"For those who know him well he was the embodiment of the vital force that had persisted so triumphantly in an alien universe; and one felt this not only because of the extraordinary vicissitudes of his personal life but also because almost alone among the great revolutionaries of our time he pinned his undying faith on Man - not in the abstract but as an individual measure of all things".

- PROF. SIB NARAYAN RAY
INTRODUCTION

I. BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF M.N. ROY’S LIFE

M.N. Roy, who founded the philosophy of Radical Humanism was in many ways a unique person. He distinguished himself both as a man of action and as a man of thought. In both the fields, he lived an intense life. As a man of action, he was a devoted and dedicated revolutionary. As a man of thought, he developed into a profound and original social philosopher. There was a fine blend of Romanticism and Rationalism in his mental make-up. His practical experience and evolving thought led him through three distinct phases of political life. He started as an ardent nationalist, became an equally ardent communist and ended as a creatively active radical humanist.

M.N. Roy, whose real name happened to be Narendra Nath Bhattacharya was born in the district of 24 Parganas, West Bengal on 21st March, 1887. At the age of twelve he joined the revolutionary movement in Bengal led by Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Jatin Mukherjee and others, and played a prominent role, having escaped imprisonment several times.

During the World War-I, he left this country in search of arms and ammunitions to overthrow the British rule and made contacts with Germany. Several such attempts having failed, at last Narendranath went to America via Japan and China, and lived for some time with Lala Lajpat Rai. Here he changed his name to Manabendranath Roy and became attracted towards radical views; his interest in Marxism also developed during this time. Here, he was arrested for conspiracy against the British government, interrogated and sent for trial from where he managed to escape. He fled to Mexico and participated actively
in Mexican politics, having become the General Secretary of the Socialist Party, there which was later transformed into the first Communist Party in the world outside the Soviet Union. It is here, that he came in contact with Borodin, who took refuge at Roy’s place as one of the emissaries of the new regime in Russia; Russian revolution having just taken place at that time. Roy’s exploits in Mexico drew the attention of Lenin, who invited him to Russia to attend the Second World Congress in 1920. At the Congress, Roy differed with Lenin on the colonial question. He had soon to play an important role in the international Communist Movement and became the head of the Eastern Department of Communist International and of the Communist University. In the fateful days of 1926-27 he was sent to China as a representative of the Communist International to advise the Chinese Communist Party. His advice went unheeded, though his stand was subsequently vindicated; meanwhile the Chinese Communist Party faced a debacle, and Roy was called back to Moscow, where he had further difference of opinion with the leaders of the Comintern on matters of policy.

After a few years Roy came back to India, and went in for a term of six years rigorous imprisonment, mostly spent in solitary confinement. This period was in a sense most fruitful in literary activities, his major philosophical works having been written during this time.

In 1936, Roy came out of jail, joined the Congress and till the beginning of the Second World War fought vigorously for the activisation of the primary Congress Committees with his famous slogan of ‘Power for the People’. He married Ellen Gotschalk in 1937. On the issue of the participation in the anti-fascist war he broke away from the Congress and formed the Radical Democratic Party. In 1946, Roy came out with his Philosophy of New Humanism which had
been taking shape in his mind for a long time, partyless politics being its natural implication, the R.D.P. was dissolved in 1948.

Since then, Roy had been developing his ideas and trying to give a practical shape to the humanist movement in this country. In the meantime, his new message reached abroad and he was invited by the UNESCO as well as by a number of Universities in America to deliver a series of lectures. But, unfortunately when arrangements were nearly complete for his proposed tour, he met with a serious accident, following close on its heels came an attack of cerebral thrombosis and after prolonged illness he expired on the 15th January, 1954.

M.N. Roy was perhaps the first Indian thinker who appreciated clearly the significance of the major breakthrough of the citadel of Imperialism by the forces generated consequent to World War-II. He maintained, that if the war was fought to the finish, and if it results in the defeat of international fascism, the success would be of British democracy and not of British Imperialism, and that in consequence, India would come nearer to the goal of attaining its freedom. He was the first to maintain that the issue of Capitalism versus Socialism was bound to make way to Democracy versus Totalitarianism. Roy was again first among the very few to recognise fully and clearly the implications of the enormous destructive power developed during the war and its bearing on the idea and technique of revolution.

M.N. Roy did not stop at pointing out these facts. He went ahead to seek a real new path of revolution. The function of a revolution and the accompanying liberating social philosophy he insisted, was to lay emphasis on the basic fact of history, that "Man is the maker of his world". Man as a thinking being, can be so
only as an individual. The brain is the means of production and produces the most revolutionary commodity - thought or ideas. Revolutions presuppose 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 fixed with the ideal of a free society of free men, can create conditions under which democracy would be possible. Spiritually, free individuals at the helm of affairs would be able to smash all chains of slavery and usher in freedom for all.

This statement of a new approach to the problems, led him into an inquiry into the cause of the crisis of modern civilization. He found that “the roots of all the evils of the modern world could be traced to the absence of man’s faith in himself”. If better individuals are the need of the time, there must be men with the faith in the capacity to do so. The new institutions to be stable must be built from the bottom up. That cannot be done by governments, political parties, even by great dictators. Institutions imposed from above collapse, when they are not sustained by intelligent will of individual men and women composing the society. But today, man lives in an atmosphere of helplessness and frustration. In this atmosphere, nothing whatsoever can be built. That is why, the imposing structure of modern civilization is crumbling.

Roy, not only had tremendous faith in the innate rationality of the human being, but he tried to prove with the help of findings in biology that rationality was needed for the survival of man, and hence it was natural for men to be rational and therefore moral. He also thought, that society is a creation of man -

2. Ibid., Pp. 100-1.
in quest of freedom. The quest for freedom is the continuation of the primitive man's struggle for existence, as such, it is the basic urge of all social advancement. Freedom is the progressive elimination of all the factors - physical, social and psychological, which obstruct the unfolding of man's rational, moral and creative potentialities. The function of 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 ideals of social liberation and progress are deceptive¹

To help ordinary, helpless, ignorant and poor Indian people to achieve this freedom, Roy showed a very simple way of action to the humanists by stating a definite yet general programme for the Radical Humanist Movement. The primary task of the Movement would be to bring about cultural renaissance by propagating the philosophy of New Humanism and through its application to political, economic and other social problems. To consolidate the intellectual basis of the movement, Radicals would continue to submit their philosophy to constant research, examine it in the light of modern scientific knowledge and experience, and extend its application to all the other social sciences. They would also at the same time, propagate the essentials of the philosophy amongst people as a whole, by showing its relevance to their present needs. They would make the people conscious of the urge for freedom, encourage their self reliance and awaken in them the sense of individual dignity, inculcate the values of nationalism and secular morality, besides spreading the spirit of cosmopolitan Humanism. By showing people the way to solve their daily problems through popular initiative, the Radicals would combat ignorance, fatalism, blind faith and sense of individual

¹ Roy, M. N: New Humanism- A manifesto, P. 39
helplessness, which are the basis of authoritarianism. They will put all the social traditions and institutions to the test of the humanistic outlook.

Roy further instructs the Radicals as to how to build small democratic institutions -- peoples committees --- as the primary constituents of the democratic state and co-operatives as the primary units of a co-operative economic commonwealth. So far very little has been done in this direction, which would help to put democracy on a sound footing. But, during the last few years increasingly large number of people are realising that unless men and women become their own masters very little could be achieved. No problem could be solved unless the human factor was taken into consideration and that men and women only could help in their development and reorganisation of the society conducive to common progress and prosperity, without encroaching upon the freedom of others. Education of the citizen it is conceived is the only way of doing it. This would take a long time, but it would lead to the liberation of human society and would reveal the path of real freedom.

The world situation today is very explosive. The threat of nuclear war is growing every day. The big powers seem to be heading towards a clash and using the smaller nations as pawns in their power game. This makes the humanist philosophy all the more necessary not only for this country, but has assumed global propositions. Everywhere the common man has become a helpless spectator of the drama of power, which is threatening his very existence. Power of the State is becoming all pervading and is controlling practically all aspects of life. Unless the common man asserts himself and asserts quickly and effectively, there is very little hope for humanity. The world needs a second Renaissance to release

itself from the power-mad politicians. The world has become considerably small and indivisible and needs a philosophy of life, which would help to build up the confidence of the common man. Roy thought that reason alone, operating in the light of experience, could solve the problems of men. According to Roy, being rational implied being moral and reason itself was the instrument for carrying on the quest for freedom, which was an expression on the plane of consciousness, of man's instinct for survival.

Roy claimed himself to be a descendant of Kapila and Kanada, the great rationalist sages of Upanishadic times. He advocated and tried to start a Renaissance Movement in India, since his release from jail in 1936 as a preparation for achieving freedom for common men and women in the country. Starting as a nationalist revolutionary, Roy crowned his career as a philosopher of Modern Renaissance, which is relevant and helpful in solving the cultural crisis of the twentieth century World.

He is one of the forgotten geniuses of India, who had the capacity to look ahead - which was perhaps the reason why his contemporaries almost ignored him. Recapitulating his philosophy to our contemporary world or the younger generation builds a hope that it might help in solving or at least in finding a way out of the present impasse, in which people find themselves and pay homage to this great good man, who was really a universal Man of human considerations.

Judged by any standard, M.N. Roy's was an extraordinary life. In an age of revolutions, the range of his experience as a revolutionary was virtually unequaled. He took an active part in revolutionary movements in India, Mexico, the Middle East, the Soviet Union, Germany and China. He founded
the Communist Parties of Mexico and India. At the same time, he was an outstanding thinker and writer, who authored several books in Spanish, German, French, Russian and English. He had very little formal education, but some of his books have become landmarks in the intellectual history of our age, books like *India in Transition, Revolution and Counter-revolution in China, Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*. The British philosopher H.J. Blackham described Roy as “a materialist on fire”, to Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi he was “the greatest champion of reason of our times”, “the first philosopher of modern India”1. The poet Sudhindranath Datta saw in Roy “the embodiment of the vital force, that has persisted so triumphantly in an alien universe... almost alone among the great revolutionaries of our times, he pinned his undying faith in man—not in the abstract, but as the individual measure of all things”. According to Robert North, “Roy ranks with Lenin and Mao Tse-tung in the development of Fundamental Communist Policy for the underdeveloped, as contrasted with the industrialized areas of the globe”2.

Like his other great revolutionary contemporaries, Lenin and Mao Tsetung, Roy too was a product of his society and his age. Unlike them, he also “recreated” himself in responding actively to the tremendous forces and pressures of contemporary history. However, he did not succeed in leading the country of his birth to a revolution. A sensible explanation of his failure is more likely to be found in the basic difference between the situation in India on the one hand and of Russia and China on the other, than in the personality or philosophy of Roy. Both Russia and China experienced a

2. Ibid.
total breakdown of the machinery of government, which made revolutions possible. In India, power was transferred by consent, and the bureaucracy and the army, built carefully by the colonial regime were bequeathed virtually intact to the politically organized native power elite, which was consistently opposed to any social revolution. A revolution probably remains as distant a prospect in India today, as it was in the time of M.N. Roy, even though its historic need may have become more pressing. That Roy devoted all his moral and intellectual resources to the single-minded pursuit of a “revolution from below” in this country and formulated a philosophy of Radical Humanism different from both Marxism and Gandhism, invests him with a historic significance, which is comparable to that of Karl Marx, in his own lifetime. An attempt is made in the subsequent chapters to deal with Roy’s philosophy of Radical Humanism at length, to explain as critically and analytically as possible.

II. THE CRISIS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Assumptions of humanistic philosophy are an important historical force in the present century. Their immediate source was the already prevalent ideas of enlightenment. The idea of human progress developed in the height of advances made in the field of natural and social sciences. Social life has changed more in the previous hundred years, than in all the previous centuries of human civilization, because of rapid advances in the field of science resulting in one discovery after another. The progressive governments of the twentieth century promoted the idea of popular education and equality of
opportunity. This resulted in the evolution of humanity towards unity and greater realization of humanistic ideas. The twentieth century also marked the triumph of the concept of evolution. It completely revolutionised human perspective towards values. It implied, that for all practical purposes "man is the measure of all things". The growth of science helped in revealing the enormous power of man. As a consequence, there was further refutation of dogma and supernaturalism in the sphere of religion. The orthodox ideas of God were rejected by humanistic cults. While rejecting orthodox ideas, the humanistic cults proposed a religious system devoted to the worship of humanity. During these distressing and disturbed times, it is heartening to recall what M.N. Roy wrote in his magnum opus called *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution* in the year April 1952, while contemplating the crisis of the Twentieth Century and the significance of Humanism.

In the opinion of M.N. Roy, the crisis of the contemporary world presents a dismal picture of decay, degradation and demoralisation. The threatening perspective appears to be either of a ruinous war or a slow breakdown of modern civilization. While peace is obviously the crying need of the distracted and tormented world, on the other side, there is a talk of war and frantic preparation for it. No sensible person wants another war, yet it seems to be inevitable, like fate. Man seems to have lost all faith in himself. Consequently, the hopelessness about the future of the race has reached its limit. It is indeed a paradoxical situation. Man's creative faculties have unfolded themselves in our time to a higher degree than ever before. He knows much more, now. His ability to do things is correspondingly greater.
Human creativeness is inhibited. The eternal urge to go forward seems to have lost its force to break down intellectual and spiritual barriers. The crisis has attained a multi-dimensional propensity. The way out for the present crisis is to take into consideration all the factors and a holistic approach is to be evolved. However, the focal point of the way out is man. Man, who can think and perceive the course of action by rational endeavours and use the resources to further his goals, has failed to live up to himself. It is argued, that the effort is to be directed to bring about an attitudinal change in the individual, by inculcating humanist, scientific and secular approaches bestowing values among men. This change should be strengthened, supported and reflected in the social, economic and political institutions replacing the present structure. Further, the effort should be aimed enhancing liberty, equality and fraternity. This paradigm affords prospecting for goals for reference and areas of action. Yet another root cause of the present crisis is the mental make-up and moral temper of the contemporary civilized man, who seems to lag behind his level of material progress. Man is now alienated from others. He has lost faith not merely in others but even in himself. \textit{Laissez faire} capitalism, monopoly capitalism, parliamentary democracy, totalitarian fascism based on nation, totalitarian communism based on class and state capitalism have all collapsed, lost all moral sanction and resulted in the predominance of power-politics and a great increase in both the scope and the power of the modern state. Under these circumstances, it is not possible for traditional types of reformist or revolutionary movements to succeed with
certainity. The cause of human freedom, democracy and general welfare suffers in this process.

This has vitiated the whole socio-cultural atmosphere of mankind by giving rise to helplessness, frustration, despair, disgust, disillusionment, demoralisation, degradation, social decay, frantic war preparations and inhibition of human creativeness all around. In such a worsening atmosphere, there is an increasing revival of traditional religiosity, relapse into medieval obscurantism growth of irrational neo-mysticism and teleological determinism; exploitation and promotion of popular prejudices, the fostering of an authoritarian mentality by personality reversion from the humanist tradition of European Renaissance based on individualism, and the enslavement of human individuals due to the parliamentary practice of delegation of power and the practice of immoral and hypocritical power-politics, both by traditional democrats and by new totalitarians, through the traditional system of political parties and the increasing subordination of the human individual to the ever-growing social, economic and political organisations.

Further, we have to accept that every stage of human development has passed through one crisis or the other. Every human being wants his individuality to be preserved and at the same time he cannot survive without society. He wants to conserve what he has achieved and desires to overcome the prevailing barriers and open new vistas of progress. Besides, his achievement in one sphere of his life may not correspond with a similar

advancement in other spheres, leading to a gap, which requires balancing. Further, there is always the problem of progress. There is development but, whether or not it leads towards the progressive realisation of desired goals or values is always debatable. Besides, when different groups advocate different goals, it is possible that there might be a controversy as to the progressive or regressive nature of the development taking place in a society.

The above analysis and diagnosis of the global crisis of our times is wholly in tune with the analysis and diagnoses made by other humanists in other parts of the world. Roy’s philosophy is no exception to this analysis. The writings and speeches of Roy are full of analysis in order to identify the crisis of the civilization. He perceived the prevalent crisis as the crisis of philosophy, more emphatically the crisis of morality. He saw that there were various dimensions of the crisis, but they all stemmed from our wrong philosophical assumptions.

Modern civilization has been declared sick. It can be cured of this sickness only with the help of a humanist ideology. But, it may be pointed out here that humanism itself is not a new thing. It is as old as human civilization itself. The Sophists and the Epicureans of Greece were perhaps the first humanists of history. The main interest of the Greek scholars till the middle of the fifth century was the physical. Since then humanism had almost an unbroken trend in philosophy through stoics, the Renaissance, Vico, Kant and a number of nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers. The humanist tradition of modern civilization was born of the Renaissance. At that time humanism became an important movement in Europe and the leaders of the
European Renaissance called themselves humanists. That humanism with such a long and venerable tradition in the history of human thought could not influence matter much has been a much speculated question. In which case it ceases to be a panacea for the evils of contemporary civilization. An adequate answer should be found to this issues, since it brings into clear light the cause of the contemporary crisis of human civilization. This will further show the need for evolving a new philosophy of humanism*

The shortcoming of the earlier schools of humanist thought was that though they declare the sovereignty of man, they could not explain man himself. The sovereignty of man would not be established if it were merely declared from housetops. To make it effective, a solid foundation must be found in the nature of man. Earlier humanism was generally religious. But if man was thus subordinated to super-human powers beyond his comprehension and control, would imply paradoxically about his sovereignty. Viewed from this point, naturalism of the Renaissance was an advance on the religious humanism of the earlier period. However, man himself remains shrouded in mystery. Ultimately, this view of man was bound to degenerate into some form of mysticism and even evolve in to a new religion. At best, Humanism could then only exist as a romantic movement. Confronted with the skeptic rationalism of the seventeenth century, it could not stand its ground and was relegated to the lumber-room of history. The tradition of the naturalist humanism of the Renaissance found expression in Feurbach. His criticism

* Humanism is an imprecise term in the sense that it has been used in diverse senses. But it is a drawback, which holds of many other excellent words like democracy and socialism. According to Prof. Edward P. Cheyne, Humanism has meant all these things: "It may be the reasonable balance of life that the early Humanists discovered in the Greeks; it may be merely the study of the humanities or polite letters; it may be the freedom from religion and the vivid interest in all the to all the sides of life of a Queen Elizabeth or a Benjamin Franklin; it may be the responsiveness to all human passions of a Shakespeare or a Goethe; or it may be a philosophy of which man is the centre and sanction". It is with the last sense of Humanism that we are concerned here. In this sense humanism centers on man as its sole agent and beneficiary on this earth and without any aid from any super-natural power.
of Christianity was applicable to other religions as well. But again he could not explain man. Marx sought to improve upon him and began as a humanist. But, his theoretical presumptions ultimately belied his humanism.

In the past there was, no escape from it. Man’s knowledge about himself was then quite inadequate. The science of biology was then quite in an incipient stage. Thus, those philosophers who revolted against God could not be ultimately successful.

More recently, a movement is in progress in Europe for a humanist revival. Some of the leaders of this movement like Jacques Martian seeks inspiration from Christianity and relies upon it to restore the moral sanity of man and to solve the present crisis of the world. Such humanitarian groups as Quakers put their ultimate faith in super-natural agencies. There are others who seek inspiration from the natural religion of the eighteenth century - a religion without God.

According to Roy, religion of any type, with or without God, runs counter to the very spirit of humanism, because every religion assumes some super-human existence. A highly sophisticated religion may eschew the anthropomorphic conception of God, but still retains belief in some form of disembodied cosmic consciousness. Humanism, which assumes the primacy of man, cannot be based on the common belief, that “there is something higher than man”. Originally, almost all the great religions of the world were humanistic in temper. Still they all developed in the opposite direction. It was mainly due to their belief in super-human forces.

If Humanism is, therefore, to prove its mettle, it has to be freed from the defect of its earlier history and fallacies of the subsequent periods. This can be done with the help of the knowledge accumulated since the days of the European Renaissance. So far, the Humanists could not explain man as a self-sufficient being. It has to be done to complete his spiritual liberation. At present sufficiently convincing hypotheses about the being and becoming of man can be inferred on the basis of scientific knowledge. Religion itself was an expression of the rationality of the primitive man. In the absence of better knowledge, man, then, assumed the existence of a vague super-natural force, by way of explaining the universe. Since then, human knowledge has made rapid strides. Therefore no longer old hypotheses are required to explain the world. Humanism, therefore, must keep pace with the growth of man, his knowledge about nature and himself.

Modern geological discoveries had evinced the existence of life on this planet from time immemorial. This gave birth to the science of biology, which definitely shows the animal ancestry of man. In the process of the evolution of life from inorganic matter, there is invariably to be a hiatus. This can be explained on the basis of two hypotheses. One is the doctrine of divine creation. The other is that life evolved out of the background of inanimate nature, through a certain combination of material substances under particular circumstances and conditions. According to Roy, this latter hypothesis is logically more plausible and there is more empirical evidence in its favour. Protoplasm is a physical substance and as such there cannot be any unbridgeable gulf between inanimate matter and the living world.
CHAPTER 1

It thus struck at the very root of the old assumption, that there is something in man which is transcendental and which is beyond the reach of his comprehension. So far as this assumption is in force, man cannot place full faith in himself. He has thus been led to derive strength by submitting himself to some super-human or super-natural force. But anthropology blasted the myth that the traditional religions were in any way revelations from God. As shall be seen later at some length, man, being born out of the background of the law-governed physical universe, is by nature rational and therefore moral. He is, therefore, quite competent to shape his own destiny and reorganise his affairs in co-operation with other fellow-men. Only when he comes to realise this, he will be able to solve the crisis of his existence. New Humanism has thus come to include the most abiding values of Renaissance Humanism, but in philosophic scope and significance goes far beyond it.

Furthermore, with television, advertising acting as its cutting edge, the rapid spread of consumerism has lent an almost pathological character to the urge to buy and possess consumer goods and have a good time. The obsessive pursuit of wealth this has led to, has caused a proliferation of both white-collar and non-white collar crimes. Criminal gangs have multiplied in a global scale, and their bosses, no longer content with being the instruments of politicians, are becoming politicians, themselves.
CHAPTER 1

III. Important landmarks and the salient features of the philosophy of Humanism

As a result of an unbroken trend in philosophy, humanism is said to be an ancient doctrine. In the West, Protagoras, the ancient philosopher, is considered the father of humanism. His epigrammatic saying that, "man is the measure of everything" is the accepted central tenet of every variety of humanism. Humanism rejects every type of supernaturalism. Thus, all materialists, naturalists, atheists and adherents of the scientific outlook are basically humanists. In recent years, humanism has gathered strength after the Renaissance. Auguste Comte is considered to be a modern French humanist thinker. With the spread of the scientific temper, humanism has gained strength each day. Some main features of humanism are explored below.

Man and his well-being is the central theme of humanism. Humanism is a man-centred philosophy. A clarification is necessary here. Humanistic anthropomorphism is different from the orthodox or the religious type of anthropomorphism. The religious minded people preach, that God has created everything in the world for the benefit of man. The seasons change, rivers flow and the trees yield flowers and fruits for the benefit of man and so also does everything else in the world. Humanists criticize the above claim as not only scientifically false, but also as betraying nothing but human arrogance and false vanity. On the other hand, the humanists are well aware of the insignificant position of man in the universe. Therefore, when it is said that humanism is a man-centred philosophy, the import is axiological and not factual. It only means that in the realm of values, man is supreme.
Humanist epistemology is a positivist epistemology. It does not accept that man has any supra-sensitive capacity to acquire infallible and absolute knowledge. Humanism holds, that our perception is the foundation as well as the ultimate verifier of all our knowledge. It follows, that humanism does not believe in the existence of supernatural entities like God, soul and so on. It also does not accept the existence of heaven or hell. Banishing all supernaturalism from our life is one of the important aspects of humanism. Humanism is a science-oriented philosophy. It tries to explain events around us scientifically. There is no place for miracles in it. Things that were once considered miracles are now due to the increase in human knowledge, matters of common knowledge.

Humanism believes in ethics, but not in religion\(^1\). Religion is supposed to be the path leading a human soul to immortality and eternal bliss. According to humanism, all these are superstitious ways of thinking. Humanism in fact attempts to dispel all superstition from our life. Here, ethics have an all-important place, evolving such rules of conduct as will make human life happy. Religious goals like obtaining infallible truth, absolute joy, immortality, omniscience and so on are very alluring objectives, but according to the humanists they are unachievable because of their being fictitious. In their place, humanism keeps before it achievable goals like, liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, social justice and so on. These humanist objectives might look a little less impressive as compared to the religious promises, but there is a strong point in their favour and that is, that they are achievable through human efforts here on this earth and in this very life.

CHAPTER I

According to humanism, since there are no super-natural entities to make or mar our life, man becomes the maker of his own fate, man is the maker of history. Man is not a mere tool in the hands of God, destiny, providence, or his own nature. Man is free to make or mar his life. Humanism believes in the cause-effect type of determinism but not in pre-determinism. Such an outlook makes humanism an activist type of philosophy. The most important feature of humanism is, that according to it, man is the creator of his values. In the ethical field man is supreme. He is the creator as well as the destroyer of values.

The emphasis on human nature was the offshoot of the Renaissance, which believed and extolled following the genius in the individual mind. The spirit of inquiry made the men of Renaissance protest against submission and obedience to orthodox Christian views. This resulted in the Humanist movement. Humanism combines the aims of self-realisation and self-expression with liberalism. As a reaction against medieval orthodox Christian religious church, humanism stressed the interest of a worldly civilised life in an earthly city with preparation of the world to come. Essentially, humanism evolved into a cultural movement emancipating the human quest from the shackles of religious domination.

A study of the historical background of the development of humanist movement, reveals that it can be differentiate into two types of humanistic philosophy. The first is humanism based on religion or religious humanism. The second can be termed as the rational humanism. Some humanists claim, that humanism is a religion. They also claim, that it is not only the major
religion of western civilisation but of all mankind, since human beings are naturally humanistic. In fact these humanists contend all other religions as humanistic, also either by revealing and serving human ends or by giving human reasons, that men can and should find their goals in super human ends. Until recently, humanists have failed to institute their doctrines and refused to organise specifically ecclesiastical agencies.

This failure has given a false impression, that humanism is not a great religion; it is not a wide spread religion. It is not even a religion, except for a few scattered examples such as Auguste Comte’s “Religion of Humanity,” some left wing Unitarians and a few branches of the American Humanist Association, besides the International Humanist and Ethical League. Humanism is not essentially a church religion. Many humanists believe, that it would be improper to organise a separate and specialised institution for the purpose of saying that man is a man, man is good, man is an end in himself, when all the other institutions are designed for this purpose. The only reason for a specifically humanistic religious society is the protest against those, who say that man is not good or an end in himself. Whenever their normal instincts have not been warped and misdirected by mistaken ideologies, men normally pursue human good, Man is naturally religious and his natural religion is humanism1.

To defend religion, it is commonly defined as belief in God or belief in Gods or spirits or super human beings. Seldom are they recognised adequately. Religion is a complex of beliefs and practices finding its

culmination in confident living. Two aspects need to be distinguished here; beliefs and practices. The beliefs pertain to the nature of the universe, man and values. Values are of two types; intrinsic, which are an end in themselves and also instrumental for the means to the ends. Being religious, a person must needs to know whether life has a goal and realise what it is, or alternately where life’s ultimate values exist and in what they consist, once his conceptions of the nature and focus of ultimate intrinsic values have been formulated, then any effort or attempt to attain that goal is an instrumental value. Evil things that prevent him from achieving the goal should be avoided. Good that promotes its attainment should be sought. But, in order to be religious, one cannot always be seeking that, which has not yet been found. It is because he will tend to give up hope, if he cannot begin to realise the end he seeks. Life has two characters, namely the aspect of existence which can be changed and those which cannot. One needs to learn to say, “yes” to those which cannot be changed, because they are in fact a part of what is ultimate in life and in the universe. The second aspect of religion is practice. Practice consist in whatever man does in order to attain his ultimate goal and to help him to accept it for what it is when he arrives at it.

Prior to humanism then, being reckoned as a religion it calls for registering beliefs common to all doctrines of all those who call themselves humanists. Regarding the universe, humanists are materialistic. The universe is natural. It acts in accordance with its own nature. It is not influenced by anything outside it. The universe includes everything, so there can be nothing external to exert

any influence on it. It is self contained, self-sufficient and self-caused in the sense that it needs nothing outside itself to cause it. However, humanists do disagree about the view, that the humanist view of the universe is naturalistic. Some regard it primarily as materialistic, some as mentalistic some as organistic. For instance, some regard it as permanent, some as changing, some as both permanent and changing, some think of it as completely determined, some as completely free and these disagreements result in splits among humanists. These disagreements about the ultimate constitution of the universe do not constitute disagreements about the moral general belief, that the universe is essentially naturalistic.

Next, regarding the nature of man, humanists are also naturalistic. That is, man is a product of nature and has a nature of his own. Further, humanists agree that man is good, it is good to be a man. Humanists recognise the existence of evil, but evil consists in whatever prevents a man from continuing to exist and in enjoying life. One is obliged to seek improvement, where possibilities exist for improving men and their joys. Obligation consists in the power, that a greater good has over a lesser good in compelling our choice. However, to say that human nature is natural still does not state about its constitution. Humanists differ in their beliefs as to whether a man is primarily rational or irrational, static or evolving, individual or social, improving or degenerating, simple or complex, determined or free, wise or stupid, the same everywhere or differing in quality and kind. But, humanists agree that despite all these differences, man’s nature is conceived in a way
where, there is something ultimate and irreducible about it. A man might have been caused. He may perish, but while he exists there is something unique and substantial about him. Not only mankind is something that cannot be explained completely in terms of anything else, but also each individual human being.

Modern humanism has been differently applied by different humanists to different spheres of growing knowledge, under different contexts of human existence. It reveals the multi-dimensional scope of humanism as a whole. In order to understand humanism in its total comprehensiveness, one has to have a reasonable idea of the various forms. Before offering a synoptic view of it, two preliminarily remarks should be made in this connection. First, many varieties of humanisms are latent, secondly the categorisation of humanisms into its various kinds differs with the criteria to be used for this purpose.

According to Supernaturalism, humanism may be religious or secular. Reality is scientific or literary when we understand it with reference to the relative importance of the rational and the emotional. Cultural humanism implies the predominant emphasis attached to particular cultural elements in particular societies. It is also prevails as many kinds like American, African, British and Indian. It may be described as personal or popular. In fact, the personal humanism is not fully shared and practised by any one else. As such Scientific Humanism of Marx, Pragmatic Humanism of Dewey, Evolutionary Humanism of Julian Huxley, Existential Humanism of Sartre, Socialist Humanism of

Harold Laski, Psychological Humanism of Russel, Moral Humanism of Nehru, Radical Humanism of M.N.Roy, their personal humanism is distinguished from each other's by unshared, unique peculiarities.

Religious Humanism is preached and practiced by religionists. They derive their inspiration from religious ways of life. Their primary interests are "other worldly." Religious humanism contemplates on personal salvation after death, and propounds on leading everyday life in myriad ways in this very world. Religious humanists rely on faith in a super-naturalistic myth or power of ritual.

Secular Humanism is the humanism discovered by secularists in their secular view. Secular humanism does not go out of this world and this life for seeking any super-naturalistic inspiration. It attaches central importance to human life and the intrinsic creativity.

Literary Humanism is the fruit of fifteenth century European Renaissance. It is based on the discovery of ancient Greek and Latin 'literature.' It chiefly concentrates on the human individual. It revived the potential glory of Man as creative end-in-himself; this glory was emotionally appreciated and expressed through literature and art. It continued to be emotional rational. It was subscribed to and pursued by the humanists. The term Humanitus began to be used in the academic centres of all fields of knowledge pertaining to literature and art.
Scientific humanism is the result of literary humanism. In its case, reason plays a more manifest and apparently dominant role than emotion. Scientific humanism is based on a scientific attitude and relies primarily on the scientific method for acquiring true knowledge of the human individual. The essentials of the scientific attitude or temper are curiosity about the unknown, creative imagination, honesty of effort, hard work, patience through difficulties, alertness to appearance of novel situations, objectivity or dispassionate impersonality in understanding the reality, and courage of conviction about scientifically drawn conclusions. Many scientific humanists suffer from darker aspects of the modern science and its dangers and harm, just as quite a large number of literary humanists are one sided and are oblivious to the dangers of their one-sideness.

Cultural humanism gives primary importance to a particular value or a peculiar syndrome of values. It depends upon different cultures followed by different groups of human individuals, each cultural humanism attaches special importance and emphasis to a particular aspect of integral humanism. It provides the context of popular humanism1.

Popular humanism deals with the practical solutions to practical problems, which confront inter-related human beings in their everyday living. It becomes a base of united action to heterogeneous humanists of all varieties. It avoids all controversial questions about existing competing contrary beliefs. It pleads for keeping an open mind and advocates for seeking prior solutions to all such ticklish questions of human nature and human destiny, that cannot

be finally decided through either speculation or argument, nor by acceptance or rejection of traditional or new beliefs. It is a common humanist programme of social amelioration. It urges for transcending the varied sectional or sectarian values and virtues, which do not go well with each other for the purpose of arriving at some agreement about common values for common humanity. Yet, in this sense, popular humanism is narrow and limited, because it does not take into account the full range of human concerns born out of life's experiences. It tends to be more akin to humanitarianism than humanism, more to do with social welfarism rather than social philosophy.

There are many personal humanisms practised by different individual humanists. Some of them attained great prominence by making their respective unique contributions to humanistic thought. They are not necessarily shared by each other they do supplement each other and combine together sympathetically to move nearer in completing the integral humanism. Such humanists make permanent contributions to the universal heritage of mankind, as the thoughts of different personal humanists enrich the integral humanism.

IV. HUMANISM AND HUMANITARIANISM

Humanism has been defined as 'the attitude of mind, which attaches primary importance to man and to his faculties, affairs, temporal aspirations and well-being'. Perhaps the first recorded evidence of humanism can be traced to 600 B.C., when Buddha announced in his First Sermon at Sarnath, that man was the master of his destiny. It was no supernatural agency, but the principal of Karma (action) that explained everything in human life. It
was two hundred years later, that the great Sophist thinker of Greece, Protagoras proclaimed, "man is the measure of all things." It is necessary to understand the difference between humanism and humanitarianism, although their ethical preachings may be nearly similar to each other, there are important differences between the two.

Humanitarians are mostly a religious type of people. They are spiritualists by faith. On the other hand, humanists are naturalists in their ontology and scientific in their outlook. Important differences follow from this basic difference. Humanitarians, mostly believe in the existence of God, soul, heaven, hell, and so on. Humanists dispel these supernatural entities as non-existent.

For humanitarians religion is the real foundation and inspiration of ethics. For them, practising ethics is a stepping stone to achieve religious goals. On the other hand, humanism considers ethics to be all-important and religion to be not only unimportant, but even harmful for the humanistic way of life. For all humanitarians, mostly, God is the source of all values. They justify universal brotherhood on the plea, that all the human beings are children of God and hence, brothers among themselves. They say that service to man is service to God. Humanitarians forbid immoral behavior on the grounds that God would be annoyed thereby and as a result thereof the chances of our getting God’s grace would diminish.

Humanists consider the above sanctions of religious morality to be unscientific. For the humanists, not God but human rationality is the source
of morality. Universal brotherhood and other moral virtues can be convincingly justified on rational grounds alone. The ethics of the humanists is wholly this worldly. There are for them no ‘other-worldly’ goals to be achieved. Humanists are firm believers in knowledge through sense perception. But the religious consider perception to be misleading and unreliable. They consider the phenomenon to be incomplete, evil, illusory and more to be shunned. It encompasses them the intuitive findings of the prophets as codified in the Scriptures, which give an infallible and absolute knowledge. These tall claims of the orthodoxy are dismissed by the humanists as hollow.

Most of the humanitarians accept the existence of God. The popular contention, that men become only toys and tools in the hands of the almighty God exists. Humility becomes the highest virtue. On the other hand, humanists consider man to be the maker of his own fate. Hence, the adherents of humanism are active and self-confident, ready to revolt against any type of social injustice. The spirit and the outcome of the good works done by the humanists differ from those done by the humanitarians. The humanitarians help people out of religious compulsion. They help to keep their conscience clear and also to please God. The humanists, on the other hand, help people to stand on their own legs and make them self-reliant. In helping others their object is not in merely keeping their consciences clear, as is the case with the humanitarians.

Consensus and opinions specified above are some of the important differences between humanism and humanitarianism. Many more can be

stated. But, the above are adequate to justify that they are two different philosophies. A majority of the saints of the middle ages were humanitarians.

At the close of the medieval period, western thinkers asserted the intrinsic value of man and his potentialities. There was a revolt against the acceptance of God, if not any other supernatural power. This led to the realisation, that man could be self-sufficient, self-reliant and earn self-knowledge. It was in essence an emphasis of the concept of free will. The urge for spiritual freedom is a characteristic feature of the human mind. It is this, in fact, that has led to the development of religion, science and philosophy. The urge for spiritual freedom finds expression in the desire for all other forms of freedom - economic, social or political. These ideas constituting the concept of humanism marked the attitude of the Renaissance throughout Western Europe.

In the modern period, humanism has acquired an intense significance everywhere. It has been claimed, that it is an essential characteristic of the Indian Renaissance of nineteenth Century too. From Ram Mohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi, most thinkers and social reformers of modern India have subscribed to humanism. Humanism that originated and developed on the Indian soil from very early ancient was perhaps the corollary of the monistic philosophy of the Upanishads, that the ultimate reality is in fact one, expressed in the well known statement, 'Atman is Brahman'. The essence of the individual is identical with the underlying reality of the universe. When the realisation dawns on man, his love encompasses all.
Markandeya Purana (600 B.C. – 200 A.D approximately) gives an apt expression to humanitarianism in the following lines: "I hanker not for kingdom or heaven or rebirth, my only ardent longing is for the removal of suffering of all creatures tormented by sorrow and misery". It would perhaps be more correct to regard this attitude as humanitarianism, rather than humanism. This distinction is not often made. Humanitarianism attaches great value to man, but does not necessarily place the highest value in man. It often identifies man with God and maintains, that one should render selfless service to man, for it is through such service, that others can best serve God. Service to man, thus, is not an end in itself, but a means towards the realisation of God. Equality of all men, mercy of service (seva) and removal of misery of man are the dominant notes of humanitarianism.

The philosophy of humanitarianism reaches the culmination in Vaishnavism. God resides in every man. It is possible for every one to discover or realise the divinity in him. Every human being, infact, every creature, being a manifestation of God, it is our moral obligation to show kindness and mercy to all beings.

Thinkers of the medieval period, responsible for what is known in India as the bhakti movement, proclaimed the equality of all men in the name of God. They criticised the rigid caste system and spread the message, that true devotion can bring salvation to man, whatever be his caste or creed. Infact, a large number of saints of this period were so-called 'untouchables'. Kabir was a weaver, Raidas a cobbler, Namadev a barber, Nanak a tailor and

Tukaram a low-caste worker. In his ‘Religion of Man’, Tagore has referred to Kabir, Dadu and other medieval poets addressing God as *Nara-Hari is Nara-Narayan* (man-God) or *Mahamanaya* (Supreme Man)\(^1\).

Ramakrishna modified this conception by substituting service for kindness. He saw God in man and he said one should serve man (*jiva*) knowing it as Siva. It is recalled, that once Ramakrishna asked Vivekananda what his most earnest desire was. He replied: ‘to be immersed in’ *Nirvikalpasamadhi* to be merged in a supraconscious stage of trance. Ramakrishna rebuked him for self, heart and soul and exhorted him to serve men for the statement of their life. Inspired as he was this philosophical outlook, Vivekananda developed the concept of *Daridranarayan*. He said true religion is a man-making formula. In a letter written to Washington in 1894, he said: ‘I refuse to follow that religion or God that cannot wipe the tears of a widow or cannot give even a morsel to an orphan’. He further said that it is the poor, the downtrodden, the miserable who should be looked upon as God. Vivekananda believed that India would not progress, until the condition of the millions of the poor is improved.

It is only the uplift of the masses, that could really make for a country’s prosperity, material and spiritual. It was with this idea, that he introduced the system of *Daridranarayan seva*. It does not mean, that we feed the poor from time to time, or on a pre-ordained auspicious day, to earn merit (*punya*) for ourselves. It implies recognising the inherent dignity of man, however low, viewing him as God and serving Him. The works of poets like Tagore

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and Iqbal abundantly reveal humanism in the sense of supremacy of man over the rest of the universe and define reality, truth and God in terms of humanity and even dependence of God on man. This idea has been expressed by Tagore in several works like 'The Religion of Man', 'Man', 'Fruit-gathering' and 'Purab'. In the last poetic work, he declares, "God is dependent upon humanity, not only for perfecting his universe, but even for his self-discovery and self-knowledge. It is in the human world, that God's power finds its fulfillment." Iqbal's humanism finds expression in his glorification of man in the world and also in his capacity to challenge God and in his declaration to improve upon God's creation (Zabur-I-Ajam, Payam-a-Mashruq). The essence of man lies in his dynamism, freedom and creativity.

Modern India had the privilege of possessing perhaps the greatest humanitarian of the present era. Mahatma Gandhi relinquished pomp and riches, truly identified himself with his poor countrymen. His simple dress consisting of a short dhoti, his simple food, travel by third class by rail, were the result of his sincere desire to be one of them to share their sufferings. Deeply influenced by Buddha, Christ and Vivekananda, he preached the gospel of love and honour to all men, without making any discriminations. His attention was specially directed to the untouchables, the 'Harijans' as he was fond of calling them. For centuries a large section of the Indian population had been exploited by the upper castes and were made to live below the level of human subsistence. Gandhiji worked tirelessly for the good of these people and exhorted his countrymen to help remove the social stigma attached to the untouchables, to provide equality of opportunity to them and to make an all-
out effort to provide them with all amenities and rights, so that they might become worthy citizens of the country.

Humanism acquired a new significance in India, in the wake of its contact with the West and the acknowledgment of an establishment of the supremacy of science and technology, especially in the Western countries. It would, however, be a gross misjudgement to think, that humanism even in the true sense of the term, which puts man above all and denies any supernatural power or being, has prevailed in India. The greatest advocate of humanism in our country is Lord Buddha. His enquiry into the problem of suffering, which resulted in his enlightenment did not make him become a recluse. According to him, there was neither a logical nor a moral, or any other basis for accepting any supernatural being. Man is governed by his *Karma* and should free from all suffering prior to being elevate to great heights, Buddha spent his entire life advising and guiding his followers through his preachings to minimise the ills and evils of life. Buddha is indeed the apostle of great compassion – a *mahakaruna*. The idea of compassion and love for all culminated in the concept of *Bodhisattva* in *Mahayana* Buddhism. A *Bodhisattva* is one, who has attained the supreme knowledge and wisdom and is fit for salvation, but of his own accord postpones his own salvation, so that he comes back to this world again and again for helping others to attain freedom. Salvation, here is not union with God or any other mystic experience, but a realisation of the conditioned nature of all things. This is Buddhas’s *dharma*. 
The highest value has been bestowed in man even in the Mahabharata as would be evident from the following line ‘na manusachresthataram Kincit’ (Shanti Parva 299/20) meaning ‘There is nothing higher than man’. The same prophetic message resounds in the words of the sixteenth century Vaishnava poet, Chandidas – ‘Sabar Upare manus satya tahar upare nai’ – implying, ‘man is the highest truth, there is none higher than him’. In this context, it is humanism par excellence.

With the advancement of various branches of science, the concept of humanism has become much more complex than classical humanism and has gained new dimensions. The essence of the concept and its various aspects and implications in the modern context has been brought out with extreme clarity by the twentieth century Indian political thinker, M.N. Roy. Where as Roy pointed out that though in classical and romantic humanism, the sovereignty of man was proclaimed; free will of man was just assumed, its origin could not be scientifically explained. “In fact speculation about the essence of man often led to mysticism. Humanism, thus, defeated itself.” Modern science, contends Roy, has revealed that man is the outcome of biological evolution. All manifestations of life-consciousness, intelligence, will - can be traced to a common origin. “Instincts and intuitions are not mysterious things, simply given. The soul is a sum total of the intellectual and emotional attributes of the human being”. “The Universe”, he pointed out, “is a cosmos of a law governed system. As man is a part of that nature, his ideas, emotions and will are also determined. Man is essentially rational,

1. The Radical Humanist: November, 1977, P. 18
2. Ibid.
his reason being an echo of the harmony of the universe.” Similarly, man’s struggle for survival, which is an expression of his basic urge for freedom has been going on from time immemorial. It is in the course of this natural evolution, that man’s urge for acquiring knowledge and for conquering his environment leads him to discover the universal truth.

Consequently, New Humanism is thus an extension of “The old doctrine of human sovereignty and dignity informed by modern science”, as it coordinates the knowledge acquired in the different departments of science and seeks to explain man not only in the context of society, but also in relation to the whole universe on the basis of an integrated picture of knowledge. So, it is also called Integral Scientific Humanism. New Humanism is further called Radical Humanism, because it tries to go to the root of the problem in order to explain man himself.

Roy qualified his Humanism by the words ‘RADICAL’, ‘NEW’, ‘SCIENTIFIC’, and so on, because he claimed that “it is humanism enriched, reinforced and elaborated by scientific knowledge and social experience gained during the centuries of modern civilization”1. The main study of the humanist philosophy is man. Roy tried to interpret man in the light of scientific knowledge, traced all social progress to his ideal aspirations and visualized a new social order conducive to the welfare and freedom of the individual.

This New Humanism, as Roy calls it, is based on materialism or physical Realism. The universe is a physical system, and so is man, a part of it. But, there is an essential difference between animal nature and human

nature, which possess consciousness, reason, will, conscience, and other qualities. It is not something inexplicable. Science has shown, that life can grow out of inanimate matter. Similarly, through a process of gradual evolution, consciousness appears at a later stage, admired with reason, which also is a biological evolution. Man is free in every sphere. He does not have an appeal to any trans-empirical agency. According to Roy, “New humanism reduces all values from the supreme urge of freedom. Freedom is the supreme value of life, because the urge for freedom is the essence of human existence”. Besides, man is essentially a rational being. It is from this innate rationality his principles of life are derived, including that of morality. So, to be moral a man has only to be human, his natural self. He does not have to be subsequent to a divine or extraneous sanction for morality. Man is rational and therefore can be moral, under any compulsion, but voluntarily.

Roy also claims that New Humanism is a world philosophy. “Human will is the motive of social evolution; it is, indeed, the most powerful determining factor of history. Otherwise there would be no place for revolutions in a rationally determined process of social evolution”. Roy maintains, that the purpose of all our rational endeavours should be directed towards the removal of social conditions, which hinder the unfolding of the potentialities of man. In fact, we should strive to provide all facilities to the maximum extent. It is only in this way, that one could establish a society, where there would be social justice and inherent potentialities of man would blossom into liberty.

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
Roy's ideas formulated in his Theses on New Humanism have not only retained their relevance, but today they prompt and provoke serious thinking on the part of every citizen, who cherishes the values of democracy, liberty and equality. Once the realisation dawns, that rationality is the core essence, it should not require any special effort or sacrifice to work for the dispensation of justice, equality of opportunity or for rendering any help to other fellow countrymen or for the preservation of human rights, democracy and so on. This calls for humans to be just natural, in the true sense of the term.

V. M.N. ROY’S PLACE IN INDIAN TRADITION

It is frequently believed, that the Indian philosophical tradition is predominantly spiritualistic, and that the belief in God constitutes its most important element. In fact, ancient Indians must be credited with producing the most extensive atheistic and rationalistic literature in the world. The authors of this literature had advanced varied theories and arguments against the existence of God. Undoubtedly, the most important of them was the \textit{Svabhavavada} or the doctrine of nature. With this doctrine they could counter the \textit{Isvaravada} or the doctrine of God, very effectively.

\textit{Svabhavavada} received its most characteristic treatment in the \textit{Samkhya} philosophy, which once enjoyed tremendous prestige in the country. According to this, primeval matter (\textit{Prakriti}), moved by the laws of motion inherent in it (\textit{Svabhava}), was quite sufficient to account for the being and
Along with the Prakriti, the Samkhya mentioned another eternal entity called Purusha. It is, however, not at all an active force and played no part in the origin and development of this world of multiplicity and plurality, for having evolved from Prakriti alone. The concept of Purusha is thus entirely superfluous in the Samkhya philosophy.

In spite of this flaw, it cannot be gainsaid that the svabhavavada of the Samkhya is scientific in spirit. And the scientific spirit, as it exists today, is older than modern science. The latter only made the doctrine surer of itself. Darwinism, particularly, gave it a powerful impetus. One cannot but marvel today that the Samkhyaavadins had, so early in the history of human thought, formulated merely by philosophical insight certain propositions, which are not much different from those made by modern scientists. In ancient India, the scientific spirit rose in opposition to the mythological and theological explanations of various phenomena.

Naturally, the Samkhya like the Lokayata, became the target of attack from the champions of Vedic orthodoxy. Practically, all its basic literature was destroyed by the latter. Besides Kapila, there are also several references to a number of post-Kapila teachers like Panchasikha, Asuri, Sanaka, Vodhu and Sananda. But, none of their treatises could be traced. Subsequently, Vedantist commentators like Vachaspati Misra, Gaudapada, Aniruddha and Vijnanabhikshu undertook to reconstruct the philosophy, and in the process they brought it in the pale of Vedantic thought, current with a shift of emphasis. As a result, the Samkhya lost its distinctive character.
It is true that Buddhism was originally inspired by the *Samkhya*. Scarcely a century after Kapila, Buddha was born at *Kapilavastu*, the very place where the originator of the *Samkhya* system lived¹. In those days the Nepal-Bihar region was still comparatively free from the influence of Vedic-Brahmanism. So the earliest attempts could be made there to explain the mystery of the universe by means of reason. Trade is a source of heretical ideas, and Kapilavastu was an important trade and political centre on the great eastern trade route, which went north from Rajgir to the Nepal Terai. Buddha naturally caught up with many of the rationalist ideas of the *Samkhya* prevalent in the region. But, a more definite influence of the *Samkhya* upon him can also be traced from the fact that one of his early teachers, *Arada* belonged to this school.

Even as Buddha obtained the principal tenets of his philosophy from the *Samkhya*, his interest was fundamentally different from that of Kapila. Buddha placed far more emphasis on ethics than on metaphysics. Ontological and epistemological questions therefore did not concern him much.

The later disciples of Buddha, of course, could not remain aloof from metaphysical controversies. They saw that it was not easy to defend the teachings of the Master, unless they clearly took an anti-theistic position. Hence, different atheistic schools developed, in course of time within the fold of the Buddhist movement. Many subtle and dialectical arguments were put forward to disprove the existence of God. But, not much attention was paid to the doctrine of nature. And if the doctrine had no more in Buddhism,

¹ *The Radical Humanist*: April, 1975, P. 29.
its future became completely bleak after its fall, which signified the virtual
termination of the rationalist phase of Indian thought. The Brahminical
reaction then came to acquire a complete hold over the Indian mind, and the
original *Samkhya* tradition no longer had a chance of survival.

Centuries later, M.N. Roy revived that tradition. Basically his
philosophy of New Humanism is the *Samkhya* doctrine of nature enriched by
modern science. Roy took up the threads where the *Samkhyaavadins* left.
The latter established, that this universe is auto-dynamic, because it has *rajas*
or energy as one of its constituents and that it is also self-sufficient. Roy
went a step further and concluded, that born out of this law-governed universe,
man too is self-sufficient and auto-dynamic. It means, that man has inherited
from nature all the basic *gunas*, which he needs for making his own destiny.
According to Roy, these *gunas* are three in number, urge for freedom,
rationality and morality.

The instinct of self-preservation in nature has become, with man, its
highest product, an urge for freedom. The determinism of nature has taken
the shape of rationality in the case of man, and the harmony of nature, that of
morality. This attempt by Roy to explain man is again a new application of
the *Samkhya* principal of *Satkaryavada*. If for deriving inspiration for his
dialectical thinking Marx “once again returned to the mode of contemplation
of the great founders of the Greek philosophy”, Roy returned to the mode of
contemplation of one of the great founders of Indian philosophy, for inspiration
after cutting a drift from the anchor of Marxism. In his philosophy of New
Humanism, Roy has sought to co-ordinate the knowledge so far accumulated
in the different departments of science, and to present a unified picture of the
being and becoming of man, in the light of that knowledge. The gaps in this
knowledge he tried to fill, on the basis of the ancient *Samkhya* doctrine. In
that sense, Roy is a modern Kapila'.