

HUMANIST POLITICS

M. N. ROY

Nav Jagriti Samaj
D 46, Lokmanya Nagar,
Mahim, Bombay 400 016.

Rupees Three

FORE WORD

A lecture delivered by the late M. N. Roy on January 31, 1949, at the Cowasji Jehangir Hall, Bombay, is being published here in a somewhat abridged form.

On the basis of his vast experience of revolutionary movements, M. N. Roy came to the conclusion that participation in the scramble for power, in which all political parties were necessarily involved, cannot possibly lead to a revolutionary transformation of society so as to ensure individual freedom and promote social progress. On the other hand, he also came to the conclusion that in a country like ours, a worthwhile revolution cannot be brought about by capturing power through insurrectionary means and setting up a dictatorial regime. He suggested a third way, a humanist way, for the attainment of a social, political and economic revolution in the country. This humanist way to revolution was described by him in the lecture published in this pamphlet. I am sure that the readers will find the ideas of M. N. Roy published here to be instructive and stimulating.

New Delhi
Dated August 13, 1983

—V. M. Tarkunde

Humanist Politics

HUMANIST Politics may appear to be something novel, because the term politics may have been qualified by a variety of adjectives, but these have never included the term "humanist." The world has heard of anarchist, democratic, conservative, revolutionary or liberal politics; there have been nationalist, imperialist and socialist or communist politics, and it may be asked what is the need of introducing yet another brand of politics in this large medley of political notions which have already created more than enough confusion.

Those who have come to feel the necessity of humanist politics have been led to this by the conviction that this medley, which has of late become a veritable chaos, can be cleared away only by introducing the human element into public affairs, or rather by giving the human individual a prominent place in political practice. All sorts of forces, elements and factors are considered in politics, and it is often forgotten that there is no purpose in all this unless it is for the welfare and happiness of men, and that it is man alone who can bring it about, not impersonal forces and factors.

Society is the creation of man. Primitive man created society for the purpose of carrying on the business of regulating their affairs and relations. In the beginning, the purpose was mainly to defend themselves against the impact of natural phenomena and more powerful beasts, and later on, to march ahead on the road to human progress on higher levels. Subsequently, when the original human communities became larger, an increasingly elaborate machinery had to be created for carrying on public administration, and that political organisation of society came to be known as the State.

Thus, originally, politics was a concern of human beings with common interests and purposes. Its purpose was to regulate human relations in certain aspects of social existence. The units of all political organisation were the individual men and women constituting it. But later on, State organisations became larger and larger, and ultimately, entire countries and continents came to be embraced by one political State. Therefore, the fundamental problem of modern political philosophy

has been how to regulate the relations between individual and State, how to carry on organised social existence without encroaching on the liberty of the individual.

In other words, the problem was how the end with which the State was originally created, could be pursued without defeating the purpose with which it was created. Even in our time, it was originally agreed that the most fundamental democratic principle is the freedom of the individual. In all democratic Constitutions, this fundamental freedom is guaranteed. But as the experience of the last two generations has proved, this has become a mere formality which, in times of crisis, does not offer any real guarantee for individual liberty.

Since the last world war, dictatorship, that is, the negation of democracy with its fundamental principle of individual freedom, challenged the old political doctrine of democracy from two sides. The earlier challenge, that is, the challenge of Marxism, very correctly exposed the deficiencies and shortcomings of democracy, as it was practised, and from that very correct analysis came to the wrong conclusion that this imperfect, inadequate parliamentary democracy should be replaced by the dictatorship of one class as the transition to a higher form of democracy.

If the old doctrine of parliamentary democracy was faulty, the Marxian doctrine of a higher democracy through dictatorship was obviously fallacious. It assumed that the negation of democracy was the condition for a higher form of democracy; that dictatorship of one class was the condition for the freedom of all men. The political doctrine of Marxism was ultimately put into practice in one country, when the Communist Party captured power in Russia.

Before this challenge to democracy, which was a challenge ostensibly with a better purpose, not a challenge to the concept of democracy itself, but which promised a higher form of democracy after the abolition of an imperfect form of democracy—before this Marxian challenge was taken up in other parts of the world a more formidable challenge to democracy appeared in the form of Fascism. Fascism was a complete, total, all-round negation and open denunciation of democracy.

Fascism ascribed all evils of the contemporary world to parliamentary democracy, which it characterised as a sign of

decadence, and it appeared on the political scene of Europe with the avowed intention of destroying parliamentary democracy, to be replaced by a distatorship which was justified on the ground that certain superior types of human beings were naturally qualified and endowed with the attributes for ruling other peoples according to their historical destiny.

During the period between the two world wars, buffeted between these challenges from two sides, democracy practically disappeared from all the countries. Even where it was formally preserved, the formality was in practice encroached upon to such a degree that the faith in democracy was lost by an ever growing section of the population. Now when one is confronted with this phenomenon that a doctrine which was evolved by important thinkers over a whole period of history, a doctrine which was undoubtedly based on sound social and philosophical principles, a doctrine which was practised in Europe even if imperfectly for nearly a century and a half, when such a doctrine ultimately led to a general revolt against itself, then one must begin to think if there was not really something intrinsically wrong with that doctrine.

By an examination of the history of democratic practice, one comes to the conclusion that the doctrine of democracy, that is, that sovereignty belongs to the people, is as sound to-day as it ever was. But there was a contradiction between the theory and practice of democracy. In reply to the challenge that democracy is irreparably discredited, or the contention that democracy is not possible, one can legitimately say that democracy has not really failed; its impossibility has not been proved in practice, because democracy has never been given a fair chance.

Democracy was not given a chance because the political practice of the last two-hundred years, although it was formally democratic, was essentially collectivist. All the notions with which politics, even professedly democratic politics, is associated—like nation, or empire, or subsequently a class—all these are conceived as a metaphysical collectivity and their doctrines place that collectivity above the reality of the individual which constitutes the nation, society or the class.

Now, when it was said that sovereignty belongs to the people, the people was not regarded as composed of sovereign

individual men and women; it was not said that popular sovereignty was the sum total of the sovereignty of the individuals constituting the people; similarly, the concept of the nation, considered to be something more than the sum total of the inhabitants of a country, logically contradicted the fundamental conception of democracy. Even the concept of democracy as practised under the parliamentary system implicitly had a totalitarian connotation: it was the rule of the people as an organic whole. But it was very soon realised that a large and numerous people cannot rule itself directly; therefore, the practice of delegation of power was evolved, and delegation of power came to be the cardinal principle of democratic practice.

It is conceded that the sovereign right belongs to the people. But as the people cannot rule themselves, they are required to delegate their sovereign right to elected representatives. Those representatives, for all practical purposes, become the rulers of the country. Now this practice of delegation of power negates the principle of democracy, because the philosophical concept of individual sovereignty and freedom was the foundation of the democratic political doctrines.

In a formal parliamentary system, even in countries like England or America, where it was practised to a large degree of perfection, the individual citizen had no more right than to go to the polling booth and throw a slip of paper into it once in three, four or five years. In the period between elections, the sovereign people was completely helpless, and had absolutely no means or possibility to control their representatives who are virtually all-powerful.

Now, when the doctrine of democracy was challenged from two sides, the critics of democracy could very easily point to this faulty practice of democracy, a practice which denied the fundamental principle of democracy itself. It was not very difficult to make the people see that they were only being utilised by one party or another. But once a party came to power with their support, the party machinery ruled, and the people had absolutely no control on that machinery.

The Fascists therefore attacked the party system, which they presented as the whole essence of democracy, and they said that by dividing a nation into parties quarreling with

each other, the nation is enervated, weakened and degenerated and consequently cannot perform its historical role. They demanded that the party system should be abolished and the nation as one whole must rule itself. But ultimately, since the nation as a whole also could not rule, they advanced the doctrine that from time to time some individual appears as the spokesman of the nation, and the nation instinctively recognises that man as its natural leader and therefore the leader rules as the personification of the nation.

The other challenge from the side of Marxism came to a very curious conclusion. They still thought in terms of parties, but they maintained that the system of several parties ruling by turns should be abolished and a system established where only one party should rule and have the freedom to exist, because only one, that is the Communist Party, really represents the interests of the people, and therefore all the others are superfluous and harmful.

In any case, as the democratic institutions were further shaken, as the social and economic crisis of the inter-war period aggravated, the fanatic appeal of fascist dictatorship found the greatest response throughout Europe, and there was a time when it appeared that the democratic tradition of western culture was going to be submerged by the tidal wave of triumphant Fascism.

It will not be necessary to go into the whole history of the second world war. That is a matter of recent memory, I would rather concentrate on what happened in the post-war period. The war was believed to have been a conflict between fascist dictatorship and democracy. The military strength of the Fascist Powers was ultimately crushed and nominally democracy triumphed. But when peace returned and the democratic reconstruction of Europe was taken in hand, that task appeared to be almost an impossibility.

The appeal of fascist dictatorship had by then been replaced by the appeal of communist dictatorship; the complete disintegration and collapse of a number of democratic countries in the face of the onslaught of Fascism and the years of fascist tyranny in the earlier period of the war had certainly destroyed faith in Fascism, but had not created greater faith in democracy. It became quite evident that, if democracy was to survive Fascism, not only the practice of democracy had to be freed from

its evident faults, but the doctrine of democracy itself had to be restated. Otherwise, the other, Marxist form of collectivism was bound to come to stay; indeed, in the early post-war period it had almost become a universal article of faith. There was complete loss of faith in the original democratic doctrine of the freedom and sovereignty of the individual.

Political parties may disagree on this or that point of programme and theory; but all of them agree that the condition for the reconstruction of any society is that a party pledged to a programme of a certain type of reconstruction must come to power somehow or other, and utilise the power for reconstructing society. In consequence, politics has degenerated into what is called party politics. The masses of citizens, the individual constituents of democracy, have nothing to say in the matter. It is only a struggle between various parties and the various parties claim to represent either the whole of a nation or this or that class, and they have to be taken on their word for that.

But in reality, when a particular party comes to power, it is neither the nation nor, the class which is actually in possession of power; the State machinery is seized by some group of individuals and once they are in power, their concern naturally is to remain in power. It has been the tragic experience of contemporary history that while at the time of elections parties are prepared to promise anything and everything, once the vote of the electorate is secured and has placed them in power, the parties are liable to forget whatever they promised.

This vicious procedure, which has created such a hopeless chaos in the contemporary world, results directly from the way democracy was practised in the nineteenth century and the earlier decades of the twentieth century. One of the standing features of the democratic system was what is called the party system. There are various parties; they have their programmes, and they place their programmes before the people at election times, and ask the people to delegate their sovereign right to a particular party if they want its programmes to be executed.

The vice of deceiving the people is inherent in this practice. You start from the assumption that, if I have a good programme of social reconstruction, I—that is to say, my party, must come to power and then utilise the State machinery for

reconstructing society according to my prescription contained in the party programme. Therefore, to come to power is the first and foremost concern of any political party.

Under the democratic system, a party can come to power only with the consent of the people. There is more than one party seeking that consent. It is quite evident—and that was also the experience in practice—that any party which could make the most glittering promises had the greatest chance of obtaining the consent of the people. The result was the democracy degenerated into demagoguery. The most irresponsible demagogue came to be the most successful democrat !

Within the system of democracy, as it has been practised so long, there does not seem to be any way out of this vicious circle. The alternative offered is dictatorship. One brand of dictatorship, that is, Fascism, seems to be out of the run for the time being. The other brand of dictatorship, however, that is, communist dictatorship, is offering itself now as the only alternative to discredited democracy. And if democracy cannot be rehabilitated, if democracy is not possible except in form of this practice which inevitably degenerates into demagoguery, then it would seem that democracy is really doomed.

Therefore, every thoughtful person must face the challenging question: Is democracy really impossible ? and, Is dictatorship really the only alternative before the modern world ? If there was no answer but yes to these questions then I suppose the only thing we could do is to wait fatalistically for the doom to overtake us all. There would be nothing for men like us to do who want to be free, and cannot be free unless others are also free.

Confronted with this situation, a growing number of thoughtful men have been thinking hard and searching for a new way of democratic practice. And curiously enough, it was discovered that, living in different parts of the world, often not known to each other, often guided merely by the experience of their particular countries in which they were living, unaware of conditions elsewhere, many men throughout the world had been moving towards one and the same conclusion, and that conclusion is that, unless man, the individual, is restored to his proper place, that is, to his position of primacy and supremacy, there does not seem to be any way out of the present crisis.

HUMANIST POLITICS

This point of view, on the one hand, has to be backed up by an entire system of thought, and on the other its relevance shown in practical life. That is nothing new, because every political doctrine has a philosophy of its own. Hence, the people who were profoundly disturbed by the experience of the contemporary world, and were reacting to the crisis, also had to examine their intellectual equipment and tradition, examine the traditional values which had been accepted for long without questioning, and in the process felt the need to restore certain fundamental principles as the basis of a new philosophy of life.

Now this philosophy, which wants to restore the individual to his place of supremacy, has been called the philosophy of New Humanism. Humanism as such is an old philosophy. As a matter of fact, the modern political doctrine of democracy was inspired by the philosophy of Humanism which appeared in Europe at the close of the Middle Ages. During the Middle Ages, for nearly thousand years, Europe was dominated by the Christian Church and the religious mode of thought. The ruling Church regarded man only as an instrument for the expression of a Divine Will. That Divine Will was believed to express itself firstly through the Pope, then through various members of the clerical hierarchy, then again through the kings of the various Christian monarchies.

Ultimately, the great intellectual movement known as the European Renaissance raised the banner of the revolt of man. It was a revolt of man against God and his agents on earth. A philosophical doctrine was evolved which maintained that man was self-sufficient. Man itself is a creative agent. Whatever exists in the world is created by man, and therefore, for the guidance of his mundane existence, interference of any supernatural force is not necessary. Man is able to look after himself and the guidance of human affairs. Hence the world that has been created by man could be recreated by man over again in such a manner as to provide for greater freedom.

But subsequently, this humanist philosophy appeared to recede to the background, and from that misfortune it was concluded that it was no more than a spurt of romanticism which could not stand the test of practical experience. But that was not true. Humanism receded to the background because it was

limited by a deficiency which could not be avoided at that period. Humanism denied the existence of any super-human or super-natural forces and placed man in the centre of the Universe. All its thought starts from man. Man was the point of departure in all its arguments. But it failed to explain man himself. Everything in the world was explained from the point of view of man, but man was not explained. Man remained some mysterious elementary undefinable category.

What really happened was that the old mysterious God was replaced by another kind of God. Every man was made into a kind of God. But just as you cannot explain God in heaven, but must take his existence for granted, just so the old Humanism took man for granted as something given on this earth. But in subsequent centuries, when the scientific mode of thought replaced the religious mode of thought, when reason and the spirit of enquiry took the place of faith, this new mode of religion, to take man for granted as something given, failed to appeal to the more advanced section of men.

To-day we are in a position to revive Humanism by eliminating its defects. To-day man is no longer an elementary undefinable. To-day we possess a good deal of knowledge about man. We may not as yet be able to explain quite in detail how animate matter came to emerge out of the background of the physical Universe; but there is no reason to assume that man is something which could not be placed squarely as coming out of the background of the physical Universe, that there was anything extra-physical, super-natural or super-human in man.

With this greater knowledge about man, the deficiencies and defects of the older Humanism can be removed, and the humanist doctrine that man is the centre of things, that man is the creator of everything out of his own ability to create, that man is not dependent on anything outside himself for his existence and evolution—this fundamental principle of Humanism can to-day be revived and substantiated, and thereby a new inspiration given for that type of political practice which appears to offer the only way out of the modern crisis, namely, a really effective, that is, radical democracy.

Humanism as a social philosophy naturally is concerned with human behaviour, with human relations. But a social philosophy, in order to be convincing, must be integrated into

HUMANIST POLITICS

a complete system of thought covering cosmology and all other branches of knowledge. New Humanism offers such an integrated system of thought. In this context, no more need be said than to state this fact, because it has its relevance to humanist politics; before making humanist politics plausible, the philosophical background of Humanism had to be outlined to show how it leads up to new forms of politics and social change.

When we demand the restoration of the individual to his sovereign place, we do not demand anything extraordinary, because that is the accepted principle of the democratic political philosophy. But the practice of formal parliamentary democracy deviated from this fundamental principle, and consequently came to grief. That deviation again was not wilful or out of perversity. It was the result of a deviation from the original tradition of political democracy; and that deviation again resulted from the fact that traditional Humanism had failed to explain man himself.

Traditional Humanism could not explain how and why man can be depended upon for behaving rationally and morally, that is, as a responsible citizen of a given society. Consequently, it came to be believed, even by the best of Democrats, that indeed sovereignty belongs to the people, but the people, as it is composed of men and women not sufficiently educated, enlightened and qualified for administering the State, must delegate their power to their elected representatives, and hence democratic government came to be known as representative government.

Now, any critical political thinker will not find it difficult to see the difference between a democratic government and a representative government. Democracy was originally defined as government of the people, by the people, for the people. That definition has been generally accepted. But in reality, democracy has come to be nothing more than at best government for the people. A government of the people and by the people has never been established anywhere in the world. The people do not govern; they simply delegate their sovereign right to their representatives, and the representatives govern.

Parliamentary democracy is representative government.

that is, government for the people; and in this sense a democratic government is no more democratic than a monarchist government or even a more or less benevolent dictatorship. The kings and dictators also claim to rule for the people. If we have to take the professions of democratic politicians on their word that they are ruling for the people, is there any reason to disbelieve if kings and dictators say the same? It may be said that the people after all elected their representatives, but we know how they elect them. They do not elect them discriminately and convinced that this particular set of people really represent their, the people's interests. They naturally elect those who make the best promises, and those who have the best and most efficient party machinery at their command can naturally get their promises across to the largest number of people.

The original sin of the discredited democratic practice was to forget a very old and wise saying, which has to be revived to-day if democracy is to function. And that is the wisdom of Plato who said that education is the condition for democracy. Without education, democracy is not possible. The modern democrats took the backwardness of the electorate for granted, and since in experience it became clear that so long as the electors remained backward, it becomes all the easier for the political parties to deceive them by promises and obtain their votes on demagogic pretenses, democratic politicians, even later on when in power, neglected the task of laying at least the foundations of future democracy by educating the people, so that the democratic way of life could be consciously travelled by every single member of a democratic society.

In course of time, this malpractice of formal democracy was reinforced by all sorts of pseudo-scientific doctrines, which denied that reason has any validity in public life, especially in the behaviour of masses, that the appeal which finds response in the average man and woman is exclusively emotional, that it is not possible for every single man and woman to claim access to the intellectual and rational heights of the best members of a society in any given period. Consequently, side by side with the division of society in economic classes,

the society was horizontally divided between the elite and the masses.

The new elite was no longer constituted by divine right, but by their right of qualitative superiority. They were considered to be competent to acquire the ability to rule. There must be a ruling class and the masses. It is quite easy to see that under these circumstances, democracy is not possible, because the individual has no possibility to assert his sovereignty, unless he belongs to the elite. Now, a proposition to change this system and replace it by the system of direct democracy, that is, a system in which every single individual citizen would have the opportunity of controlling the affairs of society and participate in them, this proposition cannot be made unless it can also be maintained that every single human being is potentially capable of developing his creative powers, his intelligence, his discrimination, as much as any other human being.

The education which is a precondition of democracy, is not what we know as primary education; it is not even the conventional higher or scientific education. It is an instrument for raising the intellectual and cultural level of the people. So long as it cannot be maintained on the strength of scientific knowledge that every human being, by virtue of being a human being, is capable of rising to the highest heights of human perfection, a humanist philosophy cannot be propounded, a humanist social doctrine cannot be advanced, a humanist political practice will not be possible at all. Humanist political practice is offered as a possibility on that assumption, on that presupposition.

Before proceeding further, I must point out another fact of experience, that is the fact that the degeneration of education in the cultural sense is inevitable under the formal parliamentary democratic system. As soon as a party comes to power, it naturally wants to remain in power. There is a plausible ground for this: A party comes to power with a programme. Four or five years are not enough to implement that programme. Therefore, that party must remain in power longer than one term of office. In order to guarantee re-election in the next elections, automatically a party in power takes to the practice of intellectual regimentation of the

people, and education under the formal parliamentary system is serving the purpose of this intellectual regimentation, which can be almost imperceptible.

We hear much about free and compulsory primary education. To say free education is obviously not enough. But compulsory education may have two sides. As soon as you go to school, you are trained and conditioned in certain ways. Before you even learn the ABC, you are trained to salute a flag or the picture of a man; books are prescribed and you cannot use any other books than the ones prescribed by a particular government for its purposes. The purpose of education becomes to create a degree of conformity and subservience to an established order. Therefore, under a formal democratic system, it is impossible—at least the possibility is extremely remote—to raise the intellectual and cultural level of the people. Consequently if we cannot find a different approach to the problem of educating the people, to lay the foundation of democracy, democracy would appear to be impossible.

That new approach to the problem of education is indicated in New Humanism, which suggests that, given the opportunity, every human being is capable of developing his or her potentialities almost without limit. It goes on to say, since this opportunity cannot be offered by any government, the problem must be tackled by individuals who have felt the necessity of a new approach to the political problem. Otherwise, the problem will never be solved, and the world will not come out of the present impasse.

With this proposition, the New Humanists, who do not attach any great importance to that kind of political practice which is concerned only with the small sector of human existence which is conventionally called political are indicating a new approach to the present political crisis and its problems. Politics is the predominating passion of the people generally, and particularly of the educated middle class: being educated, the political approach of this new philosophy should particularly appeal to these political minded people. Secondly, it appears to many people that, unless the political problem is solved, no other problem can be solved, and therefore the

political aspect of the humanist philosophy is of great significance and must be properly thought out and understood.

The humanist approach to the political problems results from a realisation of the complete futility of political practice as hitherto practised. Earlier I have tried to point out this futility, showing how one political party after another has come and offered a new heaven on earth, a new order, a new society promising the people everything they need. Party after party has come to power and mismanaged affairs, and yet another party followed. Thus, in so far as the object of leading mankind as a whole towards the goal of greater freedom and progress, intellectual upliftment and spiritual inspiration is concerned, political practice has been completely futile.

Yet, human society, whether conceived as One World or on the national scale, must subsist. We cannot break up human society into the small groups of the pre-historical age. The affairs of large communities have to be administered, and that administration is politics. Therefore, **Humanism** must offer a solution to the political problems also, if its larger appeal, its approach to the more fundamental problems of human life is to find a response.

The starting point of our approach to the political problems is that the relation between the individual and the State, the relation between man and society, between freedom and organisation, cannot be solved unless the man, the individual and the concept of freedom, are given at least an equally important place in the political equation as their counter-parts in the relations. Until now, we have been thinking mainly of the interests of the State. For the interest of the State, everything is justified. The Constitution of a democratic State includes an imposing catalogue of civil rights, but they all include also one clause which entitles the executive to suspend the entire Constitution—if necessary in the interest of the State. That is to say, for the interest of the State, the freedom of the constituent units of the State can be completely abolished.

Similarly, we have social organisations and institutions, and social welfare is considered something bigger than individual welfare. We have forgotten that social welfare is the

sum total of the welfare individually enjoyed by individuals, and no freedom, no welfare, no progress or prosperity can be experienced except by individuals. The concept of a national prosperity and greatness, or social progress, which ignores that all these blessings of a nation or society can be measured only by the progress, prosperity, welfare and freedom enjoyed by its individual constituents, is a fraud and delusion.

We are dealing with a relation in which emphasis has always been laid on one of the related things only; man has always been forgotten. In the relation between the State and the individual, between man and society, everything else was always more important than man. So also when we think in terms of freedom and organisation, we remember that we must be free to organise and that organisations must be free to do this or that, but we are apt to forget that organisation has no sense and purpose except to increase our freedom.

To this, the philosophy of New Humanism says No. let us start from man and his need. The beginning is man, man is the constituent of society, as the citizen is the basic unit of the State. Man created both as means for his freedom. Therefore, not only should we give at least equality to the related things, but primacy must be given to man, the individual human being.

This naturally cannot be done by the existing political parties, either of the Right or of the Left, either democratic, dictatorial or liberal or conservative. Because all of them, in the last analysis, are collectivist by their nature as political parties. All of them profess to serve a collective concept, either a State or a nation or a class. Therefore a new kind of political practice is necessary which must begin from the bottom; which, knowing that education is the precondition of democracy, must apply itself to the education of the people.

Education for democracy does not consist in teaching just reading and writing, but in making the people conscious of their humanness, to make them conscious of their right to exist as human beings, in decency and dignity; to help them to think, to apply their reason. That is to say, the new humanist political practice must begin as a cultural movement. It must get out of the struggle for power of the political parties. If a humanist political party would also want to join

the scramble for power, it would have to play the game according to its rules, otherwise it would stand no chance at all.

Political parties indulge in this debased practice not because they are bad or because one is more perverse than another. But as soon as you join the game, you must abide by its rules, and the rules are laid down, they are based on the backwardness of the people, because ignorant and backward people can be so easily deceived. Therefore, humanist politics starts with the eschewing of the whole game of fighting for political power according to the old rules of the game. That is not a matter of renunciation. It is a well thought out new political practice and procedure.

It starts by analysing the concept of power. Power is a means to an end. But over the means, the end has come to be forgotten. Once you have achieved the first stage of capturing power, you must go over to the second stage and see that you retain it. And if on the record of what you can do in power you cannot be re-elected into power, then you tighten the screws of the regime and establish a dictatorship, even if you do it still with the imagined purpose of remaining in power to enforce your democratic programme.

The scramble for power creates a vicious circle. Maintaining that power is not indispensable for social change, humanist politics attacks it from the root, which is man. It states that man is the basic unit of society. Therefore, a free society can have no meaning except in the form of freedom of the individual human being. In order to achieve greater freedom, the conscious urge for freedom, the desire for a democratic society, for a democratic way of life, must be awakened in a growing number of individuals. Because any exchange in society can be brought about only by the basic individual constituents of society, unless these have the desire to bring about that change, it cannot be brought about.

It might be said that that will take a very long time. That is not necessarily so. But assuming that it will take a very long time, is there any alternative? And such an alternative as will bring about the particular kind of social change that we want to bring about, namely, greater freedom for the individual constituents of society? Of course, those who still have faith in the dictatorial alternatives will not see the force

of our argument. But those who have lost that faith, those who are frightened by the signs of the time towards growing regimentation and eclipse of the individual, they have no other alternative. Humanist politics is the only way before them.

But if we look to it a little more closely, with the confidence in man which is the essence to the philosophy of Humanism, then we need not be so hopeless and desperate. It is not going to be an endless process leading nowhere. Let me dispose of another very facile argument. It is said : To capture power through parliamentary channels is not possible; therefore, a revolutionary political party, which wants to reconstruct society and establish freedom, must capture power by insurrectionary means and set up its dictatorship to prevent counter-revolution.

Now, apart from the fallacious assumption that dictatorship could lead to a higher form of democracy, I want to point out that this hypothetical shortcut to social change through insurrection is closed in our time. The days are gone when a determined minority party could capture power through an insurrection, as happened in the French and the Russian Revolutions. If you look at the history of revolutions since the Russian Revolution, it is an unbroken history of defeats. Modern States are possessed of such formidable armed forces, and are so very highly mechanised and organised, that any attempt of a minority to capture power by armed insurrection is bound to be crushed.

In a country like ours, where the State may not have those advantages of other modern and highly militarised and organised States, the security of the State is based on the blind faith and backwardness of the people. In the case of any attempt to overthrow the present government by armed force, you will find the vast bulk of the population not on the side of the revolution meant for them, but allying around the government which, for all they are told, is something almost divine, combining the qualities of father and mother, saints and worshippers of saints.

All other ways being closed, the old traditional way being rejected, and the lure of the shortcut being no longer a practical proposition, the humanist way seems to be the only way

HUMANIST POLITICS

that leads in the direction where we want to go, and if this is explained, every sensible human being should therefore be persuaded to travel it, until a better way is offered to them. Until now no better one has been offered, and therefore I appeal to all sensible people, to all those who cannot be deluded by frauds and fallacies, but want the reality of freedom, to listen to the reasoning of New Humanism and adopt the political practice which flows from it, and which I shall briefly outline before I conclude.

Elections will take place from time to time in our country. They may be perfectly democratic elections, by universal suffrage. From the formal point of view, nothing better could be desired. But before entering this gate of freedom, we may cast a glance at the rest of the world to see how this heaven of universal suffrage appears in practice. It does not appear to be such a very alluring prospect. Why is that so? Universal suffrage, in a country like ours, means that there will be a many times larger number of ignorant and politically uninformed, indiscriminating voters than have ever been known to have participated in an election anywhere, and who can be very easily swayed by appeals to their emotions, religious prejudices and primitive sentiments.

If that is the highest ideal of democratic politics, then nothing better than the present state of affairs can be hoped for. The party in power will be returned to power. It will guarantee this by maintaining the cultural and intellectual status quo. Because, to reconstruct India is a matter of many years. Therefore, the party in power must remain in power almost indefinitely if it wishes to accomplish its programme even partially. To return the party in power back to power, again and again, the present state of ignorance of the people is the best guarantee and necessary precondition.

Thus, the country may have independence; we may even become a Great Power; but all that glory would be built on the neglect, if not suppression of the human individuals who are the basic units of the nation, and that will mean a lowering of the cultural level of the people. We have seen this happening in many other countries where modern technical progress was superimposed on a culturally backward society.

and formal democracy was practised in the absence of a general urge for individual freedom.

The essence of parliamentary democracy is believed to be the existence of opposition parties. In our country also, attempts have been made to have an opposition party. In order to come to power, the opposition party must be able to sway the majority of the voters away from the party at present in power. We have seen how voters are swayed. Therefore, an opposition party, which wants to succeed in the given atmosphere, has to appeal to the same backwardness, the same ignorance, the same prejudices and blind religious faith of the people as does the party in power, so that even the opposition party will be no guarantee for democracy, indeed is more likely to reinforce and galvanise the very conditions which a truly democratic practice should tend to remove.

Thus, parliamentary democracy can be practised in our country by maintaining the present social and cultural backwardness of the people. What meaning can that kind of democracy have for us? Again, we must ask: Is there then no other way? I say there is another way. It begins with the decision to change that very condition, on which political parties thrive, by blasting the foundation on which this structure of a fake democracy is built; that is to say, we attack the backwardness, the ignorance, the blind faith of the people, which make the vast bulk of the electorate so easily amenable to demagoguery.

Needless to say, we cannot immediately educate the people from to-day to to-morrow. But we can make a beginning here and now. For example, in the next elections, if there would be two-hundred people throughout the country ready to practise humanist politics, it should be possible for them to elect a dozen constituencies in the various parts of the country and there begin the task of awakening the urge for freedom in the individuals and raise the intellectual and general cultural level of the people. When it comes to the election, we shall tell them: Vote for any party you like; but before you vote, think; don't be carried away by election speeches; use your brains; examine the programmes and promises, and the record of the people who make them. Somebody comes and says he will build Socialism when in power.

HUMANIST POLITICS

We don't say that he is telling a lie; but we shall tell the voters what Socialism is, and what the conditions in our country are; and then they will understand that no party with the best intentions can reconstruct Indian society as a socialist society in ten years' time, assuming that Socialism is found to be the highest ideal.

In that way, we can teach at least a few members in each constituency to examine the promises that are made to them in a critical spirit. If we succeed in creating half a dozen discriminating persons in each constituency, we shall have created a catalyst. They will infect others with their habit of thinking and critical discrimination, so that perhaps already in the next elections one or two percent of the voters will know how to vote and how to judge the persons and programmes for whom their vote is canvassed. Their effect may not be felt immediately in the legislatures. But the foundation will be laid for really democratic practice. If this work will be continued in the five years until the next elections, the electorate of that constituency will have become a small democracy.

If we would go on doing this in one constituency after another, it may take a hundred years. But it will not be so. Once the example and the spirit is created, the momentum will grow and the movement will spread much faster than anybody can imagine to-day. The humanist approach is that by creating these small islands of democracy and freedom, we are creating the nucleus of the society that we want to establish, the kind of society in which we would wish to live. The Humanist believes that example is better than precept, and that by creating these small groups, we are recreating society as a whole. We are not only creating a discriminating electorate. But we are also teaching them to live a co-operative life, to transform their local community into a small co-operative commonwealth, a local democratic republic. And these will be the organised basis of the society we want.

Thus, the humanist political ideal is not an ideal to be achieved in this way at some time in the incalculable future. For Humanists, means and end are not so differentiated. The means is also part of the end. We are not setting up a perfectionist ideal to be achieved perhaps two-hundred years hence.

We say that a good and rational society will be a society which is composed of good and rational human beings. And we say that every human being is essentially rational and essentially good, that is, moral. And then we say that we can create small groups of such good and rational men, and with them we shall have made a concrete beginning for the creation of a good and rational human society, which is the object of all our politics; and such a beginning is bound to spread and the process will accelerate as its results become known.

Thus, we shall not be frustrated by the long way before us. Every day of our life, by acting as Humanists, we approximate our ideal. When we approach political practice in that spirit, there arises a new outlook and perspective before us, which can give us fresh hope and a strong conviction. When that spirit grows in a sufficiently large number of people, and they begin to function as a new catalytic element in society, that society is bound to be affected by their action and their spirit, and sooner or later by their whole philosophy, which does not just speculate and preach, but which is practised by the people who are preaching it, and who are preaching it by living it.

If a doctrine, a philosophy, is lived instead of being only preached, it has much greater influence than one which is preached, but mostly denied in the living of those who preach it. A Humanist says: I must act as a rational and moral being; as such I appeal to the innate reason and morality of my fellow human beings. And I shall appeal to them not only by precept, but by my behaviour. Thus, as a social being, a Humanist can attain his ideal every day of his life. And his political approach results from this attitude to his fellow beings, from this confidence in the innate, potential rationality and morality of all human beings.

It is not difficult to see how even in a country like ours this new spirit can be lived and practised, and by its spread the political life of the whole country be changed for the better, and perhaps the change can become perceptible already within ten years' time. But we would defeat the object of this purification of politics if we would go and say: We are better people than others, therefore vote for us, instead of voting for the others. Our object will be served by simply mak-

ing it impossible for anybody to deceive the people. In proportion as this is done, the foundation for freedom and democracy will be laid, and become more and more solid and safe. Then the time will come when a democracy will not be a centralised Leviathan, but a democratic State will be composed of innumerable local democratic republics, in which direct democracy will be possible.

This is the only way in which democracy can be real in our time. The State will thereby be reduced to the position of a mere co-ordinating factor; it will co-ordinate the functioning of the constituent units, each of which is a self-contained democratic republic. In that way we have introduced a new concept of democracy which connects up with the old notion of direct democracy and shows that direct democracy is possible. Because indirect democracy is a negation of democracy, and has been so far accepted as the only possible form of democracy because it was taken for granted that a whole people cannot be educated, and because 400 million people can naturally not come together in the market place to discuss and guide their affairs. A State of such dimensions can never be a democracy if its functions are centralised at the top, far away from the people.

But there is no need for democracy to be such a Leviathan. The social, economic and political life of a country can be decentralised, and many of its functions performed in the local republics, and thereby democracy can be practised directly. Thus, democracy can be possible. But it is possible only from the humanist point of view, and that pre-supposes an entirely new outlook of life.

In this short lecture, I cannot possibly go into greater detail. But if you are interested in examining the ideas which have been presented to you here, I would appeal to you to have the patience to study them closely and to acquaint yourself with the literature published by the Radical Humanist Movement. Once you read this, you will understand. And once these ideas are grasped, all right-thinking and freedom-loving people of our country will be influenced by them to a lesser or greater degree, and will begin to act as Humanists to that extent.

I do not ask you to join anybody. This movement does

HUMANIST POLITICS

not belong to anybody. If you think these ideas are good, go and practise them for yourself. You have to join no party, you have to dissociate yourself from no other organisation. You are responsible to nobody and accept no external discipline. You are responsible only to yourself, your conscience and your convictions. Exercise your reason and intelligence. If you find that these ideas satisfy their requirements and give you hope and inspiration, then go and act according to them; and part of these ideas is the dictum that example is better than precept. If you do this; and if there will be enough people who will not only like good ideas, but also practise them; if instead of aspiring to be great men, or to follow great men, they will endeavour to be good men and act intelligently,—then indeed a revolution will have been started which is bound to produce the most far-reaching and a more lasting social change than any revolution has ever brought about.

HUMANIST LITERATURE

BOOKS By M. N. ROY (New Reprints)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1. NEW HUMANISM | Rs. 30/- |
| 2. BEYOND COMMUNISM | Rs. 30/- |
| 3. POLITICS, POWER AND PARTIES | Rs. 60/- |
| 4. HISTORICAL ROLE OF ISLAM | Rs. 30/- |
| 5. MEN I MET | Rs. 50/- |
| 6. INDIA'S MESSAGE | Rs. 65/- |
| 7. NEW ORIENTATION | Rs. 65/- |
| 8. MATERIALISM | Rs. 85/- |

Special rebate 33% for R H subscribers and I R I members

Books about M. N. Roy and Ellen Roy (Commission 25%)

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. The World Her Village, Ed. by Sibnarayan Ray | Rs. 50/- |
| 2. Political Biography of M. N. Roy by V. B. Karnik | Rs. 124/- |

Other Humanist Literature

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Radical Humanism by V. M. Tarkunde | Rs. 32/- |
| 2. People's Plan II | Rs. 10/- |
| 3. Draft Constitution of Free India by M. N. Roy | Re. 1/- |
| 4. Indian Economic Trends (Proceeding of a Seminar organised R. H. A. Delhi). | Rs. 8/- |

Roy Memorial Lectures—I. R. I. Publication

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. Rationality of Development Planning
by Dr. B. N. Ganguli | Re. 1/- |
| 2. Whither Indian Planning ? by B. S. Minhas | Rs. 2.50 |
| 3. Dissent in the Early Indian Tradition
by Dr. Romila Thapar | Rs. 3/- |
| 4. Marxism, Pluralism & Orthodoxy by Andre Beteille | Rs. 3/- |
| 5. Man in Technological Society by S. H. Vatsyayan | Rs. 3/- |

Available at the office of

THE RADICAL HUMANIST

B-17 Maharani Bagh, New Delhi - 113 065

Printed at Prabhat Printing Works, 427 Gultekdi, Pune 37 and

Published by W. S. Kane, Sec., NavJagriti Samaj, D 46 Lokmanya Nagar, Bobmay-16