes an end in itself, which defeats the professed goal of modern politics of establishing a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Party system cannot be in tune with first two terms of the democracy. Any government can
The government for the people. Therefore Roy advocated the idea of party less democracy. To be real, democracy must be direct; control of government directly by the people...with the rise of party system, the idea of popular sovereignty becomes a constitutional fiction' (Roy 1952:30). The sovereignty of the people is in fact transferred to a group of corrupt politicians constituting a party, corrupt because the Party system corrupts best of men. So there is no place for political parties in Roy's scheme of Radical democracy because it is through the instrumentality of political parties that power is concentrated in the hands of few which in turn leads to corruption. So in order to raise politics above corruption, it must be free from the lust for power. While placing political programs before the people leaders must appeal to reason, as man is a rational being. In other words, votes should be captured not by exploiting the religious or casteist sentiments of ignorant masses but a genuine effort should be made to make people conscious of their intelligence, to make them self-reliant, to help them judge for themselves on the basis of rationality as to what is right and what is wrong. For Roy elimination of political parties is essential for direct democracy and for purifying politics. It follows from his perspective that diffusion of power and direct control of state by people is essential for a truly democratic state, which is an important organ of a free society. He writes:

The ideal of radical democracy will be attained through the collective efforts of spiritually free men united in the determination of creating a world of freedom. They will function as guides, friends and philosophers to the people rather than as there would be rulers. Consistent with the goal of freedom, their political practice will be rational and therefore ethical. Their effort will be reinforced by the growth of people's will to freedom. Ultimately, the radical democratic state will rise with the support of enlightened public opinion and as well as intelligent action of the people. Realizing that freedom is inconsistent with concentration of power, radical democrats will aim at the widest diffusion of power (Roy 1953:58).

Roy considered peoples committees or professional group of engineers, economists, medical men, jurists and others engaged in intellectual and artistic, literary and other creative vocations as an alternative to political parties. A social renaissance is a pre-condition for
creating conditions congenial for democratic functioning of the society. So all the retrogressive influences in human life like dogma, blind faith, obscurantism, monopoly etc. have to be eliminated through determined hand and wide spread endeavor of the intellectual class to educate the people and awaken in them the urge for freedom and to guide them in a harmonious cooperative living. The kind of revolution Roy talks about requires a rapidly increasing number of men of renaissance which is possible only through educating the people. So in the scheme of radical democracy, peoples committees will be the school for political and civic education of the citizens. The structure and function of radical democratic state will enable the detached individuals to come to the forefront of public affairs. Manned by such individuals the state will no longer be leviathan always to be dreaded and distrusted.

Roy writes:

Revolutions pre-suppose iconoclastic ideas. An increasingly large number of men conscious of their creative power, motivated by an indomitable will to remake the world, moved by the adventure of ideas and fired with the ideal of free society of free men can create conditions under which democracy will be possible. Spiritually free individuals at the helm of affairs will smash all chains of slavery and usher in freedom for all (Roy 1953:47-48, Thesis Fifteen)

Finally it is important to find out that Roy's radical democracy does not ignore the importance of economic factors. He strongly believed that economic life of society must be progressively freed from the paralyzing and corrupting control of vested interests. He said:

Radicalism pre-supposes economic re-organisation of society, so as to eliminate the possibility of exploitation of man by man. Progressive satisfaction of material necessities is a pre-condition for the individual members of the society and for unfolding their intellectual and other finer human attributes. An economic reorganisation such as this will guarantee a progressively rising standard of living; will be the foundation of the radical democratic state (Roy 1953:45, Thesis Seventeen).

Roy further observes, the economy of the new social order will be based on production for use and distribution with reference to human needs. The new society founded
reason and knowledge will necessarily be planned but it will be planning with freedom of
individual as the main objective. The new society will be democratic politically,
economically as well as culturally. It will be a democracy capable of defending itself. Thus
for him the basic problem is one of proper re-conciliation of economic planning with the
planning of individual freedom. For this purpose he advocated the idea of cooperative system
of economy from the bottom, which means that the industries must be developed on the basis
regional cooperative societies and nature of agriculture should also be cooperative. These
industries will be owned not by any big industrialists but by local cooperative societies,
which will perform the function of stimulating production for the use of community and for
raising the general standard of living. It will be really socialistic economy without the evils of
regimentation and bureaucratization. Roy wrote a full length exposition of his new
philosophy under the title, ‘Reason, Romanticism and Revolution’ which was published in
two volumes. Only one volume was published while he was alive in 1952 and the volume II
was published posthumously in 1955.

Most philosophies have been just intellectual pursuits, unrelated to more practical and
mundane problems of ordinary people. Transcendentalist and idealist philosophers take a
view that it is not the business of philosophy to go about changing the world. But Roy, who
had been a revolutionary activist throughout his life, makes an effort to combine theory and
praxis in his philosophy of radical humanism, which involves integration of thought and
action. This is the legacy from Marx, which Roy acknowledges: ‘the philosophical point of
departure of our politics is derived from the eleventh Theses of Karl Marx on Feuerbach,
until now philosophers have interpreted the world; now they must remake it.’ (Roy
1946:31). The 18th and 19th centuries produced quite a few intellectuals, including Marx who
influenced the course of modern history. In India Roy has been an outstanding philosopher
revolutionary who has not yet received the recognition due to him. Nonetheless it is
important to point out that Roy made an effort to provide the needed solution to the problems facing modern man, which were a consequence of progressive deterioration of rational and moral standards of public life. For the purpose at theoretical level Roy constituted a self-contained philosophy, which he strongly believed, would inspire the action on the part of those committed to it. Radical humanist movement was in fact a logical consequence of the new philosophy in which thought and action are integrated. The radicals who committed themselves to it, not only regarded it as their logical and moral obligation to live by it, but also to carry it to others in the hope that increasingly large number of people must recognize its worth and relevance in offering the way out of their predicament. As Nigam (1988) points out it is not to be seen as a magic formula or a savior’s direction but as an invitation to collective effort on all planes of life. For humanist Roy, the basic problem of mankind was primarily cultural and he developed his ideas in response to both international events of which India was a part and more specifically to socio-politico and cultural conditions prevailing in India. Therefore it is pertinent on our part to elaborate on his ideas and his analysis of Indian society and culture. But before that, I would like to refer to some of the issues pertaining to the philosophy of the movement on which there has been difference of opinion among radical humanists.

4.2.1 Dissensions within the Movement:

RHM is not a monolithic and intellectually streamlined movement in all its details. True to its philosophy of human freedom, it is loosely organised and contains within itself many shades of opinions on several controversial issues. The main issues on which there have been controversies in the past are:

1. Whether or not the dissolution of RDP in December 1948 was desirable and whether it should have been substituted by another All India organisation for the implementation of their ideas. This controversy in fact stems from difference of opinion on more basic issue.
namely the viability of ‘Partyless democracy’. Group of radicals like late professor R.S. Yadava and Balraj puri believed that movement’s campaign against party system has done a serious damage to the functioning of democracy in India and they have always argued in favour of organisation at All India level. Professor Yadav has all along maintained that it was wrong to have dissolved RDP. He believed in the possibility of decentralized party system. He wrote, ‘--here, accepting the need of power, comrade Roy wrongly assumes that political parties are the instruments of centralisation of power, abusing power on false pretences. The truth is that political parties are instruments of power, not necessarily of its centralisation only, and they are the instruments not of power alone, but of many other things. Further, an adoption of false pretences is not inevitable in party system. Hence, if diffusion of power is the essence of democracy and desired decentralization is conditional not upon the disappearance of political parties, but upon the decentralisation of their structure and working and upon the use of right grounds by them. Let us have such a party then. Otherwise, by abolishing parties and by running away from political power we shall also destroy the possibility of the great good that position and proper use of power of the state by good persons and by all persons can bring.’ (Yadava 1983:53)

Majority of the radicals like Sibray, Tarkunde, Karnik, Anathmitra, Laxman Shastri Joshi, however were for dissolution of RDP and against any kind of organisation as they believed parties could not be instruments for democracy and human freedom.

1. Related to above, another controversial issue has been whether or not a radical humanist should join and work through an existing political party in view of the radical theory of partyless politics. Here again by enlarge those radicals who opposed the idea of formation of any formal organisation, were against joining any party and working through them, whereas others conceding the right of each individual to work or not to work through a party believed
that working through parties and trade unions will enable them to spread their ideas to a much larger audience. They did not entertain the idea that political parties are untouchables.

1. Whether communism is a greater danger in India or religious communalism is another issue on which radicals have had differences. As radical humanist philosophy is the outcome of Roy's bitter experience with communist Russia, radicals regard communists as the greater threat to Indian democracy and treat them (more particularly in West Bengal group comprising Sitangshu Chatterjee, Anath Mittra) as enemy number one and the greatest threat to Indian democracy. But radicals like Yadava believe that both communism and communalism being totalitarian may be equated but two are different. He writes, 'the Hindu communalist is more in tune with present social structure and outlook. If communism triumphs in India it will come from the top, but the communalist totalitarianism, if it comes, would have sprung from the soil itself. It would be wrong to underestimate the danger of communalism. Even intellectuals would be found to be more communalist than procommunist. In Indian situation there is greater danger of communalist menace than that of communist menace.' (Yadva 1983:37)

4. Association of some radicals like C.R.M. Rao, V.B.Karnik with 'congress for cultural freedom' constituted in post war era with its headquarters at Paris and its pro-American orientation, further resulted in difference of opinion among radicals. Roy did not join it as he felt that congress was constituted more with the intention of anticommmunist propaganda than with the genuine pursuit of democratic values. He wrote in a message to their congress held at Bombay, that the practice of communism has exposed the fallacies of its utopian theory. All advocates of liberty and social justice must be repelled by the loath some experience and recoil from the deceptive ideal. The alternative to communism is not a return to liberalism, but to go beyond it with a reaffirmed loyalty to human tradition of modern civilization and a more steadfast adherence to the moral sanction of the ideal of social justice. The crying need
of the time was to evolve a new social philosophy which will enable the modern civilised man to devise patterns of economic relations and political institutions free on the one hand, of the inequalities of capitalism, inadequacies of parliamentary democracy and on the other hand of the violence and tyranny of the communist practice.

People’s committees form the core of radical democracy as envisaged by Roy. Radicals by and large worked enthusiastically for formation of these, non-party institution at local level in different parts of the country. But few, like professor Raj Krishna and professor Yadava were against the formation of peoples committees and were in favour of active participation of radicals in existing local self governing institutions like municipal committees, panchayats, and cooperatives. They voiced their fear at summer study camp at Mussori in 1950 that they might in fact degenerate into instruments of tyranny and they might acquire all or most of demerits associated with political parties. Such a view however constituted a minority view point, for majority like M.L.Sen, Sitangshu Chattarjee, Sibray, Prem Nath Bajaj etc. people’s committees were sacrosanct.

Radical humanist philosophy was highly critical of parliamentary democracy and therefore radicals, time and again lambasted and criticised India’s parliamentary system with a view to replace it by a better kind called radical democracy. Such a view has not been shared by all. Again people like professor Raj Krishna and professor Yadava have argued that we should not be blind to the benefits of parliamentary form of democracy and believed debunking it would only help strengthening of anti democratic forces in the country.

In the post emergency period the most controversial issue has been whether of not the radicals should actively participate in forums like ‘citizens for democracy’ and ‘people’s union for civil liberties’, as such an interaction has been viewed by some as inconsistent with what humanism stands for. Tarkunde has been the founder member of both CFD and PUCL.
Like along with some other important leaders has been actively working through these organisations in accordance with philosophy of human radical humanism. But others who are basically involved in the renaissance work like Anath Mitra and Sitangshu Chattargee are against the idea of radicals working through CFD and PUCL as they feel RHM will lose its identity and will de-generate. They strongly believe Radicals should instead strengthen their movement by strengthening their own institutions like RH, IRHA and IRI.

Another point of debate among radicals has been whether or not radicals should have official political and non-political policies and their journal RH should write editorials based on them.

Apart from the issue-based differences, dissensions in the movement at personal level centering around personalities have existed since the party days. They have become more pronounced with the formation of IRHA with some positions emerging. Even though no power is associated with them, it has never less led to some ill feeling against each other as has been pointed out by Nigam. As, such differences are confined to personal level they do not have much impact and thus are inconsequential for the movement as a whole. As far as the ideology of the movement is concerned, there have been no serious ideological differences. Dissensions however are very much an integral part of any movement and play a positive function in its growth.

4.3 Analysis of Indian Society and Culture

In the last section we have seen that the philosophy of New Humanism as advocated by Roy, pleads for scientific outlook, enlightenment of the people and believes that philosophical revolution is the precondition of any revolution at economic and political level. To humanist Roy the basic problem of the entire civilization and more particularly of India is cultural. Major problem is economic and political sphere are basically due to cultural lag as
The sixteenth century nation faced with twentieth century problems. This temporal gap which is a cultural lag, requires to be covered up, our people must develop the outlook and attitude that will enable them to solve the problems to today. Roy critically analyzed Indian society and culture and came to the conclusion that India's traditional culture has several powerful elements, which effectively retard the process of modernization. Roy did not believe that all achievements of modern civilization and modern technology could be found in Vedas, as it is believed by many Indian philosophers and thinkers. However, India's remarkable achievements in philosophy and the science, in art and literature, in agriculture prosperity and extensive trade and commerce during the so called Golden age of India does reveal the existence of positive, progressive and rational elements in ancient Indian culture. But due to various reasons, which have not been properly investigated, the above rationalist thought developed in ancient India was buried deep under rubbish accumulated during the dark ages and Hindu civilization gradually lost its élan. The rationalist spirit of scientific enquiry almost completely disappeared and forces of rationalism, social stagnation, cultural backwardness, ignorance and superstitions overwhelmed Indian society. As a result 'Society became increasingly stagnant an taboo ridden and an attitude of resigned acceptance of poverty, disease and social injustice became almost universal'.

Marxist, Roy believed that all the major problems confronting us are borne out of stagnation of over 2000 years as social stagnation not only impedes the material progress of any group of mankind but it also hampers its cultural and intellectual progress. And this experience is not uniquely Indian experience because all the countries entered a stage of stagnation after their ancient civilization exhausted all its potentialities. History teaches us that conditions of Europe in middle-ages were no less depressing than conditions in our country today. The religious mode of thought or spiritualism that characterizes our

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1See Radical Humanist, December 18, 1949 volume XIII, no 50, p.607.
Country today is not special genius of India. Roy does not believe in the notion that ‘western civilization is materialist,’ and ‘Eastern culture is spiritual’ and scientifically refutes the doctrine of spiritual superiority of Indian culture as against western culture as is propagated by many. If one traces the history of Europe from the downfall of Greco-Roman antiquity to sixteenth century of Christian era, we find the predominance of all the spiritualist features that are found in India today. Therefore “what is claimed to be the ‘special geniuses’ of Indian culture, is not special at all; that spiritualism, that is, the religious form of thought, characterizes human ideology everywhere in a certain stage of social evolution… modes of thought change in accordance with the variation of social environments and therefore no particular way of thinking can be eternal and immutable characteristic of any people” (Roy 1950:110).

Europe was able to overcome the crisis that had gripped it during dark middle ages more than 400 years ago as a result of renaissance movement during 14th to 16th century which led to the emergence of new social force which was a consequence of reorientation of Europe ‘Spiritually and intellectually form the Christian religious mode of thought towards what has since come to be known as the scientific mode of thought’. So it was the values of renaissance that dragged the European society out of period of stagnation and placed before the people new ideas and ideal, inspired new urges in them and opened up a new era in which science, rationality, individual urge for freedom, materialistic philosophy etc., became the predominant feature as against the reactionary and antiquated forces of middle ages.

As Roy observes, on one occasion, “the essence of Renaissance movement in Europe was critical outlook on history. It was a revolt against authority. It was replacement of faith by reason. Fathers of modern Europe subjected old ideas, established institutions, and traditional cultural values, all to a severe criticism with the object of finding out how far they could serve the purpose of the development of man as a free, rational, creative member of
This reorientation of renaissance has not yet taken place in India as we continue to
cling to our past traditions, continue to take pride in them and continue to glorify the culture
which is antiquated, outmoded, reactionary and responsible for major ills of Indian society.
Roy gives a call for XX century Indian renaissance, as there is no other short cut to overcome
the crisis of Indian society. India today is struggling to come out of medieval stupor but the
lack pull of attitudes and values cultivated for centuries constitutes a real obstacle in the way
of modern renaissance.

M.N. Roy unlike other historians and philosophers interprets Indian culture from a
historical perspective and comes to the conclusion that spiritual civilization represents a
backward stage of social progress and the basic distinction between Indian culture and
western culture does not stem from the fact that former is spiritualistic as against materialism
of the west but distinction lies in as much as the former clings to medievalism as spiritualism
is the philosophy of a medieval society. The essence of our culture is religion, which is
agonistic to any change brought about by human effort, as spiritualism is a blind faith in
some supernatural, inscrutable power. It is a teleological view of life as ever thing is
supposed to be providentially preordained. Sanatan Dharma which is generally accepted as
the embodiment of the basic principles of Hindu culture leads to fatalistic attitude towards
life as it is a body of religiously conceived social doctrines, which are supposed to be eternal,
unchangeable and infallible. Hinduism therefore does not admit of any reform as it is against
all change, an instrument par excellent to preserve the status quo in the society. Many a times
India's present plight is attributed to her deviation from the path of eternal truth revealed in
the Sanatan Dharma and religious leaders harp at the necessity of dharmic awakening which
would cure not only India but the entire civilization of their ills. Roy asked it is not

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1 From the undated Pamphlet on Renaissance Movement by M.N.Roy, p3.
2 From M.N.Roy's, Speech delivered at Poona in February 1937, undated Pamphlet
explained why India her self deviated from her destiny. Why did her ‘Spiritual Geniuses’ fail to keep her on the right road? (Roy 1950: 201).

Roy analyses the basic principles of Hinduism and comes to the conclusion that Hindu Society dominated by religious mode of thought is basically undemocratic, authoritarian, duty oriented therefore is not commensurate with modern civilization having scientific basis. Idea of self-control of seva dharam is central to Sanatan Dharam. Individual’s position in society is fixed forever as is also clear from the existence of the caste system whose hierarchical presumptions and closed nature run counter to open, dynamic and egalitarian principles of democracy. Self-control means nothing more than willing subordination to the established system of social slavery. The ideal of Indian culture placed before the masses is the ‘idea of self mentality, intellectual inertia, moral death, lack of all signs of life except the spiritual discharge of duty prescribed by the ruling class is supposed to be the only way to divine bliss or salvation which is supposed to be the ultimate reality’ (Roy 1950: 207).

Dharmic discipline prohibits sense of enjoyment. Giving Marxist interpretation of Hindu culture, Roy shows that the purpose of dharmic discipline is no other than of advocating ascetic view of life so that material necessities of life are reduced to the lowest conceivable level. The taboo on sense enjoyment helps keep the masses in the bliss of ignorance as it blocks man’s road to knowledge- as experience gained through sense perception is the only road to knowledge. ‘Thus we have a stratified social organization, rigidly held together by Sanatan Dharam, which itself is immutable and eternally valid, as its name implies. To possess slaves is a divinely sanctioned right of the slave owner, just as to serve his master is the religious duty of the slave’. Any rational sane person would agree ‘India must throw off the yoke of her previous spiritual genius, if she wishes to escape further degeneration, demoralization and utter destruction’ (Roy 1950: 140-141).
The philosophical teaching of Manu and code of conduct as laid down by him clearly point to the authoritarian and undemocratic character of Indian culture. Manu was by no means a prophet of new social order but an apologist of the established system – an undemocratic system dominated by priestly patriarchs. ‘Manu’s codes lay down social obligations and don’t mention popular rights, not even of the most rudimentary kind admitted in primitive tribal organization. The whole philosophy of Manu is summarized in his definition of dharam and it is the Hindu conception of dharma, which is supposed to be the essence of India’s message of the world. Dharma is a religio-ethical concept of social conduct. Manu defines it as “contentment, forgiveness, self control, abstention from unrighteously appropriating (what belongs to others), obedience to rules of purification, coercion of organs, wisdom, knowledge of the supreme soul, truthfulness and abstention from anger’ (Roy 1950:209).

The practice of these virtues by underprivileged class means voluntary submission to the established order. They are by no means progressive or revolutionary in nature and therefore are redundant in modern times and therefore repudiation of teachings of Manu is a precondition for Indian renaissance because Roy believes that Manu’s laws were the instrument for the privilege of priestly patriarchy and medieval form of domination. Those who cry ‘Back to Manu’ cherish reactionary ideology, are status quoists concerned more with defending themselves and their interests, are against any democratic system based on rationality, equality, liberty and fraternity. They have great faith in the tired wisdom and experience of their forefathers and of old institutions and traditions as they view them as something mystic and sacred and accept them in their totality without ever questioning them. Any reform or any revolution is out of question in such a situation, which emphasizes continuity through centuries. Thus we see religious mode of thought dominates our culture even today. It is still believed by majority of Indian masses seeped in ignorance that
everything is predetermined and that destiny is providential. It is beyond the comprehension of human intelligence and cannot be changed by human action. This leads to blind faith, belief in superstition and fatalism. The transmigration of soul and the law of karma are the fundamental articles of faith with the majority of Indian masses. As long as these features prevail, the very desire to change the society cannot be felt by masses and therefore for Roy "a criticism of religious thought, subjection of traditional beliefs and the time honored dogmas of religion to a searching analysis is a condition for belated Renaissance of India. The spirit of inquiry should overwhelm the respect for tradition" (Roy 1950: viii). Roy believed the renaissance in India can take place only under the banner of revolutionary philosophy — a philosophy which will enable people to rise above the spiritualist prejudice by subjecting the religious ideology (which retains its domination even after its historical usefulness has been exhausted) to the criticism born of scientific knowledge and by exposing all the absurdities of spiritualism. Science alone can be the basis of such a revolutionary philosophy calling for a break with the dead past as it 'enables man to outgrow progressively the limitations set to the development of his mind and spirit by the odd ideas, ideals and notions which resulted from the primitive ignorance of humanity in its infancy. The shedding of these old ideas through the growth of scientific knowledge is a mental revolution, and that is the greatest significance of science'.

So what is needed is mental revolution. Renaissance movement in Europe resulted in a rebirth of man after dark ages. It was a rebirth because originally man was a rational, enquiry being rather than believing animal. Renaissance movement in Europe had an element of revivalism in it. It was motivated with the desire to evaluate ancient values and restate ancient ideas. The necessity to look backward in to the past or renaissance is felt in a crisis — when there seems to be no hope in the future and

See Renaissance Movement Pamphlet by Roy, undated, p3-4.
civilization is at the verge of breaking down. We look into the past to find something to inspire us and Roy says there are two things we can find in the past; the transitory values – the glory of kings and monuments of ancient grandeur, traditions which persist as die hard prejudices and secondly there are the abiding, permanent human values which transcend time and space and which can be applicable and appreciated under all circumstances and at all times. The object of European renaissance movement was to go back to ancient tradition of European civilization, rescue the positive contribution of ancient civilization – that has been buried under the ruins of Middle Ages over which mother church presided, and inspire modern humanity with those restated ancient ideas and ideals which lay down the foundation of a new society. Idea of Renaissance movement in Europe was to revive the ancient Greek culture particularly the ideas of Plato. Men of renaissance, the pioneers of modern civilization opened up before European humanity a perspective, which rescued the civilization of its major ills of Middle Ages and put the mankind on road to progress. The twentieth century India being gripped with the problems of pre renaissance Europe and more or less facing the similar crisis must experience renaissance and adopt the procedure similar to one adopted by European mankind as, this path alone, can lead to the establishment of a free, democratic and modern state. Outright negation of everything western will not lead us anywhere and also the theory of so-called synthesis of east and west, the former representing the forces of reaction and latter that of progress also seems to be an impossibility – as it is not possible to think of ‘harmonious interweaving of two mutually exclusive systems of culture and form of thought, belonging to different historical epochs, centuries apart’ (Roy 1950: 7).

We have seen that the thought and values developed in ancient Greece provided the inspiration the European Renaissance. Roy on the same line argues that if we undertake a scientific study of Indian history – (rather than confining it merely to the record of kings and
In a systematic manner we might discover the ancient wisdom of India, which would stimulate us with inspiration for renaissance. Therefore it is important to 'rescue the positive and abiding contribution of ancient thought, contributions which like the inspiration of Greek Sages are lying in ruins under the decayed structure of Brahmanical supremacy'.

Renaissance does not mean revival of ancient traditional culture because revivalist movement, which in fact is dominating our country today, would mean discovering 'moral sections for reactionary ideas, which are bred in the cesspool of social and cultural backwardness. Idealization of imaginary unity and social harmony of a legendary Golden age serves the purpose of totalitarian nationalism which would oppose perennial social conflicts breaking out in a mighty movement of Indian renaissance'. It has an element of revivalism only in the sense of looking into the past to find some values and truths, which may transcend time, and space, which can still serve our purpose of widening the frontiers of freedom and can still provide us with some inspiration for future.

In case of Indian renaissance, Roy advocates a pattern or method similar to that of west because he finds evolution of thought in ancient India similar to that in any other old civilization. As everywhere else, in India also philosophy was originally materialistic. Originally Hindu society was as much interested in material as in spiritual well being, that is, materialist philosophy can be traced in ancient Indian civilization. According to Hindu social philosophers of classical period object of human life is four fold, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. That shows that the other worldly attitude or in other words the attitude of world and life negation which dominates Hinduism which inhibits modernization was not there in ancient Indian civilization. The acquisition of worldly goods as well as sexual enjoyment was not only sanctioned scripturally but also was recognized as the object of human life on equal footing with religion and salvation.
This balanced outlook towards life found expression in ancient India's remarkable achievements in Science and Philosophy, art and literature and general well being and prosperity of mankind. Primitive rationalization that nothing happens without a cause developed in two directions, natural religion - ascribing the cause of each natural phenomenon to some super human power leading to galaxy of gods and naturalism searching for the cause of national phenomenon in nature itself. The basic defect in ancient philosophy as pointed out by Roy is a prior assumption, which blocked the way of empiricism. Owing to this weakness, ancient Indian materialism was eventually overcome by spiritualism; the philosophy degenerated into dogmatic theology. Roy regrets that with the exception of Nyaya, Vaisesika and Sankhya, no other speculative system tried to explain the origin, evolution and phenomena of nature independent of supernatural power. Speculative thought naturally becomes theology - a dogmatic assertion about the super natural being which by its very nature is beyond enquiry and comprehension. Thus Roy says that ancient Indian philosophy was originally materialistic. In India too, physics preceded metaphysics. The materialist outcome of the speculation of the rebels against the Vedic natural religion, contained in three systems of Vaisesika, Sankhya, and Nyaya provided the inspiration for the greatest event in history of ancient India - the Buddhist revolution.

The development of Indian thought during nearly a thousand years, beginning from the seventh century B.C. was largely dominated by materialistic and rationalistic elements. The long process of the development of materialistic thought in ancient India found culmination in Charvaka system of philosophy, which Roy compares with Greek Epicureanism. They held that truth can never be known except through senses. In the history of India, the Buddhist revolution draws the dividing line between the period when the religious form of thought was a necessary intellectual phenomenon, served a positive social purpose and the period in which spiritualism became an instrument of reaction a bulwark.

^See Roy (1944:6).
The growth of rational and quasi-materialist systems of thought which went into the revolutionary philosophy of Buddhism indicated that the older form of religious thought as contained in Upanishads had outlived their social utility' (Roy 1950: 242-43). Roy maintains that rise of Buddhism was one of the greatest revolutions of ancient time, perhaps of all times. Their doctrine opposed the basic assumption of the orthodox Hindu philosophy of the Vedantic system — as the rejection of the doctrine of soul necessarily leads to the denial of God. So Buddhism was revolutionary, it was a revolt against the priesthood of primitive natural religion Hinduism and was materialistic at core as it was based in Vaisheshik atomism. But the ideal of 'Nirvana' which represented the nihilism of Buddhist philosophy was incompatible with the materialistic core of Buddhism was proved easily by Sankaracharya which resulted in the reassertion of the priestly monopoly of ideology after having been shaken by Buddhist revolution.

The Buddhist revolution was defeated and all the subsequent misfortunes of India, contends Roy, can ultimately traced to that original misfortune of having killed one of the greatest revolutions of human history. It condemned Indian society to an age-old stagnation and centuries of political slavery. Roy however is optimistic and believed that as soon as prolonged social stagnation is broken, Indian thought will 'go rapidly ahead from the point at which it temporarily stopped and catch with the progress made by others'.

India (like Europe) herself should be able to learn the true message of her ancient philosophy. The correct evaluation of that philosophy will be to discern the germ of materialism imbedded in it. Because materialism for Roy is the only possible philosophy. Thus, a critical appreciation of the past and liberation of the objectively progressive forces from the prejudices of 'Glorious past' is a precondition for Indian renaissance. The basis of such a criticism has to be scientific as intelligence and reason alone can enable mankind to fight faith and reject the

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Religion dogma of revealed truth. Therefore another precondition for Indian renaissance is to share the common human heritage. Truth is universal, so science and knowledge is not parochial, is not a monopoly of any scientific group of people. Legacy of spiritualist genius far from being an asset is in fact a liability, believes Roy and is a real obstacle to the development of rationalist, scientific thought. So long as religious mentality subordinates man to an inscrutable, all powerful divine will, no society can be free in the true sense of the word as the cardinal principle of democratic way of life is the dignity of human being, the notion that man is an end in himself and he alone is the measure of everything.

European renaissance resulted in rehabilitation of these essential attributes of human individual and evoked his confidence in himself. Man must believe that he is the master of his own destiny, society, its various social political and religious institutions are his creations and they are created for progress and happiness of the mankind and therefore once they become obsolete in the changed circumstances by becoming antagonistic to the progress and happiness of mankind, then rather than becoming slaves to their own creation, men must revolt against them and replace them with more liberating organization and institutions. Thus alone can mankind move towards greater freedom and greater human happiness. Thus 'man must remember himself. That is the birth of man as man. Men have been either the slaves of god or servants of kings or at best the devotees of some religion. But man must be man for himself, if he wants to work his own salvation'.

In India, if we want to establish a democratic social order in true sense then this social revolution has to be preceded by mental revolution. A vast majority of Indian masses are still gripped by ignorance and the paralyzing fatalism, which they must outgrow, and then alone can man's faith be restored in his creativeness and his power to change the society.

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15 See the article, 'Pre-conditions of Indian Renaissance', Marxist Way, volume III, number 4, p.363.
16 See the Pamphlet on Renaissance Movement by Roy, undated, p.10
According to his wishes. Sovereignty of the individual has to be asserted and individual has to be placed at the center of things as man is the ultimate value—so long as people’s minds remain obsessed with old traditions and ideas which provide moral sanction to be established order we can not expect a social revolution. For Indian renaissance ‘Indian mankind must also revolt, must also challenge the moral sanction of the established order, and for that purpose we can profitably adopt the procedure which was adopted by European mankind when it was placed in a similar situation. Roy and his associates launched RHM in India precisely to create conditions conducive to Indian renaissance. It was conceived as a comprehensive cultural and political movement based on the philosophy of New Humanism whose aim was to establish a truly democratic social order. In the subsequent chapter, we intend to trace different phases of the movement since its inception in 1948 to the present day.

References


*See the Pamphlet on Renaissance Movement by Roy, undated, p.9*


