Selections from

THE RADICAL HUMANIST

ESTABLISHED : APRIL 1937
(Formerly in the name of 'INDEPENDENT INDIA' since April 1937 to March 1949)

Founder
M.N. ROY

VOLUME - I

April 1970 to December 2005

Selected, Compiled and Edited by
Mahi Pal Singh,
Editor, The Radical Humanist

An Indian Renaissance Institute Publication

M.N. Roy (1887-1954)

Selections from
The Radical Humanist

Volume - I
April 1970 to December 2005

Selected, Compiled and Edited by
Mahi Pal Singh,
Editor, The Radical Humanist

An Indian Renaissance Institute Publication

Published by :
Satish Chandra Varma, Advocate
Treasurer, IRI
For and on Behalf of
Indian Renaissance Institute
A-1/103, Satyam apartments,
Vasundhara Enclave,
New Delhi- 110096.
(M) 9811587576
Email ID: scvarma17@gmail.com

© Indian Renaissance Institute. Free re-publication or reproduction of the contents of this book permitted with due acknowledgement to the publishers of this volume.

E-Version
Published on 6th April, 2019

Available at:
www.lohiatoday.com

I dedicate this Volume

to the Memory of Dr. R.M. Pal

a Dedicated Radical Humanist

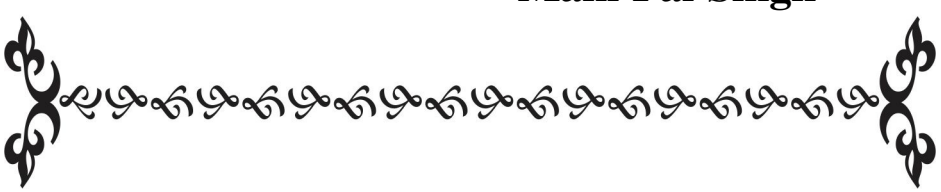
and

my Teacher, Friend, Guide and Mentor

who introduced me to

Civil Liberties and Radical Humanism

- Mahi Pal Singh



Foreword

The Radical Humanist monthly edited by Mr. Mahi Pal Singh inherited the long historical and revolutionary role in India. The journal started by Manabendranath Roy during the Second World War faced an uphill task before and after the Independence of India. Outstanding writers, critics, contributed to the journal covering wide range of issues, which drew the attention of academics, politicians, statesmen and general readers. The journal can boast of the legacy of editors, after M. N. Roy and Ellen Roy, of the likes of Sib Narayan Ray, Vasant B. Karnik, Amritlal Bhikku Shah, Govind D. Parekh, V.M. Tarkunde, Justice R.A. Jahagirdar, G.R. Dalvi, R.M. Pal who ably continued the standards of the journal which drew the attention of one and all. Many other scholars joined as and when need demanded and sustained the journal.

One great thing about The Radical Humanist is that despite facing an uphill task and financial crisis, it has never stopped.

Now about four years ago Mr. Mahi Pal undertook the editorship of the journal and is continuing the task. The selection of articles for publication indicates the wide scope, in-depth study and the attention paid to the critical issues. One thing must be emphasized that The Radical Humanist never compromised on human values, ethical norms, and above all freedom. Mr. Mahi Pal selected the articles keeping in view the cultural crisis faced by the contemporary society in the world in general and in India in particular. This selection of articles will set norms and pave the way for future. As an associate with the journal since many years, I could visualize the great effort of Mr. Mahi Pal Singh in selection which will definitely draw the attention of people in general and readers of this journal in particular. Mr. Mahi Pal has done a yeoman service through this uphill task. He has covered very useful fields in choosing the articles. As a follower of The Radical Humanist journal since half a century I could see the task of Mr. Mahi Pal.

Innaiah Narisetti (Dr.)

Preface

The writings and values of M.N. Roy become more relevant when democracy is in peril like in 1975 when the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, promulgated Emergency in the country. Roy and his ideas on democracy and freedom become even more relevant in rather more aggravated situation like today when undeclared Emergency looms large everywhere. Today we are passing through very difficult times. The very foundation of Democracy is being shaken as never before. When internal Emergency was imposed in the country in 1975, fundamental rights were suspended including the right to life, as opined by the Supreme Court of India in a majority judgement whereby even the highest court abdicated its duty to protect the fundamental rights of the people, which was most needed at a time when they were under the gravest threat and when even the highest judiciary also succumbed under the pressure of the government and its prestige as an independent judiciary received an irreparable loss, and censorship was imposed on press and media, the danger of dictatorship loomed large. Democratic institutions including the judiciary were being subverted in a systematic manner. All that was being done to perpetuate her personal rule for a very long time, to be followed later by the rule of Sanjay Gandhi, her infamous son, who had assumed extra-constitutional authority second only to the Prime Minister with her obvious connivance. But thanks to her error of judgement that she declared general elections; and also to the wisdom of the people of the country, who handed over the worst electoral defeat to her and threw away the yoke of her corrupt misrule and saved democracy.

Today under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party's Narendra Modi not only the democratic institutions but also educational, cultural and social institutions are being systematically subverted and destroyed. Secular values are being destroyed and minorities are not only being neglected but also attacked and killed through mob lynching in the name of cow-protection by goons of the Hindutva brigade. Communalism is being promoted and used for electoral benefits. Civil society activists who spoke for the rights of the marginalised people are being incarcerated as Maoists – now called 'urban Maoists'. Educational and cultural institutions are being filled with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) followers. In place of promoting scientific and rational thinking, subjects like astrology are being force-introduced in universities. Rationalist thinkers are being killed, again by elements close to the RSS and the BJP. Those speaking against anti-people policies of the government are labelled as anti-national. Media houses, both print and electronics, have been 'managed' and either pay obeisance to the party in power on their own or are kept under control through threats or intimidatory tactics. It is ensured by government machinery that journalists who dare to criticise Narendra Modi and the policies of his government do not remain in their position. There is press censorship without declaring so. In 1975 it was dictatorial rule under declared Emergency; today it is Fascist rule under undeclared emergency. The nation as a whole is threatened as never before, not even during the Emergency regime.

In such a scenario, there is greater need to remember and cherish democratic values, or to be precise, radical humanist values, as propounded by M.N. Roy, perhaps the greatest intellectual of the country in the last century and certainly the greatest democratic thinker for whom individual freedom – to think, decide and act – in matters political and religious alike, was of paramount importance. For him individual human being is the measure of all political, economic and social thinking and activity. He believed in self-sustained morality in political workers and parties alike. He wanted democracy to take root at the grass-root level for which he propounded the idea of People's Committees at the village and area levels who would decide who should represent them in government so that concentration of political power would not take place in a person or group of persons leading a political party. He was of the opinion that it was only scientific and rational thinking which could free individuals of outdated religious dogmas and social evils like caste.

Even before the imposition of Emergency in 1975, when all democratic institutions were under threat Jayaprakash Narayan and V.M. Tarkunde formed Citizens for Democracy (CFD) for fighting against those trends and during the Emergency regime when civil liberties actually came under severe attack, they along with many Radical Humanists formed the People's Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Freedoms (PUCLDR) with the support of Gandhians and others and launched a crusade for the protection of civil liberties and democratic freedoms. At that time when press was muzzled, The Radical Humanist continued to raise its voice against the dictatorial regime.

Roy knew that without spread of political education, all this would not be possible. So he advised his followers to be workers and messengers of these values. The Radical Humanist was also started to reflect on the people's difficulties and promote and spread these democratic values of freedom, liberty, scientific and rational thinking among people.

Since 1970 when The Radical Humanist was started as a monthly magazine, it has been spreading these values among people. Contributions of great writers, thinkers and activists, besides M.N. Roy's, like Justice V.M. Tarkunde, Justice R.A. Jahagirdar, Justice Rajindar Sachar, Prof. Sibnarayan Ray, Pandit Premnath Bazaz, M.A. Rane, R.L. Nigam, M.K. Haldar, Jayaprakash Narayan, Nirmal Mukherjee, Swaraj Sen Gupta, Dr. R.M. Pal, Surendra Mohan, Kuldip Nayar, N.D. Pancholi and many others have been published in the magazine. Articles published in the journal have been inspiring generations of freedom loving people to continue their struggle for the protection of democratic freedoms. We have seen in the past since 1974-75 that the ruling parties, by their very nature, tend to be dictatorial. When Mrs. Gandhi came back to power in 1980 after a three year break between 1977 and 1980, civil liberties again came under threat and the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) had to be revived by Tarkunde and others. The crusade for the protection of our democratic rights is a continuous process. Even if the present regime changes, the challenges posed by the communal and divisive forces will remain. They may even intensify, requiring greater vigilance and a stronger movement against them. Eternal vigilance, it is said, is the price we have to pay for protecting our civil liberties and democratic freedoms. As a harbinger of political and social change The Radical Humanist has been fighting not only against authoritarianism and moral-degradation in politics but also against caste and communalism. For students of political science, particularly those interested in democratic governance, and others who cherish morality in political practice these articles which have been selected from The Radical Humanist, published between 1970 and 2005, can be of great interest. These articles will keep the flame of our humanistic desire to protect and promote the values of democratic freedoms, social cohesion and humanism alight, and strengthen the Radical Humanist movement in the country and elsewhere.

Most of the writers whose articles have been selected for this volume have been well-known crusaders for civil liberties and democratic freedoms personally and through their articles they have been leading a relentless fight for human dignity, communal amity and inculcation of self-sustained morality in all individuals, and a few of them are still pursuing the path of radical humanism shown by M.N. Roy. I hope that students and other readers will find this volume useful not only for the information contained herein but it will also strengthen their faith in democratic, humanistic values.

New Delhi, ***Mahi Pal Singh***
2nd October 2018

Contents

Draft Constitution of Free India

1. The Constitution **1**

Dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party

2. Dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party : A Continuing Misconception: R.L. Nigam **17**
3. Why the RDP was Dissolved: Justice V.M. Tarkunde **23**

Humanist Manifesto And The Indian Radical Humanist Association

4. Humanist Manifesto II **25**
5. Indian Radical Humanist Association : Proposed Constitution **33**

Party System and Democracy in India

6. Radical Democracy: M.N. Roy **37**
7. Politics Without Party: M.N. Roy **42**
8. Humanist Approach to Elections: M.N. Roy **46**
9. The Statement: Party System and Democracy in India: C.R.M. Rao **53**
10. Need for a New Start: Surendra Mohan **55**
11. Parliamentary Democracy – Myths and Reality : A.J. Dastur **58**
12. Consensus in Indian Democracy: Niranjan Dhar **62**
13. Two-Pronged Threat to Party System: Balraj Puri **65**
14. Nemesis of Political Parties: M.K. Haldar **67**
15. Future of Party System – Radical Humanist Perspective : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **71**
16. JP Memorial Lecture, 1987: Organised Democracy, Party-less Politics and Total Revolution : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **77**
17. Political Parties and Party-less Democracy : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **84**
18. The Concept of People's Committees- Is It Feasible? : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **86**
19. Degeneration of Political Parties : R. Venkataraman's Laudabale Scheme Justice V.M. Tarkunde **90**
20. Humanist approach to Politics : Justice V.M. arkunde **94**
21. Democracy and the Party System : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **97**
22. Political Parties and Perversion of Democracy : M.A. Rane **100**
23. Concept of a Humanist State – Re-examined and Revised : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **105**
24. Gleanings from M.N. Roy: M.N. Roy **111**

Electoral Reforms and Participatory Democracy

25. Thoughts of M.N. Roy on Form and Method of Participatory Democracy : M.N. Roy **114**
26. People's Committees – A Revolutionary Concept : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **117**
27. Alternative Electoral Systems: Justice V.M. Tarkunde **120**
28. Interim Recommendations of the Electoral Reforms Committee of the Citizens For Democracy (CFD) : CFD **123**

The Radical Humanist Movement: Part I

29. The First Indian Humanists: Niranjan Dhar **127**
30. On the History of the Radical Humanist Movement : R.L. Nigam **133**
31. The Radical Humanist Movement – Nature and Perspective : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **137**

32. Radical Humanist Movement: Some Basic Questions : R.L. Nigam **140**
33. Past and Future: M.N. Roy **145**
34. Radical Humanism – An Outline-I : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **148**
35. Radical Humanism – An Outline-II : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **153**
36. Radical Humanist Movement in India - A Short History of the Indian Radical Humanist Movement : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **158**
37. Religion and the Radical Humanist Movement (I) : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **166**
38. Religion and the Radical Humanist Movement (II) Justice V.M. Tarkunde **169**
39. Practice of Radical Humanism: Justice V.M. Tarkunde **171**
40. A Titan among Human Rights Intellectuals and a Great Humanist: Dr. R.M. Pal **175**
41. Homage to a Noble Humanist: Sibnarayan Ray **177**

Part II : A Brief History of Humanism: M.K. Haldar

42. A Brief History of Humanism **181**
43. A Brief History of Humanism - Ancient India - I **185**
44. A Brief History of Humanism - Ancient India - II **190**
45. A Brief History of Humanism –Modern India - I **194**
46. A Brief History of Humanism –Modern India - II **199**
47. A Brief History of Humanism –Early Christianity - I **203**
48. A Brief History of Humanism –Early Christianity - II **207**
49. A Brief History of Humanism –Early Christianity - III **211**
50. A Brief History of Humanism –Early Christianity - IV **215**
51. A Brief History of Humanism –Advent of Islam and its Contribution **219**
52. A Brief History of Humanism – Advent of Scholasticism **223**
53. A Brief History of Humanism - The Crusades **226**
54. A Brief History of Humanism - The Inquisition **231**
55. A Brief History of Humanism - The Library **236**
56. A Brief History of Humanism – Mini Renaissance **239**
57. A Brief History of Humanism - The Renaissance and Western Historiography – I **244**
58. A Brief History of Humanism - The Renaissance and Western Historiography – II **250**

M.N. Roy – The Man, The Revolutionary, The Intellectual Radical Humanist

The Man

59. M.N. Roy – The Man: B.S. Sidhu **259**
60. M.N. Roy - When Shall Be Like His Again?: Ram Singh **264**
61. Remembering M.N. Roy on his 50th Death Anniversary : Dr. R.M. Pal **266**
62. Remembering M.N. Roy on his 50th Death Anniversary : Sumanta Banerjee **268**
63. A Biographical Check-List - The Twice-born Heretic - M.N. Roy and Comintern: by Samaren Roy : M.K. Haldar **271**
64. Assent and Dissent with M.N. Roy **273**
65. J.P. on M.N. Roy : Jayaprakash Narayan **276**
66. Roy, J.P. and Indian Democracy : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **278**

The Revolutionary

67. M.N. Roy: Trial of a Revolutionary: B.R. Agarwala **285**

An Assessment of Roy – The Man and His Work

68. Remembering Roy : Sangeeta Mall **291**
69. The Message of 'Independent India' : M.N. Roy **293**

70. Forty Years After Roy : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **297**
71. Some Reflections of a Radical Humanist : **301**
On Roy, Revolution and Renaissance : Sibnarayan Ray
72. Gandhism and Humanism : M.N. Roy **311**
73. M.N. Roy: A Futile Quest? : Ivan Fernandes **314**
74. Relevance of M.N. Roy's Philosophical Materialism in **319**
the Contemporary World – 1 : Nirmal Mukherjee
75. Relevance of M.N. Roy's Philosophical Materialism in **325**
the Contemporary World – 2 : Nirmal Mukherjee
76. Relevance of M.N. Roy's Philosophical Materialism in **331**
the Contemporary World – 3 : Nirmal Mukherjee
77. The Non-Contemporaneity of M.N. Roy : **336**
Radical Democracy and the Party-Form: Aditya Nigam
78. M.N. Roy's rejection of Parliamentary Democracy and **352**
Laissez-faire Economy : Swaraj Sengupta
79. A Space of Encounter: M.N. Roy's Struggle for **357**
Liberation and the World of Berlin, 1919-1930 : Kris K. Manjapra
80. M.N. Roy and Political Structures: Surendra Mohan **362**
81. M.N. Roy's Attitude Towards Indian National Congress **364**
: Suneera Kapoor and Kiran Kanta
82. The Development of the Political Ideas of M.N. Roy : Kiran Kanta **375**
83. Communism and M.N. Roy: Samaren Roy **381**
84. The Relevance of M.N. Roy's Ideas Today : Dhawal Mehta **386**
85. M.N. Roy on Fascism **391**
86. From A Nehruvian To A Royist India: O.K. Ghosh **394**
87. Gandhiji to JP, One Continuity: V.S. Varkhedkar **399**
88. The State – M.N. Roy and Jayaprakash Narayan : Bhola Singh **403**
89. M.N. Roy on Fascism **409**
90. Ideas of M.N. Roy – Relevance Today **412**

Human Rights Issues and Education - Need, Scope, Strategies

91. Human Rights: A Brief Review : Justice R.A. Jahagirdar **413**
92. Human Rights Education – India's Heritage : Dr. R.M. Pal **421**
93. A note on Human Rights Education - Need, Scope, Strategies : Dr. R.M. Pal **428**
94. Human Rights Education in India (Part 2): Dr. R.M. Pal **431**
95. Humanism and Social Justice: Dr. R.M. Pal **437**
96. Societal Violations of Human Rights, the Deprived, **439**
the Woman, the Child-I : Dr. R.M. Pal
97. Societal Violations of Human Rights, the Deprived, **445**
the Woman, the Child-II : Dr. R.M. Pal
98. Erosion of Rule of Law: N.D. Pancholi **451**
99. Attack on Judicial Independence: Justice V.M. Tarkunde **454**
100. Is It Casteism?: Justice V.M. Tarkunde **458**
101. Genesis of Kashmir Problem: Balraj Puri **461**
102. The Kashmir Problem: Possible Solutions : Justice V.M. Tarkunde **465**
103. The Practice of Fascism: M.N. Roy **471**
104. The Myth of Unity of all Religions: Dr. Ramendra **476**
105. The Role of The Bhagavad-Gita in Indian History : Premnath Bazaz **483**

Draft Constitution of Free India

In 1944, three years before India became an independent country, the late M.N. Roy drafted in outline a Constitution for Free India which presented a picture of his conception of organised democracy based on a network of People's Committees. The Draft Constitution dealt with fundamental questions and controversial issues, leaving details to be filled in at a later state.

In his Introductory Note to the Draft, Roy observed, "The Draft visualises organised Democracy as the source of all constitutional authority – the instrument for the exercise of popular sovereignty. The experience of history is that atomised individual voters cannot make democracy prevail. The structure of the basis of the State which will be established by this Constitution will be a source of political education for the people. It, therefore, eliminates the objection to universal suffrage in a vast country like India with largely illiterate masses. Organised Democracy will also eliminate the difficulties of holding elections in a vast country. It makes combination of the legislative and executive functions of the state possible. The separation of these two functions has invariably vitiated democratic practice and reduced sovereignty of the people to a mere formality."

The Draft Constitution was placed before the Biannual Conference of the Radical Democratic Party held in Calcutta in December 1944 and was passed unanimously.

Because of the recent efforts of Jayaprakash Narayan, the concept of a State based on a network of People's Committees has received a good deal of popularity. The Constitution of Free India drafted by M.N. Roy is being republished in order that the role of People's Committees in an organised democracy may be clearly understood and properly appreciated.

New Delhi ***V.M. Tarkunde***
20th July, 1979.

THE CONSTITUTION

CHAPTER I

The Declaration of Rights And Fundamental Principles

Article I. This Constitution is promulgated with the purpose of establishing the following rights, and enforcing the following fundamental principles of democratic freedom.

(a) The supreme sovereignty belongs to the entire people, and shall be exercised directly through the control of the executive as well as the legislative functions of the State, by elected representatives of the people.

(b) The people have the inalienable right to alter and modify the political organisation of society.

(c) The right of revolt against tyranny and oppression is sacred.

(d) Autonomous Indian Provinces, formed as far as possible on the basis of linguistic and cultural homogeneity and freely agreeing to unite in a federation, shall form the Federal Union of India.

(e) All territorial units in India, including those that remain out of the Federal Union, shall have a uniformly democratic Constitution.

(f) The State being the political organisation of society, it shall in all cases be identical with the entire people.

(g) The land as well as the underground riches are collective property of the people.

(h) Promotion of the productivity of labour through the introduction of modern mechanical means of production is a responsibility of the State.

(i) Basic industries and the credit system shall be subject to State control.

(j) The State shall start large-scale industries under collective ownership.

(k) Cultivators are entitled to hold land, without any disability, subject to the payment of a unitary land tax to be fixed by law.

(l) The Government shall promote large-scale cooperative agriculture through the supply of modern machinery and cheap credit

(m) An irreducible standard of living for all laboring in fields, factories, mines, transport, offices and schools; shall be guaranteed by minimum wages fixed by law.

(n) Adequately remunerative employment or relief is a right of citizenship.

(o) Nobody shall labour for more than eight hours a day, for six days a week, and every worker shall be entitled to one month's leave with full pay every year, and women workers to three months maternity leave with full pay.

(p) There shall be statutory provision of social security for the old, sick and incapacitated.

(q) Education for all children up to the age of fourteen shall be free, compulsory and secular.

(r) The promotion of public health and sanitation shall be a charge on public revenue.

(s) The freedom of press and speech is guaranteed to all but the enemies of the people.

(t) The right of association for the purpose of safeguarding and amelioration of economic conditions and the political status of workers, employees and peasants shall be guaranteed.

(u) All citizens of the Federal Union of India are guaranteed inviolability of the person. No person shall be placed under arrest except on order by legally constituted Court.

(v) The inviolability of the homes of citizens and privacy of correspondence are protected by law.

(w) Individual citizens will have full freedom of worship.

(x) There shall be identical rights and responsibilities of citizenship for men and women.

(y) The rights of minorities shall be protected by proportional representation through separate electorates on all elected public bodies.

CHAPTER II
TIIE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

Article 2. All authority emanates from the people.

Article 3. The foundation of the State is organized democracy.

Article 4. The sovereign democratic power expresses itself through local People's Committees in villages, towns and cities.

Article 5. The People's Committees will be elected every year by all the men and women of the respective localities who have attained the age of eighteen years.

Article 6. The number of the members of a People's Committee will be one fiftieth of the total number of voters in the locality.

Article 7. The territorial delimitation and population basis of the People's Committees will be fixed by law under this Constitution.

Article 8. The functions of the People's Committees are:

(a) To help and enable citizens to exercise their sovereign right, individually as well as collectively;

(b) To make democratic power effective.

Article 9. In discharge of their sovereign democratic right, the People's Committees will perform the following functions in the respective provincial Governments and (in the case of federated provinces) in the Federal Government:

(a) Nominate candidates to seek election to the Federal Assembly and to the Provincial People's Councils.

(b) Give constant expression to the will of the people for the guidance of their representatives in the Federal Assembly and the respective Provincial People's Councils.

(c) Discuss, and express opinion on proposed legislations by the Federal Assembly as well as the respective Provincial People's Council.

(d) Recommend the recall of the representatives of the particular constituency, either in the Federal Assembly or in the respective Provincial People's Council, on the ground that the representative has failed to act according to the mandate of his constituents.

(e) Recommend the recall of the Governor-General and / or of the respective Provincial Governor.

(f) Initiate legislation by the Federal Assembly or the respective Provincial People's Council

(g) Demand a referendum on any legislative or executive measure either of the Federal or the respective Provincial Government.

CHAPTER III
THE FEDERAL UNION: FORM AND STRUCTURE

Article 10. This Constitution extends to the whole territory hitherto covered by the British Indian Empire and the Feudatory States within the geographical boundaries of India.

Article 11. Provinces delimited by the Provisional Government on the basis of linguistic and cultural homogeneity, and in accordance with administrative convenience, will constitute a Federal State, which will be called the Federal Union of India;

Provided that no province, which desires to remain outside the Federal Union, shall be a constituent unit thereof.

Article 12. Before the Federal Union of India is constituted, the Provincial People's Councils elected in the Provinces under the provisions of this Constitution shall have the right to entertain a proposal that the Province concerned may keep out of the proposed Federal Union.

If the proposal is passed by a majority of the provincial People's Council, it shall be submitted to a referendum of the adult population of the Province.

The referendum will be ordered and conducted by the Provincial Government set up in the Province according to the provisions of this Constitution.

The proposal must be supported by a majority of voters in the Province in order to be effective.

Article 13. Provinces, which remain out of the Federal Union of India, shall be governed by all the provisions of this Constitution in so far as they do not relate exclusively to the Federal structure.

Article 14. Any of the Provinces, which remain out of the Federal Union, may constitute themselves into another federation.

Article 15. The Federal Union of India will conclude a treaty of co-operation and mutual assistance with the Provinces remaining outside the Union, or with their separate Federation as the case may be, on matters of interest including customs, currency and railway administration.

Article 16. The Federal Union of India will be a member of the larger Federation known as the British Commonwealth, provided that it will be called the Indo-British Commonwealth of Free Peoples.

Article 17. The conditions of India's membership of the Indo-British Commonwealth will be stipulated in a treaty, provided that the membership shall be consistent with the provisions of this Constitution.

Article 18. All the component units of the Federal Union of India shall be uniformly democratic according to the principles declared in Chapter I of this Constitution. Every component unit of the Federal Union shall also establish the Rights of Citizenship proclaimed in Chapter I of this Constitution.

Article 19. After the Federal Union of India is constituted, the constituent units of the Federation shall retain the inherent right to secede from the Union.

The proposal of secession must be submitted to a referendum by the established Government of the Province, and shall be effective if it receives the sanction of a majority of all the voters in the Province.

Article 20. Within the jurisdiction of the Federal Union of India, the Supreme Court's Council will be composed of the Governor-General (to be elected as hereinafter prescribed), the Council of State and Federal Assembly.

CHAPTER IV
THE FEDERAL UNION : THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

Article 21. The Federal Assembly will be composed of the deputies of the people of the Federal Union.

Article 22. There shall be one deputy for every 500,000 inhabitants. In the case of cities and towns having populations of more than 100,000, the proportion shall be one deputy for 250,000 inhabitants. Such cities and towns will be enumerated at the time of fixing constituencies.

Article 23. All men and women who have attained the age of eighteen years are entitled to vote in the election of deputies to the Federal Assembly.

Article 24. Every voter is entitled to seek election to the Federal Assembly.

Article 25. The deputies to the Federal Assembly shall be elected according to the following procedure:

(a) Each group of voters under the jurisdiction of a local People's Committee will choose electors at the ratio of one elector for one hundred voters

(b) The electors of one constituency will meet to elect the deputy or deputies to the Federal Assembly.

(c) The candidate for election may or may not be one of the electors.

(d) If an elector offers himself for election, he will be entitled to vote for himself.

(e) The People's Committees will function as the election machinery of the State. They will prepare electoral rolls. All official announcements regarding the election shall be made through the People's Committees.

(f) The Federal Government shall bear the expenses of the electors for attending the meetings to elect deputies to the Federal Assembly.

(g) The dates fixed for election, primary as well as final, shall be public holidays. Wages for those days shall be paid in full.

More detailed electoral rules will be framed by the Provincial Government.

Article 26. The Federal Assembly will be elected every four years.

Article 27. Members of the Federal Assembly shall receive salaries.

Article 28. The Federal Assembly shall meet within three months of the election of the deputies. Not more than six months shall elapse between two sessions of the Federal Assembly.

Article 29. The Federal Assembly may be dissolved before the expiry of its normal term by the Governor General, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

Article 30. The Governor-General may not order dissolution on the recommendation of the Prime Minister; but in that case he shall refer the dispute to the People's Committees in the Federal Union, stating his reasons for not acting according to the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

Article 31. A majority verdict of the People's Committees, each casting one vote, shall settle the dispute.

Article 32. The Governor General has the right to dissolve the Federal Assembly on his own initiative, provided that a majority of the People's Committees in the Union will support dissolution.

Article 33. A new Federal Assembly shall be elected within ninety days after the dissolution of the old Assembly. But the interval shall never be less than that of sixty days.

CHAPTER V
THE FEDERAL UNION : THE COUNCIL OF STATE

Article 34. The members of the Council of State will be appointed by the Provincial Governments of the federating provinces.

Article 35. The number of members shall be equal to for all Provinces.

Article 36. The members of the Council of State shall be chosen according to the following procedure:

(a) The following professional groups will nominate panels of ten names belonging to each profession: engineers, economists, scientists, medical men, jurists, historians. The Provincial Governments will appoint two out of each panel as members of the Council of State.

(b) The Provincial Governments will further appoint two persons from among those who have made outstanding contributions to modern thought in philosophy or the social sciences.

(c) In addition, the Provincial Governments will appoint three civil servants as members of the Council of State.

Article 37. Members of the professional groups who are remuneratively connected with any commercial or industrial concern, except as salaried employees, will not be eligible to membership of the Council of State. Preference shall be given to those engaged in teaching.

Article 38. The Provincial Governments shall not have power to cancel the appointment of any member of the Council of State.

Article 39. The members of the Council of State will be appointed for six years, and be eligible for re-appointment.

Article 40. The Council of State will have a panel of presidents, composed of one representative of each professional group.

Article 41. The Council of State will be in session simultaneously with the Federal Assembly.

Article 42. The Council of State may meet when the Federal Assembly will not be in session to advice the Council of Ministers on urgent political, economic or administrative questions.

Article 43. The power of planning the development of the different branches of society (economic, health, education and culture) is vested in the Council of State.

CHAPTER VI

THE FEDERAL UNION : THE SUPEREME PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

Article 44. The Council of State and the Federal Assembly will meet in Joint sessions with the Governor General as the Supreme People's Council.

Article 45. The sessions of the Supreme People's Council will be convened by the Governor General.

Article 46. As the highest organ of State authority, the Supreme People's Council will give the final sanction to all legislative as well as executive acts of the Government.

CHAPTER VII

THE FEDERAL UNION : THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Article 47. The Governor-General will be elected for five years by the entire electorate of the Federal Union composed of all the men and women who have attained the age of eighteen years.

Article 48. Every citizen of the Federal Union, who has attained the age of thirty years, is eligible for election as the Governor General.

Article 49. The Governor General will preside over all the joint sessions of the Council of State and the Federal Assembly meeting as the Supreme People's Council.

Article 50. The Governor-General will sign, and place his seal on, all legislations after they have received the final sanction of the Supreme People's Council.

Article 51. The Governor General will order dissolution of the Federal Assembly and election of a new Assembly, according to the provisions of this Constitution.

CHAPTER VIII
THE FEDERAL UNION : THE ORGANS OF LEGISLATIVE POWER

Article 52. The legislative power of the Federal Union is vested in the Federal Assembly.

Article 53. There shall be no division of jurisdiction.

Article 54. The Federal Assembly has the power to legislate on all matters.

Legislations enacted by the Federal Assembly and ratified by the Supreme People's Council shall be binding for the federated Provinces.

Article 55. Legislations enacted by the Federal Assembly shall be submitted for endorsement of provincial Legislatures (Provincial people's Councils) of the federated Provinces.

Article 56. The Legislations by the Federal Assembly concerning the following subjects shall not require endorsement of the Provincial Legislatures: Defence, Foreign Relations, Foreign Trade, Customs, Currency, Posts and telegraphs, Railway Administration, Ports and Maritime Shipping, Air-navigation.

Article 57. Provincial People's Councils of federated Provinces have the right to object to an Act of the Federal Assembly, provided that the particular legislation will not relate to any of the Federal subjects enumerated in the preceding article.

The objected legislation shall be referred to the local People's Committees in the objecting Province.

A favourable verdict of the People's Committees shall overrule the objection.

If the referendum supports the objection, the dispute between the Province and the Centre shall be submitted to a Federal Referendum, through the People's Committees.

Pending the Referendum, the law shall be in operation in the whole of the Federal Union.

In case of the Federal Referendum favouring the objection, the disputed legislation shall lapse. In the contrary case, the objecting Provincial Legislature shall endorse the Act of the Federal Assembly.

Article 58. Legislations will be proposed by

(a) The Council of Ministers and

(b) Non-official members of the Federal Assembly

Provided that legislation relating to or involving taxation or the expenditure of Federal revenues shall be initiated only by the Council of Ministers.

Article 59. All proposed legislations shall be first submitted for the consideration of the Council of State.

Disapproval of the Council of State shall not prevent the Council of Ministers from introducing any Bill in the Federal Assembly.

But in that case, the view of the Council of State will be stated by one of its members to the session of the Federal Assembly.

Article 60. Disapproval of the Council of State will be no bar for the Federal Assembly to enact legislation.

Article 61. No legislation enacted by the Federal Assembly shall be signed by the Governor General and put into operation, unless it is ratified by the Supreme People's Council.

Article 62. The Supreme People's Council will have the right to veto any provincial legislation in the Federal Union on the ground that it is repugnant to the Federal Constitution or contradicts any particular Federal law.

Either on the advice of the Council of Ministers or on his own initiative, the Governor General will recommend the vetoing of a Provincial legislation.

The Provincial Government concerned will have the right to appeal to the Supreme Federal Court against the veto.

Article 63. In cases of a conflict between a Federal law and a Provincial law, the former shall prevail.

CHAPTER IX
THE FEDERAL UNION : THE ORGANS OF EXECUTIVE POWER

Article 64. The Governor General is the chief executive of the Federal Union of India.

Article 65. The Government of the Federal Union will be carried on by a Council of Ministers

Article 66. The Council of Ministers shall in be responsible to the Supreme People's Council.

Article 67. The Governor General will charge some member of the Federal Assembly to form the Government. The member so charged will select from other members of the Federal Assembly his colleagues to compose the Council of Ministers. He will be called the Prime Minister.

Article 68. The Council of Ministers will remain in office so long as it will enjoy the confidence of the Supreme People's Council.

Article 69. Either Chamber of the Supreme People's Council may pass a vote of no-confidence in the Council of Ministers. But the Government shall not resign unless the vote of no-confidence is endorsed by the Supreme People's Council.

Article 70. The responsibility of the Council of Ministers is collective.

Article 71. No member of the Council of State shall be a member of the Council of Ministers.

Article 72. The different Departments of the Government will be under the vigilance of Standing Committees of the Supreme People's Council.

Each Standing Committee will be composed of 11 members of the Federal Assembly and 8 members of the Council of State, in the latter case, one representing each professional group.

Each Standing Committee will elect a Secretary who shall be chosen from the members belonging to the Council of State.

The Secretary will be the Convener of the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee will be presided over by the Minister in charge of the respective

Department of the Government.

Article 73. Federal laws shall be carried into execution by the Provincial Government in the Federal Union, under the directions of the Federal Executive, unless the latter provides otherwise.

CHAPTER X
THE PROVINCES

Article 74. All the Provinces, federated or otherwise, are fully autonomous, provided that they shall be uniformly democratic according to the provision of this Constitution.

Article 75. In the case of Provinces forming the Federal Union of India, the unrestricted nature of their autonomy expresses itself in the unreserved right of secession.

Article 76. The highest authority in the Province is the Provincial People's Council composed of the governor and Deputies of the People.

Article 77. There shall be no division of power. Both the legislative and executive powers shall be vested in the Provincial People's Councils.

Article 78. Each province will have a Governor, who will be the chief executive of the Province.

Article 79. The Governor of the Province will be elected by all the men and women inhabitants, who have attained the age of eighteen years.

Article 80. The Governor will hold office for five years. Every citizen of the Province who has attained the age of thirty years is eligible for election as Governor.

Article 81. The Deputies to the Provincial People's Council will be elected directly by all the men and women inhabitants of the Province who have attained the age of eighteen years.

Article 82. The ratio between the number of Deputies and the population of the province will be one to 100,000. In towns and cities with populations over 25,000, the ratio will be one to 50,000.

Article 83. The Deputies to the Provincial People's Council shall be according to the following procedure:

a. The People's Committees will function as the election machinery of the Province. They will prepare electoral rolls. All official announcements shall be made through the People's Committees.

b. Every voter is entitled to seek election to the Provincial People's Council from any constituency.

c. The dates fixed for election shall be public holidays. Wages for these days shall be paid in full.

Article 84. The Deputies of the Provincial People's Council will be elected every four years.

Article 85. The Deputies of the Provincial People's Council shall receive salaries.

Article 86. The Provincial People's Council shall meet within three months of the election of Deputies. Not more than six months shall intervene between two sessions of the Council.

Article 87. The Provincial People's Council has the right to legislate on all subjects, except (in the case of Federated Provinces) those reserved for the Federal Assembly.

Article 88. Provincial laws shall be according to the spirit and letter of this Constitution.

Article 89. The right of proposing legislation belongs to

a. The Governor,

b. Provincial Council of Ministers, and

c. Other members of the Provincial People's Council

Provided that legislation involving taxation or the expenditure of Government revenues can be initiated only by the Provincial Council of Ministers.

Article 90. Local People's Committees representing one third of the total number of voters in the Province will have the right to demand that an Act of the Provincial

Legislature be referred to the citizens.

In that case, the Governor shall submit the particular legislation to a general Referendum.

The result of the Referendum shall be decisive.

Pending the Referendum, the disputed law shall not be put into force.

Article 91. The Governor shall sign and promulgate all laws made by the Provincial People's Council.

Article 92. A Provincial Council of Ministers will be formed by a member of the Provincial People's Council who will be charged to do so by the Governor.

Article 93. All the members of the Provincial Council of Ministers shall be sitting members of the Provincial People's Council.

Article 94. The Council of Ministers shall be responsible to the Provincial People's Council. The responsibility is collective.

Article 95. The Council of Ministers shall resign on the Provincial People's Council passing a vote of no-confidence by a seventy per cent majority.

Article 96. On a vote of no-confidence being carried by a smaller majority, the Governor may or may not accept the resignation of the Council of Ministers.

Article 97. The Governor may dissolve the Provincial People's Council before the expiry of its normal term,

a. if no Council of Ministers can command a majority, and
b. on the demand of local People's Committees representing a majority of the Provincial Electorate.

Article 98. The Provincial People's Council will elect Standing Committees to keep vigilance on the functioning of the various Departments of the Provincial People's Council.

Each Standing Committee will be composed of fifteen members of the Provincial People's Council.

Each Standing Committee will elect a president from among its members.

The Minister in charge of the respective department shall attend meetings of the Standing Committee whenever required, and supply all necessary information.

Article 99. All proposed legislations shall be placed by the Council of Ministers before the respective Standing Committees Stand for their consideration and recommendation.

Article 100. People's Committees in a particular electoral district of the Provincial People's Council representing 25 per cent of the total number of voters have the right to demand the recall of the Deputy from that constituency.

The Governor shall submit the demand to a referendum of the entire electorate of the constituency.

The Deputy shall resign if the demand for his recall is supported by a simple majority of the electorate

The vacant seat in the Provincial People's Council shall be filled up within sixty days.

If the demand for recall fails to secure a majority, no second demand shall be entertained against the same Deputy for a period of 12 months.

Article 101. Forty per cent of the members of the Provincial People's Council have the right to demand the recall of the Governor.

The Governor shall submit the demand to a general Referendum.

The Governor shall resign if the demand for his recall is supported by a simple majority of the provincial electorate.

On the demand for recall failing to secure a majority, another demand for recall cannot be entertained within a period of twelve months.

Article 102. Within the Federal Union of India, any dispute between two or more federated provinces, falling outside the jurisdiction of the Supreme Federal Court, will be referred to the Supreme Court's Council of the Federal Union, whose verdict shall be binding on all parties concerned.

CHAPTER XI
THE ECONOMIC ORGANISTATION OF SOCIETY

Article 103. This Constitution is promulgated with the object of reorganizing the economic life of the country, so as to guarantee to every citizen all the material requirements for a civilized existence, and also adequate leisure for cultivating the finer aspects of life.

Article 104. Economically, the Federal Union of India and every Non-Federated Province is a Co-operative Commonwealth.

Article l05. Goods will be produced primarily for satisfying the requirements of the people.

Article 106. The entire production, agricultural as well as industrial, shall be planned with that purpose.

Article 107. To plan production and regulate its distribution are functions of the State.

Article l08. There shall be a Statutory Planning Authority in the Federal Union of India, and in the non-federated Provinces.

Article 109. The planning Authority will be constituted by the Supreme People's Council in the Federal Union.

In the non-federated provinces, it will be constituted by the Provincial People's Council.

The Planning Authority will be composed of experts and representatives of State enterprises, industrial and agricultural.

The State Bank will be represented in the Planning Authority.

Persons concerned with Private industrial enterprises, except as salaried employees, shall not be eligible to appointment on the Planning Authority.

Article 110. The Planning Authority in the Federal Union will be directly subordinated to the Council of State and function under its advice and general supervision.

Article 111- The Federal and Provincial Governments are entitled to raise loans to finance the economic development.

Article 112. The Federal and Provincial Governments are entitled to make budgetary provisions for extending credit to industrial and collective agricultural enterprises.

Article 113. Industrial and agricultural enterprises financed by the State shall be the collective property of the people.

The net income from these enterprises shall be treated as public revenue, and as such included in the budget.

Article 114. The State Bank will control the entire credit system of the State.

Article 115. The ownership of land, underground riches and railways, is hereby transferred to the people.

Article 116. The Federal Government or, in the case of a non-federated Province, the Provincial Government, shall complete the transaction within one year by paying fair compensation to the previous private owners, whether individual or corporate.

The compensation shall be estimated at seven times the average yearly income.

The compensation shall be paid in three per cent self-redeeming bonds of the State Bank, payable for forty years.

Where, however, the private ownership was vested in religious or charitable institutions, the compensation shall correspond to the net average income received hitherto fore.

Compensation bonds are not negotiable. They shall be deposited with the State Bank for its credit and serve as covering for its credit and/or the currency notes issued by it.

Article 117. The freedom of enterprise, individual as well as corporate, is guaranteed, subject to the principle that the purpose of production is to satisfy the requirements of the people.

Article 118. In planning the economic life of society with the aforesaid object, the State has the right to fix the maximum and minimum return on private investment, the prices of goods produced or exchanged, the remuneration and working conditions of wage-earners and salaried employees, and to take over private enterprises under State ownership by paying fair compensation to the owners thereof.

CHAPTER XII
THE JUDICIARY

Article 119. The highest judicial authority in the Federal Union of India shall be the Supreme Federal Court. The Supreme Federal Court will consist of the Chief Justice of India and four or more federal judges.

Article 120. The Chief Justice of India will be appointed by the Governor General. The other federal judges will be appointed by the Governor General in consultation with the Chief Justice.

Article 121. The Chief Justice of India and the federal judges shall serve till they attain the age of sixty-five, unless they resign earlier. They cannot be dismissed except with the previous sanction of the Supreme People's Council.

Article 122. The original jurisdiction of the Supreme Federal Court shall consist of:

(a) Disputes between the Federal Government and the Provincial Governments of the federated Provinces, or between the latter inter se, concerning their legal or constitutional rights.

(b) References made by the Federal Government or the Provincial Government of a federated Province regarding the interpretation of the Constitution.

Article 123. The Supreme Federal Court shall hear appeals from the decisions of the Provincial High Courts of federated provinces in civil and criminal cases, provided the cases involve legal questions of special or general interest. The Supreme Federal Court will make rules defining the conditions for the exercise of its appellate jurisdiction.

Article 124. There shall be provincial High Courts in all Indian Provinces. They shall be the highest judicial authority in non- federated Provinces.

Article 125. The provincial High Court shall consist of a Chief Justice and six or more judges. The Chief Justice and judges shall be appointed by the Provincial Governor.

Article 126. The Chief Justice and judges of the Provincial High Court will serve till the age of sixty-five unless they resign earlier. They cannot be dismissed except with the sanction of the Provincial People's Council.

CHAPTER XIII
LOCAL SELF-GOVENMENT

Article 127. In addition to all the rights and responsibilities specified in this Constitution, the local People's Committees will also perform the function of local self-government in their respective jurisdiction.

Article 128. The functions of local self-government are:

(a) Sanitation and public health;
(b) Education primary and secondary (up to matriculation);
(c) Building and maintaining roads and public parks;
(d) Promotion of the organisation of producers and consumers' co-operative societies;
(e) Maintenance of public order (local police administration);
(f) Administration of law in cases of petty crime

Article 129. The organs of local self-government will perform these functions on behalf of the Provincial Government and/or on its own initiative.

Article 130. As organs of local self-government the People's Committees will have the right to collect taxes subject to the approval of the Provincial Government.

Article l31. There will be sub-divisional and district People's Committees to perform the functions of local self-government.

Article 132. The sub-divisional People's Committee will be composed of delegates from each local People's Committee in the sub-division.

Article 133. The sub-divisional officer will be the Chairman of the sub-divisional People's Committee, which, in addition to its function of local self-government, will advise and help him in the discharge of all his duties.

Article 134. The District People's Committee will be composed of five delegates from each sub-divisional People's Committee.

Article 135. The District Officer will be the Chairman of the District People's Committee which, in addition to the function of local self-government, will advise and help him in the discharge of all his duties.

Article 136. The sub-divisional and district People's Committees will be organs of local self-government.

They shall not supersede the sovereign status of the local People's Committees, which are the primary organs of democratic authority and power.

Article 137. The sovereign right of controlling the entire State machinery, according to the provisions of this Constitution, is vested exclusively in the local People's Committees.

Remarks :

M.N Roy's *Constitution of Free India: A Draft* was published in 1944. It was endorsed and released for public discussion by the Radical Democratic Party of which M.N. Roy was an important member. The *Draft*, according to him, would achieve three objectives: first, remove Indian political parties as intermediaries between the British and the Indian people on questions of India's constitutional future and the transfer of power; second, articulate a novel constitutional vision for the country and; third, expedite the transfer of power from the British to the Indian people.

The *Draft*, according to M.N. Roy, was a response and an attempt to tackle the status quo that prevailed in the late 1930s and early 1940s regarding the transfer of power. He blamed Indian political parties for this situation: their lack of agreement over the future of the Constitution, and their obsession with *how* the constitution was to be enacted rather than *what* the constitution should contain. He was confident that the transfer of power would be a mere formality if the British Parliament was presented with a visionary constitutional document that was backed by popular legitimacy. M.N. Roy believed that his *Draft* would get this job done

The *Draft* is organised around thirteen chapters of which seven deal with the Federal Union – its structure, executive and legislative powers, elections etc. The following get a chapter each: rights and fundamental principles, provinces, economic organisation of society, judiciary and local self-government. There is also a chapter – 'Source of Authority' – that attempts to locate, operationalize and regulate popular sovereignty of the people.

The *Draft* embraces radical decentralisation and direct democracy. It calls for the establishment of a nationwide network of 'People's Committees' (district/city governments) elected by citizens. These committees enjoy wide and critical powers in federal, provincial and local governance. They can, among other things, recall representatives, initiate legislation, and demand referendums on executive measures – even those initiated by the federal government. The *Draft* has an interesting take on the doctrine of separation of powers - it separates executive and legislative functions at the federal levels but coalesces them at the provincial tier of government.

Other notable features of the *Draft*: State/collective ownership of economic resources (E.g. Land), proportional representation and separate electorates for minorities, and provision for free, compulsory and *secular* education for children up to the age of 14.

Niraja Jayal, in *Citizenship and its Discontents: An Indian History*, compares M.N. Roy's *Draft* with other documents that articulated a constitutional vision around the same time it was published (E.g. *The Gandhian Constitution of Free India,* 1946) and argues that the *Draft* was "..by far the most populist and radical of..the manifestos of the 'New India'..".

This, along with other reasons, may have contributed to the fate of the *Draft* which Donald Low in *Soundings in Modern South Asia History* sums up as being '[of] purely academic interest; official constitutional reforms took no notice...'. While M.N. Roy's ambitions for the *Draft* failed, it remains a novel document that offers a fascinating alternative vision for India and must be regarded as an important strand of India's intellectual history that can inform how India navigates its constitutional and political future today.

Dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party

A Continuing Misconception

R.L. Nigam

Some amongst were stoutly opposed to the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party (RDP). They were disappointed and unhappy when the party was finally dissolved. Quite many of them remained un-reconciled and continue to be so even today. They have from time to time asserted that is was a great mistake to have dissolved the party. Some even want it revived. But, they have taken no initiative to do so. They would like others to do so. The mistake or mischief could be easily undone if one or more of the advocates of the party called a convention to settle the matter. If they were able to carry the point home, there would a party, RDP or what you will. Only those who did not subscribe to the idea would remain out of it. That is a small matter. The chance is still open.

However, my purpose here is not to join issue with those who want a party. They are within their rights. I am going to be concerned only with the explanation that has been advanced from different quarters from time to time for the dissolution of the RDP. Among these are some from amongst us and some non-Radicals, scholars who have written about Roy. I understand the matter also came up at the time of the Radical Humanist Conference at Meerut. The explanation offered is that Roy dissolved the RDP out of frustration and disappointment at the total failure of the party in the elections early in 1946. He was expecting, so the argument runs, to come on top of things and be the beneficiary of transfer of power from the British to Indian hands. With the kind of showing the RDP made at the polls the possibility of its ever coming to power through normal political process could not be visualised this side of the Greek Calends. Roy, therefore, made a virtue of necessity, rationalised his failure and frustration into his new philosophy of Radical Humanism, and in its name, dissolved the party while retaining the pretence of a movement. It was the fable of sour grapes acted all over again!

I wish to contest this verdict. But, before I do this, I have to make a few apparently unsavoury observations.

Roy would have been less than human if he did not feel disappointed or "frustrated" at the most abject collapse of the party at the polls. But, in so far as this was the consequence of unrealistic expectations, the fault was not his. He was betrayed into it. The reports that used to be sent to him from the field were most exaggerated and misleading. Roy put an implicit faith in the men from whom the reports emanated and took their assessment on its face value. I vividly remember the meeting that took place at the Provincial Office of the U.P. RDP at 3 Aminabad Park, Lucknow, just a few days before the polling. I was then in-charge of the Provincial Office which was also the provincial election office. I had learnt from some of the Provincial Secretaries how well the campaign was going. But what was heard at the meeting was fantastic. The meeting reviewed the situation in different constituencies. Roy and Ellen were also present. Speech after speech detailed the wonderful response of the electorate. I seem to her the tone and the accents as I write this almost forty years after the event. It seemed we were going to make an absolute clean sweep. There appeared to be few constituencies in which the Congress of Gandhi and Nehru could save its security deposit from forfeiture. I was comparatively new then and had the faintest idea of how deep we had dug into the countryside. Here were veterans, trained and battle-scarred. The enthusiasm was infectious. I felt immensely elated and enthused at the prospect of our total victory. I felt an excitement I had never felt before on any account. As speech succeeded speech, my enthusiasm, excitement and admiration went shooting up until I received a sudden shock. This

was when the chances of Savitri Arora were reviewed. Savitri and her husband, G.K. Arora, were both, besides being party comrades, my very close, very warm friends. They lived at a stone's throw from the Party Office. I used to spend with them what spare time I could have in those hectic and difficult days. Nothing could please me more than Savitri winning the election. She had been put up from Unnao against the stalwart of the area, Bishambhar Datt Tripathi. This was a constituency I knew something about and also about the standing and influence of Tripathi. Therefore, when here too it was claimed that we would make a clean sweep I could not swallow it. It struck in my throat. Of course, I didn't dare express my scepticism. In fact, not all shared, as it turned out later, the endemic optimism; though none dared to raise a discordant voice. But one discordant voice was heard at last. This was the voice of Biren Pandey. He roundly questioned the validity of the reports and almost reversed the picture. He had just come out of the jail and was considered to be out of touch with realities. Even Roy was visibly annoyed, so convincing had been the accounts of work and response in the various constituencies! When the day of reckoning came, Congress swept the polls; we were sweeping the floor! There was pervasive demoralisation. Could Roy remain untouched by disappointment, by this rude shattering of illusion? I believe not.

But I maintain, and would presently demonstrate, that the dissolution of the party was not motivated, consciously or unconsciously, by this disappointment and failure. The Garhi Camp (Dehradun) was held soon after in late May 1946. This was the moment when the frustration should have been the deepest. If the RDP had to be disbanded as a consequence, this was the moment when, if not the decision, at least a beginning towards that decision could have been acceptably made. Roy, instead, too the opposite stand and generated attitudes that could only prove a serious obstacle when it finally came to the dissolution of the party.

In fact, Roy at this time feared that members of the party as a result of their bitter experience might want to do away with the party. He tried to forestall the possibility. He said in the Inaugural address: "*I have come to This Camp prepared for the hypothetically possible conclusion which may result from our experience. That a party like the Radial Democratic Party has no place in the country,"(*New Orientation, p. 18*).* But he exhorted the campers to examine the issue in the light of the tradition established by the first Dehra Dun Camp before they came to this conclusion. That tradition was to examine and discuss issues scientifically and rationally. He believed that such examination of the situation would convince them of the necessity and significance of the RDP and that they would not think of doing without it. However, he concludes that they may not do so and may go only by their experience: "*But you are free to turn your back on that tradition only in that case the Camp should celebrate the liquidation of the Radical Democratic Party* (Ibid., p. 26).

Far from conceiving the liquidation of the party, Roy, at this point of time, looked upon RDP as being crucially relevant not only to India but also to the humanity's struggle for freedom: "*The discussion here would give us the conviction that, in spite of all difficulties the Radical Democratic Party has not only a place in the country, but has something to contribute to the struggle for the freedom of the civilised humanity"* (Ibid., p. 28). In his anxiety to save the RDP Roy goes on to perpetrate a rare piece of illogic the like of which will be difficult to find elsewhere in Roy. He allows himself the assertion: "*The Radical Democratic Party is your party; if you are of the opinion that it has no fundamental reason to exist, and that opinion will follow from the rejection of the philosophical principles of Radicalism, you are entitled to liquidate it"* (Ibid., Preface p. vi). Here Roy takes the position that a rejection of the principles of Radicalism would and should entail the liquidation of the party. Rather curious, when we remember, as we all do, that later he came to maintain, and rightly, that a since acceptance of those principles logically required the liquidation of the party.

At the time of the party Conference in Bombay in December 1946, Roy was still clinging to the

position that the party had to be very much there. By then some doubts had been expressed if the activities that followed from the new orientation of our ideas were really party activities and whether they might not prove the undoing of the party. He chided these 'veteran Radicals" for their misplaced loyalty to the party. The common notion that party "*must always act upon its outside world"* was wrong, for the party had an inner life too which must be attended to. This meant that the foremost role of the party should be to help the members unfold their potentialities so that they could be proper "leaders of the struggle for the liberation of mankind."1 He maintained that by pointing that out he was only reminding the party that "it has a soul" and was thereby helping to save the party. It is interesting to note that Roy was here defining two facets of party work – internal and external. If the majority, or perhaps a goodly number, attended to the responsibilities of party's "inner life" while the rest engaged in "external activities", the party could grow by leaps and bounds.2 Equally, perhaps more interesting, was the formulation on the point given by Philip Spratt as the President of the Conference. He observed that "our ideas must be expounded at two different levels," obviously simultaneously. That is, at the level of a broader movement "which must be held together by a minimum programme of principles and aims," and on the level of the party, the close knit circle, bound together "by a comprehensive philosophy and a fully elaborated political programme."3 I shall return to these formulations of Roy and Spratt later. Here let me continue the line of argument I was pursuing.

With all these ideas, Roy was still emphasising, and emphasising repeatedly almost to the point of boredom, the relevance and the grand destiny of the Radical Democratic Party. In another speech on the same occasion Roy visualised the RDP as the replica of the future Radical Humanist Society4 and went on to conjure up the RDP as the redeemer of the "misled and bewildered world."5

Next, we notice a little shift in the position. In May 1947, Roy declares: "*These being our idea, and given the association of political parties with scramble for power, it has to be specifically stated that the Radical Democratic Party is not trying to capture power,"* (PPP, p. 84). The party will now aim at not at *capture* of power but at *diffusion* of power. That party must *capture* power in order to *diffuse* it, did not bother Roy and he confidently asserted: "*It is not utopian to say that not capture of power but diffusion of power is the object of the party"* (Ibid., p. 85). Before long Roy will have to live this point down. For, in 1948, when the party was finally dissolved, Roy came to maintain that the logic of Twenty-two Theses required the disbandment of the party; that for the ends proposed by Radical Humanism, party was not the right means. This led to the abandonment of the original Thesis 19 and to its reformulation. This thesis had declared the RDP as the means for bringing Radical Democratic Society into existence. From then on, Roy never looked back. His ideas were now well enough formed. "*Party politics,"* he declared, "*leads to Concentration of power and hence carries the germs of the destruction of democracy. Political ends can be achieved without capturing power. Politics can be practised without a party organisation"* (PPP, p. 63). This was 1949. To maintain that only others will be corrupted by power and that we cannot be corrupted by it was unwarranted arrogance and self-righteousness. Charity must begin at home.6 If we believe that power corrupts, we must eschew capture of power and, therefore do away with the party which is a misnomer if it does not participate in the struggle for power. Such was the thrust of arguments from now on. The retention of the party as an agent of the comprehensive social movement implicit in the acceptance of the fundamental principles of Radical Humanism was anomalous. The decision of the Calcutta Conference to liquidate the party removed that anomaly.7

Henceforth all thought is concentrated on the movement, its aims and methods. This was a step forward. There was no room for second thoughts on what was left behind.

I believe, may be fondly, that this broad narrative of the progress of Roy's thought on the

question of party in relation to the principles and goals of Radical Humanism – from its vehement spousal, dogged assertion of its relevance and grand destiny, balancing act of distinguishing between the two facets of party work, positing a soul for the party, almost prophet-like indignation at its detractors, waking up to the age-old wisdom, charity begins at home, to the realisation finally of the anomaly so perpetrated leading to the dramatic dissolution of the party to clear the way for the movement – will be seen as a very different kettle of fish form an act of frustration induced by the electoral debacle of the party preventing political power from falling into Roy's anxious, outstretched hand. If the grapes were sour, it was not because they were out of reach but because they were sour in the mouth. Experience and inhibited thought had determined the issue.

Every student of logic, the absolute beginner, learns and knows that to argue *post hoc ergo propter hoc* is a patent fallacy; that chronological sequence need not be also logical sequence. Our learned friends, in their partiality for the party, have failed to observe that caution. But this is a pitfall to which we all are exposed. What staggers me is that some, obviously learned ones, unfamiliar with our history, should pass adverse ex cathedra judgement of Roy's rejection of the party apparatus as being inconsistent with the newly conceived goals.

They assume Roy's ignorance or his failure to understand the obvious "virtues" of a political party which every schoolboy knows by heart. I suppose such savants owe it to their own conscience and to those for whose benefit they speak or write to first familiarise themselves with what has been said and thought on the matter. If after this exercise they discover faults in the arguments, let them expose the faults as ruthlessly as they may. And, we must, I for one would, take the correction humbly and gratefully.

And then, there are some sensitive advocates of the 'party' and party system who, with their uncompromising commitment to democracy and freedom, discover the germs of fascism in the Theses of Radical Humanism, though they find no such possibility in the party system which, in the name of pluralism, in thought to ensure and guarantee freedom and democracy.

I confess my intelligence fails me completely. I am at a loss, at utter loss, to profit from their percipience. On the other hand, I am ready to concede that there would be a very real danger of Radical Humanism leading to some kind of fascism if the party had been retained in fact and in the formulation of the Theses. There is a great deal of weight in Andre Reszler's finding that "Regimes which set out to foster a 'new man' have usually brought totalitarian havoc in their wake." The RDP, if it had been retained as Roy was demanding until about mid-1947 would have launched on the creation of a new society by creating 'new men and women'. If it had succeeded as a party, it would have established a Radical Democratic regime and used its newly acquired state power to 'foster the new man' and thereby produced 'totalitarian havoc'. There was an even chance of it notwithstanding some inbuilt guarantees. Doing away with the party eliminated that danger. Radical Humanists as Radical Humanists can now never come to power, and it certainly won't be thrust on them. There is no question of Radical Democratic regime being established one fine or foul morning. If it ever comes, it will come because the society will have so evolved, and that too not because of Radical Humanists' labour but, perhaps, in spite of it; and, if at all, because of them, then because of the example they set if they ever do so.

Nothing that is said here is intended to suggest, much less recommend, that political parties have to be liquidated. They are stern realities in the given situation and have to be reckoned with. One has to come to terms with them. How and to what terms to come with them, must be worked out by individuals and/or groups. But that is a separate question altogether. All that is here submitted is that for the realisation of the goals proposed in the Radical Humanism, a political party is no, and cannot be, the means, for that way fascism lies. The dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party has obviated that danger once for all as far as Radical Humanists are concerned.

REFERENCES

1. THOSE veteran Radicals, with all their loyalty to the party, have a wrong idea of what is party activity. They think that the party must always act upon its outside world. They forget that the party can have an internal life. They make this capital mistake, which obstructs the growth of the party, because they do not realise that the party is composed of human beings, full of potentialities; but their potentialities must unfold themselves, before the members of the Radical Democratic Party can claim to be free human beings, better qualified to lead the struggle for human freedom. The role of the party is to help its members unfold their human potentialities, and thus qualify themselves as the leaders of the struggle for the liberation of mankind.

   MNR in *Beyond Communism*, Renaissance Publishers, p. 98

2. ** We want to save the party by reminding it that it has a soul, so to say, by making it conscious of its own self, conscious of the fact that it is composed of human beings, and that its first function is to make every member a full grown individual. If we have 20,000 members, 15,000 of them keeping its internal life pulsating, and the rest engaged in external activity, the party will grow much more rapidly ... Internal party life consists in making every member of the party conscious of our experience, which has determined our new orientation.

   Ibid., p. 99

3. THERE are many people who hold philosophical ideas quite different from ours and are trained to hold our ideas in abhorrence, and most of them will certainly never be converted. But they are worthy people, who cannot be dismissed as enemies. Many of them will agree with our practical aims and policies. It follows that our ideas must be expounded at two different levels. We aspire to be a broad, all embracing people's movement, which must be held together by a minimum programme of principles and aims. We also aspire to be a more closely knit party held together by a comprehensive philosophy and a fully elaborated political programme.

   Philip Spratt, in *Beyond Communism*, Renaissance Publishers, p. 17

4. JUST as man is the archetype of society in general, the Radical Democratic Party is the archetype of the Radical Democratic Society, in which there will be no contradiction between collective responsibility and individual liberty. Social obligation will be voluntarily undertaken and discharged, in quest of individual freedom, by unfolding his or her potentialities; that is to say, by asserting individuality, each member of society will increase his social utility and thus contribute to the sum total of collective well-being and progress ... We shall by our example show that men and women who aspire to set the world free, can free themselves spiritually to begin with ... Because the old method of revolution is no longer practicable, in future, society will be more equitable and just in proportion as the number of men equipped with virtues of justice and equity will increase. The Radical Democratic Party will be the rallying ground of such men and women, and as such the replica of the future of society of free men and women.

   MNR in *Beyond Communism*, pp. 133-35

5. THE Radical Democratic Party appears before the bewildere3d and misled world as the standard bearer of a new political doctrine and a new political practice ...

A brighter perspective is required not only by the Indian people; the entire civilised mankind is looking out for it. The philosophy of Radicalism and the principles of Radical Democracy will open up a brighter future not only for India, but before the peoples in other parts of the world also. Therefore we say that our philosophy is cosmopolitan Humanism; we say that the Indian cannot be free if the French or the German or the Russian remain enslaved. Our ideal can be realised in a World State, in a Universal Brotherhood of Man, in a Cooperative Commonwealth embracing the whole human race. We are of the opinion that the solution of the world crisis cannot be found within the boundaries of National States.

Ibid., pp. 133-35

6. HAVING come to the conclusion, empirically as well as theoretically, that the system of several parties engaged in the struggle for power, to be captured either constitutionally or through insurrection, had debased democracy to demagogy, Radical Democrats and Humanists could no longer function as a political party. They were guided by the time-honoured dictum that charity begins at home, or that example is better than precept, and consequently dissolved their party in so far it had been organised with the object of participating in the fight for power.

MNR in *Politics, Power and Parties*, Renaissance Publishers p. 94

7. THE decision of the conference at Calcutta was a logical deduction from the philosophy of New Humanism formulated by the Radical Democrats two years earlier. As a result the Radical Democratic Party had already been engaged in developing a comprehensive social movement ... the activities carried on by the Party could not lend themselves to be measured by the standards generally applied to traditional political party ... A certain anomalous position had thus arisen between those activities and the designation of a party ... The Calcutta decision ends that anomaly and thus removes what constituted a limitation of those activities.

MNR Ibid., pp. 98-99

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, July 1983.

Why the RDP was Dissolved

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

I was astonished and appalled on reading my friend R.S. Yadav's article on the "Dissolution of the RDP" published in the last (November) issue of the Radical Humanist. Yadav has given in the article a psychological, and to some extent a psycho-analytical, explanation of the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in December 1948. He says that Roy and those of us who were then working with him were in a condition of "trauma" from the beginning of 1946, when the RDP was "totally mauled" in the general elections, to the end of December 1948 when it was decided in an all India Conference to dissolve the party. Those members "who had overcome their trauma with the passage of time" opposed the dissolution of the party, but Roy and persons like me who constituted the majority were unable to do so and persisted in having the party dissolved. F I have understood Yadav correctly, I must have continued in a condition of trauma for the last 35 years, for I am still unable to appreciate Yadav's arguments in favour of Radical Humanists forming a political party of their own.

What Yadav has said is actually much worse than this. He has implied that not only Roy and persons like me were so feeble-minded as to remain in a continuous trauma, but that we lacked elementary honesty as well., According to Yadav, despite our repeated assertion that we have given up the aim of political power, our real purpose in dissolving the party and devising a programme of work at the grass-root level was to "get into the seats of political power in future with the active desire and support of the people locally organised in the People's Committees!"

The process by which Yadav has reached these remarkable conclusions is interesting. He says that the tragic confluence of various historical forces in 1946 – the reference is mainly to the electoral defeat of the RDP – was indeed a great shock for Roy, "for then his whole dream lay shattered in shambles." His "utter pessimism" early in 1946 goaded him from within to gain new insights by the end of 1948. No new factor had intervened between 1946 and 1948, so that it was only the pessimism of 1946 which, by a process of "mental drift", led to the dissolution of the party at the end of 1948. The party would not have been dissolved, according to Yadav, if it had won a significant number of seats in the election of early 1946. "Only total defeat made the grapes of power look sour," Yadav says. He has taken notice of the fact (which was emphasised by R.L. Nigam in his earlier article published in the July 1983 issue of this journal) that in the Garhi Camp held in May 1946 after the general elections, Roy declared his faith more than once in the future of the Radical Democratic Party. But Yadav has given a truly original psycho-analytical explanation of why Roy declared his faith in the future of the party which he really wanted to dissolve. According to Yadav, "Roy himself was sub-consciously in double mind: he wanted to dissolve his party; but he also wanted to retain his followers." Yadav, however, is not really sure whether this double think on Roy's part was conscious or unconscious, because he goes on to say, "This is why he (Roy) had to use, *consciously or unconsciously*, one stratagem after another to keep his demoralised followers united" (emphasis supplied). Yadav reaches the zenith of his grand analysis when he observes that the dissolution of the RDP was only "a temporary expedient". Relying on the statement on the "Practice of New Humanism," which was adopted by the same Conference in which the party was dissolved in December 1948, Yadav says that it is evident from the statement that the disbanded membe4rs of the RDP were to "reorganise themselves in a different form and do grass-roots work so that the Radical Humanists could get into the seats of political power in future with the active desire and support of the people locally organised into People's Committees."

Yadav does not know that the statement on the "Practice of New Humanism", which was adopted by the RDP Conference and which he attributes to Roy, was wholly drafted by me. I had taken the

draft statement with me to Dehradun in or about November 1948. Roy expressed full agreement with the statement and all that he did was to reduce its length by removing some repetitious sentences. I must therefore accept the responsibility for the charge of duplicity which Yadav has directed against Roy as the assumed author of the statement.

I do not know how one should react when one is charged with dishonesty. I do not remember having had such an experience in the past. I suppose one should merely ignore the charge. I would have done so if Yadav had not been a senior member of the Radical Humanist Association and if his article had not been published in our journal.

Apart from my surprise at the low opinion Yadav has about Roy and those of us who were working with him in the period from 1946 to 1948, my main reaction to Yadav's article is that he simply does not know what he is talking about. I do not remember of his being with us in the Radical Democratic Party in those days. He was certainly not present in the Garhi Camp of May 1946, for if he were present, he could not have interpreted Roy's speeches in that Camp in the manner in which he has done. And I am sure he did not know Roy at all. Nobody who had worked with Roy in those days would have the least doubt about his mental courage and his intellectual integrity. I agree that Yadav has a right to subject Roy to a psycho-analytical examination without having come into personal contact with him. But in that case, Yadav should have at least interviewed persons like me who were working with Roy in those days. He has not done so.

Yadav, I regret to say, is equally ill-informed about Roy's work in the period prior to 1946. In his article Yadav has said: "Having failed as an active Congressman himself from 1936 to 1940 to bring about the replacement of the reactionary Congress leadership of our potentially revolutionary mass movement by a progressive one, he (Roy) had to form his own independent party in 1940 in the then critical Indian situation." The fact is that our work in the Congress had not failed; it was going from success to success in the period from 1936 to 1940. The programme of agrarian revolution which Roy had placed before the people had evoked a positive response wherever we worked. Roy had asked us to work for radicalising the Indian National Congress from below, by organising a network of village Congress Committees on the basis of the economic demands of peasants and workers. The idea was that the Indian National Congress, organised in this way, should develop into "a State within a State", capable of overthrowing the established regime at an appropriate time by revolutionary mass action. On the strength of their work, Royists (as we were then called) were gaining in strength in different parts of the country. Working along the line recommended by Roy, I was able to defeat a sitting member of the Congress Working Committee in the primary election of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee. If the Second World War had not intervened to disturb this process, we would have become a decisive force in the Congress in the course of time. Surely, nobody expected that we could radicalise the Congress in a short period of three years.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, December 1983.

Humanist Manifesto and The Indian Radical Humanist Association

Humanist Manifesto II

[This second Humanist Manifesto is issued on the 40th anniversary of the first Humanist Manifesto which was published in 1933.

Humanist Manifesto II is entirely a new document which is more relevant to the problems of the emerging world. it was drafted by Mr. Paul Kurtz, Editor, **The Humanist** *and by Mr. Edwin H. Wilson, Editor Emeritus,* **The Humanist** *and has been signed by more than 120 leading philosophers, scientists, writers and leading intellectuals throughout the world.*

The humanists who prepared the Manifesto of 1933 were still under the influence of traditional theism, Radical Humanists in India who have always been secular and owe nothing to religious inspiration, will find Humanist Manifesto II generally in harmony with the values they cherish.

The Humanist Manifesto II is being published by courtesy of **The Humanist**. – **Editor***]*

The next century can be and should be the humanistic century. Dramatic, scientific, technological, and ever-accelerating social and political changes crowd our awareness. We have virtually conquered the planet, explored the moon, overcome the natural limits of travel and communication; we stand at the dawn of a new age, ready to move farther into space and perhaps inhabit other planets. Using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend our life-span, and significantly modify our behaviour, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers, and provide human kind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life.

The future is, however, filled with dangers. In learning to apply the scientific method to nature and human life, we have opened the door to ecological damage, over population, dehumanizing institutions, totalitarian repression, and nuclear and biochemical disaster. Faced with apocalyptic prophesies and doomsday scenarios, many flee in despair from reason and embrace irrational cults and theologies of withdrawal and retreat.

Traditional moral codes and newer irrational cults both fail to meet the pressing needs of today and tomorrow. False "theologies of hope" and messianic ideologies, substituting new dogmas for old, cannot cope with existing world realities. They separate rather than unite peoples.

Humanity, to survive, requires bold and daring measures. We need to extend the uses of scientific method, not renounce them, to fuse reason with compassion in order to build constructive social and moral values. Confronted by many possible futures, we must decide which to pursue. The ultimate goal should be the fulfilment of the potential for growth in each human personality – not for the favoured few, but for all of humankind. Only a shared world and global measures will suffice.

A humanist outlook will tap the creativity of each human being and provide the vision and courage for us to work together. This outlook emphasises the role human beings can play in their own spheres of action. The decades ahead call for dedicated, clear-minded men and women able to marshal this will, intelligence, and cooperative skills for shaping a desirable future. Humanism can provide the purpose ad inspiration that so many seek; it can give personal meaning and significance to human life.

Many kinds of humanism exist in the contemporary world. The varieties and emphases of naturalistic humanism include "scientific," "ethical," "democratic,' "religious," and "Marxist" humanism. Free thought, atheism, agnosticism, scepticism, deism, rationalism, ethical culture, and liberal religion all claim to be heir to the humanist tradition. Humanism traces its roots from ancient China, classical Greece and Rome, through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, to the scientific revolution of the modern

world. But views that merely reject theism are not equivalent to humanism. They lack commitment to the positive belief in the possibilities of human progress and to the values central to it. Many within religious groups, believing in the future of humanism, now claim humanist credentials. Humanism is an ethical process through which we all can move, above and beyond the divisive particulars, heroic personalities, dogmatic creeds, and ritual customs of past religions or their mere negation.

We affirm a set of common principles that can serve as a basis for united action – positive principles relevant to the present human condition. They are a design for a secular society on a planetary scale.

For these reasons, we submit this new *Humanist Manifesto* for the future of humankind; for us, it is a vision of hope, a direction for satisfying survival.

Religion

First: In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine "spiritual" experience and aspiration.

We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence. In our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religions do not do so. Even at this late date in human history, certain elementary facts based upon the critical use of scientific reason have to be restated. We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfilment of the human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity. Nature may indeed be broader and deeper than we now know; any new discoveries, however, will but enlarge our knowledge of the natural.

Some humanists believe we should reinterpret traditional religions and reinvest them with meanings appropriate to the current situation. Such redefinitions, however, often perpetuate old dependencies and escapisms; they easily become obscurantist, impeding the free use of the intellect. We need, instead, radically new human purposes and goals.

We appreciate the need to preserve the best ethical teaching in the religious traditions of humankind, many of which we share in common. But we reject those features of traditional religious morality that deny humans a full appreciation of their own potentialities and responsibilities. Traditional religions often offer solace to humans from helping themselves or experiencing their full potentialities. Such institutions, creeds, and rituals often impede the will to serve others. Too often traditional faiths encourage dependence rather than independence, obedience rather than affirmation, fear rather than courage. More recently they have generated concerned social action, with many signs of relevance appearing in the wake of the "God is Dead" theologies. But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.

Second: Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualizations, and from rectifying social injustices. Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the "ghost in the machine" and the "separable soul." Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context. There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body. We continue to exist in our progeny and in the way that our lives have influenced others in our culture.

Traditional religions are surely not the only obstacles to human progress. Other ideologies also impede human advance. Some forms of political doctrine, for instance function religiously, reflecting the worst features of orthodoxy and authoritarianism, especially when they sacrifice individuals on the altar of Utopian promises. Purely economic and political viewpoints, whether capitalist or communist, often function as religious and ideological dogma. Although humans undoubtedly need economic and

political goals, they also need creative values by which to live.

Ethics

Third: We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is *autonomous* and *situational*, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest. To deny this distorts the whole basis of life. Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism. We strive for the good life, here and now. The goal is to pursue life's enrichment despite debasing forces of vulgarization, commercialization, bureaucratization, and dehumanization.

Fourth: *Reason and intelligence* are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses. There is no substitute: neither faith nor passion suffices in itself. The controlled use of scientific methods, which have transformed the natural and social sciences since the Renaissance, must be extended further in the solution of human problems. But reason must be tempered by humility, since no group has a monopoly of wisdom or virtue. Nor is there any guarantee that all problems can be solved or all questions answered. Yet critical intelligence, infused by a sense of human caring, is the best method that humanity has for resolving problems. Reason should be balanced with compassion and empathy and the whole person fulfilled. Thus, we are not advocating the use of scientific intelligence independent of or in opposition to emotion, for we believe in the cultivation of feeling and love. As science pushes back the boundary of the known, man's sense of wonder is continually renewed, and art, poetry, and music find their places, along with religion and ethics.

The individual

Fifth: *The preciousness and dignity of the individual person* is a central humanist values. Individuals should be encouraged to realize their own creative talents and desires. We reject all religious, ideological, or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull intellect, and dehumanize personality. We believe in maximum individual autonomy consonant with social responsibility. Although science can account for the causes of behaviour, the possibilities of individual *freedom of choice* exist in human life and should be increased.

Sixth: In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical culture, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behaviour between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered "evil". Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a *tolerant* one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire. We wish to cultivate the development of a responsible attitude toward sexuality, in which humans are not exploited as sexual objects, and in which intimacy, sensitivity, respect, and honest in interpersonal relations are encouraged. Moral education for children and adults is an important way of developing awareness and sexual maturity.

Democratic Society

Seventh: to enhance freedom and dignity the individual must experience a full range of *civil liberties* in all societies. This includes freedom of speech land the press, political democracy, the legal right of opposition to governmental policies, fair judicial process, religious liberty, freedom of association, and artistic, scientific, and cultural freedom. It also includes recognition of an individual's right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide. We oppose the increasing invasion of privacy, by whatever means, in both totalitarian and democratic societies. We would safeguard, extend, and implement the principle of human freedom evolved from the *Magna Carta* to the *Bill of Rights*, the *Rights of man*, and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Eighth: We are committed to an open and democratic society. We must extend *participatory democracy* in its true sense to the economy, the school, the family, the workplace, and voluntary associations. Decision-making must be decentralized to include widespread involvement of people at the levels – social, political, and economic. All persons should have a voice in developing the values and goals that determine their lives. Institutions should be responsive to expressed desires and needs. The conditions of work, education, devotion, and play should be humanized. Alienating forces should be modified or eradicated and bureaucratic structures should be held to a minimum. People are more important than decalogues, rules, proscriptions, or regulations.

Ninth: *The separation of church and state and the separation of ideology and state are imperatives.* The state should encourage maximum freedom for different moral, political, religious, and social values in society. It should not favour any particular religious bodies through the use of public monies, nor espouse a single ideology and function thereby as an instrument of propaganda or oppression, particularly against dissenters.

Tenth: Humane societies should evaluate economic systems not by rhetoric or ideology, but by whether or not they *increase economic well-being* for all individuals and groups, minimize poverty and hardship, increase the sum of human satisfaction, and enhance the quality of life. Hence the door is open to alternative economic systems. We need to democratize the economy and judge it by its responsiveness to human needs, testing results in terms of the common good.

Eleventh: *The principle of moral equality* must be furthered through elimination of all discrimination based upon race, religion, sex, age, or national origin. This means equality of opportunity and recognition of talent and merit. Individuals should be encouraged to contribute to their own betterment. If unable, then society should provide means to satisfy their basic economic, health, and cultural needs, including, wherever resources make possible, a minimum guaranteed annual income. We are concerned for the welfare of the aged, the infirm, the disadvantaged, and also for the outcasts – the mentally, retarded, abandoned or abused children, the handicapped, prisoners, and addicts – for *all* who are neglected or ignored by society. Practicing humanists should make it their vocation to humanize personal relations.

We believe in the *right to universal education.* Everyone has a right to the cultural opportunity to fulfil his or her unique capacities and talents. The schools should foster satisfying and productive living. They should be open at all levels to any and all; the achievement of excellence should be encouraged. Innovative and experimental forms of education are to be welcomed. The energy and idealism of the young deserve to be appreciated and channelled to constructive purposes.

We deplore racial, religious, ethnic, or class antagonisms. Although we believe in cultural diversity and encourage racial and ethnic pride, we reject separations which promote alienation and set people and groups against each other, we envision an *integrated* community where people have a maximum opportunity for free and voluntary association.

We are *critical of sexism or sexual chauvinism* – male or female. We believe in equal rights for both women and men to fulfil their unique careers and potentialities as they see fit, free or invidious discrimination.

World Community

Twelfth: We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to *transcend the limits of national sovereignty* and to move toward the building of a world community in which all sectors of the human family can participate. Thus we look to the development of a system of world law and a world order based upon transnational federal government. This would appreciate cultural pluralism and diversity. It would not exclude pride in national origins and accomplishments nor the handling of regional problems on a regional basis. Human progress, however, can no longer be achieved by focussing on one section of the world, Western or Eastern, developed or underdeveloped. For the first time in human history, no part of humankind can be isolated from any other. Each person's future is in some way linked to all. We

thus reaffirm a commitment to the building of world community, at the same time recognizing that this commits us to some hard choices.

Thirteenth: The world community must renounce the resort to violence and force as a method of solving international disputes. We believe in the peaceful adjudication of differences by international courts and by the development of the arts of negotiation and compromise. War is obsolete. So is the use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. It is a planetary imperative to reduce the level of military expenditures and turn these savings to peaceful and people-oriented uses.

Fourteenth: The world community must engage in co*operative planning* concerning the use of rapidly depleting resources. The planet earth must be considered a single *ecosystem*. Ecological damage, resource depletion, and excessive population growth must be checked by international concord. The cultivation and conservation of nature is a moral value; we should perceive ourselves as integral to the sources of our being in nature. We must fee our world from needless pollution and waste, responsibly guarding and creating wealth, both natural and human. Exploitation of natural resources, uncurbed by social conscience, must end.

Fifteenth: The problem of *Economic growth and development* can no longer be resolved by one nation alone; they are worldwide in scope. It is the moral obligation of the developed nations to provide – through an international authority that safeguards human rights – massive technical, agricultural, medical, and economic assistance, including birth control techniques, to the developing portions of the globe. World poverty must cease. Hence extreme disproportions in wealth, income and economic growth should be reduced on a worldwide basis.

Sixteenth: *Technology is a vital key* to human progress and development. We deplore any neo-romantic efforts to condemn indiscriminately all technology and science or to counsel retreat from its further extension and use for the good of humankind. We would resist any move to censor basic scientific research on moral, political or social grounds. Technology must, however, be carefully judged by the consequences of its use; harmful and destructive changes should be avoided. We are particularly disturbed when technology and bureaucracy control, manipulate, or modify human beings without their consent. Technological feasibility does not imply social or cultural desirability.

Seventeenth: We must expand communication and transportation across frontiers. Travel restrictions must cease. The world must be open to diverse political, ideological, and moral viewpoints and evolve a worldwide system of television and radio for information and education. We thus call for full international cooperation in culture, science, the arts, and technology across ideological borders. We must learn to live openly together or we shall perish together.

Humanity as a Whole

In closing: The world cannot wait for a reconciliation of competing political or economic systems to solve its problems. These are the times for men and women of good will to further the building of a peaceful and prosperous world. we urge that parochial loyalties and inflexible moral and religious ideologies be transcended. We urge recognition of the common humanity of all people. We further urge the use of reason and compassion to produce the kind of world we want – a world in which peace, prosperity, freedom, and happiness are widely shared. Let us not abandon that vision in despair or cowardice. We are responsible for what we are or will he. Let us work together for a humane world by means commensurate with humane ends. Destructive ideological differences among communism, capitalism, socialism, conservatism, liberalism, and radicalism should be overcome. Let us call for an end to terror and hatred. We will survive and prosper only in a world of shared humane values. We can initiate new directions for humankind; ancient rivalries can be superseded by broad-based cooperative efforts. The commitment to tolerance, understanding, and peaceful negotiation does not necessitate acquiescence to the status quo nor the damming up of dynamic and revolutionary forces. The true revolution is occurring and can continue in countless non-violent adjustments. But this entails the willingness to step forward onto new and expanding plateaus. At the present juncture of history,

commitment to all humankind is the highest commitment of which we are capable; it transcends the narrow allegiances of church, state, party, class, or race in moving toward a wider vision of human potentiality. What more daring a goal for humankind than for each person to become, in ideal as well as practice, a citizen of a world community. It is a classical vision; we can now give it new vitality. Humanism thus interpreted is a moral force that has time on its side. We believe that humankind has the potential intelligence, good will, and cooperative skill to implement this commitment in the decades ahead.

We the undersigned, while not necessarily endorsing every detail of the above, pledge our general support to Humanist Manifesto II for the future of humankind. These affirmations are not a final credo or dogma but an expression of a living and growing faith. We invite others in all lands to join up to further developing and working for these goals.

Following is a list of those who signed the manifesto:

Lionel Abel, Professor of English, State University of New York at Buffalo.
Khoren Arisian, Board of Leaders, New York Society for Ethical Culture.
Issac Asimov, author.
George Axtelle, Professor Emeritus, Southern Illinois University.
Archie J. Bahm, Professor of Philosophy Emeritus, University of New Mexico.
Paul H. Beattie, President, Fellowship of Religious Humanists.
Keith Beggs, Executive Director, American Humanist Association.
Malcolm Bissell, Professor Emeritus, University of Southern California.
H.J. Blackham, Chairman, Social Morality Council, Great Britain.
Brand Blanshard, Professor Emeritus, Yale University.
Paul Blanshard, author.
Joseph L. Blau, Professor of Religion, Columbia University.
Sir Hermanrd Bondi, Professor of Mathematics, King's College, University of London.
Howard Box, Leader, Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture.
Raymond B. Bragg, Minister Emeritus, Unitarian Chairman, Kansas City.
Theodore Brameld, Visiting Professor, C.U. New York.
Brigid Brophy, author, Great Britain.
Lester R. Brown, Senior Fellow, Overseas Development Council.
Bette Chambers, President, American Humanist Association.
John Ciardi, poet.
Francis Crick, M.D., Great Britain.
Arthur Danto, Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University.
Lucign de Coninck, Professor, University of Gand, Belgium.
Miriam Allen de Ford, author.
Edd Doerr, Americans United for Separation of Church and State.
Peter Draper, M.D., Guy's Hospital Medical School, London.
Paul Edwards, Professor of Philosophy, Brooklyn College.
Albert Ellis, Executive Director, Institute of Advanced Study Rational Psychotherapy.
Edward L. Ericson, Board of Leaders, New York Society for Ethical Culture.
H.J. Eysenck, Professor of Psychology, University of London.
Roy P. Fairfield, Coordinator, Union Graduate School.
Herbert Feigl, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, University of Minnesota.
Raymond Firth, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, University of London.
Antony Flew, Professor of Philosophy, the University of Reading, England.

Kenneth Furness, Executive Secretary, British Humanist Association.
Erwin Gaede, Minister, Unitarian Church, Ann Brbor, Mich.
Richard S. Gilbert, Minister, First Unitarian Church, Rochester.
Charles Wesley Grady, Minister, Unitarian University Church, Arlington.
Maxine Green, Professor Teachers College, Columbia University.
Thomas C. Greening, Editor, Journal of Humanistic Psychology.
Alan F. Guttmacher, President, Planned Parenthood Federal of America.
J. Harold Hadley, Minister, Unitarion University Church, Pt. Washington.
Hector Hawton, Editor, Question, Great Britain.
A. Eustace Haydon, Professor emeritus of History of Religions.
James Hemming, Psychologist, Great Britain.
Palmer A. Hilty, Administrative Secretary, Fellowship of Religious Humanists.
Hudson Hoagland, President Emeritus, Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology.
Robert S. Hoagland, Editor, Religious Humanism.
Sidney Hook, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, New York University.
James F. Hornback, Leader, Ethical Society of St. Louis.
James M. Hutchinson, Minister Emeritus, First Unitarian Church, Cincinnati.
Morrdecai M. Kaplan, Rabbi, Founder of Jewish Reconstruction Movement.
John C. Kidneigh, Professor of Social Work, University of Minnesota.
Lester A. Kirkendall, Professor Emeritus, Oregon State University.
Margaret Knight, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.
Jean Kotkin, Executive Secretary, American Ethical Union.
Richard Kostelanetz, poet.
Paul Kurtz, Editor, The Humanist.
Lawrence Lder, Chairman, National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws.
Edward Lamb, President, Lamb Communications Inc.
Corliss Lamont, Chairman, National Emergency Civil Liberties Union.
Chauncey D. Leake, Professor, University of California, San Francisco.
Alfred Mc. Lee, Professor Emeritus, Social Anthropology, C.U.N.Y.
Elizabeth Briant Lee, author.
Christopher Macy, Director, Rationalist Press Association, Great Britain.
Clorinda Margolis, Jefferson Community Mental Health Centre, Philadelphia.
Joseph Marglois, Professor of Philosophy, Temple University.
Harold P. Marley, Retired Unitarian Minister.
Floyd W. Matson, Professor of American Studies, University of Hawaii.
Lester Mondale, former President Fellowship of Religious Humanists.
Lloyd Morain, President, Illinois Gas Company.
Mary Morain, Editorial Board, International Society for General Semantics.
Charles Morris, Professor Emeritus, University of Florida.
Henry Morgentaler, M.D., Past President, Humanist Association of Canada.
Mary Mothersill, Professor of Philosophy, Barnard College.
Jerome Nathanson, Chairman of the Board of Leaders, New York Society of Ethical Culture.
Billy Joe Nichols, Minister, Richardson Unitarian Church, Texas.
Kai Nielsen, Professor of Philosophy, University of Calgary, Canada.
P.H. Nowell-Smith, Professor of Philosophy, York University, Canada.
Chaim Perelman, Professor of Philosophy, University of Brussels, Belgium.
James W. Prescott, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
Harold J. Quigley, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago.

Howard Radest, Professor of Philosophy, Ramapo College.
John Herman Randall, Jr. Professor Emeritus, Columbia University.
Oliver L. Reiser, Professor Emeritus, University of Pittsburgh.
Robert G. Risk, President, Leadville Corp.
Lord Ritchie-Calder, formerly of Edinburgh, Scotland.
B.T. Rocca, Jr. Consultant, International Trade and Commodities.
Andrei D. Sakharov, Academy of Sciences, Moscow.
Sidhey H. Scheuer, Chairman, National Committee for an Effective Congress.
Herbert W. Schneider, Professor Emeritus, Claremont Graduate School.
Clinton Lee Scott, Universalist Minister, St. Petersburgh.
Roy Wood Sellars, Professor Emeritus, University of Michigan.
V.M. Tarkunde, President, All India Radical Humanist Association, New Delhi.
A.B. Shah, President, Indian Secular Society, Bombay.
B.F. Skinner, Professor of Psychology, Harvard University.
Kenneth J. Smith, Leader, Philadelphia Ethical Society.
Matthew Ies Spettee, Chairman, Department of Ethics, Ethical Culture Schools.
Mark Starr, Chairman, Esperantion Information.
Svetozar Stojanovic, Professor Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Yugoslavia.
A. Solomon, Coordinator Indian Secular Society, Bombay.
Harold Taylor, Project Director, World University Student Project.
V.T. Thayer, author.
Herbert a. Tonne, Educational Board, Journal of Business Education.
Jack Tourin, President, American Ethical Union.
E.C. Vanderlann, Lecturer.
J.P. van Praag, Chairman, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Utrecht.
Maurice B. Visscher, M.D., Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota.
Goodwin Watson, association Coordinator, Union Graduate School.
Gerald Wendt, author.
Henry N. Wieman, Professor Emeritus, University of Chicago.
Sherwin Wine, Rabbi Society for Humanistic Judaism.
Edwin H. Wilson, Executive Director Emeritus, American Humanist Association.
Betram D. Wolfe, Hoover Institution.
Alexander S. Yesenin-Volpin, Mathematician.
Marvin Zimmerman, Professor of Philosophy, State University of New York at Buffalo.
Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, October 1973.

Indian Radical Humanist Association
Proposed Constitution

The next biennial conference of the Indian Radical Humanist Association (IRHA) will be held at Ahmedabad in December 24-26, 1988. The following is a draft of a proposed Constitution of the IRHA which is intended to be placed before the conference for discussion and approval.

The Aims and Objects of the IRHA were last adopted in the form of a Declaration by the all India Radical Humanist Conference held in Calcutta on December 29-30, 1973. It is felt that the Declaration does not bring out with adequate clarity the role of the IRHA in working for a social transformation in India based upon a humanist ideological revolution. That defect is sought to be removed in the draft aims and Objects published below.

The Rules and Regulations of the Association in this draft are virtually the same as those adopted in the Calcutta conference. It was felt in the Calcutta conference that the Rules and Regulations should be very simple and free from any rigidity. That feature is maintained in the following draft. The only material changes proposed in the Rules and Regulations are that the annual membership fee would be fixed at Rs. 50/- and that the Constitution of the Association would be liable to be amended by a simple majority at a general meeting of the members instead of by a two-third majority.

V.M.T.

The Indian Radical Humanist Association: Aims and Objects

The Indian Radical Humanist Association aims at developing a renaissance movement throughout the country based on the values of Radical Humanism and at bringing about a peaceful transformation of Indian society so that those values may be realised in all spheres of life – political, economic and social.

Humanism is a philosophy and a mental attitude which gives primacy to the human individual and recognises his or her right to live in freedom and with dignity. It believes that "the human individual is the measure of all things." Humanism opposes the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of any imaginary collective ego like a nation or a class. Historically as well as logically, humanism is the philosophy of democracy.

The basic values of Radical Humanism are: freedom, rationalism, and self-sustained morality. These values constitute the pillars of human progress. Radical Humanism derives values from the physical and biological sciences.

Radical Humanism regards the urge for freedom as an expression on the human level of the basic struggle for existence which is common to the entire biological world. Freedom of human beings includes their physical well-being as well as the unhindered development of their mental potentialities in various spheres such as knowledge and virtue. The struggle for freedom includes the struggle for bread, but goes far beyond it.

Rationalism consists of the recognition of the importance of relying on one's reason in distinguishing fact from fiction and right from wrong and of the determination to act according to one's rational conviction. Like the urge for freedom, the reasoning capacity is also a part of man's biological heritage. It is derived from the indisputable fact that the entire universe is law governed. Instinctive reason is found in all animals, but the reasoning faculty in human beings is far more developed than in the rest of the animal kingdom. By itself, however, reason has only an instrumental value, for it can be used for good as well as evil. Rationalism consists of acting according to what one's reason says is true and right.

Radical Humanism believes that the human conscience is also a biological heritage. It is derived from the long history of the biological evolution of human beings as a gregarious species. Morality

comprises of the values which are essential for a cooperative social existence. Since the moral impulse is a natural biological urge, its satisfaction is one of the sources of human happiness. A moral life can therefore be a happy life. Morality is enlightened self-interest. An individual can therefore be free as well as moral at the same time.

The democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity are only a popular version of the scientific humanist values of freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality.

Democracy in India is weak and unstable because these humanist-democratic values have not been adequately disseminated among the people. That is why in India the spirit for freedom and self-reliance remains submerged under the traditions of submission and servitude, why blind faith predominated over rationalism, why morality is overwhelmed by corruption and injustice, and why casteism and communalism continue to thrive. A renaissance movement based on Radical Humanist values is necessary for the all round political, economic and social transformation of Indian society.

Indian renaissance should not, like the European renaissance, be confined to the elitist sections of society, but should be spread among the people at the grass-root level so as to develop their initiative to tackle their economic, social and political problems.

The spread of humanist-democratic values among the people will increase the political maturity 9f the Indian electorate and thereby improve the functioning of the present parliamentary democracy. Political parties will then behave more responsibly, casteism and communalism would be on the decline, corruption in the political administration of the country would be curbed and all democratic institutions would function more efficiently.

Radical Humanist, however, regards the present parliamentary democracy as a very limited and truncated form of democracy. At its best, it means rule for the people and not of the people. Radical Humanism seeks to replace parliamentary democracy by a radical democracy organised from below. In order that people should be the real rulers in the country, political and economic power must be radically decentralised. Functions of the State should as far as possible be in the hands of local republics called people's committees and those functions which are required to be handled at the higher levels of the State should be in the hands of people's representative who are accountable at every stage to the electorate. Parliament should be the apex of network of people's committees which will be the repositories of people's sovereign power.

Radical Humanism does not believe that a party system is essential for a genuine democracy. The party system is based on periodical delegation of power by the people and the concentration of that power in the in the State. Political parties also tend to exploit the prejudices prevalent among the people so as to divorce morality from political practice. Radical Humanists believe that the party system will eventually e replaced by a network of people's committees which will function as the organs of people's power and will sponsor candidates for higher legislative bodies.

Radical Humanism realises that capitalism not only increases economic inequalities amongst the people, but develops a consumerist society in which wealth accumulates and culture decays. State ownership, on the other hand, is not viable alternative, because it leads to political dictatorship and economic stagnation. In a truly democratic society, an economy based upon a network of producers' and consumers' cooperatives societies, assisted by cooperative financial institutions, is likely to replace the systems of both capitalism as well as State ownership. Radical Humanism believes that such a cooperative economy will end human exploitation and contribute to economic as well as cultural growth.

In social life, Radical Humanism stands for equality in all spheres and the recognition of the dignity of every human individual. Radical Humanism opposes discrimination based on sex, caste, religion or class. It aspires for the creation of a free and moral society consisting of free and moral men and women. In personal life, Radical Humanists practise the values which they preach.

The principles of Radical Humanism were first formulated by the revolutionary philosopher M.N.

Roy in 1946. They have never been regarded as a closed system of ideas. They are open to revision in the light of further experience and growth of knowledge. The Indian Radical Humanist Association does not, therefore, require from its members an uncritical adherence to the system of ideas developed by its sponsors. Any person who agrees with the basic values of Radical Humanism and desires to promote those values is welcome to join the Association.

Rules and Regulations

1. Name

The organisation shall be called the Indian Radical Humanist Association, hereinafter referred to as the Association.

2. Office

The main office of the Association shall be at such place in India as may be approved by the Executive Council. It may have its branches or local groups anywhere in India.

3. Members

(i) Subject to what follows, membership of the Association shall be open to any adult person residing in India, who generally agrees with its aims and Objects and accepts its rules and regulations.

(ii) A person intending to be a member shall apply in writing in the prescribed form.

(iii) The Executive Council shall have the right to reject any such application for membership of renewal thereof.

(iv) A person whose application is approved by the Executive Council shall be enrolled as a member.

(v) Every member shall pay an annual membership fee of Rs. 50/- or life membership fee or Rs.500/-. An annual member who does not pay the fee for two consecutive years will automatically cease to be a member.

4. General Meetings

(i) The General Meeting of the Association will be held not less than once in two years at the time and place decided upon by the Executive Council.

(ii) The Executive Council shall propose the agenda for the General Meeting.

(iii) The functions of the General Meeting shall be as detailed below:
(a) to elect members of Executive Council.

(b) to receive from the Executive Council or from any of its office bearers a report on the working of the Association during the previous years.

(c) to receive from Executive Council a statement showing receipts and expenditure, assets and liabilities and to consider the auditor's report pertaining thereto.

(d) to make suggestions regarding the work of the Association.

(e) to consider any other business placed before it by the Council.

(f) to consider any resolution proposed by any member provided notice of it has been given to the Council at least a fortnight before the meeting.

(g) to consider any other business with the permission of the chair.

5. Executive Council

(i) The Executive Council shall have the power to co-opt members.

(ii) The Executive Council at its first meeting shall appoint from amongst its members such office-bearers as it deems fit.

(iii) The Executive Council shall be generally responsible for the fulfilment of the objective of the Association through such policies and measures as it may consider necessary.

(iv) The Executive Council shall meet as often as may be necessary. It may transact business through circulars.

6. State, Regional & Local Groups

Members of a State, region or locality may with the approval of the Executive Council set up State, Regional and Local Groups of the Association. They will have such representation in the General Meeting as may be decided by the Council.

7. Funds

The funds of the Association shall be deposited in any scheduled or cooperative bank. The accounts of the Association shall be operated by two members of the Executive Council.

8. Regulations

The Executive Council shall have the power to frame regulations for the conduct of the affairs of the Association and they will have the same force as if they were part of the Constitution of the Association.

9. Amendment to the Constitution

The Constitution of the Association can be amended by a resolution passed by majority of votes at a General Meeting.

10. Dissolution

In the event of dissolution of the Association its assets will be donated to any non-profit, cultural or educational institution or institutions as approved by a majority of the members present at the General Meeting.

Membership Form

The Secretary
Indian Radical Humanist Association

Dear Friend,

Please enrol me as a member of the **Indian Radical Humanist Association**. I generally agree with the Aims and Objects of the Association and shall abide by its rules and regulations. I remit herewith the annual membership fee Rs. 50/- / life membership fee Rs. 500/-.

Name : .....

Address: .....

.....

Profession: .....

Activities: .....

.....

.....

Date: ..... Signatures .....

Party System and Democracy in India
Radical Democracy

M.N. Roy

The philosophy which will give modern mankind a new hope and a new faith must put a concrete content into the concept of freedom. If the liberating possibility of social organization and political institutions is still to be judged by divergent ideological prejudices, discordant doctrines and conflicting dogmas, common efforts for overcoming the present crisis, the greatest in history, and for promoting human progress, will remain a matter of wishful thinking. A common standard of freedom alone can make such common efforts possible.

Quest for freedom can be referred back to man's struggle for existence. It accounts for the triumph of man over nature, in the course of his efforts to satisfy his biological needs. It provides the basis for his constant search for knowledge, which enables him to be progressively free from the tyranny of natural phenomena and physical and social environments. Quest for freedom is a continuation, on a higher level – of intelligence and emotion – of the biological struggle for existence. In modern society, an individual, to be free, must not only be able to enjoy economic sufficiency and security but live in a social psychological atmosphere free from cultural regimentation and helpful to the development of his intellectual and other human potentialities. Progressive attainment of freedom in this wide sense by the individuals, composing society should provide the criterion for judging the merits of social organisation. Guided by the dictum of ancient wisdom that man is the measure of everything, the philosophy of the future should proclaim that the merit of any pattern of social organization or political institution is to be judged by the actual measure of freedom it gives to the individual.

Whether it is the nation or a class, any collectivity is composed of individuals. Society is a creation of man- in quest of freedom. Co-operative social relationships were established originally with the purpose of reinforcing the struggle for existence, which the primitive man had undertaken as an individual. 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, 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 of progressive significance of any social order. Otherwise, the ideals of social liberation and progress are deceptive.

No political philosophy nor a scheme of social reconstruction can have more than a very limited revolutionary significance if it dismisses the concept of individual freedom as an empty abstraction. A political system and an economic experiment, which subordinate the man of flesh and blood to an abstract collective ego, cannot possibly be the suitable means for the attainment of the goal of freedom. It is absurd to argue that negation of freedom is the road to freedom. The purpose of all rational human endeavour, collective as well as individual, should be the attainment of freedom in eve larger measure, and freedom is real only as individual freedom.

A new world of freedom will not result automatically from an economic reorganization of society. Nor does freedom necessarily follow from the capture of political power by a party claiming to represent the oppressed and exploited classes. The abolition of private property, State-ownership of the means of production, and planned economy do not by themselves end exploitation of labour, nor lead to an equal distribution of wealth. By disregarding individual freedom on the pleas of taking the fullest advantage of technology, of efficiency and collective effort, planned economy defeats its own purpose. Instead of ushering in a higher form of democracy on the basis of economic equality

and social justice it may establish a political dictatorship. Economic democracy is no more possible in the absence of political democracy than the latter is in the absence of the former. That consideration should be borne in mind by those who make a fetish of economic planning.

The crucial question is: planning for what? It is assumed that planned economy will guarantee the greatest good to the greatest number, in other words, it will mean equal distribution of wealth – establish social justice. In that case, it should be possible to reconcile planning with freedom. If modern technological trends preclude such reconciliation, then they should be curbed so as to be more amenable to human welfare. Machine should not be the Frankenstein of modern civilization. Created by man, it must sub-serve man's purpose – contribute to his freedom.

Dictatorship of any form, however plausible may be the pretext for it, is excluded by the Radical Humanist perspective of social evolution. Politics cannot be divorced from ethics without jeopardizing the cherished ideal of freedom; it is an empirical truth that immoral means necessarily corrupt the end. In the Soviet Un ion, proletarian dictatorship promises to be a permanent institution. It has become identical with Communist. The means have become the end. The State does not hold out any hope of withering away. If a socialist society has been established in the Soviet Union, then, the period of transition has passed, and dictatorship must disappear. But so long as no other party is allowed to exist, or the party of the proletariat does not disappear with dictatorship, it is idle to say that a higher form of democracy has been established.

The practice of Western democracy is equally disappointing. Traditional democratic Socialism, therefore, also does not inspire any confidence of success. Democracy must reorient itself. It must revert to the humanist tradition. It must not be limited by the counting of heads, particularly when the heads have not the opportunity to raise themselves with sovereign dignity. Formal parliamentarism must be replaced by actual democratic practice. The character of a patty is to be judged not by its ability to catch votes, but by the merit of its proclaimed principles and published programme. The people should be asked to vote not for professions and promises, but by judging the record of a government. Democratic practice which is no more than mere counting of heads, in the last analysis, is also a homage to the collective ego. It allows scope neither for the individual nor for intelligence. Under the formal parliamentary system, unscrupulous demagogues can always come to the top. Intelligence, integrity, wisdom, moral excellence, as a rule, count for nothing. Yet unless the purifying influence of these human values is brought to bear upon the political organisation and administration of society, the democratic way of life can never be realized.

The contemporary world is not poor in men and women incorporating those values of the humanist tradition. But disdaining demagogy, they can never come to helm of public affairs. On the other hand, a dictatorial regime, even if established as the means to a laudable end, discourages the rise of that type of citizens. Thus, between formal democracy and dictatorship, humanity is deprived of the benefit of having its affairs conducted b spiritually free individuals, and is consequently debarred from advancing towards the goal of freedom.

It is idle to condemn dictatorship on the ground that regimentation precludes the creation of human values, so long as those values are not allowed to influence public affairs even under so-called democratic regimes. To wean the unthinking world away from the appeal of dictatorship, postulated as a short-cut, indeed as the only way to freedom, democracy must recover the humanist tradition of modern culture.

Man must again be the measure of all things. Intelligence, integrity, wisdom, moral excellence, should be the test of leadership. Democracy can no longer be taken simply for granted. Today all thoughtful lovers of freedom are perturbed by the challenging question: Is democracy possible? The advocates of democratic Socialism, while rightly rejecting dictatorship, have so far failed to answer satisfactorily this question of our time. The fundamental democratic principle – the greatest good to the greatest number – can be realised only when the conduct of public affairs will be in charge of

spiritually free individuals who represent their own conscience before anybody or anything else.

Moral sanction, after all, is the greatest sanction. The real guarantee of parliamentary democracy is not law, but the moral conscience of the majority in power. In the last analysis, dictatorship also rests on a moral sanction; it claims to be the means to an end. But group morality is a doubtful guarantee against the temptation of power. Values operate through individuals. Therefore, a government composed of spiritually free individuals, accountable, in the first place, to their respective conscience, is the only possible guarantee for securing the greatest good to the greatest number. Democracy must have that philosophical reorientation, if it is to survive the present crisis and resist the powerful onslaught of dictatorship.

What is suggested is not a rule of the "intellectual elite" but such an organisation of society as will give unlimited scope for the unfolding of the creative genius of man, by placing the executive power of the State under the control of free individuals – free from the influence of vested interests and also from the vagaries of the collective ego, so very susceptible to demagogic appeals. Democratic practice should not be confined to periodical elections. Even if elections are by universal suffrage, and the executive is also elected, democracy will still remain a mere formality. Delegation of power, even for a limited period, stultifies democracy. Government for a people can never be fully a government of the people and by the people.

The people can have a hand in the government only when a pyramidal structure of the State will be raised on a foundation of organised local democracies. The primary function of these latter will be to make individual citizens fully conscious of their sovereign right and enable them to exercise the right intelligently and conscientiously. The broad basis of the democratic State, coinciding with the entire society, will be composed of a network of political schools, so to say. The right of recall and referendum will enable organised local democracies to wield a direct and effective control on the entire State machinery. They alone will have the right to nominate candidates for election. Democracy will be placed above parties. Individual men will have the chance of being recognised, on their merit. Party loyalty and party patronage or other forms of nepotism will no longer eclipse intellectual independence, moral integrity and detached wisdom.

In other words, what is suggested is creation of conditions under which democracy can be possible. In the first place, there must be a conscious and integrated effort to stimulate amongst the people the urge for freedom, the desire to rely upon themselves and to be the makers of their destiny, the spirit of free thinking, and the will never to submit to any external authority by exchanging their freedom for the security of slaves. A new Renaissance, based on rationalism, individualism and cosmopolitan Humanism, is essential for democracy to be realised and capable of defending itself.

Such an atmosphere will foster intellectual independence dedicated to the cause of making human values triumph. Moral excellence alone can mould a community together without sacrificing the individual on the altar of the collective ego, be it of the nation or a class. Men and women, possessed of that great virtue, will command the respect of an intelligent public, and be recognised as the leaders of society. Demagogy will be placed under a heavy discount. Democratic practice will not be reduced to periodical elections. People will no longer be mere "masses".

It will be some time before reoriented democracy can thus be the master of the situation. In the transition period, a democratic Constitution should provide for creative genius, intellectual detachment and moral integrity occupying a high place in the State, so as to advise, guide and influence the operation of executive power. In the transition period, democracy must be elective as well as selective. Until the intellectual and moral level of the entire community is raised considerably, election alone cannot possibly bring its best elements to the forefront, and unless the available intellectual detachment and moral integrity are brought to bear upon the situation, democracy cannot come into her own.

During the transition period, residuary power should be vested in a Council of State representing men of science, intelligence, integrity, wisdom, and moral excellence; men, who, as a rule, keep aloof

from the rough and tumble of politics, and therefore are not to be found among professional politicians. The valuable services of those who are the best qualified to be the leaders of society can be enlisted in the following manner:

Each professional group – of engineers, economists, scientists, medical men, jurists, historians and others engaged in intellectual, literary, artistic and any other creative avocation, will recommend a specific number for membership of the Council of State. They will be nominated by the head of the State, who will have the prerogative also to nominate some other persons equally qualified, though not formally attached to any particular group, any possible indirect control of the veste3d interests will be obviated by stipulating that members of the professional groups, who are remuneratively connected with profit-making concerns, except as salaried employees, shall not be eligible for the membership of the Council of State. The power of planning the development of society in all branches (economic, health, education, culture) and also to guide and supervise the execution of the plans, will be vested in the Council of State.

To begin with, the economic life of society must be progressively freed from the paralysing and corrupting control of vested interests. In consequence thereof, intellectual independence will be accessible to a greater number. Secondly, these latter should be regarded as the most trustworthy custodians of public welfare, and afforded the opportunity to function as such. If, before democracy has come of age, their intrinsically representative character is to be measured by the counting of heads, society will remain deprived of the best available leadership, which alone can guide it towards true democratic freedom.

Radicalism presupposes economic reorganisation of society, so as to eliminate the possibility of exploitation of man by man. Progressive satisfaction of material necessities is the precondition for the individual members of society unfolding their intellectual and other finer human attributes. An economic reorganisation such as will guarantee a progressively rising standard of living will be the foundation of the Radical Democratic State.

The economy of the new social order will be based on production for use and distribution with reference to human needs. Its political organisation will exclude delegation of power which in practice deprives the people of effective power. It will be based on the direct participation of the entire adult population through the People's Committees. Its culture will be based on universal dissemination of knowledge and incentive to scientific and all other kinds of activity. The new society being founded on reason, and knowledge, will necessarily be planned. But it will be planning with the freedom of the individual as its main objective. The new society will be democratic – politically, economically, as well as culturally. It will be a democracy capable of defending itself.

The ideal of Radical Democracy will be attained through the collective efforts of spiritually free men and women united with the determination of creating a new order of freedom. They will function as the guides, friends and philosophers of the people rather than as their would-be rulers. Consistent with the goal of freedom, their political practice will be rational and ethical. Their effort will be reinforced by the growth of the people's will to freedom. Ultimately, the Radical Democratic State will rise with the support of enlightened public opinion as well as intelligent action of the people. Realising that freedom is inconsistent with concentration of power Radical Humanists will not seek to capture power. They will help democracy organise itself in People's Committees, which will eventually become the organs of democratic power. Thus, becoming coterminous with the entire society, the Radical Democratic State, as the organ for its political administration will cease to be an instrument of coercion. At last, democracy – government of the people and by the people – will be possible.

In the last analysis, education of the citizen is the condition for such a reorganisation of society as will be conducive to common progress and prosperity without encroaching upon the freedom of the individual. The People's Committees will be the school for the political and civic education of the citizen. The structure and function of the Radical Democratic State will enable detached individuals

to come to the forefront of public affairs,. Manned with such individuals, the State will no longer be the Leviathan, always to be dreaded and distrusted.

The function of a revolutionary and liberating social philosophy is to emphasise on the basic fact of history, that man is the maker of his world – man as a thinking being, and he can be so only as an individual. The brain is the means of production, and produces the most revolutionary commodity. Revolutions presuppose iconoclastic ideas. An increasingly large number of men, conscious of their creative power, motivated by an indomitable will to remake the worlds, moved by the adventure of ideas, and fired with the ideal of a free society of free men, can create conditions under which democracy will be possible.

Spiritually free individuals at the helm of affairs smash all chains of slavery and usher in freedom for all.

First published in ***New Humanism: a Manifesto***, 1947; reprint Ajanta, 1981. Later published in ***The Radical Humanist***, April 2002.

Politics Without Party

M.N. Roy

(Slightly abridged, this article was published in The Radical Humanist, 25th September 1949. It remains as relevant as it was then).

Having come to the conclusion, empirically as well as theoretically, that the system of several parties engaged in the struggle for power, to be captured either constitutionally or through armed insurrection, had debased democracy to demagogy, radical democrats and humanists could no longer function as a political party. They were guided by the time honoured dictum that charity begins at home, or that example is better than precept, and consequently dissolved their party in so far as it had been organized with the object of participating in the fight for power.

But they never accepted either the anarchist view that politics is an evil, nor the Marxist utopia of a stateless society. They had defined politics as the theory and practices of public administration and the State as the political organization of society. The corollary to the definition is that membership of civil society implies the responsibility of doing whatever is necessary to guarantee and orderly, equitable and just administration of public affairs; only the recluse can disown the responsibility. By resolving to dissolve their party, the radical democrats did not propose to retire into reclusories. The resolution simply was no longer to participate in a pattern of political practice which has done more harm than good, has soiled the fair name of democracy. It was to initiate other forms of public activities which would raise politics on a higher level.

One of the many bad features of the party system is that it restricts the number of citizens participating in political activity. The membership even of the largest mass party cannot embrace more than a small fraction of the people. The restriction logically results from the very term, party. Indian terms, such as Congress, Sangh, Sabha or Dal, do not alter the situation, because of the identity of purpose, namely, to capture political power. No matter whatever may be the name, a political party is formed with the sole object of capturing control of the State, sooner or later. The object is justified with the argument that only in office a party can put its programme into practice. Therefore, by adopting one of the Indian terms for its name, a political organization does not cease to be a party, that is to say, only a part of the people or the class or the community it claims to represent. Otherwise there would be no sense in the idea of representation. Since by its very nature a party is bound to be exclusive, a minority organization, party-politics cannot be democratic politics in the true sense of the term. Political practice is monopolised by a minority of professional politicians; and the bulk of the community are given no place in the practice; they are to follow one party or the other. Democracy therefore can never be practised through the intermediary of party-politics which, by its very nature, reduces the *demos* to the status of camp-followers.

Obviously, the rejection of party-politics means a resolution to practise politics on a much wider field, so that the entire people may actively participate in it. Under the party system, the people can do no more than vote for this or that candidate who is nominated by respective parties. Political practice cannot be truly democratised unless the people can nominate as well as vote for a candidate. It is easy to see that parties will have no place in the latter form of political practice, which provides for sustained actual participation of the entire community. While not compelling them to do so, it allows all citiae3ns to play an active and significant role in the State.

It goes without saying that this change-over cannot take place from today to tomorrow; nor will an entire country discard the old practice and adopt the new one all at once. It will be a process, and the process itself will be uneven. The change-over from party-politics to democratic politics will be brought about gradually by raising the intellectual level of the people, by quickening their sense of self-respect and self-reliance. Therefore, democracy is not possible without education.

Those who will apply themselves to the initial task of laying down the foundation of a democratic social order cannot in the meantime be indifferent to the political conditions in which they will have to operate for quite a long time. These conditions may influence their work, for better or worse. In the transition period, parliamentary democracy, with all its manifest failures and inadequacies, will be obviously preferable to a dictatorship. Civil liberties will have a greater chance of survival so long as several parties alternate in power or contend for power, than under one-party rule.

Co-operation with opposition parties at the time of election, however, does not exhaust the possibilities of the political practice of Radical Democracy. The most fundamental task is to educate the people. Election campaigns can be utilised for this task. Democracy will not be successful so long as the masses can be swayed by demagogy or appeal to emotions. On the eve of an election, when various parties will make big promises to catch votes, the electorate should be advised and helped to examine the promises and vote intelligently. That will mean political education.

On the same occasion, the people should be told that they are not obliged to vote for this or that party; that they can just as well vote for a locally nominated candidate who will be their man, known to them, and therefore can be controlled more easily. The initial propaganda for the nomination of local candidate, instead of party-men, will lead to the formation of People's Committees. The people will replace the party, and a long step towards real democracy will be taken. That will be political activity of fundamental importance, and active participation in the current politics of the country without engaging in the scramble for power. There are many other forms of none-party political activity designed to spread a spirit of independence and self-help in all day-to-day public affairs of a community.

Those who conceived the idea of organized democracy must now put it into practice. People's Committees are to be the basic units of an organized democracy; and it is easily imagined how the rise of People's Committees will mean the beginning of the end of party-politics. The experience of individuals working accordingly to this plan in selected places should be a source of general inspiration. Even existing *Village Panchayats* set up in some parts of the country can be built up as units of organized democracy, defying party control, even of the party in power.

A dictatorship with "democratic" sanction may destroy all hopes of political freedom and social liberation. The cultural tradition of backward countries being the breeding ground of the danger, it must be, in the first place, fought on the cultural front. Enlightenment, civic education and spread of knowledge are the weapons. Experience also has great educative value. Elections are part of that and they will show that in an atmosphere of political illiteracy of the bulk of the electorate and authoritarian mentality of the middle class, even formal parliamentary democracy is not possible. Many even in the ranks of the parties, today, deluded with the hope of coming to power at some time or other, may be expected to learn from the experience the lesson that democracy must be built up from below and, abandoning party-politics, will turn to democratic politics. Meanwhile, the pioneers must show that politics without party is possible.

The last Conference of the Radical Democratic Party marked the opening of a new chapter in contemporary political history with the decision to transform a political party into a broad and comprehensive social movement for the spread of education for democracy and the promotion of the ideal of freedom. (The Radical Democratic Party was formed in December 1940 and dissolved in December 1948). The decision is probably unprecedented in the history of political institutions. Instances of political organisations having atrophied, decayed for decomposed may not be wanting, nor cases of organisations having dissolved their separate entity with a view of merging into another. But several hundred delegates possessed of political conviction and enthusiasm deciding after prolonged deliberations to transform a political organization of their own creation is perhaps unique. It amounts at once to an assertion of man's sovereignty and creativity.

The decision of the Conference at Calcutta was a logical deduction from the philosophy of New

Humanism formulated by the radical democrats two years earlier. As a result, the Radical Democratic Party had already been engaged in developing a comprehensive social movement. Having abjured the aim of power, it had placed itself outside the scramble for it, the only sense in which politics seems to be understood in our times. The activities carried on by the Party could not lend themselves to be measured by the standards generally applied to a traditional political party. A certain anomalous position had thus arisen between those activities and the designation of a party, which on occasions create confusion even in the minds of those who otherwise sympathized with and supported the cause of Radical Democracy. The Calcutta decision ends that anomaly and thus removes what constituted, in a way a limitation on those activities.

The Radical Democratic Party had the tradition of freedom and rationality in its own ranks. That enabled the Party to take such a decision. Throughout the period of its existence, it functioned as a school for the education of its members to develop into better human beings, and never as a collectivity with a transcendental significance, demanding the sacrifice of their individuality from its constituents. I t has no existence of its own, over and above and independent of its constituents which could enchain its creators and reduce them to a position of subordination. It was an expression of the cooperative activity of radical democrats, inspired by a common ideal. As such, it was free from the organisational characteristics of political parties, many of which are necessary corollaries of their being engaged in coming to power. The discipline in its ranks was an expression of organisational ethics and never meant to be a code of conduct enforced with a whip. Responsibilities were voluntarily accepted and authority had mostly suggestive and directive significance.

Built up in this manner, the Party never claimed a strong mechanical apparatus with huge mass membership which could be no more than a blind following in the prevailing atmosphere of cultural backwardness. But it did surpass any other group in the country in respect of its intellectual integrity and spiritual strength. These were often proved beyond doubt during the short period of its of existence, when the Party had to struggle against overwhelming odds, and were recognized even by those who disagreed with it. In the successive waves of nationalist mass hysteria, radical democrats alone stood firm, reminding the people that so long as politics was based on emotion and prejudice, it could not bring them freedom. They went against the popular current because intellectual and moral integrity always counted for more than immediate and temporary success.

Though the Radical Democratic Party was a comparatively small political party, its traditions and functioning gave it a cohesion rarely seen in political groups. The decision of the radical democrats to cease functioning as political party is an expression of that spirit struggling to expand beyond the limits of a closed group.

Inspired by a democratic ideal and aiming at the construction of a political apparatus in which power would be effectively vested in the people as a whole, it could not and did not endeavour to function as an intermediary between the people and the state. The task it had formulated for itself was diffusion of power, and meant to remove the gulf between the rulers and the ruled, which has so often proved to be destructive of democracy, even within the framework of formal representative institutions. The party could not therefore achieve its task through the capture of power not even by the aid of the ballot box, much less through insurrectionary means. It was thus neither a constitutional nor a revolutionary party in the traditional sense.

Educations of the citizens and gradual building up of a new political structure from below are the only guarantees against these dangers of the party system. Education will make people consistently self-reliant, rational, discriminating and hence capable of protecting themselves from being easy victims to mass hypnosis of one kind or the other, and only from among such people can a new institutional framework crystallise which will provide the guarantee against an individual or group of individuals dominating and exploiting them. The institutional framework of parliamentary democracy with its inherent concentration of power in the hands of a few though the political parties can hardly

be expected to fulfil this need. It is not in the nature of political parties to function in this role. Leaving aside the obviously monolithic parties frankly aiming at the establishment of a dictatorial rule, even a constitutional party seeking to obtain the support of a majority through the ballot box in order to control the political state apparatus cannot make it its primary task to educate the people. Being involved in the game of power, it has to play it according to the rules, and objective political education of the people might be an means to defeat the end of coming to power. That a party comes to power backed by a majority is no proof and guarantee that it is democratic. And education of the people may also militate against its next objective of remaining in power.

To have discarded the organisational form of a party does not in any way even remotely imply that radical democrats will eschew politics. Those who cannot conceive of politics without the incentive of power, and therefore without a party, are not the best doctors for the maladies of our time. They themselves need to be cured. Political parties have been instruments devised mainly for the smooth functioning of the political apparatus of parliamentary democracy, which seldom went further than paying lip service to the sovereignty of the human being. In the contemporary context it does not guarantee even the continuation of that formality. The problem of democracy can therefore no longer be solved by political parties. It is a deeper and more comprehensive problem than one of institutional adjustments. It can be solved only by a comprehensive social movement, developed on the basis of the realisation of the ultimate identity of political, economic and moral problems, and inspired by a philosophy capable of suggesting solutions of them all. "New Humanism", of which Radical Democracy is the political expression, is such a philosophy. Guided by this philosophy, radical democrats will now endeavour to develop a Radical Humanist Movement, and in consequence discard a form of organization which had become irrelevant to their task.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, May 2002.

Humanist Approach to Elections

M.N. Roy

Talk delivered by M.N. Roy at Guntur in the winter of 1949. It is a chapter from the book "Politics, Power and Parties" (Published by Indian Renaissance Institute). It has relevance today [Editor]

The fundamental principle of New Humanism is to revive the old idea of the sovereignty of the human individual. According to it, every political organisation or social and economic institution must be judged by its ability to help the development of the individual human personality of the people who live under those institutions. The freedom of any social system is to be judged by the actual degree of freedom that its individual members enjoy. A social philosophy which sets up any other standards to measure progress and freedom is misleading, and can be of no use to solve the crisis of our time.

During the last quarter of a century – a period exceptional in history because during that short time the world was plunged into two cataclysmic world wars and experienced other world-shaking events – political theories and social philosophies with their metaphysical sanction have been put to the acid test and failed to stand that test. The experience has led to a universal movement for a humanist revival, a movement which calls for a rebirth of man as the sovereign entity, as the measure of all things, as the root of mankind and the highest outcome of the entire history of evolution.

In order to see to what extent this humanist philosophy can be practised, we should apply the test in our own country. For a generation and more, India has been struggling to gain the opportunity for internal reconstruction in a way which would promote the progress and prosperity and ensure the freedom of its inhabitants. That struggle has at last resulted in success. National independence has been attained. This is a historical event which opens a new chapter in the history of India. Having thus gained the opportunity of taking our destiny in our own hands and shaping it according to our own desire and needs, we must now see how we shall best accomplish this task imposed on us by history.

A Constitution of a Republic, of a parliamentary democracy has been framed. But to frame a Constitution is easy enough. That comparative easy part of the task having been accomplished, we shall now have to see whether this Constitution can be worked in our country.

Social institutions are made by the men constituting society, whereas a Constitution can be made by a few learned individuals. But any social institution, however good and idealistic it may be conceived, is brought down to the general cultural and intellectual level of the people of a country. A democratic Constitution can be worked in an atmosphere where the democratic way of life is appreciated. A conscious will to freedom, the desire to take destiny in your own hands, a sense of responsibility and ability to judge what is good and what is wrong and to examine critically the promises and programmes put before the people by parties and politicians – these are the preconditions for a successful democracy. If we take a realistic view of the situation in our country, then we must regretfully come to the conclusion that, whatever be the letter and the spirit of our new Constitution, the prevailing atmosphere is not conducive to a democratic society.

Confronted with the situation, what are we to do? There is a simple attitude, which is actually taken up by many people, trying to make a virtue of our handicaps. According to this attitude, the intellectual backwardness and cultural stagnation, the authoritarian mentality, blind faith and hero-worship, all these various features of our national psychological make-up, are interpreted as so many indications of a special Indian Genius. It is suggested that the western way of life, including parliamentary democracy, cannot and should not be attempted on the Indian soil, and India must have a government, a State, and a social system corresponding to her special "spiritual" genius.

A little analysis will reveal the real significance of this point of view. It is this: since the cultural atmosphere and mentality of India, or at least of the large bulk of the Indian population, have not risen to the level where democratic practice is possible, since it belongs rather to the 16th if not the 15th century of world history, it is quite natural that 20th century political institutions cannot be established in that atmosphere. Therefore, it is argued, the political institutions of by-gone days would be more suitable for India than those evolve in Europe in modern times.

In a way, that is right. But it is retrograde and reactionary to approve and glorify this deplorable state of affairs. For one reason or another, culturally and intellectually, the vast bulk of the Indian people has not progressed from the point where Europe found herself in the 15th and 16th century. Therefore, the advocates of India's "special genius" argue: don't try to introduce modern political institutions into this mediaeval atmosphere, but let us glorify medievalism and give India the equivalent of mediaeval institutions. This may be interpreted as love of tradition and patriotism, but is certainly not a progressive ideal. It would take the Indian people farther away from the goal of freedom. Therefore, we shall have to see if democracy cannot after all be worked in our country, because it is the only political philosophy based on individual freedom.

A critical attitude towards democracy, doubts and scepticism about the possibility of democracy, are not confined to our country, but are widespread also in Europe. The attack on democracy began already earlier in the 20th century. The attack on democracy began already earlier in the 20th century. Having pointed out the obvious faults and defects of parliamentary democracy, advocates of a new revolutionary social philosophy suggested dictatorship as the alternative to defective democracy. Democracy was criticised as the dictatorship of the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie. Therefore, it was suggested, since parliamentary democracy is the dictatorship of one class, it should be replaced by the dictatorship of another class, and only then true democracy could be attained.

The suggestion was to replace one evil by another evil, and by some curious process of reasoning, good was expected to result from evil. But after the first World War, the cult of dictatorship was preached from yet another quarter, not from the left but from the right, and the result was the rise of Fascism, which plunged the world into a ruinous war and might have completely destroyed modern civilisation had the war not ended in the defeat of Fascism.

Between these two schemes of dictatorship, democracy appeared discredited, and an opinion gained ground that democracy had proved to be a failure. Of course, there still exists a large bulk of democratic opinion, and several important countries still hold on to the faith in democracy and practise it in their own way, and consequently it cannot be said that the western world has rejected democracy. But what has happened is that a large volume of opinion has come to this depressing conclusion not because they prefer dictatorship, but because they have not drawn the correct lesson from the defective practice of democracy in the last hundred years. The lesson should be not that democracy has failed, but that is has never been given a fair chance. People never had the opportunity to govern themselves. If anything has failed, it is representative government and not democracy. No taxation without representation was in its time certainly a democratic demand, but it was democracy at its primitive level, and it never rose much above it.

The lesson of this experience is that we should now try to find out if a government more directly controlled by the sovereign people is possible in our time. Obviously, there must be some government, and all the people cannot be responsible for the actual execution of governmental functions. It may be possible in some village communities, as it was done in the city states of antiquity. But in modern States, with their vast population and complicated social and economic institutions, direct participation of the whole people in the day to day administration of a big country as a whole is impossible.

This baffling problem is driving more and more people to the conclusion that democracy cannot be practised and must be supplanted by another form of government, and if it is not democracy it must be dictatorship. News Humanism offers a new approach to this problem. The approach is to

renew the emphasis on individual man in society and to point out that every human being is naturally endowed with potentialities which can be developed; and if they are freely developed in the individuals from childhood, then an increasingly large number of the citizens of any country will be able to judge for themselves in all matters concerning their government and discriminate between propositions placed before them. Consequently, the present atmosphere in which politicians and parties can sway people with big claims and promises will be changed and a different atmosphere created in which the citizens are capable of forming clear opinions on what they want and what is to be done, and how it can be done. There remains then only to provide the channels for the intelligent and responsible opinion of citizens to become effective.

Democracy recognises the sovereignty of the people, but no opportunity is provided to the sovereign people to exercise their sovereignty. The only choice granted to the sovereign people is to surrender their sovereignty to one or the other political party, and then they are ruled by this or that party on behalf of themselves, so to say, but it is the party which rules and the people have no say and no control in the matter till they may surrender their sovereignty in the next elections to some other party. Once a representative is elected, he is no longer under the control of his electors but that of his party. Party discipline is binding on every member of a party, and the party whip is the last appeal to his judgment. A member of a particular constituency may feel morally obliged to do certain things for the welfare of his electors, but as a member of his political party, he is guided by the party whip which may as often as not prevent him from doing what he feels morally obliged to do.

Therefore we find in most cases that popular representatives do not represent the people, but their own party. You may have noticed that during the debate on the Constitution in the Constituent Assembly, many members advocated in the beginning a point of view of their own which they suddenly abandoned simply because the party whip had cracked, and they voted against their conscience. To change this system, obviously, we have to find a way by which the popular representatives will remain constantly and at all times under the control of the people. They should always express the will of the people, always represent the aspirations and needs of their electors. But that cannot be done unless the representative is free from this conflict of loyalties between the people and the party. So long as the sovereign people remain steeped in a psychological, intellectual and cultural atmosphere in which they can be easily swept off their feet, in which they lose their ability to discriminate and to judge intelligently, the people's representatives do not have to fear that the people who elected them once may not elect them again. But as soon as that atmosphere changes, as soon as the electors will be able to hold their representatives responsible for what they do, then the would-be parliamentarian will feel that party loyalty is not enough for them to be re-elected by the people and that he will have to represent more faithfully the intelligent will of the people if he wants to get the vote of the people of his constituency more than once.

There we come to the root of the problem. We shall have to remind ourselves again that without education democracy is not possible. Education is not merely meant to signify the ability to read and write. We know of people holding science degrees practising all sorts of religious rituals and behaving in a most unenlightened manner. Education for democracy means development of the natural distinctive attributes of all human individuals, development of the innate ability to think for oneself, to judge oneself and decide for oneself what is right and wrong. Even the attempt to change the atmosphere in that respect cannot be made unless our point of departure is the recognition of the fact that every human being is potentially rational, and therefore, potentially moral; every man is born as good as the other, and with the same potentialities. That idea is denied in formal democracy, under merely representative government, as much as under dictatorial regimes. Both believe in prerogatives given by God, or by birth or by environment; in any case, given by an extraneous agency to some and not to others. This presupposes the view that there is no human equality on principle: some are born inferior to others, and those born superior, endowed with abilities not to be

found in the common man, are naturally destined to be the rulers of a country; that is, they alone can conduct the affairs of society in all its departments on all levels.

New Humanism challenges this underlying idea of all those political theories and suggests that, if we are to come out of the present crisis, if democracy is ever to become a reality, if freedom is to be more than fraud or fiction, then we must begin from the fact indicated by modern scientific knowledge, that every man is endowed with basically identical potentialities which can be developed. The foundation of a free society will be laid by helping every single individual in society to develop his or her human potentialities.

As far as this, many are prepared to agree. But then the practical difficulties will be pointed out. This may be a *bona fide* doubt. But I am afraid, subconsciously, this question is again inspired by the doubt about the controversial equality of men. Unless we discard the old belief that men are born to be unequal, this question is bound to arise. What may be legitimately said is that everybody is potentially equal, but how long will it take to unfold the potentialities? The answer is that assuming that it will take a long time – what is the alternative? We have travelled the other way so long, and where has it led us? Since that other way has proved to lead into a blind-alley and some new say has to be travelled, even if it is a long way and an uphill path, we shall have to risk that. The only way is also the shortest way.

But ultimately it will turn out not to be so much longer than others. Everything depends on accepting a simple proposition, namely, the fundamental, because biological, equality of all human beings. We first ask: Is man by nature rational and capable of thinking and enquiring? Or is his nature to believe and therefore the bulk of men must always accept and follow blindly something or somebody? Secondly, is it possible for man to be moral on his own, or can he always behave morally only under compulsion? If all members of society could behave intelligently and decently, we should have the best of societies. If the present society is so full of evil, the reason is that so few people behave intelligently and decently. They do not behave intelligently, but blindly follow something or somebody, leaders, traditions, or customs. They do not behave morally, because in the given atmosphere, moral sense has been destroyed: man's natural sense of what is decent and moral has been dulled by the generally accepted saying that ends justify means. And this has been said so often that is has become one of those traditions and habits which are blindly followed. This is true both in personal, and even more, in public life.

Public life in the political field is dominated by political parties. Their main object is to capture power, because it is believed that nothing can be done except by governments in power. If the best of programmes is ever to be realised, the first need is power. Once it is taken for granted that capture of power, by whatever methods, is the precondition of any good to be achieved, and without power nothing can be done, the logical conclusion is that anything and everything done for capturing political power is justifiable. Once popular mentality is dominated by the principle that anything done for a good end is right, morality disappears, and that is the main evil in the public life of all countries in the world today. All thinking people complain about this, and are looking for ways and means to introduce decency and morality in public life. Morality has disappeared because it is forgotten or ignored that only individuals can be moral. Morality is an attribute of men and men have been lost in the masses. If you deal with men, ultimately you can appeal to their reason and deal with their conscience. But in the mass, men's reason and conscience are also submerged and suspended. Masses respond more easily to emotional appeals, because men merge into masses on their lowest common denominator. The level of the politicians then adjusts itself to this mentality. Elections do not ensure democracy but put a premium on demagogy.

Top ensure that elections reflect an intelligent public opinion, there has to be an intelligent public opinion first. The only elections can become an instrument of democracy not sprung on unprepared electorates in a concerted effort to sweep them off their feet. Such an alternative approach to election

begins with people in their localities meeting in local or regional conferences for serious discussions, not for public harangues, but for educative and enlightening propagation of these ideas. Through such informal regular meetings an intelligent public opinion is created. Having come to understand political questions and economic problems for themselves, the people will see that they need not vote for this or that party, leaving all judgment to them and rely on their promises. But that they can judge independently and elect candidates of their own choice, from amongst themselves. These will be independent candidates, that is to say they will not depend for their election on any political party, and therefore they can depend on their own conscience and be responsible to the people directly. That will do away with the evils of party politics and the scramble for power and its demagogy and corruption.

In the next elections we may not yet get rid of the bad effects of party politics. But we may already help in the appearance of a considerable number of independent candidates who in the assemblies, will not be subjected to the whip of the parties, whether in power or in opposition, but who can raise the voice of the people inside the parliament. That voice may not yet be able to influence affairs vey soon in a decisive manner, but even in the first parliament elected under the new Constitution it will be possible in this way to have at least a good number of independent candidates who can think for themselves and can have the courage of their conviction because they do not depend for their seats on any party machinery.

Thus, while the nig parties may fight for power among themselves, there will be a few people to express the will of the people without reservations of fear or favour. Their voice, in its turn, will quicken the consciousness of the people outside who follow the proceedings in the assemblies. And what is more, after the elections, independent candidates, who depend directly on the people of their locality for their election, cannot forget their constituencies but must keep constantly in touch with them for their mandate and support. Also those Humanists who have stimulated this political awakening in the constituency will not leave the voters to relapse into apathy after elections, but constantly remind them of their rights and responsibilities. They worked in the constituency not to be elected and then go away to the centres of power, but they remain there with the sole function of educating the people and helping them establish a democratic local democratic. In these local republics it is possible to have direct democracy, and their functions can be expanded as the citizens grow increasingly discriminating and conscious. In them, power and sovereignty will remain in the hands of the people themselves, and in this way the precondition for a government of the people and by the people will be created. Because ultimately the nature of the basic units will determine the structure of the whole State built upon them. A democratic State in a large country is possible only on the basis of such small organised local democracies which can remove the sense of helplessness of the individual citizens, and through which alone individual votes can exercise control over the State by means of an intelligent active public opinion. To promote this is the most effective practice of New Humanism in the political field.

But New Humanism can be practised in other aspects also. Instead of making the government or the State responsible for everything and then complain if it does not discharge its responsibility, for instance in the field of education, people who are interested in actually doing something and not only talking and demanding, or blaming somebody other for all that is wrong, can take a similar initiative, as in the political field, and through mutual co-operation start educational institutions from the primary schools to the Universities by their own means and efforts. No State educational institutions can work in a vacuum. Before the demand for general education as a responsibility of the State arose in the 18th century in the French Revolution, the preconditions for its fulfilment had been created by the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment. That movement had laid the foundation for a secular education divorced from the Church, priestly domination and the blind faith of the religious mode of thought. The lessons of that movement can still serve in countries like India today.

It dispelled the darkness of the Middle Ages in Europe. Its ideas were not very different from what we are proposing today in our effort to dispel the last vestiges of the darkness and stagnation of our own dark ages, from which we are only recently emerging.

The Enlightenment movement was carried on by great scientists. Their main activity consisted in writing that monumental work, the Encyclopaedia. History has proved that if the French Revolution were to be traced to one single cause, it is this book. Through this book Enlightenment is spread to the farthest corners of France. The single biggest result of the Encyclopaedia was to destroy the prejudices and enslaving traditions of the old order, through the spread of scientific knowledge. Therefore, nobody need fear that the work of education and spread of ideas is merely theoretical or without practical value in public life and even in the political field. Other forms of political practice are necessary, but this change of outlook and atmosphere has to precede the building of any democratic institutions.

Since democratic politics thinks in terms of elections, New Humanism, if it wants to be accepted, will have to show whether it can be practised in elections also, and that is what I have tried to show. But greater importance should be attached for the time being to the other kind of work which aims at freeing the people from spiritual bondage, which appeals to their reason and compels them to think, and which also compels them to be guided in their behaviour by their own judgement and conscience. And not by any external authority, be it in heaven or on earth. Only when people will behave morally because they are consciously relying on their rationality will man appear as what in fact he is – the highest culmination of the entire process of evolution. This moral self-reliance will express itself in all fields of human life and activities, personal as well as social. It will dispel the paralysing influence of the belief in *karma*. If people believe that their suffering is due to their *karma*, they will think it is useless to try and shape their own fate. Thus, if we bring the light of science to the people, it is not merely a matter of building schools and indulging in theories. When people will understand what science has to say about the laws of *karma*, it will have a decisive effect on the creation of that self-confidence without which democracy is not possible.

To spread enlightenment in all the dark corners of our social life, where superstitions lurk and prejudice breeds, is the most fundamental task of all. It is the precondition for any better society, particularly for a democratic society and for a higher cultural level. If authoritarian mentality is so prevalent, it is because of the cultural backwardness of the people. If we want to avoid the danger of totalitarianism, we must change that mentality of the people. That can be done only if those who are at least partially enlightened, conscious of their own responsibility to contribute to this effort. Everybody can search himself if he cannot by his own will and decision be decent, moral and rational; if he can, he will in consequence feel free himself. If you say that you cannot, I must doubt that freedom is your highest ideal. But once you say that you can, then you can also spread this certainty, this conviction and this attitude to others. Once there are a few people anywhere who have this spirit, you have founded the nucleus of a decent society in which men can be free. Once you have a hundred such nuclei, the progress of this movement will become very rapid and spread in geometrical progression.

But first you must have the conviction that it can be done. And then you must have the courage and the confidence to start doing it. If instead of only preaching and teaching, we act and life as Humanists, the practice of this New Humanism will spread more and more rapidly. Of course, before talking about practice, it is necessary that we must not only accept the ideas, but thoroughly understand them also. Otherwise, neither can we act according to them ourselves, nor carry conviction to others. When I hear somebody argue that New Humanism cannot be practised, I first ask whether he is convinced that the ideas themselves are right. Because if he is not yet convinced, no use arguing with him about practice. If you accept ideas merely because it is easy to practise them, you are much more likely to accept bad ideas than good ideas because bad ideas are usually more easily

practised. In any case, before we talk of practice, we must grasp the theory. Action presupposes thought. Unless the theory appeals to your reason, no use worrying about practising the theory. But once that theory has become part of me, of my whole mental outlook, and I am inspired by it, I must act according to it. I cannot help doing so. As long as a theory remains theory, and does not become part of my existence, there will be no action at all, at least not conscious and consistent action. But once the theory becomes a live and integral part of my existence, all my actions will still be *practical expressions* of that theory.

The appeal of New Humanism is addressed to all who are dissatisfied with the given state of things because it is they who feel the need of something new to give meaning to their lives. And if they are convinced that New Humanism offers a better and more satisfying way of life than the theories which have led to so much disillusionment and frustration, you will not hear from them this doubt about the possibility of practising the ideas which they have made their own. To say that you would agree with our ideas if you thought they could be practised, is the wrong approach. Because when we spread our ideas, we don't ask anybody to join us or to vote for us or to go out of his way to perform any particular kind of discipline or activity. We only say: you agree with these ideas go and act according to them. New Humanism is a way of life. If you accept it, if you make it your own way of life, you cannot help acting up to it. Life consists in some form of activity all the time. And if you accept this way of life, it will find expression in everything that you do, in human relations, in social institutions, or political elections. That is the only way in which we can ensure that not only will India be an independent country, but the Indian people will also actually enjoy freedom. No amount of welfare and prosperity can bring happiness unless they are enjoyed in freedom.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, September 1999.

The Statement:

Party System and Democracy in India

C.R.M. Rao

At the time of Independence we had three major national parties – the Congress, the Socialist and the Communist. In stark contrast to the parties of today, they were far more ideological and principles.

As the successful leader of the national struggle, the Congress was the party of pure nationalism – of national unity and strength, and even of national glory as the champion of international peace and cooperation.

The Socialist Party shared some of this nationalism but valued social equality and justice more.

The Communist Party refused to recognize national independence as real and was committed to violent change of the whole power structure, subject of course, to the approval of Moscow.

Such idealism and commitment to the well-being of the people as there was in the early years of Independence soon wore off as the magnetic pull of governmental power grew stronger day by day. In the name of planned socialist economic development and defence against external threats, the Congress government assumed more and more functions and powers. The country did benefit by this to an extent – in terms of industrialization – but the Congress party benefitted much more. It entrenched itself in power, and Congressmen grew fat and rich and set the tone and pattern of politics in the country.

Winning elections and gaining power at any cost, or getting as close as possible to the centres of power and policy-making at all levels, rather than organizing and educating a poor and backward people for democratic development, because the all-important purpose of politicians and parties. Ideologies, principles and values were cast to the winds. The resulting lack of culture is called 'Congress culture', rather insolently by Congressmen and derisively by others.

This allowed full play to the latent factionalism and personalized politics, leading ultimately to the fragmentation of all major parties. So that today we have a large number of regional, local and even purely personal parties, but not a single national party with a nation-wise organization, nor party (as against personal) following worth the name. And as the results of recent elections to some state assemblies show, even the charisma of the leader cannot make up for the lack of organization.

As cadre-based and well-disciplined parties with a national outlook, the CPI (M) and the BJP seem to have the makings of national parties, but their popular appeal is still very much confined to certain parts of the country. They have a long, long way to go.

Shall we then race to the conclusion that our parties and party system have failed to perform their roles? But what, in the first place, are the precise roles they were supposed to perform?

In a developing society aspiring to be a modern democracy, political parties have a dynamic role to play; for example, by organizing public opinion land by serving as a two-way communication channel pressing the demands and interests of the population upward to the centres of power and policy-making, and simultaneously passing downward to the people a better understanding of the concept and meaning of the broader community, of the absolute restraints and ultimate requirements of the polity and society as a whole. Indeed, a party has to play such a role even when its aim was to radically modify the polity.

But already this is a tall order. The role obviously demands certain intellectual and organizational skills which no party in India has exhibited in any significant measure. So the parties must be pronounced a failure.

And so must the party system. Having failed in their individual roles they could not succeed in their collective role of providing an appropriate mechanism for dealing with the problems of transferring power and changing the personnel and the policies of the government. Against this, of

course, one may cite the example of the Janata Party which for once did succeed in replacing the long entrenched Congress at the Centre. But the disintegration of the Janata in the very moment of its success despite great goodwill, underscores the failure of the party system.

Should we therefore discard the parties and the party system? But then what should we do with the parliamentary system of which they are a necessary concomitant? Should we discard it too?

Whether it is possible or not, if seems neither feasible nor indeed desirable to discard these institutions of democracy when better ones are not available. With all their defects they have served over the years to politicise a traditionally apolitical people. The parliamentary system has given them the right to vote, an instrument of power, which they have learnt to use to good effect particularly in the last five or six years. It has also enabled the growth of a significant number of voluntary grass-0root organizations, addressing themselves to the solution of some pressing problems of the people, in response to the deceptions and insensitivity of the government and the rest of the society.

This poses a real dilemma: we cannot get along well without the parliamentary and party systems, nor can we work with them as well as we need to for democratic development. Unless some of the major parties realize even now the full implications of this for their own future, if for nothing else, and change their attitude and conduct here and now, there can be no solution to the dilemma in the short run.

In the long run ... Well, we may not have all that time. The ruling clique – for it is no longer a party – seems well poised to save us the trouble of finding a solution – to a problem entirely of its own making – by a desperate switch over to a Presidential system in some queer combination with dynastic rule.

Now let us face it. This country has got its freedom on the cheap. It has to pay the proper price some time. It seem it has to go through hell – the hell of dynastic Presidential system itself, maybe – before any good can result. And if so, the sooner it does the better. It will at least put the Indian democratic struggle on its first real trial.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1982.

Need for a New Start

Surendra Mohan

Successive elections have confirmed that some political parties have entrenched themselves in certain geographical regions: AIADMK and the DMK in Tamilnadu, CPI(M) in West Bengal and Tripura, Akalis in the Punjab, BJP in Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, the Lok Dal in Haryana, U.P. and Bihar and the Janata Party in Assam, Karnataka and Gujarat. Now, if they could serve and represent the people in their respective areas, and help create clear political choices before them, then there need be no cause for worry if their rivals in those states, as the BJP, Janata and Lok Dal in the CPI(M)' areas, or the CPI(M) and the CPI in their areas remain ineffectual. To that extent, the choices become clearer and confusion starts to evaporate.

But, factually, all of us appear to be alarmed, possibly because of an apprehension that Mrs. Gandhi's fading charisma would result in creating a vacuum at the national level. Frankly, there are several organizations with proven national sweep and influence: the bureaucracy, the defence services, the corporate industrial private and public sectors, the judiciary, the banking system, the intellectual elite and so on. All of them could look after the national interest as far as integrity and unity are concerned. Thus, if it is in the geographical or the territorial sense or in the formal institutional sense that we are thinking of the term 'national', then it is not very material if political parties remain only regional phenomena, especially if they discharge their political functions in an effective manner in that capacity.

But then this does not really satisfy us. We wish the emergence of national parties which would strive to provide a viable national alternative because we have something else in mind. We want, as the Statement suggests, parties based on principles and ideologies, parties that organize public opinion, serve as two-way communication channels. In fact, regional parties too can fulfil, and try to fulfil, these roles. It is possibly only a matter of time when this trend of regional political expression of people's will would spring up in other areas too, based on principles and ideological commitment, and also play the dynamic role expected of them in a modern democracy.

It is only when one lifts one's sights to meaningful solutions of the problem of the people – in a society characterize3d, among other things, by centralized democracy, central economic planning with a modern corporate industrial order locating all effective economic power in a few points, a people fractured into a clearly identifiable small section of the nationally linked elites enjoying special privileges and the vast majority of the Indian people – that one finds the need for a different kind of political expression of the will of the people. For, none of these phenomena and several others too, can be settled or dealt with at the regional levels. Their solutions would require the whole people's effective mobilization at the national level. It is in this radical – you may call it structural – sense, rather than the territorial or formal institutional sense, that political parties have to acquire national stature, expanse and response. The Statement however dismisses this significant aspect of the function of a party as if by placing it at the end of hyphen. And, it is a failure to undertake or even to comprehend this role that our polity is experiencing strong territorially regional and socially sectional pulls.

For, when it is decided to operate within the socio-economic framework and participate in the existing power structure, then what remains is to press ahead for a larger share – crumbs – of the national cake for the benefit of specific sections or regions. The ruling party's ubiquitous factions or various regional political parties, or groups thereof, become the vehicles or agents of these pressures, in a *status quo* where the powers-that-be have perfected a neat spoils system, a parallel black money economy, a system of economic regulations in the name of tending a scarcity economy, but actually cementing the collusions of the powerful and the rich. This could hardly result in anything other than the consequences that we lament today: electoral system is becoming much too expensive; defections

in politics are accepted as normal as corruption in every walk of life, and the people are at one level involved and at another level disillusioned with the political process.

But, then when we lament the absence of ideologies or principles, or deplore the present absence of nationally evocative issues, need we not stop to ask ourselves one or two inconvenient questions? Within a decade after freedom, the intellectuals started saying: "This is the end of ideology; this is the era of consensus. Why are you talking of 'classes' or of 'structural changes'? In the process, a whole generation of eager and inquisitive youth was being brought up on the staple food of these narcotics; in consequence, their curiosity was blunted and their idealism was left unattended. Politics of commitment was laughed at; a Lohia was ridiculed, a J.P. was suffered – respectfully, disdainfully. For all kinds of democrats liberalism had gone away and radicalism was on the downswing. Liberals, as all radical, were however stung hard during the Emergency. The walls between them and the radicals were broken. But by then large sections of radical youth had been lost to democratic politics.

Even today, the need is to restructure our political parties so that they concern themselves with structural and basic issues – issues relating to poverty and property; power of the elite and power vested in people's communities; special privileges and social equality; a dual society of class antagonisms and an egalitarian-cum-plural society. Elements holding similar views and groups whose perceptions of social good converge on these basic issues must get together to pursue the politics of principles and ideologies, and should neither remain scattered in different non-political formations and political parties nor get divided on peripheral issues or personal prejudices.

The failure of the Janata Party, in a sense, underlines even more strongly the need for such restructuring. When Shri Jayaprakash Narayan strove hard to persuade the democratic or non-communist opposition parties to unite, he was impelled to do so by the emerging authoritarian threat to our democratic polity, and not in pursuance of what he himself described as the objective of total revolution. He is fact argued that an opposition party which could become a national alternative, in a poor country like ours, will become a party of the poor. He had thought that the dynamics of the situation requiring that party to evolve an alternative programme to that of the ruling party capable of evoking enthusiastic responses of the common people would ensure that the party takes radical positions of basic socio-economic transformation. Thus, the programme of structural transformation was very vaguely spelt out, not sharply focussed, as it was considered generally consequential.

As it happened, the Janata Party came into power even before it became an organized party in fact, the first foundation conference of the party was held on 1 May, 1977, five weeks after it had started to govern. It did not have an opportunity to grow into a party of the poor it grew as a party of the rulers. It did not strive to transform the iniquitous *status quo*. Therefore, the latte started gradually to appropriate it. Yet, the impact of the JP movement, the idioms of the parties which unified to create it and, more importantly, the vast expectations of the people had imparted to the party a different character than that of the party it had replaced.

Thus, the Janata Government oriented the economy toward larger employment, intensification of agriculture, greater sensitiveness to the poor and genuine concern for the needs of the villages. Increased food-for-work programme, Antyodaya, integrated rural development, reservation of manufacture of items in the small scale sector and the maximization of minimum needs programme – all were designed to serve these goals. And, yet, no steps were even envisaged to restructure the system. Possibly, the time was short. Or, probably, the tension involved in the sudden transformation of a party (yet in the embryo) expected to provide a viable political party to the poor people into one which started to rule over them by continuing the past, cut its life short.

But it is obvious that, while wanting to transfer massive political power and economic resources to the rural people away from the powerful urban-industrial interests, the party had not set to mobilize the rural masses either in organizations of producers or of workers, or in politically conscious people's committees. Here, again, the importance of the class approach, the radical attitude, was ignored. And,

although a vast network of cottage and small industrial units of the self-employed was sought to be created, or Panchayati Raj institutions were required to provide the fulcrum of the dynamics of self-government, growth and change, party workers were not trained for these tasks, nor were the people involved. Lok Shakti was progressively relegated to the background. A party which started with so much promise failed, but it failed in defining its popular moorings and in discovering its social roots.

This should have been plain from the beginning. Most of the non-party idealist youth formed themselves into separate groups and several socialist groups were also launched. The radical Gandhians who had been led by JP kept away, too. Radical Humanists continued to take vicarious pleasure in the party's work, as they had done in the case of PSP or Sarvodaya. All these elements were uninvolved in or yearned to get away from traditional politics and parties. They neither perceived the change that the people's upsurge had brought about, nor sought actively to promote it. The failure of the Janata Party was not only a confirmation of the failure of the political parties, it was also the failure of all votaries of Lok Shakti, all followers of JP, to organize a fight back against those who were appropriating the massive opportunity of 1977 for traditional politics. Socialists, in fact, failed twice, as they, being closest to J.P's new role, wee vital link between the new party and these non-party groups.

If, however, all concerned learn from past mistakes, and decide to act together in concert to provide a real political national alternative to the people, then a fresh start to build a people's movement is necessary. All hose, who have come to believe that a Gandhian, Socialist, - egalitarian and participatory – social order can be brought about by peaceful social actions of Lok Shakti, the poor working people in behalf of basic structural changes, must, in spite of marginal differences, come together. Groups like the Vahini, Bhumi Sena or Kashtakari Sangathana would be one kind of elements; those working on appropriate technology, environment and energy could be another. The Gandhians in the Sarva Seva Sangh, Radicals in the Citizens for Democracy, Socialists in Samajwadi Manch, Samata Sangathan, Yuva Kranti, RSD, Samata Yuvajan Sabha, Lohia Vichar Manch and similar other groups or several socialist parties or in the Congress (S), Janata or Lok Dal, those Marxist groups who do not concern themselves overmuch with international affiliations, but have a new radical, pro-Gandhian understanding of the struggle, the vas radical intelligentsia and the radicalized liberals would all be part of this striving, this communion, for a counter-Congress culture, the culture of Gandhian resistance and constructive work.

But, I must sound a note of warning in the end: the time is quite short, indeed. Since the Statement has pinpointed to this aspect quite eloquently, I will not take more of your space or time.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1982.

Parliamentary Democracy - Myths and Reality

A.J. Dastur

The adoption of parliamentary democracy by us was a deliberate act on the part of the leadership, more it was patterned on the Westminster model. This presupposed certain fundamental principles – a party system, a council of ministers responsible to the parliament, the rule by the majority party, collective responsibility, and leadership of the Prime Minister. The cabinet drives "a stream of affairs" through the parliament. Barring, perhaps, the leadership of the Prime Minister, we have given a go-by to the other principles and transformed the leadership of the Prime Minister into autocracy.

The framers of the Constitution set before the country a difficult task – working a parliamentary system in a semi-federal set-up towards establishing social justice by democratic means. In those euphoric days the task did not seem so difficult. But in practice we started chipping and nibbling at a vital organ of the expression of the people's will. In the first general election of 1951-52 the PEPSU voters had the temerity to return the Akalis in a majority – it was the only state with a non-Congress government. A few months later President's rule was imposed for the first time on any state and continued till a Congress Ministry could occupy the treasury benches. Morarji Desai was defeated by the slender margin of 19 votes; once again the people's will was set aside and he was appointed the Chief Minister of Bombay. Just two illustrations to demonstrate the "respect" for democratic procedure.

Thus did the Congress Party start out on the wrong foot, distrusting other parties, emphasizing the cult of the individual and seeking to keep under its control every position of vantage and profit. This was in the heyday of the popularity and greatness of the party and under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru! This brings to mind a telling incident from the past – a dim (?) past. When Deshbandhu Das, Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel thought of the Swaraj Party to carry on the freedom struggle from inside the legislatures – however unrepresentative they were – they naturally consulted Gandhiji. He was prophetic in his reaction: these are "*mandirs* (temples) of *maya* (wealth); see that you people do not get yourselves enmeshed by *maya*."

Our own days bear ample testimony to his value judgement. Defections, purchase of legislators by money and office have become so routine that people's shock or indignation is muted. Haryana is merely the tip of the iceberg; the more pernicious fact is that is has its defenders among the most politically powerful in the land. Gandhi at least knew or was aware of the mould in which his countrymen were cast. The lesser mortals who accompanied or succeeded him did not.

India is a land of ancient lineage but the contemporary politicians are in a hurry to *line* their nests. On the eve of elections political parties used to be formed. (The Janata experiment falls in a different category altogether). At the time of the first general election over 120 political parties contested. The Indian voter, illiterate though he be, eliminated the vast number of them and justified the act of faith of the Constituent Assembly in introducing universal adult franchise. Four national parties emerged according to the principles laid down by the Election Commission – the Indian National Congress, the Socialist Party, The Communist Party and the new-formed Jana Sangh; about twenty were recognized as local or regional parties. Here can be seen the emergence in embryo of a workable party system but the splintering of parties, barring the Jana Sangh, has complicated the political system and impeded the political process. Politicians continue to contaminate the parties.

Not only politicians are ambitious for pelf and position; parties, newly formed parties are over ambitious for power. When socialists in England formed the Labour Party, two members entered

Parliament in 1892. The party waited till 1923 to form a minority government supported by the Liberal Party and waited till 1945 at the end of the War in Europe to sit in its own right on the treasury benches. Not so here – buy votes here, sell offices there, if only it will enable ever so tenuous a hold on the government!

It is almost an axiom of parliamentary government that the administration must be immune to political pressures. The reason is obvious; administration must respect the wishes of the people as registered in the vote and faithfully serve whichever party have returned in a majority. The civil service, the bureaucracy must help in formulating policy and programme; must act as advisers. But once the government takes a decision it is their duty to carry it out faithfully. That Nehru and Patel understood and appreciated the logic behind this approach is well demonstrated by their attitude to those who had served the alien masters faithfully. An enlightened leadership at the dawn of independence utilized the services now for the benefit of the country. Once again an extreme example will clinch the argument. During the Quit India movement Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai was sent to USA where he reviled the Congress and its leadership, Gandhi downwards; yet realizing his capacities and capabilities, Nehru created the post of Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs for him. What happens today is too well-known to require recapitulation.

The party system has not failed us; it is the politician who has failed the system. There is a new dimension to it, too. Principles and policy are at a discount; loyalty is at a premium; and loyalty to what? Not to principles, not to programmes but the leader. This is not only in the Congress but also in the Lok Dal. Loyalty is a virtue within limits; beyond that it is sycophancy and self-inflicted humiliation. We have the strange spectacle of a chief minister publicly declaring that he will prostrate himself at the feet of his leader. We have the stranger spectacle of an incoming president stating that he will pick up a broom and be a sweeper at the bidding of his leader! The sweeper, though denigrated as a menial doing very lowly work, is an important member of any community or group. Without him there would be plague all around. One does not need the command of the leader to cultivate a sense of social hygiene or environmental cleanliness. In office will such a one dare to see the dregs and dross in the country's politics? Or will he seek the permission of his leader to do so? Instead of the Prime Minister being *primus inter pares* – first among equals – Indira Gandi's Lilliputian colleagues see her as a Gulliver. We have talked aloud of socialism in its various evolving forms and incorporated it in the country's Constitution. But in our thinking and being we continue with subservience and obsequiousness on one side, and with supercilious tolerance on the other.

We have also toyed with collective responsibility. When the going was good it was a worthy principle to be followed. But at critical junctures sacrificial goats had to be found. V.K. Krishna Menon was the most prominent of them. India's China policy was truly Nehru's policy. India knew it, Nehru himself knew it; yet for the debacle of 1962 Menon paid the highest political price. Nehru, however, respected his colleagues and paid heed to their stances even when he differed from them. After the 1969 split in the Congress Mrs. Gandhi showed scant respect to her colleagues. She took decisions, important decisions, on her own and merely announced them to her cabinet colleagues. On August 9, 1971 she informed them that she had decided to sign a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation with Soviet Russia. At a dawn meeting of her cabinet on June 25, 1975 her colleagues were told about the declaration of the Emergency and the overnight arrests. They had merely to concur. Rarely has a prime minister anywhere shown such scant regard to the cabinet. For all practical purposes it suffered a further eclipse when decision-making and implementation of policy both came to gravitate towards "the extra-constitutional centre" of authority, as it was during the Emergency. These trends have to be reversed because at best they are feudal – *ji hazoor* (Yes Sir/Madam); at worst, they are fascist.

And what of the opposition? They are people in a hurry. Anyone who can gather a few persons

around him believes he is a leader; once this make-believe takes possession of him, he begins to believe he is prime ministerial timbre. This country has had the rare but dubious distinction of having three Congress parties, four socialist and communist parties, with mutual recriminations within the unit. The ego is a little too prominent. The personality cult competes with the cult of the individual. Has the doctrine of *moksha* something to do with such egregious individualism? For, after all, whose *moksha* is one after? One's own. Many in politics seek their material *moksha* with single-minded devotion. Elections are corrupted, the political process is undermined – all for the personal benefit of the individual.

In a dismal political picture the Janata experiment and experience have telling lessons, the most obvious being the failure of the leadership and overweening ambition of one man. The heart-warming response of the people whether in town or village, was another. The election of March 1977 shows that given the right cause, money and its corrupting influence do not have any role. Here, too, the main weakness of India's body politic surfaced – reliance on and response to an individual – the individual being Jayaprakash Narayan. Indian voter remains a democrat having the discernment to change the government when it has ceased to give him satisfaction land the country an adequately working government. The state elections in 1967, the Parliamentary and state elections in 1977 and 1980 are warning signals to errant governments and political parties, which may be ignored at great peril to the nation.

Time was when political education was imparted to the people in large measure – Gandhiji, Nehru, Bose, Jayaprakash were past masters in this act. In these days it is replaced by mutual recrimination, vituperation, polemics. We need to unlearn a lot we have taken in during the last two decades and re-educate and above all rededicate our energies and intellects to the service of the country.

We have criticized and condemned the British for their policy of divide and rule. Are we doing any better? Instead of bringing minorities into the mainstream of national affairs, we condemn them as political minorities in perpetuity throwing a few crumbs here, a few lollipops there, to appease them. We instil fear into them – vote Congress lest the opposition parties emasculate, if not annihilate, them. Instead of firmly removing the centuries-old indignities inflicted on the scheduled caste, we pander to the higher-ups among them, allowing the rest to wallow in their unhygienic and unhealthy surroundings. Minorities are socio-religious categories, not politico-economic groups. Political parties from the extreme right to the extreme left offer to them the possibilities of choosing their place according to their political predilections and economic attitudes. But no, we make the minorities symbols of our "secularism" and use them as shibboleths for vote-getting. They should not be encouraged as pressure-groups to extract benefits of which only a few at the top can take advantage.

Not only is the moral tone wanting in our public life, it is being strangulated. First and foremost it has to be revitalized/. We must restore to ourselves our lost clan. All other things will follow thereafter. As already stated, the system is neither undesirable nor unworkable. In the ruling parties there is no desire to work it as it should be worked. Hence the several distortions. This brings to mind the reaction of Sir (as he was then) John Simon to the efforts made at the Round Table Conferences and in the British Parliament to produce a new measure for the governance of India: give to the Indians the most perfect constitution in the world and they have the genius to tear it to pieces. Some prescience, this!

Jayaprakash called for electoral reforms; Tarkunde produced the blueprint. The just retired election Commissioner has made some suggestions. Will they even be considered? For the past ten years and more the government and parliament have been toying with the idea of an anti-defection bill, they have yet to draft it. In sharp contrast the Emergency measure was ready within hours; the 42nd amendment was cleared through the Parliament in a few days. But anti-defection...?

We have to tread carefully lest the earth under us should suddenly open and engulf us. If such a bill is passed willy nilly, then how will a legislative minority be transformed into the required majority? Haryana is merely the tip of the ice-berg of political corruptions. Other means are projected expansion of the cabinet to keep the hopefuls well-behaved and in line.

To such a depth has politics in the country tumbled. The constitution is sound in principle and, what is more, workable, having stood the test of time and emergencies like war, aggression, recession, drought. Changing the parliamentary into a presidential form is not going to improve the tone either of decision-making or of administration. The presidential form also involves parties – we cannot get away from political parties (note the plural) in any democratic government. What we have is good enough; only we need to restore to ourselves a social purpose, a sense of service and responsibility to the nation, a moral tone and an ethical base.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1982.

Consensus in Indian Democracy

Niranjan Dhar

It was Auguste Comte, the great Positivist philosopher of France, who at the time of the Revolution of 1848 warned against the blind worship of the peculiarities of the political evolution of England. He contrasted the "fiction" of parties and parliament with the "real France" and contended that the English Parliamentary system of government was not indeed an appropriate institution of "universal avocation". He therefore called for putting an end to the futile imitation of English institutions.

The Positivist father of sociology was not, however, alone in taking the parliamentary system as characteristically British. He only set the pattern, and some other French sociologists followed suit. They therefore became engaged in a search for "another mode of representation" than that of parties and parliament with which the British history had made them so familiar.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the parliamentary form of government with its party system originated and developed in England mainly as a series of accidents of her dynastic inheritance. It was not deliberately created on the basis of any document worked out by constitutional thinkers in accordance with some theoretical principles. The system simply grew under the stress of circumstances, and its justification followed, and not preceded, its birth. But an institution surviving historically has a way of growing beyond its origin so that ultimately it acquires a character which qualitatively differs from the one it had at the time of its inception. This particularly holds true of the British parliamentary system of government.

So no useful purpose will be served by castigating the modern parliamentary system as "peculiarities of the political evolution of England" and ruling out its introduction elsewhere. Transplantation is indeed a process which has been going on for centuries - transplantation not only of plants but also of institutions. Few civilized countries have lived entirely on their own. In fact, the best political institutions, like the greatest political thinkers, belong not to any one country but to the whole world. any nation may adopt any of them if it so likes. Thus, despite the warning of the sociologists of the country, France too did not hesitate to opt for some form of parliamentary government.

A nation is not a mere mass of bipeds. Like an individual man, it has also a character. The individual shows a remarkable consistency in his conduct mainly because of his character. It is the same with the nation. How completely a country will work its imported parliamentary institutions depends very much on its national character. Since the parliamentary system of government is essentially a government by politicians, the national character immediately means here that character and quality of political leaders.

Practical politics is largely concerned with power, and the role of political parties is to win and exercise power to promote the general good. A democracy can attain stability only if the parties concerned play their power game in obedience to an underlying consensus. J.W. Gough has given a succinct expression to this aspect of democratic politics when he says in his *Locke's Political Philosophy*: "Perhaps it is only when parties can treat politics as a game and not as a war that parliamentary government is possible. This may mean that they must agree about fundamentals, and differ only about less radical matters. Their refusal and inability to do so is one of the excuses for dictatorship." In this connection it may be mentioned here that a game is to be played according to rules while nothing, as the saying goes, is unfair in love and war.

Since the parliamentary system of government is essentially a government by discussion the concept of consensus also determines the character of parliamentary discussion – whether it is cooperative or combative. If it is combative, all issues promptly divide the members into a "pro" faction and an "anti" faction. Discussions then take the shape of debates. As has been argued by Ernest Barkar in his *Reflections on Government*, "discussion is not like a war: it is also like love. It is not only a battle of ideas; it is also a marriage of minds." When a majority engages in a discussion with a minority "in a

spirit of giving and taking", the ideas of the majority are widened to include some of the ideas of the minority so that the will of the majority will not be 'the abstract or isolated will of a mere majority, considered in itself and as standing by itself in opposition to the similar will of a mere minority". Some fusion has taken place and some accommodation has been achieved.

The sociological landscape of France makes her an interesting country to study the ebb and flow of national consensus. France is known to be a country of low consensus. The nation is almost hopelessly divided into several warring camps pledging loyalty to such divergent traditions as republicanism, revolutionism, royalism, clericalism, anti-clericalism, etc. The concept of legitimate authority of majority rule is not shared by larger minorities which together go to constitute the majority of the nation. In the absence of a consensus the parties multiply and tend to become single-interest, hard-core ideological parties. Hostility among them also goes on increasing. As a result, the parliamentary system works there very unsatisfactorily. Coalition governments are formed but do not last long, and there is widespread political instability. New constitutions are promulgated one after another. The comic part of the episode has been reiterated by the story that when a customer went to a French bookshop to purchase a copy of the constitution of France, the salesman at the counter retorted: "We do not sell temporary literature." Under the given condition much governing has to be done in France by the permanent executive, i.e., the civil service at the non-political level. Of late, the position of the President has also been strengthened to cope with the situation.

Comte and his fellow sociologists thus proved to be prophetic although parliamentary institutions do not work in France smoothly, not because they are characteristically British but because the precondition of their smooth working is lacking there. It has been like transplanting a plant on a soil which is not very congenial to its growth.

II

The Indians lived long under the British domination during which they were initiated into the British parliamentary system of government. The process so started has been consummated in independent India. At present we have a full-fledged parliamentary system of government in our country on the British model.

But this is only on paper. The way in which the system has been working for some time has a close resemblance to that of France. In India, as in France, there is in operation a multi-party system in an atmosphere of low consensus.

The contemporary Indian party system is extremely fragmented. It consists of more than two score of parties, many of which have programmatic differences as between a tweedledum and tweedledee. Rampant dissidence and defection have made the existing positions of parties extremely fluid. When coalition governments are formed, they are generally unstable with mutual bickering constantly going on, and the government itself eventually falls with this of that party withdrawing its support. Repeated midterm polls not only mean a constant drain on the public exchequer but prevent political life of the country from getting stabilized at the functional level. Even the formal heads of the states are found fishing merrily in the troubled waters. Party politics has thus been reduced to a sordid game.

No infrequently party politics also takes the shape of undeclared inter-party civil war, and armed clashes take place resulting in bloodshed and killings. For this purpose party politicians harbour under their protection known criminals. In some cases, "*satyagraha*" is also organized to pull down a government which, though duly elected, is not liked by an otherwise powerful section. The coexistence of such subversive activities with the parliamentary process naturally leads to the devaluation of parliamentary values.

The politicians, particularly those of the party in power, seem also no longer reconciled to the norm that in a democratic setup the administration should be scrupulously kept separate from the political apparatus. Its integrity and impartiality have been tempered with at all levels to serve their personal and

party purposes. Even the police force has been immobilized and politicized.

It is thus clear that the politicians who rule in our democracy have failed to manage our political affairs within an elaborate framework of conventions and ethics which may remain largely unformulated but tacitly accepted and respected. In the absence of this broad moral consensus the temperature of political life could not be kept down to a permissible point. Nor could political partisanships be suitably moderated. The imperatives of morality have been replaced by the imperatives of power. Ambition to acquire power may be natural for leaders having a long active political career, but in no case should it go unregulated by more important public considerations. It is now widely apprehended that if the process goes unchecked for some time more, the country itself would disintegrate.

There are "prophets of doom" in this country who see no streak of light in the surrounding gloom. On the contrary, they see the logic of "slippery slope" in operation here with full force. According to them, every specific act contains the germ of a habit, and once we step on a slippery slope, we must descent at an accelerated speed till we reach the dead abyss of catastrophe.

III

We are not, however, so pessimistic about the future of parliamentary democracy in India. We know that nothing is ever lost beyond redemption. Man is a rational being. So, if he can be made aware of the danger of a particular situation, there is no reason why he will not retrace his steps. At least we can hope so, and this hope may not appear to be altogether unfounded if we look at the latest development in France. The latter, as we have seen is proverbially a country of low consensus but Maurice Duverger, the celebrated author of *Political Parties*, writes that the traditional ideological rigidity of the French political parties and their mutual hostility have started melting, and "the French have learned to live surrounded by radically contradictory political philosophies, with the result that they now believe that the coexistence of such philosophies is one of the essential conditions of freedom".

Now, what has been possible for France need not elude India. The growing realization of the need for some amount of consensus would lead us also to change our pattern of political behaviour. And once the process starts, it will soon gather momentum and the logic of "slippery slope" cease to operate. But pending the dawn of this realization, some mechanical device may be attempted to produce an element of national consensus and to induce some respect for it in the behaviour pattern of our political leaders.

For this purpose we may act upon a suggestion of the late K.K. Sinha, who in one of his articles "Democratic Party in Democratic State", incorporated in his book *Towards Pluralist Society*, called for the creation of a new institution such as an Autonomous Inter-Party Authority. It is to be composed of one member from each recognized party. A few detached intellectuals from outside the domain of party politics should also be co-opted and one of them made the chairman. This new institution will prepare a code of conduct for the politicians and will keep a vigil over it so that it is not honoured more in breach than in observance. Aggrieved individuals and groups may also appeal to it for getting redress. The suggestion is not altogether untenable. Public limited companies, trade unions, factory managements, educational institutions, religious and public trust bodies, etc. are all regulated by appropriate laws. It is only the political parties which today remain completely unregulated, particularly when a moral consensus is yet to evolve among our politicians.

But we must be on our guard while going to prepare this code of conduct. If the extreme of two little consensus poses the danger of the disintegration of the democratic setup from within through conflicts, the other extreme of too much consensus will produce a social conformity that throttles al freedoms. Democracy must hover between the two extremes. Where exactly the line is to be drawn has to be determined more or less empirically.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1982.

Two-Pronged Threat to Party System

Balraj Puri

Within the first decade after independence, India had become a classical case of one-party dominant state, thanks mainly to the momentum of the freedom movement, compulsions of a developing economy and the unique personality of Nehru.

However, the party system in that period was marked by pronounced ideological features. Marxism, democratic socialism and militant nationalism were the ideologies of the three main opposition parties while the Congress covered the wide centrist ground in between them with some leftist noises.

Nehru not only evolved and presided over a broad consensus on most of the national issues, he could also afford to be generous to his democratic opponents.

Opposition stalwarts like Acharya Kripalani, Acharya Narendra Dev and Asoka Mehta owed at least a part of their outstanding parliamentary career to the courtesy of Nehru and the support extended to them by his party.

As a corollary to politics of consensus and as its leader, Nehru invited Jayaprakash Narayan to join his cabinet as deputy Prime Minister and to share power with his party at national and state levels. Praja Socialist Party (PSP) rejected the offer and thereby lost forever its role as a contender for power and as a successor to Congress. With it the role of ideologically oriented politics also received a setback.

Further, PSP did not tolerate Asoka Mehta's acceptance of the post of deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and he was forced to leave the party. Thus the politics of inter-party cooperation ended before it could be given a trial.

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia must be credited with the major responsibility for reversing the trends towards the politics of consensus and cooperation, in general, and between Congress and the socialists in particular. He was the principal architect of the strategy of joint front of opposition parties on the basis of anti-Congressism. By bringing together as heterogeneous groups as communists, socialists and Jan Sangh, he contributed towards the shift from ideology-oriented politics to issue-oriented politics. In reality, power became the dividing line of Indian politics as it was polarised between the party in power and opposition. Indira Gandhi's style of politics, in which personal loyalty matters more than ideological convictions, and her authoritarian tendencies sharpened this polarisation between her and the rest.

But the most crippling blow to the party system was perhaps delivered by J.P. He opted neither for cooperative nor for confrontationist politics. He simply left the political scene as a leader of the major opposition party of the time – which almost orphaned it – as also party politics.

Direct assault on the party system had already been made by an intellectual giant like M.N. Roy. He described delegation of power, on which power system rested, as "negation of democracy" while parliamentary democracy was "only a veiled dictatorship".

J.P. led the assault at mass level. As the Radical Humanist (15 June 1958) observed: "In his critique of parliamentary democracy and particularly of the party system he has not only used arguments but even sentences and paragraphs which might have been lifted from this journal".

In my humble judgement, the Humanist-Sarvodaya school, by confusing concepts of democracy, shaking democratic (parliamentary) convictions of intellectuals, discouraging democrats from participating in democratic process – spelled as scramble for power, undermining respect for democratic institutions and deflecting the course of democracy to illusory goals, was on the whole a paralysing influence on Indian democracy.

As J.P. mounted his attack in 1974 not so much against the alleged authoritarianism of the ruling

party as against the whole system lock stock and barrel, I had warned: "If, besides Congress, the system also collapsed, we are not sure what would replace it. In fact, in the ensuing confusion and instability the danger of an authoritarian backlash cannot be ruled out." (*Cross Section*, May-June 1974)

Ironically, when the backlash threatened survival of party and parliamentary system, opposition parties sought shelter under the umbrella of JP who had vowed to demolish the system. However, only Indira Gandhi fully shared his distrust of institutions of western democracy.

Despite JP's reservations about the role of political parties, it was only through their help that he was able to overthrow the authoritarian regime in 1977. The system – party and parliamentary – survived in spite of him. But it was the weight of his mighty personality that prevented alignment of political forces along ideological lines. The forced merger of five parties under his moral pressure was the single greatest cause of the failure of the Janata regime and stagnation of the party system in the country. A coalition would have been a more realistic response to the situation.

The trend towards revival of normal and rational party system through an ideological realignment of forces did start on the issue of Janata's Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) links. But Indian intelligentsia and the so-called liberal press were so conditioned by JP's spell that they pounced upon the new trend and launched a massive attack of character assassination on those who had dared initiate the trend; the collapse of which was further ensured by the schizophrenic personality of the Indian socialists.

The vacuum created by decline of ideology as a political force was readily filled by forces like casteism, regionalism, tribalism, personality cult and money power. Ideological trends, however, soon started re-emerging. Revival of old Jan Sangh under the label of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with a little liberal outlook, on the one hand, and the coming closer of the two communist parties, on the other, represent consolidation of two ideologically important streams of Indian politics. The third important stream viz. of democratic socialists is hopelessly divided, principally between Janata and Lok Dal. But the objective situation does exist for their unification, notwithstanding formidable contrary subjective factors. Would ideological realignment of the opposition parties have its echoes in the ruling party? And are principal competing ideologies competent enough to encompass the wide diversity and complexity of the contemporary India?

Party system is still in a state of crisis. It faces two-pronged threat; from growing concentration of power and money in fewer hands, on the one hand, and utter confusion about the concept of democracy and the role of its institutions caused by the saints, philosophers, utopians and perfectionists of Indian politics, on the other.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1982.

Nemesis of Political Parties

M.K. Haldar

M.N. Roy's spiritual and intellectual odyssey took him from gun-totting, bomb-throwing terrorism inspired by an emotional reaction to foreign domination to international Communism and ended in a purely rational approach not only to political problems but also to all other problems. His philosophical insight grew with his personal encounter and experience. His experience with narrow, clandestine nationalistic political parties in his early youth lured him to international Communism with its promise to lead the whole of humanity to Canaan. His experience with international Communist conspiracies, intrigues and plots led him to the conclusion that international Communism is a fake, a cover to enhance the national interests and is based on a defectively rational approach to human problems. After coming back to India and after his release from jail, he tried an experiment of a new political party in India. All these experiences, however, led him to grapple with a more basic and fundamental question: What is the nature of a political party? Can a system dependent upon political parties or a political party enhance the cause of human freedom and dignity? Roy's experience with international Communism and of Soviet Communism in particular must have had made it clear to him how at the behest of a political party a promised land of Canaan becomes a veritable Orwellian animal Farm in reality. His experience with political parties not only in this country but also elsewhere opened his eyes to the fact that political parties dehumanise man and take him away from his true purpose – enhancement of freedom and human dignity. Yet it is worth its while to recall that the political parties served their historical role at a particular stage of history and enhanced the cause of human freedom.

Modern democracy because of a number of socio-historical and cultural reasons came into being in the Western world after the French Revolution, primarily due to the cultural revolution inspired by the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment. Men of calibre, men of excellence were its leaders. 'Democracy', however, was introduced in the western countries with a strong dose of Nationalism. The process of the waning of democracy started at its very birth. Nationalism introduced the cult of the masses, pride in one's own nation. In the latter half of Nineteenth Century a new dimension – the dimension of Socialism and Communism – was added in the name of world unity of the suffering humanity. The rise of Hitler is a typical example of how modern democracy with its emphasis on Nationalism becomes a stumbling block in the way of human progress. Hitler came to power through popular vote and called himself a national Socialist. National Socialism had to be demolished through a bloody war. 'Democracy' threw up a very low grade man to State power.

Even in the Western democracies today we can hardly see any man of calibre at the helm of political affairs. Politics has become the profession of low mediocrity or, at its best, of mediocrity.

In this country democracy was introduced by the erstwhile British rulers in a land which did not go through any intellectual revolution like that of the European Eighteenth Century Enlightenment. The Constitution that India gave to herself after independence is mainly based on Government of India Act of 1935 – an innovation transplanted in this country by the British. The leaders of Indian struggle for freedom were all trained in British democracy. Waning of democracy in India started with the demise of the generation of leaders who participated in India's struggle for freedom. The very fact that there was hardly any massive protest against Mrs. Gandhi's introduction of Emergency should be sufficient to testify that neither the Indian political leaders nor the Indian masses cared much for the preservation of human freedom.

Even a cursory look at the membership, activists and leaders of the political parties in India will convince the doubtful that these parties have ceased to attract any man of calibre. The political parties have become nothing but a collection of sycophants of irrationally bolstered up psycho-pomps. Men of calibre, men of excellence shun all involvement with any political party. One may

sound cynical if one say s that politics has become mostly a profession of the scoundrels and Gibeonites; yet one will not be far from the truth. But this should not be taken as a call to the men of calibre to join political parties. The cause of Democracy would be already half won if only the men of calibre found in their own defence a little of the passion and perseverance that their enemies devote to their destruction. To awaken this passion it will be futile to appeal to the generosity of the leaders of the political parties or the power that be, because even among the best of these the virtue of generosity is disappearing. But it may well be pointed out to the leaders and members of the political parties that the fate of the corrupt and the valueless is their own fate too. No political leader feels himself to be secure as long as an honest man, a man of calibre has reason to fear for his life. So create a condition where low mediocrity will be at a premium. Political parties today are increasingly showing that they are eager to dehumanise the human being by taking away from the people their very right to breathe free air.

The solution to the problem does not, however, lie in the massive introduction of men of calibre into the political parties. Evil has almost an irresistible solidarity. Today's man of calibre becomes almost a dodo tomorrow if he sells his soul to a political party. He is liable to be a victim of lure and be corrupt especially when the party is in for corruption as he joins a political party simply because he thinks that the only way to change socio-economic and cultural conditions lie through State power, Power has a corrupting influence. Once he becomes corrupt, the man of calibre ceases to be a man of calibre and he sells his soul to the party. If he leaves the party, he loses himself into a cynical wilderness of frustrations. What is astonishing is the genius of Roy who could visualise these developments though he did not have the opportunity to have any encount4er with recent developments of the political parties in this country. If Roy were alive today, he possibly would have been horrified at the spectacle of vindication of his own theory.

A political party is a collection of individuals committed to the idea that the main instrument, if not the only instrument, of social, economic and cultural changes is political power. A political party, initially an innovation to challenge the right, divine or otherwise, of the few to rule over the laity, became a part and parcel of all democracies. Existence of multiple political parties in a country became one of the hallmarks of democracy. But even in the democracies where existence of multiple political parties is guaranteed, the number of effective political parties has been reduced to two – the party in power and the party in opposition; political power oscillates between these two.

In this country there was hardly any indication of oscillating political power. For more than twenty years there was virtually one party rule. The possibility of the growth of another effective political party which could come to power through the ballot box was opened after the Emergency was withdrawn in 1977. A motley collection of parties called itself the Janata Party and came to power. But because of the internal power struggle, the Janata experiment failed. The failure of the Janata Party also indicates the fact that a political party's sole aim is to have political power and that mainly it is lure for power which attracts people to political parties and keeps their members together. With the different components inside the party, the party could not come to any agreement regarding shares of the spoils of power. Moreover, the Janata Party during the short period of its existence on the saddles of power could not bolster up psychopomp whom the sycophants could worship, whose simultaneous threats and munificence could keep the members together.

The Congress (i) has very successfully brought to fruition the possibilities of the development of a political party. All the potentialities of a political party have been very ruthlessly and shamelessly actualised, jettisoning all values. The Congress (I) boasts that it alone has plans and programmes, and no other party has any plan, ideology or programmes. But when asked to spell out the ideology of the Congress (I), one is dished out a hodgepodge of empty claptraps as answers. Even the pretence of a so-called Congress ideology has been dropped. Ordinary members, even the so-called leaders of the party, can continue to remain in the party with their endless mutual bickering and back-

biting and vituperations on the distribution of the spoils of power, but they will have the blessings and protection of the leader so long as their squabbles do not pose any threat to the leader, so long as the leader's verdict is accepted without any effective protest. Following the inexorable logic of political parties, once a man is in a political party, he sells his soul to Mephistopheles and faces the fate of Dr. Faustus. Development of sycophancy is a *sine qua non* of a political party.

To keep sycophancy and hero-worship as realities, political parties find Nationalism a very handy tool. Members discern a moving image of Nationalism in their leader. International experience has time and again illustrated a simple law of Nationalism which is manifest to the historians, though it had been ignored by nationalists. The destructiveness of Nationalism is proportionate to the degree of the discrepancy between the ideal of Nationalism and the local state of existing geographical, cultural and political facts. Nationalism has come to affect communities whose contemporary or historical, geographical, cultural distribution and political realities afforded Nationalism no vestige whatsoever of a basis in the realm of facts. The ill-defined, irrational and empty idea of Nationalism provides a slogan to rally the masses. People motivated by the lure of power take full advantage of this. That political parties cannot but be votaries of Nationalism is an unmitigated evil specially in the context of contemporary world situations. Coupled with Nationalism a new dope called "socialism" has also become a 'creed' of all political parties in this country. No political party, including the Congress (I) and the different brands of Marxist parties has even defined in clear and unmistakable terms what it really means by "socialism". Everyone knows what "socialism" is so long as he is not asked to talk about it and not simply repeat it. Authoritarian tendencies, if not totalitarian ones, are inherent in the very concept of a political party and these things are sugar-coated by extravagant, wishy-washy ideas of 'Nationalism", "Socialism", internal and external threats, etc. The distinction between the concept of "democracy" as used in ordinary speech and in the Communist and authoritarian lexicons is muddled. There is hardly any distinction between the Congress (I), Lok Dal, C.P.I. (M) or for that matter any other political party whatsoever in this regard. Even the different parties, supposedly wedded to the cause of Communism, with tall claims to ideological commitments are split on non-ideological issues. The Communist Party of India suffered a major split on the issue of the notorious Dange letter. Same is the case with the history of the splits and defections in or from any other political party. The inexorable logic of political parties has come to a quick fruition in this country because of the low level of intellectual and cultural renaissance – a foundation on which the political parties in the West developed their superstructures. The ugly teeth of political parties are not so apparent in the political parties of the Western democracies as they have become in this country. One of the cause s of this fruition can be discerned in the disastrous effect of C.P. Snow's *Two Cultures*. Compulsions of developmental needs have given undue weight-age to the technologist, the laboratory worker, the industrial worker, the producer of material goods, etc., while the human mind as a totality suffered from a process of attrition.

Unable to find out any window open for immediate desirable changes, some 'revolutionaries' like the Naxalites wanted reprisals. It matters little to them that innocent people are made to suffer for the realisation of a programme drawn up by a group in Naxalbari, or Andhra, or Eastern Bihar. It is also to be noted that these groups get their support mainly from educationally and economically backward people from proverbially backward areas.

However, despite the inherent drawbacks of political parties, a stubborn fact remains – the fact that existence of multiple political parties vying with each other for political power is not only a present historical compulsion but also a valuational necessity. So long as the masses of people remain in conditions in which they are at present, the existence of multiple political parties, the existence of a collection of ragamuffins, skull-duggers and crooks in political parties has to be tolerated within the present framework which is worth preserving and is the only hope and guarantee for future development. The concepts of a benevolent autocrat, dictator, military ruler, etc., are self-

contradictory concepts.

Developments elsewhere are showing signs changes in desirable directions. Take, for example, the waning of the cult of Nationalism in the Western countries and their growing eagerness to recognise themselves as parts of a larger community – the community of man. But such awareness can only be ushered in through an intellectual revolution. Intellectual revolution will be a far cry if we fail to preserve the democratic institutions that we have today. Once intellectual revolution takes place, recognition of the senselessness of political parties will take place,

Intellectual revolution must precede political revolution. Or, else the revolutionary's zeal to bring about a revolution will actualise itself into just the opposite of his original inspiration. That is precisely the lesson taught by the rise of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. At the present juncture of history the existence of multiple political parties is an unavoidable evil, if we intend to keep the possibility of developments in desirable directions open. Political parties are both a challenge and a lesson to the intellectual leaders everywhere. The intellectuals must take up this challenge. Or, else they will not only ruin themselves but also commit treason against the future.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1982.

Future of Party System – Radical Humanist Perspective

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

Radical Humanists stand for organized democracy and they have worked out the way by taking which it may be realized. What Radical Humanists have to say about the role of political parties in a parliamentary democracy and the relevance of party system during the transition from parliamentary to organized democracy can be summarised in three broad propositions:

(1) Parliamentary democracy consists of a system under which a representative government comes to power from time to time through periodic elections. In such a system, political parties perform the useful function of representing conflicting interests of the voters, of organizing the electorate into political communities and of providing a more or less stable basis for government. The legitimacy of the party system is, however, getting eroded. With the extension of franchise to the entire adult population and with the growth of maturity and discrimination among the electorate, the programmatic differences between political parties are getting blurred and the party system is losing its significance and utility.

(2) The party system, although it is necessary in the present phase of parliamentary democracy, causes a good deal of harm in the course of its functioning. The scramble for power in which political parties are engaged has the consequence, on the one hand, of divesting morality from political practice and, on the other, of concentrating political power in a few hands. The harmfulness of the party system arising from such an unprincipled scramble for power is more pronounced in counties where the bulk of the electorate is relatively uneducated and steeped in superstition.

(3) In an organised democracy where political power is decentralized and is exercised by a self-reliant and discriminating electorate through a network of local democracies (people's committees), political parties will not have any useful role to play. The function of organising the voters into political communities, which is being inefficiently performed by political parties at present, will, in an organized democracy, be more adequately discharged by people's committees. People's committees will not only function as political organizations of the electorate, but will also set up candidates in elections and will have the powers of recall and referendum. Political parties will not be abolished by law, because an organized democracy will defend the civil liberties of the people including their freedom to form any organization of their choice. Political parties, however, will have no useful role to perform in an organized democracy and will become redundant and obsolete.

In a parliamentary democracy, political parties play a useful role in representing the conflicting interests of the electorate. It is obvious, however, that political parties are formed in order to represent the conflicting views on every issue on which differences of opinion exist in an open society. This is so because persons who take the same view on one issue may disagree on other issues. Those, for instance, who agree that women should have the right to abortion may not agree on the circumstances in which divorce should be allowed. If two persons agree on issue A, it cannot be assumed that they will agree also on issues B and C, so that they may form a stable political party. Opinions held on specific issues may lead to political lobbies, but not to political parties. In order that conflicting interests in a society may be represented by political parties, it is essential that a large number of persons should have the same attitude on a large number of political, economic and social issues.

That is why political parties are generally formed in order to represent the common economic interest of large sections of the people. Such economic interests are generally the interests of

economic classes, as when parties are formed to represent either labour or capital. Parties are occasionally formed to represent economic interests such as those of the peasantry and the rural poor. Political parties may also be formed to represent the interests of the people belonging to the same religious denomination or to the same region. Economic, religious and regional interests are thus the basis on which political parties are formed.

It can hardly be argued that political parties based on religion are necessary for the proper functioning of a democracy. Secularism, which is one of the accepted principles of democracy, requires that the State should not interfere with any religion and that no religion should be allowed to interfere with the State. It may be that in a particular democracy the rights of a religious minority may require to be protected. To protect such rights, however, is the duty not only of the minority community but of all the progressive sections of society. With the growth of enlightenment, political parties based on religion are bound to disappear.

Political parties based on regional interests have also a limited future. Where a region has a distinctive culture, it is a sub-nationality and should have a large degree of autonomy in a democratic State. When regional autonomy is granted, regional parties will have little reason for continued existence.

A more stable basis for the party system is provided by the conflicting economic interests of large sections of the people. Conflicting economic interests have been the traditional basis of the Conservative and Labour parties of Great Britain, and the rightist, leftist and centrist parties in other democracies in the West. The economic base of the party system is, however, being increasingly eroded in recent times. There is a growing tendency on the part of different political parties, on the left and the right, to have more or less the same programme, transcending their class and sectional interests. One reason for this development is the extension of franchise to the entire adult population. Adult franchise has made it necessary for every political party to so mould its programme as to appeal to the majority of the electorate, which does not belong to the class which the party was originally intended to represent. The other reason is the growth of education and enlightenment among the people which make it increasingly inconvenient for any political party to pursue narrow sectional interests at the cost of society as a whole.

In industrially developed countries, the middle class has increased in number and strategic importance. The Conservative Party in Great Britain cannot hope to succeed if its appeal is confined to the capitalist class, nor the Labour Party if it seeks the support of only the working class. Hence the election manifestos of these parties tend to have the same programmes. Various features of the welfare State in Great Britain were conceived by the Labour Party when in power but were implemented by the succeeding Conservative Party Government. The programmes of these parties are often so similar that one party is known to have complained that an item on its programme was filched by the other. This tendency towards a convergence of the election platforms of the leftist and rightist parties is found in all the Western countries.

This is even more evident in those countries of the third world where some form of democracy based on adult franchise continues to exist. An overwhelming majority of votes in these countries are either below, or just above, the poverty line. Their economic interests are, on the whole, uniform. All political parties have to present an election platform which will appeal to this deprived majority. They have therefore either the same or very similar programmes.

Thus there is a gradual and progressive erosion in the legitimacy of political parties as organizations for the representation of the conflicting interests of voters.

An attempt is sometimes made to justify the existence of rightist and leftist parties on psychological rather than economic grounds. It is said that each country has two types of people – those who have a conservative bent of mind and who therefore want to preserve the status quo, and those who have a radical bent of mind and who therefore want to alter the status quo. It will be found,

however, that such psychological differences arise largely from economic interests. If the economic basis of political parties is getting eroded, the party system cannot be expected to continue on merely psychological grounds.

Harmfulness of the Party System

While the useful role of political parties in representing the conflicting interests of the electorate is thus decreasing, the harmfulness of the party system even in parliamentary democracies is on the increase.

The main reason is that the struggle for power between rival political parties is increasingly assuming the character of an unprincipled scramble for power. Several factors have brought this about. In the first place, the functions of the State have been constantly increasing and hence the powe3r concentrated in the State is far greater today than before. Consequently, political success has far more attractive rewards now than before. Politics has become a very profitable profession for those who hanker after power and pelf. Secondly, with the progressive disappearance of programmatic differences between political parties the element of principle in political practice has been reduced. Political parties today are more power-oriented and less class-oriented. An unprincipled scramble for power has therefore become the characteristic of political practice, of both the right and the left.

While this tendency towards a vulgarization of political practice is apparent in all countries where the party system prevails, it is naturally more in evidence in the countries of the third world. Here a largely illiterate and credulous electorate plunged in perennial poverty offers an ideal field of operation for unscrupulous power hunters. The political scene in India offers an instructive illustration. Morality has been completely divorced from politics here, at least in so far as successful politicians are concerned. Black money is collected in exchange for official favours. The election process is denuded of its democratic content by the misuse of money and governmental machinery, and the election propaganda consists mostly of mud-slinging and never-to-be-implemented promises. Apart from misleading the electorate in this way, the election process in India strengthens and consolidates the evils of casteism and communalism.

The scramble for power, in which political parties are engaged, and the resulting low standards of political practice, have the effect of repelling persons of moral sensitivity from party politics. Moral scruples being a handicap in politics of this kind, those who are possessed of that handicap do not join any political party or do not remain there for long. In the result, society is deprived of the services of persons of moral excellence, persons who are likely to be most devoted to public service, in the conduct of its vital political affairs.

Apart from its involvement in unprincipled power politics, the party system is harmful to democracy in two other ways. In the first place, it increases the political distance between the people and the government. In the absence of the party system, an elected candidate would be responsible directly to the voters. Under the party system, his primary responsibility is towards his party. The power delegated by the people in an election is acquired, not by the successful candidate, but by the successful political party, which is only remotely responsible to the electorate.

Secondly, the party system increases the concentration of political power in the hands of the executive. The executive under the party system controls the legislature instead of being controlled by it. If, for instance, the members of the ruling party have 55 per cent of the seats in the legislature, it is this 55 per cent of the House and not the House as a whole, which possesses the power of passing laws and setting up the executive government. What is more, this 55 per cent of the legislature, which controls the House as a whole, is itself controlled by the cabinet, consisting of party-men and often the cabinet itself is controlled by a single leader or a small coterie of leaders. Thus under the party system, all the legislative and executive power of the State tends to be concentrated in a few hands.

Organized Democracy and the Party System

The establishment of an organized democracy presupposes that society has undergone a renaissance based on the humanist values of freedom, equality and fellowship, reared on rationalism, self-reliance and secular morality and that the entire electorate is able to exercise its sovereign political power through a network of people's committees. In such a democracy, delegation of power by the people to the higher organs of the State will be greatly reduced. Not only will there be a substantial decentralization of power to the lower organs of the State, but the electorate organized in people's committees will be able to exercise a standing control over those executive and legislative functions which are to be performed at the higher tiers of the State.

Political parties will hardly have any useful function to perform in such a State. People's committees will take the place of political parties. There will certainly be many differences among the people on individual issues, but those differences will be many differences among the people on individual issues, but those differences will be resolved by discussion and consensus. Being represented in people's committees, and through people's committees in higher organs of the State, the voters will not require another political organization to represent them.

We have observed that the only abiding basis of political parties in a parliamentary democracy has been the conflict of class interests among the electorate. The formation of political parties on a class basis, however, assumes that the economic interests of persons belonging to a particular class can be protected and promoted by only the members of that class. That assumption, we have seen is not justified. All interests which deserve to be protected and promoted have a moral sanction, and morality is not a class function. Taking into consideration the background of a humanist renaissance, on the basis of which people's committees will be formed, there is no reason to assume that the just claims of any economic class will not receive the support of a people's committee on the basis of a consensus reached after a free discussion.

It is, however, argued that political parties will be necessary even in an organized democracy in order that the governments formed at the Centre and in the States should be able to adopt and implement unified policies. The argument in other words is that only a party government can be a stable government having a coherent policy. The argument is not well-founded. Even today, differences of opinion exist inside every political party which functions in a democratic way. When a political party is in power, the differences amongst its members are resolved by mutual discussion and the consensus so reached becomes the policy of the government. If a unified policy can be adopted and implemented by a government formed by ministers belonging to a democratic party who have differences among themselves, there is no reason why such a unified policy cannot be adopted and implemented by a government consisting of ministers who do not belong to any political party. In fact, non-commitment to any political party should make it easier for such ministers to reach a consensus on all controversial issues.

This conclusion is strengthened by the experience of coalition governments which have functioned successfully in several European countries, particularly after the Second World War. It is also borne out by the example of Switzerland, which is a highly developed country having one of the most affluent economies in the world, but where the executive council consists of members of all the principal political parties in the different Cantons. It is significant that one does not hear of any disruptive difference within the Swiss cabinet. There is, therefore, no reason why a unified policy cannot be adopted and implemented by a government formed in an organized democracy where the party system has ceased to exist.

In the Meantime

The belief entertained by Radical Humanists that the party system is not a permanent feature of democracy and that the system would become obsolete by the time a higher form of democracy is

established, does not make them hostile or indifferent to the existing party system and to the manner in which it functions. A long period of indefinite duration will have to pass before the prevailing parliamentary democracy is replaced by an organized form of democracy. In the meantime, political parties will dominate the scene. Some of them will form governments and others will be in the opposition. In order that Radical Humanists may be able to carry out their primary task of educating the people in humanist values and of promoting grass-root organizations on the basis of those values, they will require a government which honours democratic norms and an opposition which does not allow civil liberties and democratic rights to be encroached upon. It is also necessary for Radical Humanists to ensure that parliamentary democracy, defective as it is, is not replaced by a naked dictatorship in which the educative and organizational work of Radical Humanists and their associates may become far more difficult. Radical Humanists fare therefore keenly interested in having a government and an opposition which would help, at least not hinder, their primary work.

The question then is: Should Radical Humanists have a political party of their own? Alternately, should they work in other political parties in order to ensure a government or an opposition which should be helpful to their educative and organizational activities?

It will be recalled that an outline of the philosophy of Radical Humanism was prepared in 1946 in the form of the 22 Theses and that those Theses were adopted by an All India Conference of the Radical Democratic Party (in which Radical Humanists were then working) held in Bombay towards the end of December 1946. The Radical Democratic Party continued for two years thereafter and was dissolved by a resolution passed by majority in an All India Conference convened in Calcutta towards the end of December 1948. The majority view was that the educative and organizational activities which Radical Humanists had to undertake could not be properly carried out by working in a political party. The Radical Democratic Party was therefore dissolved and the Radical Humanist Movement was inaugurated.

The majority was right in the conclusion it reached. There are mainly two reasons why Radical Humanists should not function as a political party. The first reason is that those who desire to bring about a humanist renaissance in the country by educating the people in the values of freedom, equality and fellowship cannot at the same time seek to represent them in the legislature. Educators of the people cannot simultaneously be their representatives. A humanist renaissance involves a revaluation of values. It requires that the people should be called upon to discard of the traditional values and accept a value system based on freedom rationalism and secular morality. A political party which seeks the votes of a majority of the adult population cannot be the proper instrument to bring about such a cultural renaissance. Secondly, and this is even more important, Radical Humanists do not believe that worthwhile socio-economic changes can be initiated from above. A humanist revolution must be initiated and developed from below, on the basis of an enlightened and insistent public opinion, although at a later stage, it may be assisted by a helpful government. A socio-economic transformation initiated from above, with the aid of State power, leads to dictatorship, while a similar transformation brought about from below, with the initiative of the people, extends the bounds of democracy. Radical Humanists do not require political power to bring about a revolutionary transformation, but desire, on the contrary, that the people themselves should acquire and exercise political power as a result of a cultural renaissance. Being not interested in acquiring political power even for achieving their objectives, Radical Humanists ought not to form a political party of their own.

After the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in December 1948, some Radical Humanists tried to promote their humanist ideals by joining other political parties. The experiment also did not succeed. Some of them got involved in the game of power politics and ceased to be Radical Humanists for all practical purposes. Others became disillusioned, left their political party and rejoined the Radical Humanist Movement.

The crucial fact is that the functioning of the party system can be improved, particularly in countries like India, only by working among the people along non-party lines and not by joining a political party. In every form of democracy, the people get the government they deserve. If corrupt and power-hungry politicians dominate the political field, this is because they are able to get the allegiance of an ignorant and credulous electorate. The only remedy is to have a more enlightened and discriminating electorate, organized in local people's committees. When this is done, party candidates will have to abide by the popular opinion expressed through people's committees or (what is more likely) the people's committees, will set up candidates of their choice and secure their success in periodic elections. Parties would eventually be replaced by candidates of people's committees, and in the meantime the functioning of the party system will be increasingly more democratic.

That is also how the advance of authoritarianism can be checked and the advent of a dictatorial regime prevented. A vigorous humanist movement among the people and their organization in people's committees is the precondition for an improvement in the functioning of democratic institutions and for the elimination of the danger of authoritarianism.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1982.

JP Memorial Lecture, 1987

Organised Democracy, Party-less Politics and Total Revolution

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

I deem it a great honour to have been invited to deliver this memorial lecture on the 8th anniversary of the passing away of Jayaprakash Narayan. Although I had known him for many years, I came into closer contact with him in 1972 when we discussed the necessity of forming a non-party organisation for protecting and strengthening the roots of democracy in India. This organisation was eventually formed in April 1974 and was given the name of Citizens For Democracy. During the emergency, I was further involved with him in the formation and development of the People's Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights. Jayaprakash Narayan was a most delightful companion, besides being a charismatic personality. Moral sensitiveness was natural to him, and had become a part of his character. He was correctly described by Minoo Masani as "the conscience of India". The void created by his death has not been filled till now, and it is doubtful whether it will ever be filled. I take this opportunity to pay my personal homage to his memory. He will continue to be an inspiration for all those who are striving for promoting the freedom of the Indian people.

For this memorial lecture, I have selected three interconnected topics – organised democracy, party-less politics and total revolution. While organised democracy in which political and economic power will remain vested in the people is our ultimate goal, party-less politics and total revolution are the means of achieving it. The concept of organised democracy and party-less politics were fully developed by M.N. Roy with whom I had been working for several years, while the concept of total revolution, although initiated and defined by M.N. Roy when he spoke of the necessity of "revolution from below", was subsequently developed to some extent by the Sarva Seva Sangh under the guidance of Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan. The credit of popularising all the three concepts throughout the country must, however, go to Jayaprakash Narayan. These three concepts constitute a material departure from the traditional theory of political and economic democracy.

In appreciating these innovations in political science, notice must be taken of certain developments which have been taking place throughout the current 20th century in the nature of the modern State. With the growth of technology and its impact on the economic life of the people, modern societies have become far more complex than before and this complexity is reflected in the phenomenal growth of the modern State. The modern State can no longer be conceived as an essentially coercive machinery which is likely to wither away and disappear with the growth of civilisation nor can it be confined as conceived by nineteenth century liberalism to the function of protecting the community against external aggression and internal disorder. Its functions have been increasing all the time, with the addition of education, health, employment generation, economic control, environmental protection, international trade and so forth. With the growth in its manifold functions, the modern State has grown in responsibility as well as power, with the consequence that it now threatens to be a veritable monster.

Another feature of the same process of technological development is the enormous growth in the military might of the modern State. With the addition to its armoury of machine guns, grenades, mortars, big guns, tanks, helicopters and bombers, let alone nuclear weapons, the modern State is incomparably more powerful today than it was at the time of the French revolution or the Russian and Chinese Revolutions. In comparison to the enormous increase in the political, economic and military power of the State, the individual has been reduced to an insignificant non-entity.

Another significant change which has come about in the 20th century is in the relative predominance of political over economic power. In the last century, Marx and Engels were able to say, with a great deal of truth, that real power vested in the owners of the main means of production

who constituted the capitalist class, and that the political State was merely an executive committee designed to carry out the wishes of the economic masters. With the enormous growth in the power of the State, the co-relation between economic power and political power has undergone a complete change in the present century. While political and economic power in communist countries is concentrated in the same hands, in capitalist countries the successful politicians are in a position to dictate terms to the owners of capital. Those who wield economic power usually work in cooperation with those who wield political power, but the latter predominate over the former. Under the Nazi regime, for instance, Hitler was more powerful than German capitalists and could not truthfully be described as their agent. In the contemporary period, Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain and Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi in India have been more powerful than the industrial magnates in their respective countries. Political vested interests are a greater menace to democracy today than economic vested interests. While even today the fight for freedom and democracy has to be waged against both economic and political vested interests, the latter constitute the more dangerous and more powerful adversary.

How can democracy survive in the context of the ever increasing power of the State? How can the ordinary people control the State which was developing into a monstrous octopus? How can power be radically decentralised so that it would come into the hands of people and would remain vested in them? It was in response to these questions that M.N. Roy developed the concept of an organised democracy, a democracy built up from below.

Organised Democracy

Communism obviously does not supply answer to these questions. It aggravates the problem of a leviathan State by concentration of both economic and political power in a small coterie of leaders. On the other hands, parliamentary democracy, characterised by the institutions of representative government does not also provide a solution to the problem. Parliamentary democracy does not put power in the hands of the people but merely gives the right to choose their rulers once in four or five years. Between two elections, the people remain powerless. Parliamentary democracy provides at best a government for the people, not a government of and by the people. It is a democracy in form but not in content. That is why it was so easily superseded by communism in certain countries and by fascism in others. A solution had to be found by transgressing the limits of both communism and parliamentary democracy.

The solution proposed by M.N. Roy was that of organised democracy. It has four essential features. It is conceived, in the first place, as a State composed essentially of a network of local democracies in villages and town *mohallas* which may be called people's committees. These people's committees are to be the organs of people's power as well as schools of popular education in the principles and conventions of democracy. The State is to be a pyramidal structure, with people's committees at the base and a parliament at the apex. In a parliamentary democracy, the voters are atomised individuals who remain powerless except on the polling day. In an organised democracy, the voters will be active members of small local republics so that they may be able to exercise political power from day to day.

The second feature of organised democracy was a radical decentralisation of power. Such a decentralisation is implicit in the very idea of people's committee. A people's committee would not only be concerned with local self government, but will have the power of economic planning of a local scale, of nominating candidates for election to the State legislatures and the Central Parliament, of giving expression to the will of the people on various issues for the guidance of their representatives, of expressing opinion on proposed legislation for the consideration of legislative assemblies and the Parliament, of recommending the recall of elected representatives from all higher bodies, and of demanding a referendum on any legislative or executive measure of either the Central or the State

Government. Maximum power would thus be decentralised and only those functions would be assigned to district committees, State governments and the Central Government which cannot by their nature be discharged at the lower levels. This is how the ideal of "power to the people" can be realised to a large extent.

This brings us to the third feature of the concept of organised democracy, which consists of ensuring that the functions which cannot be discharged at the level of People's committees and which have to be entrusted to higher centres such as district committees, State Governments and the Central Government are placed in the hands of genuine people's representatives who will remain under the control of the primary voters. This requires that those elected to the higher centres shall be responsible, not to one or the other of the political parties, but to the voters themselves and shall be liable to be recalled by them. This aspect of organised democracy can be conveniently considered a little later while dealing with the concept of party-less politics.

The fourth and by far the most basic feature of the movement for organised democracy is the development of the cultural foundation on which alone a democratic structure can be reared. Organised democracy is after all a device which can enable the people to acquire political power and wield it effectively. But the success of any organisation depends upon the outlook and temper of the people by whom and amongst whom the organisation functions. Organised democracy will not be able to invest political power in the people if the people do not have either the will or the capacity to wield that power. A democratic experiment can ensure the freedom of the people only if people cherish the value of freedom. Those who have no self-confidence and who prefer to be somebody's camp followers cannot become the constituents of a genuinely democratic State. That is why M.N. Roy immediately on his release from jail in 1936 declared that "a cultural revolution must precede a social revolution." In an attempt to define the cultural foundation of an organised democracy, M.N. Roy developed the philosophy of Radical Humanism. In formulating that philosophy, he tried to identify those characteristics of human nature which make democracy possible. The basic characteristic necessary for a successful democracy is recognition of the value of freedom. Freedom is essentially an expression at the human level of the primary biological urge for existence. It comprises of a struggle to secure the means of a comfortable physical existence as well as a social environment congenial to the development of the intellectual, aesthetic and ethical potentialities of human beings. Freedom in this comprehensive sense is made possible by the acquisition of knowledge, and knowledge is acquired by the use of reason for understanding the different facets of human experience. Rationalism, which means the recognition of the value of reason in judging facts as well as values, is thus the second progressive characteristic of human nature. Since human beings cannot achieve anything except by mutual cooperation, moral sensitiveness is the third requirement of human progress. In order, however, that morality should be consistent with individual freedom; it should not be based on religious orthodoxy but should be consistent with free thought. Morality is consistent with freedom because moral sensitivity has been acquired by human beings in the course of their cooperative struggle for existence extending to over a million years. Since the moral impulse is a product of human struggle for existence and since freedom consists of the success in that struggle, there cannot be conflict between freedom and morality provided it is realised that the origin of morality is secular and not religious. The values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality are part of the biological heritage of man and they together contribute to human progress. In social terms, these values can be described as the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity. Liberty comprises the values of freedom and rationality, while equality and fraternity are the moral values essential mutual cooperation. To promote freedom as against fatalism, the promote rationalism as against blind faith, and to promote secular morality as against religious orthodoxy is, therefore, the essence of a cultural movement which is necessary if the experiment of an organised democracy is to succeed. Propagation of

these values is the fourth and the most basic feature of the concept of organised democracy.

Almost the whole scheme of organised democracy was described by Jayaprakash Narayan in his inaugural address to the All India Radical Humanist Conference held in Calcutta towards the end of December 1973. He said that he derived the concept from both Gandhiji and M.N. Roy. He drew a parallel between Gandhiji's *gram sabhas* (village assemblies) and M.N. Roy's people's committees and the value which both of them attributed to the necessity of a radical decentralisation of power. What was left out by Jayaprakash Narayan in describing the concept of an organised democracy was the necessity of developing a democratic culture among the people by disseminating the values of liberty, equality and fraternity. There is, however, no doubt that J.P. cherished these values, although he was not a committed rationalist.

Party-less Politics

The way to an organised democracy in which power will remain vested with the people lies through a new type of political activity described as party-less politics. It consists essentially of a process of disseminating the values of liberty, equality and fraternity amongst the people and developing people's power through suitable grass-root organisations by a body of persons who function as catalytic agents of social change without aspiring for political power for themselves. They function as friends of the people rather than as their leaders or potential rulers. It was in 1947 that M.N. Roy developed the theory of party-less politics and this led to the dissolution of his Radical Democratic Party in December 1948 at a time when it was making satisfactory progress. In the meanwhile, Gandhiji also had proposed the dissolution of the Indian National Congress but it is not known whether Gandhiji had conceived of an Indian democratic State in which the party system would eventually cease to exist. It is necessary to notice the reasons which led M.N. Roy to the conclusion that party politics is not only unnecessary for a democracy, but is actually antithetical to it.

The main defect of the party system, according to M.N. Roy, is that it is based on the delegation of power by the people to party candidates, who after their election remain responsible to their respective parties and not to their voters. Under the party system, the people not only delegate their power to party candidates at the time of voting, but also lose it completely and remain powerless till the next election day. The power thus delegated to party candidates becomes concentrated in the leadership of the successful party which comes to power. If democracy consists of the widest diffusion of power, as insisted upon by both Gandhiji and M.N. Roy, the party system functions in just the opposite direction by concentrating power in a few hands, if not in the hands of a single leader. Political parties, being thus the means of depriving the people of their power and concentrating it in a party leadership, are antithetical to the concept of an organised democracy in which power must remain vested in the people.

The second reason why the party system is harmful to a genuine democracy is that during the struggle for power between political parties, a divorce is brought about between morality and politics. The enormous power presently concentrated in the State operates as an irresistible attraction to political parties with the result that they try to achieve it by hook or by crook. They tend to take advantage of the prejudices and religious sentiments of the people in order to win their allegiance and their votes. In consequence party politics has become a dirty game in all the democracies, and this is particularly so in countries where the people are under the domination of religious orthodoxy and blind faith. Instead of urging the people to have faith in themselves, political leaders ask the people to have faith in their respective parties. They foment and exploit the anti-democratic sentiments of the people based upon narrow nationalism, communalism and other collectivist propensities. While democracy requires a freedom-loving, self-reliant, mutually cooperative people, party politics increases their blind faith, their sense of dependence and their mutual differences.

The analysis of the party system made by M.N. Roy in 1947 has been completely borne out by

the experience of Indian politics during the last 40 years. Under our party system, power has always remained concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Indian people have remained entirely powerless. In the course of their scramble for power, the Indian parties have strengthened communalism, casteism, parochialism and narrow nationalism. During the entire history of the Indian nationalist movement, there was never a period when so complete a divorce between morality and politics was brought about as at present. Party politics has become a terrain in which decent men and women fear to tread.

It is sometimes said that political parties are necessary for democracy because the people cannot do without one or more political organisations. This objection is based on a misunderstanding. People's committees at the local level are the most appropriate political organisations which are necessary for a people's democracy. It is only in the context of the development of people's committees that a gradual obsolescence and ultimate dissolution of political parties is contemplated. It is not suggested that parties should be banned by law. They will become otiose when the people transfer their allegiance to their own committees.

It is sometimes said that no Government can pursue a coherent policy unless it is manned by a political party or by at least a coalition of parties having a common programme. The objection overlooks the fact that there are differences of opinion within every political party which has an element of internal democracy. A party government acts on the basis of a consensus among Cabinet members. If a consensus can be brought about in a Party Cabinet, there is no reason why it cannot be brought about in a party-less Government.

An apparently formidable objection to party-less politics is raised by people who believe that class conflict is the essence of our economic life and that it is the function of political parties to represent the conflicting interests of different classes. What is forgotten here is that a people's committee, if it is formed after the dissemination of the values of liberty, equality and fraternity, will function on the moral plane and that the economic demands of the majority of the deprived sections of society will be upheld by the people's committees on moral rather than merely economic grounds. The class conflict, in other words, will be converted into a moral conflict in which the just demands of the majority will be supported by the people's committee and eventually by their representatives in higher legislative and executive bodies. The essential vulgarity of class conflict will be sublimated into a struggle for freedom and morality.

Total Revolution

The concept of total revolution has resulted from the realisation that both the conventional methods of bringing about social transformation have utterly failed. It is found on the one hand that a communist revolution, like the one visualised by Marx, Engels and Lenin, results in the creation of dictatorship and the consequent eclipse of freedom and equality, particularly in the political field. This is inevitable because, according to the philosophy of economic determinism cherished by communists, the cultural growth of the people and their appreciation of democratic values can take place only after the communists come to power and bring about an economic transformation, as a result of which there would be a material improvement in the people's standard of living. A political evolution, however, in a culturally backward society must necessarily result in the setting up of an authoritarian rule. That has been the invariable experiences of all the communist revolutions that have taken place so far.

A socio-economic revolution, on the other hand, which is intended to be brought about peacefully through the ballot box has also been proved to be an illusion. The experience in India shows that a political party, even when it is led by a charismatic leader of socialist persuasion like Jawaharlal Nehru, was quite unable to bring about a socio-economic transformation in India even after an uninterrupted rule for 17 years. This was because, in the absence of an initiative at the local level on

the part of the vulnerable sections of society, every beneficial measure adopted by the government went to the benefit of the local vested interests. As we observed earlier, the functioning of the party system increases the sense of dependence and helplessness of the people and inhibits local initiative at the grass-root level. Due to the failure of the party system in India, we are presently experiencing a political void in which no political party enjoys the allegiance of the people. The path for a successful revolution will be opened up only when the people, instead of relying on political parties for the solution of their problems, learn to rely on themselves.

The process of total revolution commences with the creation of a climate of self-reliance and mutual reoperation amongst the people. A reference has already been made to grass-root activists who would try to develop the initiative of the deprived sections of society with the object of ensuring power to the people rather than power to themselves. Such grass-root activists are the soldiers of a total revolution. They should choose one or more constituencies for intensive work. They should propagate the values of liberty, equality and fraternity among the people in the locality. They should encourage the people to solve their problems by mutual cooperation. If the problems involve class conflict, the struggle would be conducted on the moral plane and not on the merely economic plane. Some of the economic issues, however, can be tackled by developmental work such as improvement of agriculture and launching small-scale industries. It is also necessary to combat social evils like illiteracy, casteism, communalism and the dowry system. The function of the grass-root activists will be to help the people to help themselves and to show them the ways to tackle these economic and social problems through their own efforts. They will adopt only peaceful means in the pursuit of these activities. They cannot match the State in its military might. Their strength lies, not in *lathies* and guns, but in increasing their organised strength and creating irresistible public support in their favour.

In the process of total revolution, a political transformation of the State will be brought about by the election of people's candidates who will always remain answerable to the primary voters. The work of grass-root activists will result in the formation of people's committees which will be wedded to the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. These people's committees will be minority institutions to start with, but in the course of their work they will come to represent the majority. A network of such people's committees should be developed in a selected constituency. A few months before the election to the legislative body, a conference should be convened of one representative each of all the people's committees, so as to form a people's council. This council should select a suitable person as the people's candidate and secure his success in the election. The candidate will publicly commit himself to being recalled by the people's council. The people's council will be a standing body which will continue to function between two elections and will act as a liaison between the primary voters and the elected candidate. An increasing number of successful people's candidates can eventually establish a genuine people's State. A majority of such candidates in the legislatures will enact laws to bring about a radical decentralisation of power and create a genuine organised democracy.

Quite a few intellectuals, even though they are disillusioned about the utility of party politics, regard the above programme of total revolution as utopian. They mean that the programme is not capable of practical implementation. This pessimism arises from their assumption that the selfless grass-root activists required for a total revolution will come only from the middle class elite. They know that it will take a long time, perhaps several generations, before peaceful social transformation visualised by the concept of total revolution can be achieved. Thousands of grass-root activists will be required for bringing about such a social transformation in a vast country like India. It is difficult to believe that an adequate number of young people from the middle class will devote their whole life for such work when it will bring them neither economic gain nor political advancement. They will in a short time become cynical, accept some gainful employment and relapse into a mundane family life.

What is wrong in this thinking is the assumption that the bulk of grass-root activists required for total revolution will come from the middle class elite. The fact is that it is from the comparatively more educated boys and girls belonging to the deprived sections of society that the bulk of such social activists will emerge. They will be fighting for a better life for themselves and their kith and kin. They will not become cynical or indifferent, because they do not have the alternative of a comfortable family life. The vast majority of the poor and exploited people of India constitute a veritable power house from which an adequate number of grass-root activists will eventually be available for the arduous task of preparing for a total revolution. For the time being, that vast power house remains largely untapped.

There is also another answer to the intellectuals' pessimism. The work of total revolution consists essentially of two parts, first to disseminate the values of democracy among the people and second to increase the people's strength by developing a network of organisations like people's committees. The first of these tasks, consisting of spreading the values of liberty, equality and fraternity among the people, is both possible as well as necessary for the success of even the present limited parliamentary democracy. Work of this type will make the Indian electorate more discriminating and less gullible, with the result that the contest for power between the various political parties in the country will become less vulgar and demoralising. Indian democracy in that case will come up to the standard of most of the western democracies. That will not be a radical revolution in any sense, but will be a step in the right direction. By the time we reach that stage of democratic development, the further task of building up people's power through a network of local republics will appear more plausible.

It is necessary to make a further clarification. The process of total revolution should not be compared to what happened in the so-called J.P. movement of 1974-75. The basis of total revolution is to increase people's power through a network of self-reliant people's committees. That basis was not created when the J.P. movement commenced. It was largely a spontaneous movement against a corrupt and authoritarian regime. In the absence of a framework of an alternative State based on people's power, the only outcome of that movement was to transfer power from one party to another. It was only possible for the movement to transfer power from the ruling party to the people themselves, which is the essence of total revolution. The movement did succeed to a limited extent in removing a corrupt and despotic government, but the Janata Party which came to power as a result of the movement had no revolutionary potential and suffered a deserving death due to the conflicting personal ambitions of its leaders. J.P. himself realised that the movement was not for total revolution, because he announced some time thereafter that the achievement of total revolution will take several generations.

The economy of the post-revolution State will be neither capitalist nor State-owned. It will be predominantly a cooperative economy in which the works will also be the owners of the means of production and the conflict between employers and employees will be eliminated. Since the basis of total revolution will be the dissemination of the values of liberty, equality and fraternity, the revolution will bring about not only political and economic but also social transformation. It will truly be a "total" revolution.

The goal of total revolution will take long time to be achieved but it is certainly a glorious ideal which is worth fighting and dying for. The best tribute which we can pay to Jayaprakash Narayan is to carry on the torch lighted by him land tread the path of peaceful total revolution.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, January 1988.

Political Parties and Party-less Democracy

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

There is a growing school of political thought which regards the party system as being inconsistent with a genuine democracy in which political power will belong to, and remain vested in, the people. Radical Humanists are an important constituent of this school thought. They believe that the basic purpose of political parties is to bring about a rule 'for' the people and not 'of' the people. Political parties according to them are instruments by which the people delegate political power which gets concentrated in the hands of the leaders of the successful political party. They are also convinced that the struggle for power in which political parties are constantly engaged in brings about a divorce between morality and politics and reduces political practice to an unprincipled scramble for power.

Nevertheless, Radical Humanists and other party-less democrats have an active interest in the proper functioning of the party system. They are interested in ways and means by which the internal structure and external behaviour of political parties would be more in consonance with democratic principles. They find some parties more progressive than others. They occasionally ask the people to support one party and oppose another. They are generally more sympathetic to opposition parties than the party in power. There is thus an apparent inconsistency between their rejection of the party system and their interest in the functioning of political parties.

The inconsistency, however, is only superficial. The type of peaceful social transformation which they want, a transformation which M.N. Roy described as "revolution from below" and to which Jayaprakash Narayan gave the name of "total revolution", is essentially a process by which the limited democracy of today will be gradually transformed into a full-fledged democracy of the future. The process does not visualise that the present parliamentary democracy will be replaced by a temporary dictatorship which will eventually establish a free society. On the contrary, those who believe in revolution from below appreciate the value of the limited civil liberties and political rights which are presently available to the people. They desire to preserve and defend these civil liberties and political rights so as to utilise them for expanding the bounds of freedom and creating a genuine democracy in which power will remain vested in the people and will be actually exercised by them. The desire to protect and expand the limited democracy of today explains the active interest which the exponents of party-less democracy take in the functioning of the party system.

In the past this interest has expressed itself in different ways. Radical Humanists and other supporters of total revolution have consistently taken an active part in defending civil liberties and human rights. They have also been keenly interested in efforts to eliminate corruption from political and social life and to reform the electoral system so as to reduce the role of money power, State power and different forms of coercion in the electoral process. When the ruling party exhibited dictatorial tendencies during the period leading to the emergency of 1975-77, they actively opposed it and made a common cause with the democratic opposition. Since continuous one party rule is harmful to the functioning of parliamentary democracy, exponents of party-less democracy have generally favoured the development of an opposition which can present itself as a viable alternative to the party in power.

The present situation in the country is characterised by a political void. While the ruling party is rapidly losing its popular allegiance, there is little likelihood of any viable alternative emerging on the side of the opposition. The opposition consists of number of small national parties which cannot merge to form a single party, two Communist parties and a number of Naxalite groups which on principle will not merge with others, and some regional parties as in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Assam which buy the logic of their existence will remain separate entities. It is

difficult to visualise a viable alternative emerging from these mutually conflicting groups.

While the prevailing political void in the country underscores the failure of the party system as a whole, there is no prospect of the emergence in the near future of a party-less democracy organised from below as visualised by the advocates of total revolution. Party-less democracy requires the development of people's power through a network of people's committees which would sponsor candidates in legislative elections and establish a government of such representatives. It will take a long time before such a people's government can be formed. In the meantime, it is necessary to fill in the present political void by a stable government in order that we may not have a period of anarchy leading to a dictatorial regime. If the ruling party is not able to improve its dwindling image in the country, and dif the opposition is also unable to throw up a viable alternative, the possible drift of the country towards anarchy can be stopped by the formation of a national government composed of the best leaders of all the political parties. Such a development would be entirely consistent with the goal of a party-less democracy. If the establishment of a party-less democracy is to be a peaceful process, it must consist on the one hand of an increasing political enlightenment of the electorate through a process of democratic education and on the other of less animosity and greater cooperation between the existing political parties. It is indeed implicit in the principle of party-less democracy that the existing programmatic differences between political parties would gradually diminish. Such a process should lead to the establishment of an all-party national government. That is the real viable alternative to the present condition of political void and the prospect of anarchy leading to a dictatorial regime.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, February 1988.

The Concept of People's Committees – Is It Feasible?

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

M.N. Roy was the first political scientist in India who conceived and developed the idea that the party system is inimical to the maintenance of a genuine democracy, if by democracy we mean a rule of the people and by the people, and not merely a rule for the people. The party system is the necessary concomitant of the theory of representative government, the people in whom sovereignty is supposed to be vested delegate their power to party representatives from time to time. Direct democracy being not possible in populous modern States, representative government was conceived as a suitable alternative. Since, however, the people have no way of exercising any power during two general elections, the delegation of power by them amounts in effect to a surrender of power, and therefore results in the negation of popular sovereignty. Representative government at its best implies rule for the people and not by and of the people. Such a form of government being characterised by periodic surrender of power by the people has always the tendency of degenerating into some form of oligarchy or dictatorship. In Roy's opinion, representative government, popularly known as parliamentary democracy, must be replaced by an organised democracy, where power would be largely decentralised and would vest in a number of local democracies called people's committees, and where the limited power which remains centralised at different levels will be under the people's control by suitable institutional devices.

The party system, according to Roy, has two main defects. In the first place, the immediate purpose of every political party, however laudable its ultimate objective may be, is to acquire the power delegated by the people. Pursuit of power as the immediate goal creates conditions for it concentration in a few hands. In the case of a successful majority party, the State's power is concentrated in the hands of a small coterie forming the cabinet and sometimes in the hands of a single leader. Since democracy must consist of the widest diffusion of power among the people, such concentration of power is clearly antithetical to the basic concept of democracy. Secondly, the delegation of power by the people necessarily leads to a struggle for power between the contending political parties. Success in the struggle goes to the party which makes the most skilful use of the people's weaknesses. If the people are inclined to orthodoxy and blind faith, these harmful traits are exploited by political parties for getting votes. If the people are susceptible to appeals based on caste or religious antagonism, political parties tend to become the promoters of casteism and communalism. Narrow nationalism being the weakness of many people political parties become the champions of nationalist prejudices and rivalries. The result if that the struggle for power between political parties assumes the form of an unprincipled scramble for power, and moral values cease to have any relevance to political parties.

This critical or negative part of Roy's political theory, consisting of a total disapproval of thee party system, has been fully justified by the history of the last 45 years of Indian politics. It was in June 1947 that Roy delivered a number of powerful speeches describing the undemocratic character and moral turpitude of party politics. Soon thereafter, the limited amount of internal democracy which existed in the Indian National Congress disappeared after it came to power and Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of the ruling Congress party, became virtually the absolute ruler of the country. Some internal elections in the Indian National Congress used to take place at the beginning, but they disappeared in the course of time. No internal elections hqve3 now taken place in the Congress for many years, including the years after the supreme power passed from the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty into other hands. That is also largely true of other political parties. Thus the first objection of Roy that the party system would result in concentration of power and virtual negation of democracy is borne out by practical experience.

Roy's second objection that party politics would bring about a divorce between morality and political practice has been borne out even more vividly and in a more frightening form than Roy himself might have anticipated. Because of the black money collected for meeting the mounting expenses of periodic elections, the whole political administration of the country has reached a level of corruption which is truly alarming. An unholy alliance has also developed in many regions between politicians, the local administration and the anti-social elements consisting of smugglers, land-grabbers, liquor contractors and downright criminals. This criminalisation of politics is not confined to a few parties, but has infected even those parties which were known to have been firmly based on political principles. Lastly, we have reached a stage when a genuine apprehension has arisen that communal animosities, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, would be fomented for political gains to such an extent that Indian democracy itself may be replaced by an indigenous variety of fascism.

While these negative aspects of Roy's political theory have been amply borne out by experience, the positive aspect of his theory, of replacing parliamentary democracy by an organised democracy, a democracy organised from below, has failed to materialise. What Roy desired was that, in the course of time, political parties would be replaced by a network of people's committees at the grass-root level, that these people's committees would remain vested with a great deal of political power, that such power as may have to be exercised at higher centres would be in the hands of persons elected as representatives of the people's committees, that these representatives would remain answerable to the people's committees, and that people's sovereignty over them may when necessary be exercised by suitable methods such as those of recall and referendum. The realisation of the negative part of Roy's political theory and the failure of the positive part to emerge on the political scene has created a dangerous situation in which the existence of event eh defective democracy which we have somehow managed to sustain is now in danger.

Apart from the positive aspect of Roy's political theory consisting of the creation of an organised democracy, there are some other positive aspects in the Indian situation which have been of some help in sustaining the present defective democracy which we possess. In the first place, in 1947, when Roy exposed the defects of the party system and explained its harmfulness to a genuine democracy, he had no reason to visualise a judiciary in India which will have the power of protecting the people's fundamental rights against executive and legislative excesses. That power was given to the judiciary by the Indian Constitution which was formulated between 1947 and 1949 and was promulgated on January 26, 1950. Although the Indian judiciary, even at the highest level, has not been always as free and fearless as one would have liked, it has on the whole played some valuable role in imposing a degree of restraint on legislative and particularly on executive excesses.ds the second check on the exercise of arbitrary power by the executive has been that of the Indian press, both in the English language and in the regional languages. The role of the press has not always been positive, as we witnessed at the time of the anti-Mandal agitation and the wave of self-immolations by young boys and girls, as also in some communal riots and on issues influenced by narrow nationalism like that of the Kashmir valley. Yet, on the whole, it cannot be doubted that the press has played a positive e part in checking executive arbitrariness and also in exposing corruption in high places. Thirdly, there has been and emergence of a fairly strong civil liberties and human rights movement in the country which undoubtedly is a positive feature of recent Indian politics. It is a matter of satisfaction that the role of Radical Humanists in this movement has not been meagre. The fourth and perhaps the most significant of the recent positive developments in our political life is the mergence and multiplication of a number of grass-root organisations working among the deprived sections of society for the amelioration of their conditions of life without being affiliated to any political party.

While these positive factors do show that the Indian political scene is not so gloomy from the

democratic point of view as it may otherwise appear, it is obvious that steps in the direction indicated by Roy must be taken to prevent further degeneration of Indian politics and the possible replacement of our nascent democracy by an Indian variety of fascism as a consequence of the continuing scramble for power by political parties. In this connection it is necessary to emphasise that Roy not merely suggested the replacement of the party system which characterises parliamentary democracy by a system of organised democracy, but he emphasised that this process of replacement must be preceded by the education of the people in the humanist values of individual freedom, self-reliance, self-confidence, mutual cooperation and a genuine attachment to moral principles. This was the essence of the movement which Roy described as the "20th century renaissance", and which, according to him, must precede the formation of people's committees and the creation of an organised democracy. Such a cultural movement is really a movement for strengthening the values of democracy among the people, the values of liberty, equality and fraternity. Even if people's committees ultimately fail to appear on the scene, a movement for disseminating democratic and humanist values among the people is necessary for reducing the rank opportunism in the functioning of political parties, and thereby reducing their harmfulness to our democracy.

Reverting to the concept of people's committees, it must be remembered that there were no *gram panchayats* or *taluka* and district *panchayats* when Roy recommended that people's committees should be basis of an organised democracy which would replace parliamentary democracy. The utility of the *panchayat* system was appreciated by Jawaharlal Nehru and, as a result of his inspiration; the Balwantrai Mehta Committee was formed in the late 1950s for preparing a scheme. The recommendations of that Committee for the formation of village, *taluka* and district *panchayats* was implemented in some States in the early 1960s, particularly in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Initially the experiment created great enthusiasm but it did not last. This was because the people, particularly in the rural areas, were not psychologically and culturally prepared to undertake the responsibility of looking after their own affairs and discharging the responsibility which goes with the possession of power. In other words, the experiment was sought to be implemented without creating the psychological and cultural background, which according to Roy was the necessary basis for the success of an organised democracy.

Recently a *Panchayat* scheme has been incorporated in our Constitution by the 73rd Amendment. According to the Amendment, *panchayats* must be formed by every State at the village level, intermediate level and the district level, except that the intermediate level *panchayats* may not be formed in small States having a population of less than 20 lakhs. The *Panchayats* will have the power of self government and such additional powers as the State legislature may grant them. A Schedule, the Eleventh Schedule, has been inserted to specify these additional powers. They include agriculture, land improvement, consolidation of holdings, minor irrigation, animal husbandry, fisheries and some other functions including those of poverty elimination, development of small scale industries, provision of health care and family welfare. The Constitutional Amendment also lays down that the Governor of every State shall appoint a Finance Commission every five years to review the financial position of *panchayats* and to provide them with adequate funds.

It appears to me that after i of this type are set up in different States, the formation of separate people's committees would be an unnecessary duplication. However, the precondition which Roy visualised as necessary for the success of people's committees will have to be fulfilled at the initial stage. Radical Humanists and other humanist workers should select some constituencies with the object of converting the existing village *panchayats* as well as intermediate and district *panchayats*, which will be conservative bodies to start with, into genuinely democratic people's committees. For this purpose, a good deal of educative work will have to be undertaken for the dissemination of humanist-democratic values mentioned above. In the course of time, a local leadership of

humanist workers would arise and these leaders would increasingly get elected to the local *panchayats*. By working amongst the local people on humanist lines, as their friends, philosophers and guides, these humanists will be able to increase their strength in the *panchayats* so that he latter will in effect be the people's committees of Roy's conception. The *panchayats* should in the course of time demand that they should have the right of setting up their candidates for election to the State legislature and to the Lok Sabha. In this manner, it is possible that the present harmful system of unprincipled political parties scrambling for power would be replaced by people's representatives nominated by truly democratic *panchayats* and elected with the support of such *panchayats*. A good deal of time may be taken in bringing about such a transformation. It is obvious, however, that the work done during this process will purify and strengthen our democracy and in the end we may succeed in bringing about a socio-economic humanist revolution in some selected localities to start with and then in the whole country.

22.12.1993.

(*Paper prepared for the All-India Humanist Study Camp to be held at Hyderabad on December 27-31, 1993.*)

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, January 1994.

Degeneration of Political Parties R. Venkataraman's Laudabale Scheme

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

The most significant development in Indian politics in the last three decades is the gradual, and now irreversible, degeneration of all important political parties into instruments of an un-principles scramble for power. The largest party in the country, the Congress (I), has repeatedly proved itself to be patently opportunistic. The party next in importance is the Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P.), which is blatantly communalistic and which, if it comes to power at the Centre, will strive to establish a government based on "Hindutva" and would thereby destroy India's ideal of a secular democracy. The B.J.P., which is presently in power in the States of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan besides Delhi, is now engaged in softening severity of its communal stance, but the Indian electorate is now wise enough to understand that this is only a political tactic undertaken to secure at least a part of the votes of minority communities in the coming general election of the Lok Sabha.

Apart from the Congress (I) and the B.J.P., the only other serious contender for power at the Centre is the so-called third force, which includes a number of political parties which were formerly part of the National Front under the nominal leadership of Mr. Rama Rao, the present Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, and the Left Front which is mainly composed of the two communist parties, the C.P.I. and C.P.I. (M). The parties, which had formed the National Front do have democratic principles but they have no internal discipline at all, because their leaders are unable to subordinate their personal ambitions to their party principles. If they come to power at the Centre, they can only form what Indira Gandhi contemptuously called a "*Khichdi* Government". The Communist Parties are more disciplined, but they cannot give up their Marxist orthodoxy, and with the fall of communism throughout the world, it is not conceivable that they can, on the basis of their own strength, come to power at the Centre in India.

The degeneration of our political parties has reached a stage where most of the Indian people do not look upon any political party as their own. Their main concern at a general election is to ensure that a party which they consider to be worst does not come to power. All the political parties being bad in different degrees the voters tend to cast their votes in favour of "the least evil" – the party which is relatively the least objectionable.

Degeneration of political parties into instruments of opportunism and corruption was anticipated by M.N. Roy as early as in 1947. In a series of lectures delivered in 1947 and 1948 Roy explained why the party system is inconsistent with a genuine democracy. Roy pointed out that the very purpose of a political party is to acquire power and concentrate it in its own hands and that concentrated power is always a source of corruption. While genuine democracy must aim at the widest diffusion of power among the people, political parties worked in the opposite direction of concentrating power in the hands of their leaders. These views of M.N. Ropy resulted in the dissolution of his Radical Democratic party in December 1948 and the launching of the Radical Humanist Movement.

M.N. Roy, however, felt that if political parties are rejected because they are harmful to a genuine democracy, the people must have another political instrument so that they can wield political power and effectively exercise it. He recommended that People's Committees should be formed in villages and town-*mohallas,* and that these Committees should function as instruments of people's power and schools of their political education. Representatives of People's Committees in a constituency should set up a people's candidate in a legislative election and they should work for their candidate so as to ensure his success. The Parliament should be the apex of a pyramidal

structure based on a network of People's Committees. Political power should be radically decentralised and as much of it as possible should remain with the Primary People's Committees. These Committees should have various constitutionally guaranteed powers, including the right to recall their candidate from the legislature.

Roy visualised that if such an experiment is to succeed, the formation of People's Committees should be preceded by a renaissance movement for spreading among the people the humanist-democratic values, the values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality. Such a renaissance movement should be developed by social workers who would function as friends, philosophers and guides of the people and not as their would-be rulers. They must create among the people by propagating democratic-humanist values, the self-confidence necessary to wield power so as to be the architects of their future. A People's Committee can be successfully formed only when at least a few such principled democrats are created in a village or a town-*mohalla*.

The concept of a party-less democracy reared on a network of People's Committees was fully accepted by Jayaprakash Narayan, probably because he found the concept to be consistent with Gandhian principles. Jayaprakash put in a great deal of effort to popularise this concept.

Since nothing is inevitable in history, a party-less democracy may or may not be realised in the future. It is also possible that it may be realised in a different form. In any case, its realisation is bound to take a long time. In the meanwhile, political parties are bound to continue in India, and unless some effective steps are taken, they will continue as corrupt and unprincipled organisations scrambling for power. Left to themselves, they would create conditions of continuous anarchy which, in the absence of a practicable democratic alternative, may result in the establishment of a dictatorial regime.

Since 1984, all Central governments in India have been weak and unstable. Things are not likely to improve after the general election of the Lok Sabha next year. It is widely expected that the election will create a hung Parliament in which no party will have an absolute majority. The only party which can hope for an absolute after the next election is the B.J.P., but if that party forms its government at the Centre, that itself will be the beginning of the end of Indian democracy. For, in a multi-religious country like India, a state-based on the hegemony of one religion cannot be democratic and will be potentially dictatorial and indeed fascist – somewhat mildly fascist like the one in Franco's Spain.

The chances of the B.J.P. obtaining an absolute majority in the coming election are, however, remote. For the B.J.P., besides being communal, is known to be upper class/upper caste party. It is bound to be opposed not only by all progressive elements but also by the minorities, by the poor, and by the socially backward classes and the communities. Hence the likelihood result of the coming general election will be a hung Parliament.

We have had hung parliaments in India for the last six years. The governments formed recently have been weak, unstable and ineffective. Significantly enough, they were minority governments formed with the support of one or more of the opposition parties. Such minority governments cannot, and do not, command any respect at home or abroad. It is one of the symptoms of the degenerated party system in India that a hung parliament sets up a minority government, rather than a potentially more stable coalition government.

The post-war experience of Western European democracies has shown that multi-party coalition governments can be as stable and as productive as single-party governments. Coalition governments have been in the saddle for most of the post-war period in Western Germany and the Scandinavian countries, and these countries are now among the most affluent in the world. The success of coalition governments, however, depends on the realisation by the parties which form the coalition that the success of their government depends on their ability to place the interests of the general public above their particular party interests. It takes some time before political parties

acquire the maturity required to form stable and successful coalition governments. Lack of the requisite maturity was the reason why coalition governments were unstable and short-lived in pre-war Europe. Political parties in India obviously lack that maturity, and it will take some time before they acquire it. In the meantime the country faces the danger of anarchy followed by the eclipse of democracy and the establishment of a dictatorial regime.

In this critical situation an alternative to the present weak and wobbly governments has emerged from several quarters. The alternative consists of a remedy which is worse than the disease. The proposed alternative is a revival of the idea that instead of the present cabinet form of government we should switch over to the presidential form, like the one which prevails in the United States. It will be recalled that the proposal was anonymously circulated during the declining years of Mrs. Gandhi's rule and was later endorsed by several politicians including Vasantrao Sathe. It was, however, strongly opposed by several others on the ground that the presidential form concentrates a very high degree of power in the hands of the President and is very likely to result in a downright dictatorship, particularly in countries in which democratic values are yet to be firmly rooted among the people. All Presidents in the third world countries have become dictators and that would be the likely result if the experiment is tried in India. The proposal was then quietly dropped, and its present revival deserves the same fate,

Another alternative to the present cabinet system which would put an end to the series of weak and wobbly party governments, which is of a truly democratic character, and which comes as a breath of fresh air in the present suffocating political atmosphere, has emerged from the ex-President of India Mr. R. Venkataraman. The proposal comes from a person who has vast executive experience at the State and Central levels and who, after completing a faultless term of President of the country, is now likely to e free from any party bias. The proposal was made during an inaugural lecture and its summary was published in the *Times of India* of 21.4.1995. It deserves a wider and livelier recognition than it has received so far.

Mr. Venkataraman suggests that instead of the present system of confrontational governments (characterised by a confrontation between the ruling party or parties and the opposition), we should adopt a more democratic system of cooperative governments which would involve the participation of all the sections of the legislature. Mr. Venkataraman suggests that the Prime Minister should be elected by the Lok Sabha by means of a single transferable vote. The elected Prime Minister will not have the right of choosing Ministers and getting them appointed through the President. The Council of Ministers shall be elected by means of a single transferable vote by each House of Parliament, as is being done at present in forming Parliamentary Committees. The Prime Minister will, however, allocate portfolios to the elected Ministers. The elected Prime Minister and Council of Ministers will not resign because of a vote of no-confidence or because any of their proposals are rejected by Parliament. The Council of Ministers will last till the expiry of the term of the Lok Sabha. The decisions of Parliament will of course be binding on the Council. It is implicit in Mr. Venkataraman's plan that similar elected governments will be formed in all the States.

Mr. Venkataraman's alternative contains several other concomitant suggestions which would be highly welcome to all democrats. All legislators will have freedom of expression and freedom to vote. The infamous anti-defection law embodied in the 10th Schedule of the Constitution will become redundant and would be scrapped. The more infamous Article 356 which allows President's rule to be imposed in States would also be abrogated. No declaration of emergency should be issued except with the sanction of 2/3rd members of the Council of Ministers. The privileges of parliament and State legislatures should be codified and if their exercise results in any violation of a fundamental right, recourse should be available to a designated court.

Mr. Venkatkaraman's alternative will require some Constitutional amendments. In particular, Article 75, which empowers the President to appoint the Prime Minister and other Ministers and

which provides for the collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers to the lower House of Parliament, will have to be suitably amended, along with the corresponding Article relating to State.

It is the desire of Mr. Venkataraman that a consensus of all political parties should be developed in support of which he calls his "national alternative to party governments", that the scheme should then be examined by a committee of Constitutional experts to fill up the blanks, and that thereafter the necessary amendments should be placed before Parliament for being passé by the requisite majority.

The advantages of Mr. Venkataraman's "national alternative to party governments" are obvious. It will provide stable governments. It will promote cooperation between political parties instead of the rancour and bitterness which presently govern their relations. Above all, governments under the scheme will be composed of talents from all parties and non-party legislators, instead of the limited talents from the ruling party adulterated by a large admixture of non-entities.

Supporters of party-less democracy will readily recognise that Mr. Venkataraman's scheme which reduces the stranglehold of political parties over its elected members by giving them freedom of expression land freedom to vote, and which will form all-parties governments, constitutes a half-way house between the present parliamentary democracy land the future party-less democracy. Even those who regard the concept of party-less democracy as an impracticable utopia will realise that the system of more stable and more democratic governments proposed by Mr. Venkataraman will give them adequate time to strengthen our democracy by further popularising civil liberties and human rights and by launching movements for combating corruption and for electoral reform.

It is doubtful whether the present political parties which are intent on acquiring power for themselves will take much interest in Mr. Venkataraman's scheme. The scheme, however, should be popularised by non-party democratic organisations like the Citizens for Democracy (C.F.D.). The C.F.D. should set up a committee of Constitutional experts of democratic convictions. The Committee should examine and refine the scheme and the scheme so refined should be popularised throughout the country.

Pune
16.6.1995
Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, July 1995.

Humanist approach to Politics

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

(Paper presented to the Seminar on "Integrated Human Development in South Asia" held in Bombay on January 2-3, 1996).

After the second world war, colonialism disappeared in all the countries in South East Asia as well as in Africa and South America. In most of these ex-colonial countries, imperialism was initially replaced by democratic governments. Soon, however, democracy was replaced by dictatorial regimes in most of these countries with a few exceptions like India. In these few countries also, democracy remains weak and unstable. Democracy had virtually disappeared from India when an emergency was declared in June 1975 and a virtual dictatorship was established. If India's then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi had not committed the mistake of declaring a general election towards the end of 1977, her dictatorial regime might have continued for an indefinite period. At present, Indian democracy is being threatened from a different direction. A Hindu chauvinist party, which also claims to be ardently nationalistic, has a chance of coming to power in New Delhi. A party which combines a religious chauvinism with aggressive nationalism is likely to establish a fascist regime of an Indian variety. That would amount to the virtual disappearance of what remains of a secular democracy in India. In a multi-religious State like India, democracy cannot survive unless it is secular.

The Seminar is concerned with integrated human development in South Asia. It is not difficult to see that integrated human development on a social scale is possible only in a democratic regime. The climate of a dictatorship is clearly inimical to the development of the individual. Humanists are therefore naturally interested in the promotion and maintenance of a genuine democracy.

It should not be difficult to see why, after the disappearance of British imperialism, democracy has either disappeared or has remained very weak and unstable in South Asian countries. The reason is that like all social, economic and political institutions, the institution of democracy requires for its establishment and stability an adequate cultural base. All institutions represent certain human values, and the institutions can survive and can serve their purpose if the persons who run these institutions and the persons among whom the institutions are run cherish to an adequate extent the values represented by those institutions. The weakness of democracy in South Asian countries including India is the result of the relative under-development of the cultural values which are necessary for the sustenance and stability of democracy.

Liberty, equality and fraternity are generally accepted as the values of democracy. Liberty has no meaning unless it is liberty of individuals. It is only individuals who possess a conscious mind and can appreciate and cherish freedom. No society or country can be regarded to be free unless freedom is enjoyed by the individuals who compose it. Now, a person who is dominated by blind faith or religious orthodoxy, who is not self-reliant, and who has no confidence of being the maker of his own future, cannot be a free individual and cannot function as the constituent of a democratic State. For being self-reliant, an individual requires to be a rationalist. He must be a person who relies on his own reason and is not controlled by the dictates of others. Equality and fraternity which, besides liberty, are regarded as the other two values of democracy are moral values necessary for the sustenance of a democratic society. A free man can be a moral man if his morality is self-sustained and is not prescribed by scriptures or laid down by dictators, thus the basic values of democracy – liberty, equality and fraternity – are essentially the same as the humanist values of freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality. Radical Humanists in India are of the view that humanism provides the cultural subsoil on which democracy can be sustained.

It was not a mere coincidence that democracy took birth in Europe after the period of what is known as the European Renaissance. European Renaissance was essentially a humanist movement.

It was a movement against the domination of the priestly class and its driving spirit was to seek progress in this world rather than in the next one. The values which gradually emerged from the renaissance movement were the humanist values of individual freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality, provided the background of the French revolution and the birth of democracy in Europe.

The fact that the humanist values of individual freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality, which form the value-base of democracy, are not adequately developed explains why democracy was either replaced by dictatorship or has remained weak and unstable in third world countries including the countries of South Asia. Propagation of humanist values among the people, by working with them for the solution for their problems, is therefore essential for the reintroduction or sustenance of democracy in these countries.

However, as will be presently shown, democracy in Western countries including the USA is also superficial and lacking in depth, though it is relatively much more stable. The reason probably is that the humanist values generated by the renaissance movement, and developed in subsequent periods of Reformation and Enlightenment, did not have an adequate scientific basis. The science of biological evolution, which provides such an adequate basis to humanist values, is a comparatively recent development. Till then, no satisfactory explanation could be given to the origin of human reason, which continued to be regarded as a God-given faculty or a mysterious "category" of the human mind. Morality also could not be given a scientific sanction and it was, therefore, difficult to dispel the popular perception that religion must be strengthened if morality is to prevail.

Individual freedom is the central humanist value. The urge for freedom can now be traced to the urge for existence which, as emphasised by Charles Darwin, is the primary urge of the entire biological world. Because of much higher reasoning faculty possessed by human beings, their urge for existence takes the form of an urge for freedom. Freedom so understood means that human beings naturally aspire, not only for the satisfaction of their physical needs but also for an atmosphere congenial to the development of their mental faculties – intellectual, aesthetic and ethical.

The origin of human reason can now be traced to the fact that the universe is law-governed. That is why the application of reason to human experience results in the discovery of the "laws" of nature. Scientific development would not have been possible if the universe were not law-governed. Possession of reason in animals and, in a much higher form, in human beings can be traced to the fact that no animal species could have survived in the law-governed environment unless it possessed reason at least in a rudimentary form.

Morality in human beings, as explained by Darwin, arises from the fact that homosapiens are a gregarious species and they derive satisfaction from staying together, developing friendships and helping each other. Gregariousness was necessary for their survival. This social instinct, as Darwin called it, is the source of morality. Morality does not require the assistance of religion. It can be sustained by the fact that a moral life is a life of enlightened self-satisfaction. A free man can be moral without losing his freedom because his morality is self-sustained. Humanist values can thus be propagated with the sanction of science and with the confidence that they are ultimately bound to prevail because they represent the truth.

Democracy as it is developed in Western Europe and America is, however, essentially superficial. It provides for the rule, not of the people, but of political parties which claim to represent them. To be real, democracy must mean the rule of the people and not merely a rule for the people. Such a genuine democracy requires a radical decentralisation of power. Radical Humanists believe that, for this purpose, the State should consist of a network of local republics which may be called People's Committees, that as much power as is possible should vest in the primary People's Committees, that power which is required to be exercised at higher levels of government should be in the hands of persons who are the real representatives of the people and who are subject to their control and recall, and that the parliament should be the apex of such People's Committees and intermediate centres of

power. It is hardly necessary to add that such a genuinely democratic state can be achieved only on the basis of the development amongst the people of a humanist culture centred round the values of individual freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality. People's Committees cannot be the primary centres of people's power unless the people have both the desire and the capacity to exercise that power.

Radical Humanists believe that in such a truly democratic State, political parties will be redundant. Even now, the political parties everywhere and particularly in South Asian and other third world countries, play a role which on the whole is detrimental to democracy. There are two reasons why Radical Humanists do not believe that the party system can subsist in a genuine democracy organised form below. In the first place, parties operate as the means by which power is taken away from the people (at the time of general elections) and concentrated in a few hands. This is true to a considerable extent even in Western democracies but is far more evident in democracies such as the one in India. Every political party which ruled with a clear majority in India had always a tremendously concentrated power in its hands, and it was never accountable to the people. The second defect of the party system is that, in their struggle for power, parties pander to the weaknesses of the people, such as their blind faith and their adherence to the evil traditions of casteism and religious communalism. In fact, it is now openly admitted that political parties in India are criminalised to a large extent. It is also the money required during struggle for power between political parties which is the main cause of the tremendous increase of corruption in the country, with the result that governments in India have become instruments of exploitation of the people.

Instead of candidates for the legislatures being nominated by political parties, Radical Humanists propose that the People's Committees should be utilised for the purpose of nominating "people's candidates" and getting them elected. Representatives of the People's Committees in each legislative constituency can form an enlarged People's Committee of that constituency, and this committee can nominate a candidate and help him or her in getting elected. Such a People's Committee of a constituency can be a standing body which can oversee the work of its representative in the legislature and will have the power of recalling its representative if this is found necessary.

Radical Humanists have no doubt that it will take a long time before an adequate cultural base can be created and a State consisting of People's Committees and People's representatives in higher legislative bodies can be set up. Radical Humanists are aware that in the meantime the present defective parliamentary democracy will continue to exist and political parties will continue to function. Radical Humanists, however, think that even during the continuance of the present parliamentary democracy, the propagation of humanist values amongst the people will reduce the mischief of political parties, make them more accountable to the people and check the growth of corruption and the present vulgarisation of the political process. Propagation of humanism is a remedy for the present situation and also the hope for a brighter future.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, January 1996.

Democracy and the Party System

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

I will deal with the major socio-political evils which have arisen in India from the party system, the reasons why such evils are inherent in that system, the characteristics of a party-less democracy, and the stages by which such democracy can be attained.

Major Socio-Political Evils and their Origins

One of the major socio-political evils in the country is the enormous increase in political and administrative corruption. Some degree of corruption was always thee in government services in India, but the scale of corruption started increasing from about 1967 with the increase in the election expenses of political parties. Corruption has been increasing all the time thereafter, both in political and in administrative circles. Recent cases in the Supreme Court and High Courts have revealed that corruption on a large scale prevails even at the highest level of every political party and administrative service. Corruption has grown to such a scale in all administrative services that there are only a few officials who perform their legal duties without some illegal gratification. It was recently said by one of our Prime Ministers that not more than 19% of the money spent on any developmental project reaches the target. This means that the money spent by the government for promotion of say primary education and provision of medical aid, or for the construction of roads and irrigation dams, is misappropriated to the extent of about 80%. Political corruption results from the enormous resources required for contesting elections and the temptations arising from the possession of power. It is legitimate to infer that the increase in administrative corruption follows the increase in political corruption. Thus the struggle for power between political parties and the concentration of power in the hands of the successful party are the main causes of the increasing corruption in the Indian polity.

Another evil of the same type and arising from the same causes is the admitted criminalisation of politics. It is known that anti-social criminal elements, having contact with the police and local politicians, are able to procure a number of votes for any party of their choice. Since the attainment of political power is the aim of every political party, they welcome the influx of criminal gang leaders for increasing their vote strength.

Another major evil is the recent increase in communalism, particularly of the majority community. This is the direct result of the deliberate policy pursued by the BJP and its supporters politicalised the issue of Babri Masjid *versus* Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. For this purpose, a systematic programme was undertaken, first of "*shila pujan*", then "*rath yatra*" and finally the gathering at the place of the Babri Masjid on a particular day of a large number of committed communalists, when the only work which the fathering would do was to destroy the Babri Masjid and lay the foundation of a Ram Mandir. The B.J.P. leadership, having come to realise that the programme of increasing communal tension by promoting *Hindutva* increases their voting strength but at the same time prevents them from getting an absolute majority, now wants to curb its communalist programme, but the leaders of the Sangh Parivar consisting of the RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajarang Dal, are not willing to give it up.

Lastly, the struggle for power between political parties has increased political opportunism to an extent never seen before. Since no political party is able to get an absolute majority at the Centre, a large number of small parties, sometimes consisting of only two or three members, have sprung up for the purpose of bargaining with any of the larger parties which can form a Government on the basis of coalition with other parties. Alliances are being formed, not on the basis of any principles, but only for the purpose of sharing power. Coalitions formed on such an opportunistic basis cannot create a stable Government. That was the experience of the last National Front Government and that

is also the characteristic of the present BJP-led government.

Party System Inconsistent with genuine Democracy

The above evils in Indian politics have obviously resulted from the struggle for power between different political parties and the concentration of power in a few hands. In a genuine democracy, however, power should remain vested in the people and should not be delegated to political parties. The evils of the party system are found in all existing democracies, though they are more in evidence in comparatively less developed countries like India.

The shortcomings of the party system were first pointed out by M.N. Roy who also indicated the way in which a genuine party-less democracy, in which power will remain vested with the people, can be developed. Jayaprakash Narayan agreed with the views of M.N. Roy and tried to popularise the idea of a party-less democracy. According to Jayaprakash Narayan, Gandhiji also was not in favour of primacy being given to a political party because, as is well known, he had, just before his death, drafted a resolution to be placed before the All India Congress Committee (AICC), for the dissolution of the Indian National Congress and its conversion into an organisation for social service.

The following were the main reasons why M.N. Roy was of the view that the party system was inconsistent with genuine democracy:

(1) Democracy must mean the rule by and of the people and not rule for the people. Rule for the people, in which political power is vested in a person or a group of persons other than the ordinary people, can be described as a benevolent democracy and is not a genuine democracy.

(2) Political parties deprive the people of power after the day of the general election and the power then gets concentrated in a few persons who form the leadership of the party or parties in power. While democracy implies the widest diffusion of power, the party system leads to its concentration.

(3) Although political parties claim that they want to have power for the purpose of promoting the good of the people, in practice, the attainment of power becomes the main aim of the political parties. The struggle for power between different parties tends to become an unprincipled scramble for power, with the result that political practice gets entirely divorced from morality. This happens in all the countries where the party system prevails, but is particularly evident in culturally under-developed countries.

(4) The party system is sought to be justified on the ground that parties represent different economic interests. This justification had some validity in the past, but it is not valid now. In economically developed capitalist countries, the middle class is the most numerous class and its interests are not exclusively represented either by a capitalist party or by a labour party. Moreover, with the advancement of education and social culture, increasing numbers of people cast their votes in favour of what they regard to be just and fair, and not in conformity with their individual class interests. In developing countries like India, the overwhelming majority of people are poor and all parties claim that they represent the interests of the poverty-stricken majority. The theory that parties represent class interests is no longer a justification for the party system.

The alternative of a party-less democracy

M.N. Roy and Jayaprakash Narayan believed that a genuine democracy can be built up on the basis of small republics which may be called people's committees. In a country where the *gram panchayats* have been formed, the *gram panchayats* can fulfil the functions of the people's committees visualised by M.N. Roy and Jayaprakash Narayan. Political power should be radically decentralised

and the maximum power should be vested in the people's committees (or *gram panchayats* and ward committees in towns). The people's committees should function openly and all people of the locality should have the right to attend their meetings.

Since all power cannot be fully decentralised, power to some extent would remain with Central and State Governments as well as organisations of the State at the district and block levels. The people's committees should have the right to nominate candidates for the higher legislative bodies of the State. If the system of people's committees functions in a proper democratic way, the candidates proposed by the people's committees would be persons of moral integrity and social commitment, and they would get elected in preference to party candidates. Higher legislatures can thus be formed of representatives nominated by people's committees. These representatives should be liable to be recalled by a majority of the people's committees in the constituencies from which they are elected.

The success of such a scheme of organised democracy depends on the extent to which the people become self-reliant and are willing to cooperate with each other for the common good. The spirit of self-reliance and mutual cooperation among the people can be created by propagating the humanist values of freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality among the people. The same values became popular at the time of the French Revolution as the values of "liberty, equality and fraternity". Propagation of these values and the creation of a spirit of self-reliance and mutual cooperation among the people can be the cultural basis of a successful party-less democracy.

The way to attain a genuine party-less democracy

A cultural transformation in the manner mentioned above, which will make the people self-reliant and mutually cooperative, is essential for a State in which power is decentralised and vested in people's committees. The process can be helped by country-wide movement in favour of human rights among the people. Such a movement must be undertaken by voluntary organisations, the so-called NGOs. Many such organisations already exist in India. They should work with the conscious objective of empowering the people through the propagation of the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity and thus developing the spirit of self-reliance and mutual cooperation among them. A law ensuring freedom of information will greatly aid this process.

While such a movement of empowering the people is developed from below, some change at the higher legislative level is also desirable, particularly in order to have stable and pro-people governments at the Centre and in the States. At present we have unstable governments in the country which are governed by an unprincipled coalition of parties. This situation can be altered and improved if the proposal made by Shri R. Venkataraman, the former President of India, for an alternative system of Government is accepted. His proposal in substance is that the Prime Minister at the Centre should be elected by the Lok Sabha, that the number of ministers should be fixed in advance at 10% of the membership of the Lok Sabha and they should be elected by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, that the elected Prime Minister should have the right of assigning portfolios to the elected ministers, and that the Anti-Defection Law should be abolished. If such a scheme is accepted, we will not only have a stable Central Government which will last the whole period of five years, but the Government will consist of the ablest leaders from different political parties. Moreover, the Government so elected will be under the supervision of members of Parliament who, being free from the party whip, will be able to exercise their judgement in evaluating the performance of the Governments elected by them. A similar type of party-less Governments can be formed in all the States and union Territories. The formation of such elected governments would be a half-way step towards the creation of a healthy party-less democracy in which Central and State Governments would be manned by people's nominees and political power will remain vested with the people at the grass-root level.

New Delhi, May 2, 1998.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, June 1998.

Political Parties and Perversion of Democracy

M.A. Rane

"The more you read about politics, you got to admit that each party is worse than the other." – Will Rogers.

The major premise and justification of the party system in the working of the modern democratic state is that democracy will not be successful and effective without the functioning of political parties competing to capture political power.

The members of every party assume that unless their party is returned to power, the problems the people face will not be solved successfully and satisfactorily, and no other viral competing party can discharge that role. Therefore, every attempt should be made for their party to succeed in capturing power by all possible means, fair or foul. In politics, as in war and love, everything is fair and the end justified the means. Once the power is captured, the party must strive to continue in power by all means. Scruples, honesty, rectitude and morality are all relegated to secondary position and rendered irrelevant in the struggle for power. Thus politics and political practice, necessary for the progress and well being of mankind, are reduced to an unscrupulous scramble for power.

It is assumed that political parties secure power through a fair and democratic electoral process under a democratic constitution. Once returned to power, the elected representatives are presumed to function for and on behalf of the electorate. Contesting elections in a modern state, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, requires the candidates and their parties to spend huge amounts of money running into crores, collected by all possible means, fair or foul. It is no secret that in all countries, the major part of the funds for elections is collected by questionable means. The fund largely comprises unaccounted, black money, collected from various shady sources. Those who contribute to the huge political funds, particularly the corporate sector and organisations of special interest, are not motivated by charitable or ideological considerations. Largely, they are on *quid pro quo* basis with a stipulation or expectation that if the party they finance is returned to power, the party will return certain favours to the donors.

The party already in power stands a stronger position to collect huge funds for the next elections either through kickbacks or commissions in governmental deals and also by coercing the prospective donors or by making false promises to them. Political parties, possessing muscle power, have been resorting to extortion in collection of election funds. Further, those collecting the party funds palm off part of it by way of self-enrichment. Politicians like Sukhram are standing examples of such degeneration of political parties. Still, with a party of only four MLAs in the H.P. assembly, he has been accommodated by the BJP as No. 2 Minister to enable the BJP for forming its Government in that State. The same BJP had stalled the working of Parliament for 11 days for alleged corruption by Sukhram while in the Rao Ministry.

Questionable Methods

In the two classical homes of democracy worked by the two party system, i.e., the USA and Great Britain, what is the substantial difference between their two parties? Will Rogers, the American satirist, used to say that the difference between the Republicans and the Democrats is one of tweedledum and tweedledee. Their methods of collecting election funds and election campaigns are identical. They are more marked during the Presidential elections. Image building of the Presidential candidates in the media and the hype are important factors contributing to success. Apart from contributed dinners, other questionable methods for collecting election funds are resorted to. In the last Presidential election, it came to light that some enterprising foreigners collected huge funds for the election of Bill Clinton. With the self-liberation of Afro-American blacks, the ideological difference

between the two parties has disappeared, except as historical hangover. In the Congress, the Republicans and the Democrats have freedom to vote according to their conscience. On many issues, some Republicans and Democrats vote on the same side.

In Great Britain, the original home of modern democracy and the two-party system, ideological differences between the Conservatives and Labour are also disappearing, thanks to the working classes acquiring the status of the middleclass. With the collapse of communism in Soviet Russia, and the failure of the State-controlled command economy in building a welfare state, it is difficult to distinguish between the programmes of the two rival parties. In the last, election, Tony Blair for the Labour adopted several measures introduced by diehard Margaret Thatcher and her successor and the British electorate opted for the Labour as the Conservatives were in power for a pretty long time.

In India, the situation is much more confusing. Both before Independence, and thereafter for nearly three decades, the Congress Party dominated. It was difficult to regard it as a political party with one well defined programme. The Congress was more of an umbrella, accommodating various ideologies, interests, viewpoints, religions, castes and classes – reflecting the plural nature of our society. Before Independence, in the last phase, the Muslim League spearheading the aspirations of the Muslims, challenged the monopoly of the Congress and succeeded in portioning the country. After Independence, the Congress was unchallengeable due to the charismatic leadership of Nehru and others who had sacrificed during the struggle for Independence. The break came in the elections of 1967 when fissures were noticed in the monopoly of the Congress. Several local parties representing interests of certain castes or classes that thought themselves to be neglected by the Congress, particularly in the North, reduced the strength of the Congress in the Lok Sabha. The final breach in the Congress monopoly was brought about by Mrs. Indira Gandhi ousting the old guards described as the Syndicate.

Emergency

Having tasted the fruits of power, the Congressmen were getting corrupt, resorting to self aggrandisement and losing their credibility and live touch with the common people and failing to safeguard the interests of the vulnerable sections of the people. Mrs. Gandhi institutionalised corruption in the Congress and being surrounded by cronies and sycophants resorted to catchy slogans like '*Garibi Hatao*', concentrated all powers in herself and destroyed or weakened all institutions which were the pillars of democracy such as the Congress party, the Cabinet, the Parliament, the press and the judiciary. Finally, she derailed democracy by declaring Emergency in 1975 in order to retain herself as Prime Minister, deprived the people of their basic freedoms, imposed a draconian censorship, intimidated the judiciary and imprisoned without trial nearly one lakh of dissenters headed by Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Vajpayee, Dandavate and almost all leaders of the opposition parties as well as dissidents from her own party like Chandrashekhar, Krishna Kant, Mohan Dharia, and others. The MISA, the law of Preventive Detention, was drastically amended so as to deprive the detenues of their fundamental right of moving the courts for the writ *habeas corpus.*

What is to be noted is all the above drastic and undemocratic steps were taken by Mrs. Gandhi and her coterie on the pretext of putting back democracy on rails, but actually for entrenching herself in the seat of power by assuming dictatorial powers and silencing all dissent. It was in fact castration of democracy, reminiscent of Nazi or Communist totalitarianism. It was an irony that the dictatorial powers were acquired by ascent to power through the democratic electoral process of parliamentary democracy. It was destruction of democracy through democratic process and with the tacit consent o a captive Cabinet and Parliament.

The people of India freed themselves from native slavery by defeating Mrs. Gandhi and her Congress (I) Party in the parliamentary elections of 1977, declared by her on the assurance of sycophants and state intelligence out to please her that she would win hands down in the elections.

There was a ray of hope of revival of democracy and alleviation of the suffering of the people submerged in poverty and illiteracy, deprived of even basic needs of subsistence, let alone a civilised life. But the ray of hope plunged itself into darkness due to the inexorable logic of unscrupulous scramble for power by competing political parties. Various experiments of permutations and combinations were tried by the opposition parties to encash the gross abuse of powers by the Congress party whenever it was returned to power. But they were all doomed to failure. There were manoeuvres, intrigues, horse-trading, purchase of elected representatives of other parties either by payment or by offering ministerial positions. But these questionable means adopted with the sole object of capturing power were bound to fail and in fact did fail.

Carbon Copies

The mighty Congress Party which had earned gratitude of the people , because of its sacrifices during the struggle for independence and the credibility of its earlier leadership, was reduced to a corrupt power-machine, its leaders and members indulging in self-aggrandisement and self-enrichment, nepotism, promoting the interests of themselves and their near and dear ones, associating with criminals and shady characters, being accountable to none and still manoeuvring to seats of power. Some of the opposition parties who captured power in states, behaved similarly becoming carbon copies of the corrupt Congress. There was increasing criminalisation of politics. Every succeeding election was marked with more violence and corrupt practices, more use of money power and muscle power, returning known criminals and the corrupt to the legislatures and seats of power.

The erstwhile Jan Sangh resurrected as Baharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980 with its congenital bias against minorities, particularly the Muslims, resorted to various gimmicks and rabble-rousing for displacing thee Congress. Vajpayee's experiment with Gandhian Socialism having failed, his successor his successor Advani resorted to aggressive Hindutva, the main plank of the Sangh Parivar, took out a *Rathyatra* in a Toyata converted into a *Rath* and ultimately was a silent witness along with his senior colleagues like Murli Manohar Joshi and rabble-rousing Uma Bharati to the perfidy of demolition of the 400-yer old Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, resulting in serious communal riots in Mumbai, and in several parts of the country. The BJP encashed on *Hindutva*, captured power in some States and went on increasing its tally in the Lok Sabha from 2 MPs in 1984 to 180 in 1998. Now at last, the saffron brigade has captured the *takht* of Delhi, not on their own strength, but with the help of about 89 MPs belonging to about 16 allies and even Independents.

It is significant that after 1984, the electorate has not returned either the Congress or BJP, the only two competing national parties, with absolute majority to the Lok Sabha. They had to align themselves with splinter groups, regional parties and even non-descript individuals. In UP, the BJP entered into a ludicrous arrangement with its sworn enemy, Kanshiram's BSP, of sharing office of Chief Ministership for six months each by Mayawati and Kalyan Singh. The arrangement having failed, there was no government for some months. Ultimately, the BJP indulged in horse-trading brought about 'legal' defection in the Congress and BSP, and Kalyan Singh formed a jumbo cabinet of 90 ministers by giving berths in the ministry to each and every one of the defectors.

The rowdy scenes seen in the U.P. Assembly on TV by the entire world were disgusting. The elected representatives of the people belonging to all the parties removed the microphones and flung them at each other, causing injuries. Short of uprooting of microphones of the U.P. Assembly, scenes were replicated in the Lok Sabha on the motion of confidence moved by the Prime Minister Vajpayee on 27th and 29th March 1998. Similar violence took place in the Bihar assembly. The people of India are required to hang their heads in shame before the entire world for the criminal conduct of their elected representatives in the legislative houses where they are expected to conduct themselves with dignity and to maintain decorum, to debate and not to shout and fight. How is it that political parties nominate such rowdies and criminal elements as their candidates and the electorate is left

with no choice but to elect one or the other criminal?

Pursuit of Power

The democracy in India founded on an ideal Constitution is thus reduced to a mockery by the candidates put up by all political parties including the two national parties, who aspire to secure absolute majority in the legislative houses including the Lok Sabha. None is serious in solving the urgent problems facing the people. This is all the result of unscrupulous pursuit of power by the political parties.

Is there no way out for the unfortunate people of India to liberate themselves from such an ugly situation? Has human ingenuity come to its wits end? Can we not have politics and political organisations of the society without he vicious participation of political parties? After all, in human history, political parties as we understand today, have emerged only during the last two hundred years,

Among political philosophers, M.N. Roy gave a serious thought to this disturbing problem long before India became independent and adopted our Constitution. The Constitution makes no reference whatsoever to political parties, except in the Tenth Schedule embodying the anti-Defection Law introduced in 1985. During our struggle for Independence, Roy as a Congressman had advocated formation of a Congress Committee in every village and *mohalla* in urban areas and they should function as rival organs of the State by way of challenge to the British government. During World War II, Roy predicted that on the defeat of Fascism, Great Britain will be constrained to transfer power to Indians by liquidating their empire. He therefore appealed that Indians should be ready with a blue-print of an economic plan and a democratic Constitution. He and his colleagues in their erstwhile Radical Democratic Party framed a draft Constitution of Free India in 1944. Roy had come to the conclusion that the liberal parliamentary democracy reduces the individual citizens to helpless atoms unable to withstand the onslaught of totalitarian parties and an authoritarian state. Hence it should be replaced by an organised democracy.

The basic features of the Draft Constitution was that the organisation of the State should be like a pyramid, the base of the pyramid being a network of local republics or people's committees in the village and in *mohallas* in urban areas, freely elected by the local people. These people's committees should be the ultimate repositories of sovereignty that vests in the people. The people's committees, besides functioning as local self-governments, should also exercise a permanent control over the affairs of the State. They should have power to recommend candidates for the election to the higher legislative bodies, to examine merits of proposed laws by all legislatures, to initiate new legislation, to recall their representatives from legislatures if need be, to demand a referendum on vital issues and to express the will of the people on all important matters.

People's Committees

Secondly, the local People's Committees shall play an important role in election of representatives to the legislative bodies of Mandal Committees, Zilla Parishads, State Assemblies and the Central Parliament. One member from each People's Committee will constitute an electoral college to elect by consensus or by majority the people's candidate to the Mandal Committees. The same process will be followed in electing representatives to the higher bodies (vide *Draft Constitution of Free India* published in 1944, *New Humanism* by M.N. Roy and Chapter 13 on *Political Organisation, Organised Democracy in Radical Humanism* by V.M. Tarkunde).

The concept behind this electoral process is to effect decentralisation of power to prevent the citizens from going to sleep after casting their votes in a periodical election, to ensure continuous control over the affairs of the State by the People's Committees and to free the present electoral process from large constituencies involving enormous expenses vitiated by demagogy, money power, muscle power, violence and manipulations.

By 1946, Roy and his colleagues evolved the philosophy of New or Radical Humanism by going beyond liberal parliamentary democracy and totalitarian Communism. The philosophy, the form of political organisation and economic organisation were formulated in the form of 22 Theses. Consistent with this philosophy they voluntarily dissolved their Radical Democratic Party at a Conference held at Calcutta in December 1948.

At or about the same time before Independence, Gandhiji thought on similar lines as those of Roy in evolving the idea of decentralisation of power and the vesting of ultimate political power in the local bodies like the village *panchayats* and *gram sabhas*. There are certain differences in the background and concepts of Roy and Gandhiji. However, Gandhiji was not allowed to live longer to work out the full details of a decentralised State. Jayaprakash Narayan adopted the principle of decentralisation of power and the concept of local organs of People's Committees. The Gandhians, following J.P. and the Radical Humanists led by V.M.

Tarkunde came together along with certain freedom-loving citizens like Justice Chagla and formed in April 1974 a new non-party organisation known as "Citizens for Democracy" (CFD) for carrying out the above objects. The CFD played a vital role in resisting the Emergency rule and in restoring parliamentary democracy, which at least allows freedom to express new ideas and to make new experiments in organisation of society including the State.

It is not claimed that the aforesaid system is fool-proof. It is not advocated that political parties should be dissolved by law or by force. The Fundamental Right of Freedom to form associations precludes such a course. Even otherwise, such a course is improper. Secondly, the political parties cannot be just wished away. Organised democracy can be ushered in by persistent and selfless efforts on the part of NGOs and Human Rights organisations, who will educate the people at the grass-root level in the values of democracy and in empowering the people, without aspiring for themselves to secure offices of political power.

Today, a golden opportunity is provided to such selfless workers to experiment in the concept of party-less organised democracy as against the power-centred politics pursued by all political parties, in view of the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts 1992 that came into force with effect from 24.4.1993, embodying the concept of *Panchayati Raj* in the Constitution. The *Panchayati Raj* system has received constitutional recognition with elaborate provisions for empowerment of the people, particularly the weaker sections, for allotment of funds and working of the *Panchayats* in rural areas. It also provides for municipalities in urban areas, defines their powers, authority and responsibilities in the newly added 11th and 12th Schedules to the Constitution. Opportunities should be taken by the people to convert these constitutionally recognised local institutions into People's Committees, exercising powers of recommending candidates to the legislatures and control over the State and ultimately convert our State into a party-less organised democracy.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, June 1998.

Concept of a Humanist State – Re-examined and Revisited

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

In the issue of the *Radical Humanist* of January 2003 (Issue No. 394), I had published an article titled "Party-less Politics and People's (Humanist) State: a Picture for Public Discussion". In that article, I had presented in a summary form the constitution of a democratic State, which would be free from power politics and in which power would remain vested in the people. In the introductory part of the article, I had stated that what was presented in the article was "a suggestion meant for public discussion rather than a blue print of a government free from power politics". As this was the first attempt to present a picture of a democracy free from the evils of power politics, I had expected that the article would evoke a good deal of public discussion. However, although there is no doubt that most people are disgusted with the power politics which is being witnessed in India in recent years, my article did not provoke any public reaction.

I now realise that the main cause why my article did not generate any public debate was that hardly any attempt was made by me and by other radical humanists to let a substantial section of the public know the contents of my article so that they may see how easy it is to remove the curse of power politics and how the consequent cleaner politics can help the people in achieving social progress at a more rapid rate than at present. In the 16th of the "22 Theses" of New Humanism, M.N. Roy stated: "A social renaissance can come only through determined and widespread endeavour to educate the people as regards the principles of freedom and rational cooperative living." Such endeavour is yet to be undertaken to let the people know the substance of my article.

There is one exception to my statement that no public discussion was evoked by my article. The exception is an article written by M.A. Rane and published in the March 2003 issue (Issue No. 396) of the *Radical Humanist* under the title "Response to V.M. Tarkunde's outline of Party-less Politics and People's (Humanist) State". While generally agreeing with my outline of a Humanist State, Rane has pointed out some omissions, which it is necessary to fill up. I am writing this to supply the omissions and also to make some additions to, and a few clarifications of, my outline of a Humanist State for India.

For a long time (nearly ten months) has elapsed after the publication of my outline of a Humanist State in Issue No. 394 of the *Radical Humanist*, I will first give, in a very summary form, the main features of my proposal, so that the reader may not be required to go back to the old *Radical Humanist* issue.

In the proposed Humanist State, there will be a separation between the State's legislative and executive functions. Members of the Central and State legislatures will be debarred from occupying any executive post of the State. The State will be Presidential, not Parliamentary.

The President as well as the State Governors will be elected on the basis of adult franchise. Their tenure would be of five years. Before the end of their tenure, the President and the Governors will form ad hoc committees, which would frame rules for confining the candidature for the election of the President and Governors to those who have fair chance of getting elected.

In order to prevent this presidential system from degenerating into a dictatorship, the proposed scheme provides a number of "checks and balances". One check will be a vibrant public opinion against any exercise of arbitrary power. The provision of elected (instead of appointed) Governors would facilitate a sharing of executive power between the President and the Governors. The Parliament will appoint an Advisory Council which will cooperate with the President in the discharge of his duties, so as to constitute a "Participatory Democracy". The President will appoint the heads of various departments (corresponding to present Ministers) in cooperation with the Advisory Council. Some members, 5 to 10 in number, of the Advisory Council should be attached

to each of the more important departments. The Governors and heads of the more important departments should constitute the President's cabinet. Before the lapse of 2-1/2 years after the general election, the President and each departmental head should seek the confidence of the entire electorate. Their continuation in office would depend on their getting a vote of confidence from the electorate. If any measure of the Government is disapproved by a majority of the Advisory Council, and if all the attempts to remove the disagreement fail, the issue or issues should be settled by a referendum to the entire electorate. A similar system of Advisory Councils and their cooperation with the Governors should be adopted at the State level.

One important feature of the proposed Humanist State is that it calls for an all round decentralisation of power. Responsibilities and powers should be transferred from the President to Governors and from Governors to the *Panchayat* system down to the Gram *Panchayat* and *Gram Sabha* on the one hand, and to Municipalities and Ward Committees on the other. A provision should be made to ensure that out of the powers mentioned in the 11th and 12th Schedule of our Constitution, some specified powers must be transferred to each Gram *Panchayat* and *Gram Sabha* and to each municipality. Democracy consists of power "of" the people and not power "for" the people. In the case of *Gram Panchayats*, a number of responsibilities can be discharged directly by the primary members, either individually or in cooperation with other members. They should be empowered and encouraged to do so. When any function of the *Gram Panchayat* is discharged by some person other than the primary members, such person –

(a) should have been elected by the primary members;
(b) should remain under their control; and
(c) should be removable by them.

A meeting of the *Gram Sabha* of every *Gram Panchayat* must be held at least once every month, and a minimum part of the agenda of the meeting should be laid down by law or by a statutory rule.

I now turn to M.A. Rane's "Response" to my article on a Humanist State summarised above. The reader must have seen that there are two main features of my proposal: (1) checks and balances on the exercise of the powers of the President and (2) the necessity of a maximum and all round decentralisation of the governmental functions and powers.

Rane fully supports the complete separation of legislative and executive powers (the Presidential form of Government) in my article and further says: "I endorse the checks and balances suggested by Tarkunde, though some of them are not very clearly and fully explained." I agree with the last clause of Rane's comments where he states that some of the checks and balances are not clearly and fully explained by me. This comment is particularly true in regard to the "Advisory Council" which is a novel but important part of my picture of a Humanist State. I literally forgot to state in my article how the Advisory Council, which would cooperate with the President for the development of a participatory democracy, should be formed by the Parliament. I also feel that it is necessary to deal more fully with the functions of the Advisory Council which would enable it to fulfil its objective of attaining a participatory democracy.

For the formation of the proposed Advisory Council, I had in mind what M.N. Roy had said in his "Manifesto of New Humanism" about the formation of a Council of State in an ideal democracy. He said that the Council should represent "men of sincere intelligence, integrity, wisdom and moral excellence, men who, as a rule, keep aloof from the rough and tumble of politics and therefore are not to be found among professional politicians." Dealing with the manner in which such men should be enlisted, he said, "Each professional group of engineers, economists, scientists, medical men, jurists, historians and others engaged in intellectual, literary, artistic and any other creative avocations will recommend a specific number for membership of the Council of State." Roy adds

that the head of the State may also nominate "some other person equally qualified, though not formally attached to any particular group." That is the manner in which, in my proposed Humanist State, the Advisory Council at the Centre should be formed by the Parliament. The same procedure should be adopted in forming the Governors' Advisory Councils.

The main function of the Advisory Councils should be to look closely at the working of the different departments of the Central and State Governments, to see whether the laws passed by the legislatures are properly and expeditiously implemented, to find whether time is or is not wasted in unnecessary paper work, to ascertain whether the fundamental rights of the people and the directive principles of State policy enshrined in our Constitution are followed in practice, to discuss these matters with departmental heads and whenever necessary with the President and the Governors respectively, and issue public statements on these matters from time to time so that the fancied "information revolution" becomes a reality. I have stated in my article that 5 to 10 members of the Advisory Council should be associated with each of the important departments of the Central Government. It is these members of the Advisory Council who should discharge its main function of supervising over the working of the Government as described above. A similar practice should be followed in the working of the Advisory Councils at the State level.

It is quite necessary that all the files of Governments should be open for inspection by the members of the Advisory Council associated with the departments. These members of the Advisory Council should have the same unlimited information about the working of the Central and State Governments as the President and Governors are entitled to have. In the very rare cases where it is essential to maintain secrecy, the associated members of the Advisory Councils should be trusted to maintain it as well as members of the bureaucracy who maintain the "secret" files. The excessive secrecy sought to be maintained by the Indian Government leads often to an absurd situation. The people of India, for instance, do not know what nuclear weapons India has and how much is spent in acquiring and maintaining them, whereas this is probably known to the Pakistan Government through its intelligence services. The law regarding information is required to be amended so as to limit official secrecy to the rarest of rare cases. A truly "open Government" is necessary for the establishment of a participatory democracy.

The second function of Advisory Councils should be to assess the "development" of the country in accordance with the standards advocated by Dr. Amartya Sen. Social progress should be measured by the assessment of not only economic progress but also progress in primary, secondary and vocational education, in public health and hygiene, and I would add, progress in purification of the environment.

The Advisory Councils can and should help materially in reducing corruption, which they would detect while supervising over the work of Central and State Governments. Corruption on a large scale occurs not only because of the selfishness of some Government servants for various facilities. Advisory Councils should be able to approach the police for the punishment of the guilty persons. This is the third function of the Advisory Councils.

A fourth function of Advisory Council has been mentioned in my main article on the Humanist State. I said that the President should appoint executive heads of various departments "in cooperation with members of the Advisory Council". Similar powers should be vested in the Advisory Councils of the State Governments. I have dealt at length with the formation and working of Advisory Councils because they are a novel but essential part of the proposed Humanist State.

It is obviously necessary to limit the number of candidates who can contest the election of the President and the Governors on the basis of adult franchise as proposed in my article. I stated there that the candidate should be limited by rules made by ad-hoc committees set up by the retiring President and Governors. However, in the constitution of States which adopt the presidential form of Government, the rules which determine the right to contest the election of the President

and the Governors have great deal of importance. Rane suggests that the candidature should be decided on the basis of votes of *Gram Panchayats* and municipalities, each of them having one vote. Although this idea is basically sound, the proposal to involve each *Gram Panchayat* in the country in the election process would be so cumbersome as to be virtually unworkable. There are about six hundred thousand villages in India and we are likely to have about the same number of *Gram Panchayats* in the country. The voting by such a large number of village bodies is likely to be superficial if not bogus, when the purpose of the voting is only to decide who should have the right to be a candidate for the election of State Governors and the national President. I suggest that instead of each *Gram Panchayat*, each Block *Samiti* should have one vote in the above election. Since on an average one-block covers about a hundred villages, there would be nearly six thousand block *samities* in the country. Regarding the municipalities, each small municipality should have one vote, while the municipalities of District Towns should have two votes and those of metropolitan cities should have four votes. Only the three persons who top in the relevant vote list should have the right to be the candidates for the election of State Governors and the national President.

I will next deal, as synoptically as possible, with the remaining comments of Rane on my article/ however, before doing so, I will fill up one omission and correct one mistake which occurred in my article. I have stated that before the expiry of two and half years after the last general election, the President and the heads of the various departments of the Central Government should seek the confidence of the entire adult population in the country. I should have added that the same requirement of seeking the confidence of the electorate should be necessary in the case of Governors and Heads of the State Governments.

A mistake has occurred in the heading of my article, which is "Party-less Politics and People's (Humanist) State". In the parliament form of government, all political parties are engaged in the struggle for power, which is harmful to the cause of democracy. In the Presidential form of government, however, there is a separation between the legislative and executive functions of the State, so that the legislature may have a conservative and a liberal party and these parties may have different attitudes in regard to the making of laws, but they will not have any share in the power which is vested in the executive wing of the government. Separation of the legislative and the3 executive functions is one of the important features of the State depicted in my article. It is therefore wrong to describe it as an instance of party-less politics.

Rane has pointed out that I have not dealt with the question whether an upper house is or is not necessary in the Central or State legislatures. In my view, an upper house in the State legislatures serves no useful purpose in any constitution, except perhaps in very unusual circumstances. In India, different States were formed on the basis of linguistic and cultural differences. An upper house at the Centre was felt necessary mainly for the purpose of protecting the rights of the people in respect of their language and culture. In the proposed Humanist State there will be a substantial and all round decentralisation of power, the State legislatures with their enhanced powers will have no difficulty in protecting the linguistic and cultural rights of the people. Hence an upper house will be unnecessary in the Central legislature also.

I have stated that the President's cabinet should include all Governors and the heads of the important departments of the Central Government. It is necessary to clarify as well as modify this statement in view of Rane's comments thereon. We know that a cabinet is not a standing committee. It consists of those persons who have the right to be invited by the President for the settlement of some important issues. I suggest that when the issues to be settled are of great national importance, the President's cabinets should consist of all the Governors and heads of the important departments of the Central Government. For the settlement of other issues the cabinet should consist of only the heads of important departments. This means the President should have two cabinets, a larger

one and a smaller one, for deciding different types of issues. Since the cabinet is not a standing committee, this proposal of two cabinets, though somewhat novel, is easily workable. The President will of course have the discretion to decide when a cabinet meeting should be held and which of the two cabinets should meet to deal with the issues, which are to be discussed and settled. It is necessary to have statutory rules to regulate this discretion of the President so as to ensure that he does not take hasty action on matters which require to be decided after consultation with his cabinet members. After such rules are framed they should be properly published so that the people would know how their Government is run. There are two reasons why the Governors should have the right to be members of the President's larger cabinet, one because the Governors will have larger powers and responsibilities on account of the proposed decentralisation, and two because they are elected on the basis of adult franchise instead of being nominated.

Rane has suggested that there should be a Vice-President at the Centre and Vice Governors in the States. I agree. They should be elected along with the President and the Governors.

Urbanisation is taking place in India at a rapid rate, so that the urban population in the country will increase and the rural population will decrease. It is therefore necessary to provide for the development of participatory democracy in the functioning of municipalities in towns and cities.sd this can be achieved by forming people's committees in towns and cities, which will meet at the same time and place where meetings of the Ward committee of the municipality are held, so that cooperate with each other. Our Constitution provides that Ward Committees "shall" be formed within the territorial areas of municipalities having a populati8on of three lakhs or more (Article 243-S). However, the people in most towns and cities do not even know whether any Ward committees of the municipalities have been formed and where and when they are going to meet. Our Constitution enumerates the powers and responsibilities in the 12th Schedule, but the schedule requires to be amended by adding some functions and responsibilities and by clarifying some others. For instance, the water of our national rivers like Ganga and Yamuna is now so dirty as to be poisonous, and it should be one of the duties of municipalities of cities through which these rivers pass to cooperate with the schemes which the Central and State Governments may have made for the purification f the water of these rivers. It should be the duty of a municipality of a town or city to establish schools within its area and to supervise over their functioning, but this is not mentioned in the 12th Schedule. The duty of supervising over public dispensaries which are started for providing free medicine to the poor does not find a place in the 12th Schedule. The Scheme also does not state clearly that the municipality must provide an adequate number of latrines with water in or near them in different places of the towns and cities. For such reasons the 12th Schedule requires to be amended by adding some duties and responsibilities and by clarifying some others. Many of the duties and functions such as supervising over schools and the public dispensaries and providing of latrines in adequate number, besides cleaning roads, should be delegated the Ward committees. The Ward committees should meet at least once a month and the meeting of the People's committees should be held at the same time and place.

In the concluding portion of his "Response" Rane has struck a pessimistic note. He says that notwithstanding the various Checks and Balances on the exercise of the President's powers, it is unsafe to leave the vast executive powers of the State, in the hands of the President and his cabinet. He therefore proposes that the President should he made answerable to the legislature. This observation contradicts the earlier statement of Rane that "no elected legislator should exercise any executive power". In my opinion the Checks and Balances mentioned in my article are enough to prevent the exercise to any arbitrary power by the President. The first Check mentioned by me in the list of Checks and Balances is the prevalence of a vibrant public opinion "which would resent and prevent the exercise of arbitrary power". In the USA the President has vast powers and he is not controlled by the legislature, but the public opinion in favour of the rule of

law and against the exercise of arbitrary power is so strong that we do not apprehend that the American President will act as a dictator. In India a Humanist State will not come into existence in the absence of such vibrant public opinion, and if such opinion comes to prevail there will be no apprehension that the President will become a dictator.

Finally, Rane wonders how a Humanist State will come into existence in India. He refers to the famous Keshvanand Bharti case in which the Supreme Court of India said that the Parliament in the exercise of its powers to amend the Constitution cannot so amend it as to adversely affect any of the basic features of the Constitution. In his opinion the law, which would provide for the formation of a Humanist State would not affect the basic structure of the Constitution and can be passed by Parliament in the exercise of its powers to amend India's Constitution. In view of the fact that in the proposed Humanist State political parties will be deprived the power of controlling the executive, Rane asks whether any political party will commit Hara-kiri by introducing the Constitutional amendments necessary for the formation of a Humanist State.

Now, in the first place, I do not agree that a law for the creation of a Humanist State would not affect the basic structure of the Constitution. The Supreme Court has held in several cases that the Parliamentary form of Government in which the executive is answerable to the legislature is an essential feature of the Indian Constitution. If the amending power of parliament does not permit an alteration of a basic structure of the Constitution, it follows that it cannot substitute one feature of the constitution by altogether a different feature. In my opinion a law, which substitutes an essential feature of the Constitution by a different feature does alter the basic structure of the Constitution and it cannot be passed by Parliament in the exercise of tits amending powers. That means a Humanist State can be brought into existence not by the Parliament but by referring the proposal to the entire adult population of the country.

It is obvious that such a proposal of substituting a Humanist State for the present parliamentary democracy will not be referred by the President to the entire adult population of the country unless the President finds that the proposed Humanist State is approved by a majority of the Indian people. Now, there is no reason why a Constitution of a Humanist State in which power will be exercised "by the people and not for" the people should not be supported by a majority of the Indian population. It may take good deal of time before the Constitution of a Humanist State is so popularised as to be supported by a majority of the Indian people, but if such public opinion is generated, the establishment of Humanist State cannot be prevented by anybody.

The heading of my article on the Humanist State says that if presents "a picture for public discussion". All those who support the ideal of a people's State in India are invited to make suggestions for the improvement of the picture presented by me. A committee consisting of constitutional experts and social workers will eventually prepare the Constitution of Humanist State in India, after considering the picture presented in my article and the suggestions made for its improvement.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, January 2004.

Gleanings from M.N. Roy

M.N. Roy

The crying need of the time is to harmonize ethics with a social philosophy and political practice. The sovereignty of man, which must be the foundation of any revolutionary social philosophy, can be deduced only from the fact that man is a moral entity. It has been a time-honoured belief. Which could not be sustained in practice; now the belief must be replaced by the knowledge of the fact that man is moral because he is rational. The Universe is a moral order governed by laws inherent in itself. Man grows out of that background.

Ethics must be the foundation of the social philosophy which is the crying need of our time. In order to avoid the quicksand of transcendentalism and the pit-falls of relativity, ethics must be integrated in a general philosophy. We do not want to build yet another castle in the air, which will not stand the test of the next storm. A humanist ethics based upon a naturalist rationalism can be built only on the rock-bottom of a mechanistic cosmology and a physical-realist ontology. Therefore, we must begin by examining the problem raised by modern science. The next step is to find the connecting link between the world of dead matter and living nature. It is no longer a missing link; it solved the problem of the origin of life. If it is discovered that life originated in course of the mechanistic process of nature, human rationality can be deduced from the background of the law-governed physical Universe; the imaginary gulf between physics Universe; the imaginary gulf between physics and psychology is thus bridged and the most baffling problems of philosophy, the epistemological problems, are solved. Truth ceases to be a metaphysical concept; it stands out as the content of positive knowledge. In the light of the basic nature of truth, the nature of other values is more clearly visible, and they can be rationally arranged in a proper hierarchy. Having thus obtained our moral values in the world in which man has his being and becoming, we shall be able to harmonize them with a social philosophy which indicates the humanist approach to the economic and political problems confronting contemporary world.

- *The Radical Humanist*, March 2. 1952.

***

If human freedom is not to be sacrificed in the scramble for power, we shall have to explore the possibility of political practice without the interpolation of political parties between the people and their sovereign power. Because it is through the instrumentality of political parties that the power is concentrated in the hands of minorities, to be abused of false pretences, decentralization of power is conditional upon disappearance of the instrument of centralization. It must be replaced by another instrument which can guarantee that the sovereignty of the people will remain with people. The delegation of power to elected representatives is the legal sanction of parliamentary democratic governments. Constitutional Pandits Declare that this is democracy itself; but in reality, it is a negation of democracy, based on contempt for the *demos*.

Not only the politicians, but even the people themselves have come to doubt that they can wield power and exercise their sovereignty. The way out, which party politicians will not take, because that would mean the end of their days, is an appeal to reason. The appeal has the sanction of modern science behind it. Human nature is rational. It is true that rational nature of man has been buried fathoms deep. But being the essence of human nature, it can be recovered. Unreason has gone so far that the appeal to reason is bound to find response, and a rational political practice will bear fruit sooner than one might imagine. But the measure of success will not be power; it will be gradual disappearance of the evils which are at the root of the present situation. It will express itself in an intelligent public opinion which cannot be swayed by emotional and demagogic appeals.

From a lecture at Ahmedabad, December 20, 1949, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp. 76-77.

The starting point of the humanist approach to political problems is that relation between the individual and the State, between man and society, between freedom and organisation cannot be solved unless man, the individual, and his freedom, is given an at least equally important place in these political equations. Until now political thinking has placed all emphasis on the interests of the State. For the interests 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

- *Politics, Power and Parties*, p. 120

***

Education as a precondition of democracy is not just primary education; it is not even the conventional higher or scientific education. It is the process of raising the intellectual and cultural level of the people. So long as it cannot be maintained on the strength of scientific knowledge that every man, by virtue of being a human being, is capable of rising to the highest heights of human attainments, a humanist philosophy cannot be propounded, a humanist social doctrine cannot be advanced, a humanist political practice will not be possible. This is the starting point for a humanist political practice which alone can make Democracy a reality.

Education for Democracy is hardly found anywhere. A certain degeneration of education in this sense is inevitable under the formal parliamentary democratic system. That is in the nature of the formal parliamentary system of party politics. As soon as party comes to power, it naturally wants to remain and consolidate itself in power. There is a plausible reason for this: a party comes to power and forces a government with a programme. Four or five years are not enough to implement that programme. Therefore, the party must ensure another term in office. In order to guarantee re-election in the next round, automatically a party in power takes to the practice of indoctrination and varying degrees of intellectual regimentation of the people. Education under the formal parliamentary system is influenced by parties in power and this is a kind of intellectual regimentation, which may be almost imperceptible.

Free and compulsory education is considered a great democratic achievement. It is not considered enough to say fee education, it must also be compulsory. But compulsory education may have two sides. You must go to school and 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 book than the ones prescribed by a particular government. The result, if not the purpose, of this kind of education, particularly in previously illiterate countries, is to create a high degree of conformism and subservience to an established order. Therefore, under a purely formal democratic system in a backward country it is impossible - at least the possibility is extremely remote – to raise the intellectual and cultural level of the people through government-sponsored education. Consequently, if we cannot find a different approach to the problem of educating the people, in the sense of laying the foundation of democracy, democracy would appear to be impossible. Free and compulsory education is not enough ...

Education for democracy does not consist in teaching just reading and writing, but in making people conscious of their humaneness, to make them conscious of their right to exist as human beings, in decency and dignity. Education means 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 of power of the political parties. Even a humanist political party, to have to come to power, would have to join the scramble, would have to play the game according to its rules; otherwise it would stand no chance at all. And if it refuses to play the game, it is not a political party in the proper definition of the term.

- *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp. 118, 119, 121.

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 must be able to sway the majority of 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. Thus event eh opposition party will be no guarantee for democracy, indeed it is more likely to reinforce and galvanize the very conditions which a truly democratic practice should tend to remove.

Ibid., pp. 124-125.

***

Popular political parties operate with the slogans: agitate, educate and organize. But until now none has educated or organized. Experience shows that agitation precludes education; and mobilization is not to organize. The replacement of atomized democracy by organized democracy presupposes emphasis on education. Only an educated democracy can be an organized democracy. Therefore, we hold that democracy is not possible without education; that education is the foundation of democracy. Political education of the people is not very helpful for the old political parties, right or left. The practice of opposition parties, either parliamentary or insurrectionary, does not lead to the establishment of democratic government. It is clear that our activities cannot be cast in the pattern of activities of other parties which are following that objective. We need not think that all others are scoundrels. One is bound by the laws of the world in which one lives, and if we breathe in the atmosphere of the world of power politics, we shall be bound by its laws.

- *Independent India*, Vol. XII, No, 50, December 19, 1948.

Electoral Reforms and Participatory Democracy

Thoughts of M.N. Roy on Form and Method of Participatory Democracy

M.N. Roy

(*Selected and arranged with subtitles by Sunil Bhattacharya from* 'Politics, Power and Parties'*by M.N. Roy, Renaissance Publishers Private Limited, Calcutta- 12, First edition, April 1960*)

Democracy and minority rule

"Democracy has been pursued as an ideal for al long time. But before it ever had an effective chance to be practised, people are beginning to question whether democracy is at all possible. As a matter of fact, democracy appears to be a widely discredited concept today. Yet, I think that democracy remains a desirable ideal, and that it will be possible and practicable in proportion as the State will become coterminous with society. So long as the State is not coterminous with society, it remains an instrument of power in the hands of some section of society. And when power is concentrated in the hands of any minority or any section, it necessarily becomes an instrument of coercion, and democracy becomes impossible."

(***From a lecture delivered at Calcutta University on January 31, 1947, p. 19***)

Essence of parliamentary democracy

"Parliamentary democracy formally recognised the sovereignty of the individual, but in practice deprived all but a privileged few of effective use of that sovereignty. The sovereign individual became a legal fiction. For all practical purposes, most individuals were deprived of all power and even of their dignity." (***Ibid., p. 19***)

Importance of political democracy

"But even a more egalitarian economic reorganisation by itself will not produce the desired result, unless it is accompanied by the largest measure of political democracy. And that depends on the possibility of the diffusion of power in a state which will be coterminous with entire society. The State being the political organisation of society, the widest diffusion of power makes it coterminous with society." (***Ibid., P. 28***)

People's Committees as the form of organised democracy

"Hence the supreme importance of the idea of organised democracy. The idea gets its concrete form in People's Committees. As members of these basic units of the State, individual citizens will no longer be atomised and helpless, which State reduces the sovereignty of the people to a fiction. The People's Committees will be standing bodies with wide powers and direct influence on similar Committees for larger areas, and through them the citizens will actually be in possession of power always. The result will be a far-reaching decentralisation of the State. The state will become no more than a clearing house of information, and advisory and administrative machinery to co-ordinate and supervise policies framed directly by the people as a whole operating through local People's Committees. That is how the State will become identical with society, its function confined to an over-all co-ordination and harmonisation of social life in a country as a whole."

(***From a speech at the Political Study Camp, Dehradun, in May, 1947, p. 84***)

Political education through People's Committees

"It wants that power must be vested in the people organised in People's Committees, through which the people will be educated and taught to exercise their sovereignty, thereby rendering scramble for power by parties impossible. Let there be ten other parties; we do not want any party to be suppressed. But if we succeed, no party can capture power, which must remain with the people in their Committees." (***Ibid., P. 84***)

Humanist political approach

"The humanist political approach is that by creating these small islands of democracy and freedom, the nucleus of a humanist democratic society will be created, the kind of society in which a Humanist would wish to live. Example is better than precept, and by creating these small democratic islands, we are recreating society as a whole. Humanist democratic education will not only create a discriminating electorate, but also teach people to live a cooperative life, to transform their local community into a small cooperative commonwealth, a local democratic republic. As the example spreads these will be the organised basis of the society we want."

(***From a lecture delivered at the C.J. Hall, Bombay, on January 31, 1949, p. 126***)

Form and method of humanist democratic movement

"Experience will teach what should be the forms in which the new Humanist ideas can best be presented, so that less fortunate people can grasp them more easily. It is a challenge to the initiative and imagination of the pioneers, to initiate social change by this new method of an integral Humanism. The movement will attract rational men and women who want to improve the public life of their cities, towns and villages, and spreading from there, of the country as a whole. It is in the smaller circle of your own individual lives and environments and, spreading out from there, in your professional offices and chambers, and thence in your town and district, that the future rational and moral society will begin to grow, and once the process has started, it will be sufficiently attractive to give increasing impetus to its spread on an ever widening scale and with an ever accelerating tempo." (***Ibid., p. 154***)

Accountability of elected representative

"To change this system (party system with party whip in parliamentary democracy – S.B.), obviously, we have to find a way by which the popular representative will remain constantly and at all times under the control of the people. They should always express the will of the people, always represent the aspirations and needs of their electors. But that cannot be done unless the representative is free from this conflict of loyalties between the people and the party. So long as the sovereign people remain steeped in a psychological, intellectual and cultural atmosphere in which they can be easily swept off their feet, in which they lose their ability to discriminate and to judge intelligently, the people's representatives do not have to fear that the people who elected them once may not elect them again. But as soon as the atmosphere changes, as soon as the electors will be able to hold their representatives responsible for what they do, then the would–be parliamentarian will feel that party loyalty is not enough for them to be re-elected by the people and that he will have to represent more faithfully the intelligent will of the people if he wants to get the vote of the people of his constituency more than once."

(***From a lecture delivered at the Town Hall of Guntur in the winter of 1949-50, pp. 172-173***)

Role of Radical Humanists

"Also those Humanists who have stimulated this political awakening in the constituency will not leave the voters to relapse into apathy after elections, but constantly remind them of

their rights and responsibilities. They worked in the constituency not to be elected and then go away to the centres of power, but they remain there with the sole function of educating the people and helping them establish a democratic local republic. In these local republics it is possible to have direct democracy, and their function can be expanded as the citizens grow increasingly discriminating and conscious. In them, power and sovereignty will remain in the hands of the people themselves, and in this way the precondition for a government of the people and by the people will be created. Because ultimately the nature of the basic unit will determine the structure of the whole State built upon them. A democratic State in a large country is possible only on the basis of such small organised local democracies which can remove the sense of helplessness of the individual citizens, and through which alone individual votes can exercise control over the State by means of an intelligent public opinion. To promote this is the most effective practice of New Humanism in the political field." (***Ibid., p. 176***)

Independent initiative and constructive work

"Instead of making the government or the State responsible for everything and then complain if it does not discharge its responsibility for instance in the field of education, people who are interested in actually doing something and not only talking and demanding, or blaming somebody or other for all that is wrong, can take a similar initiative as in the political field, and through mutual co-operation start educational institutions from the primary schools to the universities by their own means and efforts." (***Ibid., p. 177***)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1979.

People's Committees – A Revolutionary Concept

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

The appeal issued by Jayaprakash Narayan, soon after the Lok Sabha election, for the formation of People's Committees in all the villages and *mohallas* in the country, has evoked a great deal of enthusiasm. It appears, however, that the precise nature of a People's Committee and the preparatory work which is required for its formation have not been properly appreciated by those who have responded to J.P.'s appeal.

It is well-known of course that a People's Committee is expected to enable ordinary citizens to exercise increasing control over the local functionaries of the State, and that a network of such People's Committees would provide the foundation of a participatory democracy which would be a substantial advance over the present institution of parliamentary democracy. What is, however, overlooked by several followers of J.P. is that the ordinary people would not be able to exercise the sovereign power which is supposed to be vested in them if an attempt is made to form a network of People's Committees without undertaking a massive and clearly formulated educative programme to alter the socio-cultural climate which prevails in the country at present.

That this pre-condition has been overlooked is clear from a scheme which was recently announced by a number of leading members of the Sarva Seva Sangh in pursuance of J.P.'s appeal. The scheme is for the setting up of an Ad Hoc National People's Committee which would, *in less than two years*, organise a network of People's Committees in all the villages and towns of India and would also create a hierarchy of such Committees at the levels of the constituency, the district, the State and the nation as a whole!

What is being overlooked by these and other well-meaning followers of J.P. is that People's Committees formed in the prevailing socio-cultural climate are liable to be dominated by the same type of anti-social elements which are currently in control of the majority of local self-government institutions such as *Gram Panchayats*, *Zila Parishads* and Municipalities. If these institutions, though elected on the basis of adult franchise, are dominated by anti-social elements, there is no reason to suppose that People's Committees formed on the consensus of the same adult population would have a different complexion. If in the current cultural context the ordinary people are unable to exercise effective control over *Gram Panchayats*, *Zila Parishads* and Municipalities, it is obviously wrong to assume that in the same cultural context they would not only be in effective control of People's Committees but that they would be able through a network of such Committees to control the apparatus of the State as well.

It is relevant in this connection to observe that the utility of any organisation (like a People's Committee) depends, not on its form, but on the values which are cherished by the people who set it up and run it. If the will to exercise their sovereign power is not generated among the people, an organisation which is created for the exercise of popular sovereignty can easily be converted into an organisation for the exercise of dictatorial power concentrated in the State. After all, our concept of People's Committees is not materially different from that of the Soviets which sprang up in Russia on the eve of the Communist revolution. Instead of functioning as instruments of People's power, the Soviets were easily made to function as organs of a party dictatorship. It should therefore be clear that the formation of a successful People's Committee must be preceded by a substantial degree of cultural transformation.

What is said above is only one instance of the theory which was propounded by M.N. Roy, the theory namely, that every worthwhile social revolution must be preceded by a philosophical revolution. A country-wide network of effectively functioning People's Committees would usher a genuinely democratic revolution in India, only if a cultural transformation necessary for the proper

functioning of People's Committees is first brought about.

Let us then consider what type of educative work is required to be carried out before the formation of a People's Committee which can function as an organ of popular sovereignty.

A growing number of people must, in the first place, learn to appreciate the inherent dignity of the individual, irrespective of his or her class, community, religion or sex. Recognition of the dignity of the individual is the basis of the feeling of equality which lies at the root of political, economic and social democracy. People must learn not to recognise and accept any privilege arising from either the wealth of an individual, or his or her caste, community or sex. An increasing appreciation by an increasing number of people of basic individual dignity and human equality will enable a People's Committee to be representative of those currently "weaker" sections who form the bulk of the population in almost every locality but who have little say in "representative" institutions,

The people must learn, in the second place, that they have to rely upon themselves to solve their problems, that they are the makers of their future, and that nobody will really help them unless they decide to help themselves. Responsibility and power go together, and the ordinary people will not be able to exercise any political power if they look upon some group or authority other than themselves as being responsible for their well-being. The people must not, in particular, commit the mistake of transferring their allegiance from the holders of economic vested interests to the holders of political vested interests. Nothing is gained if the people transfer their faith from an economically dominating class to a politically dominating group. People can exercise sovereign power only by becoming masters of their own destiny.

Thirdly, people must learn to cooperate with each other. In the complex society of today, an individual can rarely solve his problems by working in isolation from others. Cooperation implies a certain moral tradition, a tradition of honesty and sensitivity to the needs of others.

The values of individual dignity, self-reliance and mutual cooperation are only other names for the values of equality, liberty and fraternity, which are universally recognised as the basic values of democracy. What is necessary is that these values must gradually and progressively come to prevail in all the spheres of life, political, economic and social. That in my view is the essence of the Total Revolution advocated by J.P. Educating the people in the basic values of this Total Revolution is the essential pre-condition of setting up a network of People's Committees which can function as the instruments of popular sovereignty.

This discussion shows that those who intend to organise a network of People's Committees throughout the country should first concern themselves with the creation of an adequate human machinery for the massive education of the people along the lines indicated above. This can be achieved by holding a large number of district and sub-divisional camps for the training of village and city workers so as to equip them with the outlook and the capacity required for the organisation of People's Committees. These workers must themselves become true champions of the Total Revolution. They must themselves come to cherish the basic values of liberty, equality and fraternity, and have the urge to ensure that these values permeate all aspects of life – political, economic and social. They must not only preach but also practise those values. Such workers can set up ad hoc People's Committees and the ad hoc Committees can undertake the further education of the people in the values of democracy in all spheres of life. After this work has progressed to an adequate extent, a regular People's Committee on the basis of the consensus of the entire adult population can be formed.

It is necessary at this stage to consider another question to which little attention has been given so far. What will be the relation between a People's Committee and the *Gram Panchayat* in a village? Will not the simultaneous existence of these two bodies in the same locality amount to an unnecessary duplication of organisations? Such a duplication was not visualised in whatever was written by Gandhiji on *Gram Panchayats*. The ideas of M.N. Roy on this question were more precisely formulated,

because they were embodies in the *Draft Constitution of Free India* which he prepared in 1944. The place of People's Committees in Roy's *Draft Constitution* is far more important than that of a traditional institution of local self-government. The last Article (Article 137) of the Draft Constitution prepared by Roy provided: "The sovereign right of controlling the entire State machinery, according to the provisions of this Constitution, is vested exclusively in the local People's Committees." In order to enable the People's Committees to discharge their sovereign democratic function, the Draft Constitution invested them with various rights such as the right to nominate candidates for State and Federal legislatures, to discuss and express opinion on proposed legislation, to initiate new legislation, to demand a referendum on legislative and other measure, to recall an elected representative, and to demand the dissolution and fresh election of a legislative assembly (Article 9, 90, 97, 100 etc.). However, the Draft Constitution also provided by Article 127: "In addition to all the rights and responsibilities specified in this Constitution the local People's Committees will also perform the function of local self-government in their respective jurisdiction." It is clear that Roy did not visualise two separate organisations – a People's Committee as an instrument of popular sovereignty and a body like a *Gram Panchayat* to discharge the functions of local self-government.

In the present context, however, since institutions of local self-government like *Gram Panchayats* have already been set up by law but are not functioning as genuine democratic bodies, a duplication between them and the local People's Committees would have to be tolerated for a limited period of time. While institutions like *Gram Panchayats* will discharge their limited duties according to law, People's Committees will function as self-help organisations, will try to solve the economic and other problems of the people, and will also seek to ensure that the State functionaries in the locality discharge their duties in conformity with people's interests. This duplication, it may be hoped, will not last for long. During the educative process of the formation and functioning of People's Committees, the *Gram Panchayats* and other local bodies would themselves be increasingly free from the domination of anti-social elements and be increasingly representative of the people's democratic will. When that stage is reached, legal or constitutional enactments can be made to invest one and the same body with the powers of local self-government as well as the more vital powers of popular sovereignty which were conferred on People's Committees in Roy's Draft Constitution.

A reference has been made above to the scheme proposed by some leading members of Sarva Seva Sangh which visualised the organisation of a network of People's Committees at the local level and also a hierarchy of such Committees leading upto State People's Committees and a National People's Committee. If, however, the scope of the functions of a People's Committee is taken into considerati9on, it will be seen that there is no occasion for setting up such Committees at the level of the States or the Nation. The purpose of People's Committees is to decentralise power, and not to create alternative centres of power which may compete with State and Union Governments. A scheme of setting up a National People's Committee as the apex of a network of local People's Committees would be legitimate if the plan was to create a State within a State, so that the former may overthrow the latter. That is, however, not the objective of any of J.P.'s followers. It is accordingly not necessary to build a hierarchy of People's Committees above the level of the district.

The concept of People's Committees as organs of popular sovereignty has been in the field for a long time. Roy visualised such Committees from before 1944. Conditions, however, were not ripe hitherto for giving to that concept a practical expression. The resurgence of democratic sentiment which was witnessed in the last Lok Sabha election, and the enthusiastic participation of Indian youth in achieving freedom from despotic rule, have created a favourable climate for undertaking a massive effort for the organisation of an extensive network of People's Committees. A clear understanding of the nature of the task will contribute to the success of that effort.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, July 1977.

Alternative Electoral Systems

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

The present electoral system, which is usually described as First Past the Post (FPTP) was considered by the makers of our constitution as suitable for India, mainly by relying on the experience of Great Britain and the USA. When our Constitution was promulgated in 1950, a two party system happened to prevail in both these countries. Politics in the USA is still characterised by a two party system, but in recent years Great Britain has developed a third party – the Democratic Alliance, which has attracted a number of liberals who do not agree with the class approach of the Labour Party nor the upper class prejudice of the Conservatives. A growing body of public opinion in great Britain has begun to opt for a system of Proportional Representation. In India, there were always more than two parties from the beginning of the elections after the promulgation of the Constitution and the number of parties has the tendency of being on the increase.

The major defect of the FPTP system is that it does not fairly represent the will of the people in the election results. Till the last few years, the Congress Party in India used to be able to get a more than two-third majority in the Lok Sabha on the basis of about 40% of the polled votes. Although elected by a minority of the voters, it was able to make extensive and sometimes retrogressive amendments in the Indian Constitution. There is no prospect that this unfairness in the present electoral system will be reduced in the future. A procedure by which a person is declared to be the representative of a whole constituency simply because he get the highest number of votes, even if the votes do not exceed even 30% of the polled votes, cannot possibly be regarded as fair to the electorate.

It is claimed in favour of the FPTP system that it results in strong and stable governments which are able to adopt consistent policies for the entire period between the two elections. In countries where the two party system prevails, that is usually the case, although even in such countries the strength and stability of the government depends upon the extent of the majority which it enjoys in the legislature and the internal coherence of approach which the party happens to posses. In India an illusion was created that the FPTP system results in strong governments because the Congress Party was, till recently, almost always in an absolute majority at the Centre. Circumstances have now changed and we have entered a period when we should expect that no party would get an absolute majority and the Central Government hereafter would either be a coalition Government or a minority Government which remains in power because of the temporary support of one or more of the opposition parties and is therefore at their mercy. We should expect that the basic defect of the FPTP system, which is that it distorts the popular will and results in a legislature (and therefore in a government) which does not represent the majority opinion in the country, will not hereafter be counter-balanced by the advantage that the system will at least result in the establishment of a strong and stable government.

Actually, according to the basic principles of democracy, it is essential that the legislature and the government should fairly reflect the will of the majority of the people. The establishment of a strong and stable government cannot possibly be an excuse for tolerating a government which does not genuinely represent the wishes of the people. A good government cannot possibly be a substitute of a genuinely representative government. When however, we find that the FPTP electoral system, besides its unfairness to the electorate in a country having a number of political parties, also results in governments which are feeble and unstable, the continuation of the electoral system does require, to say the least, a serious reconsideration.

It is true that the democratic content of an election is eroded to a large extent by corruption in various forms. In India use of black money on a large scale, misuse of the official machinery and

booth-capturing by use or threat of physical force, are among the methods by which the elections are denuded of their democratic content. It appears, however, that the evil of corruption would operate in any electoral system which may be chosen in preference to FPTP system which is prevalent today, although some electoral systems may be marginally more open to corruption than others. The problem of corruption, therefore, despite its obvious importance, requires a separate treatment land should not be determinative in choosing an electoral system except where a particular system under consideration is clearly more liable to be vitiated by corruption.

Some of the alternative electoral systems which are prevailing elsewhere, have to be rejected as being unsuitable to Indian conditions. One of them is the system of the Single transferable Vote. It can hardly be doubted that the system is too complicated for the parliamentary form of State elections in India because of the numerically massive electorates. The system has been successfully operated in Ireland and Australia where the electorates are numerically much smaller and also more educated. To work the system in India would be difficult and cumbersome.

The two-round voting system introduced by General De Gaulle in France has the merit of electing to the legislature a member who reflects more correctly the wishes of the electorate. In this method of election, if no candidate gets more than 50% of the polled votes, a candidate or candidates getting less than 12.5% of the polled votes are eliminated and a second election takes place only of the remaining candidates the success in the second election is determined by the FPTP method, but very often it results in the return of a candidate who gets either more than 50% of the votes or votes which are not far short of 50%. The system is simple and deserves to be considered. However, when we have to face and overcome so much trouble in one election, arising from booth capturing, use of money power and misuse of official machinery, to face similar trouble a second time in the same constituency as a part of the same electoral process appears to be highly impracticable.

What remains for consideration, apart from some minor variations of the above, are two alternative methods of election: Proportional Representation and Indirect elections. We shall first deal with Proportional Representation.

In considering the merits of Proportional Representation, we should take into consideration the procedures which have been evolved to get over some of its defects. One defect of Proportional Representation is that it fails to maintain a direct link between the voters and their candidate. Although this defect is inseparable from the system of Proportional Representation, its impact can be minimised by choosing a relatively small area for which the various parties are to announce their respective lists of candidate. In India, for instance, it would be convenient to choose each district as the unit of Proportional Representation in an election to the State legislative assembly. On the average, about 10 candidates are at present being elected from each district. According to this proposed system of Proportional Representation, political parties will announce the lists of their candidates for each district in order of preference, making specific mention of their candidate or candidates from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Independent (non-party) can also contest in such an election. In the case of the Lok Sabha election, each State can be conveniently divided into groups of districts which together would elect approximately ten members to the Lok Sabha. There also, similar lists would be declared by the political parties, and individual candidates can also announce their candidature. After the election, the parties will obtain seats according to the particular method devised for adjusting the seats to the number of votes polled by each party. Currently, there are different methods in vogue of adjusting the number of seats to the votes secured by each party, but that is a technical matter which cannot be dealt with here. All the methods in vogue are intended to ensure that each party gets a number of seats which would be roughly proportionate to the votes secured by it. It appears to me that even an independent candidate, if he is really popular, can get elected in such a system of voting. For instance, if there are ten candidates to be elected from a district to the State legislature by Proportional Representation, an independent candidate who gets 10% of the votes is bound to be successful. He

may get elected even with a less number of votes, depending upon the number of parties which contest the election and the number of votes they secure.

Apart from the distance which it creates between the voter and its candidate, another defect of the system of Proportional Representation is that it may encourage a multiplicity of parties. That is the main defect in the working of Proportional Representation in Italy and this feature may result in Italy abandoning Proportional Representation and going to the FPTP system. However, this defect in Proportional Representation method can be substantially neutralised by providing that the votes polled by those parties which do not get more than a certain minimum percentage of the total polled votes will not have their votes counted in deciding the names of successful candidates. This means that parties not getting more than the minimum percentage of votes will have no candidates in the legislature. In Germany, this minimum has been fixed at 5% of the polled votes, and this has resulted in there being only 4 parties (rarely 5 parties) in the German Bundestag. If we adopt the Proportional Representation system in India, we may start with the minimum percentage of 5 as in Germany and adjust the figure according to our future experience. It appears, however, that if the device of choosing a small area for the election by Proportional Representation as recommended in the preceding paragraph is adopted, the provision regarding the minimum number of votes may be found to be redundant.

Proportional Representation leads in many cases to the establishment of coalition governments. But that may also be the result of the FPTP, as it prevails in countries like India where a large number of parties contest the election. Experience in Europe, particularly of German and Scandinavian countries, shows that coalition governments may neither be weak nor unstable. We should not forget that, in economic terms, Germany and the Scandinavian countries are amongst the most advanced countries in the world. In India in recent years, we would have done better if we had coalition Governments at the Centre, instead of minority Governments supported by one or more of the opposition parties.

Turning to the system of Indirect election, it consists essentially of providing a device of electoral colleges, the members of which will elect the legislature. A system of Indirect election may not be uniformly indirect all through the State hierarchy, starting from the *Gram Panchayats* to the Parliament. It is not necessary that the *gram panchayats* alone should be directly elected by the primary voters, and that all subsequent bodies will be elected indirectly, i.e., *taluka samities* to be elected by *gram panchayats*, *zila parishads* by *taluka samities*, State legislature by *zila parishads*, and the Lok Sabha by State assemblies. We may have, as suggested by M.N. Roy in the *Draft Constitution of Free India* (1944), that the *gram panchayats* may nominate one member for a certain number of primary voters and these and these members may meet together for the election of the candidates of the Lok Sabha or perhaps of the State assemblies. The advantage of such a system is that it recognises the fact that the *gram panchayat* is the real repository of power in the State and that even the Parliament consists of representatives of these primary local republics. The alleged disadvantage of this method is that it may lead to greater corruption. However, that is likely if the elections are indirect throughout the State hierarchy, but not otherwise.

The Proportional Representation and Indirect elections, or suitable combination of both, may be the best electoral system for Indian democracy. The present FPTP system is clearly highly defective and requires to be replaced as soon as possible. It should be replaced by either Proportional Representation or a combination of Proportional Representation and Indirect elections. The topic requires careful study and detailed discussion by political parties and non-party leaders of public opinion including experts in Political Science, so that a consensus may emerge about the electoral system most suitable to Indian conditions.

New Delhi
12th September 1993.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, October 1993.

Interim Recommendations of the Electoral Reforms Committee of the Citizens For Democracy: CFD

The Electoral Reforms Committee appointed by Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan consisting of Mr. V.M. Tarkunde, Mr. M.R. Masani, Mr. A.G. Noorani, Prof. P.G. Mavalankar, MP, Prof. K.D. Desai and Mr. E.P.W de Costa as Convener have met and have carefully considered the numerous memoranda which have been received from public bodies, political parties and individuals. The Committee have also had the benefit of hearing evidence taken in Bombay, Madras and Delhi.

While the time at their disposal does not permit the Committee to make their report for some time, they have made some interim recommendations to Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan on certain issues of urgent importance. There are various important and fundamental areas, however, such as the distortion of the popular will caused by the present system of elections of "first past the post" on which the Committee have been deliberating and will, in due course, present their Report. The present recommendations are without prejudice to the final conclusions to which the Committee may come and are intended as a basis for fuller public discussion.

I. The Election Commission

The position and authority of the Election Commission is integral to a system of fair and free elections. As in the case of the judiciary, the Election Commission must not only be independent in theory but also manifestly appear to be so in the exercise of its powers of organising and conducting elections. In recent years, and impression has gained ground that the election Commission is becoming less and less independent of the executive than in the earlier years of Independence, perhaps because the choice of the Chief Election Commissioner has not always been based on criteria which would command confidence of all sections of public opinion. The practice of making it a berth for a retiring Civilian has, perhaps, been responsible for the feeling that the incumbent so benefited will be beholden to the Government for his office. When this is viewed in the context of the various complaints made during the elections about alleged irregularities in polling and the subsequent counting and declaration of results, rumours, not all of them unfounded, are circulated which detract from the prestige and confidence which the Election Commission should enjoy with all sections of the electorate.

Large Body Needed

It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that the Election Commission is so constituted that its integrity and fairness are unimpeachable. Suggestions have been made in recent years that the Election Commission should consist of more than one person and, indeed, Article 324 of the Constitution makes specific provision in sub clause 2 for the appointment of a Chief Election Commissioner and a "number of other Election commissioners". But this provision has not so far been implemented. The position of the Election Commission is somewhat analogous to the Public Service Commissions at the Centre and the States which consist of several members. A Commission consisting of a body of three members can arrive at a consensus on major controversial problems of organising elections which is decidedly a superior method of ensur9ng impartiality to the individual decision of a single Chief Election Commissioner. We would, therefore, emphasise the importance of implementing the existing provisions of the Constitution.

Manner of Appointment

Equally important is the manner of appointing the Members of the Commission and the choice of the Chief Election Commissioner. The Constitution provides that appointments should be made by the President and this has been interpreted in the usual sense in which all Presidential actions are exercised, namely, on the advice of the Council of Ministers. While this may be in keeping with the basic feature of Cabinet responsibility under the Parliamentary system of Government, nomination to

this high office by the executive of the day is always open to suspicion and cannot command the prestige and confidence that should be associated with that office. The tendency of the Government is not to look for the qualities of independence and impartiality which would satisfy the public regarding the fairness of the electoral process. Moreover, it is necessary to ensure that an appointee has no sense of obligation to the Government for his position.

We, therefore, suggest that Members of the election Commission should be appointed by the President on the advice of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition or a Member of Parliament selected by the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India.

State Commissioners

The Constitution further provides that before each general election to the Lok Sabha and the Legislative assemblies, the President may also appoint state Election Commissioners. His again is one of the provisions which have been ignored in practice, with the result that an independent and efficient machinery is no available at the State level for the proper conduct of elections simultaneously to the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies over the far-flung areas of the country comprising an electorate now touching the 3000 million mark. The Election Commission has not been able to look promptly into all the complaints of irregularities made between the calling of an election and the polling date. We, accordingly, suggest that State Commissioners should be appointed either for each State or for two or more continuous States. At the time of elections, the State Commissioner should have the responsibility of appointing Election Officers, Returning Officers and Polling Officers for various constituencies. The choice of these officers need not be restricted to Government servants. The Office of the State Commissioner should be of permanent nature and it should discharge such duties as the periodic revision of electoral rolls, maintenance of election records, etc.

II. Election Expenses

1. All recognised political parties should be required by law to keep full and accurate accounts, including their sources of income and details of expenditure. The accounts should be audited by Chartered Accountants nominated by the election Commission and should be open to public inspection on moderate charges. Keeping of false accounts should make the office bearers of the Party punishable for a cognizable offence.
2. In every constituency, all the amounts spent for the furtherance, directly or indirectly, of the prospects of a candidate in an election shall be disbursed through his election agent. These should include amounts spent by the candidate's political party or any organisation or persons supporting him. All contracts whereby election expenses are incurred shall in every case be entered into by the candidate himself or by his election agent, and by nobody else. The provisions of sections 60-63 of the British Representation of the People Act, 1949, should be referred to in making provisions in this behalf.
3. The following facilities should be made available in every constituency at Government expense:

   (a) Printed Cards giving the registered number of a voter and the polling booth where he may cast his/her vote, along with the names and symbols of candidates in the order in which they would appear in the ballot papers, should be made available to all voters. These printed cards should be sent by postal delivery to the satisfaction of the candidates or their election agent.

   (b) Each candidate shall be entitled to send to each voter, free of postage, one communication containing matter relating to the election not exceeding two ounces in weight.

   (c) School rooms and meeting halls should be available for meetings in furtherance of the candidature of every candidate at reasonable times and at a nominal cost. Reference in this connection may be made to Section 82 of the British Representation of the People

Act, 1949.

(d) Twelve copies of the relevant electoral roll shall be supplied to each candidate free of charge.

4. The present limit of election expenses fixed for Parliamentary and Assembly elections should be doubled. This is necessary in view of our recommendation that party expenses should be included in the return of a candidate's expenses.
5. Deposits required from candidates should be increased from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 2000/- in the case of Parliamentary elections and from Rs. 250/- to Rs. 1000/- in the elections to an Assembly or a Council. Proportionate increases should be made in the case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribe candidates. This increase in deposits is necessary in view of the facilities which we have recommended for being extended to each candidate.
6. Any donation to a political party or for a political purpose up to Rs. 1000/- per year should be eligible for exemption under the Income Tax Act.
7. The Committee has considered various arguments placed before it both in favour of banning donations made by Joint Stock Companies to political parties and against such a ban. We are clear that in principle a Joint Stock Company which is formed by a large number of shareholders holding different political views for the purpose of commercial and industrial activities should not be allowed to contribute collectively to a political party. Even if a majority of share-holders may be inclined to do so, it would be doing violence to the feelings of those of the shareholders who hold different views. We are not satisfied that legalising company donations will necessarily prevent clandestine payments being extorted from companies and we, therefore, recommend that the present ban on corporate donations should continue. Indeed, we believe that the way in which the ban at present is being evaded by large payments being made for so-called advertisements in the so-called souvenirs of political parties should be prevented by law.

III. Corrupt Practices

The Committee recalls the observation of the Supreme Court of India in the famous case of Ghasi Ram vs. Dal Singh and others (AIR 1963 S.C. 1191) in which a large sum of money was placed in the hands of a Minister in Haryana on the eve of elections and for disbursement in his discretion and such disbursement was made by him in his Constituency during the 1967 election/. The Supreme Court felt that having regard to the state of the law as it then existed, it did not amount to a corrupt practice within the meaning of Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act 1951. The Supreme Court nonetheless made these pertinent observations: "Election is something which must be conducted fairly. To arrange to spend money on the eve of elections in different constituencies, although for general public good, is, when all is said and done, an evil practice, even if it may not be corrupt practice.

The dividing line between an evil practice and a corrupt practice is a very thin one. It should be understood that energy to do public good should be used not on the eve of elections but much earlier and that even slight evidence might change this evil practice into corrupt practice. Payments from discretionary grants on the eve of elections should be avoided."

The opinion has been unanimously expressed before the Committee by the witnesses who have given evidence on this aspect that such an evil practice should be made a corrupt practice within the meaning of the Act, and thus attract the penalties and disqualifications laid down in the Statute. The Committee is strongly of opinion that an amendment on these lines to the Act is imperative and therefore recommends that an explanation should be added to Section 123 (1)(A) of the Representation of People Act 1951 to read as follows:

"Any disbursement, offer or promise made by a Minister on the eve of an election with the object of furthering directly or indirectly the prospects of his election shall be deemed to be bribery in the

absence of proof to the contrary."

IV. Radio and Television

In view of the importance of the audio-visual media of communication, the present Government monopoly over Broadcasting and Television is contrary to the needs of democracy. The Chanda Committee Report has shown the way but unfortunately Government has refused to part with its control over radio and television. Even so, in the case of elections certain action can be taken.

First of all, recognised parties should be given time for election broadcasts, and while doing so the number of votes cast for them should be taken into consideration. In England, for instance, the BBC allots time in the ration of 2:2:1 to the Labour, Conservative and Liberal parties on this basis. We suggest that a suitable mechanism be worked out to this end.

In addition, an interesting suggestion has been made that political parties and others should be allowed to buy time on radio and television for the purpose of expressing their points of view during election campaigns. This may also be considered, and expenses incurred should be suitably divided between the candidates benefiting therefrom.

Apart from rationing time for election propaganda, the question of preventing tendentious broadcasts and the misuse of programmes and news bulletins by the ruling party also arises. In this connection a suggestion has been made that an advisory committee should be set up to act as a watch-dog and supervisory body to function from the date of notification of an election up to the date of polling. Such a committee may be composed of representatives of recognised parties and some non-party persons of integrity and good repute. Their role should be similar to that of the Press Council of India.

We are of the view that the above recommendations would be of limited value unless the radio and television are placed under the control of autonomous statutory corporations. This we regard as of primary importance.

V. Election Petitions: Reforms for Speedier Disposal

The present arrangements for the disposal of election petitions involve considerable delays in handing out decisions on allegations of corrupt practices and improprieties regarding acceptance or rejection of nominations. The old system of trial by Election tribunals was replaced in 1966 by provisions making the High Court as the court of first instance to try election petitions. The object, doubtless, was to ensure that the status of the adjudicating authority is high enough to prevent suspicions of pressure and to create faith in its independence and impartiality. In practice, however, the number of election petitions, following a keenly contested general election to the Lok Sabha or State Assembly, could be so large as to cause a congestion of election cases on the files of the High Courts. In practice, therefore, the provision in Section 86(7) of the Representation of the People Act for expeditious trial of every election petition and its conclusion within six months from the date of its presentation to the High Court has not been complied with.

In order to expedite the disposal of election petitions, we make the following two recommendations:

(1) After a general election, all the election petitions are filed in the State High Court at about the same time. They should be made ready for hearing as early as possible and, when they are ready, the Chief Justice of the High Court should make available one judge of his Court for the hearing of each election petition. For this purpose, retired judges of the High Court should be appointed ad hoc in sufficient numbers so that all the election petitions can be simultaneously heard. This will result in a quicker disposal of election petitions by the High Court.

(2) There should be no appeal as of right to the Supreme Court from the High Court's Order on an election petition. A party wanting to appeal to the Supreme Court may apply for special leave under Article 136 of the Constitution.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, January 1975.

The Radical Humanist Movement
Part I
The First Indian Humanists

Niranjan Dhar

Rationalism in history never arose alone. It has always been linked with a new set of values and ideals, or empiricism and humanism, which are not, however, opposed to each other, as might appear on the face of it.

Our experiences and impressions are nebulous and ill-adjusted, and no intelligible discourse on them. We must evaluate our actual knowing and choose a direction through which we can see the landscape as a whole. Science can discover facts and their inter-connections but is unable to evaluate them as a whole. Analysis and synthesis must therefore go hand in hand.

A secular metaphysics serves as a clearing house to which the results of the sciences and other data gained by the exploring reason are referred. These then are pooled and shifted to enable us to apprehend their general implications. Concretely, this means that after doing its best at the empirical level, reason must enter the metaphysical plane. By study of facts and intellectual imagination we have to reach principles which are not *a priori* but are inferences of reflection on experience. Its method is as empirical as of any other science.

Reason has given man mastery over matter to transcend his various limitations. All these achievements have their philosophical implications countering the religious concept of man. Some sort of secular humanist, giving a Promethean image of man, results from the philosophical estimate of man as revealed by science. It brings philosophy from the clouds of transcendentalism to the hard empirical ground. It is at the same time full of promise and hope for the future of mankind. To some extent it may be coloured by psychological interests. But in so far as truth is valuation and is discovered by human effort, psychological interests necessarily play a part. In essence, however, Humanism is a kind of new empiricism.

If intuition is the basis of religious life, rationalism must culminate in Humanism. It is an act of integration on a new level. This integration is a sign of maturity. If the individual is to play a role, he must have a value system capable of yielding principles of moral action and a standard for criticism of behaviours.

The last battle of rationalism in 19th century Bengal was waged by the Comtists (followers of Auguste Comte) – the battle started by the Derozians. In fact, the Derozians in the first half of the century and the Comtists in the second half were the two important groups to unfurl the flag of rationalism in the country, with Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and his lieutenant, Akshoy Kumar Dutt, occupying an intermediate position. The Comtist movement in Bengal was indeed the last flare-up before its final extinguishment.

The Comtist movement was, however, a more positive than the Derozian, which remained satisfied only with registering a protest against the domination of all thought by religion. The Derozians could not develop any positive philosophical movement, and their energies were mostly spent over fighting some concrete irrational practices and injustices of the society. Because of this lack of positive ideology they could be easily persuaded to dissolve their organisation and to join the political movement of the country. some of them were dispersed in different parts of the country in pursuit of their avocations of life, and lost all contacts with one another. Some of them even back-slided into the religious fold because bare scepticism was a very unstable position. One must either move forward to a new conviction or step back to the earlier position. Derozio, however, died young at 23, and it is very difficult to say what would have happened to the movement inspired by him had he lived longer. As things stood, the Derozians were a group without ideological

commitment and their movement was dispersed by the early forties of the 19th century.

The Comtists, on the contrary, were committed to the cult of man as enunciated by Auguste Comte. Comte (1798-1857) was a philosopher of the French Enlightenment, characterised as the Second Renaissance of Europe in which the first one found fulfilment. The first Renaissance saw the ascendancy of rationalism in philosophy which paved the way for the birth of modern science. It left the socio-political sphere untouched and even in philosophy its triumph was not complete. With the French Enlightenment the reign of rationalism became the more pervasive and thorough-going. Not only philosophy now became more materialistic but the human society was also brought within the purview of rationalism, it was thought that social phenomena, like the natural, were governed by laws and might be studies in the same way, thus giving birth to different social sciences. Reason thus ceased to be a subject of mere philosophical speculation and became the regulating factory of practical life as well.

With this triumph of reason in almost all spheres of human life the faith in man was reinforced. Humanism was the intellectual keynote of the First Renaissance movement also, but it then consisted primarily in a reaction against the domination of all thought by the church. In its positive aspect it took a mystic and poetic view of life. In the absence of adequate knowledge about life, Humanism could not be placed on a rational foundation. Comte did it. His Positivism, in denying the divine side of man and a divine order in nature, quite consistently made humanist its highest ideal. He proclaimed the sovereignty of man because in him the physical process of becoming had reached the highest point so far and because he had become the maker of his own destiny and the ruler of this world with his knowledge of different sciences.

The thought of Comte almost immediately made a world-wide impact and claimed among its admirers many celebrities of the age. But the number of thorough-going Comtists in different countries could be counted on one's fingers. Dr. Robinet and M. Laffite in France and Dr. Congreve and Dr. Budges in England were the only four known faithful followers of Comte in Europe. According to Dinabandhu Sanyal, biographer of Justice Dwarakanath Mitter, India had the distinction of having the largest number of convinced Comtists. The history of English Positivism dates from 1848 when Congreve, a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford, visited France and came under the influence of Comte. From England Comte migrated to Bengal.*

Among the Bengalee Positivists we may name Ramkamal Bhattacharya, (Professor of the Sanskrit College) and his brother Krishnakamal (Principal of the Ripon College), W.C. Bonnerjea (first President of the Indian National Congress), Dwarakanath Mitter (first Indian Judge of the Calcutta High Court), Jogendra Chandra Ghose (a Homeopath), Girish Chandra Ghose (a Journalist), K.M. Chatterji (a Judge of the Lower Court), Nilkantha Majumdar and Nilmoni Kumar (two students of Krishnakamal). Bankim Chatterji, the famous novelist, Nabin Chandra Sen (an epic writer) and Swami Vivekananda too came under the influence of Comte for some time in their early life. Some scholars believe that Vidyasagar was also influenced by Comte but there was not much evidence of warrant this. Besides, there were some English Positivists in India during those days. Lobb, Principal of the Krishnagar College, and Geddes, an I.C.S. Officer, were the most prominent. Cotton, Beveridge, Haggad and a few more young civilians were also known as Positivists. These names are put on record for the sake of historical justice because these Positivist Humanists were the precursors of the Radical Humanists in India.

During the latter half of the 19th century the atmosphere in the country was too surcharged with devotional religious fervour for the growth of a rationalist movement. Even stalwarts like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Akshoy Kumar Dutt had to stage a retreat before this upsurge. A news type of Young Bengal altogether different in outlook and temperament had come to take the place of the Young Bengal inspired by the teachings of Derozio. Unlike the Derozian movement, the Positivist movement could not thus be predominantly a youth movement. But still the ideas of

Comte did not fail to penetrate the student community altogether. We have already named two students of Krishnakamal who took more or less a leading part in the contemporary Comtist movement. If the Derozian movement radiated from the Hindu College in the first half of the 19th century, the Comtist movement originated from the Sanskrit College in the second half. Ramkamal took the lead in the matter and succeeded in disseminating positivist ideas among a small but select circle of friends and admirers and also among the students. The movement survived the shock from his death in 1860, and from a letter of Lobb written in 1867 we know that at that time "Positivism is gaining some attention in India." The Comtist movement might not have been numerically strong, but there is no gainsaying the fact that it acquired a firm hold upon some of the best minds of 19th century Bengal. An intellectual movement as such could not be popular, and Comte himself visualised that his philosophy would be acceptable only to intellectuals, none the less it is certain that one or two of the Comtist leaders of Bengal could capture the imagination of the people. Wherever they went, crowds gathered for a glimpse of them. This relative popularity of the Positivist movement might be partly a reaction against an over-dose of Vedantism in the country. in that case, Positivism might be taken to be a modernised version of Buddhism.

After the death of Ramkamal the mantle fell upon Dwarakanath Mitter. He was born in the village Agunshi in the Hoogly district in 1836. He was a man of studious habits from his student life and came to have a cursory look at the philosophy of Comte which immediately made a deep impression upon his mind. He began legal practice at the Calcutta High Court at the young age of 22 and became a Judge of the same Court in 1867. During his career at the bar he had not much time, but it was different on the Bench. His power of delivering quick judgments was remarkable. As soon as the arguments in a case ended, he would, except on rare occasions, dictate the judgment to the Bench clerk then and there. He could now devote his spare time to the study of Comte. He was so taken up with Positivist Humanism that he learned French to read all of Comte's works in the original. Comte made a selection of books (nearly 250) "with the view of guiding the more thoughtful minds ... in their choice of books for constant use." This was known as the Positivist Library. The collection was purely provisional and intended only for Westerners. But Dwarikababu tried to collect for his own use as many of those books as possible. He also translated from French into English Comte's *Analytical Geometry*. He could not go to sleep without reading a chapter from Comte every night. He did not depart from this practice even when his professional work kept him occupied till 2 or 3 a.m. When his father died, he refused to perform the *shraddh* ceremony since he had no faith in the soul and the next world. Through the good offices of Lobb Dwarakanath became acquainted with Congreve and was in regular correspondence with him in London. He was also the first Indian to contribute (Pound 5) to the Positivist Fund in France. In 1873 he developed cancer of the throat accompanied by the swelling of glands and died on 25 February, 1874.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was not committed to Comte, but he was a practical Humanist and gave tacit support to the Comtist movement in the country. We know that Ramkamal and Krishnakamal who were students of the Sanskrit College were profoundly influenced by Vidyasagar, as a result of which they became convinced atheists even before their conversion to Positivism. When Krishnakamal wrote to Comte in France, he gave his address as care of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Vidyasagar knew Dwarakanath intimately. The two veterans often used to discuss scriptural matters. Vidyasagar even expressed a desire to learn practising law at the court from his friend and took advice from him in all legal matters. When in January 1872 Vidyasagar appointed a Committee for the management of his Hindu Metropolitan Institution, Dwarakanath was a member of it, the other member being Krishnadas Pal. Dwarakanath further arbitrated in the dispute in which Vidyasagar got unfortunately involved with his brother Dinabandhu over the Sanskrit Press and Depository. Dwarakanath was indeed so close to Ishwar Chandra intellectually and socially that he was called the Second Vidyasagar (*Somprakash* dated 12 September, 1870). In cooperation

with Vidyasagar the Comtists established the Bengal Association as against the British Indian Association which was dominated by *zamindars*. Here it may be pointed out that the Comtists, like the Derozians, always espoused the cause of the poor and the downtrodden. Mention may be made in this connection of Dwarakanath's conducting of what came to be known as the Great Rent Case. Girish Chandra Ghose was one of the founders of the *Hindu Patriot* which took such a prominent part in the indigo agitation but as the journal came under the increasing influence of the landed aristocracy, Ghose dissociated himself from it and founded the *Bengalee* which fought the case of the labourers of the Assam tea gardens. Sometime after the passing away of Dwarakanath a Positivist Humanist Club was established at the residence of one of the relatives of Nilmoni Kumar living at Taltola. At intervals this club used to meet also at the house of K.M. Chatterji. At each sitting some portions of a book of Comte was read and discussed. Jogendra Ghose was the Club's moving spirit.

The English Positivists, however, did not come to this club. Principal Lobb was their leading figure. He took keen interest in promoting the Positivist movement in this country. He was in regular correspondence with Girish Chandra Ghose, and in 1967-68 wrote a series of articles on Positivism in the journal edited by Ghose. He encouraged Krishnakamal to write on Positivism in Bengali journals. Accordingly he wrote two articles on the subject "Positivism *kahke bale*" (What is called Positivism?) in the *Bharati* (Sravan and Aswin, 1292 *Sakh*) and another captioned "*Pramanik dharma*" (Authoritative Religion) in the *Pous* issue of the same journal in the same year. Lobb further induced Congreve to write to Dwarakanath. But why, in spite of all his interest in the movement, he too kept completely aloof from the Club, is a question that cries for an answer. Certainly it was not due to racial arrogance. Most probably the English Positivists did not like the way the Club under the leadership of Jogendra sought not only to Indianise but also to Hinduise the movement.

We know that Comte provided for worship of Humanist in place of Divinity. A woman of thirty with her son in her arms (Madonna with Christ) was taken as the visual symbol of Humanity. In all parts of the world temples would be built up in each of which such statue would be fixed and worshipped ceremonially, and a painted representation of the same figure was to be carried on banners in solemn processions. Now Jogendra thought that the people of this country would not take kindly to the image of a woman wearing a skirt. So he wanted to replace the image of Madonna by that of 'Narayani' – a sari-clad and vermillion-ointed woman suckling a child. He even went to the extent of smuggling into the Religion of Humanity the traditional adoration *sloka* of the sun – *Yavakusumasankasham*, etc. Jogendra also became very eager to declare Comte a *Rishi*. All this must have been sentimental nonsense to the English Positivists.

But to speak the truth, sentimentalism was inherent in the Humanist philosophy of Comte. Merely to declare from a house-top the sovereignty of man and to worship Humanity in the form of an idol, whatever it might be, led nowhere. Man could be maker of his own destiny only *collectively*. It pinpointed the importance of ethics in human life. Comte tried hard to explain the society with the help of knowledge which had accumulated in the different departments of science since the Renaissance. But he had not thought it fit to find in reason the source and sanction of ethics. On the contrary, he fell back upon the age-old remedy of looking upon organised religion as a cementing and moralising factor in society although his religion was of a secular nature. As a result, he had to install Humanity, a visual symbol of this abstraction in temples and plead for the establishment of a Universal Church of Humanity and other paraphernalia instead of making reason the determining factor in the march of social progress and human emancipation. This was the fundamental weakness of Comte's Religion of Humanity. Some critics heave, however, found in his attaching such importance to religion a re-assertion of his early religious upbringing. We know that Comte was a born in a fervent Catholic family and had a religious upbringing. If Hegelian

upbringing misled Marx from the scientific into the idealist Camp, Catholic upbringing did so to Comte. The valuations and predilections of the philosophers here got supremacy over the question of the logical compatibility of the elements which he tried to combine.

The Comtist movement in Bengal, however, crumbled ultimately not because of its theoretical weakness but because of an attack, direct and indirect, from the Vendantist camp. We know that the Brahmo Samaj was an inveterate enemy of the rationalist movements of the age. During the first half of the century it made the Derozians its target of attack. During the second half it took up cudgels against the Comtist movement. The *Tattvabodhini Patrika* thus hardly missed an opportunity to express its deep concern at the rapid spread of Positivist-Humanist ideas among the contemporary educated Bengali youths. The Brahmo leaders sometimes utilised the columns of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* to indulge in personal vilification against individual Comtists and took delight in their personal misfortune. Rajnarain Bose, then President of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, discussing the religious opinion of Bankim Chandra in the said journal, called him "a hated follower of Comte". Cancer disfigured the face of Dwarakanath. The Brahmo leaders were so angry with his Positivist outlook that one of them publicly said that God had justly disfigured his face because in the past he had dismissed the ideas of God, next world etc, by a similar expression of face.

The Brahmos joined issue with the Comtists over philosophical questions as well. As already mentioned, Lobb had induced Krishnakamal to write on Positivism for the Bharati. Dwijendra Nath Tagore wrote a rejoinder to them in his Bengali essay "Positivism o Adhmyatmik dharma" (i.e. Positivism and Spiritual Religion). Later, Dwijendra Natgh referred to this controversy in an article in the *Suprabhat* (*Aswin*, 1317) and described Krishnakamal as 'a terrible fellow" who "knows how to write and how to fight and how to slight all things divine."

The Brahmos made Bankim Chandra a particular target of attack. At first they tried to win him over. Kalinath Dutt, a Brahmo leader, writes in his *Bankimprasanga* that while Bankimbabu had many good qualities, he had no faith in God which pained the author much.

He gave Bankim a copy of Theodre Parkar's *Ten Sermons* to read. The book was at one time almost the Bible of the Brahmos. Bankim returned it after a week with an influencing observation. Later in life, however, Bankim defected to the Vedantic camp. In fact, he came under the influence of the *Bhagwadgita*, appraised as the 'Practical Vedanta'. The Comtist ideal of service to man transformed in his mind into the spiritual ideal of '*lokasangraha*' as propounded in the *Gita*. Coming to the 20th century we find that many of our nationalist leaders drawing inspiration from the *Gita*, particularly its ethics of disinterested action. The process virtually started with Bankim who was initiated into it at an early age by his father and who committed it all to memory. After toying with Comte's ideas for some time he returned to *Gita*. In a number of letters to Jogendra Chandra Ghose, Bankim sought to explain the main tenets of the Hindu view of life. But it appears that the Comtian influence lingered in him till his last days. At least Brahmo leaders thought so. That is, when he wrote his *Krishnacharitra* in which he depicted Krishna as "the wisest and greatest of the Hindus", Brahmo leaders like Dwijendra Nath Tagore, Rajnarain Bose and Kailash Chandra Sinha mounted a severe attack upon this new concept of Krishna and attributed it to the influence of Comte. Subsequently, even Rabindranath joined in the fray. He was then the Secretary of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. Bankim himself, however, found the instigation of Dwijendranath behind much of this attack but Dwijendranath denied it.

It is, however, not so much Bankim's "Practical Vedanta" as Swami Vivekananda's which played havoc with the Positivist-Humanist movement. Bankim's defection, no doubt, weakened it. But towards the close of the century it began propagating the ideal of seeing Siva in *jiva* with a good deal of fanfare which took the wind almost completely out of the sails of the Comtist movement. In Europe the Christian Fathers divested the concept of Humanism of its revolutionary significance by equating it with the mere cultivation of art and literature. Similarly, Vivekananda reduced the

Positivist secular Religion of Humanity to a super-naturalistic religion and gave birth to a new religion of humanity. He could do it easily because the very term 'religion' in Bengali and Sanskrit had a connotation of its own and suggested an association with super-naturalistic ideas.

The Humanist movement of the Positivists somehow managed to drag its weary existence to the first decade of the 20th century. Jogendra Ghose started in 1904 a society called the Association for the Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Education. But he was the last titan of the movement and with his death soon after, it practically died down. Krishnakamal no doubt survived him but was then too old to take active interest in the movement. He assessed the position existing then and the fate of the Comtist movement thus: "After the death of Jogendra Positivism has no longer ay leader in this country. Now it is in a state of stupor. Even if anybody has still any inclination towards it without our knowledge, there is no expression of it. An arrangement for discussing it together is also lacking. In fact, I feel that the country is not yet ripe for the religion of Comte. There is no certainty that it will ever be. When we entertain doubt whether it would get ascendancy even in Europe, it is better not to speak of this country." The note of pessimism is unmistakable.

Krishnakamal tool passed away on 13th August, 1932 at the ripe age of 92 and with him disappeared the last spokesman of the Positivist Humanist movement in the country. some two years before his death Roy made his debut on the Indian scene after a long absence, and with him started the second phase of the Indian Humanist movement. The second phase started about a century after the beginning of the first, and is far more mature.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, January 1975.

---

*Comte and Marx were almost contemporaries and were disciples of Saint Simon. But we find no mention of Marx in India before 1903 and that too in a critical note. Engels was, however, more fortunate than Marx in this respect because his name found mention in the sociological literature of India in 1900 in an appreciative way. Comte, however, came to India long before Marx and Engels.

On the History of the Radical Humanist Movement

R.L. Nigam

Let me state it at once that the scope of this piece is going to be much more limited than what the caption may lead one to expect. I shall be concerned here with just one observation of C.R.M. Rao in his address on "The Relevance of M.N. Roy" (RH May 1983). There Rao observes: "*Ever since Ellen's death the movement had been languishing until Tarkunde took up the task of carrying the movement forward.*" Here is the history of the movement in a capsule which is likely to prove seductive to the prospective historian of the Movement. But it is, I submit with due apologies, bad history. I am, therefore, venturing to re-set the perspective for the sake of record.

Rao's way of encapsulating the history of the movement suggests a rectilinear development of the movement. It gives the impression that the movement has been running in a straight line, becoming slow, dead-slow, over a stretch of the line, picking up again and going forward on the same rails. I am afraid this is not so.

The proper history of the movement may be said to begin with the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in 1948. The event marked the transformation of the party into a movement. It was not just a change of name on the signboard. It was going to be an altogether new venture, or rather adventure, both in the field of ideas and of action. The organization with all its paraphernalia, its hierarchy, its Centre and Branches and Units, its circulars and directives disappeared. There remained only individuals dispersed all over the country, bound by a common outlook, a shared vision, and a desire to work for the realisation of that vision. True, a small co-ordinating committee was formed, but it had no executive, administrative or directive role. Its scope and function were to be shaped by the activities and needs of the scattered individuals working in different fields of life. There will have to be activities, even a variety of activities, before any question of their co-ordination could arise. I do not remember if there was a convener of the committee from the very beginning. However, at a much later stage, the late G.D. Parikh was acting as one, but all he did was to correspond with individuals, and elicit information from them about what was going on in their part of the country. As far as I remember he never issued a directive.

The time between the formulation and acceptance of the philosophy of New Humanism and Roy's death in 1954 was generally taken up by elucidation and further exploration of ideas. The question whether for the movement as visualised or envisaged in the philosophy as it then stood, an organization was at all indicated and, if so, what sort, also kept coming up from time to time. But nothing was settled.

While the question of 'organization' did keep cropping up during Roy's life-time and Ellen's, with more or less force, the feeling generally was that until the activities of the Radicals themselves required or threw up an organization, the movement was to develop around the journal, the *Radical Humanist*. The Indian Renaissance Institute was seen to stand in complementary and symbiotic relationship with the movement, one helping the other in its growth. Thus, IRI and the RH served as the equivalent of organization for the movement.

After Roy, the burden of guiding and directing the movement fell on Ellen, actually on Ellen and Sibnarayan Ray. In the work of the IRI and the RH the two joined hands, and it worked well enough. And though Sib in his recent writings has been suggesting that he was an unwilling wearer of Roy's mantle thrown or fallen on him, the fact is that during all those days there was nothing about him that even remotely suggested his reluctance. On the contrary, *The Weekly* journal and IRI continued to serve as the vehicle of the movement and also as the source of its motive power. There were, however, no spectacular activities, no notice in the media, no crowded conference. In fact, we had no conferences at all. Our only congregations used to be our camps/re-

unions, all-India or regional. We sometimes participated in conferences of other organizations with which we shared some views or attitudes like the Rationalists' Association and Civil Liberties Union.

With Ellen's departure we were, in the common manner of speaking, orphaned. Had there been an organization, things in some ways would have been simpler. Some persons would have been elected at different levels to carry on the work of the movement. But, as noted earlier, the movement such as it was had gone on around RH and IRI. Now, with Ellen gone, Sib who had shared the burden with her remained almost the sole occupant of the position by whatever name we may call it. Tarkunde being a judge of the Bombay High Court had not been available to us all these years in an active sense. His participation in one of our camps – it was Aurangabad camp if I remember correctly – had aroused considerable controversy and even some press comment. Our attitude to the independence of judiciary having what it is, we felt that though comments were pointless (Tarkunde having neither attended a political conference nor made a political statement) it was desirable that he should be kept above controversy. Parikh had meanwhile become the Rector of Bombay University. That responsibility claimed all his time and energy. Besides he had already initiated certain changes in the University and its academic life which seemed to have a tremendous potential. It was best that he went ahead with his work as its success would mean the furtherance of the movement's ideals in a significant sector. So, Sib remained the only visible source of guidance for the movement which had to go round the RH and IRI. Sib had already shifted to Bombay and so he had the advantage and/or opportunity of consulting other senior members of the movement there. This was in 1961-62 – Ellen having been done in on 13 December 1960.

Tremendous responsibility rested on Sib's shoulders. At the first camp after Ellen's death held in May 1961 the question of 'organization' came up again. It came up with a seriousness and a touch of poignancy. However, all articulated demand for an organization was for "an organization to co-ordinate the activities of the movement so that members could keep in touch with each other and seek one another's help." In this context it was clearly and unambiguously emphasised that "Radical Humanist Movement could not be looked upon as a substitute for political activity," and "Renaissance movement was not just another political movement." In the event of idea of an 'organization' was rejected , RH, IRI and the Camp/Reunion were seen as adequate by way of organization for the kind of movement we were trying to promote. The Camp's published report ended with: "*The other important achievement of the Reunion was to have more or less given a decent burial to the ghost of 'organization' which has haunted Radical for many years now. 'More or less,' because the last nail is yet to be driven into the coffin of the organization. And that can be done, it seems, only when the weekly paper, the Institute and the Publishing concern begin to function effectively and efficiently. This remains to be achieved."*

At the end Sibnarayan Ray's voice was heard by the Camp as its own when he declared in ringing tone: "WE ARE DETERMINED TO CONTINUE THE MOVEMENT."

Not long after this Sib had to accept an assignment in Australia. With his departure the void was nearly complete. Before continuing the sequence of events, a little digression here.

The peculiar concatenation of circumstances which I have been describing brought me too into the picture, not for any merit or competence in me but for sheer necessity. The manner of Ellen's death had thrown IRI and 13 Mohini Road into a complex legal situation. Being on the spot, I had to look after the matters that arose from it. I had to deal with the court, the police, the bank, the postal department and the rest, day in and day out. But I had no *locus standi.* Sib, the Secretary, the only proper authority was in far away Bombay. Acting out of character, I allowed myself to pass as Assistant Secretary, a post non-existent in the IRI Constitution. The rubber stamp is still there. This helped in a purely technical way which was my purpose. With Sib's departure this proved embarrassing. But I was saved.

During his stay in Bombay Sib had been able to draw A.B. Shah closer. This helped to fill the void. AB. Shah stepped in as the Secretary in Sib's place. As an act of grace I was also made a Secretary. However, I took it for what it was, an act of grace, and acted, on the whole, rather as a caretaker and a resident secretary for technical purposes. And I did that for very good reasons. As I have said before, the real position of "leadership" (I use the word with serious reservations) rested with the Secretary of IRI and with the Editor of the RH. After Roy, these positions were held by Ellen and Sib. With Sib's departure for Australia the secretary-ship for all practical purposes fell on Shah. In my own mind I never regarded my secretary-ship seriously and tried to keep the mantle as much out of sight as I could. This was because I believed that the IRI Secretary had to have competences which I did not possess. The philosophical and intellectual positions the IRI and the Movement stood for, the Twenty two Theses and all had always been a forbidding matter for me. I could never feel at home in dealing with the many awkward questions that would be raised in respect of them. I conveniently left them to Shah and except in a couple of matters I never behaved like a secretary of IRI. I still believe that IRI Secretary has to have high calibre. And that was my unstated reason for wanting to resign from secretary-ship several times before I was finally allowed to do so., Be that as it may. To make things worse, with Sib gone, the editorship of the RH also fell to me. My diffidence was not less in this case, particularly with the consciousness of the extra-editorial responsibilities it involved vis-a-vis the movement. Moreover, even the editorial responsibility could not be properly discharged from Dehradun. The burden was virtually borne by friends at Calcutta whose forbearance remains an un-discharged debt on me.

This position went on more or less until 1969. Ellen had died in 1960. It is not as if the movement as movement had been very full-blooded and kicking until 1960, and from 1960 to about 1970 it was moribund as Rao's capsule records. Of course, Roy was a host in himself. The momentum that he had generated enabled those who succeeded him to carry on the movement competently though with reduced tempo and significance. It is the same momentum that carries us on even today, good, bad or indifferent. Though Roy believed, and it is humanist faith too, that what one man has achieved other men can achieve as well, the experienced reality forces the realisation that what Roy did none of us seems capable of doing. I should be sorry if I am hurting some susceptibilities.

Then came a stage when A.B. Shah resigned the secretary-ship of IRI. The reasons need not be gone into. But that was a big blow. He had done some very useful work. Now I remained the single secretary. I have already confessed to my want of competence a secretary of IRI should have. I could no longer have the benefit of a shield. To make things worse the situation at 13 Mohini Road was coming to a crisis. It was not for the first time, nor for the last. Somehow we have excelled in finding ad hoc solutions and leaving things to destiny in which, as humanists, we do not believe. During all this period I used to remain very upset over our inactivity. Whenever I took the question of the movement's furtherance and the handicaps I had to work under with our senior comrades, they always told me that my task was to just "hold the fort as long as possible" as we were experiencing a "crisis of survival". Well, I tried to do just that, and, as my experience of recent years has convinced me, to my utter and immense discredit!

So, from the time of the dissolution of the RDP to 1969-70 the movement went on in whatever strength or weakness it did, in keeping with the nature of the movement conceived at the time of the transformation of the party into movement. It is true that towards the end of this period it became moribund. This was the stage when formally I had the sole charge of IRI and the RH. I have no hesitation in making that admission. I offer no defence, not at the moment at least. Only I must point out, in fairness to myself, that none of the positions I held was of my seeking, and for none of them there was an aspirant in sight. I gave up the moment I discovered that the positions were in request. But I would not be right to suggest, as Rao's encapsulated history does, that the entire period from 1960 to 1970 was one of languishment. That is unfair to my other colleagues who did

some valuable work. The fact is that the character of the movement as it had come down was different and its success and failure, progress and stagnation could not be judged by usual norms of success or progress. This is not to say that there was no failure, but its nature and circumstances have to be clearly understood.

Surely, 1969 marks the turning point in the movement. Around 1969 Tarkunde took retirement and was a "free man" once again. The old question of "organization" came to life. It was felt that the movement was in a bad way because there was no organization, not that there was no organization because the movement was not what it should be. An organization was directly created. The Convention which gave birth to the organization, the Radical Humanist Association, gave Tarkunde the charge of the organization. Tarkunde worked zealously and indefatigably. But he put the movement on different rails and the movement has rolled on them merrily since. That it is moving towards the selfsame destination is a debatable point. Debatable too is the point if the organization formed was the right sort of organization in structure, in spirit and in functioning. It was and is an organization in the image of apolitical party and it has functioned like a political party minus the pursuit of power and provision of disciplinary action. Look at the proliferation of organizations, committees, offices, posts and resolutions galore, even within the RHA itself. I am, therefore, in considerable sympathy with those who have been asking for a political party straight away. They are being more consistent.

To conclude: The RH Movement from the start in 1948 to Ellen's death went on as a cultural movement. As politics were not to be divorced from culture the movement had, too, a political dimension though in the circumstances of those days it was not pronounced enough. After Ellen's death for nearly a decade it was on the same rails, limping along. It was just a question of somehow surviving until good times came. Good time came with Tarkunde's retirement. He has gone ahead, as Rao says. But the character of the movement is now different. It is now essentially a political movement which is supposed to have a non-political dimension, not very visible.

I am not suggesting that the work being done is not useful or necessary. But every useful and necessary work does not become the RH movement. Rao himself has made the point when he says, "... But all these, I make bold to say, do not amount to what we have always cherished – a movement for Indian Renaissance."

If the new direction given to the "movement" is really its fuller development which the rectilinear view would suggest, then I would be for going whole hog with it, CFD, PUCL and all and for directly dissolving the IRI and RHA. If the PUCL and CFD are directed respectively to short term and long term goals of the Radical Humanist Movement, as Tarkunde maintains, the IRI and RHA being bound up with a philosophy and its onerous implications are not only irrelevant but serious encumbrances. The dynamism of CFD and PUCL, which are composed overwhelmingly of non-Radicals, suggests that for the Radical Humanist goals our older kind of organizations encumbered with philosophy, etc. are a sort of road-blocks. Rid of them, the present work will acquire much greater momentum and our present state of near disarray will give place to greater cohesion. Personally, spiritually, I do not belong there. But that's another matter.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, June 1983.

The Radical Humanist Movement – Nature and Perspective

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

A Controversy in regard to the nature of the Radical Humanist movement and the perspectives of its development has arisen as a result of the articles of S.N. Puri and R.L. Nigam published in the June 1983 issue of the Radical Humanist. I have been pressed by a number of friends to express my views on the controversy. I was reluctant to do so because I am of the view that such issues should first be discussed in gatherings of Radical Humanists which take place from time to time. Many of the apparent differences would be found on mutual discussion to be superficial and non-existing, and those differences which persist thereafter would be so crystalised as to facilitate a fruitful discussion through the columns of this journal. However, the publication of the two articles has raised some controversial issues in a rather vague form, and it has become necessary for others to deal with them.

It is true that the primary purpose of the Radical Humanist Movement and of the Radical Humanist Association – I will explain later why the two are not identical – is to promote what M.N. Roy used to call the Twentieth Century Renaissance. For this purpose, the values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality have to be propagated among the people. It is only on this basis that democratic organisations like people's committees and cooperative societies can be built up and a revolutionary transformation of society can eventually be brought about.

The basic question, however, is: Among which sections of the people the humanist values, necessary for the Twentieth Century Renaissance, are required to be propagated? Will it be enough if the propagation of these values is confined to middle class intellectuals? Is it true that if values are propagated among middle class intellectuals, they will in the course of time percolate to the rest of the people? Or is it the lesson of our experience that the Indian renaissance visualised by us cannot be brought about except by propagating humanist values among the broad masses of the people? And if it is necessary that humanist values must be propagated among the masses, can we do it without partici9pating in activities designed to encourage the masses to strive for a better life, politically, economically and socially? It is by answering these questions that we can get a clear idea of the nature of the Radical Humanist Movement and prospective of its development.

A period of 20 years passed between the death of Roy in 1954 and the inauguration of the Citizens for Democracy in 1974. During that period we were not inactive. *The Radical Humanist* was published more or less regularly; the Indian Renaissance Institute was somehow kept alive; all-India Study Camps were held from time to time at Dehra Dun or Mussourie; some study camps were also held at the State level; Renaissance Clubs were run in a few towns; individual radical humanists gave talks on Radical Humanism or conducted study circles wherever possible. The work, however, was confined to middle class intellectuals. It was meagre and ineffective. The movement did not grow and became stagnant.

The lesson to be drawn from this experience was that the propagation of Radical Humanist values among the middle class did not help in promoting a renaissance movement among the masses of the people. While conducting study circles or Renaissance Clubs during those years we used to say that we were engaged in "educating the educators". But the potential educators, after hearing us with some interest, remained inactive for the most part. Some of them used to ask us the question: What work are you doing among the masses? We had no answer to that question. The fact is that, by and large, the middle class is either reactionary or indifferent to the problems of the people. A few individuals belonging to the middle class are interested in the problems of the masses but, finding that non-party organisations have no mass work, they join one or the other of the contending political parties. The above experience clearly indicated that the Humanist Movement had to undertake mass work if it was to be effective in the county.

A similar lesson was drawn by Jayaprakash Narayan on the basis of his experience in the Sarvodaya movement. Writing in *Everyman's Weekly* towards the end of 1974, he pointed out that Sarvodaya workers had spent many years in addressing meetings and organising seminars among middleclass intellectuals and that this led them nowhere. He concluded that "mass agitation" was necessary if the Sarvodaya message was to be carried to the people. J.P. clarified that mass agitation, if properly conducted, could be constructive and educative. Radical Humanists may not use the word "agitation", but they should recognise that the lesson drawn by J.P. about the necessity of mass work was correct.

It is in this context that the work of radical humanists who are functioning in the Citizens for Democracy and the People's Union for Civil Liberties should be evaluated. There are two aspects of this work which are relevant from the Radical Humanist point of views. In the first place, the main objective of the F.F.D. and the P.U.C.L. is to prevent the establishment of a dictatorial regime in the country. It is easy to see that if civil liberties and democratic rights are destroyed and a dictatorial regime is established, the work of radical humanists of propagating humanist values will be far more difficult than at present. Rule of law, freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly, are essential for undertaking activities designed to educate the people in democratic and humanist values. The new way of revolution visualised by Roy (see for instance his lecture on "Humanist Politics" published in Chapter XI of "*Politics, Power and Parties*") pre-supposes a system of legislative elections which should be increasingly free from corrupt practices. It cannot be doubted that Radical Humanists working in the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L have done valuable work in retarding the establishment of authoritarianism in India. This is one aspect of the work of Radical Humanists in the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L. The second aspect of the work is even more relevant for the present discussion. The work consists essentially of spreading the message of freedom amongst the broad masses of the people. Freedom implies self reliance and absence of blind faith. Freedom and rationalism are logically interconnected. The moral values of equality and fraternity are the social counterpart of the humanist values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality. It is these humanist values which are being propagated by radical humanists working in the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L They are doing radical humanist work, though not under the auspices of the Radical Humanist Association. I am therefore greatly surprised that a contrary view, based on the assumption that the work of the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L. has little connection with the cultural values of Radical Humanism, has been expressed in the articles of S.N. Puri and R.L. Nigam.

It is true as S.N. Puri has pointed out that the direct work of the Radical Humanist Association has received a set-back after the formation of the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L. That is because many of the active radical humanists are now participating in the work of these two organisations. (I find that even the work of the C.,F.D. has suffered to some extent when the P.U.C.L. was reorganised with a regular membership in November 1980, because a majority of active C.F.D. workers are now engaged in the rapidly increasing work of the P.U.C.L.). This happens because we are few in number. I wish, however, to make two observations, in addition to what I have said above, with regard to the effect of the work in the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L. on the functioning of the Radical Humanist Association. In fact, it is very likely that most of the new entrants in the Radical Humanist Association are persons who had been associated with radical Humanists working in the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L. Secondly, it is not essential for members of the Radical Humanist Association to join either the C.F.D. or the P.U.C.L. in order to do useful work among the masses of the people. This has been shown, for instance, by Dr. Indumati Parikh in Maharashtra and Moni Das Gupta in West Bengal. With the invaluable assistance of the ever-young radical humanist Laxman Shastri Joshi (now only 83 years of age), Dr. Indumati Parikh has been organising a number of study camps in rural parts of Maharashtra under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Social Change established by our late comrade G.D. Parikh. The philosophy and practice of Radical Humanism are discussed at length in these camps. It is noteworthy that these camps are attended by boys and girls coming from farmers' and artisans' families in rural areas. Similar work is being done at

Karmala in the Solapur district by the radical humanist Anand Kotharia, who is working largely under the inspiration of Dr. Indumati Parikh. Another instance of successful rural work by radical humanists is the Gobardanga Renaissance Institute run by Moni Das Gupta and his friends in the rural setting in West Bengal. The Rationalist Movement in which M.V. Ramamurty and others are engaged, and the Science Club Movement being developed by Moni Das Gupta and his friends, are other instances of Radical Humanist activities which are outside the range of the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L.

It would indeed be very helpful if some radical humanists were to undertake mass activities directly on behalf of the Radical Humanist Association rather than through either the C.F.D. or the P.U.C.L. With this object, a resolution on "Plan of Action" was introduced and unanimously passed in the All India Conference of the Radical Humanist Association held in Meerut in the last week of December1982. The resolution called upon Radical Humanists to work among the deprived and exploited sections of society in some selected areas, so as to promote self reliance among the people and propagate the values of individual freedom and cooperative moral behaviour. The resolution went on to give some details of the work that can be done by radical humanists among the deprived and the exploited. I have referred to this resolution in order to show that the mass activities of radical humanists need not be confined to the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L. What is essential is that radical humanists should now realise that the renaissance movement which they are striving to develop must be a mass movement if it is to achieve anything worthwhile in the country.

It would be entirely wrong to suppose that the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L. can possibly eliminate the necessity of the Radical Humanist Association. A person requires a philosophy of life if he is to work with determination and against great odds in a social movement. It is my experience that the most determined workers in the C.F.D. are either the radical humanists or Gandhians. This is because both of them have a philosophy of life. The Radical Humanist Association should be looked upon as the generator of the most determined fighters for a humanist revolution in India.

The need of the Indian Renaissance Institute does not require to be separately emphasised. It should develop as a research wing of the Radical Humanist Association. Attempts are being made to develop the Indian Renaissance Institute along these lines and I have every hope that those attempts will succeed to a considerable extent.

One last word of clarification. Just s the work of radical humanists in the C.F.D. and the P.U.C.L should not be regarded as exhaustive of the work of the Radical Humanist Association should also not be regarded as exhaustive of the Radical Humanist Movement. A radical humanist may be an artist or a man of literature; he may be interested in writing books or publishing articles in the periodical press; he may be engaged in producing progressive plays or films; he would in such cases not require any organisational link for the purpose of carrying out his activities. The work of such radical humanists, who may not join any association, is at least as valuable as the work of members of the Radical Humanist Association. There are, moreover, a number of persons who are radical humanists by temperament or by conviction, but who have either not heard of the Radical Humanist Association or have not known that the values which they cherish are the values of Radical Humanism. As pointed out by M.A. Rane, the late M.C. Chagla was a more genuine radical humanist than many of us, though he never identified himself as a radical humanist. The values of Radical Humanism are being spread by some persons who are not members of the Radical Humanist Association and who are not known to be radical humanists.

I do not wish to give the impression that everything is all right with the Radical Humanist Movement. Obviously much more is required to be done. But nothing is gained by a purely negative attitude. The critics should specify positively what we should do to develop the Movement and they should blaze a new trail by putting their ideas into practice.

14 August, 1983.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, September 1983.

Radical Humanist Movement: Some Basic Questions

R.L. Nigam

On What view one takes of the nature and character of the movement will depend the kind of activities that are undertaken, the methods that are followed to promote the movement, and the norms that are applied in determining the progress the success or failure, of the movement. On it will depend also what kind of institutions we create, what kind of interpersonal and inter-group relationships we develop. On these matters, it seems to me, there have developed wide divergences amongst us over the years. And these divergences have remained implicit; they have not been made explicit. As a consequence even when we speak the same language, it does not mean the same thing for all of us. We have become almost like islands with no bridges thrown across. In such a situation, meaningful dialogue becomes difficult for want of a common starting point and a common language. The development which has led to it was perhaps, inherent in the situation itself and might even be traced back to Roy himself. I need not go into it here.

So, for the purposes of this statement, I shall make an assumption or two in order to circumscribe the universe of discourse within which whatever I may say or suggest should be examined and assessed. The principal assumption I thus make is that *our basic position remains valid* – call it 'orthodoxy' or 'fundamentalism' if you like. In other words, the *Twenty-two Theses* continue to be the frame of reference for our theory and practice. Which does not mean that they should so remain; I advocate no fundamentalism. But, as these have not been disavowed seriously, I take them as the starting point. I hope this is methodologically permissible. There may be a further advantage in this; that is, any needless motive-hunting about my statements and formulations may be avoided. Or, so I hope.

I

Now, what is the 'orthodox' position? By orthodox I mean the positions explicit and implicit in the *Theses*, and as explicated by Roy in his many statements. Here, I shall focus attention on some of these statements from which it would appear how the nature and the task of the Radical Humanist Movement was then viewed and how we were to set about it.

III

Here is what seems to me the most comprehensive statement Roy made on the nature and task of the movement:

"The primary task of the movement will be to bring about a cultural resurgence by propagating the philosophy of New Humanism and its application to political, economic and other social problems. To consolidate the intellectual basis of the movement, Radicals will continue to submit their philosophy to constant research, examine it in the light of modern scientific knowledge and experience, and enrich its application to all the social sciences. They will, on the other hand, propagate the essentials of the philosophy amongst people as a whole by showing its relevance to their pressing needs. They will stimulate the people's love of freedom, encourage their self-reliance and sense of individual dignity, inculcate the values of rationalism and rational morality and spread the spirit of Cosmopolitan Humanism. By showing the people the way to solve their daily problems by popular initiative, Radicals will combat ignorance, fatalism, blind faith and sense of individual helplessness which is the basis of totalitarianism."

Carefully studies, the above statement will show that here is already the tallest of tall orders. It is altogether a frightening perspective of work if that is what the movement as movement has to do. To follow the ever developing scientific knowledge and experience, to submit our philosophy to constant

research and re-examination and re-evaluation in the light of this knowledge and experience would require the utmost attention and effort from a band of scholars with an unusually high degree of multi-disciplinary aptitude and command. Is this a task which we as a group were capable then or are capable now, of accomplishing? I do not wish to underestimate other people's capacity and competence; I, on my part, feel rather intimidated. I have no doubt Roy was conscious of the implication. He was working hard to get together and develop such a band of scholars and the Indian Renaissance Institute was to continue to provide such scholars. But, with Roy's departure the process stopped. The task, however, remains.

Let us take another of Roy's pronouncements. He has told us already that the *immediate task* of the Radical Humanist Movement was to propagate the philosophy of New Humanism. To what purpose was this to be done? In his own words, the result expected of this endeavour was "*the rise of new men and women engaged in the task of establishing new forms of social relations and building new patterns of political institutions*." Here is not only the objective but also a norm to measure the success of the movement by.

The philosophy of New Humanism was a response to a pervasive crisis which Roy believed to be, in the last analysis, a cultural and moral crisis. Therefore, the agents of this desired transformation – new revolution as he called it – had to be 'disinterested, spiritually free individuals, rational and moral.' But were we, or are we, such men and women as Roy's formulation requires? And, then, how is the desired result to be achieved? Cold we just sermonise and harangue the people into becoming the preferred kin of individuals, the 'new men and women'? Here again, Roy's answer is clear:

> "(But) I am sure of one thing and that is a lesson of history; an evangelist zeal will go much farther in introducing morality in public life than intellectualism and theorising. It has been said that loin-cloth contributed much more to the Mahatma's success than his moralising and propaganda of the national press. Europe has produced so many schools of moral controversy. The life of the people at large was not touched by any of them. But the tradition of Christian morality is still a living tradition – and in the present crisis the Europeans turn to that tradition. Christian morality was not preached as an intellectually constructed hierarchy of values. *It was lived by a group of people, and presently by a whole movement*. Therefore, it made such a deep impression not only on the contemporary world, but on subsequent history. We shall have to follow that example if we want to make the appeal of our philosophy of New Humanism irresistible. What is required is something more than either a political party or as intellectual movement. We shall have to function as a group of evangelists, not only to preach a doctrine with zeal but also to live it with conviction. We must be an Order, an Evangelist Order."

IV

Further, believing that the Radical Humanist Movement "will be the archetype of its ideal and function on the principle that example is better than precept", Roy adopted a radically, even shockingly, different criterion of success for the movement. For, he declared,:"*Its work and progress will no longer be judged in terms of mass following, which it does not seek to acquire, but in the spread of the spirit of freedom, rationality and secular morality amongst the people and in the increase of their influence in (on)the State."* With the given characters of the movement we could not adopt that criterion. We still judge our progress by the usual standards of *mass following* which manifests itself through certain quantitative indicators. When such quantitative indicators are large, we feel elated – the movement is growing. When these indicators are fewer, we are depressed. – the movement is languishing. We may even try to find scapegoats – activists in the intellectuals, the intellectuals in the activists, and the middlemen, in both! As a consequence, whenever we feel troubled at the

thought that the Movement is not growing, or that the Indian Renaissance Institute is moribund, our patent prescription and remedy is "Membership Drive" or "Subscribers Drive". And membership can be had by just asking a person to fill a form "and pay the prescribed fee which he may do for quite other considerations than appreciation of our stand. Number is what matters. The more the merrier; and isn't merriment a sign of life? Not that quantity is to be ignored. The point is what would be the basic criterion of the progress of the Movement?

V

The 'cultural resurgence' or the humanist transformation of society which Roy regarded as the task and purpose of the Radical Humanist Movement amounts to a revolution of a most far-reaching, comprehensive kind. I hesitate to call it 'total' revolution because 'total' has an additive connotation whereas Radical Humanist revolution is integral, to be increasingly approximated. In that sense it is also 'permanent' revolution. Therefore, it has been called a 'new kind of revolution', in content as well as in method. It goes without saying that for a 'new kind of revolution' there will have to be also a *new way of revolution*. What is that way? There are ideas in Roy which answer this question. These ideas are scattered all over the work of his humanist phase. Roy, unfortunately, did not have the time to elaborate and systematise them into a theory or a rounded statement. This is another of the tasks we inherited from Roy. But we did nothing about it. And, then, the way we sent about it further obscured the question.

Reacting against 'economic determinism' of Marx – or rather of practising Marxists – Roy emphasised the role of ideas in the making of history, in social change. I even suspect he somewhat overemphasised that role. Or, perhaps, we ourselves oversimplified the matter. Roy's assertion of 'the dynamics of ideas' was taken by us, so it seems to me, as another kind of determinism in which all that was required was to put the ideas across and everything will follow by a kind of necessity. "Ideas have wings", we believed. Release the idea, and presently pigeon-like it takes to wings, and where it alights – regardless of the quality of the soil – the dynamics will work out the desired transformation, the revolution will sprout. However, if the aim is to bring about or help a humanist transformation of society, and not to engineer it, can this be the method? For us the method is/was not categorically given. It had to be evolved one the basis of ideas Roy had left diffused in his writings and speeches and in the light of our own understanding and experience of going what we did and the way we did it. The task has remained unattended to.

VI

From Roy's ideas and from the deliberations of various study-camps held during Roy's life-time we get *three things* on the point.

One: continuous self-education individually as well as collectively. Even while the Radical Democratic Party was still there, he had emphasised very strongly the imperative need of improving and developing what he called "the inner life of the party" by which he really meant the fullest development of the potentialities of the individual members. From the way we have gone about it, or have failed to go about it, it would appear as if we believe that we have already arrived! We need no further development.

Two: the imperative of living with the ideas and values we had accepted, i.e., translating them into our personal lives and in interpersonal relationships. This would be propagating philosophy through catchy examples. This seems to be the essence of Roy's insistence that the practice and propagation of the philosophy of New Humanism was not "an intellectual effort of a few individuals," but the "work of an Order, an Evangelical Order," or, what on another occasion he called the practice of "Twentieth Century Monasticism" which will breed not ascetics or a sort of persons holier than others, but "disinterested, spiritually free individuals," whom our age, and particularly our society,

so badly needs: whose absence or rareness was the main cause of the pervasive contemporary crisis.

Three: *education of the people*; the other two requirements – self-cultivation and living our philosophy – were meant to turn us and those who may be drawn to us into good and effective educators of the people. It is wrong to maintain that this meant conferring the movement to the middle class.

Even if we succeeded in making ourselves good educators, intellectually and morally, the question still would be: *how to set about educating the people*. How are the people to be educated? Will lecturing, preaching, sermonising, haranguing the people educate them? Education cannot be a one-way traffic. That is what happens most of the time in our institutions of formal education and learning. That one-way traffic reduces the people to a passive role. A passively received idea is bound to remain an inert idea, and there is no dynamic in an inert idea. Dead things do no move. Nor can agitation be a means of true education. There is a belief abroad that to collect a mass of people and lecture to them on the values of freedom, rationality and secular morality and the like is to educate them, and so to educate them, is to revolutionise their thinking and outlook. This belief is fallacious. This can be an effective method for imparting to the people some significant topical information and for mobilising them for some *immediate action* for some *immediate objective*. But this cannot be the way where the object is to help the "renaissance" or the "resurrection" of man.

Education has to be distinguished from propaganda, conditioni9ng and indoctrination. The distinction cannot be that what we do is *education,* what others do is *indoctrination*. If the end-result is all that matters and how it is produced is of no consequence, what should be out objection to genetic engineering, operant conditioning, hypnotism, drugs, pills, and electrodes? These can produce the desired attitudes and dispositions surely and speedily. If means and methods be of no consequence, why shouldn't we heartily approve of these methods, especially when our model is so utopian? In short we were set the task of educating the people, but it was left to us to settle the content and methodology of this education of the people. Again, this is a task which has remained unattended to. We have not even begun.

VII

To sum up: we have been given or we have accepted a philosophy: we have, flowing from it, an ideal of individual, personal cfharace4r and conduct to strive after; and we have a model, a social and political model, to work for,. The philosophy requires us to be in our person and conduct Radical Humanists, the archetypal individuals – specimens of the "new men and women" of whom the new society will be composed. This is a condition precedent if we are to create archetypal institutions and soci8al relationship.

I am nobody to pass judgement over my compeers or superiors. Everyone has to judge for himself. Speaking for myself, I would say that I have never claimed – nor do I claim now – that I am a Radical Humanist. When I let myself be known as a Radical Humanist either explicitly or implicitly. I use the epithet in its descriptive, not in its normative sense. That is, in applying the label, Radical Humanist, to myself what I mean and what I wish to be understood is that I belong with a group which goes by that denomination, and not that my life and conduct conform to or are an expression of the norms and values of Radical Humanism, I cannot be a disinterested judge of my own character and conduct, though my conscience is my own affair. In saying so, I am not adopting any self-effacing posture. It is being said out of a vivid realisation of the tremendous difficulty which an ordinary mortal like me must face at every step in trying to practise Radical Humanism. Belief in good and right ideas may be a necessary condition for good and right conduct, but it is not a sufficient condition; such conviction does not necessarily lead to correspondingly good and right conduct, not in all cases certainly. Man, in his present state of evolution, is a battleground of contentious urges, drives and instincts, some of them compulsive, some more amenable to discipline. Reason can

chasten and subdue them surely, but the process if not automatic. Not a success inevitable. To leave the intellectual conviction to take care of conduct is to suspend a mountain boulder with a silken thread. The battle has to be fought every moment. Of course, the task will be easy for some, less easy for others.

To return: Our model is, by its very nature, to be progressively approximated, jot to be realised in one go in a fully formed state. This approximation can be slow or fast, more, or less, close to the ideal, depending on our own subjective equipment, on the quality and efficacy of our work to enable an ever increasing number of people to become the desired kind of human beings, capable of appreciating, forming and managing preferred kind of institutions. All this adds up to a terrifying demand on our physical, intellectual and moral capacities and their sustained application, in a most forbidding environment, towards the realisation of the quality of life and society which, even on a most optimistic estimate, must appear to remote a possibility as to be almost utopian.

Then, while working, howsoever sincerely and steadfastly, towards the realisation of this very long term goal, we cannot be indifferent to the present, to the conditions in which we have to live and labour. The demands of the present cannot be ignored in the hope of a possible realisation of the ideal order in what can scarcely be called foreseeable future. If so, a dimension of our work must encompass the present and include the efforts for its betterment either by initiating appropriate activities on our own or by participating in the endeavours being made by others, or of course, without compromising our principles.

Such being the enormity of our task, the question to ask is not whether this or that has been done or not, but whether the task can really be done, whether we have not really bitten much more than we can ever chew. If it can be, then of course, we must ask whether we have gone about it in the best way? If not, how should we go about it? If, however, the task is, on a realistic appreciation, impossible of attainment, then we must lower our sights, stop thinking in terms of philosophy and model, and choose what with given capacities and resources can be attempted. I think these are some of the basic questions which must be faced, and it is not a day too early to do so. In facing them we face our moment of truth.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, July 1986.

Past and Future

M.N. Roy

(The name of this journal was changed from Independent India to The Radical Humanist from the issue April 3, 1949. M.N. Roy's Editorial of that issue is reproduced below).

Living in a distressingly dismal present, we look hopefully into the darkness of an unknown future, with the light of our experience in the past. The present also does not distress us, because it has not taken us unawares, we knew what was coming. It was dreadful, but we tried to see beyond it, not without success.

The weekly journal until last week called *Independent India* made its first appearance twelve years ago today. The movement for national independence, though strong apparently, was in a crisis. Notwithstanding its creed of non-cooperation, the Congress had participated in the provincial elections and swept the polls. What would be the next step? There was a sharp difference of opinion. It appeared that a majority, led by the President himself, was opposed to Congressmen accepting office under the 1935 Constitution Act, which the Congress had denounced as the Charter of Indian slavery. The opposite view was held by man who controlled the party machinery. Both the factions, however, were committed to the goal of complete independence placed before the country ten years ago. Which of the two policies – boycott or capture of office – would take the country nearer to the goal? That was the question of the moment. But it could not be answered unless there was an agreement as regards, a picture of independent India. In the absence of such a picture, the controversy would only raise a cloud of words and phrases shot through here and there by the lightning of high feelings. But neither faction would come forward with a realistic picture.

The weekly *Independent India* appeared at that juncture to clear the confusion of a wordy controversy by putting the issue concretely. The editorial of the first number outlined a picture of the goal of national independence. And since then, for years, it popularised that picture with the object of putting some meaning in the nationalist agitation and propaganda. It pointed out tirelessly, week after week, that any substantial change for the better in the conditions of life of the bulk of the Indian people required a radical reconstruction of the established social order. Therefore, it maintained, the replacement of the white bureaucracy by a brown bureaucracy might be national independence, but it would not mean freedom for the Indian people.

If national independence meant democratic freedom, then, it also implied a social revolution. The failure of the nationalist movement to be conscious of its revolutionary implications exposed the limitations of nationalism. Again, the weekly *Independent India* was the first to learn that valuable lesson from actual experience. Having learned the lesson, it discovered the discrepancy between nationalism and democracy, and boldly declared that under the banner of nationalism the Indian people could never attain freedom. The nationalist disregard for democracy became evident at the outbreak of the Second World War. At the same time, formal democracy also stood discredited in practice. While criticising the nationalist attitude towards the anti-fascist war, *Independent India* declared that democracy could not survive the crisis unless its shortcomings were realised, and formal parliamentarism was replaced by a constitutional structure and political practice approximating a government of the people and by the people.

During the dangerous years of the war, *Independent India* carried on a fearless campaign against the fascist tendency of nationalism, and at the same time elaborated the idea of Radical Democracy as the politics of post-war world. Foreseeing the downfall of British Imperialism in

consequence of the anti-fascist war, we said that national freedom in the sense of a transfer of power was a foregone conclusion, and pointed out that a national-capitalist State was actually rising even during the war with the connivance and patronage of decayed Imperialism.

The alliance of decrepit Imperialism and undemocratic Nationalism, apparently engaged in a struggle for power, was bound to pave the way for the rise of Fascism in India. The advent to power of the British Labour Party for a time revived the possibility of a more hopeful development in India. We alone saw the possibility and appealed to the British Labour Party to rise to the occasion. But wedded to the tradition of formal parliamentary democracy, the British Labour Party handed over power to the nationalist leaders who had shown so very little concern for democracy when it was threatened with destruction by triumphant Fascism. That act, on the one hand, was one more proof of the inability of formal democracy to cope with the problems of the post-war world and, on the other hand, it sealed the fate of democracy in India.

By the end of the war, thanks to the benevolent patronage of senile Imperialism and the narrow visioned opportunism of British Socialism, totalitarian nationalism was established in power. It was an utterly confounded hope that once the foreign rule was gone, the nationalist united front presented by the Congress would break up into political parties with conflicting economic programmes, and India will begin her advance in the road of democracy. We pointed out, and experience corroborated our contention, that so long as India lingered in the medieval atmosphere of authoritarian culture, totalitarian nationalism could not be removed from power. A one party rule (virtual dictatorship) would be firmly entrenched behind a facade of formal parliamentary democracy. In that peculiar situation, old political theories, including Communism and Socialism, lost all meaning. A totalitarian regime clothed in the regalia of democracy could not be combated effectively through parliamentary party politics. Nor could an authoritarian rule be overthrown by violence when it commanded the blind faith, if not the confidence, of the people. The practice of the theory of Radical Democracy offered the only promise and possibility of any escape from the paralysing grip of a non-violent authoritarianism and a totalitarian rule with formal democratic sanction.

The new nationalist *status quo* being based on cultural backwardness and intellectual inertia, any advance towards democratic freedom was conditional upon a movement to shake that foundation. So long as the people did not feel the urge for it, proclaimed by parties and politicians, freedom was bound to be a fraud. Democracy must be built from the bottom up, if it is to be real. And individual men and women constitute the foundation of any social order. Therefore the character and the possibilities of a social order are determined by its individual constituent's outlook on life.

Radical Democracy thus developed into Radical Humanism. Since the Independent India of our conception – a country inhabited by free individuals co-operating voluntarily, for mutual benefit, as sovereign constituents of an open society – can no longer be created by any political party in power, the Radical Democratic Party will broaden itself into the Radical Humanist Movement. On the other hand, India having attained national independence, from the general point of view, Independent India is no longer an ideal; it has become a reality, and that reality is so ve3ry different from the picture drawn in the first issue of this Weekly that it can no longer retain the old name without misleading and creating confusion. Therefore it assumes a new name, which will more truly describe its role.

Experienced has influenced our ideas. We have moved away from Marxism to Radicalism, from formal democracy to Humanism, from internationalism to cosmopolitanism. But the basic urge of the movement has remained constant. It is the quest for freedom. *The Radical Humanist* will give expression to that urge. Our past experience has added momentum to it; therefore in future it will be more irresistible. *The Radical Humanist* will not appeal to the "masses"; its endeavour will be to awaken and quicken the urge for freedom in individual man and woman, in whose experience

alone freedom can become a reality. And free men alone can constitute a free society.

In the past, we pursued an ideal the attainment of which depended upon the honesty of others who also professed to be engaged in the same pursuit. Therefore we failed to attain the ideal. But it is not our failure; it has been a misfortune for India. In future, to show that we have not really failed, we shall live our ideal as well as place it before others. Some will join us in the movement, which will know no failure; others may still run after unrealistic ideals, which will always elude unless frauds will be glorified as freedom.

If our past has been instructive and sown seeds still to germinate, the future is full of promise because we shall have the patience to nurture the plants which will grow out of the seeds sown in the past, until they will blossom in the fullness of time.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, April 1987.

Radical Humanism – An Outline-I

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

M.N. Roy the founder of the major humanist school in India which goes by the name of Radical Humanism. It is therefore very appropriate that this international seminar held to commemorate the year of his birth centenary shou8ld revolve round the philosophy of humanism.

It is not easy to define humanism. In compiling the material for his book *The Humanist Alternative*, Dr. Paul Kurtz invited about 30 well-known humanists to present the gist of their philosophy. Although the result was an interesting book, no consensus seems to have emerged on the definition of humanism.

Speaking for myself, I would define humanism as consisting of a philosophy and an attitude of mind which gives primacy to men and women as individuals, and recognises their right to live in freedom and with dignity. This definition in my opinion summarises what humanism stands for.

What is noteworthy in this definition is that humanism, besides being a philosophy, is also an attitude of mind. This implies that humanism is not merely an academic exercise; it is not something that may be studied and then kept on the shelf gathering dust. It provides a guidance to our personal and social life. Humanism is a theory which expresses itself in practice.

There is another advantage of defining humanism as both a philosophy and a mental attitude. The definition provides an explanation of why there are quite a number of individuals who can be correctly described as religious humanists. Theoretically, religious humanism is a contradiction in terms. While humanism gives primacy to the human individual, religion places an imaginary supernatural power in the centre of things. This theoretical contradiction, however, does not prevent some deeply religious persons having a humanist attitude. They achieve this result by various devices, such as by regarding their love of human beings as a reflection of their love of God. Their philosophy of life is coloured by religion but their attitude to social problems is humanistic. In India, Gandhiji and Jayaprakash Narayan could properly be described as religious humanists because, while believing in the supernatural, they appreciated the value of human freedom and placed the human individual in the centre of their social objectives. They did not regard themselves as belonging to any particular religious denomination. I am of the view that in India it is necessary for secular and religious humanists to join hands for the purpose of achieving certain humanist goals. I will revert to this topic later but would like to emphasise at this stage that humanism is not only a philosophy but also a mental attitude.

This paper will be devoted to an analysis of the purely secular humanism propounded by M.N. Roy and its socio-political implications.

M.N. Roy regarded Radical Humanism as scientific humanism, having as its objective a radical transformation of society. The basis postulate of science is that man and the world are parts of nature, that there is nothing which is supernatural, and that the universe, being law-governed is progressively knowable by human beings. This basic approach is historically known as materialism and can be more adequately described as monistic naturalism, since man is part of nature, his physical and mental attributes are of scientific understanding.

Radical Humanism: Personal Philosophy

Humanism emphasises the obvious fact that since every human being is possessed of consciousness, he or she can appreciate pleasure or pain, progress or regress. Society is an organisation of individuals living together and has no independent consciousness of its own. It follows that the value of any social experiment can be judged by its good or bad effects on human beings. The human individual is in this sense the measure of things. Primacy belongs to the human

individual and not any social collectivity such as a community, a nation, a race or religious denomination.

Man being a product of biological evolution, Radical Humanism proceeds to identify these attributes of human nature which contribute to human progress, progress being defined as an enhancement in the quality of life. Radical Humanism identifies three mental attributes which contribute to human progress – urge for freedom, rationalism and secular morality. These were also the values of the European Renaissance of the 16th and 17th centuries which paved the way to the emergence of modern democracy. The difference between the humanism of the European Renaissance and the humanism which provides the basis of the Radical Humanist movement is that, due to increased scientific knowledge, particularly of biology, physiology and psychology, we are now able to provide a scientific basis to these values so that they would be consciously strengthened in the course of time and become a stable part of human culture. Radical Humanists believe that since truth, though initially overwhelmed by illusion born of prejudice, triumphs in the end. Radical Humanism will gain in popular support in the course of time. We regard it as the philosophy of the future.

Out of the three humanist values – freedom, rationalism and secular morality – freedom is regarded by Radical Humanists as the most fundamental. The struggle for existence is the basic urge of the entire biological world. That is also the primary urge of human beings, since they are a product of biological evolution. On the human plane, however, the primary urge for existence assumes the form of a struggle for freedom. This is because the human brain is far more developed than the brain of even the highest animals, with the result that life on the human level has much larger mental component than sub-human life. With his brain, the human individual can acquire knowledge, can develop virtues, and can create and enjoy things of beauty. Human beings desire to live not only physically, but also mentally. They aspire for a life in which they can have physical comfort as well as an environment congenial to the development of their intellectual, ethical and aesthetic potentialities. That is why the basic biological struggle for existence takes, on the human plane, the form of a struggle for freedom. Freedom implies physical well being and unhindered mental development. Since that is the primary object of human life, the value of freedom is the value of all values.

Man's freedom, his increasing success in the struggle for existence is made possible by the acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge is acquired by the use of the reasoning faculty for the understanding of human experience. Man's reasoning faculty, like his urge for freedom, is a part of his biological equipment. As observed by Darwin, no animal species could have survived in the struggle for existence in a law governed universe unless the species was equipped with a rudimentary sense of putting cause and effect together. Some degree of rudimentary reason is found in the entire animal world. Man's relatively greater success in the struggle for existence arises from the fact that his reasoning faculty is far more developed than that of the rest of the animal world. It is in this sense that man can properly be described as a thinking animal. Throughout the period of man's history, quest for freedom and search for truth have been the twin pillars of human progress. Rationalism consists of the recognition of the value of reason in distinguishing between fact and fiction, between virtue and vice. Rationalism is the second basic value recognised by Radical Humanism.

Homo sapiens has always been a gregarious species. Living in association with his fellow beings was necessary for the survival of the human individual and for his success in the struggle for existence. It was natural that in the course of aeons of biological evolution the moral impulse, which is essential for cooperative social existence, should have developed and become a part of human nature. There is reason to believe that all the human urges and impulses have developed in the course of biological evolution in association with, and as contributory to, the basic urge for existence. Thus biological evolution, and not religion, is the source of morality. This is obvious from the fact that rudimentary moral behaviour is found in almost all the higher animals. In the case of human beings, however, social living has a far greater survival value than in the rest of the animal world.

Besides helping the individual to survive in the struggle for existence human society passes on to the individual the entire cultural and material heritage of the past, including the spoken language, knowledge acquired through the centuries and economic and social resources developed by previous generations. Since moral living is necessary for success in the struggle for existence, there is a direct causal (i.e., rational) connection between morality and freedom. It is therefore wrong to suppose that morality operates as a fetter to individual freedom. This mistaken notion arises because it is wrongly assumed that moral behaviour involves self-sacrifice. Morality in fact consists of enlightened self-interest. Like other human impulses, the moral impulse, when it is fulfilled, is a source of deep satisfaction. As Epicuros said, one should be moral, not in order to please the gods, but in order to please oneself. Morality is the voluntary choice of a rational individual. That is why morality is not a fetter but is a contributory factor to individual freedom. Bu the use of his reason an individual can develop his inherited moral sensitiveness so as to become an autonomous unit in a harmonious society.

Thus the personal ideal of a radical humanist is to grow in freedom, rationality and moral worth. This ideal rejects the present trend of a consumerist society towards an endless accumulation of purely physical conveniences. The humanist ideal recognises the fact that the quality of human life is far richer when the pursuit of physical pleasures is supplemented by the pursuit of more enlightened enjoyment derived from activities of the mind. Every biologically inherited human impulse, if it does not conflict with the well-being of others, can become an independent source of deep satisfaction. The human instinct of search was probably derived from the necessity of the pre-historic man to search for food and shelter. The same instinct, directed towards the acquisition of knowledge, can vastly enhance the happiness and enrich the life of the individual. The creative urge of human beings is another source of the creation and enjoyment of literature, music, painting, dance, sculpture and other things of beauty. A third source of mental satisfaction is the biologically inherited social impulse, the moral sensitiveness of human beings. Many persons derive immense satisfaction by quietly helping those who need help. The personal ideal of a radical humanist is to enhance the quality of life by recourse to the values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality.

Radical Humanism: Social Philosophy

The social philosophy of radical humanism follows logically from its personal philosophy. The social objective of radical humanists is to strive for the development of a society in which men and women will be able to live in freedom and to develop their potentialities without any physical or social impediments.

M.N. Roy continued to cherish revolutionary ideals after he ceased to be a Marxist. Even during the Marxist phase of his life, he developed several ideas which were essentially un-Marxist. This was because he always regarded Marxism as a mode of thought and not a set of dogmas. After he ceased to be a Marxist, he tried to foster a movement for a radical humanist social transformation.

The social philosophy of radical humanism, as developed by M.N. Roy, can be considered conveniently under five subheads – (1) Primacy of cultural revolution as a precondition of a social revolution; (2) Concept of organised democracy as an alternative to both parliamentary democracy and communism; (3) Party-less politics, practised by spiritually free individuals who would strive for power to the people and not power to themselves; (4) Revolution from below as against the conventional mode of bringing about a revolution from above by a political party coming to power; and (5) Cooperative economy as an alternative to both capitalism and State ownership of the means of production.

(1.) Cultural Revolution: Soon after his release from jail in November 1936, Roy declared that every worthwhile social revolution must be preceded by a philosophical revolution. He drew this conclusion largely from the fact that the birth of modern democracy heralded by

the Great French Revolution was preceded by the European Renaissance movement which was essentially a humanist cultural revolution.

The conclusion drawn by M.N. Roy about the necessity of a cultural transformation as a prelude to a social revolution is based on sound logic. A social revolution consists of the replacement of one set of political and economic institutions by another set. It is, however, that any new political or economic institution which replaces the old one can fulfil its purpose only if it is sustained by a new set of values cherished by the persons who work that institution and by the people amongst whom the institution is worked. The institutions of parliamentary democracy and free economic enterprise which replaced the old feudal order could not succeed in those countries where the new values of liberty, equality and fraternity had not replaced the earlier feudal outlook on life. The institutions of democracy could not possibly succeed where the people remained steeped in blind faith and did not desire to be the makers of their future. The purpose of every institution is to enable the people to realise the values which they cherish. In the absence of those values, the institution is a meaningless formality. That is why every social revolution must be preceded by the emergence of new values in the place of old ones.

The history of the European Renaissance preceding the birth of modern democracy justified the conclusion that humanism is the underlying philosophy of political and economic democracy. The democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity which constituted the background of the French Revolution were the social expression of the personal humanist values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality. The concept of liberty comprises the values of freedom and rationalism, while the concepts of equality and fraternity are expressions of secular morality. Propagation of humanist values is thus a precondition of the success of democracy in political as well as economic spheres. Recently, however, these values have declined even in the West. There has been in particular a decline of the value of rationalism. A re-assertion of humanist values is, therefore, necessary in both the new and the old worlds. M.N. Roy was of the view that what the world needs at present is "a 20th century renaissance". He regarded radical humanism as a philosophy on the basis of which such a renaissance movement can be developed.

It will be noticed that M.N. Roy's assertion of the precedence of cultural transformation over a social revolution was essentially un-Marxist. According to Marxism, ideas constitute a super-structure based on the economic reality consisting of the ownership of the means of production and the division of economic classes arising there-from. Marxism believes that a change in the basic economic reality leads to a change in the ideological super-structure. To give precedence to a cultural transformation over a socio-economic transformation is to reverse that process. Roy, however, rejected the theory that ideological changes play a subordinate part in the development of history. According to him, the philosophy of materialism did not require precedence being given to social events over ideological changes. Social structures as well as ideologies are both of material (i.e., natural) origin. They influence each other. One of them need not necessarily have precedence over the other. Revolutions, however, are created by human beings and just as thought precedes action in human behaviour, a revaluation of values ought to precede replacement of one institution by another tin a social revolution.

(2) *Organised Democracy*: The modern State, with the enormous increase in its political and economic functions and in its military might, has become a veritable leviathan. In comparison, the individual in a modern State is being reduced to a non-entity. How the people constituting a society can exercise a standing control over the functioning of the increasingly powerful modern State is therefore the main question before contemporary democracy throughout the

world. The concept of organised democracy was developed by M.N. Roy in attempting to answer this basic question.

Neither communism nor parliamentary democracy provides a satisfactory answer; communism indeed aggravates the problem by placing political and economic power in the same hands and thereby increasing enormously the power of the State vis—a-vis the individual. The perspective of a communist State withering away has been proved to be an illusion. Parliamentary democracy, on the other hand, does not make it possible for the people to exercise a standing control on the affairs of the State. It provides a machinery by which the people are enabled to chose their rulers once rulers once in four or five years, but during the period between two elections the people remain powerless for all practical purposes. Parliamentary democracy at its best brings about rule *for* the people, and not rule *by* and *of* the people. It is a democracy in form, not in content. It does not provide a machinery to enable the people to rule over themselves.

The concept of organised democracy was developed by M.N. Roy as an alternative to both communism and parliamentary democracy. It has two essential features: (1) that the State's power shall be radically decentralised so that it will vest for the most part in a network of local democracies called people's committees formed din villages and city wards and (2) that such power as is required to be exercised at higher centres will be placed in the hands of genuine people's representatives who will remain under the control of the voters and will be liable to be recalled by them. Organised democracy will thus consist of a pyramidal structure based on a network of people's committees exercising the maximum power, with reduced powers at the district, State and Central levels exercised by representatives who will remain under the control of the primary voters.

The people's committees which will be the main organs of people's power in an organised democracy will not be concerned only with local self-government. They will have the power of economic planning on a local scale; of maintaining law and order within their jurisdiction; of nominating candidates for election to the district councils, State legislatures and the Parliament, of giving expressions to the will of the people on various issues for the guidance of their representatives; of expressing opinion on proposed legislation as well as initiating legislation for the consideration of higher legislative bodies; of exercising the power of recall of representatives elected to the higher centres; and of demanding a referendum on important legislative or executive measures proposed by the higher organs of state power. The ideal of "power to the people" will thus be realised to a large extent.

People's committees, however, can successfully function as organs of people's power only if the people have developed the spirit of self-reliance and mutual cooperation and are free from fatalism, blind faith and religious orthodoxy. In the absence of such a cultural renaissance, people's committees instead of being organs of people's power will soon become the instruments for the exercise of State power over the people. That has been the fate of Soviets in the USSR.

As indicated above, some of the functions of the State cannot by their nature be exercisable at the local level. They will be exercised at the district, state and Central levels. In order that these centres should be manned by genuine people's representatives who will be subject to recall by the people, It is essential that they should be responsible, not to any political party, but to the primary people's committees. How such an organised democracy consisting of people's committees at the base and people's representatives at higher centres can be brought about described in the second part of this paper to be published in the next issue.

(*To be continued*)

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, July 1988.

Radical Humanism – An Outline - II

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

(*The first part of this paper was published in our July issue – Ed.*)

(3) *Party-less Politics*: The party system is a concomitant feature of a formal parliamentary democracy. It helps in the functioning of a representative government. It does not have any place in an organised democracy where power will be exercised by the people and not for the people. Political parties are not only inconsistent with, but are antithetical to a genuine democracy in which power would remain vested in the people.

There were two reasons why M.N. Roy came to the conclusion that the party system will have no place in a genuine democracy.

In the first place, political parties are the means by which power is delegated by the people and the delegated power is concentrated in a few hands. On the polling day, the voters delegate their power to party candidates who thereafter remain responsible to their respective parties and not to their voters. Between two elections, the votes remain powerless for all practical purposes. The power so delegated by the people to party candidates becomes concentrated in the hands of the leaders of the successful political party. If genuine democracy consists of the widest diffusion of power, as it undoubtedly does, the party system which brings about a concentration of power functions in the reverse direction and positively anti-democratic. In order that power should remain vested in the people, the successful candidates should be responsible to the voters and not to any political party, and should be liable to be recalled by them.

The second reason why the party system is antithetical to democracy is that the struggle for power between political parties brings about a divorce between morality and politics. This happens in all parliamentary democracies, but is particularly evident in countries where the voters are comparatively uneducated and gullible and are liable to be influenced by collectivists appeals based on narrow nationalism, communalism, casteism and parochialism. In the course of their struggle for power, political parties tend to appeal to the prejudices and religious sentiments of the people and thereby depress those public standards the maintenance of which is essential if democracy is to be a reality. While democracy requires a freedom loving self-reliant and mutually cooperating people, party politics foments their blind faith, enhances their sense of dependence and increases their internal dissensions.

The essentially undemocratic character of the party system was brought out by M.N. Roy for the first time in 1947. The experience of the last 40 years which have elapsed since then has corroborated the conclusions reached by him. In all parliamentary democracies, political power tends to be concentrated in the hands of the leaders of the successful political party or parties. That is particularly so in those democracies which are still functioning in the countries of the third world. In most third world countries, parliamentary democracies have already been replaced by authoritarian regimes. There is also an increasing tendency in all democratic countries towards a divergence between political practice and moral standards. Again, that is particularly the case in the countries of the third world where a majority of the people continue to be swayed by blind faith and religious orthodoxy. In India the divorce between morality and the practice of political parties is now so complete that the bulk of the people have become disillusioned with the party system as a whole. The ruling party in India continues to rule, not because the people like it, but because the people like the opposition even less.

It is necessary to emphasise that the alternative to the party system is not an unorganised electorate consisting of atomised individuals. Unorganised individuals are bound to remain powerless. The alternative to the party system is a network of people's committees in villages and city wards

which will function as organs of people's power. A people's committee is the most suitable political organisation of the voters. It is in the context of network of such people's committees that the eventful disappearance of the party system is conceived. It is not intended that the political parties should be banned by law. When the people transfer their allegiance from political parties to their own committees, the party system will become otiose and will disappear in the course of time.

Many persons who dislike the dirtiness of party politics are nevertheless of the view that political parties are necessary in order to reflecting the conflicting interests of different economic classes. There are two reasons why this view is becoming increasingly untenable. In the first place, it is found in practice that there is an increasing convergence in the programmes of the political parties which are supposed to represent conflicting economic interests. In the Western democracies, the programmes of parties representing the capitalist and the working classes tend to be the same, with only marginal differences between them. This is because both the parties have to seek the allegiance of the middle class which now comprises the largest number of votes. In countries of the third world like India, the bulk of the people are poverty stricken and all the parties tend to have more or less the same programme.

Secondly, the idea that political parties should represent different economic interests is based on the assumption that all people are essentially guided by their economic interests. This view, which was always a half truth, is becoming less tenable with the march of time. There are moral considerations such as justice and fair play which supersede conflicting class interests. This will particularly be so in the case of people's committees which, according to the concept of organised democracy, will be formed on the basis of the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity. A people's committee consisting of persons who espouse these values is likely to be guided by the principles of justice and fair play and not by narrow class interests. The interest in particular of the poverty stricken sections of society are likely to be better represented by a people's committee than by any political party formed to represent those interests. A system of people's committees based on democratic values will ender class-based political parties entirely superfluous.

It is sometimes assumed that no government will be able to pursue a coherent policy unless it is run by a single political party or at least by a group of parties having a common programme, this view overlooks the fact that there are individual differences inside every political party, particularly if there is a modicum of internal democracy and freedom of thought therein. A party government really functions on the basis of a consensus between the ministers who compose the cabinet;. If a consensus is possible in a party cabinet, there is no reason why it should not develop in a party-less government.

(4) *Revolution From Below***:** If it is true that political parties play an anti-democratic role by acting as vehicles for concentrating political power at the centre of the State and by depressing moral standards in public life, it must follow that a political party cannot be the instrument by which a humanist social revolution can be brought about.

A worthwhile social revolution can be generated only from below, by a devoted band of humanists operating at the grass-root level, disseminating the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity amongst the people, and gradually developing people's power so that it may eventually succeed in building up an organised democracy. These grass-root workers will operate as friends of the people and not as their leaders or would-be rulers. Their object would be to inculcate the spirit of self-reliance amongst the people and to encourage them to strive for the solution of their manifold problems b mutual cooperation. They will act as catalytic agents of a radical social transformation. Their objective must be power to the people, not power to themselves. To use M.N. Roy's words, they should be "spiritually free" individuals, individuals who are free from blind faith and narrow selfishness and who are actuated by humanist values.

Radical Humanists believe that there is no other way of bringing about a worthwhile social revolution. According to conventional revolutionary theories, there are two alternative ways in

which a political party can strive for a revolutionary transformation of society. One is the communist way visualised by Marx and Engels and exemplified by the achievements of Lenin, Mao and their followers. History has shown that this type of revolution, instead of extending the boundaries of human freedom, gives rise to a formidable dictatorial state. This consequence is inherent in the theory of economic determinism by which communist strategy is guided. According to the theory of economic determinism, humanist-democratic values would emerge among the people only after a successful communist revolution has demolished capitalist structures and established a classless society. It is obvious, however, that any revolution brought about by a political party in a culturally backward society must result in the establishment of an authoritarian state. As emphasised by M.N. Roy, a cultural transformation must precede a social revolution. A successful revolution cannot be brought about by reversing that process.

The other conventional methods of bringing about a revolution from above consists of a socialist or communist party trying to abolish the existing exploitative economic institutions and creating an egalitarian society by peaceful means through the ballot box. This alternative method, although less dangerous in its consequences, is equally futile. This is proved by India's experience during the post-independence period of the last 40 years. All party leaders who were Prime Ministers of India during that period, including Jawaharlal Nehru, who had an uninterrupted regime of 17 years, were socialists by profession. They could, however, do nothing to bring about a social revolution. In fact the anti-democratic vested interests, both political and economic, are stronger in India today than 40 years ago. There are several reasons why these leaders could not achieve any progress in the direction of democratic socialism. They had in the first place utilised their party in concentrating all power in their own hands. They themselves constituted the main vested interest in the country, the liquidation of which was necessary if democracy was to be realised by a radical decentralisation of power. Secondly, they were actively engaged in the inter-party struggle for power, with the result that their political practice was at variance with their professed principles. Lastly, exploitive economic structures require for their removal a strong popular initiative, which neither the ruling party nor any of the opposition parties could possibly generate. Party propaganda is directed, not towards making the people self-reliant and inculcating in them the spirit of freedom, but towards making them camp followers of one party or another.

It is not difficult to visualise the process by which a revolution from below can be brought about. The work among the people of the humanist grass-root activists mentioned earlier will result in the formation of people's committees which will be wedded to the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and which will work in their respective localities for the solution of the people's economic and social problems. If the problems involve class conflicts, the struggle to solve them will be conducted on the moral plane rather than merely on the economic plane. Some of the economic issues, however, can be tackled by developmental work such as improvement of agriculture and promotion of small scale industries. The people's committees will also combat the social evils like illiteracy, casteism, communalism, and the inferior status given to the women. Because of the prevailing orthodoxy and blind faith, the people's committees will initially be minority institutions. In the course of time, however, they will by their activities come to represent the majority of the people in their respective localities. People's power would thus be built up from below.

As a result of this work, it will be possible to secure the election in one constituency after another of "people's candidates" who will remain directly answerable to the voters and not to any political party. For this purpose, a network of people's committees should be developed by the grass-root activists in a selected constituency. A few months before the election to the legislative body, a conference should be convened of one representative each of all the people's committees so as to form a people's council in the constituency. The people's council will select a suitable person not belonging to any party as the people's candidate and will secure the success in the election. The

candidate will publicly commit himself to resign his seat if he is recalled by the people's council. The number of successful people's candidates will be the measure of the growing strength of the people. When the legislature will consist of a majority of such candidates, laws will be enacted to bring about a radical decentralisation of power and to set up a fully organised democracy.

The whole of this process will be carried out by peaceful methods. The grass-root activists will not try to match the military might of the state by recourse to *lathis* and guns. Their strength will consist of an irresistible public support created in their favour.

A doubt will naturally arise whether a sufficiently large number of grass-root activists of humanist-democratic persuasion and actuated by selfless moral impulses will be available for the transformation of a huge country like India. It should, however, be remembered that this huge country has also a huge population of people who are living in conditions of economic backwardness and servitude. Although the initial impetus for grass-root activity will come from a section of middle class youth, an increasing number of social activists will eventually spring from the submerged multitude. The vast majority of the poor and exploited people of India constitute a revolutionary power house which has remained largely untapped so far.

The arduous task of generating and completing a revolution for below will be a long process, occupying probably a number of generations. The fact, however, that there is no other way to secure an improvement in the present intolerable conditions of life will in the course of time bring increasing support to the movement and shorten the time required for its success.

(5) *Cooperative Economy*: A genuine political democracy is not possible in the absence of economic democracy. To be a reality, democracy must pervade all spheres of life – political, economic and social.

The Marxian prognosis that capitalism would collapse as a result of its internal contradictions has not been corroborated by history. Proletarian revolutions have not taken place in the most advanced capitalist countries as anticipated by Marx. Capitalism nevertheless remains a highly in-egalitarian economic system. It widens the disparities of income and wealth among the people. The economic inequalities created and fomented by capitalism are reflected in political inequalities as well. The owners of capital have a far greater weightage in a parliamentary democracy than their number justifies. Capitalism, moreover, has an inherent tendency to develop both national and international monopolies. State interference is required not only to curb capitalist monopolies, but also to regulate money supply and international trade. If the state is required to interfere in the prevailing economic system, there is no reason why the interference should not be directed towards, helping the people to create a more egalitarian economy.

State ownership of the means of production enjoined by communism (the so-called "scientific socialism") is even more undemocratic. It concentrates economic and political power in the same hands. State ownership of the mass media and the printing press is bound to destroy freedom of the press and create a state monopoly in the dissemination of news and the publication of books. Judicial independence and academic freedom also cannot exist where the judicial machinery and all academic institutions are owned by the state. State owne3rship is inconsistent with the freedom of the people.

Marx had rightly emphasised that the appropriation by the capitalist owners of the goods produced by labour results in the alienation of workers from their work. Such alienation, however, also takes place where the products of labour are appropriated by the state. That is the experience of all communist countries. Neither capitalism nor state ownership solves the problem of works alienation.

A cooperative economy in which the workers in an undertaking will be owners of the means of production employed in that undertaking is undoubtedly the most democratic economic institution conceived so far. A cooperative economy can be developed so as to pervade the spheres of production, distribution and finance. It will eliminate exploitation of man by man by abolishing the distinction

between employers and employees and by ensuring that the workers will be self-employed. The problem of workers' alienation will also be solved in a cooperative economy because the workers will be the owners of the goods produced by them.

A cooperative culture among the people is necessary if a cooperative economy is to succeed. The same culture is also necessary for the success of a genuine political democracy. Given the prevalence among the people of the requisite cultural values, producers' cooperatives can be formed in agriculture, in small scale industries and in industries of medium size. Distribution of goods and allocation of finance can also be managed by a network of consumers' cooperatives and cooperative banks. Cooperatives, however, cannot be formed where the scale of production is necessarily very large such as in railways and air services. In such cases the principle of cooperation can be effectuated by placing large scale undertakings in the hands of autonomous institutions created by law and managed by representatives of workers and consumers in equal number.

Just as people's committee will be the primary political unit of an organised democracy, a producers' cooperative will be its primary economic unit. The work of grass-root activists will comprise the promoting of both these types of organisations. The creation of an organised democracy and of a cooperative economy will be a simultaneous process.

Concluding Remarks

A humanist revolution consisting of the building up an organised democracy and an egalitarian cooperative economy will necessarily be a long drawn effort. It will be spread over several generations. In the meantime, the limited parliamentary democracy which we have today in countries like India is required to be preserved. The present civil liberties and democratic rights must be defended in order that they may be utilised for the creation of a full-fledged political and economic democracy. The work of humanists is thus two-fold: to protect the present civil liberties and democratic rights, and to launch and develop a grass-root movement for the popularisation of democratic values and for building up people's committees and cooperative institutions.

Such a huge task cannot be carried out single-handed by the limited number of radical humanists who are in India today. They must find a large number of other like-minded persons to discharge this task. There will be no dearth of colleagues in this work if it is realised that humanism is the philosophy democracy and that, therefore, every genuine democrat is a potential humanist. Radical humanists will find numerous valuable co-workers among religious humanists as well as other committed democrats who have not even heard of humanism. The number of radical humanists will also increase in the course of this work. Radical humanists will achieve increasing success in their task by working with others in a spirit of understanding and mutual respect.

(*Concluded*)

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, September 1988.

Radical Humanist Movement in India
A Short History of the Indian Radical Humanist Movement

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

History of Indian Radical Humanist Movement goes back to 1920 and has evolved with the evolution of M.N. Roy's thought process though several others have contributed to that process. M.N. Roy was one of the most charismatic personalities of his time. As an ardent nationalist struggling to bring about an armed revolt in the country against British Empire he had left India in search of German arms. This pursuit, however, proved to be a mirage. He travelled through Japan, China etc. and ultimately landed on the East Coast of America. Disillusioned about the success of an armed revolt, Roy turned to the study of Socialism and Marxism, which soon became the most popular ideology because of the success of the Russian Revolution. By this time America had joined the War and Roy was arrested as a German agent. He managed to escape to Mexico and after the Russian Revolution he organised the first Communist Party outside Russia.

This attracted the attention of the Russian agents and Lenin invited Roy to visit Russia through Borodin. He travelled through Spain to Germany and spent about a year there before he could travel to Russia. Roy soon became one of the top leaders of the Communist International and was placed in charge of developing communism in India. Being an independent thinker, he was required to part company with the Communist International in 1929.

While in Germany he met a number of Indian students like Tayab Sheikh, Sunder Kabadi, Brijesh Singh who had contacts with their contemporaries in India and who were involved in freedom movement in one form or the other. Roy began to contact these people through these students. Talyab Sheikh was perhaps the most active student and had good contacts in Bombay. He established firm contact with V.B. Karnik and a small group known as Roy Group or 'Royist' was formed. This was perhaps the beginning of the Radical Humanist Movement in India.

As most of the youth in India, this group was dominated by the Marxist ideology and was trying to organise the working class in big cities. But from Roy's early writing it could be seen that he was thinking of the Indian population as a whole – particularly the masses – the peasants. In his book 'What Do We Want' written 1922 time and again he refers to the subhuman lives of the masses and asks the question – Why do we want Swaraj? "Ninety out of every hundred people in India belong either to the poor peasantry and the exploited city workers." Unlike the Marxists of the day he talks of ending social and moral slavery of the masses. "The masses must be freed from their moral slavery in order to release them fully from the misery of their material life. Throughout the ages they have been taught that they will be rewarded in the after-life if they suffer patiently in this. We must teach the masses that the philosophy of poverty is conducive to the interest of the idle rich because it keeps the people docile and harmless. The spirit of docility and resignation does not make for freedom. So long as Indian people remain victims of this pernicious doctrine even the political liberation of our country cannot be realised." "Our task is to develop in the minds of the masses this consciousness of their own power, to awaken their interest and develop their indomitable will to conquer freedom. They will do the rest."

This long quotation from Roy's early writings indicates the direction in which he wanted the freedom movement in India to grow. Roy wanted to fight for Swaraj because he expected that in Swaraj 'The Indian People would advance on the road to greater freedom in every field - Social, Economic and Political."

The Royist group in India was working inside the Congress and also in Trade Unions, but it was not as organised group though the ideology was spreading all over the country. the activities increased when Roy came back o India in 1930 – incognito. He met several leaders of The Indian National Congress, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who was the most progressive and modern

man in the nationalist circle of the day. National independence was the goal and Roy thought that Congress could form the spearhead of a progressive liberating movement in the country which, if properly groomed, could achieve real freedom for the Indian masses. In July 1931 Roy was arrested and the whole group became suspect. Some of them were arrested but were released as no evidence of anti-British activities could be produced against them. The movement did get a setback but it did not disintegrate. It organised itself as a close group and went on working in the freedom movement under the Congress.

Roy gathered first hand information about the Indian social and political situation after his release from jail in November 1936. Soon after that he announced that a philosophical revolution must precede a social revolution. The outmoded social and religious institutions were as much to be challenged as the foreign rule. He got enough time to study and write about fundamental aspects of life, like science and philosophy, materialism, both in Western thought and in ancient Indian thought, philosophical consequences of modern science etc. All this is reflected in the voluminous writing he did in jail. He succeeded in smuggling some of these writings out of jail and thus he could guide his followers effectively.

As soon as he was released from jail, he plunged into Indian political movement and joined the Indian National Congress. He was enthusiastically welcomed by all but Mahatma Gandhi who advised him to serve the country by 'his silence'. Roy was not the man to keep quiet and after attending the Faizpur session of the Congress in 1937 he undertook an extensive tour of the country. In Faizpur Congress itself he explained his revolutionary idea of announcing the summoning of a Constituent Assembly so as to challenge the continuation of British rule in India. To disseminate his ideas he started a weekly journal called *Independent India* in 1937. He thought that "The struggle for political freedom is a political struggle. The success in that struggle will be followed by great social transformation, but the immediate task is the capture of political power which will enable Indian people to clear away all obstacles in the way to its economic prosperity and social progress."

Roy advised his followers to form a League of Radical Congressmen and work for "transformation of Congress into the revolutionary party of the Indian people, so that it may perform effectively the function of leading our struggle for freedom." He advised the LRC members to shoulder concrete responsibility and form an inner core of the movement. Roy advised the LRC members to form Congress Committees in villages and towns so as to create "a State within a State' with the intention that the former would eventually overthrow the latter. The League members would be the conscious, active, revolutionary members of the Congress and the League would become ultimately the rallying ground for all such Congressmen, with this object. The League of Radical Congressmen held its first all India Conference in Pune in June 1939. The LRC wanted to transform The Indian National Congress into a revolutionary party of the Indian people. "The League of Radical Congressmen is not a mere wing of the Congress. It is the vanguard of the revolutionary party of the Indian people which is bound to rise before long to lead the Indian struggle for freedom. The League proposes to transform the National Congress into the revolutionary political party of the Indian people," emphasized Roy in his Presidential address to the First All India Conference on 27th July 1939 in Pune. In the same speech Roy describes how the present leadership is not playing this role. "The present leadership of the Congress has step by step receded to the position of making continuous compromises with Imperialism, because either they do not grasp the need for complete national freedom or are afraid of the far-reaching revolutionary implication of the political programme of the Congress. National freedom is not an end by itself. It is necessary so that the people of India may prosper and progress freely after the elimination of the foreign factor which has for such a long time stood in the way."

The programme of LRC was "to activise the lower units of the Congress. Political education of the primary membership will be the practical application. Systematic mass activity according to concrete plans is the school for imparting political education. That is completely absent today. Blind

faith being the foundation of the present authoritarian leadership, the necessary process of democratization of the internal life of the Congress is retarded." LRC would create a small band of consistent revolutionary leaders who would stand up boldly as the vanguard of the democratic forces which are bound to prevail in the course of time. "The League will combat all tendencies of compromise, be it with the Imperialist or with the conservative sections of Indian people ... The League does not believe in changing the enemy's heart as its struggle is against the system of colonial exploitation and that a system has no heart." The League also believes in right of revolt against oppression and tyranny as sacred.

"The League will press for the adoption by the Congress of a comprehensive programme of social reconstruction which must be undertaken by the free Democratic State of India to promote the progress and prosperity of the nation as a whole." Thus it could be seen that LRC was formed with the hope of converting National Congress into an organisation with a clear programme for throwing the Imperialist power out and building a democratic Indian State." Soon Congress was put to test by the escalation of the Second World War and Hitler running over almost all the democratic states of Europe.

Break with the Congress and formation of a separate Party

LRC of the Royist group was rapidly gaining support at the grass root level and a number of primary congress committees were in the hands of the Royists. This alarmed the Congress leadership. The differences grew and they became sharp when the Radicals started talking of supporting the anti-fascist war. They could not get reconciled with the decision of the Congress leadership to oppose the war on the pretext of non-violence or on a precondition that independence should be granted to India. A number of Radicals were expelled from the Congress for observing an "all India Anti-Fascism Day". An all India Conference of Radicals was held on June 2nd and 3rd 1940 under the President-ship of Vimal Prasad Jain, a member of the AICC from Meerut U.P. Seventy four delegates, all holding responsible positions in the Congress from ten provinces, attended the Conference. On 1st September 1940 throughout the country Radical Congressmen organised demonstrations against fascism demanding India's unconditional participation in the war. A number of Radicals including Roy were expelled from the Congress. The Congress membership became incompatible with the anti-fascists convictions of Radicals. So no alternative was left for them but to form a new Party. Therefore the Central Executive Committee of LRC passed the following resolution in its meeting on 26th and 27th October 1940 at Meerut:

"It is resolved that the League of Radical Congressmen shall henceforth function as an independent political party with the name 'Radical Democratic Party'. It is further resolved that a special Conference be convened to announce formally the inauguration of the party and adoption of its programme formulated on the basis of the declaration of the objects of the LRC. Meanwhile, the radicals shall resign from executive posts and elected committees of the Congress, because they cannot share the responsibility for executing the present Congress Policy." As a result 3000 Congressmen throughout the country resigned from the Congress.

The inaugural Conference of The Radical Democratic Party was held from the 20th to 22nd of December, 1940 in Bombay. M.N. Roy presided. Dr. N.B. Khare, Ex-Prime Minister Central Provinces, inaugurated the conference. The Conference was attended by 109 delegates elected by 3428 members from 14 provinces.

In the Manifesto issued in the inaugural Conference the Radical Democratic Party declared among other things that 'The Party will advocate a comprehensive programme of social reconstruction, which must be undertaken by the free democratic state of India to promote the progress and prosperity of the nation as a whole." Generally the Party stands for a Radical reconstruction of Indian society which is conditional upon the removal of all antiquated institutions, the disruption of all oppressive

relations and the rejection of all reactionary ideas which together obstruct the free economic development of the Country and impede the progress of the nation towards a high level of modern civilization." The Party struck roots in the Indian political field and grew as the torch-bearer of progressive thought.

Indian Federation of Labour

Radicals wanted to go all out to help the Anti-Fascist War. An all India anti-Fascist Labour Conference was held at Lahore on 29th and 30th November 1941 under the president-ship of M.N. Roy. As the All India Trade Union Congress had refused to help the war efforts it was decided to form a new Central Organisation of Labour with the name Indian Federation of Labour. The following resolution was passed at the Lahore Conference:

> "The Conference of delegates representing about three lakhs of workers organised into over eighty Unions decides to form a new Central Organisation of Labour by the name of Indian Federation of Labour and appoints an Executive Council with Mr. Jamnadas Mehta (M.L.A.) as President and M.N. Roy as General Secretary, Mr. V.G. Kulkarni and Mr. A.K. Mukerjee as Joint Secretaries: Vice-President – Manek Homi. M.A. Khan, Maniben Kara, P. Venkatrao Miavi and Khwaja, J. Mitra and others as members."

The meeting sent fraternal greetings to the Soviet Union pledging to stand by them in their heroic resistance to Nazi invasion. It also sent the following message to the British workers: "Indian Labour reaffirms its loyalty to the principle of internal solidarity and disowns either non-cooperation or neutrality in this bitter struggle against the common enemy of the working class. We are determined to rally entire Indian Labour by your side in this war against Fascism." The message further states that "The present position of this country is very unsatisfactory. The truly democratic and progressive forces labour under all sorts of disadvantages, including unsympathetic and even hostile attitude of the Government." "We believe that an Indo-British Labour Front, as an integral part of the International anti-Fascists people's front can alone guarantee democratic freedom for India and mobilize the entire man-power and natural resources to contribute to the victory of the democratic and progressive forces throughout the world."

The Indian Federation of Labour grew by leaps and bounds. Nearly 200 major Trade Unions in the country were affiliated to it with a membership of more than 5 lakhs.

Besides the normal Trade Union activities it organised several others for the welfare and education of the workers. A number of study circles were conducted in the labour areas of the big cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, Sholapur, Ahmedabad etc. Food was becoming scarce and costly so the I.F.L. organised Food Councils at different levels with the help of Central Food Advisory Council. It appointed a committee to look into the matter of Labour Legislation.

In 1943 when the anti-fascist war in Europe was showing definite sign of victory, I.F.L. also started thinking of the future and appointed a committee to formulate a People's Plan of Economic Development. The plan was presented in the All India I.F.L. conference held at Zaria, Bihar, and was unanimously adopted. The Plan was so devised as to provide to poverty-stricken Indians the necessities of life – food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical aid and to promote employment.

For organising propaganda in support of the war The Labour Department of The Government of India offered some financial assistance, and I.F.L. decided to accept a grant of Rs. 13,000/- per month to be spent in motivating Trade Unions to put in more efforts in industries to hell the war effort. This amount was spent for promoting the principles of democracy and anti-fascism through scores of activists who were working in the trade union movement all over the country. This created a hue and cry and Royists were accused of accepting Government money as a bribe for supporting war.

In fact Radicals were supporting the war right from the time it acquired an anti-fascist character, out of the conviction that if Fascism wins Indian freedom would recede by decades. On the other hand the defeat of International fascism was bound to facilitate India's freedom because it would strengthen democratic forces throughout the world including Great Britain and weaken British Imperialism both politically and weaken British Imperialism both politically and economically. As it happened, India became free exactly in the manner conceived by the Radicals.

In 1944 Radicals started thinking about the constitution of Free India. M.N. Roy prepared the Draft Constitution of India which was endorsed by the Central secretariat of the Party and published for discussion. The Draft suggested a Federal Constitution after reorganizing the existing provinces on a linguistic and cultural homogeneity basis and administrative convenience. According to the Draft Constitution People's Committees in villages and town *mohallas* were to be the main repositories of political power and the Indian Parliament was to be the apex of a network of such People's Committees. India was to be treated as one nation inclusive of the native states. The British Empire was to nullify their previous treaties with different States to achieve this.

If India had accepted this pattern a number of problems including the problem of minorities could have been solved. But the Congress, Muslim League and the British Parliament did not pay any attention to the Draft and landed the country in a bloody civil war the aftermath of which is still chasing us.

Indian Renaissance Institute

The Radicals were one group which was keen to bring about a social revolution in the country and Renaissance Clubs were organised at several places where critical appraisal of existing social institutions was discussed and ways and means to bring about the change were discussed. In 1943 the Renaissance Association was established which became the rallying ground and the vanguard of intellectuals of modern India. An appeal to intellectuals in 1943 stated that "At no other time in human history has the play of irrational forces been so organised so widespread and so destructive as today. The exploitation of ignorance, suppression of freedom of thought and expression, racial arrogance, organised cultivation of irrational forces, mass hysteria, superstition and bigotry are but a few dismal features of contemporary (one wonders whether this description is of 1943 or 1995) existence." To combat all this, in 1946 The Indian Renaissance Institute was established at Dehradun to act as a focal point of research and education.

The object of Indian Renaissance Institute (IRI) was "to help the rebirth of Indian people after centuries of stagnation as the backwater of the world." It further states that "The rebirth of the people presupposes revaluation of traditional values. The past is dead. It cannot be resurrected. Renaissance is not revival. It is an efflorescence of the new life, pulsating with new ideas, inspired by new ideals, and looking out to a new horizon." With the torch of Enlightenment in our hands we shall retrace Indian History to discover the permanent intellectual and cultural values created in the past. Ours is the search of truth, which is not limited by space and time: which is cosmopolitan as well as eternal. Armed with the truth of modern scientific knowledge we shall be more qualified to discover and appreciate what is true and imperishable in Indian tradition."

The aims and objects of IRI further states that "Indian Renaissance coincides with the greatest crisis in the history of mankind. It may have the privilege of helping the solution of the crisis if it will reinforce Cosmopolitan Humanism as the common heritage of the race. In that case Indian Renaissance will merge into such a greater movement embracing the entire civilised world." So the Radicals were already on the march towards a Cosmopolitan Humanist Movement with a world view from 1946.

Radical Humanist Movement and Dissolution of the Political Party

Radicals had to struggle hard as this movement which was for reappraisal of old institutions that

had advocated a radical change in the attitude to life was very much against the current milieu of the country. This was and still is an uphill task. In an all Indian Conference of The Radical Democratic Party held in Bombay in December 1946 Radicals accepted the broad principles of scientific humanism in the form of 'Twenty-Two Theses'. In 1948 the Radicals dissolved the Radical Democratic Party at Calcutta under the inspired guidance of Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi because it was felt that party politics was injurious to genuine democracy and humanist movement. In his concluding remarks at the Conference Shastriji said, "Our decision to dissolve the party is arising out of a desire for new triumphs on the higher plane of human freedom. When the instruments created by man take the form of fetters on his creativity, it is the essence of human wisdom to discard them. Human progress is possible essentially because of man's capacity to discard old and antiquated instruments and take to new more effective instruments and take to new more effective ones. The various institutions and associations like society, the state, the nation, the religion and so on are made for man and not man for them. Man is the archetype of the society. He is the creator of the culture. The history of religion amply shows that he is also the creator of God and it is therefore essential to examine the society or God as the means." This shows that the fight of the Radicals for political freedom was a part of the fight for multidimensional freedom.

The launching of the Renaissance Movement and the Radical Humanist Movement was not an easy task. Some of the people who were good organisers of a political party could not undertake the work of fighting against the harmful social institutions. Some of those who were in the Labour movement preferred to work in the Labour movement preferred to work strictly in traditional Trade Union fashion. There were some dropouts and it took for some a long time to understand and assimilate the ideology of humanism. A lot of heated discussion went on amongst the party members, as to why the political party should have been dissolved. Could we not fight on both the fronts – Renaissance and capture of power – to better the conditions of the masses of India, they asked. In the beginning there was no concrete programme. It was decided not to have any organisational set up: this decision also bewildered many. They were left to fend for themselves. This did disintegrate the rank and file and it took a few years to reorganise the movement on a sound footing. No doubt our Journal – *Independent India* – which has been renamed *Radical Humanist* kept us together and so did our yearly camps. But to discover what one could do as a Humanist was an arduous task. It was easy for those who were already in education. They could extend their activities. Some Radical Humanists undertook the fight for civil liberties and many joined Jai Prakash Narayan in PUCL – People's Union for Civil Liberties, or Citizens for Democracy – C.F.D. In fact Radicals were and still are the most active members of these organisations.

Indian Radical Humanist Association

Many of us felt that networking of the humanist activities on an all-India basis was essential and in 1969 The Indian Radical Humanist Association was formally established with V.M. Tarkunde as the President and V.B. Karnik and C.T. Daru as the Secretaries. Since then the organisation is working on different fronts. During the emergency some of the Radicals were behind bars but those outside fought for the liberation of the people. Under the leadership of V.M. Tarkunde constant battles were fought in almost all the Law Courts of the Country to defend the people who were arrested and those Journals which were sought to be penalised.

Organisational matters were taken in hand and State Units were organised by old and new Radicals. IRHA is a sort of federal organisation with different states having their own state units with their own executive councils and membership. There are yearly as well as life members in the Central Organisation and there is an elected Executive Council as well as President and General Secretary elected during biannual conference.

Many State units have their own periodicals in regional languages and they publish literature in people's language to spread humanist thought and to disseminate scientific knowledge and exposing blind faith. *The Radical Humanist* continues to be the main organ of the movement. A biannual Conference of IRHA is usually hosted by a State Unit and a biannual educational all India camp is organized to discuss burning issues and fundamental problems. These two all India activities are supplemented by the State activities which are attended by Radicals from different parts of the country. Some of the Radicals got involved in grass root level work and patiently and pertinently started building from the bottom. Some of those who were in rural areas could take up the rural development work, some started working in women's movement, and others in educational institutions. Humanism is philosophy which could be put in practice in any field in which one happens to be working and this has made it possible for many to be active.

So far we did not have permanent headquarters. With the establishment of M.N. Roy Memorial Human Development Campus we would have at least one permanent address and a place which we can call our own.

Indian Radical Humanist Association works in close cooperation with the Rationalist and Secularist organisation in the country. They are also active in organisations like PUCL and CFD. *Streehitkarini* and Centre for the Study of Social Change are organisations which were in fact started by Radicals for creation of a broader platform for the movement. All of us are working in cooperation with each other. IRHA is one of the founder organisations of The International Humanist and Ethical Union which was started in 1952 and M.N. Roy was one of its sponsors. We have close relations with the IHEU.

Principles and Philosophy of The Indian Radical Humanist Association

The following could be stated as the broad philosophical principles of The Indian Radical Humanist Association:

1. Man is the measure of all things. Cooperative social relationships contribute to develop individual potentialities. Development of an individual is the measure of social progress. Freedom and well being must be enjoyed by individuals.
2. Man is part of nature. Consequently the primary impulses as well as the potentialities of man must be traced to nature and to man's biological and socio-genetic evolution. Humanism excludes super-naturalism and affirms that man with his increasing power over nature is the maker of his Future.
3. Freedom, rationalism and secular morality are the basic values which contribute to individual well-being and social progress. Urge for freedom is the expression on the human plane – of the primary biological urge for existence. Since acquisition of knowledge and self-reliance are made possible by reason, rationalism is essential for individual freedom and social progress. The moral impulse is not of supernatural origin. It is an acquisition made by man in the course of biological and social evolution. Moral life is a life of enlightened satisfaction.
4. In traditional parliamentary democracy, citizens remain powerless, atomized individuals, who during periodical elections delegate the power supposed to be vested in them to their representatives. Democracy requires to be transformed into an organised participatory democracy, where the bulk of political power will remain vested in primary peoples' committees and the parliament will be the apex of a pyramidal structure of the State reared on countrywide network of local democracies in the form of such people's committees.
5. Economic democracy is no more possible in the absence of political democracy than the latter in the absence of the former. Democracy like freedom is indivisible and cannot be compartmentalized. Dictatorship is the negation of democracy and hence cannot be the

means of attaining freedom.

6. The theory of economic determinism is misleading as it represents a half-truth. It amounts to denial of human creativity. The human brain is also a means of production and it produces the most revolutionary commodity. Cultural patterns and ethical values are not a mere ideological super-structure of established economic relations. The dynamics of ideas runs parallel to the process of social evolution, the two influencing each other. A worthwhile social revolution must be preceded by a philosophical and cultural revolution. A mere institutional change cannot guarantee social progress. This is because the utility of every social institution depends upon the values shared by the persons who work for the institutions and the persons among whom the institutions function.
7. The State economy should be developed on the principles of cooperation rather than mere self-interest.

IRHA is now cooperating with The Centre for the Study of Social Change and *Streehitkarini* to build an M.N. Roy Memorial Human Development Campus on the land belonging to the C.S.S.C. which could implement almost all the programmes of I.R.I. and bring academicians and grass-root level workers together to bring about the New Renaissance – Renaissance from the bottom of the society.

We will be organising South Asian Humanist Centre at this Campus for networking Humanist, Rationalist and Secularist movement in South Asia. The atmosphere in the country though very depressing has great potentialities for the growth of The Radical Humanist Movement. The South Asian region is completely fragmented with religious fundamentalism rising like a monster, casteism, linguistic egotism and chauvinistic nationalism diving people in very turn of life. Humanism is the only philosophy which could cut across these manmade barriers and unite people on the human plane. IRHA should seize the opportunity and make humanism the philosophy of the 21st century. Therefore working with the people to change their attitudes and inculcate in them humanist values becomes the most important programme for Radical Humanists. They must reach out to the people and help them to strive for their own liberation – liberation from outmoded religious practices, fatalistic attitudes, oppressive social, political and economic institutions which alone would help them to achieve a worthwhile human life. We will strive to make the 21st century The Century of Humanism.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, April 1999.

Religion and the Radical Humanist Movement (I)

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

Materialism, now more adequately described as monistic naturalism, is the basis of the philosophy and practice of Radical Humanists. They do not believe that there is anything super-natural. They are therefore, atheistic or agnostic. They have no religion.

In practice, however, active Radical Humanists find it desirable, indeed necessary, to cooperate with persons who believe in the super-natural. This is because the main social objective of Radical Humanists is to strengthen and deepen Indian democracy by spreading the values of liberty, equality and fraternity among the people, by promoting civil liberties and human rights, and by spreading in the under-privileged sections of society a keen desire to improve their own lot and, if necessary, to fight for their rights. This cannot be done except by seeking the cooperation of many others who have the same ideal but who believe in religion. The relationship which is developed by Radical Humanists with religious minded people in the course of this work is often warm and abiding.

Some of the religious minded people with whom Radical Humanists have been cooperating in the course of their activities have been described in this journal as "religious humanists". They are so described because, in spite of their religious faith, they share the values of individual freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality, which are the basic values of Radical Humanism. Out of these values, the one which is most important in keeping secular (Radical) humanists and religious humanists together is the value of self-sustained morality. The driving force of such morality is far more powerful than is generally recognised. Humanists of both types do not strive to attain political power for themselves. They want political power to go in the hands of the people as a whole so that the deprived sections of society may be able to attain economic progress and social equality. In the absence of any desire for political power for themselves, the main motive which activates humanists in their social work arises from their moral incentive in favour of justice and equality. It is true that the desire for popularity is also one of the motives of social work even in the case of humanists, but the desire for popularity, if it is kept in check and is not allowed to be competitive, does not affect the cooperative relationship between different humanists.

It is not difficult to identify the characteristics of those religious people who readily cooperate with Radical Humanists and who can be designated as religious humanists. They, in the first place, treat with equality people who profess different religious. They do not regard people of their own religion as being nearer to them than people belonging to other religions. They treat all human beings according to their individual worth, irrespective of their religion, caste, sex or nationality. They also agree that all religious tenets and established religious practices deserve to be examined from time to time by the touchstone of one's reason, by ascertaining whether they are consistent with the basic humanist principles of individual freedom, morality and human equality. It follows that those who are either communalist because they entertain hostility or aloofness from persons belonging to other religions, and those others who refuse to examine the established tenets and traditions in the light of reason and are therefore rightly called fundamentalists, exclude themselves from category of religious humanists. Commitment to the humanist values of individual freedom, rationality and self-sustained morality on the one hand, and freedom from communalism and fundamentalism on the other, would entitle a person to be characterised as a religious humanist.

It may be doubted whether a religious person can have a self-sustained morality, i.e., morality not derived from social norms or from the dictates of religion. However, while the majority of religious people are governed by social norms and religious dictates, a considerable minority behave according to their conscience which they regard as the voice of God. It should be recalled

that one of the dominant features of the European Renaissance in the 14th and 15th Centuries was that the humanists of that period claimed that they were not bound by the dictates of the clergy because they obeyed their conscience which they regarded to be the voice of God. Despite this claim, the fact remains that one's conscience, being a biological heritage, is influenced by one's reason and a man who obeys his conscience can change his conduct when he finds that what his conscience prompted him to do in the past was unfair and unjust. That was probably why Gandhiji who regarded the conscience as the voice of God changed his opinions on social issues from time to time.

A greater difficulty arises in understanding how a person who has faith in religion can be truly rational. Faith in religion being itself irrational, it is not easy to see how a religious person can regard rationalism as a value. The difficulty is genuine, but it arises from the unjustified assumption that there is mutual consistency in the ideas and impulses of human beings. The fact is that there are only a few persons who are so completely rational that they do not allow inconsistent ideas to inhabit their mind. Inconsistency in the ideas and opinions of one and the same person is a common experience and I believe psychologists will agree with this view. It is true that a religious person who is so orthodox as not to entertain any doubt about the correctness of religious tenets and practices, and who can therefore be justly called a fundamentalist, would not have the type of mental inconsistency mentioned above. But the minds of majority of men and women are full of inconsistencies and it is the4refore possible that even a mentally advanced person may have faith in religion and may be a rationalist at the same time. This is convincingly borne out by a recent article of the eminent humanist Dr. M.P. Rege published in the Marathi Journal "*Ajacha Sudharak*" (January 1995). He writes that a man is a mystery, that faith in God is a natural trait of human beings, and that nothing has happened which requires him to give up that natural faith. Nobody who knows him can doubt that Dr. Rege is a humanist and one now finds that he is a religious humanist.

To take a slight detour, I find that in one branch of our work, Radical Humanists can cooperate even with orthodox persons. That happens in our efforts to combat communalism and promote communal amity between Hindus and Muslims. Generally speaking, communalists (those who entertain same degree of hostility against persons belonging to a religion other than their own) are not committed to the orthodox tenets and practices of their own religion. On the other hand, orthodox persons who are deeply committed to the tenets and practices of their religion have often a rigid sense of morality and they are free from any hatred of persons of other religions. This can be seen, on the one hand, in the intense communalism of RSS cadres who are generally not deeply religious Hindus and many of whom are religious reformers, and on the other hand, in the religious tolerance of both orthodox Hindus and orthodox Muslims. However, our cooperation with the persons of religious orthodoxy does not mean that we are supporters of orthodoxy. As previously explained in this journal, orthodoxy is very harmful to the religious community of those who are orthodox, whereas communalism is harmful to persons of another religion who are hated by the communalists. Both are required to be opposed, but there can be separate movements, one against communalism and another against fundamentalism, What is discussed above shows that cooperation between Radical Humanists and Religious Humanists is not only justifiable but is necessary for the promotion of democratic rights and civil liberties in India, and on some rare and exceptional occasion even the cooperation of Radical Humanists with orthodox religious people may be justified.

There is, however, another issue which is required to be dispassionately considered by the Radical Humanists, and which, in my opinion, deserves to be discussed in the forthcoming biennial conferences of the Indian Radical Humanist Association to be held in Patna on the 11th and 12th of March, 1995. The question is whether religious humanists may join the Radical Humanists

Association and if so, in what circumstances. Cooperation with religious humanists is a matter on which there exists in my opinion a consensus among Radical Humanists, but whether some committed and active religious humanists should be members of the Indian Radical Humanists Association is a different and more controversial question. I would like to express my *tentative* opinion on this second question so that a decision on the may perhaps be taken in our forthcoming biennial conference.

One material consideration relevant to this issue is that no person is born as an atheist. Because of the training received in their childhood, most children develop a faith of the religion of their parents. Those who become atheist or agnostic do so at a later stage in life as a result of their experience, study and contemplation. Every movement, however, which aims at a radical transformation of society, derives its strength from the support of youthful idealists. It is common experience that youthful idealism often fades away in later life, but some of the youth remain active idealists throughout their life. That is why the membership of young persons is valuable for every radical movement. If we insist that the doors of the Radical Humanists Association should be open only to the non-theists (atheists and agnostics), it would be hardly possible to get any young people in our movement. It is significant that most of the present Radical Humanists were former members of the Radical Democratic Party and that they developed their rationalism and their non-theistic conviction in the course of their work in the Party. It appears desirable, therefore, that we should admit young persons, boys and girls, into the Radical Humanists fold, even if they have religious leanings to start with, provided of course they agree with the aims of our movement. With greater maturity, they may become fully rationalistic and therefore non-theists in the course of time.

Another relevant consideration is that the religion of some people is highly refined. They do not believe in a personal God. They believe that there is a spiritual power which is immanent in nature. There are others who are committed to the view that there can be only one God for all human beings and religious differences are therefore baseless. It is a moot question whether such people, if they want to join the Indian Radical Humanists association, should not be able to do so.

In this connection, it is pertinent to refer that in the Constitution of the Radical Humanists Association, no reference to religion has been made and there is no condition that only non-theists would be admitted as members of the Association. What the Constitution insists upon is that Radical Humanism gives primacy to the human individual and recognises his or her right to live in freedom and with dignity. It defines the main values of Radical Humanism and these values are freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality. The constitution of the Radical Humanist Association moreover says: "The principles of Radical Humanism were first formulated by the revolutionary philosopher M.N. Roy in 1946. They have never been regarded as a closed system of ideas. They are open to revision in the light of further experience and growth of knowledge. The Indian Radical Humanist Association does not, therefore, require from its members an uncritical adherence to the system of ideas developed by its sponsors. Any person who agrees with the basic values of Radical Humanism and desires to promote those values is welcome to join the Association."

In view of these considerations, the question to be decided is whether persons, who believe in a supernatural power but who are committed to the above values and wish to join the Indian Radical Humanist Association for promoting them, should not be able to do so. It is necessary to emphasise that this question is pertinent only if we, the Radical Humanists, are keen to develop and strengthen our movement at a rapid rate so that it may become capable of achieving its great ideal.

New Delhi
Dated: 22.1.1995.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, February 1995.

Religion and the Radical Humanist Movement (II)

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

In the February 195 issue (Issue No. 299) of this journal, while stating that there is a general consensus amongst Radical Humanists that they should cooperate with religious humanists for the attainment of their democratic objectives, a controversial question was raised on which a dispassionate discussion was invited. In the words used in the editorial, the question was "Whether some committed and active religious humanists should be members of the Indian Radical Humanist Association?" A few contributions on the subject by members of the Radical Humanist Association were published in the next two successive issues and some more contributions are published in the present issue. A short discussion on the subject took place at the biennial conference of the Radical Humanist Association held in Patna on 11-12, March, 1995, but adequate time was not available for dealing fully with the subject.

For consensus among members of the Radical Humanist Association appears to be that it would not be proper to admit religious humanists in the Association. Nobody however suggested that the present constitution should be amended for that purpose. As observed in that editorial, the constitution of the Association does not make any reference to religion, but says that any person who is in general agreement with the basic values of radical humanism, which consist of freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality, may be admitted as a member of the Association. The consensus therefore appears to be that while we should not approach a person known to be a firm believer in religion for joining the Association, those who apply for membership on the ground that they are in general agreement with the aforesaid basic values of radical humanism, should be admitted without raising any question about their religious inclinations. I suggest that we should act according to the above consensus in admitting members to the Radical Humanist Association.

That however should not be taken as a final closure of the controversy. The subject requires further discussion and clarification.

I fully agree with those who insist that the Radical Humanist Association should not change its character and should always remain a non-theist (atheist or agnostic) organisation. It appears to me that a person who genuinely believes in the values of freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality cannot normally be a firm believer in the existence of a super-natural power. That is why, despite the fact that religion prevails in the society as a whole, only a small minority of religious-minded persons can be categorised as religious humanists. Their commitment to rationalism conflicts with their faith in religion and, therefore, when they join an organisation of non-believers and work actively with its members, they are likely in the course of time to lose their faith in the super-natural and espouse a materialistic outlook. This happened in the past in the case of large number of persons who had joined the Radical Democratic Party when they still had a religious faith but who became full atheists in the course of time. A little reflection would show that if those who believe in the super-natural work in cooperation with those who are committed to a materialist philosophy, it is the former who would lose their faith in the super-natural and not vice versa. This is because truth always has the tendency to prevail in the end. For a fully developed rationalist, the only possible philosophy is materialism (monistic naturalism).

There is another, and a much more important, reason why the controversy in regard to the admission of some religious-minded individuals in the Radical Humanist Association should not be regarded as permanently closed. It was emphasised in the editorial mentioned above that an individual, if he becomes an idealist at all, does so in his early youth. Idealism consists of a deep attachment to some social goal and the rejection of a life of narrow selfishness. Persons who do

not become idealists when they are teen-aged rarely change and become idealists in later life. It is true that even those who are idealists in their youth often lose their idealism when they grow older, but some of them retain it in later life. It is obvious that such idealists are the *only* potential member of the Radical Humanist Association. Working in cooperation with mature Radical Humanists, they will give up their illusions about the super-natural. That is why, in the editorial mentioned above, it was emphasised that "we should admit young persons, boys and girls, into the Radical Humanist fold, even if they have religious leanings to start with, provided of course they agree with the aims of our movement." None of the persons who have opposed the admission of religious humanists into the Radical Humanist Association have dealt with this aspect of the issue.

The question involved is very important. Every month we publish in this journal some obituar5y notes lamenting the passing away of our valued comrades, mostly on account of old age. While we are losing old members, we are not able to secure an adequate number of young recruits. This has become a very vital problem for Radical Humanists. That is why we have to seriously consider whether we should not approach young idealists for membership of the Radical Humanist Association even if they entertain some religious illusion.

April 15, 1995.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, May 1995.

Practice of Radical Humanism

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

"Radical Humanism – The Contemporary Situation" is the main subject of the present Special issue. The subject necessarily involves some self-introspection on the part of Radical Humanists. The purpose of the self-introspection should not merely be to find faults with ourselves, which are likely to be quite numerous, but to find ways and means by which the Radical Humanist Movement may be strengthened so as to fulfil its objectives. As far as possible, the self-introspection should be done in a spirit of optimism.

The contemporary situation is such as to justify a good deal of optimism on the part of Radical Humanists. Marxism was the philosophy which was hitherto espoused by large numbers of progressive people in India and the world. With the collapse of communism, Marxism has received a severe setback. This was anticipated by M.N. Roy and other Radical Humanists and in fact the philosophy of Radical Humanism was developed in order to overcome the defects of Marxism and to formulate a more consistent and acceptable social philosophy. There is reason to believe that humanism, in one form or another, would be the philosophy of the future, at least for a long time to come.

Secondly, our criticism of the party system has been fully justified by the recent experience of political parties in India. We had anticipated that the party system would lead to concentration of power in the hands of a few top party leaders, which would amount to a denial of democracy. We had also anticipated that the struggle for power between various political parties would greatly depress the moral standards in political practice. Both these anticipated defects of the party system have been borne out by the post-independence experience of India. There is no political party in the country at present which the people at large regard as their own.

It appears, however, that Radical Humanists have not been able to take advantage of the fact that humanism is now the almost only philosophy which would appeal to thoughtful people and that the party system in India has collapsed as expected by them. Is this failure to take adequate advantage of a favourable situation the result of any serious defect in the philosophy of Radical Humanism? Or is there some defect in the practice of Radical Humanists in pursuing their philosophy?

No significant defect in the philosophy of Radical Humanism has surfaced since the philosophy was formulated in 1946 and was partially revised at the time of the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in December 1948. As often observed by M.N. Roy, the first six of the 22 Theses of Radical Humanism constitute the core of our philosophy, whereas the remaining Theses are experimental in nature and may require comparatively more frequent revisions. No shortcoming has been found hitherto in the core of the philosophy expressed in the first six Theses, whereas such changes as may perhaps be justified in the remaining Theses are of a superficial nature.

Is there, then, some shortcoming in the practice of Radical Humanism? As we always knew, the progress of Radical Humanism involves a cultural transformation of society and such transformation is always a slow process. But even after giving due weight to this necessity of gradualness, the progress of Radical Humanism appears to be not as satisfactory as it should be. Given my opinion may assist us in the necessary self-introspection in our practice of Radical Humanism.

We dissolved the Radical Democratic Party in December 1948 not only because the party system was, for reasons given earlier, inconsistent with our concept of a radical democracy in which political power would remain vested in the people, but mainly because we were convinced that such a radical democracy cannot be attained in the country in the absence of a cultural transformation of Indian society based on humanist-democratic values. We believed that a political

party was not an effective instrument for bringing about the necessary socio-cultural transformation and that a wider movement than that of a political party was required for that purpose. We therefore dissolved the Radical Democratic Party and urged upon Radical Democrats to reorganise themselves into a movement to be called the Radical Democrats to reorganise themselves into a movement to be called the Radical Humanist Movement. The philosophy of Radical Humanism which would guide such a movement was already formulated in the form of 22 Theses which were suitably amended in 1948 to make it clear that a political party, even if guided by humanist principles, would not be an appropriate instrument of the necessary socio-cultural movement. The proposed movement was often described by M.N. Roy as 20th Century Renaissance.

Obviously, the purpose of the renaissance movement was to disseminate among the people the main values of Radical Humanism which were identified as the values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality. But how were these values to be spread among the people? It was clear even in 1948 that these values could not be propagated merely by explaining them to the people through lectures ad writings. What was necessary was to w0rk among the people for the solution of their problems so that, in the course of such work, the values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality would come to be appreciated and shared by them. For this purpose, as explained in the 22 Theses, Radical Humanists were expected to work among the people as their friends, philosophers and guides. To demonstrate to the people the suitability of the values of Radical Humanism for facing and overcoming their difficulties was regarded as the essence of the work of Radical Humanists. It may be noted in parenthesis that this method of bringing about the "Twentieth Century Renaissance" was different than the manner in which the European Renaissance took place over a period of about 400 years from the twelfth to the sixteenth centurie3s.d the question to ask is whether and to what extent we have been working among the people for the solution of their problems so as to disseminate the values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality among them.

In this connection, it is necessary to remember that the generally recognised values of democracy, namely, liberty, equality and fraternity, are really the *social* values of humanism. Both logically and chronologically, humanism has been the philosophy of democracy. Humanism is characterised by the recognition of the dignity of the individual, and that is also the basis of democracy. The humanist values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality, when expressed in social terms, correspond to the recognised democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity. Historically also, the European Renaissance, which was essentially a humanist movement, was followed by the emergence of democracy in Europe. Because the humanist-democratic values are not adequately rooted in the existing cultural sub-soil of India, the democracy set up in the country by the Indian Constitution has always been weak and unstable. It is liable to be replaced by a dictatorial regime or by our own brand of fascism reared on communalised nationalism. What is the duty of Radical Humanists in this situation?

In the first place, although the present Indian democracy is deficient in the sense that power really vests in the hands of the elitist minority, there are some valuable fundamental rights embodied in the Indian Constitution, such as the right of personal liberty, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, which are necessary for developing a people's movement by the dissemination of humanist values. The defence of the present limited democracy against authoritarian or fascist forces is therefore an essential requirement of our movement. This involves the propagation among the people of the values of freedom, equality and fraternity, and the propagation of these values is clearly a part of the renaissance movement.

Development of public pressure from below by the dissemination of humanist-democratic values is also necessary for bringing about economic and political reforms in the functioning and structure of the Indian State. Since the majority of the people have no economic assets, they

require the active assistance of the State over a long period of time for the alleviation of poverty and unemployment by recourse to labour-intensive undertakings such as construction of roads and houses, improvement of agriculture, small irrigation projects, watershed management, systematic plantation of trees, promotion of small scale industries and so forth. The poverty-stricken majority also requires State assistance in the spread of education and in the provisions of medical assistance and various social services. Pressure from below is also required to be built up for several essential reforms in the structure and functioning of the State. Political power is required to be decentralised, not only in name but in substance, and decentralisation is also necessary of economic planning which would continue to be necessary for supplying the needs of the poor majority. The electoral system has to be reformed and determined steps are necessary for reducing, if not eliminating, the corruption which pervades the entire political administration. The party system, which will continue to exist till a party-less democracy can be brought into existence, requires to be improved in diverse ways, such as by making it necessary for the parties to have internal democracy and to maintain correct audited accounts. By these and other means we will have to aid in the formation of a democratic pro-people Government in the country. we have to remember in this connection that the humanist revolution which we cherish will e brought about by peaceful means and, since it involves a cultural transformation, it will come about gradually, as a result of a multiplication of reforms in various directions.

The Radical Humanists have to spread humanist ideas and ideals in the political sphere for the purpose, first, of preventing the establishment of a dictatorial or a communalist-fascist State; secondly, for propagating and popularising human rights (and corresponding responsibilities) among the people; and thirdly, for bringing about several political reforms so as to establish a democratic pro-people government in the country. Now, the question which is required to be considered is whether all Radical Humanists feel that it is necessary to do this work on a non-party basis in cooperation with other similar-minded people and whether Radical Humanists also appreciate that this is an essential part of the renaissance movement.

The formation of the Radical Humanist Association in 1969 coincided with the success of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in attaining supreme leadership in the Congress Party. As the dictatorial tendencies of Mrs. Gandhi began to show themselves some Radical Humanists in association with the section of Gandhians led by Jayaprakash Narain formed in April 1974 an organisation called the Citizens for Democracy (CFD), for the purpose of defending democracy in the country and strengthening it. The proposal to form such an organisation was sanctioned by the resolution of the Central Council of the Radical Humanist Association in 1973. It is, however, doubtful whether this was appreciated by Radical Humanists themselves as a part of the Indian Renaissance Movement. Soon thereafter, as anticipated by some of us, an Emergency was declared in India and civil liberties and democratic rights were thrown overboard. Opposition to the resulting oppressive and dictatorial regime amounted to the defence of freedom and democracy and was clearly a part of the renaissance movement. Several Radical Humanists joined in opposing the Emergency but some did not do so, and in any case such opposition to autocracy was not clearly recognised as a part of the Indian Renaissance Movement.

During and after the Emergency, a number of human rights organisations arose in the country. The first such organisation was the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) which was formed in 1976 by Jayaprakash Narain with the assistance of some Gandhians, a number of Radical Humanists and some others. The entire human rights movement in the country is essentially a part of the Indian Renaissance Movement if by renaissance we understand the spread of humanist values. Some Radical Humanists are participating in the human rights movement but some are indifferent to it. It appears that this indifference arises from the fact that the human rights movement is not regarded as a part of the Indian Renaissance Movement which we are committed to develop.

In the last 4 or 5 years, majority communalism has been increasing in the country by leaps and bounds. It is being deliberately fostered by a political party and its associates for the purpose of attaining power in the States and ultimately at the Centre. The party and its associates have recently captured power in the important States of Maharashtra and Gujarat. There is a possibility of that party coming to power at the Centre after the next parliamentary election. The party's outlook consists of a combination of aggressive communalism and chauvinistic nationalism, and its conduct as shown by the destruction of the Babri Masjid is based on the doctrine that might is right. The party thus represents an Indian version of fascism. Opposition to such a movement clearly is a part of the Indian renaissance movement. But only a few Radical Humanists are taking interest in opposing the growth of this fascist movement. Actually, all the humanists in the country including Radical Humanists ought to be actively engaged in opposing the establishment of a fascist theocratic State in India.

There are also other very important socio-economic issues in which Radical Humanists ought to be, but are not, very much involved. Tremendous growth of corruption in the political and administrative machinery of the State has become an issue of vital importance. Corruption affects all the people from the top to the bottom of society. Progress in all directions is being thwarted by the all-pervading corruption. We as Radical Humanists ought to be concerned with and involved in that issue. Another important issue to which we have not paid adequate attention is that of environmental degradation. Efforts to check corruption and to prevent environmental degradation ought to be regarded as a part of the renaissance movement if by renaissance we mean the spread of humanist values.

Some Humanists are doing valuable work in spreading rationalism and opposing blind faith. A few others are involved in very useful grass-root activities. There is no doubt that they are engaged in promoting the renaissance movement. The movement is also assisted by humanists working in cultural and scholarly spheres. For the deprived majority of the Indian people, however, apart from the intensive humanist activity at the grass-root level which at present is necessarily confined to a few localities, what is of immediate and utmost importance is the humanist work in the political sphere described above. While continuing their activities in other directions, Radical Humanists will be more effective in attaining their objective if they concentrate their efforts of defending and strengthening India's secular democracy and for establishing a corruption-free and pro-people Government in the country.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, April 1995.

A Titan among Human Rights Intellectuals and a Great Humanist

Dr. R.M. Pal

Mr. V.M. Tarkunde died on 22 March 2004. His loss is irreparable. Many liberals were Mr. Tarkunde's admirers. This issue contain a letter from G.S. Bhargava, a renowned journalist, and one such admirer.

I used to address VMT as Comrade Tarkunde until a few years ago. When almost all of his old associates and colleagues started addressing him a Tarkunde Sahib, I also switched over to this mode of address. Comrade Tarkunde was a close associate of Comrade Roy. He contributed considerably towards the framing of the 22 Theses of Radical/New Humanism. I first met him in 1948 during the study camp held at a forest house in Dehradun, not far from the Indian Military Academy. It is there I observed that Comrade Roy and Ellen heavily relied on Com. Tarkunde for many things. He helped them financially. When he started his practice on his return to Mumbai after the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party, of which he was General Secretary from 1943 to 1948, he used to send money every month for the Roy's maintenance. I came in close contact with him in 1952-53 winter when he and Chitratai – that's how Mrs. Tarkunde would be addressed affectionately – came to Dehradun with their 5 month old daughter Manik and an ayah. Tarkunde came to look after Roy who was ailing at that time. Just about that time, Roy had started recovering from his attack of cerebral thrombosis.

Then I came in his contact in 1969 when he again returned to Delhi to start his legal practice at the Supreme Court of India. I was pleasurably surprised to see him one evening at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences where I was admitted for a general check-up. He told me that he had heard from a friend, Ram Singh, that I was not well and that I was admitted to the hospital. I hope it is nothing very serious, he told my wife and when he stepped into the room where I was staying, he said, I have a number of projects in which I want your assistance. So you can't afford to stay in a hospital. On my discharge, I visited him a number of times at his Defence Colony residence. He had already planned to hold an All India Conference of Radicals to start the Radical Humanist Association. Vimal Prasad Jain and Advocate Suhas Malik and his wife Dr. Gauri Gazaz helped him in this project. He then brought the Radical Humanist weekly from Kolkata and started publishing it as a monthly magazine as its Editor, from Delhi. Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz was its Managing Editor. Ram Singh, Vimal Prasad Jain, Suhas Malik and later I were asked to join him. We would assemble at his Maharani Bagh home once every month. By this time R.L. Nigam also shifted to Delhi and he too joined the monthly.

Tarkunde had many un-Indian qualities. I will refer to one such. He would always appreciate any good work done by his colleagues. When I was Managing Editor of the RH, VMT once went to London to spend some time with his sister, a consultant in Radiology. In his absence I wrote a brief editorial note. He wrote to me from London, highly appreciating the note and asking me to write more often.

I returned from UK during the latter part of the Emergency. I was told by my colleagues that I was also on the list of those to be arrested. My friend, Dr. G.R. Dalvi, told me that we would all face the situation together and that I should not go back to the UK. VMT said that now not many people were being arrested so that I might think of staying back. Two radical friends whose advice I accepted and who gave me moral courage were Dr. G.R. Dalvi and Maman Chand. And of course VMT.

Some of his old RDP colleagues, especially from Gujarat and Mumbai, were very unhappy with him and Prof. Rajni Kothari. I went to the US in 1994 where I was invited to a number of places to speak on the state of human rights in India, thanks to our friend, Prof. Dhirubhai Sheth of the

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies set up by Rajni Kothari in Delhi I was invited by the Indian Association at Chicago. My host, an old RDP member who had attended the Mussoorie Study Camp in 1949, did not mince words. He said Rajni and VMP had been very unkind to Mrs. Gandhi. I could understand that my host was not an admirer of Indira Gandhi but was very critical of a number of leaders in the Janata Party. My host and a few others thought that the Janata Party leaders were not capable of keeping India united. India will fall apart in their hands, they were convinced. They were all critical of Morarji Desai – a self-righteous man like him cannot be democratic and cannot run the affairs of the country. Once I made a cryptic reference to this to VMT. He got angry. He said – I and many colleagues in the RDP lost our political base and became unpopular primarily because we fought against fascism. I cannot compromise with the fascist practice of Mrs. Gandhi. Look at her arresting an old man and freedom fighter like Bhim Sain Sachar and Jaya Prakash Narayan. Come what may, we must stand up against her. VMT did not compromise with people who were with Mrs. Gandhi. During the M.N. Roy Centenary Celebrations, of which I was Member-Secretary, Mr. Brahm Dutt, and old RDP member, told me one day that we should write to the UP Chief Minister requesting him for a grant for the celebrations projects. I asked VMT to write a letter to Brahm Dutt who was Finance Minister in the UP Government. He declined to writ because the latter had joined Mrs. Gandhi. I then wrote to Brahm Dutt Ji and the UP government sanctioned a grant of Rs. 5 lakhs. But for that money the work of the *Selected Works of M.N. Roy* could not have started.

I don't know anyone in present day India who saw the danger of fascism in communalism represented by saffron/Hinduised/religious nationalism which is preached by the Hindutvavadi BJP leaders, except VMT. Even when he fell ill he wrote a number of short pieces on the subject. I have myself written fairly extensively on the human rights violations caused by communalism and the caste system. Once I requested him to write on the subject for the PUCL Bulletin. He wrote under the title "To speak for Reservation is not Casteism". This piece was reproduced in the Radical Humanist In his J.P. Memorial lecture he said, "I am of the view that the communalist nationalism represents a far greater danger to Indian democracy than personal authoritarian rule." That communalism and religious or Hinduised or saffronised – one may call it anything one likes – represents Fascism was a strongly held view by VMT. When the BJP came to power with the active help of a few other parties VMT began to write about it. It is in this context that he said that people who have no choice in the next election might vote for the Congress Party, which comment has been resented by many liberals supporting the BJP. How could he recommend Mrs. Gandhi's Party? I may mention here VMT's strong dislike for Hindu communalism. Once, one evening, he invited a few of us for dinner on the occasion of A.B. Shah's visit to Delhi. A.B. Shah spoke scathingly about Muslim communalism. VMT almost lost his temper and spoke about the fascist character of Hindu communalism. R.L. Nigam and I saved the situation. We took away A.B. Shah to one side and he stopped speaking on this subject.

One last observation. The condolence meeting for Tarkunde in Delhi was very well organized except for one thing. Not many people liked Arun Shourie sitting on the dais. His speech was also not related to the subject matter, i.e., condolence. He spoke about the Communists and M.N. Roy not joining the freedom struggle. Many people would have engaged in an argument with him had the subject been Fascism, the philosophy, practice and profession of fascism. I don't know in India anyone else who wrote so much on the subject as has been done by VMT.

Tarkunde's death means the end of an institution, one that represented a strong stance against fascism, communal Hinduism, and which stood up for human rights and humanism. His loss is a loss to all that is decent and moral in our society.

Published in **The Radical Humanist,** May 2004.

Homage to a Noble Humanist

Sibnarayan Ray

I see V.M. Tarkunde as one of the last major figures of that remarkable phase in Indian history which is commonly called the Indian renaissance. Taking place as it did in the constrictive context of colonial rule, it had its obvious limitations. Nonetheless, its achievements in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth were undeniably considerable. New ideas and ideals, institutions and techniques, methods and morals, flowing in from the West, itself emerging from the stranglehold of its own dark and moribund religio-feudal heritage, found in some of the boldest and finest spirits in India a creative response which expressed itself in multiple directions. Languages and literatures were revolutionised in one Indian vernacular after another. There were energetic efforts to reform society, to expose its fetid institutions and beliefs to the fresh air and light of free inquiry and to break its rusted fetters. The new values of freedom, justice and all-round human development opened inspiring perspectives and visions among the educated. Much of what is cherishable and inspiring in modern India - human rights and a democratic constitution, scientific advancement and social mobility, remarkable efflorescence of literatures and the arts – is the heritage of the Indian renaissance. Despite the vicious efforts of revivalists, nationalists and communists to denigrate it from various angles, the achievements of the Indian renaissance stand out prominently, in particular in sharp contrast to the decadence of culture and morality that seems to be fast overtaking contemporary India.

What particularly characterised the Indian renaissance was the appearance of several generations of individuals who were persons of integrity and intellect, richly sensitive and articulate, deeply committed to truth and public welfare. I have in mind persons like Rammohun Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Akshay Datta, Bankimchandra, the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, Jambekar, Vishnu Shastri, Lokahitwadi, Jotiba Phule, Agarkar, Ranade in Maharashtra, Viresalingam Pantulu in Madras, Kasondas Mulji of Gujarat, the Parsi Behramji Malabari, and others who were there kinsmen in spirit. I see V.M. Tarkunde as belonging to that memorable line of singular individuals whose great tragedy was that despite their lifelong efforts they did not succeed in carrying the common people with them in their pursuit of freedom, truth and justice. That too was the tragedy of Tarkunde's mentor and mine, M.N. Roy, and the shadow of that tragedy deepened in the last quarter of twentieth century. What has made the Indian situation so very desperate at the opening the new century is not simply poverty and over population, but the pervasive absence of honesty and integrity in public life – the fearful iniquitousness of corruption and cynicism and total lack of concern for the rights and interests of common citizens. In the circumstances I feel the loss of Tarkunde all the more acutely, for looking around I hardly find any one in contemporary India who may fill that gap.

I came to know Tarkunde personally for the first time in May 1946 when about a hundred fifty radicals from all over India had gathered at Dehradun for a national study camp. The camp, its topics and principal speakers were all planned by M.N. Roy who opened and directed the discussions. I had not yet formally joined the Radical Democratic Party whereas Tarkunde had been its General Secretary wince 1944. A barrister and economist with a degree from London who had abandoned the path to a lucrative career to devote himself to full-time party work, his intellectual brilliance, organisational ability and total dedication had already established him as Roy's most trusted right hand man in the party. a complete newcomer, I was twelve years younger than Tarkunde, and my interest in politics was marginal. But by that time I had devoted several years of intensive study to Marx and Marxism, had my first book published at 24, and already gained some recognition as a writer and professor of English. I had come to the camp mainly out of curiosity, but I was delighted to find that ideas which I had been trying to formulate tentatively on the strength of my studies and researches were quite close to those which Roy had been exploring since his disillusionment with communism and the Soviet Union. In the course of

the camp deliberations he presented his first formulations of a new political philosophy which went beyond both liberal democracy and communism. Among the old Royists in the Study Camp Tarkunde and Professor G.D. Parikh responded most positively to the new development. I believe they were able to do so because three years ago, under Roy's guidance, they had jointly prepared, together with Prof. B.N. Banerji, the *People's Plan for Economic Development of India* which anticipated some of the novel features of the new philosophy.

Although I was a new comer I was encouraged by Roy to give shape to my ideas which he not only serialised without delay in *Independent India*, but also got published as a book with a generous introduction under the title *Radicalism,,* simultaneously with his own collection of camp lectures, *New Orientation.* In the following months there were intensive discussions conducted by Roy at Dehradun, Bombay and Calcutta on the basis of his formulation of the fundamental principles of Radical Humanism. It is my recollection that in the first draft formulation there were sixteen theses, which in the course of discussion developed into twenty two theses. Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach" probably provided the formal model, but the contents were very different. Tarkunde took a prominent part in these discussions; among others who participated at one stage or another I remember Philip Spratt, Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi, G.D. Parikh, G.R. Dalvi, Sudhin Datta and Suhil Dey. Naturally I was very much involved in these deliberations, and after the 22 Theses were adopted by the Radical Democratic Party at its conference at Bombay in December 1946, and *New Humanism: A Manifesto,* drafted by Roy had been adopted and published in August 1947, Ellen Roy and I were asked to write "a systematic exposition" of the theses in the form of a full length text book. *In Man's Own Image* was published in August 1948, but before that book Tarkunde and I had made dour separate contributions to the quarterly *The Marxian Way*, on the new philosophy, Tarkunde under the title "Beyond Marx' (Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 38-56), and I under the title "Philosophy of Radicalism" (Vol., No. 2, pp. 127-148).

From 1946 to 1948 I worked quite closely with Tarkunde, for during, those years I was in charge of the Bengal branch of the RDP while Tarkunde was its All-India Secretary. Partly the difference in age, but even more the difference in personality and predilection prevented dour developing a relation of bonhomie which from the beginning I had struck with G.D. Parikh. However, I deeply appreciated Tarkunde's integrity and commitment, his sharp intellect and capacity for hard work, and since he was an experienced organizer, he too, I presume, did make his own assessment of my strong and weak points. In any case I don't remember any serious hitch in our collaboration during those two years.

In May 1948 took place the Summer School of Higher Studies of the Indian Renaissance Institute where, besides clearing up several theoretical issues, agreement was reached that political parties were incompatible with radical democracy and that for a movement committed to a cultural revolution, a political party w3as an altogether unsuitable instrument. In December 1948 the Calcutta Conference of the Radical Democratic Party decided to dissolve the Party organisation and transform itself into the Radical Humanist Movement. Not many among Roy's old followers were happy with the decision; the dissolution of the Party made them feel homeless; many feared that without the Party, the movement would disintegrate. They had a point, but I argued strongly in favour of the dissolution, and if my memory serves me rightly, Tarkunde preferred to keep his mind open on this issue, at least at this stage. The decision, apart from the logic which led to it, released Roy from pressing organizational obligations, and to concentrate on the elaboration of his new philosophy which resulted in his magnum opus, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*. It also allowed him to write his fascinating *Memoirs* which unfortunately he had to leave incomplete, due first to the accident in June 1952 and then death in January 1954. Tarkunde who had left his legal practice to be a whole time organizer of the Radical Democratic Party was also now free to return to his legal practice in the Bombay High Court, where his honesty and acumen soon won him many clients and admirers. In 1957 he was made a Judge of the Bombay High Court and occupied that position till he retired in 1969. As Nani Palkhivala wrote in a personal tribute, Tarkunde "made an ideal Judge – courteous impartial, wise and quick on the uptake,

combining great legal acumen with judicial detachment."

Meanwhile *Independent India* which had changed its name to *The Radical Humanist* in April 1949 was caught in a crisis. Debts had accumulated, and the comrades at Bombay no longer found themselves in a position to carry the mounting burden I who had hoped also to be set free after the dissolution of the Party to devote myself to my literary and academic pursuits, had already been saddled with the management of *The Marxian Way* (changed to *The Humanist Way* in August 1949) and the Renaissance Publishers. Roy also fully involved me in planning and conducting the IRI summer camp at Mussoorie (May-June 1949) where the philosophical implications of Radical Humanism were considered in great detail. And now Roy appealed to me to attend to the survival of *The Radical Humanist,* and it was an appealed that could not be denied. In May 1951, I brought over that weekly from Bombay to Calcutta, and for the next twelve years it never failed to come out punctually every Saturday afternoon. I had Tarkunde's fullest cooperation and advice at the time of this transfer; but what I remember with particular gratitude is Mrs. Tarkunde's coming over to Calcutta, and helping us during the first month of our venture with her managerial expertise.

During the fifties while I looked after the journal and other publications, it was Tarkunde, more than anyone else., who took full care of the material requirements of the Roys at Dehradun. I knew personally from Ellen how much they depended on Tarkunde's loyalty and support. Tarkunde, of course, never wanted this to be known, but a significant segment of his lawyer's income went into the maintenance of 13 Mohini Road. He surely passed the test of fealty and authenticity with the highest credit.

When after Ellen's tragic death I became the Secretary of the Indian Renaissance Institute, I saw as one of my first tasks the preservation of the nine volumes of the Jail Manuscripts left behind by Roy. I wanted those nearly three thousand foolscap size pages of closely handwritten notes to be mirror-copied and this was a formidable undertaking, requiring high intelligence and acumen, familiarity with Roy's thinking and handwriting, absolute scrupulousness and hard work. Parikh and I went through the manuscripts preparing pages by page synopsis (which I still have in my possession), but for the physical "mirror-copy" of that vast tome; we had neither time nor competence. At this point Tarkunde came to my rescue; he lent me the full-time free service of his very efficient personal secretary-typist, Mr. Pai, himself a radical humanist, and Pai made an excellent job of it under my supervision in 1961-62. Five 'mirror copies' of the jail volumes were made (those were days before photo copy and microfilm), and they were left with Prof. A.B. Shah while the original manuscripts were placed in Parikh's safe-keeping when I went abroad in March 1963.

From 1962 to 1968 I was a member of the Executive and the Board of Directors of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. It was then situated in Utrecht, Holland. At one of its meetings the Dutch group proposed to provide an equivalent of one hundred thousand rupees in Dutch guilders as seed money for a developmental experiment in rural India on humanist lines. I immediately consulted Tarkunde, and we readily agreed that our best choice would be Sheopujan Singh of Sahabad who was the most active and respected radical humanist in Bihar. The amount was duly sent to Sheopujan Singh, but I gathered later that the experiment did not prove to be a striking success.

From 1963 to 1981 I was much of the time abroad heading a newly started department of Indian studies at the University of Melbourne. However, the terms of my appointment allowed me to visit India once every two years for a couple of months. I was thus able to keep in touch with many of the active radicals in Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. I met Tarkunde after he moved to Delhi and started practice as a senior advocate in the Supreme Court. At his instance the *Radical Humanist* weekly which had fallen into bad shape at Calcutta was brought over to Delhi to be published henceforth as a monthly. He took the initiative and formed the Radical Humanist Association of which he was chairman from 1969 to 1980. He also revived the Indian Renaissance Institute, of which he became chairman of the Board of Trustees.

But Tarkunde's finest hour came during the dark years of the Emergency. As a true radical

humanist he knew that Fundamental Rights, though enshrined in the Constitution, could be saved from authoritarian attacks only by conscious citizens who truly understood and prized these Rights, and were organised to defend them against such attacks. Sensing the drift towards authoritarianism in the country he founded with Jayaprakash Narayan an organisation in April 1974 named "Citizens for Democracy". Its objectives were to eradicate corruption from public life and to educate the common people in democratic values and processes. I was in India during the Emergency and I was present at some of Tarkunde's public lectures. With J.P. in jail, Tarkunde virtually at that critical moment became the voice of an outraged nation fighting to defend its democratic Constitution against authoritarian onslaughts. Through his public speeches and his writings in *The Radical Humanist* and other journals he, probably more than any other single individual, contributed to the stirring of public conscience which eventually led to Indira Gandhi's defeat in the elections, in my campaign abroad against the Emergency I drew much inspiration from Tarkunde's courageous stand inside India. Besides his writings and speeches, Tarkunde also appeared in a very large number of cases to defend the civil liberties of the people – particularly in cases related to punitive detention under the MISA, jail conditions of the detenues and freedom of the periodicals and the daily press. The People's Union for Civil Liberties founded by J.P. and Tarkunde in 1976 served for some time as a beacon light of freedom in an India temporarily submerged in darkness.

After my return to India in 1981 I was almost immediately summoned to be the Director of Rabindra Bhavan where I spent the next two years, and a half building up the archives and museum devoted to Rabindranath Tagore which formed part of the Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan. Thereafter I decided to give top priority to repaying at least partially my very deep intellectual debt to M.N. Roy. During my years abroad I had been collecting various sources material relating to Roy from archives and libraries in different parts of the World. I now drew up a detailed project of editing, translating (where required) and publishing the major works of M.N. Roy in six volumes, with all the necessary scholarly paraphernalia. I approached Tarkunde who immediately fell in for the idea; Brahm Dutt arranged a grant from the government of Uttar Pradesh to meet the cost of publication; R.M. Pal negotiated publication arrangements with Oxford University Press on behalf of the IRI. It took me over twelve years to edit the first four volumes (19851997) and get them published by OUP. Tarkunde, as chairman of the IRI, very considerately proposed that I should accept some honorarium for my whole-time arduous work. I thankfully rejected the proposal; in fact, at my instance it was decided that all royalties from the volumes should go to the IRI. However, I was provided with a typist-assistant from the grant that had been made for this purpose. Since, then, for the last seven years I have been working on a biography of M.N. Roy, the first two volumes of which have been already published. I am now working on the third and final volume, and I feel sad that I would not have the privilege of presenting to Tarkunde the full set (assuming that I would live long enough to complete the project).

A few months ago when I met Tarkunde for the last time at Dr. Gauri Bazaz-Malik's house in Delhi we talked about the future of 13 Mohini Road. I was and still am strongly opposed to the idea of selling that place once its ownership is physically restored to IRI. I pleaded that 13 Mohini Road was a place of historic significance, and that both the union and the Uttaranchal Governments should be approached to declare it as "a place of national importance". I thought it could be made into a Museum devoted to M.N. Roy, Ellen Roy and their Age. Tarkunde was also opposed to the idea of selling the place, but he preferred to establish there a humanist school. I saw no contradiction between his proposal and mine; they could very well be combined. I was hoping to take the matter up with him on my next visit to Delhi this year. But, maybe there would be no next visit. I am 83, and in a while my turn will come to return to the elements. Meantime I grieve with others the loss of one of the last fall poppies of the Indian renaissance.

Published in **The Radical Humanist,** May 2004.

Part II
A Brief History of Humanism
M.K. Haldar
A Brief History of Humanism

The word 'Humanism' is derived from the Latin word humanus, meaning 'human', 'relating to human beings'. In general the word 'Humanism' stands for any system of thought or action which assigns predominant position to the affairs of men as compared to super/supra natural or the abstract. The term is specifically applied to the movements of thought in the West which were neglected, if not totally forgotten in Latin and medieval theological tradition culminating in scholastic theology and philosophy. Humanism in the West is essentially a movement of thought, an intellectual challenge and a protest against the stifling intellectual atmosphere generated by decayed Roman imperialism, male chauvinistic Christian theology where women were taken as agents of perdition1 and the individual human being lost all chances of salvation if he protested against ecclesiastical and eschatological authority. Because of their concern for the individual human being, his freedom and rationality, the humanist movement became the progenitor of the phenomenal development of modern science, technology, philosophy and all other intellectual adventure of man. It also had its impact on modern developments of theology and religion which are now increasingly inclined to obliterate the old, orthodox notions of the separate existence and overlord-ship of

Divinity.

---

1. It is to be noted that the position of women in the theology of all the major religions of the world, with the possible and debatable exception of Islam, has always been lower than that of men. Theologies have considered celibacy as a sine qua non for attaining religious ecstasy and salvation. The cult of celibacy has been prized by the religious seers and theologians. Even Ramakrishna Paramhansa, one of the latest religious seers, described women as nothing short of gate-way to hell, as it were. All religions bear the obnoxious stamp of male chauvinism. Unable to find any rational justification for its asseverations, religion takes its flight in mythopoeic imagination and faith. The age-old controversy between reason and faith is raised where 'faith' becomes the final arbiter and reason is dumped in the back room.

The humanists refused to accept religion as a sop for inhumanities of feudalism which was supported by religious orthodoxy. They turned towards ancient Latin and Greek classics where paedia (excellence) was accepted as the highest achievement of man though the Latin diluted the Greek idea of paedia. The pre-Christian classics were more concerned with human being than with God as a spiritual entity. Though the Greco-Roman Gods were beyond the reach of death, yet they could not alter the dark counsels of fate. They themselves were of the same order of being as men. The pagan conception of God was basically anthropomorphic. Movement of thought in the pre-Christian world was from the world of God. The Latinos covertly accepted the attitude but failed to buttress the same with reason and scientific development. The inordinate lust for power led the Romans to pax Romana and the decline of the Romans started. Soon Christian monotheism with its underlying humane appeal came. The Roman emperors found the sobriquet of Christianity a handy pis aller to provide a balming effect on the suffering people. Despite minor protests for the betterment of life, the situation continued for over a thousand years. The Empire, the Church and the feudal order of society were accepted not only as the last words in the cosmic order but also as divine

dispensations which could not be modified in the slightest degree. Very little progress was made in the fields of science and technology. The humanities could not flourish under the stranglehold of theology.

By the beginning of the 2nd millennium A.D. signs of an intellectual break-through in stifling atmosphere became pronounced. In Italy, a band of scholars delved deeper into their Egyptian, Oriental, Latin, and later Greek, past, possibly inspired by Arab scholarship, and science opened new vistas for the adventure of ideas. Their movement gave rise to secular literature in different European languages. The band of people who were concerned with classical scholarship during the waning of the Middle Ages and later received the sobriquet of umanista, following the Ciceronian (Mercus Tullius Cicero, 106-43 B.C.E. wrote about studia humanitatis et literarum) tradition, they called the study of classics umanita – the humanities or literae humanioris.

The reason for calling classical studies literae humanioris was that the pre-Christian classics were more concerned with human beings than with God as an extra-mundane entity, both benign and rhadamanthine. Man was the centre of Greco-Roman world. The humanists found their kindred souls in the Greco-Roman culture of the past. It should, however, not be overlooked that Greco-Roman culture, especially ancient Greeks owed a lot to other civilisations of the ancient times, particularly the Egyptian.

Be that as it may, the humanists found their kindred souls in the classical culture. Both as a corollary to and as an extension of the use of the term 'Humanism', it was meant to cover the theories and outlooks which took man's own experience, his own station and duties as the starting point of his quest for knowledge of his own self, nature and of his aesthetic and moral adventures.

The German educationist Niethammer used the term Humanism in 1808 (the English took the word from German) to describe the study of Greek, Latin, Hebrew and other classical languages and literature. Such studies he called Literae humaniores (Human letters), the revival of which is one of the hallmarks of European Renaissance with Italy as its main germinating ground. Meanwhile intellectuals of other European countries were also struggling to find an opening in the stifling atmosphere caused by the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, and by the Christian orthodox theology with feudalism as its ally. The movement later came to be known as the movement for "new Learning".

The reason for calling the classical studies Literae Humanioris, Human letters, is the pre-Christian classics which were more concerned with human beings than God as spiritual entity. Their conception of God or Gods was primarily anthropomorphic. The Sophists adumbrated the predominant attitude of the pre-Christian classical times in the aphorism: Homo Mensura. Man cultivates knowledge for his own self-development which is not possible without his encounter with the external world which was not envisaged as a reflection of or as emanating from his own self. The Upanishads seers of India, the Taoists of China, the Sufi mystics and many others made perplexing human situation as the starting point of their quest. This is why many have taken them as exponents of humanism. But they either posited a transcendent or a transcendental being or ended by saying that one cannot speak about the real – the real is not accessible to human reason, only beatific vision can put the human being to touch with reality. Other, however, ended in the nihilism of subjectivism or said that we should pack up our logic and send it to wilderness. In short, all of them landed themselves in some type of anti-rationalism, anti-reason. They lost sight of their starting point – the individual human being and gave rise to closed systems of philosophy, metaphysics, theology and religion. The history of intellectual development is a record of man's revolt against, and his reluctance to accept, closed systems.

Of late Humanism has been under attack from two sides: the Fundamentalists and the Reductionists. The word 'Fundamentalism' is derived from the word 'Fundamental'. It was in 1909 that a series of tracts called 'The Fundamentals' was published in the USA. These tracts defended the literal acceptance of the words of the Bible. Today the word is used for all those who advocate a literal

acceptance of an authority. One need not accept Derrida's contention that no text can be established and end up in Heideggerian numbo jumbo to counter the fundamentalists who endeavour to put human beings into a straightjacket. The fundamentalists think that whatever could be thought of and can be thought of in the future has already been thought of by the authority by whom they vouch – that authority may be a religious book, the words of a spiritual seer or even a 'materialist' tract.

As against the fundamentalists, the reductionists claim that statements on one kind of entity can be completely translated into statements on another kind of entity. The reductionists, however, in a circumlocutory way land in some type of fundamentalism. Thus, according to some reductionists, statement on history can be completely translated into statements on economics, class struggle, etc. or expressions of moments in the process of 'self-realisation' of an absolute. The fundamentalists and the reductionists, both religious and overtly secular, have sometimes tried to establish their ideas through gentle persuasion; but their pursuivants have often indulged in the exercise of brute force to bring others in line with them. History abounds in copious instances of religious warfares, inquisitions, ostracisation and such other cruelties though many prophets were men of compassion. Twentieth century experienced the onslaught of at least two barbaric types of fundamentalism – Fascism and Communism, not to speak of the minor onslaughts of some pig-headed fundamentalists of contemporary world. Of late fundamentalist nationalism is having its round of desperate activists. Fundamentalists' forte are the irrational and non-rational.

The humanists recognise the presence of the non-rational and even of the irrational. Man's non-rational and emotional reactions are registered in bewilderments, poetry, art, creative literature, metaphysical and mystical flights of imagination, religion, mythologies, etc. But in order to make communication possible, all these are to be subjected to rational discernment. The only way that human beings can communicate with each other is through ceaseless discussions, And discussion becomes a far cry, if it is not conducted through reason. Even those who decried the efficacy of reason have laboured hard to give a reasonable account of their insights into the mysteries of being. In contradistinction to this, a humanist does not prescribe that we should pack up our logic and send the same to wilderness. The main trouble with the anti-rationalists is that they do not provide us any method pursuing which we can ascertain their validity. Humanists provide us with a rational method to facilitate our understanding and communication. Humanistic outlook provides a tentative, open-ended rational explanation of the universe and of human life, replacing the anti-rational accounts given by myths, religions and closed systems of philosophy. Humanism believes in an open system which is always subject to expansion and revision. It does not deny the potency of the non-rational or even of the irrational; its only appeal is to reason. While non-rational methods of exploration (as a matter of fact, they are not methods at all) do not contain any built-in ways of correction within themselves, rational methods insist that man should always be ready to accept correction. The quintessence of rational method is the scientific method. Man's quest for finality, immortality and completed, closed wholes are to be subjected to rational and scientific method in order to understand and communicate his non-rational quests. Humanism refuses to accept anything as true which is hot corroborated by reason. Man's freedom consists in his exercise of his own reason. Once human rationality is taken away from him, he surrenders his freedom. The foundation of human freedom lies in his rationality. Take away reason from man, and you can transform him into an automation. Man's freedom is not a chain of reflexes. It rests on his capacity to choose between alternatives. Human choice is guided by reason. Hence rationality is the foundation of his freedom. Freedom is not instinctive compassion for others though compassion for others is laudable. Humanists attach supreme value to compassion based on reason. Humanism is dimension of thought and outlook on life and the environment within which are found many different views, held together not by a unified structure but by certain shared, rationally discerned, assessed and accepted ways of looking at things. To indicate a rough and tentative pattern of humanistic thought and outlook, the following

propositions may be suggested: The human being has a potential value in himself. This value is not derived from a God or a super natural being or any other being. This value consists in his ceaseless quest for freedom which is endemic to his rational nature.

(i) The human being has a potential value in himself. This value is not derived from a God or a super natural being or any other being. This value consists in his ceaseless quest for freedom which is endemic to his rational nature.

(ii) As a consequent to this, humanism rejects all systems which, like the Nihilist despair of man, deny all meaning to him or treat him as Calvin treated him – a depraved, worthless creature, a worm in the deep recesses of Purgatory to be saved only by Calvin's grace.

(iii) Humanism does not regard man as an expendable raw material for use or exploitation by political, economic and religious systems.

(iv) Humanism is also against all movements, (essentially anti-rational), which in the name of demystification of thought discover a sense of collapsed significance, as it were, only to land human thought into a deeper slumber and mystification. Such demystification of older philosophies and theories of the prophets of doom talk about collapsed significance and see the end of time. If time comes to an end, it will come not because of the efforts of the demystifiers; it will come in spite of them. No one will live through the end of time.

In a broad and general sense, any one whose attitude is marked by compassion, kindness, sympathy or consideration for others may be called a humanist. In this sense all religious seers, mystics and philosophers whose initial motivation was provided by their compassion for man, by the predicament of human existence may be called votaries of humanism. But because such compassion, such concern for others or for themselves was not grounded in rationality, it soon slides into orthodoxy providing prison houses for men, as it were. The compassionate words of the religious prophets were taken as the last word of knowledge and wisdom. A tragic and cruel mockery of human compassion ensued.

Modern humanism developed through many trials and tribulations. The history of these trials and tribulations is well documented in what we may call the Western complex. But that does not mean that humanistic thought was absent in other complexes. One can here mention the humanistic thoughts of the ancients Indians.

Doubtless lofty expression on the glory of the human being can be found in the Upanishadic sayings. But they remained as perorations which were repeated by others and were divested of all significance. At their best, attempts were made for lexicographical, grammatical and etymological analyses while neglecting an historical analysis. Such exegeses are of great vale but they do not give us any rational analysis and understanding. The loadstone of the major tenets of thought in India is their mulish adherence to the exegeses and lexicographical, etymological and grammatical hair-splitting. Because of the stunted growth of scientific development and knowledge in the non-Western countries, humanism could not develop into a full-blown and throbbing outlook on life, though initially many of the non-Western countries had a promising beginning. As a matter of fact, the West owes much for its cultural and scientific development to the non-Western countries. Non-Western influences worked as catalytic agent for development of science, culture and knowledge in the Western countries. Moreover, the paucity of humanistic literature in non-Western countries like India, China, Japan, Egypt, the Arab would etc. pose an insurmountable obstacle in the narration of a connected account of development of humanism in them. It is because of this we shall confine our attention on the history and development of humanism in the West only, mainly what is known today as the Greco-Latin world.

(To be concluded...)

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, February, 1993.

A Brief History of Humanism
Ancient India - I

It is generally maintained that the Hindus do not have a religious text which is regarded as the last touchstone as Christianity and Islam and other religions have, we forget that these are monotheistic religions. After the rise of Shankaracharya, Hindus tried to clear out of the theological tangle of monotheism-polytheism by propounding a theological theory which is generally known as Vedantic pantheism. Shankaracharya is the classical propounder of Vedantic pantheism. After his rise in the 8th-9th century A.D., his unprecedented missionary activities, the Hindus generally accepted the *Vedas* and their offshoots the *Upanishads* as the touchstone in their disputations on religion. Exceptions to this can, however, be found in Jainism, Buddhism and in the religious practices of cults like the Tantric and some esoteric cults with strong tribal backgrounds. Though there are many cults and sects within the Hindu fold, who do not accept Sankar's words as the last words of wisdom, yet the Indian scholars with strong support from the Western orientalists maintain that, essentially, Shankar's theology is the foundation of all Hindu theology.

Through centuries of efforts the Sanskrit Pundits of India, with the help of the power that be, succeeded in practically driving out Buddhism from the land of its birth. Buddhism was eclipsed because of its internal atrophy and the onslaught of rejuvenated Hinduism. Even the script in which Asoka wrote his inscriptions was forgotten. Buddhist temples and stupas and universities were either destroyed or allowed to disintegrate because they were considered as citadels of some heretical cults. Many Buddhist places of worship were mostly engulfed by the tropical forests and were completely forgotten. Even Pali and Prakrit - the languages of the people in general in which Buddha and his followers preached – were forgotten. But Pali and Prakrit left their indelible mark on different Indian languages. Jainism survived as it was the religion of a limited number of people, and also as they accepted the caste system.

From Buddha's times classical Sanskrit was slowly growing as distinct from Vedic Sanskrit. Panini wrote his *Sabdanusasan* not later than the fourth century B.C. (cf. George Cardona – *Panini*.Vol. I, 1988, p.2). Panini distinguished between spoken language and language of sacred literature; and mentioned a number of his predecessors; but the historicity of non of them can be established. Much later Patanjali (c. 2nd. Century B.C. – c; 1st century A.D.) in his *Mahabhasya* used the term *Astadhyayi* to depict Panini's text; and this is the name by which Panini's epoch-making work is generally known. Panini gave stern grammatical structure to Classical Sanskrit. He also gave strict phonological codes of pronunciation of Sanskrit and thus saved the oral tradition from outlandish distortions. In India the oral tradition continued to exercise its sovereign authority so much so that writing the sacred texts tantamount to sin. The Vedas and Upanishads were transmitted through oral tradition.

The oldest records of the Vedic Indians are to be round in the Vedas of which some portions of the Rig Vedas are the earliest. From internal evidence it can be surmised that the Vedic people did not enter the Indian subcontinent when their early Vedas were composed. Most probably these people came to the Indian subcontinent not earlier than 1500 B.C. – a time coterminous with the eclipse of the Harappan civilisation. The description of nature given in the early Rig Vedas do not allude to any part of India. The Rig Vedas contain 1017 (by another reckoning 1028) hymns. Most of the hymns are invocations addressed to the gods. These gods, however, are conceived as the powers of nature personified. Thus we find *Agni* (Fire), *Indra* (Thunder), *Varuna* (Heaven or Sky), *Surya* (Sun), *Ushas* (Dawn), etc. The same god appears to have several names; and each in his turn, is declared to be the most powerful one. It seems that the Rig Vedic people were essentially fire worshippers – evincing a close connection with the ancient Iranians. In the Boghazkeui

inscriptions of the Hittites in Northern Central Turkey we find the mention of many Rig Vedic names. These inscriptions are of c. 1400-c. 1200 B.C. From this it will not be too rash to surmise that the early Rig Vedic Indians had at least close relations with the Hittites round the end of the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C.

Usually the hymns of the Vedas beg for material favours from the gods and try to win their goodwill by means of prayers and sacrifices in their praise. The Rig Vedas do not indicate that idols were used as aids to worship. The trait to invoke gods' help for material benefit continues to haunt the Hindus even to-day. Most of the *mantras* uttered in praise of gods contain *Dhanang Dehi* (Give me wealth), *Balang Dehi* (Give me power), and *Dejo* (give). Nowhere the devotee says *Mokshang* (Salvation) *Dehi*. The Rig Vedic gods, like all anthromorphic gods, were not distant from and totally unconnected with men.

Commentators on the Vedas have different views on the exact meaning of Vedic mythology. Some maintain that the gods addressed severally are really names of the self-same god; some read polytheism in the Vedas, while still others read internecine feuds between different sections of the Rig Vedic people as well as their feuds with other groups of Aryans and non-Aryans.

The earliest specimen of Rig Vedic philosophical speculations which might have had prepared the way of the Upanishadic speculations can be found in the celebrated Creation Hymn (*Purushasukta*) of the latest, i.e., the 10th Book of the Rig Vedas. It is here we find:

Nor August nor nought existed; you right sky
Was not, nor heaven's broad woof outstretched above.

The Gods themselves came later into being –
Who knows from whence this great creation sprang.

He from whom all this great creation came,
Whether his will created was mute,
The Most High Seer that is in the highest heaven,

He knows it – or perhaps even he knows not.
(Max Muller: *Chips from a German Workshop*, vil. I p, 78.)

As against the mythologizing penchant of the Indian Scholars, reinforced by many Western orientalists, D.D. Kosambi in his book: *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1956) has made some incisive and perspective suggestions. One need not wholly accept Kosambi's version of Marxism, but the suggestions given by him should provoke further research on Indology. Kosambi has shown how the Rig Vedic people depicted their internecine feuds among the different groups of their own people and also had to reckon with people belonging to people outside the pale of their civilisational complex, specially inhabiting the areas beyond the North-Western regions of the Indian subcontinent. The challenge that should be taken up by the rationalists in India, in particular, is to demythologize the Vedas and epics in particular. Mythopoeia is, as it were, a countrywide pastime in India. Every village, town and city in India has at least one living seer who can cure incurable diseases, can produce material objects out of nothing and supposed to be in direct communion with the Almighty. The latest instance of mythopoeia is that of finding out the specific spot where Ram, the hero of *Ramayana*, was born in some unknown past.

Some clear and definite articulation of metaphysical speculations supposedly derived from the Vedas can be found in the Upanishads which, according to some, are 108 in number, while

Nirnayasagar of Bombay published 112 Upanishads. There are others who claim that the number of Upanishads is much larger than 112. Out of the many Upanishads, Dara Shikoh, Emperor Shahjahan's eldest son, translated 50 into Persian with the help of some Sanskrit Pundits. Dara himself was well-versed in Sanskrit. These translations were done in 1656-57. Before this, the Upanishads were not available in language except Sanskrit. It is also said that under orders from Akbar, Faizi wrote an Upanishad, called the *Alloupanishad*. Akbar was the great-grandfather of Dara.

Dara Shikoh's Persian translation was translated into Latin in 1801-02 by Anquetil Duperron. The German scholars and philosophers were the first in the Western countries to take note of the Upanishads through this Latin translation. German philosophers with their strong liking for metaphysics were enamoured of the Upanishads; and Schopenhauer (1788-1860) became ecstatic about them.

Between 1816 and 1817 Rammohan Roy published Bengali 'translation' of five shorter Upanishads – (i) *Kena* (ii) *Isa*, (iii) *Katha*, (iv) *Mundaka*, (v) *Mandukya.* These translations were the first of its kind in any Indian language. In 1832 an English translation done by Rammohan was published from London., it was through the translations that those English-speaking people who did not know either Sanskrit or Persian or Latin came to know about the Upanishads though earlier a number of English men of letters took not of the existence of the Upanishads.

The absence of chronological and historical orientation in Vedic literature makes it difficult to fix any definite date for the Upanishads, not to speak of the Vedas. Moreover, the composers of the Upanishads hardly evinced any recognition of the inhabitants of India even of the time when the Vedic people settled down in the Indo-Gangetic planes. In addition to this difficulty, there are very scanty references to any group of people living outside the pale of Vedic people. It seems that history and relation with out-group people hardly provoked the interests of the Indians. It is to be noted that even today the majority community's interests are more or less confined to their own fold. Major Hindu men of letters, after Islam had its strong foothold in India, indicate scarce close acquaintance with Islam.

The Upanishads, most probably, were composed not much before the rise of Buddhism. Continuance of *Karma* through different births as found in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (3.2.13) IS A TYPICALLY Buddhist idea. To give another instance: The Maitri Upanishad (24) mentions *Alatchakra* (Wheel of Fire) – a characteristically Buddhist imagery. The Upanishads contain half-poetical, half-philosophical fancies, dialogues and disputations dealing in a half-worked-out manner metaphysical questions juxtaposed with spells and obiter dicta on many sundry things. Thus in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we find lofty sayings like:

From the unreal (*asat*) lead me to the real (*sat*)
From darkness lead me to light!).
From death lead me to immortality. (1.3)

In addition to such lofty sayings there are also statements alluding to the age-old Hindu obsessions with semen. Formulae are given for the recovery of lost semen. The neurotic or paraneurotic preoccupation with sex and procreation can be found in the Upanishads, Manu Samhita, even in Kalidas, the greatest Sanskrit poet, in most of the Hindu sculptures crafted by superb craftsmen, and many other things. But there are two parallel conglomerates – one advocating abstinence from sex and family life, and the other that sex can lead to man's salvation. The two parallel conglomerates lose their identity in a mystical fusion where both become meaningless. Salvation (*Mukti*) is beyond the comprehension of human beings. There are divergent ways of attaining *Mukti*; but all the routes lead to the same goal. One carries his good and sinful deeds with him through different births till he attains *Mukti*. The Upanishadic and Hindu concept of

salvation is individualistic. To read humanism in such a conundrum needs a lot of interpretations and reinterpretations.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and many other Hindu religious texts contain *mantras* which a man should *utter* during intercourse to get a son; if he does not want any offspring, there is also an appropriate *mantra.* There is even sanction for rape. Thus we read in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (6.7):

> If she should not grant him his desire, he should bribe her. If she still does not grant him his desire, he should hit her with a stick or with his hand, overcome her, saying: "With glory I take away your glory!" Thus she becomes inglorious.
>
> (The English renderings from the Upanishads are taken from *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*: translated from Sanskrit by Ernest Hume, Oxford University Press, 1958).

Later scholars, including Radhakrishnan, have either completely ignored such passages or regarded them as interpolations without ever facing the problem by whom and when they were interpolated. Others have taken such passages as secret land esoteric messages not to be subjected to any scrutiny. The Upanishads seem to be encrusted with successive layers of texts added by different people belonging to different cults. In parts the language of the Upanishads is enlivened by wonderful energy testifying to the elevated mood in which the Upanishadic thinkers laboured to express the great mystery of existence. The Upanishads neither collectively nor severally offer a consistent conception of the world logically developed. As a matter of fact, their speculations and bewilderments were brought to a system only by the post-Buddhist Hindu revivalists. R.G. Bhandarkar, in his *Vaishnavism, Saivism, and Minor Religious Systems* truly remarked:

> It is generally believed that the Upanishads teach a system of Pantheism; but a closer examination will show that they teach not one, but various systems of doctrines as regards the nature of God, man and the world, and the relations between them. The religio-philosophic systems of modern times, which are mutually inconsistent, quote texts from Upanishads as an authority for their special doctrines.

Interpreters have tried to arrive at the true meanings of the Upanishadic saying through etymological, syllabic, phonological and morphological analysis. Take, for example, the syllabic division of the word *Satyam* (True, Real). The word is tri-syllabic: *Sa-Ti-Yam – Sa* is one syllable, *Ti* is one syllable, *Yam* is one syllable. "The first and last syllables are truth. In the middle is falsehood (*anritam*)." The genius of the commentator explains how *ti* is falsehood. It is falsehood as the sound *ti* is contained in the word *anritam*. Be that as it may, "Falsehood is embraced on both sides by truth; it partakes of the nature of truth itself." (cf. Ibid. Hume, 151.) In short, there is no distinction between falsehood and truth. The distinction is only ephemeral.

There is also the usual technique of using the same word to convey different meanings; and to slip from one meaning to the other to press one's own is an oft repeated technique of discussions. Take as an example of *Dharma*. According to S.N. Dasgupta (cf. *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I. P. 427 foot note.), "The use of the word *dharma* in the sense of appearance or entity is peculiarly Buddhistic." But Shankar used the word to mean both self and object of knowledge.

Most of the arguments in the Upanishads are analogical. We read in the Chhandogya Upanishad that when Svetaketu was not convinced by his father's claim that "Thou are That," his father, Uddalak Aruni said to his son:

'Bring hither a fig from there,'
'Here it is, Sir'
'What do you see there?'
'These rather (*iva*) fine seeds, Sir,'
'Of these, please (*anga*) divide one.
'It is divided, Sir.'
'What do you see there?'
'Nothing at all, Sir.'

... Then he said to him: 'Verily, my dear, that finest essence which you do not perceive – verily, my dear, from that finest essence this Nyagrodha (sacred fig) tree arises.

... Believe me, my dear, said he, 'that which is the finest essence – this whole world has that as its soul. That is the Reality. That is the *Atman* (Soul). That art thou, Svetaketu. (Ibid, pp. 247-48).

Self restraint (*damayata*), giving (*datta*) and compassion (*dayadhvam*) are also cursorily mentioned. But these asides had hardly any influence on the general outlook and way of life. Analogical arguments were accepted as a norm of argument. Above all the orthodoxy, the Brahmin Pundits, accepted *Sabda Praman* (Authority) as the final proof in any disputations. Acceptance of authority as the final method of proof, inordinate preoccupation with sex, the neurotic fear of losing semen, the cult of Brahmacharya, paranoid attachment to astrology, rituals, fortune-tellers, belief that to be spiritual means the mind having power over nature, etc. have stood as so many stumbling blocks against development of a rational outlook on life in India.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 1993.

A Brief History of Humanism
Ancient India - II

Buddhism with its strong rational content, because of its internal decay land also because of its loss of political power, was thrown out of the land of its birth. By the 11th/12th century A.D. Buddha was made an Avtar by the Hindus, Jainism, however, did not have to face the same fate. Jainism was a powerful religion though not widely accepted. It should not be forgotten that Ashoka's grandfather Chandragupta accepted Jainism as his religion towards the end of his life. The Hindus, most probably, borrowed their vegetarianism from the Jains. Even so, the agglutinating genius of the Hindus failed to agglutinate Jainism. Jainism continues to remain as a distinctive religion in India despite Hindu onslaught and persecution in earlier times. Hindu depredations did not allow Buddhism and such other religions to develop in India. They had to content themselves either by remaining a small religious sect or by surrendering themselves to the general Hindu ethos. But the agglutinating genius of the Hindus failed to agglutinate Islam notwithstanding the efforts of a number of medieval mystics. Though Islam in India was affected by Hinduism, it, nevertheless, remains a distinctive religion. Strict monotheism could not be obliterated in the unknown, unknowable and inexpressible Real. Despite the claim of the Islamic fundamentalists that the Koran is the last word of wisdom land is *ipso facto* un-challengeable, the rational content in Islam cannot be wished away.

It is worth recalling that the medieval mystics of India are mostly the direct outcome of the impact of Islam. Many of the medieval mystics came from the lower caste of Hindus. It is also worth recalling that many of their followers came from the lower caste of Hindus. They found recognition of their manhood in the humanistic message of the medieval mystics. The same is, to a great extent, true about the majority of the converts to Islam in India and later to Christianity. Many lower caste Hindus who provided the majority of the craftsmen of India found the Hindu caste restrictions suffocating. The final assault on Buddhism was launched by Sankaracharya. After him Hindu society withdrew itself into its own cocoon engulfed by stricter caste restrictions and asserting the supremacy of the Brahmins. The process of withdrawal from religion bereft of humanistic content started earlier, probably from the Gupta period; but it reached its finality after the rise of Sankara.

Sankara was a man from Kerala and was, most probably, born in the last quarter of the 9th century A.D. He must have had a long life. He could not have written so many books and travelled throughout India, establish ten orders of Sanyasis – (i) Teertha, (ii) Asram, (iii) Ban, (iv) Aranya, (v) Giri, (vi) Parbat, (vii) Sagar, (viii) Saraswati, (ix) Bharati, and (x) Puri – and establish four Maths (monasteries) – (i) Sringeri Math, on the banks of the river Tungabhadra in South India, (ii) Gobardhan Math in Puri, (iii) Sarada Math in Dwaraka, (iv) Jyotir Math in Badrinath in a short life span as is claimed by the Sankara devotees. Though Sankara wrote mainly commentaries on extant religious books of his liking, a careful perusal of these commentaries projects a picture of an original mind. The most famous commentary of Sankara is on the *Brahmasutra*. Most probably, Badrayan, the author of *Brahmasutra*, lived sometime between 2nd century B.C. and 1st century A.D. Sankara's celebrated commentary establishes the veracity of the *Brahmasutra* by referring again and again to the Upanishads and the Vedas. Sankara also wrote commentaries on ten Upanishads.

It appears that Sankara, the great metaphysician, was completely oblivious of science whatsoever and his knowledge of biological procreation never could go beyond the obsessions of esoteric cults and beliefs of primitive societies, probably transmitted through many Tantric cults. Notwithstanding all this, if one wishes to get so-called Pantheism in a naively poetical expression and at the same time in its coarsest form, one will enjoy reading the most exalted passages in the Upanishads and Sankara. But these lofty utterances are not organically related to the other, rather the major, parts of the Upanishads and of Sankara's works. Possibly, finding this difficulty, Badrayan wrote his *Brahmasutra*

to bring into forms the metaphysical speculations of the Vedas and Upanishads. Sankara reads like a much more sophisticated, scholarly and determined apologist of the Vedic religion than Swami Dayanand (1824-83), founder of the Arya Samaj. Be that as it may, Sankaracharya marks the end of Buddhism in India. By that time Buddhism itself lost its initial zeal and was affected by indigenous cults and sects. That made the task of the Hindu revivalists easier.

Buddhist places of learning, worship, stupas, inscriptions, etc. were either destroyed or allowed to decay through crass apathetic negligence. Tropical forests were allowed to engulf some of them. Some of the Buddhist places of worship were converted into Hindu temples. Even the scripts in which Asoka wrote his inscriptions were forgotten. The typically Buddhist concepts of *Maya* and *Karma*, etc. were incorporated in the all-devouring concept of an indefinable Brahma. Buddhist compassion terminated in rituals. Through these achievements the Hindu idea of 'tolerance' had its full round, as it were. Even Hindu vegetarianism, so very common among the higher caste Hindus, seem to be a legacy or accommodation of later Buddhism and Jainism. The Rig Vedic people were beef eaters and they enjoyed their alcoholic drinks. Buddha himself was a non-vegetarian. He died because he was infected after eating pork in a disciple's house. By the time Asoka came to power, the attitude of the Buddhists changed. In the first Rock Edict of Asoka were read:

> Formerly, in the kitchen of His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King, each day many thousands of living creatures were slaughtered to make curries. But now, when this pious edict is being written, only three creatures are slaughtered daily for curry, to wit two peacocks and an antelope – the antelope, however, not invariably. Even though three living creatures henceforth shall not be slaughtered.

Though we find mention of Varnas in the Rig Vedas and no mention of castes, by the time we come to the Upanishads, we find that except the upper castes, especially the Brahmins, no one else is entitled to the knowledge of the Vedas. The idea was reinforced by Sankara and formed an integral part of the Hindu ethos. Henry Maine has truly said that the caste is "the most disastrous of human institutions", yet it forms one of the main pillars of Hinduism even of today. No apologetic of the caste system can be invested with any humanism. To become a humanist in the Hindu tradition is to call for being dubbed as an outcaste. This is one of the reasons why humanism is very difficult to find among the Hindu philosophers and thinkers. One can, however, discern humanism in the attitudes and work of many medieval mystic poets and religious seers; but medieval mysticism in India is a direct outcome of Islam's Influence. The Hindus have either declared their followers as out-castes or accommodated them in their fold reserving a special place for them or just ignored their existence. Out of the followers of different medieval mystics only the followers of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) later formed themselves into a distinctive religion. The teachings of the medieval Indian mystics are closely akin to those of Jala-ud-din Rumi, Hafiz and many others with a strong base in Islam.

In the 17th century Emperor Akbar tried to arrive at a new religion called Din-e-Illahi, wherein he tried a reconciliation between Islam, Christianity and the medieval mystics. But, like the Egyptian Pharao Alkhneton's new religion, it also failed to register any success.. With Akbar's death his Din-e-Illahi also went into oblivion.

In the 9th century Jayanta Bhatta in his Nayamanjari, possibly observing the ceaseless squabbles between the followers of different religions and religious cults, said that the words of Kapil, Buddha and other religious seers should be regarded as words of God. God, out of his compassion for the created living beings, appeared on this earth in the forms of Buddha, Kapil, etc. and gave to mankind precepts which they should follow accordingly to their Karma (deeds). There is no basic difference even between the believers and non-believers. Individual men follow different paths to their Karma. Karmabad (doctrine of Karma) appears to be one of the basic tenets of Hinduism. One cannot get out

of the legacy of his own work which he carries with himself through different births till he is liberated. Religions of India including Buddhism uphold Karmabad. The same is true of the Gita. But while Buddhism maintains that only through true knowledge one can snap the cycle of birth and rebirth, the Gita enjoins men to surrender themselves to the diktat of the almighty. The Gita summarizes all previous doctrines, twists them all together to one common end: Surrender everything to Krishna as the supreme God. As Krishna was an athlete, husband of many goddesses, had a good time with not less than 60,000 *gopies* (milkmaids), a shepherd boy at the same time, people who originally, followed different cults could, and did, worship him. (For a clear and unorthodox view of Gita see *The Truth About the Gita* by V.R. Narla. It was also serialised in this journal from January 1990 to October 1992).

Side by side with the Krishna cult there was another major cult – the Siva cult. The Siva worshippers demanded the practice of orgiastic rites prevalent in many primitive cults, but not certainly Vedic, nor Brahmanic. After the eclipse of Buddhism in India, the worshippers of the two gods came into violent conflicts which matured by the twelfth century. The practioners of the two cults paid the least attention to the rising Muslim powers who came to India with a distinct religion of their own.

The Jains accepted Hindu caste system and it is only in Jain manuscripts date by year and era are normally given. This was probably necessitated because many of the people belonging to the merchant class accepted Jainism and they were used to keeping annual records over a long time. Meanwhile, the Hindus had arrived at the concept of *apaddharma* which allowed even the higher castes to engage themselves in trade, money-lending, and such activities when in difficulties. Meanwhile Buddhism was undergoing transformations and they were recorded in the different councils. Out of the councils, the fourth council supposedly held during the Kusan king Kanishka's reign is the most important one. A split between two major schools of thought – the Mahayana (Great Vehicle) and the Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle) took their birth. Mahayana Buddhism drifted away from the common man and engaged itself in the refinement of its doctrine, researches into science and abstract philosophy. It also created a form of hybrid Sanskrit not precisely following the canons of Panini. The Hinayana retained a primitive and austere form of Buddhism using simpler Pali language. The Jains found Mahayana more accommodating than Hinayana which became popular in South India. The Jains who were prominent in South India gained ground in the north. Meanwhile Buddhist monasteries accumulated enormous wealth and monastic life turned into a life of luxury. The political map of India was changing. The great, militant, highly centralised, personally administered empires were declining and with it came the decline of Buddhism in India. But along with the decline of Buddhism the message that the individual must train himself to lead a good and clean life and cultivate knowledge also declined. With the decline of centralised empires, the Buddhist monasteries and seats of learning declined because of the lack of patronage.

The Hindu way of meeting the challenge of heterodoxy is, generally, different from that in which the Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions dealt with them. The monotheistic Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions indulged in inquisitions, witch-hunting, anathemas, etc. to deal with heterodoxy. The Hindus, by and large, took a different path to deal with such phenomena. The Hindus thought that a frontal attack on heterodoxy very often increases the determination of the heterodox; hence the most prudent way to deal with the heterodox is to wait and see whether he sees the light. Hindus, however, were not uniform in this behaviour. Some of them used the word to spread their religion. Hindu polytheism can easily find a place for other gods in its pantheon of gods. The miscellaneous Varna – Sudra – is there to take them in as another caste or mixture of other castes while keeping the other Varnas, especially the Brahmins, pure as far as possible. The Hindu should not find it difficult to accommodate even monotheism – the Vedantic pantheism and the pious exhortations of the Upanishadic seers and the medieval mystics are ther3e to support his view of life while he continued to live a life encrusted by superstitions, rituals, god-men and many, many other things. Follow the method of operational conditioning and leave the heretic as an out-caste; send him to the ghettoes,

as it were, where he should wallow in poverty and squalor, give him sufficient dose of Karmavad and he will be so much occupied in keeping his body and soul together that the spirit of revolt will be sapped out of his ethos. The process of Sanskritisation is there to condition even the out-castes to see their salvation in Parameshwar. There is the opium of Karmavad; they will not blame you for their miserable lot; they will put the burden of their present miseries on their previous births and will realise that the only way to get out of their present misery, nay the only way that they can hope for a better life in their next births, is to follow your *Dharma*. Despite all this there is a way out for them even in this life; they can become Sadhus – the Sadhus have no caste. It is significant to note that the number of Sanyasis not belonging to the higher caste is larger in number than those coming from the higher castes. If one does not belong to the highest caste one cannot get entry into the Dasnami Sampradaya – the ten orders of Sanyasis established by Sankara. Even Vivekananda was not allowed entry into the fold of orthodox Sanyasis.

Indian history is replete with caste warfares feuds between the different sects of Hindus, like the Saivites and Vaishnavites, feuds between the Hindus and Buddhists, etc. But the Hindu historians are either ignorant of such historical occurrences or try to depict them as very minor and insignificant matters and sing the glory of Hindu religious tolerance.

After being defeated in the battle-fields again and again by the invading powers from across the Himalayas, professing Islam, the Hindus followed their age-old tactics of dealing with the aliens – social and cultural boycott. Except the minor mystics of India, no Hindu of the orthodox fold showed any knowledge of Islam. The social distance between the Hindus and Muslims persisted. By the end of the 18th century another foreign power, this time professing Christianity, slowly established their sovereignty over India. This power was neither Islamic nor Hindu; hence they could be blamed for the communal divide in India between the Hindus and Muslims. It, however, cannot be denied that the new foreign powers took advantage of the existing communal divide between the Hindus and Muslims and that they might have had even aggravated the divide. But the divide was a social reality.

It is interesting to note that the Hindu learned men very seldom have taken note of the existence of the Muslims, their history, religion and culture. And this is true in spite of the several minor mystics coming from both the communities in India. We had to be told by the foreign scholars that even the great Upanishads of the Hindus were brought to the notice of the external world, thanks to Persian translations of some of them under the aegis of a Mughal Prince – Dara Sikoh. But a corresponding effort by a Hindu in regard to Islamic achievements is conspicuous by its absence. The first significant attempt in this regard was made by Raja Rammohan Roy (1774- 1833).

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, May 1993.

A Brief History of Humanism
Modern India – I

Rammohan Roy was born in a Brahmin family and was well-versed in Sanskrit, Bengali, Arabic, Persian, English and a few other languages. He wrote a few tracts on Islam; but his primacy interests were mainly three: (i) to challenge the superstitions and rituals of the Hindus; (ii) to challenge Hindu idolatry, and (iii) to bring the Indians in line with modern developments in Europe.

Rammohan's tirade against Hindu superstitions and rituals took a concrete shape in his work against burning of widows in the funeral pyres of their husbands. Before him there were many European observers and East India Company men who felt appalled at the inhuman practice. Job Charnock, the founder of the city of Calcutta, rescued a widow when she was taken to the cremation ground to be burnt with her husband's dead body. He lived with her till the end of her life allowing her to continue with the daily routine of a Hindu woman. But there was hardly any protest form the Hindus themselves. Rammohan was the first educated Indian to raise his voice against the abominable practice. The East India Company administrators were reluctant to interfere with the customs and manners of the Hindus as they were afraid of putting them off. Rammohan's support gave them the confidence to go ahead. And Lord Bentinck promulgated an Act making Sati a penal offence.

Rammohan was also tired of the idolatry of the Hindus. He tried to get at the roots of Hindu beliefs and rituals and found those roots in the Vedas and Upanishads, more importantly in the Upanishads and that too, most probably, in some selected Upanishads. He translated some of the Upanishads into Bengali. It is to be noted that he avoided some of the major Upanishads like Brihadaranyaka, Chhandogya, etc. most probably because many crudities continued in these were not to his liking. He also translated the Brahmasutra of Badrayan into Bengali. Though Rammohan accepted Sankara as a significant commentator on Badrayan, he differed with Sankara. Sankara maintained that only a Sanyasin can attain the knowledge of Brahma and that only a Brahmin can have an access to that knowledge. Sankara was a firm believer in Karmabad and the caste system. As distinct from this, Rammohan did not believe in Karmabad and the caste system. According to him, dharma is anchored to two roots – one, stead-fast devotion to the supreme reality and, two, to spend time and energy after cultivating the good of others. In Sankara's imagination others did not exist. Rammohan's interpretation, it is claimed, is in line with the Chhandogya Upanishad wherein we read:

> In the beginning ... this world just Being (*sat*), one only, without a second. To be sure some people say: "In the beginning this world was just Non-being (*asat*), one only, without a second; from that Non-being Being was produced."
>
> ****
>
> It bethought itself: "Would that I were many! Let me procreate myself."
>
> ****
>
> All creatures here ... have Being as their root, have Being as their abode, have Being as their support.

Rammohan was tired of Hindu prayers before idols. These prayers contain only *Balang Dehi, dhanang Dehi, Yashang Dehi, Dehi, Dehi, etc.* (Give me strength, give me wealth, give me fame, etc.). Instead of this he insisted that prayers should be addressed to the Supreme Reality not for any material benefit, like strength, wealth, fame, etc., but for spiritual upliftment of the individual. Basically Rammohan accepted the Vedantic outlook and view of reality without subjecting the

same to a strict logical analysis. Covertly he accepted *Sabda Praman* (Authority) as method of proof. Rammohan's Brahmoism dissipated itself soon after his death, though it provided a tremendous releasing force from the moribund orthodox Hindu outlook. Rammohan tried to meet the Hindu orthodoxy on their own ground and showed how the Vedas and Upanishads do not support their idolatrous religion with numberless superstitious rituals. Rammohan wielded his pen to show how the Hindu old texts support Vedantic monotheism and how they do not support the burning of widows in the funeral pyre of their husbands. But the most important work of Rammohan was concerned with education.

We get an inkling of the state of education in the country from what Lord Minto wrote in 1811, He wrote:

> It is common remark that Science and Literature are in a progressive state of decay among the Natives of India. From every inquiry which I have been able to make on this interesting subject, that remark appears to me too-well-founded. The number of the learned is not only diminished, but the circle of learning even amongst those who still devote themselves to it, appears to be considerably contracted. The abstract sciences are abandoned, polite literature neglected, and no branch of learning cultivated but what is connected with the peculiar religious doctrines of the people. The immediate consequence of this state of things is the disuse and even actual loss of many books; and it is to be apprehended that unless Government interpose with a fostering hand, the revival of letters may shortly become hopeless from want of books or of persons capable of explaining them.

In the meanwhile the native languages were getting a push forward thanks to the efforts of the Pundits of Fort William College, the missionaries of Sree Rampur, etc. as the company merchants needed native clerks to keep their books, schools were started by some enterprising men to teach English. But these schools trained students in committing to memory some English words with the help of which they could translate Bengali into English. No grammar was taught. Certificates were issued on the basis of the number of English words they could recite, thanks to the efforts of William Jones, the English gentry who came to India as servants of the East India Company started learning Sanskrit. Such learning brought prestige to them. As a result we find an array of Sanskrit scholars like Colebrooke, H.H. Wilson, James and Toby Princeps, Macnaughton, Sutherland and many others these men found that Sanskrit learning in the country was declining.

Meanwhile Rammohan with his friends and admirers started a movement for the introduction of Western style of education discarding the age-old Sanskritic system which was being sponsored and supported by the East India Company. Thanks to their efforts and the untiring, selfless zeal of the great soul David Hare, the Hindu College was established in 1817. We, however, do not find the name of Rammohan among the founders of the College. He had to keep himself away from any direct connection with the College as the Calcutta conservative Hindus refused to have anything to do with the College if Rammohan, whom they took to be a heretic, was connected with it. Rammohan started helping the College from the background and started his own school to impart Western style of education. His ideas on education come out very succinctly in a letter, which he wrote in 1823 to Lord Amherst.

> If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the

> same manner, the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of Government, it will consequently promote move liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, natural Philosophy, chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a College furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus.

Rammohan was not against the native languages. He was not also an Anglophil. He wrote copiously in Bengali. As a matter of fact, Bengali prose, as it were, attained its maturity under his pen; it became a suitable language to express high philosophical and thoughtful subjects. He also opened up new approaches to Sanskrit literature and philosophy.

The neo-nationalists of India and specially the post-independence patriots see the introduction of Western system of education in India as nothing but a device to produce some clerks and lackeys of British Government. They forget that a large section of the Britishers in India were against the introduction of Western system of education and that it was the forward-looking Indians who literally struggled for its introduction. Retrograde conservatism has always stood in the way of progress and the latest is the attempt of the Bharatiya Janata Party to impede the progress of education as it evinced from the decisions of the State governments where the BJP came to power. There seems to be a design in all this as for a backward-looking Party the only stock that they have among the masses of illiterate voters is their superstitions and rituals.

Be that as it may, it was Akshaya Kumar Datta (1820-1886), who carried Rammohan's spirit forward. He challenged the claim that Vedas and Upanishads are indisputably infallible. From 1843 to 1855 he was editor of *Tatvabodhini*, the journal of Brahmo Samaj at that time headed by Devendranath Tagore who was believer in the efficiency of prayers. In one of his articles in the paper Datta wrote:

> Prayer plus hard work = good result.
> Hard work = good result.
> Therefore, Prayer = zero.

This, naturally disturbed Devendranath. Earlier Iswarchandra Vidyasagar had assured Devendranath that he would look into Datta's writings before they were published. So Devendranath referred the matter to him. Vidyasagar replied that Datta had always shown his writings to him before publication and that he had gone through the article under reference with special care before it was published. Datta wrote books and articles on the sciences, and his special interest was botany. He also wrote a classical work on the devotional sects of India. Earlier Henry Vivian Derozio, the stormy petrel of Bengali renaissance had appeared on the scene. Derozio was a poet of considerable merit and is the first among Indians to write a poem upholding the cause of Indian independence. He was born in 1809 and joined the Hindu College in 1826 as a teacher; but he had to resign from his job as the conservatives found his views too difficult to digest. Derozio asked his students not to accept anything as true if their reason did not say so. There was not a single aspect of life in which his students did not take an interest. They even challenged the orthodoxy in the open streets around the Hindu College. The brilliant young men enthused by Derozio carried his message forward; but the group dissipated and many of Derozio's students ended in utter despondency. Thus the tornado ushered in by Derozio disintegrated in wilderness. The movement initiated by Rammohan and bolstered by Derozio, however, had its effect all over India. In Maharashtra Phule, in Madras Naicker and many

others in different parts of India were products of this movement. Thanks to their efforts the message of humanism, based on human reason, had wide acceptance in the intellectual movements in India. The best product of this movement was Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891).

Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-1873) the great humanist poet and one of the products of the movement described before, truly categorised Vidyasagar as a "splendid fellow", "the first among us", "grand energy which is the companion of your genius and manliness of heart", "one of nature's noble men", etc. Madhusudan introduced the blank verse in Bengali poetry and wrote, among other things, the classic "Meghnad Bad Kabya" (The epic of Meghnad's Killing). The core story of the classical epic was taken from Ramayan. But unlike the Ramayan, he portrayed Ravan and his son – Meghnad – in heroic colours. He was a great admirer of Vidyasagar.

It will take at least volumes to describe what this great humanist of this country did. His pioneering role in education, humanitarian activities and movements for social upliftment of the down-trodden, including women, etc. has become legendary. He crusaded for widow marriage and ultimately succeeded in getting a law passed in its favour. His tirade against child marriage and polygamy had their had their effects on later legislation and change in social attitudes of the Hindus. But in all this, and in our appreciation of the work he did for men we forgot the man – his essential humanism. Vidyasagar came down to us as a Dayar Sagar (Ocean of kindness). Vidyasagar was profoundly learned in Sanskrit. He wrote Sanskrit Grammar books to make the language easily available to the students. Bengali prose whose foundations were laid by the Pundits of Fort William College, the Missionaries of Sri Rampur and Rammohan, achieved its full grown maturity in the hands of Vidyasagar. As a matter of fact, his primer of language meant for the beginners is the first primer of this kind in Bengali. Single-handed he started several schools both for the boys and girls. He introduced teaching of English in Sanskrit College of which he was head for a few years. His deep study of Sanskrit Philosophy led him to some rational and unorthodox conclusions. To his countrymen, however, he is known as a very kind-hearted man who was full of sympathy for suffering humanity.

Vidyasagar was appalled at the state of education in his own country and at the degradation of manhood enmeshed in superstition bolstered by "false systems of philosophies". As a rejoinder to the letter of James R. Ballantyne to the Secretary of the Council of Education, Calcutta, which was sent to him by F.I. Mouat, Secretary to the Council of Education for his (Vidyasagar's) comments, Vidyasagar wrote on the 7th September, 1853 a memorable letter. Vidyasagar was at that time Principal of Sanskrit College. The letter is worth quoting in full; but because it is too long we shall resist from the temptation. We shall content ourselves with some excerpts only. Inter alia he wrote:

> With regard to Bishop Berkeley's inquiry I beg to remark that the introduction of it as a class book would beget more mischief than advantage. For certain reasons, which it is needless to state here, we are obliged to continue teaching of the Vedanta and Sankhya in the Sanskrit College. That Vetanta ... and Sankhya are false systems of Philosophy is no more a matter of dispute. These systems, false as they are, command unbounded reverence from the Hindus. While teaching these in the Sanskrit course, we should oppose them by sound Philosophy in the English course to counteract their influence. Bishop Berkeley's Inquiry, which has arrived at similar or identical conclusions with the Vedanta or Sankhya1 and which is no more considered in Europe as a sound system of Philosophy, will not serve that purpose. On the contrary, when, by the perusal of that book, the Hindu students of Sanskrit will find that the theories advanced by Sankhya and Vedanta system are corroborated by a Philosopher of Europe, their reverence for these two systems may increase instead of being diminished ... It must be confessed ... that there are many passages in Hindu Philosophy which cannot be rendered into

> English with ease and sufficient intelligibility only because there is nothing substantial in them. The bigotry of the learned in India (is such that) they believe that their Shastras have all emanated from Omniscient Rishis and therefore, they cannot but be infallible. When in the way of discussion or in the way of conversation any new truth advanced by European Science is presented before them, they laugh and ridicule. Lately a feeling is manifesting among the learned of this part of India, especially in Calcutta and its neighbourhood, that when they hear of a scientific truth, the germs of which may be traced out in their Shastras, instead of showing any regard for that truth, they triumph and the superstitious regard for their Shastras is redoubled.

Vidyasagar was despondent about the intellectual atmosphere in the country. He wrote: "I cannot persuade myself to believe that there is any hope of reconciling the learned of India to the reception of new scientific truth." But this despondence did not lead to withdrawal. It was the people and his idea of manhood that gave him confidence to continue with his work. He continued:

> The local circumstances of this part of India compel us to pursue a different course for the dissemination of knowledge. I have with care and attention observed the state of things here, and my impression is that we should not at all interfere with the learned of the country. we do not require to get them reconciled because we do not require their assistance in any shape. We need not fear the opposition of a body declining in their reputation. Their voice is gradually becoming more and more feeble. There is little chance of their regaining their former ascendency. To whatever part of Bengal is the influence of education extending, there the learned of the country are losing ground. The natives of Bengal appear to be very eager to receive the benefit of education. The establishment of Colleges and Schools in different parts of the country has taught us what we can do, without attempting to reconcile the learned to the country. What we require is to extend the benefit of education to the mass of the people. Let us establish a number of Vernacular schools, let us prepare a series of Vernacular class-books on useful and instructive subjects, let us raise up a band of men qualified to undertake the responsible duty of teachers and the object is accomplished. The qualification of these teachers should be of this nature. They should be perfect masters of their language, possess a considerable amount of useful information and be free from the prejudices of their own country.

To achieve this aim Vidyasagar proposed remodelling the courses of studies in Sanskrit College. He did not abandon all hopes as he had full confidence in the rationality of man. He was sure that if rational education, bereft of prejudices, is given, the people will take to it like the fish takes to water.

Note: 1. In 1853 Vidyasagar anticipated, as it were, what G.E. Moore said in his famous article "The Refutation of Idealism" published in 1903. This article of Moore opened up new directions in Philosophy as against Hegelian absolutism. Vidyasagar found Sankhya and Vedanta arriving at the same conclusions as those of Berkeley – subjective idealism and thus by implication he meant to suggest, as later suggested by Moore, that all forms of idealism are varieties of Subjective Idealism.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, July 1983.

A Brief History of Humanism
Modern India - II

Slowly and urge for getting modern education developed. The old land-holding people were generally reluctant to accept the new system of education. It was mainly the middle-income groups who joined the new system of education. Community wise the middle income group among the Muslims was smaller than that of the Hindus and the out-castes were kept away from any system of education whatsoever. It is wrong to think that the Muslims did not take to the modern system of education because of their religious bias. Apart from the rich land-holding people among the Muslims, the Muslims, in general formed the artisan class and were poor peasants. In 1837 the government of Bengal decided to conduct its business either in English or in the local vernacular. So long as Persian and Urdu continued to be the language of administration, Muslims continued to hold their own in the judicial service and the law. In administration of justice and law, the Muslims had been in relatively stronger position till the first half of the 19th century. But their decline was rapid. Even in 1951 there had been more Muslims pleaders in Calcutta than Hindus and Christians combined. The decline was so rapid that in 1869 in Calcutta there was not a single Muslims among the attorneys, proctors and solicitors. But the picture was not the same throughout India. In upper India Urdu continued to be the language of administration and the Muslims continued to hold more than 45 % of all the un-covenanted executive and judicial posts in the provinces of upper India. The relative standing of the Muslims, or for that matter of other community, in India can only be determined at a local level. W.W. Hunter's conclusion in his *Indian Musalmans* that British discrimination and Muslim backwardness are interconnected should be taken with caution.

The movement initiated by the stalwarts of early 19th century in Bengal had its effect throughout India, and on all communities. Thus Abdul Latif (1828-93), educated at the Calcutta Madrassa, took upo the cause of imparting modern education among the Muslims and founded the Muhammedan Literacy and Scientific Society in 1863. There was an array of men like Jotirao Govindrao Phule (1827-90), Rahmatulla Muhammad Sayani (1847-1902, Behrani Merwanji Malabari (1853-1912), Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), Karsondas Mulji (1832-1875), Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925), Amir Ali (1849-1928), Mahadev Govind Ranade (1841-1901), Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), Badruddin Tyabji (1844-1906), Lakshminarasu Gazulu Chetty (1806-1968), and many others took up the cause of social reform and education. But the most active crusader for education remained Vidyasagar. His primary interests were education and social reforms; but he was not impervious to political movement. Surendranath Banerji in his A *Nation in the Making* writes that in 1860, there were two persons – Jotinder Mohan Tagore and Vidyasagar – to whom the organisation wrote for names from Bengal who could act as delegates to the new Branch of the Association at Bombay.

It seems that towards the end of his life Vidyasagar used to get tired of the constant bickering among his contemporaries and he used to run away to Karmatar in Santhal Parganas to get some respite and get recuperated. Vidyasagar's call for strengthening and broadening primary education got little support. As against Vidyasagar's ideas, the institutions of higher learning,

specially in arts, multiplied. The educational ventures of Arya Samaj geared towards a revival of the wisdom of the Vedas so much that Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj movement, declared that the Vedas were infallible. Hindu revivalist movements, in a new grab, were initiated. Though the sage of Dakhineswar, Ramkrishna Paramhans, declared that all religions contain the same message, through his own actions and the actions of his disciples, like Swami Vivekananda, it seems that they upheld, to plagiarise George Orwell, that the messages of some religions are

more equal than others. In contemporary India, the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda formula of equality of all religions is accepted as secularism. The votaries of all religions vouch by this brand of secularism while by their practice, way of life and their stead-fast devotion to rituals, they in reality give the impression that their religion is more equal than others. It was, however, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94) who, following his Hindu orthodox predecessors, gave the mantra of Hindu nationalism and his song *Bande Mataram* was accepted as the national anthem. Bankim is a landmark in the rise of Hindu Nationalism in India.

Western system of education could hardly break the religious conservatism. Because of religious prejudice, the Calcutta Medical College, founded in 1835, found it difficult to get students; but thanks to the movement started by Raja Rammohan Roy even the orthodox found the efficiency of the Western system of medicine. Madras, which had the highest number of students attending post-matric classes, found it difficult to get sufficient number of students in the Medical College which was started in 1852. By 1882 the Madras Medical College could produce only 50 graduates. It may be mentioned that an overwhelming majority of college students came from the upper castes of Hindus among whom there was a strong prejudice against dissection of dead bodies. The reason for this is also partly economic as the indigenous system of medicine was still holding its ground. Medical practitioners of Western system of medicine could make their both ends meet only in the cities.

But the most backward was education in Engineering. Here also the problem of employment came as a stumbling block. The engineering graduates get employment only in government service to build roads, bridges, canals and railways. As a result most of the graduates joined colleges and schools and worked even as village school masters. As most of them belonged to the higher castes, they found such employment more honourable. In the meanwhile the Indian legal system went through transformation. He right to employ pleaders in criminal and civil suits alike was conceded. Educated youth found the independent legal profession not only lucrative but also prestigious. Large number of Indian students, who could afford the expenses to get legal education in England, went abroad. In 1866 Henry Maine observed "the immense multiplication of legal practitioners" and notes that

> The great addition ... is due to the numbers and influence of the Native Bar. Practically, a young educated Native, pretending to anything above a clerkship, adopts one of two occupations – either he joins into the service of Government, or joins the Native Bar ... the Bar is getting more and more preferred to Government service by the educated youth of the country, both on the score of gainfulness and on the score of its independence.

No wonder that the bulk of political leadership of non-extremist variety was provided by the lawyers. But the lawyers because of their professional training cannot, generally, think of going out of the way. In a country where religion, its rituals, and prejudices had and has preponderant edge, naturally the political leaders had strong orientation towards religion. Bankim was one of those 19th century men who advocated strong religious orientation in policies and he was hailed by Aurobindo Ghosh as the apostle of Indian nationalism. Even so, before the rise of so-called 'radicalism' in Indian politics led by Lal, Bal, and Pal (Lala Lajpat Rai, a staunch Arya Samajist, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a Chitpavan Brahmin from Maharashtra, and Bipin Chandra Pal, a devout Vaishnav from Bengal), the major section of the leadership of Indian politics kept religion away from politics. Radicalisation of the Congress in the hands of religious zealots made the rise of Gandhian politics possible.

To Gandhi, there was no politics without religion, and that religion to him was Hinduism with

its Varnashram, faith in the infallibility of the Vedas and Upanishads, cow protection, etc. Gandhi was, however, not totally impervious to a rational approach. He wrote: "I decline to be bound by an interpretation, however, learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense." (cf. *Aspects of Hinduism* by M.K. Gandhi in *Hindu Dharma*, New Delhi. Orient Paperbacks. 1978, pp. 9-10). But Gandhi never subjected his own religious assumptions to reason or moral sense. Gandhian leadership mobilised mostly the unemployed, underemployed, ill-educated higher caste Hindus and the briefless lawyers led by eminent people in the profession. As yet no analysis of the religion and castes of those who participated in the Gandhian movement has been made. An idea of such orientations, which can throw some light on the problem, is easy to make when the Government is liberal in offering freedom fighters pension. Gandhian leadership, by and large, failed to mobilise the Muslims and members of the scheduled castes in particular. Failing to mobilise the bulk of the Muslim community Gandhi toyed with the Khilafat movement – a retrograde movement among the Indian Muslims to restore the disbanded Turkish Empire which disintegrated after the First World War leading to the independence of several countries in the Middle East. A large numbers of Muslims joined the Khilafat movement led by the Ali brothers – Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali – and Gandhi. Abortion of the movement, however, was endemic in its very pivot. The Muslims drifted away from the Gandhian leadership. Only a few Muslim leaders remained within the fold of Gandhian leadership. Many of them thought that they will settle the scores with the Gandhian leadership after India wrests her freedom from British Imperialism. Gandhian endeavours back-fired.

Gandhi also tried to mobilise the members of the scheduled castes by starting what is called the Harijan movement. He called them children of God and launched a movement to convince the orthodox Hindus that the members of the scheduled castes should have free entry to places of worship. But he could not do much for them as he himself was a believer in the caste system. Gandhi had tremendous concern for man not because he is dignified by his own right but because he is a child of God. He maintained that all men are equal in the eyes of God and that all religions essentially carry the same message. Everyday he held prayer meetings and sang "Ishwar Allah Tere Nam" – your name is Iswar and Allah. But this failed to carry any conviction with the practitioners of different religions. Gandhian politics achieved one thing – it got politics mixed up with religion. Thus ended even the elemental concern for man as found in the Vedas, Upanishads, Koran, the mystic seers and poets and many, many others. Politics could no longer remain separate from religion, especially in the rising ride of nationalism. Religion became an effective tool for the mobilisation of the people, especially in a country where religion with all its superstitions and rituals, has a strong hold over the poor, illiterates and socially backward people.

Rabindranath Tagore, with his commitment to liberal outlook tried to put some sense into the Gandhian leadership. He warned Gandhi against the Frankenstein he was creating. The two differed. But later Gandhi saw his blunder, called Tagore "The Sentinel of the East" and dubbed him as "Guru Dev". Interpreters of Gandhi and Tagore said that the two – Gandhi and Tagore – saw the same truth differently and subscribed to a version of what Vidyasagar so poignantly called "Double theory of truth". Tagore's humanism hardly registered any impression in the welter of rising nationalism which is antithetical to humanism. The voice of humane considerations, sympathy, etc. did not however die. The voice of humanism found in the Upanishads, in the medieval mystics and poets and litterateurs, Gandhi and many others is, at its best, an expression of compassion for the human being. But such compassion, though laudable, is not based on a recognition of the essential rationality of the human being. It is because of this that their spirit has often been distorted by vested interests. Humanism based on a non-rational compassion and sympathy for man is at its best an emotional reaction to the human predicament to the miseries of individual human beings. Doubtless compassionate reactions have contributed immensely to the amelioration

of the sufferings of individual human beings. They have opened vistas for consideration for others; they have recognised the existence of others.

The founder editor of this Journal, M.N. Roy, protested against obscurantism and said that man is essentially rational and therein lies the glory of his existence. Political parties in the country, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with its thesis of Hindutva, claim that are secularists. Secularism to hem does not mean that the state should remain equidistant from all religions and no religious ritual should be performed on state expenses. The individual is free to practice the rituals of his own religion, but they must not do this on state expenses. But today ministers participate in Bhoomi Pujas, Yagnas on state expenses. Prime Ministers and Presidents, not to speak of the minor Ministers and politicians, rush to their favourite places of worship at State expenses after assuming office. Most of the politicians appear to take a masochistic delight in publicly genuflecting before so-called spiritual men and women and rush to astrologers and fortune tellers. They use the Sadhus and Fairs to mobilise votes for them at the time of elections. They stir up the masses on issues like Ramjanambhumi Mandir – as if building a temple is a political issue – and the Prime Minister himself promises to build mosque and temples and that too in a country where millions of people are illiterate and numerous children of school-going age roam about in the streets as wayward beggars. But these are no issues on which the masses cannot be mobilised by the political parties. The masses should remain in their abysmal ignorance and abject poverty while the political leaders will manipulate them for their votes in newly instituted form of Government, called the democratic form of Government. Even the hope that the intellectuals, if there are any, will rise in unison to protest against the skulduggery of the politicians and political parties, seem to be a cry in the wilderness. The intellectuals are vying with each other to curry favour with the power that be. The Congresses like the Science Congress, History Congress, Philosophical Congress, etc. cannot be opened without getting a political leader to bless. Even the academic seminars are to be graced by semi-literate political leaders. The seminars discuss things at a supposedly high academic level and mostly provide justifications for their powers that be. The intellectuals have their eyes not on this country but on foreign travels. Some of them become Airport Professors as they hop from airport to airport. When they go out, they must sing the glory of the power that be or else they may be deprived of their pelf. It is not surprising that the majority of intellectuals support the interpretation of secularism as equal treatment of all religions by the State – a logical impossibility. If objections to such things are raised in the seminars and Congresses, they are treated with benign smiles from the official intellectuals and their hangers on. Yet one must not give up all hope as rational hope is the only thing that we have under the present circumstances.

(To be concluded)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1983.

A Brief History of Humanism
Early Christianity - I

The history of humanism in the West is, however, a chequered one. Before the rise of monotheism, there was no conflict between man's mundane existence and his encounter with Gods. Even the Gods recognised the existence of other Gods. Te most powerful God like Zeus or Indra had to recognise the presence of other Gods. The origins of monotheism lie in the obscure past, possibly in Akhneton (Amenophis IV, 18th dynasty pharaoh of the 14th century B.C.), Moses (13th century B.C.), Zoroaster (7th-6th century B.C.). Both Moses and Zoroaster were influenced by Akhneton's monotheism though soon after Akhneton's death monotheism was eclipsed.

Apart from Zoroastrianism, developed Judaism and Christianity, no such thing as monotheism existed in classical antiquity. None refused to use the predicate 'God' of nay but one 'Being'. The rise of Christianity, however, signalled the onward march of monotheism, Christian monotheism soon came in conflict with Paganism and Mithraism – an oriental mystery cult for men which flourished in late Roman Empire. Mithraism had its origin in Persia and possibly in India. It became one of the great religions of the Roman Empire of the 2nd century A.D.; but it suffered rapid decline in the 3rd century. It believed in the duality of good and evil and practised highly secret rituals restricted only to men.

Initially the political power that be in Rome persecuted the Christians. But as time passed the power that be in Rome, apart from change of heart, found that neither Paganism nor Mithraism could provide justification for their monolithic rule. Christian monotheism came very handy to them. There is only one God and once the emperor is blessed by the votaries of Christianity, he will also be the one unchallengeable emperor. Christian compassion was adopted as a sort of sop for the laity not only for the consolidation of the empire but also for its perpetuation. All this notwithstanding, some genuine religious callings were also factors in the adoption of Christianity by the Romans.

From the large number of disciples who followed him, Jesus Christ appointed twelve as apostles. The Greek word *apostosa* means 'one sent out'. But after Christ's crucifixion, the name of Judas was removed from the list of apostles and was replaced by Mathias. Soon the name of Paul who did not have any personal contact with Jesus was included in the list of apostles. It was said that Jesus had a special resurrection appearance and he chose Paul to go to the Gentiles. The term is also used of others like James the brother of Jesus, Barnabus, Sivanus, Timothy, Andronicus and Junius. Historically Paul saved Christianity from being a mere Jewish sect. Paul travelled widely and preached the new religion. During his last visit to Jerusalem in 57-59 A.D., he was arrested for provoking a riot. He appealed to Rome on his citizen's right and was sent to Rome as a prisoner. Of his final fate in Rome nothing is known precisely. He was probably beheaded in 62 A.D. near the Ostian Way, south of the city of Rome. St. Peter's name is intimately associated with that of Paul though in Paul's writings we do not find any mention of Peter's presence with him in Rome. According to Tertullian (Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, c. 155-222 A.D.), Peter was crucified in Rome by Nero possibly in 68 A.D. Origen Peter (c. 185-254) was crucified with his head down on his own request.

Jerusalem, the primitive centre of Christianity, was disappearing amidst the disasters of the war of the Roman Empire with the Jews. The Church in Jerusalem, moreover, was being narrowed by Jewish Christian particularism and was hardly qualified to remain the metropolis of Christianity which was gradually gaining ground in the Greco-Roman world. the Christian community was founded in Rome during the reign of emperor Caludius (41-54 A.D.) and Peter became the first

Bishop of the Church of Rome. The orthodox Roman Catholics trace the institution of 'Pope' from St. Peter. The word 'Pope' is derived from the post-classical Latin word *papa* meaning 'father'. Upto the 4th and 5th centuries it was frequently used in the West to designate any bishop. Even today, in the Greek Church and in Russia, a priest is called *papa,* which is translated as 'pope'. But in the West the name 'Pope' gradually came to be reserved for the bishop of Rome. The Pope was and still is regarded as the successor of St. Peter, the first Bishop of Rome. The two essential prerogatives of the papal primacy are: (i) infallibility in matters of doctrine and (ii) immediate and sovereign jurisdiction, under all its aspects, over all the pastors and faithfuls. These two prerogatives of the Pope took centuries to be defined at the Vatican Council of 18th July 1870. The extraordinary ecclesiastical power soon overflowed into mundane power. The Pope became a force in political intrigue, conquests and such earthly affairs.

Initially Christianity spread not by the might of the sword – a thing which the early Christians did not have. Imperial Rome of those days was known for its liberal and tolerant attitude. Yet Jesus was crucified under orders from Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator of Judea, in accordance with Roman customs as crucifixion was not a Judaic custom. Subsequently the Pilate was accused of committing excesses causing massacre of the Gallileans and was removed from his office. The Pilate committed suicide in 36 or 37 A.D. at Rome.

Imperial Rome was fast sliding into the nadir of corruption, autocracy and tyranny. The people of Rome were in need of compassion, piety, forbearance and justice. Some of the well-educated members of the ruling elite of Rome were also affected by the egalitarian and humanistic appeal of Christianity, while some others found Christianity with its universal appeal, message of peace and compassion more expedient to mobilise the people against the oppressive and whimsical rule of the Roman emperor indulging in gladiatorial extravagance and profligacy. Rome by that time had lost its full-blooded vigour. It was Roman emperor Nero Claudius Germanicus, originally Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, known only as 'Nero' (37-68 A.D.), who persecuted the Christians with unprecedented brutality as he suspected that the Christians may depose against him and accuse him for being responsible for the fire in 64 A.D., which gutted at least half of Rome. Nero was the son of Agrippina by her first husband. Her second husband was Chaeu Domitius. She married emperor Claudius (he third husband) and persuaded the emperor to adopt her son Nero. Claudius, like his predecessor Caligula, was no angel. In Claudius's reign of thirteen years, thirty five senators and three hundred high officials of the state were condemned to death.

Nero had at least two great teachers – Chaeromon the Stoic, who taught him Greek, and Seneca, who taught him literature and morals. Nero murdered his own mother and executed his teacher Seneca as well as his own wife, and is reported to have both St. Peter and St. Paul executed. Because of his crash brutality he was hounded like a rabid dog and ultimately tried to commit suicide by driving a dagger into his throat; but his hand failed when his freed slave Epaphroditus helped him to press the dagger home. Thus ended the inglorious life of a power-hungry, ambitious and wanton tyrant who was lover of art of no mean merit. In his *Annals XV* Comelius Tacitu;s (c. 55-117 A.D.) has given us a poignant description of the events of those days. He writes:

> A race of men detested for their evil practices, and commonly called Chrestiani ...the name was derived from Chrestus, who in the reign of Tiberius suffered under Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea. By that event the sect, of which he was the founder, received a blow which for a time checked the growth of dangerous superstition; but it revived soon after, and spread with recruited vigour not only in the city of Rome, the common sink into which everything infamous and abominable flows like a torrent from all quarters of the world, Nero proceeded with his casual artifice. He found a set of profligate and abandoned

> wretches who were induced to confess themselves guilty; and on the evidence of such men a number of Christians were convicted, not indeed on clear evidence of having set the city on fire ... They were put to death with exquisite cruelty, and to their suffering Nero added mockery and derision., some were covered with skins of wild beasts, and left to be devoured by wild dogs, others were nailed to crosses, number of them were burned alive; many, covered with inflammable matter, were set on fire to serve as torches during the night ... at length the brutality of measures filled every breast with pity. Humanity relented in favour of the Christians.

Despite all cruelties of wanton despotic rule, an administrative organisation providing a high order of provincial government was formed under Roman rule and Rome could maintain the tradition of cultivation of letters. Between 14 and 90 A.D. we find the 'Silver Age' of Latin letters though it indicated a fall from the excellence of Augustan Age of Maecenas, Vergil, Ovid, Livy and Horace. This was the time of Seneca (c. 4 B.C. – 65 A.D.), and many other men of letters belonged to this period. Seneca in his *Epistulae Morales* (Loeb Classics) wrote:

> I read in Epicurus today: "If you would enjoy real freedom you must be the slave of philosophy." The Man who submits to her is emancipated there and then ... The body, once cured, often ails again ... but the mind, once healed, is healed for good and all. I shall tell you what I mean by health: if the mind is content and confident, if it understands that those things for which all men pray, all the benefits are sought or bestowed, are of no importance in relation to a life of happiness ... I shall give you a rule by which to measure yourself and your development: in that day you will come into your own when you realize that the successful are of all men most miserable.

Happiness is the goal of life. The way of virtue and not of pleasure is the road. Lucian's (c. 115-200 A.D.) biting satire demolished the ideal speculators. He wrote:

> A short survey of life has convinced me of the absurdity and meanness ... that pervade all worldly purposes ... In that state of mind the best I could think of was get at the truth of it all from the ... philosophers. So I selected the best of them - if solemnity of visage, pallor of complexion, and length of beard are a criterion ... I placed myself in their hands. For a considerable sum down, and more to be paid when they had perfected in wisdom. I was to be ... instructed in the order of the universe. Unfortunately, so far from dispelling my previous ignorance, they perplexed me more and more with their daily drenches of beginnings and ends, atoms and voids, matters and forms. My greatest difficulty that, though they differed among themselves, and all they said was full of contradictions, they expected to believe them, each pulling me in his own direction ... Often one of them could not tell you the number of miles from Megara to Athens, but had no hesitation about distance in feet from the sun to moon.

This was the period when realistic sculpture and massive architecture reached the climax of Roman art and Latin was mothering and nursing the different languages of Western Europe. This was also the period when intellectuals could get away after writing against Christianity. T.R. Glover in his *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire* (London, 1932, p. 252) mentions

Origen (c. 185-255 A.D.) writing that Celsus (fl. 178-80 A.D.) ridiculed the Christian faith in a final conflagration, the Last Judgement, and resurrection of the body. Celsus, according to Origen, wrote:

> It is silly to suppose that God, like a cook, brings the fire, the rest of mankind will be roasted, and only the Christians will remain – not merely the living ones, but also those who died long ago – rising from the earth with identical flesh they had before. Really, it is the hope of worms! ...It is only simpletons, the ignoble, the senseless – slaves and women and children – whom Christians can persuade – wood-dressers, and cobblers and fullers, the most uneducated and common men, whoever is the sinner ... or godforsaken fool.

Origen wrote *Contra Celsum* (Against Celsus). The controversy between monistic faith and others was an on-going controversy. Pagan Rome of the first two and half centuries of Christian era was no a cultural fossil. Wall scribbling at Pompii indicate general literacy. Roman culture took on a Greek hue. The teachers became so popular that Emperor Vespasian (69-79 A.D.) thought it to be prudent to bring the important teachers to the capital. Subsequently some Roman emperors even made provisions for retirement benefits to the teachers who were exempted from taxation and other civic burdens. But this benefit was enjoyed only by the leading teaches. Despite the Censor (Magistrate) prohibiting the playing of any musical instrument except the short Italian flute, Romans loved music. Mercus Terentilus Varro (116-27 B.C), the greatest of scholars among the Romans of that time, was a man of encyclopaedic learning. His writings cover philosophy, music, medicine, social history of the Roman people, geography, rhetoric, jurisprudence, etc. Varro is the only instance of how the love of music among the Romans could not be throttled by the Censor. About a hundred years after Varro, Salvius Julianus (c. 100-169 A.D.), the epoch-making figure in Roman legal science – a permanent legacy to all subsequent civilisations – coordinated the enactments of his past praetors and produced a Perpetual Edict which paved the way for Justinian's *Digesta* or *Pandactae, Institutiones* and *Novekia*. But it took centuries to get the Roman law codified. Justinian ruled from 627 to 665 A.D.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, June 1983.

A Brief History of Humanism
Early Christianity - II

After the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Apostles dispersed to different parts of the Roman world and even outside. Legend has it that St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles, came to India, baptised several Indians in the Malabar coast, and became a martyr there. The Apostles are the direct disciples of Christ. From a large number of disciples, Jesus chose twelve and called them his Apostles. They were: (i) Simon (called Peter), (ii) Peter's brother Andrew, (iii) James, (iv) James' brother John, (v) Philip, (vi) Bartholomew, (vii) Thomas, (viii) Mathew, (ix) James, son of Alphaeus, (x) Thaddaeus, (xi) Simon the Patriot, and (xii) Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus and was replaced by Mathias. Jesus' choice of twelve Apostles had direct reference to the tribes of Israel. During his life time, Jesus sent out some of his Apostles to preach the Gospel; but their final dispersal took place after Jesus' crucifixion. The old citadel of Christianity – Jerusalem – was disappearing amidst the wars between the Roman Empire and the Jews. Imperial Rome was on the way to the nadir of corruption, autocratic rule and tyranny. Yet Rome was maintaining a facade of law, justice and order. The Procurator of Judea, Pontinus Pilate, under whose orders Jesus was crucified according to Roman customs, was accused of committing excesses causing massacre of the Galileans, was removed from his office and committed suicide. Peter, his wife and Paul, the founder of Christian theology, reached Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius (41-51 A.D.).

In no time Peter and Paul could establish a powerful centre of Christianity in Rome. A Number of Romans, both from the ruling class and the laity, embraced Christianity. A number of Romans were touched by the Christian message of universal peace, compassion and love and found consolation in a moribund pagan atmosphere while some found Christianity a politically expedient tool to mobilise the people against the oppressive and whimsical rule of the Roman Emperors of that time. Paul was arrested first in Jerusalem and Caesarea, and then in Rome and concluded his life as a martyr during the Neronian rule. Peter also faced the same fate. Christian tradition claims Peter to be the First Bishop of Rome. Later the Bishop of Rome was recognised as Pope. Papal claims derive their authority from Peter's martyrdom as Bishop of Rome.

Schismatic movements developed within Christianity even during Peter and Paul's life time. Notwithstanding the claim that the twelve apostles had no difference of opinion among themselves, it cannot be denied that there were many unorthodox views within Christianity. Patristic accounts are unanimous in regarding Simon Magnus as the fountainhead of all heresies. Simon Magnus came to Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius. Irenaeus, Hippolyte, and Epiphanius consider him to be the progenitor of the later Gnostics. The Gnostics, generally stressed salvation through a secret *gnosis* or knowledge evincing the influence of some tenets of Indian thought. Most probably Gnosticism was profoundly influenced by neo-Platonism or Plotinus.

Through virtually a numberless vicissitudes of so-called heretical views like Arianism, Gnosticism, Eunomianism, Priscillianism, Appolarianism, Macedonianism, Pailicianism, Rogomilism, Albegenesianism, Donatism, Nestronianism, and many other dissenting voices Christianity, on the whole, proceeded in its triumphal march. Out of these schismatic movements, Docetism seems to have had most widespread influence. Most probably Cerenthus, the founder of Docetism, lived in the first century of the Christian era. It is claimed that he blended together the Judaizing Christian and Gnostic ideas. Docetism undermined not only Incarnation, but also Atonement and Resurrection. Modern Christian theology, generally, takes the humanity of Jesus very seriously, to the extent of sometimes neglecting His deity and thus drive a wedge between faith and history. They confront the charge of opening the door to a new Docetism.

In order to meet the challenge of schismatic movements, the Christians declared eight Early

Fathers conspicuous for learning, sound doctrine, and saintliness as Doctors of the Church. In all religious disputations their interpretations were taken as most authentic. The first eight doctors of the Church were: (i) Ambrose, (ii) Augustine of Hippo, (iii) Gregory the Great, (iv) Jerome, (v) John Chrysostom, (vi) Basil the Great, (vii) Gregory of Naianzus, and (viii) Athanasius. During the past four hundred years the Roman Catholic Church has proclaimed twenty-four more "doctors" beginning with Thomas Aquinas in 1567. As late as 1970, Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena were proclaimed as "Doctors of the Church."

The Roman Catholic Church felt the need for an authentic interpretation of the gospel. Meanwhile, the Christians were acquiring political power and were aspiring for more power. Finally, Constantine the Great, The emperor of Rome (c. 274/280-337 A.D.) gave a decisive thrust to Christianity. Though he was baptised in his death-bed by Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia and patriarch of Constantinople, Constantine was a great champion of Christianity. Constantine called a council at Nica (modern Isnik, in Persia) in 325 A.D. to deal with the Arian heresy which was threatening the Christian Church. Arius was a presbyter of Alexandria. He died in 336 A.D. Arius maintained that if the Father beget the Son, He that was begotten had beginning in existence; and from this it became evident that there was a time when the son was not. Arius' submissions are constant, but judged by the apostolic witness, it is patently heretical. At the council of Nicea the Church Fathers decided that Christ is one substance with the Father. Christ was not an intermediary of God in his work of creation and redemption. The world was created directly by God. This was unlike the Greek concept of an intermediary who linked the world to God but not God to the world. The Nicene Creed emphasised that (a) the 'sonship' of Christ is more than the concept of 'logos'; (b) the phrase that Christ is of the being of the Father; (c) the Nicene Creed also denied the Arian contention that the logos was 'made'; the phrase 'begotten' was added to the scriptures instead of 'made'; (d) so also was added the significance anti-Arian phrase: 'the son is one substance with the Father'; (e) Further to the words 'became flesh', 'and was made man' was added. Many more anti-Arians statements were added to the creed. The Council's deliberations were guided mainly by a foreshadow, as it were, of Augustinean theology.

Like St. Paul, Tertullian (c. 160/70-c. 215/20 A.D.), Cyprian (c. 200-258 A.D.), and Ambrose (c. 339-397 A.D) believed that human beings from the time of their birth are inclined to evil from which they can be rescued and turned to good only by the gratuitous act of God. Since all men are children of Adam, they all share in his guilt, which was concupiscence. Sexual act befouls every act of generation. Mankind is a "mass of perdition". Hence all are damned. Despite the original sin, some men are saved. But that can happen only through the intercession of Virgin Mother who conceived her Son sinlessly. St. Augustine, the greatest Christian theologian of the early history of Christianity (354-430 A.D.), wrote: "Through a woman we were sent to destruction; through a woman salvation was restored to us." He thought that the Church being the spiritual father of all, should chastise an unruly and wayward son for his own good; that it would be better if a few suffer "than ... all should be damned for want of coercion." This provided the theological justification for later inquisitions and auto-da-fe. Christianity lost its initial humanistic compassion and understanding. Augustine's writings, however, are full of contradictions. He also wrote against enforcing death penalty of the heretics. Agustine's *City of God* was identified with the Church and was late used as an ideological weapon of politics; and the doctrine of theocratic state was logically deduced from him. The secular powers of men were subordinated to the spiritual power derived from God and held by the Church.

Even during Augustine's lifetime Pelagius, a footloose monk who came from Britain, strongly defended man's freedom and emphasised the saving powers of good deeds. God did not predestine men to heaven or hell. The Augustinian theory of innate depravity of man is a cowardly shifting of the blame of man to God. God leaves the choice of our fate to ourselves. Pelagius had to flee Rome

when Alaric's invasions made his life difficult there. He first came to Carthage and then went to Palestine. Augustine did not like Pelagilus' championing human freedom. The Augustinians ultimately succeeded in getting Pelagius' views condemned. But that happened almost after a year of Augustine's death. The condemnation was done at the Council of Ephesus held in 431 A.D.

The major trend of the future of the Christian Church for at least 1000 years was contained in the Augustinian doctrines. Augustine is the Napoleon of the Catholic Church in so far as its organisational aspects are concerned. Augustine's inflexible theology and organisational discipline galvanised the Christians into a compact organisation. The Pope, the Bishop of Rome, soon became the final word and authority on matters theological.

He early Christians could not remain content with their message of piety and compassion. When they faced pagan opposition, they organised themselves into compact and secret organisations to resist persecution. St. Peter organised resistance against pagan onslaught. The story of the persecutions of Christians is, however, not uniform. One of the major sources of the history of persecution of the early Christians is *The Death of the Persecutors* by Lactantius (c. 240-c. 320 A.D.) who also wrote the *Divine Institutions* wherein he argued that pagan religion and philosophy were absurdly inadequate. He rightly pointed out that persecuting Emperors suffer and that the virtuous and just Emperors prosper. He supported his thesis with good historical evidence. Meanwhile the perseverance, piety, compassion and human appeal of the numberless Christian fathers affected the people. The Roman Emperors soon found the Church a useful ally. Emperor Constantine virtually declared Christianity as the religion of the state. Historians differ as to Constantine's motives and the depth of his Christian convictions. Early Christian writers portray him as a devout Christian although they have difficulty in explaining his execution in 320 A.D. of Crispus, his son by his first wife, and of Fiesta, his second wife. Some later historians see him as a political genius who expediently used Christianity to unify his Empire, while a median interpretation portrays him as a pagan in the process of gradual conversion to Christianity.

The mighty Roman Empire was already in the process of decline. In the reign of Gallienus (252-268 A.D.) thirty generals governed thirty regions of the Empire in practical independence of the central power. The war-like tribes in the borders of the Empire started challenging Roman authority and renewed expansionist designs of the Persian Empire started making inroads, specially into the eastern side of the Empire. The Church tasted the allurements of wealth and power, and it became the richest religious organisation of the state. The Church with its enormous wealth started taking interest in the affairs of the state. Christian monasticism arose as a protest against the self-indulgence of the Church Fathers and their lust for wealth, luxury and power. Rome itself was showing weaknesses of real imperial authority. Constantine found it to be expedient to shift his capital to the old town of Byzantium – a town whose geographical location provided safety both from over-land and sea invasions. The new capital was called New Rome; but to perpetuate the name of its founder it was known as Constantinople. On the 30th of May, 330 A.D. the Roman Empire had its new seat of government.

Since the early days of Christianity the divide between Eastern and Western Christianity was germinating. These two major divides, however, took a long time to come to fruition. From round about the time of the advent of Christianity, Latin started acquiring its predominant position in the Roman Empire; but the Eastern part of the Roman Empire continued with the Greek heritage. The Church Fathers of the first few centuries of the Christian era were profoundly learned in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. The Church Fathers of the East, however, maintained the traditions of the Greek language. Byzantine-Greek, Russian Orthodoxy took hold of the Eastern Church while Roman-Latin Church became Roman Catholic. The schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Church was finally and formally recognised as late as 1054 A.D. The contribution of Roman Catholic Church to Latin learning and language cannot be overstated. The Eastern Church,

however, maintained its cultivation of Greek learning and on a later date passed on the same to the Islamic scholars. The Eastern Church was not very much interested in secular Greek literature. Their interests were primarily religious. Yet Greek as a language survived primarily because of their efforts. The Roman Catholic Fathers adopted Latin as their language. Their proselytizing efforts, coupled with Latin Roman Imperialism, spread the Latin language throughout the Western part of the Roman Empire. From the point of view of development of humanism, it will be worth its while to see what the state of affairs in the fields of scholarship and learning during this period was. Education, scholarship and cultivation of knowledge are s*ine qua non* in the development of humanism. Without the cultivation of human reason land putting man as a rational being as the pivot of all development. Education is the most important factor in this development. (*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, September 1983.

A Brief History of Humanism
Early Christianity - III

The last significant attempt to revive pagan rule in Rome was made by Julian the Apostle (332-363 A.D.). He was the younger sons of Julius Constantinius, (half brother of Constaintine and Basilina), educated as a Christian and baptised. He, however, turned against Christianity and concluded that there was no beast who could beat Christian ferocity. Julian did not persecute the Christians. He encouraged divisions in the Church and forbade Christian children to receive the old 'Greek' education – a theme taken by the Christians of the Roman Catholic Church later. Julian himself was a scholar and a vigorous writer. Most of his works are, however, lost probably as a result of Christian suppression. He exposed from intimate knowledge all that he considered weak or unsound in the Christian teaching and practice. The visionary failed as he was not in tune with his times. Julian committed a blunder by forbidding Christian children to receive Greek education.

Greek education did not hold any authority as sacrosanct. The cultivation of reason was its main pivot. But Christian education, specially of Roman Catholicism, tied human reason to authority. The Greek commitment to reason was forgotten. It took centuries for Europe to emancipate reason from authority. This emancipation became the hallmark of the European Renaissance. The intellectual revolution of the Renaissance hinged upon the emancipation of reason from authority and paved the way for the application of the principle of reason to all matters. Christian Fathers and their educational systems were imprisoned in authority, custom and tradition. The story of the emancipation of reason from authority is, however, not a straight and uniform one. Christianity limped ahead through the labyrinths and challenges of paganism and Greek education.

Christian theologians like Clement of Alexandria (c. 115-207 A.D.) and Origen (c. 185-254 A.D.) regarded Christianity as the culmination of philosophy. They thought that the way to understand philosophy was through pagan education on worldly matters. Without such an education the Christians could live a life of faith and obedience but could not achieve an intellectual understanding of the faith. Origen fell a victim to Emperor Dacius' persecution of the Christians. He was hounded from place to place, was put in chains and tortured, suffered the experience of the iron collar, was placed in stocks and confined to a dungeon. He was subsequently released, but did not survive long. Though he suffered for his faith, the later adherents of the same faith for which he suffered condemned him. Later he was condemned as a subordinationist. Subordinationism holds that Christ is divine but his divinity is somewhat below the highest divine principle. The fate of Clement of Alexandria and Origen are instances, of which there are many, both in pagan and Christian Rome, of the resolute recidivism of obdurate faiths. Their crime was that they belonged to a different faith though they valued pagan education. Education was in those days in private hands who were paid by the pupils. The great institutions of Alexandria, Athens, Antioch and Constantinople specialised in medicine, philosophy, literature, rhetoric, etc. But most of the physicians accepted astrology and advised different treatment according to the positions of the planets. Teachers who refused to accept the orthodox way of looking at things usually sought sanctuary in Athens where non-orthodox pursuits of knowledge was still relatively free. But even this small citadel of free thinking was closed in 529 A.D. under orders from Emperor Justinian. Thus came the end of a glorious institution where once Plato taught.

As against those who saw some value in pagan education, Tertulian (160-240 A.D.) forbade Christians to teach in the pagan schools. But for quite some time the Christians did not accept Tertulian's prescriptions. Even St. Augustine and St. Jerome held that literary and rhetorical culture were useful so long as they are kept subservient to Christian faith. But the conflict between the Christian view of life and the Greco-Roman view of life could not remain dormant for long. It was

not only a conflict between two systems of education but also a confrontation of two divergent ethics. Greco-Roman ethics was essentially an ethics of self-reliance and self-control, showing itself in moderation and proportion in all expressions of life. Education upheld the value of high-mindedness and self-respect which was of the nature of pride. Opposed to this, Christianity exalted humility as one of the highest virtues. It regarded pride and self-respect as deadly sins. In practice it gave rise to monasticism, with its elaborate and minute regulations expressing unlimited obedience and renunciation of private will. Monastic life became the nearest ideal which a Christian could achieve. As this conception gathered momentum, the value of classical culture became less and less important. By the time of St. Gregory, the Great (d. 604 A.D), the use of classical literature, except as a pedagogical means to achieve some ends other than Christian culture, was discouraged.

The first few centuries of the advent of Christianity in Europe, though full of wars, feuds and famines, were not completely barren in scholarship. Martinus Minneus Felix Capella (early 5th century A.D.) wrote a sort of encyclopaedia in verse and prose. His *Satyra* or *Satyricon* better known as *De nuptiis Philogiae et Mercurii* was regarded as a storehouse of learning in the middle ages and was used as a text book of high class education. The book is written in the form of an allegory ending in the apotheosis of Philologia and the celebration of her marriage in the Milky Way where Apollo presents her seven bridesmaids who stand for Grammar, Geometry, Geography, Arithmetic, Rhetoric, Astronomy and Music (including poetry).

Boethius Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severius (c. 480-c. 525 A.D.) wrote *De consolation philosophiae* in prison, translated Aristotle's *De Interpretaione* and *Categories*, wrote two volumes on Categorical Syllogism and another two volumes on Hypothetical Syllogism as well as the *Oposcula sacra* on which Thomas Aquinas wrote a commentary. Boethius was a prolific writer. He also wrote books on arithmetic and music and a commentary on Porphyry's *Eisagoge*, an introduction to the logic of Aristotle. It may be mentioned that Porphyry, whose original name was *Malchas*, lived during (c. 233-c. 304 A.D.), was a student under Longinus and Plotinus. He wrote extensively against Christianity and on rhetorical, literary and philosophical themes. He reduced the 10 categories of Aristotle to five predicables which are still recognised in logic, especially by those who study Aristotelian logic. Though Boethius was a devout Christian, he recognised the genius of Porphyry – a vigorous anti-Christian writer.

Christian Fathers could not succeed in wiping out secular learning. Flavius Aurelius Cassiodorus (c. 477- c. 570 A.D.) established great centre of secular and religious learning at Calibria where he helped copying of classical manuscripts and encouraged the monastic tradition to preserve classical culture. Without the Christian monasteries much of the classics would have been lost. Though Gibbon was against the tradition of the monks, his fidelity to facts of history induced him to admit that "the monuments of Greek and Roman literature have been preserved and multiplied by their indefatigable pens." And this in spite of his writing that "The freedom of the mind, the source of every generous and rational sentiment, was destroyed by the habits of credulity and submission; and the monk, contracting the vices of slave, devoutly followed the faith and passions of his ecclesiastical tyrant." Cassiodorus shrewdly saw the possibility of making the monasteries the centres of new learning where the Christian scholars would work on the emendation and elucidation of the Bible according to the methods of profane scholarship. During those turbulent centuries, the monasteries were the only safe citadels in Western Europe, the only places where letters could be cultivated in any measure. It was in the monasteries that most of the Greek and Latin antiquity, both classical and ecclesiastical, were transcribed and preserved. Even so outside the periphery of the Church and monasteries there were many writers and scholars. Prudentius (348-410 A.D) was a great Christian poet. Orosius (fl. C. 400 A.D.) wrote his book on general history and his contemporary Macrobius wrote a book on general information. Chaucer was fed on this. Simessius (c. 375- c. 414 A.D.) claimed personal freedom to dissent on the soul's creation, literal resurrection

and the apocalypse. His scientific interests are evidenced by his letters to Hypatia wherein we find the earliest reference to araemetry (The science of estimating the specific gravity of fluids by the use of an araemeter)1. During this period poets like Florentinus, Flavius Felix, Luxorius, Mavortius, Coronatus and Calbulus wrote in the pagan style. In their poems there is a mixture of Christianity and obscenity.

It was during the reign of emperor Theodocius I that Christianity received an additional spurt. In 425 A.D. he endowed the University of Constantinople and sponsored the publication of *Codes Theodocianus* in 438 A.D. The *Codes* is a collection of Imperial constitutions for the benefit of the officials. It is one of the chief sources of information of the government of the Roman Empire in the 5th century. The *Codes* reveal the decline of municipal liberty, the improvement of the middle rung of the society in the West, the evils of the fiscal system and the appalling emasculation of Roman administration which had been efficient. It also discloses the disorganisation which led to the dismemberment of the Roman Empire by the incursions of Vandals, Goths, Visigoths, Huns and such other war-like people.

About two centuries before the advent of Theodosius, Goths, Visigoths and others started their forages into the Roman Empire. The original home of the Goths was at Gotland in south Sweden. They started spreading themselves outside southern Sweden in the first century B.C. By c. 238 A.D. they began to raid the Roman Empire. In 268-270 A.D. Marcus Aurelius stemmed the tide of the onrushing Goths. Meanwhile the division of the Goths into Visigoths and Ostogoths began to take shape. The Visigoths held a large part of the lower Danube extending to the Seret and Vistula. The area was known as Dacia. Constantine's treaty with them temporarily stopped their onrush. Ulfilus (c. 311-c. 381 A.D.) translated a large part of the Bible from Greek into Gothic, devised a new alphabetical system for the purpose and thus laid the foundation of the Gothic script. Ulfilus took a leading part in the conversion of the Goths to a form of Arianism.

The Vandals whose original home was on the Baltic, also adoped some type of Arianism and moved into the Hungarian plains. Led by Genseric or Gainseric they crossed the strait of Gibraltor after overrunning Spain, capture4ed Carthage, Sardinia, Corsica the Baleuris and marched to Rome in 455 A.D. Genseric took revenge of the persecution of Arians by Christian orthodoxy. Orthodox Christian centres in north Africa were destroyed. The Roman Empire lost its control of the Mediterranean sea. Without the Mediterranean, Rome could not get its supply of wheat. One cannot think of Rome of those days without Osia.

The mighty Roman Empire was crumbling under its own weight, as it were. The Persian and Parthion incursions were becoming stronger in the eastern part of the Empire. Arabia was restive to prowl upon the richer West. The Ethiopians, Libyans, Berbers, Numedians and the Moors were waiting in fierce impatience to see and accelerate the process of crumbling of the Imperial defence and morals. The outlying ramparts of the Empire away from the Mediterranean – Belgium, Germany, Rhaetia, Nriem, Banonia, Britain showed signs of revolt. The mighty Roman lines were no longer sufficient to stave off the forages and incursions of the war-like tribes. The Empire itself was exhausted. It was obliged to maintain in trim in the long and complicated frontiers, had to suppress revolts and was menaced by court intrigues like the one which led to the estrangement between Rufinus and Stilicho at a time when Rome was required to face the onslaught of Alaric and the invading Gauls. The general populace of the Empire became passive and were incapable of resistance. Though the populace despised the invaders yet they were ready to submit to their yoke. Corruption and ostentatious living style of the ruling elite alienated the populace from the power that be. The people were demoralised and were ready to accept any replacement of those who were in power. Most of the invaders who entered the Empire were Romanised soon after they had established themselves in the Roman Empire. Their fearless courage and will to fight tapered, yielding to the influence of their Roman environment. The soil of Rome sapped their vitality. They

fell into the morass of the decadent pattern of Roman luxury, profligacy and peculiar life-style. Yet Rome survived for sometimes by virtue of inertia, as it were.

Meanwhile the Empire also needed the intruders as soldiers, agricultural labourers and other types of manual workers. Most of those who entered the Empire were Romanised, adopted its language and its religion. Before long there were not many Romans in the mighty Roman legion and most of the manual work was done by the naturalised foreigners. While the Patricians were living a life of luxury, profligacy, intrigues, acrimony and enjoyment of cruel sots, the Plebians, in their turn, were hunting for the best in a decadent land besieged by the invaders. The legendary Roman legions could not adjust themselves to meet the marauding of quick moving horsemen of the invading tribes. The Roman legions were mainly composed of heavy infantry and were vulnerable to quick-moving cavalry and archers and to guerrilla fighters. The waves of tribal incursions into the Roman Empire possibly prove the truth in Ibn Khaldun's observations that "When the two sides were equal in numbers and strength, the one accustomed to the nomadic life gains victory." It is also likely that the appeal of emotional humanism, implied in the Christian faith as exemplified by the life of Jesus Christ himself, had its adverse effect on the Roman mind. Christian humanism was not founded on rationalism; it could easily slide into two opposite directions with different shades in- between. On the one hand people were asked to follow the path of charity, kindness, compassion and piety, and on the other hand, they were mobilised to fight to for the defence of their faith which was easily translated into a rationalisation of the expansionists and autocrats. Gibbon is not far from the truth when he impliedly held the rise of Christianity to be one of the causes of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Christianity made its position stronger through organised Church and the institution of Papacy. The Popes, at least most of them, played significant roles in the political intrigues and ups and downs. Christian humanism had its waterloo in the organised Church.

Reference: 1. Hypatia (d. 415A.D.) was a mathematician and Neoplatonic philosopher. She was a woman, renowned for her exceptional beauty, learning and eloquence. She was barbarously murdered by a band of monks, encouraged by the Archbishop of Alexandria, St. Cyril. Charles Kingsley used her story for a historical novel.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, October 1983.

A Brief History of Humanism
Early Christianity - IV

The name Pope is commonly applied to the Bishop of Rome in respect of both ecclesiastical and temporal authority claimed by him as a successor of St. Peter, Vicar of Christ, over the Roman Catholic Church. In Asia there were a number of flourishing Churches which came into conflict with the Bishop of Rome on the question regarding the Easter celebrations. While Bishop of Rome held that the celebrations should be held on the first Sunday after the vernal full moon, the recalcitrant Churches of Asia held that the celebrations should be held on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan which was so arranged that its 15th day fell on the full moon day after the vernal equinox. The Bishop of Rome called a conference where his views prevailed. He excluded the recalcitrant Churches of Asia from the Catholic communion. Yet the controversy went on and was finally decided upon in the Council of Nicea held at 325 A.D. The Eastern Churches receded more and more from the Roman church which slowly excluded the Greek language from its schools. Soon a federation of several self-governing or autocephalous Churches called themselves the "Orthodox Church". The term "orthodox" is derived from the Greek word meaning "right believing". The Eastern Churches, however, do not have a centralised governing authority as the Roman Catholic Churches have.

By the first decade of the 4th century A.D., the Pope exercised a special metropolitan jurisdiction not only over Bishops nearest to Rome, but also over the Churches of central and southern Italy. Gradually the Pope established his authority over many Churches of Europe and further. These Churches depended on the Pope for the interpretation of the messages of Jesus and his Apostles. The edict of the Pope spread far and wide.

In February 380 Emperor Theodosius issued a decree in favour of the faith of St. Peter and Pope Damasus (c. 304-384 A.D.) The famous Tome of Damasus was issued in 382; an imperial decree against clerical worldliness was enforced and Jerome was commissioned by Theodosius to review the old Latin version of the Bible which represented a Greek original prior to the *Hexapla*, a polyglotic version of the Old Testament. Theodosius also decreed that the faith of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, was regarded as the true Catholic faith and the adherents of other creeds were called heretics. Meanwhile Rome was constantly threatened by tribal incursions.

In 447 the Huns led by Attila advanced from the plains of Theiss, ravaged Moesia and Thrace as far as Thermophylae, turned West-ward, marched upon Gaul, crossed the Rhine in the spring of 451 and laid waste the countryside as far as the Loire. The death of Attila in 453 spelt the end of his ephemeral ambitions, and saved the West from the perils of Hun belligerency and depredation. Meanwhile differences between the Western and Eastern halves of the Roman Empire were brewing. Byzantium and Rome were falling apart. Emperor Justinian retrieved the situation considerably. His general, Belisarius defeated the Vandals and recovered Italy from the Ostrogoths (533-534). Before embarking upon his campaign to retrieve the glory of the Roman Empire, Justinian concluded peace with the Persian Empire (532), and, by means of paying subsidies, immobilized the tribal invaders of all sorts who were on the prowl in the frontiers of the Empire. By 533 Belisarius succeeded in retrieving practically the whole of North Africa lost to the Vandals, who never rose again and were absorbed in the masses of population in the Roman Empire. The Moors alone continued to resist; but they were finally brought under control in 548. Justinian soon held all the shores of Tyrrhenian Sea, with the exception of Provence. The Mediterranean was again a Roman lake.

Justinian's greatest contribution is his *Corpus Juris*. He appointed two commissions, headed by Tribonian, as he found the legal system and law in the Roman Empire in a state of confusion.

The process of codification took some time and finally the *Corpus Juris* came into existence. *Corpus Juris*, which immortalises the name of Justinian, has four books or parts: (i) authorised collection of Imperial Constitutions; (ii) the authorised collection of extracts from the writings and utterances of great jurists (*Digestae* or *Pandectae*); (iii) the elementary handbook (*Instituines*) and (iv) the unauthorised collection of constitutions subsequent to the Codex (*Novellage*). The *Codex Constitutionum* was formally promulgated in 529. All Imperial Ordinances not included in it were repealed at one stroke. The Justinian *Codex* is the most important expression of the legal genius of the Romans, and is the most important law book that the world has ever seen. There came into being a definitive law book to which all could refer. The Codex was issued in Latin so also was the *Novelliae Constitutiones Codicem*; but parts of it had to be translated into Greek as Latin was not popular in Byzantium. The *Codex* served as framework of law and legal system and provided order and security to a motley assemblage of people. Italy under the Lombards, Gaul under the Franks, England under the Saxons, and Spain under the Visigoths, however, ignored the *Codex* while it continued in the Byzantine Empire. After five centuries of its life there, it was revived by the Jurists of Bologna, was accepted by Emperors and Popes, and became a part of the scaffoldings of the legal structure and order of many modern states. The people's urge for freedom, whose framework is provided by the rule of law, was recognised. Rule of law is the very basis of man's rational urge for freedom. In this sense the *Codex* is a great humanist document. Rational human freedom is unthinkable without a framework of rational law. A rational system of rule of law has built-in safeguards against its travesties and bastardisations.

Within hundred years after the death of Justinian, the Western part of the Roman Empire, especially Italy, was reduced to a miserable condition. The population of Rome, which was once about a million, fell downs to hardly 40,000 of whom nearly half were paupers. Milan was destroyed and almost all its inhabitants were killed. The exactions of the rulers and the depredations of the troops sank into insolvency hundreds of towns and villages. Regions, once fertile, became desolated and food supply fell. Recurring famines devastated the countryside. In Picenum alone some 50,000 people died of starvation. The aristocracy was practically liquidated, so much so that by 579 A.D. we do not hear of it any more. The great system of Roman aqua-ducts was broken and neglected. The Capagna turned into a vast malarial marsh. Only ruins bore witness to Rome's ancient grandeur and glory.

As soon as the upper and affluent sections of the Roman society accumulated sufficient wealth, they started imitating the life-style of the Eastern landlords, Latifundia with i (city house), *villa rustic* (country house), *instrumentum vocale* (equivalent to slaves), *semovocale* (equivalent to farm animal), and *mutum* (furniture and equipment) were to be found in the possession of all the rich Romans as well as the hands of the rich in Roman provinces. These *Latifundia* kept alive a modicum of classical culture but at the same time were strongholds of limited parochial interests. They also formed the basis of many semi-independent and small principalities, gave rise to a number of roi fainéants who enjoyed some modicum of independence and gloated on their imagined chivalric glory living a boisterous life. The Roman system of education, which was already under threat, was put out of gear by the rising tide of Christian orthodoxy, tribal incursions and the life-style of the rich in the disintegrated Western Roman Empire.

Even before the rise of Christianity education in Rome was sliding downwards. We get a glimpse of this from Marcus Fabius Quintillian's (c. 35-95 A.D.) *Institutio Oratario* when culture was acquired as a discipline to develop skill, the most important qualification for public career. He judges, the jurists and the public demanded the startling, quaint and epigrammatic expressions. The speakers practised a thousand tricks to cater to the demands of the times. Oratory became a veritable art for concealing facts, Imitations of the forms of great models led to general sense of unreality and consequent servility. The vivid presentment of living thought gave way to inflated

and bombastic abuse of meretricious ornaments and far-fetched metaphors. The continuing gazing with adulation on the achievements of the past, with the Greek conception of *paideia* interpreted as closeness of imitation, led to a cravenly submissive attitude of mind towards authority in close collaboration with political servility., such an education was, naturally, hostile to all creativity. Rhetoric became not only an art but also an essential part of a type of character.

Yet the light of education kept burning in the basin of Western Mediterranean, not to speak of Constantinople. Gregory of Tours (c. 538-594 A.D.) noted the achievements of the medical school at Constantinople. That the tradition of intellectual life continued even in the 7th century is evidenced by Pope Gregory's (d. 604 D) objections to Didier, the Bishop of Vienne, for giving all his time to grammar. In Spain there were historians up to the time of the Arab conquest and beyond.

Pope Gregory broke away from the literature of the ancients and renewed the movement to write in the Latin spoken by the people. He was not a stickler for grammatical exactitude. This simplicity of language was adopted by Isidore of Seville (d. 646 A.D.) who included knowledge of science in his compilations. He tried to bring to his contemporaries knowledge of science of those days. Yet hardly any trace of the classical spirit survived in him. His compilations recorded useful recipes and was regarded as an Encyclopaedia in the middle ages. Even the Latin spoken and understood by the people became highly sophisticated so much so that it became a private preserve of the learned scholars and Churchmen. Be that as it may, the intellectual and moral history of the middle ages rested on the work of men of faith as well as of those who were called infidels and heretics – equally men of faith as they had trust in the essential humanity of man.

On the one hand, Christianity with its doctrine of intimate personal relationship between the individual and the Christian realities and doctrines posed a challenge to paganism with its orientation to a decadent and decaying middle rung of the society, its exhausted poetry, literature and its moribund philosophy, and on the other hand, the charitable love and compassion of Christianity in the communities and equality before God served as uniting forces, and, above all, the persecution by the pagans and rival religionists, against which the ordinary Christian Fathers stood with their message of compassion, produced the greatest concord. At the grass-roots levels persecution was not answered by counter-persecution. The sympathy of the pious, non-violent Fathers made Christianity attractive to the people. Christianity, and for that matter, no religion ever spread through the might of the sword alone. But Christianity could not work as a cementing force of the Roman domination. Though Christianity spread throughout Europe, yet Europe got more and more fragmented as the decline and fall of the Roman Empire gathered momentum. Roman Empire failed to keep its entire domain together. A new centre of power developed in Gaul. Merovigian Clovis I (481-512 A.D.) became the leader of the entire Frankish people in the narrower sense and of the Allamannic people, i.e., people of continuous Germanic origins. Clovis I became the lord over Romanic Gaul as a whole with Paris as his *cathedra regni* (capital). Despite vicissitudes of fortune, his dynasty lasted for about two centuries and half. There were usurpations of the supreme power until Pepin the Short (c. 714-768 A.D.), son of Charles Martel and father of Charlemagne, alone with his brother Carloman installed the Merovingian Childeric III as nominal king of all the Franks in 743. This was necessary to usurp the glory of the dynasty of Clovis I which ruled nearly for 250 years. Pepin's brother Carloman retired to religious life in 742. Pepin was not left with any rival in his own family. He found the reflected glory of the Merovingian kings redundant. In 751 he forced king Childeric into a monastery and himself became the king. He defended Rome against the Lombards and wrested the exarchates of Ravenna and other cities. These he ceded to the Pope, thus laying the foundation of the Papal states. Quest for legitimacy, respectability and administrative alacrity provoked Pepin, the son of Charles Martel, who was of questionable birth, to humour the Pope who was slowly acquiring his supremacy and say in the

European Christian world. Meanwhile, about a hundred years before this, a new and significant phenomenon was ascending in the East. The New religion – Islam – was on the march. Within hundred years of the death of its Prophet Mohammed in 632, the adherents of the new religion reached Spain after bringing the regions of north Africa to submission and crossing Gibraltar. Charles Martel turned them back in 732 in the battle of Tours. His son Pepin obtained the title of *Patricus Romanus* from the Pope. Pepin was appointed *rex Dei gratia,* "king by the grace of God" by Pope Stephen II at the abbey of St. Denis on the outskirts of Paris in 754. Pepin also got a papal injunction to the Franks never to have a king except from his progeny. Pepin died in 768 leaving his kingdom jointly to his two sons, Charloman II and Charles who later took the name Charlemagne. In 771 Carloman II died leaving Charles to be the sole king.

Justinian's Code had already legalised serfdom and that prepared the ground for feudalism which took definite shape during the Morovingian and Carolingian periods and continued to hold its sway till the advent of what is known as the rise of capitalism. European feudalism with its different shades, was essentially a contractual relationship between the feudal lords and the serfs as has been shown by Ganshoff in his book on Feudalism.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, January 1994.

A Brief History of Humanism

Advent of Islam and its contribution

(*For the previous parts see RH, Vol 56, No. 11 onwards*)

Charlemagne is the greatest king in the medieval history of Western Europe. He extended the territories of the Frankish Empire by waging wars and subduing the tribal incurcesionists. He marched into Spain in 777, ostensibly to help the besieged Moslem governor of Barcelona, Ibnal-Arabi. But he had to retreat in no time. His army was attacked by the Basque forces at Roncesvalles in Navarre. Most of his men were slaughtered at the rear of his column. The legendary Hruodland, was killed. This happened in 778. Three centuries after this Hruodland became the hero of *Chanson de Roland*, France's most famous poem. After living a life of ceaseless wars and feuds for 34 years, he resigned himself to peace in his sixty-third year.

Charlemagne introduced a system of inquiries by groups to decide many local issues relating to land ownership and crime. These groups were called *jurata*. He was not only the expansionist and consolidator of the Frankish empire but also a great patron of learning and scholarship. He invited scholars and savants from different parts of Europe; the most famous among them was Alcuin (733-804). Scholars and savants found it difficult to pursue their avocation in the turbulent conditions of continental Europe. Many of them took refuge in places like England and Ireland which were comparatively less turbulent.

Alcuin was a Saxon born at York in 735. His reputation as a scholar travelled far and wide. Alcuin was sent on a mission to Charlemagne's court. On Charlemagne's invitation Alcuin stayed on in France. During that time the Danes were making their forays in England and as a result England's monasteries became desolate. Charlegmagne collected many scholars like Paul the Deacon from Monte Cassino. Among other things, Paul the deacon wrote a history of Rome, *Historia Romana* as well as *Historia Gentis Langobardorum* (History of the Lombard People).

Charlemagne opened a school in his own palace where scholars came and taught. Charlegmagne himself with his queen and children joined the school. After years' service at the palace school Alcuin desired to be relieved from his services in the palace school. Charlemagne was reluctant but ultimately agreed when Alcuin accepted the offer to become the Abbot of Tours where he worked feverishly with other monks who were induced to make fairer and more accurate copies of the *Vulgate* of Jerome. Many of the classical Latin texts are available to modern scholars from the scriptoria of the 9th century. Under the guidance and inspiration of Alcuin all extant Latin poetry and prose were copied during the Carolingian times. They, however, did not touch the poems of Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius and the prose writings of Varo, Tacitus and Apuleius. Alcuin himself wrote commentaries on the Bible, dogmatic treatises and controversial manuscripts. He also introduced a very significant innovation in the art of writing which is known as Caroline miniscule. Earlier Merovingian writing did not have any capital letters. Alcuin's innovation had direct and significant influence. The art of printing books in Roman types was taken directly from Alcuin's innovations. The Carolingian monks also produced illuminated and decorative manuscripts. In this, most probably, they were influenced by the Arabs. Charlemagne came to an entente with Harun-al-Rashid to discourage the Byzantine incursions. Harun sent elephants and keys to the Christian holy places in Jerusalem to Charlegmane.

Charlegmane was not ignorant of the life of profligacy that many members of the clergy were leading. In one of his many capitularies, he asks the clergy to keep strict vigil on the "whoring, drunkenness, and covetousness" among the nuns. In another capitulary, issued in 811, he enquires what the clergy mean by their profession of renunciation of the world when some of them labour "day and night, by all sorts of means, to augment their possessions; now making use, for this purpose, the menaces of eternal flames, now of promises of eternal beatitude, of despoiling simple-minded people of

their property in the name of God or some saints, to the infinite prejudice or their lawful heirs." Yet he encouraged the clergy, allowed them to get richer and richer and eked out an intimate cooperation between the Church and the state. Carolingian A*ufklarung* was short-lived. It ended in the incompetence of Charlemagne's successors, the feudal anarchy of the lords, the energy-consuming and debilitating struggle between the Church and the state, the Norman, Magyr and Saracen invasions, moribund economic and social life of the people and the inordinate lust for power of the Church with intrigues, excommunications and heresy hunting. Meanwhile the Arab world was fired by a new religion – Islam. A rejuvenation of the Arabs was ushered in.

Prophet Mohammed (570-632) admired and encouraged pursuit of knowledge. Justice Ameer Ali, in his book *Spirit of Islam*, Calcutta, 1990, p. 331, remarks that Islam holds that "He who leaves his home in pursuit of knowledge walks in the path of God ... and the ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr." In 712 when Moslems took Samarkand and they took some prisoners of war among whom there were some Chinese. Earlier the Chinese invented the art of making paper but kept it a closely guarded secret. Only Korea had access to that secret. The art of paper-making was known to the Chinese from the first century B.C. The earliest writing material used in the non-Egyptian world was stone, copper plates, clay (fired after writing and such other materials. But these were neither easily manipulable while their storage took up inordinately large space. In Egypt, however, papyrus was used as a writing material from very early times. The earliest use of papyrus can be found in the reign of King Assa (3580-3536 B.C.) of Egypt. A papyrus manuscript contains the accounts of the reign of King Assa.

Papyrus was widely cultivated in the Delta region of Egypt where it was used for various purposes. The stem of the papyrus plant was cut into longitudinal strips, were laid on a smooth surface; and another layer of shorter strips was spread side by side to get the required width of the writing material. They were soaked in water and finally hammered and dried in the sun. Egypt had a flourishing market of papyrus. In the 2nd century B.C. Egypt refused to supply papyrus to Pergamon in Asia Minor. The scribes of Pergamon started using animal hide as writing material – a thing which they borrowed from Egypt as the Egyptians used both animal skin and papyrus as writing materials. Egypt had stopped the supply of papyrus to Pergamon when Eumenes, the ruler of Pergamon, wanted to enrich his library. The Ptolemies of Egypt did not like the idea of a rival library developing in Asia Minor. However, the Pergamoneans took up the use of parchment and soon started to use vellum which is a high quality Parchment made of the skins of young calves or even sill-born animals. Its principal quality is that it does not soak up ink or paint so as to preserve the original colours better. The introduction of parchment also helped in binding written book form. However, the whole world outside the Chinese ambit continued to use papyrus, parchment and vellum till Islam spread the use of paper outside China. The use of paper for preservation and dissemination of knowledge cannot be overstated. In this regard Islam's contribution, though they spread a borrowed technique, cannot be neglected. One cannot think of the European Renaissance, introduction of mass circulation newspapers and even of printing without paper. Yet very few writers have given much importance to this epoch-making dispersal of technique. Paper was introduced in Egypt in 800, in Spain in 950, in Constantinople in 1100, in Sicily in 1102, in Italy in 1154, in Germany in 1128 and in England in 1309. Because of the paucity of the writing material even the Bible was rare outside of the monasteries. It took a year to copy it, a year's income of a parish priest to buy it. As a result only a few clergymen had a full copy. But the introduction of paper brought down the cost of writing material and even the laymen could lay their hands on them. This must have induced the Church Council of Narbone to forbid in 1227 laymen to possess any portion of the scriptures. They aspired to keep the Holy Book as a private reserve to themselves. The Arab scholars, however, came out with a plethora of books and embarked on a mission of translating the Greek and Latin classics.

Islam spread far and wide by the end of the 7th century. In the beginning of the 8th century a new school of philosophy called the "Mutazilites" established itself in the Arab world with profound influence on Arab intellectual life. They denied the eternity of the Koran and insisted that wherever the Koran or

the Hadith are not in consonance with reason, they are to be taken as allegorical., the Mutazilites worked fearlessly and feverishly during the reigns of al-Mansur, Harun-al-Rashid, al-Mamun, al-Mutassim and al-Watiq. Al-Mamun died in 833. The movement produced scholars like Yaqub ib Ishaqibn ab-Sabbah al Kindi and many others. Al-Kindi translated many classical works from Greek, Hebrew and allied languages for the Abbasid rulers. Al-Mamun established a "House of Wisdom" (Baytal-Hikmah) at Baghdad in 830. Here he collected a large number of scribes who were paid by him and were engaged in programmes of vigorous translations. Ibn Khaldun rightly points out that the work of this institution led to extension of commerce, the rediscovery of Greece and caused the flowering of science, literature, philosophy and art. At the head of this institution was Hunain ib Isaq (809-73), who himself translated, among other books, many books of Galen, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Ptolemy and the old Testament. Sanskrit books like the *Siddhantas* were also translated. Thus the Arab world, which was so long living in a claustrophobic world of their own, opened itself to the external world of knowledge. It, however, appears that these scholars were not very much interested in creative literature. Translations of the rich Greek creative literature were very few. The interests of the "House of Wisdom" were confined mainly to medicine, philosophy, history, geography, and other sciences. In spite of there being a strict injunction against the Christians and the Jews, the Baghdad Khalifs pursued a liberal policy towards the Christians and the Jews. The injunctions were there in the books, and even if they were implemented, they were implemented with caution and sympathy. Some injunctions like prohibiting the Shia sect, forcing the Christians and the Jews to put special dresses and ride only asses and mules were neglected. But soon a reversion from this policy took place. From the time of al-Mutawakkil who came to the throne in 847, these injunctions were implemented. But the light brought in by the Mutazilites took a long time to extinguish.

Muttawakkil's support base was mainly the new converts of Turkey. Like all new converts, the Turks were zealots for the cause of orthodox Islam. Yet Abul-Hasan al-Asari (873-935) tried a reconciliation between reason and faith – an attempt which was made much later by Maimonides for Judaism and Thomas Aquinas for Christianity in the 13th century. Islam took up "Believe without asking how" as its guiding principle. The ferment of philosophy and scholarship subsided in Baghdad, but it emerged in the minor courts. Nasr al-Farabi, a Turk by birth, was denounced as a heretic in Baghdad, and found a home in Aleppo. His *Ihsa al-Ulum* (Encyclopaedia of Science) gave a summary of the knowledge of Logic, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Economics and Politics of his times. As an offshoot of the Mutazilite-Abbasid *Auf* (Enlightenment), a number of scholars and savants like Abu Ali al-Husain Ibn Sina (980-1037) worked outside the pale of Baghdad. Ibn Sina's thought reached Spain. While Ibn Sina advocated a reconciliation between reason and faith al-Ghazali worked for jettisoning philosophy for the sake of religion.

Even a cursory account of the contribution of the Arab intellectuals to knowledge in its multifarious ramifications, will take volumes to cover. The best product of Arab enlightenment, most probably, is Ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (937-1048), who evinced Muslim scholarship at its best. He was a philosopher, historian, mathematician, traveller, astronomer, linguist, and scientist. He left major works on all these subjects. He was patronised by Mahmud of Ghazni.

The Turks under the leadership of Alptigin invaded Afghanistan, captured Ghazni, and established the Ghaznevid dynasty three. His slave and son-in-law, Subuktigin (976-97) extended his rule over Peshawar and parts of Khurasan. His son, Mahmud (998-1030) extended the kingdom to Persia from the Gulf to the Oxus and conducted seventeen campaigns in India. Added Punjab to his empire, looted the rich temple at Somnath. Sultan Mahmud is known as a notorious, bigoted, ruthless ravisher to the Indian students of history, but we forget his achievements in the intellectual field. Most of Mahmud's invasions were in reach of wealth in India and not for extending his empire. He made his capital a citadel of scholarship and art. He established near Ghazni a College with a library of rare volumes. To this College came students, professors, scholars and savants. They were paid from the imperial coffers. Abul-Qasim Mansur Firdausi, the author of *Shahnama*, found shelter under Mahmud and so also did al-Biruni

among many, many others. Soon after Mahmud's death the Seljuk Turks occupied Ghazni and a total eclipse of the college of Sultan Mahmud took place.

One of the basic characteristics of Islamic approach to the world and man is that it was steeped in history for centuries. In the Middle Ages it was absolutely essential to the intellectuals of the Arab world to ground his ideas in history. History and its studies were an essential part of the education of any gentleman as well as of administrative and religious life. More than 13 hundred books by Arab historians were produced by them between 9th and 13thj centuries. Their idea that time had a definite beginning and end destroyed the cyclical notion of the time order. In the 9th century Bokhari collected about three hundred thousand Hadiths, but after a careful historical and textual scrutiny rejected all but a dozen of them.

The conflict between the multiplicity of the temporal world the immanent differences between religions, the confrontation of logic and spiritual yearning for a universal and eternal beatific existence gave rise to Sufism. Sufism was profoundly influenced by the mystics of India emanating from the lofty sayings of ancient times. Sufies, in their turn, influenced the medieval mystics of India. The word *sufi* is derived from the word *suf*, meaning wool. The Sufis used to wear a simple robe of wool. One of the earliest Sufis was a woman, Rabia-al-Adawiyya (717-801). When she was asked whether she hated the Satan, she answered: My love for God leaves no room in my heart for hate for anyone, not even for the Satan. She also said, "O God! Give Thine enemies whatever Thou hast assigned to me in this world's good, and to Thy friends whatever Thou has assigned to me in the life to come; for Thou Thyself art sufficient for me." Sufism is clearly a product of universal compassion and love of the Buddhists and Jesus Christ. Logic cannot grasp metaphysical, spiritual realities; it merely describes man's ability to think. If you are perturbed in your understanding the problems of man's existence, entrust yourself to God's mercy. If you do that, helpful light will shine upon you and show you your objective. The Sufis, like so many others, were emotional humanists. Their influence on literature, art and humanistic endeavours is profound and deep-rooted. The compassion and love of the Sufis, however, lost themselves in the wilderness of man's greed for more and more power. This also happened to Buddhist compassion and Christian love.

There is a wide-spread canard that there are Koranic injunctions against music. But in the Koran there is no such injunction though Islamic theologians and all the four schools1 of Islamic law frowned upon music. H.G. Farmer, an authority on Arab music wrote: " ...The cultivation of music by the Arabs in all its branches reduces to insignificance the recognition of the art in the history of any other country." (cf. T.W. Arnold and A. Guillaume – The *Legacy of Islam*, p. 358). Al-Kindi and Avicenna wrote extensively on music while al-Farabi produced his monumental work on music – *Grand Book on Music* – an outstanding work on medieval music. As early as the 7th century the Moslem's wrote measurable music. Their notations indicated the duration as well as the pitch of each note. Most probably influenced by the Arab musicologists, Guido d' Arezzo was the first among the Europeans to introduce musical notations in the early 11th century.

By the 12th century Arab enlightenment lost its élan. But it travelled through the Barbari coast and through Spain and reached France and neighbouring areas. Subsequently it also reached Italy and other countries of Europe. Impact of Arab enlightenment is one of the main motivating factors for what is known as European renaissance. The history of the individual's struggle for freedom and dignity is a history of the onward march of the renaissance spirit through many ups and downs.

Reference: 1. The schools are: (i) Abu Hanifa ibn Thabir (d.767), (ii) Malik ibn Anas (715-95), (iii) Muhammad al-Safi, (iv) Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Though the four schools differed on matters of principle yet they agreed in matters relating to detail and advocated minute, detailed regulations of conduct and ritual. They not only prescribed the correct matrimonial rights, the proper dress for both males and females but also went to extremes of prescribing hair arrangement and even the correct size of toothpicks. (cf. D.B. Macdonald – *Development of Muslim theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory*, p. 66).

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 1994.

A Brief History of Humanism
Advent of Scholasticism

The history of the rise of humanism which is intimately related to the rise of rationalism and scientific method is not an one-dimensional history. There have been ages when rationalism was ascendant followed by a decline of the recognition of reason being the foundation of the dignity of man. Even religion has its rational foundation though its subjection to unreason and non-reason is endemic in the very process of its generation. Religion could never discard reason altogether. All theologians felt the need for arguing their case. It is because of this that the theologians had to continue with teaching not only their priests but also the laity from whom the priests were recruited. Reason, doubtless, is a unifying factor; but it also gives rise to dissensions and conflict of views. The differences between religious seers and prophets are differences of perceptions. The differences between the theologians are based on their interpretation, sublations and amplications of the visions of the religious seers. The most important theological school of the middle ages is Scholasticism.

It is commonly believed that Johannes Scotus Eriugena – John the Irishman born in Erin – commonly known as John Scotus Erigena or simply as Erigena – was born in c. 800 and died in c. 877. He knew Greek, Arabic and Chaldean and translated Dionysius and many other books into Latin. He was made the head of the Palace School at Paris by Charles the Bald in 843. In his *Devivina praedestinatione* he wrote that in earnestly investigating and attempting the reason of all things, every means of attaining the pious and perfect doctrine lies in the science and discipline which the Greeks call philosophy. Erigena was taken as implying denial of pre-destination; that the will is free in both man and God and that God does not know evil. Erigena was condemned in two Church Councils in 855 and 859 and later by Pope Gregory XIII in 1858. Erigena attempted a rational demonstration of substance of Christian truth. Many, however, would like to shift the honour of being the initiator of scholasticism of Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). Anselm wrote: "I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand; for this I also believe that unless I believe I will not understand." He formulated the "ontological proof" for god's existence. Anselm was a realist. In the middle ages the three – realism, nominalism and conceptualism, differed on the status of the universal. In the middle ages the problem of the universals was a valid problem. The Church could not agree that she was an abstraction, nor could it agree that she existed only in individual persons. The Church was the universal and had an existence of her own irrespective of the individual persons. This was Anselm's realism. Roscelin and later Peter Abelard were opposed to realism, while William of Champeux (c. 1070-1121), whose thoughts Peter Abelard rejected, exaggerated realism as well as nominalism. Abelard argued that heretics should be brought round by reason rather than by force. Those who refrain from this task, generally seek to cover up their inability to teach their faith intelligibly. The story of the love affair between Abelard and Heloise is a classical story. In his *Historia Calamitatun* Abelard writes: "While ... I was asleep in a secret room of my lodgings, they broke in ... There they had vengeance upon me with a most cruel and shameful punishment ... for they cut off those parts of my body whereby I had done that which was the cause of their sorrow." Abelard retired to a monastery and died on 21st April, 1142. And Heloise who retired to a nunnery died in 1164. She was buried besides Abelard in the gardens of Paraclte. The graves were disturbed during the Revolution. Whatever remained of their graves were transferred to Perelachaise Cemetery in Paris. Even today men women are seen to offer flowers on the grave of the two lovers.

Peter Lombard, a pupil of Abelard, made a compilation of Abelard's thought and laid the foundations of formal scholasticism. His book *Four Book of Opinions* became a favourite text in

theological courses for the next four centuries or so. In the meanwhile Greek learning was revived and the translations of Greek and Latin classics started arriving in continental Europe. The impact of Aristotle impelled the Catholic theologians to attempt a synthesis of Greek metaphysics and Christian theology. The impact of Aristotle was so compelling and challenging in 1210 that a Church Council forbade the reading of Aristotle's Metaphysics and natural philosophy and the commentaries thereon. The prohibition was repeated. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 permitted teaching of Aristotle's logic and ethics but forbade the rest. A committee of three was appointed to sterilize Aristotle, as it were. But the exercise was abandoned. Alburtus Magnus (1193-1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) convinced the Christian orthodoxy that Aristotle could be fumigated and made serviceable to Christianity. Alburtus accepted Aristotle as the biggest authority in science, Augustine in theology and the scriptures as the final word on everything. He used Adverroes' commentaries in his interpretation of Aristotle. Alburtus was polyglotic; but he did not have the power of synthesis.

During the first half of the 13th century Averroes was reigning supreme in the field of scholarship. Thomas challenged Averroes in his *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists* and claimed that Aristotle could be harmonized with Christianity. He produced his monumental work *Summa theologica* in twenty-one volumes and also wrote *Summary of Catholic Faith Against the Pagans*. The *Summa* gives summaries of heresies and is a monument of Christian dogma. In his *Summa* Thomas argues mostly from reason and laments that his work "is deficient in the things of God." Christianity must be divine as it, according to Thomas, could conquer Rome and Europe despite its stand against the pleasures of the world while Islam conquered by force of arms preaching pleasure. After meeting many arguments against Christianity, Thomas concluded that the cardinal dogma cannot be proved by reason and required faith. We cannot know what God is; but reason can tell us what he is not. God's existence, however, can be proved by natural reason. The ephemeral and incomplete nature of man and the world only prove that there must be some power who created them. Only the perfect can create the imperfect. The imperfect cannot comprehend perfection without jettisoning its imperfections. And that can be done only in and through an act of faith. Even matters pertaining to economics and politics – things which are based on moral perceptions – must be made subservient to religion. They should remain supreme in secular affairs but the Church as a right to intervene if the state violates the rules of ecclesiastical morality.

Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican. The Dominican order was founded by Dominic (1170-1221). Dominicans were very helpful to the Roman Catholic Church for preaching crusades, collecting monetary levies, and the execution of various diplomatic missions. They decided to live by alms and relinquished ownership of property land fixed income. Through a chain of elections at different levels, they elected a general chapter and assigned authority to a master general chosen for life. The members were obliged to vow obedience directly to him. Their nuns were to observe similar rules to that of men but were obliged to live an enclosed, sequestered and contemplative life. This was somewhat softened by their undertaking to educate girls. They were innovators in the teaching of languages like Hebrew, Greek and Arabic. They are known for their impressive literary and scholastic outputs. The works of Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus are notable examples. But their hostility to other orders of Christianity and their involvement in the work of Inquisition detracted their popularity. The scholastics used an Aristotle which suited their purpose, so much so that the major part of Aristotle was lost to posterity. They, however, left Plato alone. That is possibly one of the reasons why most of Plato's works are available to us while about one-third of Aristotle survived.

Growing threats of heretical groups, particularly the Cathari, led the Roman Catholic Church to use the secular authority, of physical penalties, and of an inquisitional method as means of suppression. Pope Alexander III at the Council of Tours (1163) asked secular princes to prosecute

the heretics, imprison them and confiscate their property without following the earlier method of prosecution on the basis of complaints by an accuser. The older method was replaced by the method of inquest where the judge took the initiative. The accused was not allowed legal defence. Pope Gregory IX, through a series of actions from 1231 to 1235, imposed a formal organisation for inquisition whereby the apprehension and trial of heretics was reserved to the Church and major responsibility for such work was given to the Inquisitor. Pope Gregory IX is generally known as the one who established the Inquisition. If the Inquisition found a person guilty, he was handed over to the secular authority for burning. The Church did not officially participate in shedding blood. The property of the guilty was confiscated. Milder punishments like imprisonment, confiscation of property, wearing a yellow cross, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, flagellation, and pilgrimage were also imposed.

It has already been mentioned that the immediate motive behind Inquisition was the growing influence of the heretics, especially the Cathari. The Cathars are a widespread heretical sect of the middle ages. Their analogues can be found in the Islamic world as well. In the East the Cathars were known as Bogomils and Paulicians; in the West as Patarenes, Tixerands, Bulgars, Concorricks, Albanenses, Alibigeois, etc. These sects, however, very often cut across the lines of the Cathars and the Manicheans. The Cathars were dualists; they rejected marriage and sexual intercourse, practicing a rigid asceticism. Their influence on the Catholic Church was enormous. The Catholic Church had been toying with the idea of celibacy for long. It was Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) who renewed decrees against simony and clerical marriage and desired a strong adherence to the same. The Catholics imposed celibacy to counteract the influence of the Cathars; out of this the great Christian mendicants evolved. The Roman Catholic Church tried to show to the people they could beat the Cathars in their own game of celibacy and asceticism. In France the most important group of Cathars was known as the Alibigensians. They were adherents of a religion derived from the teaching of Mani who lived in Persia in the third century. They were strict dualists and their strongest centre was at Albi in Languedoc. From "Albi" they derived the sobriquet "Albigensians." Despite inquisition, heresy hunting and excommunication of the heretics, the Albigensians could neither be suppressed nor could they be forced to accept Roman Catholic Christianity. Pope Innocent III (1160-1216) launched a Crusade against them.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, April 1994.

A Brief History of Humanism
The Crusades

The desire to acquire knowledge and culture of the past still vaguely remembered, in spite of being doctored by St. Augustine and his successors, made its appearance with renewed vigour round about the time of Charlamagne (742-814); the Greek and Roman peripatetic and later, the influence of Arab *Aufklarung* cannot be lost sight of. But the vigour of this reawakening started ebbing in the labyrinth of theological disputations and nit-picking. Education became almost a private reserve of the clergy. Only in Italy, side by side of the cathedral schools, there were institutions run by laymen owing to the demand to know more about medicine, law and commerce, in particular; institutions run by laymen came into existence. This gave Italy the honour of establishing the institution which can be called the first semblance of a university in medieval Europe. The University of Pavia celebrated its eleven hundredth anniversary in 1925. The institution was founded by Lothaire – a grandson of the redoubtable Charlamagne. The Justinian code of law was taught in these institutions. The influence of the Justinian codes became so pronounced that St. Barnard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) observed that the courts of Europe reverberated with Justinian law; and that they no longer listened to the law of God. Early in the 13th century Accursius summed up the explorations in law of his predecessors in his *Glossa Ordinaria* which became the standard authority by which the kings and communes broke away from feudal law, and raised their voice against the Popes.

The Justinian Code acknowledges the ecclesiastical authority of the Church. But at the same time it proclaimed the supremacy of the emperor over the Church. It held that all laws, ecclesiastical as well as secular, had their fountainhead in the throne. Hence the Code could contain laws against the transgressions of the Clergy. In Code 1.xiv, 34 it specified penalties for clerics who gambled or attended the theatre or the games. Though the clerics, by and large, followed the codes as given by the Popes, there were occasional rebels. But most of them moved within the periphery traced by the Popes. The clerics started naming the heretics. There were instances of mob lynching of some heretics long before the Church started persecuting the heretics. Seeing the instances of mob lynching of some heretics, Pope Leo IX (1049-1054) (*Leo IX was the Catholic Church's 151st pope. He served from February 12, 1049, until his death on April 19, 1054. He was declared a saint by the Church, and his feast day is April 19* – Ed.) held that excommunication should be the only punishment of the heretics. He also toyed with the idea of a triple alliance between the papacy, the holy Roman empire and Byzantium. But before he could fulfil his dreams, he was defeated by the Normans and taken a prisoner in 1053. Pope Leo IX died in 1054. After this there was a succession of Popes. In the appointment of these Popes Hildebrand, who became the Pope in 1073 under the name of Gregory VII had a heavy hand.

In February, 1075 a synod of Italian bishops at Rome, under the leadership of Gregory, issued decrees against simony, clerical marriage, and lay investiture. Gregory revived the Justinian Code with his own additions. This he did possibly to close the doors of earthly desires to the clergy. Possibly he thought that the clergy without earthly desires would be a dedicated lot. He desired to bring all Christians of the western world under his own rule. This brought him into conflict with King Philip Augustus of France and Henry IV of Germany who took him a prisoner. Norman Robert Guiscard, who had a Norman kingdom in southern Italy, freed Gregory. In the meanwhile, Henry had consecrated Guilbert as Pope Clement III in Rome. This Pope crowned Henry as emperor. Gregory after he was freed by Guiscard could not get back to Rome, he shifted his seat to Avignon. Gregory died on May 25, 1085, his dream of an all-powerful church remaining unfulfilled. Within 10 years time after the death of Gregory, Pope Urban (1088-1099) was acknowledged as the Pope and

head of Christendom. It was he who as the head of Christian Europe brought about that synthesis of Christianity, decaying feudalism, chivalry and desire for territorial expansion which is known as the Crusades.

The idea of freeing the Holy Land from the hands of the Muslims started gathering momentum from the time of Pope Sylvester II (c. 945-1003) who inspired an abortive expedition to Syria. Pope Gregory VII declared that he would rather sacrifice his life in delivering places from the clutches of the infidels than reign over the universe. Pope Gregory VII, however, got too much involved in bringing Christian kings and feudal lords together. He even wedged wars for this purpose. Pope Urban took up the cause in right earnest and made fervent appeals narrating half-truths, invectives and innuendoes against Muslim occupation of the Holy Land. Phantasmagoric and terrifying stories on the persecution of the pilgrims to the Holy Land were circulated when the peaceful Christian pilgrims were seldom harassed by the Muslims as a political power. But finding that even the horrible stories were not enough to mobilise the masses of people, Pope Urban absolved all those who joined the Crusades from commitment of any transgression, freed the serfs and vassals who joined the Crusades from fealty to their lords, and assured them the privilege of being tried by the ecclesiastical courts instead of manorial courts. He also assured the Crusaders the protection of their properties in their absence. In addition to the stories of Muslim atrocities and blasphemies, juicy and salacious anecdotes were told of the dark beauties of the orient waiting to be taken by brave men. The fabulous wealth of the orient was very much in circulation as a great inducement.

In the beginning of the 2nd millennium A.D., the Seljuk Turks were advancing and threatening Byzantium. Belaboured by the Seljuks, Emperor Alexius of Byzantium appealed to Pope Urban for help though the Great Schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Church had already taken place in 1054. Yet Pope Urban found it expedient to extend his helping hand to Byzantium. He mobilised the Christians of Western Europe and launched the Crusades. Meanwhile, western Mediterranean was already taken by Christian powers from the Spanish Moors. The Christian powers started making inroads into eastern Mediterranean not only with a view to expanding their territorial possessions but also for the easy flow of their commercial activities.

Pope Urban fixed august, 1096 as the time of departure of the Crusaders. Enthused by promises of heavenly rewards and mundane benefits, the general populace, mostly illiterate and steeped in superstitions and non-rational beliefs, became impatient. In March 1096, a motley crowd of some 20,000 people set out from France under the leadership of Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless. Another crowd started from Germany under the leadership of a priest called Gottschalk; still another bunch of people advanced from Rhineland under Count Emco of Leiningen. Even women and children joined them. Pope Urban's slogan *Dieu li volt* (God wills it) became the war cry. The Crusaders started with very little funds which were soon exhausted. They marched like locusts ravaging everything on their route so much so that many people resisted them violently. But the 'God intoxicated' people marched on and reached Constantinople. Emperor Alexius was aghast at the sight of the pillaging mob. He was eager to get rid of them. He provided them with vessels to cross the Bosporus and asked them to wait on the other side till further reinforcement arrived. But they advanced to Nicaea where they were annihilated by the Turks. Disappointed with the uncontrollable hordes, Peter the Hermit returned to Constantinople. Yet another horde of Crusaders, who escaped annihilation at Nicaea and did not go to Nicaea, reached Jerusalem in 1099. The first Crusade lasted from 1095 to 1099. The ambition of the Crusaders was fulfilled when under the leadership of Godfrey of Bouillon or Boulogne, the Crusaders captured Jerusalem and made it the capital of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem; and it continued to remain so till 1187 when Saladin re-conquered it for the Muslims. Since that time, except from 1229 to 1239, and from 1243 to 1244, the city had been held by the Muslims.

After the first Crusade several Crusades were launched. 2nd Crusade (1146-48); 3rd (1189-92); 4th (1202-04); 5th (1217-21); 6th (1228-29); 7th (1248-54); 8th (1270); 9th (1271-72). In addition to these 'official' Crusades there were some unofficial Crusades. The sordid story of unofficial Crusades can be found in what is known as the 'Children's Crusades'. They show how the propaganda of the fanatics can affect the minds even of children.

In 1212 a German youth called Nicholas claimed that God had commanded him to lead a Crusade of Children to the Holy Land. Despite opposition from the clergy and the parents, Nicholas could collect about 3000 children whose average age was 12 years. They marched from Cologne and after facing starvation reached Genoa. On the way many died. Pope Innocent III, who was an ardent votary of the Crusades, found the crowd of children unsuitable for his purpose and asked them to go back to their homes. Some preferred to remain in Genoa and the survivors were absorbed in the unskilled labour force. The rest went back to their homes.

In the same year a twelve year old boy, Stephen, announced before Philip Augustus, King of France, (1165-1223) that Christ had appeared before him and bidden him to lead a Crusade to the Holy Land. King Philip ordered him to go back to his home. But by that time he had collected a crowd of some 2000 children who refused to abide by Philip's orders and marched to Marseille where the sea did not make way as promised by Stephen. Two ship-owners found an opportunity to utilise these children for their own profit. The ship-owners offered to take them to their destination without charge. They were put into 7 ships. Two of the ships were wrecked in the sea. And the remaining five reached the coasts of Egypt where the children were sold as slaves. Subsequently the ship-owners were rounded up and hanged by order of Frederick II (1194-1250), Roman Emperor as well as King of Sicily. The children's Crusades are eloquent testimonies to unreason's conquest of the minds of even children.

It is worth noting that "None of the great sovereigns of Europe embarked their persons in the first Crusade. The emperor Henry the Fourth was not disposed to obey the summons of the Pope; Philip the First of France was occupied by his pleasures; the kings of Spain were engaged in domestic wars against the Moors; and the northern monarchs of Scotland, Denmark, Sweden and Poland were yet strangers to the passions and interests of the South. The religious ardour was more felt by the princes of the second order, who held important places in the feudal system." (Gibbon – Vol. V, pp. 91-92).

A savage fanaticism motivated the Crusades. About the 11th century the tide of civilisation which, for various reasons had so long ebbed, began to flow with a steady and accelerated course; and a fairer prospect was opened to the hopes and efforts of the rising generations.

> Great was the increase, and rapid the progress, during the two hundred years of crusades; and some philosophers have applauded the propitious influence of these holy wars, which appear to me to have checked rather than forwarded the maturity of Europe. The lives and labours of millions, which were buried in the East, would have been more profitably employed in the improvement of their native country; the accumulated stock of industry and wealth would have overflowed in navigation and trade; and the Latinos would have been enriched and enlightened by a pure and friendly correspondence with the climates of the east. In one respect I can perceive the accidental operation of the crusades, not so much in producing a benefit as in removing an evil. The larger proportion of the inhabitants of Europe was chained to the soil, without freedom, or property, or knowledge; and the orders of ecclesiastics and nobles, alone deserved the name of citizens and men. This oppressive system was supported by the acts of the clergy and the sword of the barons. The authority of the priests operated in the

> darker ages as a salutary antidote; they prevented the total extinction of letters, mitigated the fierceness of the times, sheltered the poor and defenceless, and preserved or revived the peace and order in civil society. But the independence and discord of the feudal lords were unmixed with any semblance of good and every hope, industry and improvement was crushed by the iron weight of the martial aristocracy. Among the causes that undermined the Gothic edifice, a conspicuous place must be allowed to the crusades. The estates of the barons were dissipated, and their race was often extinguished, in these costly and perilous expeditions. Their poverty extorted from them those charters of freedom which unlocked the fetters of the slave, secured the farm of the peasant and the shop of the artificer, and gradually restored a substance and a s soul to the most numerous and useful part of the community. The conflagration which destroyed the tall and barren trees of the forest gave air and scope to the vegetation of the smaller and nutritive plants of the soil. (Ibid., pp. 193-194).

We have quoted Gibbon at length as he is the most perceptive and exhilarating historian of the period with which we are concerned.

The chief person in a feudal system was the king. The feudal lords chafed under the king whose authority was supported by the church. Coronation of many a king was confirmed by the popes, but in England a momentous development took place in 1215 and forced king John to sign the celebrated Magna Carta. Though the Magna Carta enshrines mainly the powers of the feudal lords, it laid the foundation of the liberties enjoyed by the democratic world today. It safeguarded the basic human rights, extolled *habeas corpus* and trial by jury providing a frame-work for arming the people against tyranny and paving the way for the transformation of absolute monarchy into a constitutional one. The incipient Parliament was given power of the purse. Though Article 60 of the great charter guaranteed basic freedoms even to the laity, it remained for a long time only as a pious wish and took ages to get down to the masses of people.

While the Crusaders were shedding their blood in answer to the 'call of God', the kings and feudal lords were taking advantage of the upheaval. Small kingdoms were formed; Emperor Alexius of Byzantium, whom Gibbon compared with "the jackal who is said to follow the steps, and devour the leavings of the lion" extended his domain from the Hellespont to the banks of Maemander and the rocky shores of Pamphylia without participating in the Crusades.

Though the Crusades are eloquent testimonies to human credulity, stupidity and truculence, yet they opened some possibilities. The wealth of the Church was in land and not in trade. As a matter of fact, the Church scorned the merchants as much as the feudal lords. In the turmoil caused by the Crusades, the traders and money-lenders were making it good for themselves. The Western Mediterranean provided ample scope for the traders. In the wake of the Crusades they were importing silk and other goods from the East. New technologies from the East were picked up and introduced in Europe. The art of fortification took a new turn. Among the crowd of unthinking fanatics, a captive or a pilgrim observed the superior refinements of Cairo and the Eastern world. In 1105, the windmill, first invented in the dry country of Asia Minor, was used in Normandy. In the age of the Crusades the Church and feudal kings and lords viewed with careless indifference the literature of the Greeks, the orient and Egypt, already introduced by the impact of the Arabs and the dispersal of the ancient seats of learning. Each Crusader aspired to return with his spoils, the relics of Greece, Palestine and Egypt, which was preceded and followed by a train of miracles and visions. The faith of the Catholics got contaminated by new legends and their practice got superstitious. As abuser of indulgence the mendicant order of monks and friars, which was already incipient, made strides. Financial constraints because of the Crusades forced the Church and feudal kings and lords to borrow money. Finances

were readily available from the Jewish merchants and money-lenders who did not exhaust their resources by indulging in the stupid 'holy wars'.

After the dispersal of the Jews from their home-land, they migrated to different countries of Europe and the Egyptian peninsula and even to India. They stuck together wherever they had the required number and pursued their own life-style. They went for different peaceful activities like education, trade, commerce and money-lending, etc. many of them became financiers to the feudal lords, kings and the Church. Under these conditions the Church, the feudal lords and kings found it expedient to bolster anti-Jew feelings. The Jews were the only people who were neither serfs, nor feudal lords, nor members of the Christian Church. Fantastic stories of Jewish participation in the Crucifixion of Jesus were circulated forgetting that Christ himself belonged to the Jewish people who were not against him. We read in St. Luke how the Jews welcomed Jesus in Jerusalem, how they smote their breasts when Jesus was carrying his Cross and how they lamented when Jesus was crucified. The propagandists also overlooked the fact that though Judas betrayed Jesus, he was the solitary exception in a collection of people who had the last supper with him. Yet the Roman Catholic clergy identified all Jews present in the last supper with Judas. They Jews were too powerless to stop Jesus' crucifixion.

Finding that economic jealousy was not enough to mobilize the people against the Jews whose contributions to the general cultural development of Europe cannot be overrated, the Clergy deliberately distorted history. Persecution of the Jews has a long history.

In A.D. 132-135 the Jews who lost their independence to pagan Roman imperialism revolted under the leadership of Bar Kochba. But the revolt was suppressed by emperor Hadrian and the persecution and dispersal of the Jews from their home-land started with a renewed vigour. Since that time persecution of the Jews went on by fits and starts. Romans complained against Jewish separatism, Jehova's claim to exclusiveness as well as Jewish image-free worship and their stubborn attachment to ritual purity. The Christians, soon after they had the political hegemony, took up the anti-Jew stance. Emperors Constantine, Theodosius and Justinian degraded the Jews to lesser citizenship. Yet Pope Gregory the great (A.D. 590-604) suggested that the best course to win over the loyalty of the Jews was not persecution but favours. This idea was seldom practiced; and the pogroms started with a renewed vigour during the time of the Last Crusade which pushed the Jews into still more inferior positions. The first terrible persecution of the Jews in the middle ages took place in A.D. 1196-1215. In 1215 the Lateran Council prohibited the Jews from holding any office and passed decrees governing even the apparel of the Jews so that they were easily identifiable. Frederick II designated the Jews as 'servants of the chamber'. He bastardised the concept of 'servants of God', which was to be understood mostly in spiritual terms, and gave it a juristic interpretation. *Servitus camerae* – personal and economic dependence on the emperor – was made the law.

The Jews were expelled from England in A.D. 1209; from France in 1306. A ruthless pogrom was pursued in Germany from A.D. 1347 to 1354 and many Jewish communities were destroyed. The Jews were expelled from Spain under orders from the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada; they were expelled from Portugal in 1496. Orders for expulsion did not, however, last long; and Jews resettled themselves in the countries from where they were expelled. Be that as it may, the persecution of the Jews continued intermittently. Under Hitler, Germany witnessed the most gory spectacle of persecution of the Jews. Millions of Jews were just exterminated through inhuman torture. Soviet Russia under the Communists followed the pogrom though in a less horrifying degree. After the defeat of the Fascists in the 2nd world war, persecution of the Jews abated in most of the countries; but Soviet Russia continued to perpetrate the crime. All this happened throughout history even when the Jews contributed so much towards the economic, cultural and scientific developments of man in general.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, May 1994.

A Brief History of Humanism
The Inquisition

We have cursorily surveyed how human reason through many tribulations, ups and down, registered its onward march toward the freedom of the individual. The worst challenge to individual freedom in medieval Europe was put by what is known as the Inquisition. 'The Inquisition' is the name given to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction to deal with the detection and punishment of heretics and all persons guilty of any offence against catholic orthodoxy. Its beginnings can be traced back to the origins of Christianity. St. Paul (1 Tim.i, 20) "delivered unto Satan" Hymenaeus and Alexander, "that they might learn not to blaspheme." The Old Testament laid down a simple code for dealing with heretics. We read in Deuteronomy and Exodus:

> If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer ... saying, 'let us go after other gods ... that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death... If thy brother ... or thy son, or thy daughter, or thy wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, let us go and serve other gods ... thou shall not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; but though shalt surely kill him (Deuternomy xiii, 1-9)... Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. (Exodus xxii, 18)

We further read in Deuteronomy xvii, 25 that if three witnesses testified to a person's having "gone to other gods," he was to be led out from the city and "stoned with stones till" he dies. Even Jesus seems to have acquiesced to this tradition. For, we read in the Gospel of St. John (xx, 6) that "If anyone abide not in me, he shall be cast as a branch, and shall wither; and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and burneth." Such statements, however, were taken only as metaphorical expressions of spiritual excommunication.

There must have been cases of physical persecution of the heretics or else we cannot explain the rejection of the very idea by many early Christian fathers like Origen (Origenes Adamantius) (c. A.D. 185-c. 254) and Lactantius (c. A.D. 240- c 320) who rejected the whole idea of punishing, spiritually or otherwise, the heretics. It is also to be pointed out that in the first three centuries of the rise of Christianity, the Christians had no political power. Even emperor Constantine the Great (c. 274/280-337) inaugurated an era of official tolerance in his Milan edict (A.D. 313). But from the time of Valentinian I (A.D. 364) and Theodosius I (A.D. 379) onwards, laws against heretics increased with surprising regularity. The office of the Inquisitor was first instituted by Theodosius. When no accuser was found to denounce the offender, the Roman judge acted both as the inquirer and persecutor. Thus an old custom which could be found even in ancient Greece was given an official recognition. The custom of banishing or killing a heretic is a legacy of tribal life. In ancient Greece *asebeia*, failure to worship the gods of the Hellenic pantheon, was a capital crime.

In fifty years after Theodosius decree a few small groups of Manichaenians and Donatists faced death for their heretical views while others were subjected to exile or confiscation of property and deprived of the right to inherit. Within the Church only Opatus (A.D. fourth century) approved of the violent repression of the heretics, especially of the Donatists. St. Augustine admitted punishment like scourging, fines or exile to the heretics. When Priscillian of Spain was put to death in A.D. 385 by order of emperor Maximus in connivance with some Spanish bishops, it raised vigorous protests from many Christian fathers like St. Martin of Tours (c. 335-400), St. Ambrose (c. 339-397), and many others. St. Ambrose held that a heretic should be deprived of the liberty of speech and their assemblies should be dissolved. But he thought that "to put a heretic to death

would be to introduce upon earth an inexplicable crime." Till the 9th century the heterodox, with the exception of some Manichaeans and Donatists, were hardly subjected to persecution. By the beginning of the 1st millennium the Cathars spread themselves throughout Christendom. The Cathars derived their origin from a 3rd century Roman. The Cathars were called Bogomiles in Bulgaria and Albigensians in France. They were an ascetic sect and rejected marriage and sexual intercourse and practiced a rigid asceticism. The theology of the Cathars shows a fusion of Polician, Euchite and ascetic mysticism from the East. 13 Cathars were burnt in Orlelans in 1022 under orders from King Robert. After A.D. 1022 there were numerous cases of execution of the heretics. It is, however, difficult to establish the role of the Church in these executions. Most of the executions were done either by mob fury or by orders of the king. Being aghast at the horrible executions, Pope Leo IX (1002-1054) held that excommunication should be the only punishment of heresy. It was Pope Innocent III (1160-1216) who in the Lateran Council registered the most blatant trampling over sense and humanity by establishing trans-substantiation and the Inquisition, revived from the earlier Roman emperors.

Pope Gregory IX in a series of actions gave a formal organisation to the Inquisition and set procedure whereby the apprehension and trial of heretics was reserved to the Church; and the major responsibility of such work was given to papal Inquisition. In 1227 Gregory appointed a board of inquisitors, headed by a Dominican monk.

The Dominican order was founded by Dominic (1170-1221) to defend the Roman Catholic Church against the Albigensians and other heretics. The Dominicans did fantastic work in the teaching of languages such as Hebrew, Greek and Arabic. Many of the leaders of European thought in Europe of the middle ages were Dominicans. Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas were Dominicans. They were particularly chosen by the Pope for preaching Crusades, collecting monetary levies, and the execution of various diplomatic missions. The activity which detracted from their popularity as pious men of letters was their involvement in the work of the Inquisition. The Dominicans with their scholarship provided apologetics for papal crudities.

Pope Gregory in a series of actions gave a formal structure to the Inquisition and set procedures whereby the apprehension and trial of heretics was reserved to the Church; and major responsibility for such work was given to papal Inquisition. In 1227 Gregory appointed a board of inquisitors, headed by a Dominican monk. From 1220 to 1239 the German emperor Frederick II supported by Pope Honorius and above all by Pope Gregory IX defined his jurisprudence more clearly and formulated the penalties of death, banishment and confiscation of property against the heretics. Pope Gregory felt Frederick II's influence as well as that of Dominican Guala, bishop of Brecia, who had subjected his area under his Episcopal jurisdiction to the full rigour of the law of Frederick II. Pope Gregory IX not only accepted the laws of Frederick but also made some additions of his own. New methods of inquiry and judgement were introduced. Out of the material furnished by the mendicant orders, especially by the Dominicans, Gregory instituted the monastic Inquisition. Heresy hunting started in right earnest. The Pope's commissioners travelled from place to place in search of heretics. Later inquisitorial districts were formed. The seat of the Inquisition in each district was the monastery either of the Dominicans or of the Franciscans. The procedure was secret and arbitrary in the highest degree. The judgement, however, was pronounced after consulting leading men of the district. This was the only protection for the accused. Very often civil lawyers tried to impress that the secular authorities had a right to see the documents bearing on the case; the Inquisition, however, always succeeded in setting aside such claims. Peter, a Dominican and an inquisitor, was murdered near Milan in 1252. The murderers were tried not as assassins, but as guilty of heresy and opponents of the Inquisition.

The Church never sentenced anyone to death following the motto: *ecclesia abhorret a sanguine* – the Church shrinks from blood. It asked the secular authorities to execute the sentence and

inflict "due penalty" with a proviso to "avoid bloodshed." Hence started the most heinous abomination – burning on the stake. A man could be murdered provided his blood was not shed. By the 13th century, an addition was made – the witches came under Inquisition and witch-hunting became a pastime of the clergy and their agents. Joan of Arc, the maid of Orleans, was burnt on the stake on a charge of being a witch. The Jews were infidels; but they became heretics when they attacked Christian faith or community, made proselytes, or returned to Judaism after being converted. Those who practised usury were "suspected of not holding very orthodox doctrine as to theft." They also came under the Inquisition.

Among subsidiary penalties imposed by the Inquisition, the condemnation of books may be mentioned. Under Constantine's orders Arian writings were burnt. And the same was done to the books of the Nestorians and Manichaeans by Theodosius II and Valentinian III. Justinian burnt the *Talmud*. Books of David of Dinant and *Periphyseon* of Aristotle faced the same fate in 1210. In 1255 William of St. Amour's book *De periculis novisimorum temporum* was burnt under order from Pope Alexander IV. It may be mentioned that St. Amour, whose full name was Guillaume de St. Amour, died in 1272. He was a canon of Beauvis and rector of the University of Paris. He was one of the main mouthpieces of the secular clergy in their attacks on the mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans.

The purpose and scope of the Inquisition are very succinctly expressed by a bull of Nicholas III (1280). The bull, *inter alia*, says:

> We hereby excommunicate and anathematize all heretics – Cathari, Patarines, Poor Men of Lyons ... and all others, by whatever name they may be called. When condemned by the Church they shall be given over to secular judge to be punished ... If any, after being seized, repent and wish to do penance, they shall be imprisoned for life. ... All who receive defend, or aid heretics shall be excommunicated. If anyone remains under excommunication a year and a day, he shall be proscribed... If those who are suspected of heresy cannot prove their innocence, they shall be excommunicated. If they remain under the ban of excommunication for a year, they shall be condemned as heretics. They shall have no right to appeal ... Whoever grants them Christian burial shall be excommunicated until he makes proper satisfaction. He shall not be absolved until he has with his own hands dug up their bodies and cast them forth ... we prohibit all laymen to discuss matters of the Catholic faith; if anyone does so he shall be excommunicated. Whoever knows of heretics, or of those who hold secret meetings, or of those who do not conform in all respects to the orthodox faith, shall make it known to his confessor, or to someone else who will bring it to the knowledge of the bishop or the inquisitor. If he does not do so he shall be excommunicated. Heretics and all who receive support or aid them, and all their children to the second generation, shall not be admitted to an ecclesiastical office... we now deprive all such of their benefits forever.

From the point of view of economic history the importance of confiscation of property by the Inquisition cannot be neglected. Confiscation of property was very profitable to the feudal lords and kings. Lure for extension of property and wealth through confiscation under order from the Inquisition induced many feudal chiefs to uphold the Inquisition. In France there was a special officer, *the procureur des encours,* whose duty was to collect personal property of the heretics, and to incorporate their estates in the royal domain. Soon the papacy managed to gain a share of the spoils. The inquisitors had a direct interest in the spoliations. In France, Italy and Germany, the

property of all those convicted of heresy was shared between the lay and ecclesiastical authorities. Trade and commerce suffered as there was always a risk of uncertain transactions. There was a risk in entering into a contract in an atmosphere where existence of heretics was suspected, since any contract entered into with a heretic was void. Nor was there any security in the transmission of inheritance for posthumous trials were frequent.

Though the proximate cause of Inquisition is preparation for the Crusades, its history lies much deeper. Roman Catholic Church found its anchor in ancient ways of dealing with the heretics as it acquires more and more power and as it spread widely. The Church wanted to bring to books not only those who were outside its fold but also all the recalcitrant elements among its folk. The Inquisition had one of its ugliest manifestations in Spain, Though Spanish Inquisition was established as late as 1478, in its ferocity it surpassed many other Inquisitions. Under it no Spaniard felt safe. Even St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) and St. Theresa of Avila (1515-82) were investigated for heresy. Spain exported the Inquisition to her dominions. The most novel innovation of Spanish Inquisition was what is known as *Auto-Da-Fe* (fact of faith). It was the ceremony during the course of which the sentences of the Spanish Inquisition were read and executed. The punishment of death by burning was much more frequently employed by the Spanish Inquisition than by other Inquisitions. About 2000 persons were burnt in Torquemada's day. Juan de Torquemada (1388-1468) was a fantastic upholder of papal supremacy and was a Spanish theologian. Usually, those condemned to be burnt were strangled previously. The Spanish Inquisition, after a lot of struggle against it, was finally abolished in 1820. Before that in 1816, the Pope had abolished fortune in all the tribunals of the Inquisition.

Two features of the Spanish Inquisition are especially noteworthy: the prosecutions for "speeches suspected of heresy" and the "censure of books." All books had to pass through the hands of the bishops. Prohibited books were confiscated even from private libraries. In 1558 the penalty of death and confiscation of property was decreed against any book-seller or individual who kept in his possession condemned books. By 1551 an index of prohibited books was drawn up, later several editions of the same was published. It may be mentioned that even today the Vatican maintains an index of prohibited books. In Spain, however, the censure of books was eventually abolished in 1812. The Spanish Inquisition was also dead set against the mystics, while Rome was a little soft towards them. Mystics were persecuted in Germany and France during the 14th and 15th centuries. But when the Spanish Inquisition took it up, they did so with a vengeance. After the *Marranes* (Jews of Moors of Spain), mystics of all kinds furnished the greatest number of victims to the terrible Inquisition. A great number of apostate Moors were condemned by the Inquisition, sent to the gallows, or burnt on the flimsiest grounds, such as making ablutions during the day time, abstaining from pork or wine, using henna, singing Moorish songs, or possessing Arabic manuscripts. The Spanish Inquisition also pounced upon the Protestants and sent many of them to what the Inquisitors thought was perdition. The Spanish Inquisition did not spare even slight deviants from Christian orthodox beliefs. In retrospect, it may be said that Spain paid heavily for the depredations of the inquisitors. A family, into which a conversion or a mixed marriage had introduced Jewish or Moorish blood, was deprived of any chance of public office, and was constrained, in order to escape suspicion, to furnish agents or spies to the Holy office. Spanish Inquisition looked upon heresy as a national scourge to be destroyed at all costs.

Spain withdrew the Inquisition in 1820; but it seems that the Roman Catholic Church never withdrew the Inquisition. Owing to the rise of democratic norms, the Inquisition's power to dictate death penalty, incarceration, confiscation of property, inciting mob violence against those who did not agree with her, slid away from her hands. Incitement of violence also became an offence under secular law. And only the secular authority had the power to inflict any form of punishment to anyone who defied secular and ecclesiastical laws. The Roman Catholic Church, however,

continued to maintain its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* – the title of the official list of those books which on doctrinal grounds the Church authoritatively forbade the members of her communion to read or to possess. The Church, however, does not have any authority to punish the transgressor even here. Power to inflict punishment rests only with the secular authority.

The history of the *Index* can be traced back to *Notitia librorum apocryphorum qui recipiuntur*, the first reduction of which was made by Pope Gelaxius in A.D. 494. The *Notitia* went through several revisions, additions and alterations through ages and appeared as *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* with the approval of Pope Pius IV (A.D. 1499-1565). The work of condemning pernicious books and of correcting the *Index* to date rested, since the time of Pope Sixtus V (A.D. 1521-1590), with the "Congregation of the Index" which consisted of several cardinals, one of whom was the perfect, and several 'consultors' and 'examiner of books'. Through the ages the Church lost all authority to punish even the transgressors in this respect. It could only appeal to her congregation. It lost even its authority to organise mobs against those who wrote or published or possessed the *Indexed* books, as that would be tantamount to transgressions of secular laws.

Though throughout the major part of her history so far the Church had been clamouring against 'pernicious' books, yet individual Churchmen and even some Popes and Cardinals had encouraged secular learning and scientific investigations. It will be worth its while to recall the encouragement that some Church fathers gave even to Canon Copernicus in his scientific investigations and the stupendous work of translations from old classics that they did and the encouragement they provided to the rise of the local languages. Despite all this, one cannot forget the depredations of the Inquisition, the religious war-fares, mass massacres, looting and burning of properties, etc. sponsored or abetted by religious fanaticism. Just to cite an example of the infernal massacre of innocent people because their religious avocation was different from that of the power that be, we may cite the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day which started on the 24th of August, 1572 and cost the lives of innumerable people; their properties were looted, burnt and the survivors were left penny-less and homeless destitute. Hell was let loose. The massacre was sponsored by Catherine de Medici, a Catholic zealot queen. She received congratulations from all the Catholic powers for the wanton extermination of the Huguenots (Protestants). Pope Gregory XIII commanded bonfire to be lighted and medal to be stuck in her honour. Politics became a handmaid of religious zealotry. Even the great University, without having advised the massacre, did not hesitate to justify the diabolical dead.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, June 1994.

A Brief History of Humanism
The Library

A library is a place in which literary, musical, artistic and reference materials as books manuscripts, recordings, or films, etc. are kept for use but not for sale. Since the beginning of writing men have been collecting written materials either for their own use or for the use of the institutions in all civilisations. In India the oral tradition became respectable. Yet, the Buddhists and the Pundits had their collection of books. There were vast collections of books in the Buddhist institutions in Taxila, Nalanda and such other places. Most of these collections were shifted outside India to countries like Ceylone, Tibet, China, etc., when the Brahman cal reaction against Buddhism became preponderant. Be that as it may, in the western ancient world the most celebrated library was that of Alexandria founded by Ptolemy Scoter, but it was his son, Ptolemy Philadelphia who organised the libraries properly.

Ptolemy Scoter was a trusted general of Alexander, the Great. After the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., Ptolemy became the satrap of Egypt with his capital in Alexandria, and erected a grand temple to Serapes, the Greco-Egyptian God. His policy was to find a deity that would win the reverence of both the Greeks and the Egyptians. The idol was proclaimed as the anthropomorphic replica of the Egyptian beast-divinity, the dead Apes, assimilated as Osiris. It is also likely that he established the library following the ancient Egyptian Libraries whose history can be dated back to 5000 B.C. or so. But that is not all that the Ptolemies did to satisfy their Egyptian subjects. From Ptolemy II, the Ptolemies adopted the Paranoiac custom and married their own sisters. The progeny of such unions were the heir apparent. Under Ptolemy II the library system which was housed in at least two buildings became the repository of ancient wisdom. It formed the citadel for vigorous intellectual activity, and scholars from far off lands thronged in its portals.

When Caesar set fire to the fleet in the harbour, the fire extended to one of the library buildings. Caesar's general Marc Antony endeavoured to repair the loss and handed over the remaining collection of books as well as vast collection of books from Pergamum to Cleopatra. From that time the library continued to function and enrich itself for a few centuries.

In 389 or 391 roman Emperor Theodosius ordered the destruction of Serape as he thought that it was a citadel of paganism. And Theophilus (d. 412 A.D.), Patriarch of Alexandria, destroyed the grand library which Christian orthodoxy thought was the fountainhead of paganism, heretical ideas and a citadel of the infidels. Thus was perpetrated one of the most heinous affront against preservation and propagation of knowledge and scholarship.

In 640 A.D., 'Amr, a general of Caliph Omar, took Alexandria after a siege of 14 months. Before that in 616 A.D. Alexandria was taken by Chosroes, king of Persia. After taking Alexandria, 'Amr wrote to Omar that he had taken a city containing "4000 palaces, 4000 baths, 12000 dealers in fresh oil, 12000 gardens, 40000 Jews who pay tribute, 400 theatres or places of amusement." 'Amr nowhere mentions the library. The library was destroyed long before 'Amr's occupation.

More than six hundred years after the occupation of Alexandria by the Arabs, Bar-Hebraeus or Abul' Faraj, a maphrian or catholicus of the Jacobite (Monopysite) Church, wrote"

> John the grammarian, a famous Peripatetic philosopher, being in Alexandria at the time of its capture, and in high favour with 'Amr, begged that he would give him the royal library. 'Amr told him that it was not in his power to grant such a request, but promised to write to the Caliph for his consent. Omar, on hearing the request of his general, is said to have replied that if those books contained the same doctrine with the Koran, they could be of no use, since the Koran contained

> all necessary truths; but if they contained anything contrary to that book, they ought to be destroyed; and therefore, whatever the contents were, he ordered them to be burnt. Pursuant to this order, they were distributed among the public baths, of which there was a large number in the city, where, for six months, they served to supply the fires.

Bar-Hebraeus was born in 1226 A.D. and died in 1286 A.D. Bar-Hebraeus lived at a time when the crusades were in the middle of their throws. By that time stories of the great library and its destruction reached the western world. in order to generate more hatred to the Muslims, Bar-Hebraeus spread the canard that it was the Arabs who destroyed the Great library. Bar-Hebraeus was promoted to be maphrian by patriarch Ignatius III. The canard became so popular that ordinary text books on logic, even in India, contained Omar's supposed statement, as an exercise for rebutting the dilemma. The canard has been repeated by many western historians. This, however, is a typical instance of how religious orthodoxy shifts the blemish of their own forebears on others. Be that as it may, the destruction of the magnificent library at Alexandria could not stop secular pursuits. There were many smaller libraries in the western world as well as in the East, specially of the Arab world where considerable materials not only on theological learning but also on secular learning was preserved. The Arab world, Byzantium, the Mors of Spain, Christian monks in the monasteries contributed a lot in the preservation of reading material. By this time art of manufacturing paper was introduced through the Arab who learnt the art from China. An improved technique of binding books was also taken from the Arabs. These things made writing and copying of manuscripts and their preservation easier. Books became more easily available to the collectors and even to the laity.

After Justian's 'Caesaripapism' abolished the institutions in Athens in 529 A.D., scholars from thee migrated to different countries and the West and the Byzantium where the Greek language was cultivated and it became the official language of the Eastern Church. Though the language of the Eastern Church was considerably removed from Classical Greek, yet it had its vestiges. In western Europe, Salerno became a meeting-place of Greek, Latin, Arabic and Jewish culture with a strong Hebrew component. In northern Europe the medieval universities arose out of the cathedral schools. They were mostly assemblies of clerks. In Italy, however, the universities, though accommodating some clerks were generally lay. In both cases the appearance at the universities was a spectacular embodiment of the reawakening of rational interest. By the beginning of the 13th century two distinct formats of the University arose – The Bologna mode, where it was a students' guild and the Paris model where it was an assemblage of teachers, recognised scholars and academicians. The Universities became so important that it gave rise to the dictum that "There are three powers to guide the world - the *Sacredotum*, the *Regnum*, and the *Studiem*." Despite interference and opposition coupled with sponsorship and encouragement, both from the *Sacredotum* and the *Regnum,* the Universities gave ambple opportunity for learning as well as for ingenuity and rational discernments. The intellectual enthusiasm which gave birth to the Universities started tapering out. By the end of the 14th century intellectual adventure started sliding into mere routine.

Meanwhile, by the 12th century Aristotle had arrived in Europe in a Latin dress. Earlier in the 9th century the Arab thinkers sought a reconciliation between Islamic theology and Greek philosophy. Averroes (Abdul-Wahid Muhammad Ibn-Ahmad), who was born in 1126 and died in 1198, was a stalwart among those Arab thinkers who tried a reconciliation between Islamic theology and Greek thought, mainly Aristotle. His phenomenal fame aroused the jealousy of the Christian savants, many of whom tried to controvert him by propounding that the Christian scriptures are supported more by Aristotle than they do for Islamic theology. From 1150 to 1250 Catholic

theologians attempted a synthesis of Greek thought and catholic theology.

By the beginnings of the 13th century Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Physics* reached Paris and men like Amalric of Bene, David of Denant, and others were moved to attack such basic Christian dogmas as creation, miracles, personal immortality, etc. This led a Church Council at Paris to forbid reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Natural Philosophy* and of the commentaries thereon. The prohibition was repeated by a papal legate in 1215. Despite these prohibitions, Aristotle's influence continued to germinate so much so that the Fourth Council of the Lateran allowed the teaching of Aristotle's works on logic and ethics. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) assured the Church that Aristotle could be sterilised to support the orthodox Christian views. Paris became a battle-ground, as it were, of those who accepted Averroistic interpretations of Aristotle and those who followed the sterilised Aristotle of Thomas Aquinas. Siger (1235-1281) argued against Thomas in his *Against Those Famous Men of Philosophy, Albert and Thomas* that Averroes was more reliable than Albert and Thomas in their interpretation of Aristotle. He was condemned by the Inquisition, was imprisoned and murdered at Orvieto by a half-mad assassin. Despite anti-Thomism, respect for Aristotle continued. Aristotle, the greatest systematiser of human thought in the ancient world, had a seminal influence on the intellectual life of the medieval world. As late as 1583 When Giordano Bruno (1548-1600 A.D.) visited Oxford there still existed on its Statutes a provision that "Masters and bachelors who did not follow Aristotle faithfully were liable to a fine Five Shillings for every point of divergence, and for every fault committed against the *Organon.*" Bruno was imprisoned in 1593 for seven years, excommunicated on the 9th of February, 1600, and on the 17th was burned at the stakes. On the 9th of June, 1889, Romans unveiled a statue to him in the *Campo dei Fiori*, the very place where he was burned at the stake. Thus the Romans atoned for the crime that their forefathers committed. Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galileo (1564-1642) had to suffer humiliation and persecution for their anti-Aristotelian views. Owing to the rise of rationalism the obduracy of the Christian Church had already started relaxing despite the defenders of the Faith like Calvin (1509-1564) and his followers. Today the Church with minor exceptions, here and there, are more relaxed in matters relating to the mundane world though the Roman Catholic Church has not as yet withdrawn its ban on Darwin. The Church appears to have accepted St. Mathew's dictum: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." (Mathew, xxii, 21.)

(*To be continued*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist*****,** July 1994.

A Brief History of Humanism
Mini Renaissance

In the 12th century the western world witnessed a mini Renaissance which tapered out by the end of the 14th century. From the point of view of rising rationalism, the contributions of Roger Bacon (1214?-1294) cannot be overrated. Bacon studied at the University of Oxford and won the friendship of such eminent men like Adam de Mariso and Robert Grosseteste. Those were the days when the two prominent newly founded orders, Franciscan and Dominican, were full of enthusiasm. The oracle of the Franciscans was Alexander of Hales, while the Dominicans vouched by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. Because of the training that Bacon received and his studies of the Arab writers, he could see many defects in the systems of the scholastics. He shifted to Paris, the intellectual hub of those days. In 1250 he returned to Oxford and the Franciscan order over which ruled Bonaventura who did not like Bacon's telling that Physical science cannot be cultivated in the Aristotelian way: it cannot be studied by arguments deduced from propositions given by an authority or custom. Bonaventura commanded him to go back to Paris and place himself under the superintendence of the Franciscan Fathers so that he was cured of the bug of experimental science. He was forbidden to write anything for publication and languished in Paris for ten years. But Pope Clement IV, on hearing his reputation, asked Bacon to send him hi works. The fate of these works is not known. In 1268 he was permitted to return to Oxford where he concentrated his efforts on a vehement attack upon ignorance and the monks. The Franciscan order condemned his books in 1278. He was thrown into prison for 14 years. He died in 1294. Bacon's life shows how the Church Fathers tried to throttle all voices of dissent, rational explorations and adventures.

Bacon knew Greek, Hebrew and Latin and used translated Arabic sources by which he was profoundly influenced.

Bacon anticipated many things of modern science. Here are some excerpts from his writings:

> A fifth part of experimental science concerns the fabrication of instruments of wonderful excellent usefulness, such as machines for flying, or for moving vehicles without animals and yet with incomparable speed, or of navigation without horsemen more swiftly than would be thought possible through the hands of men ... (cf. Little, A.G. Roger Bacon Essays, p. 178.)

Bacon also visualised the possibility of flying machines. Possibly influenced by the reformed calendar, *djalali*, of the 12th century Islamic world, Bacon introduced reforms in the then existing Julian calendar. His capacious mind even anticipated modern application of mathematics to the sciences by insisting that thought experiment is the method of science; it does become fully scientific until it can reduce its conclusions to a mathematical form. He regrets the fashion of the learned of his time that a proposition is proved if it can be found in Aristotle and lists four causes of human error: frail and unworthy, long established custom, the sense of the ignorant crowed, and the hiding of one's ignorance under the show of wisdom. Bacon's ideas were far ahead of his time which saw the submergence of his brilliant insights into a sea of ignorance. His *Opus maius* is the greatest work of the 13th century. Yet the 13th century mixed theology with science, superstition with observation and thought findings were not found in Aristotle. Knowledge extends from facts and increases by experimentation, protecting itself against deductive theorising. Bacon was also an enthusiast for the recovery of lost learning of yore which found a treasure trove in translations mostly from Arabic sources and often through the mediation of the Jews. The 12th and 13th centuries were a golden age of translators. Some translations were made directly from Greek by

men like Robert Grosseteste (1253), William Moerbeke (1286) and others. These translations were not confined to divinity only; many were those on strictly secular subjects. It was during this period that the Arabic numerals were introduced in Europe. Until A.D. 1204, the chief centre, where these translations were done, was in Toledo in Spain where Christian, Muslim and Jewish teachers, scholars and students met together. These translations had widespread influence throughout the western world. One cannot think of a Dante without these translations.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) is one of the greatest thinkers of the world. in his *De Monarchia* he argued that since the proper function of man is intellectual activity which can work only in peace, an ideal government would be that which will guarantee universal peace and uniform justice. He also advocated the sovereignty of the state in matters secular. The book was banned in 1329 and was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in the 16th century. It was, however, removed from there by Pope Leo XIII in 1897.

Though Dante did not know Arabic, yet there are unmistakable indications of his acquaintance with Islamic thought and theology – things which he might have had picked up either from translations or from the general atmosphere around him which was surcharged with Arabic and other influences. Italy of his time did not chafe under the stranglehold of insularity. In this of Arda Viraf's ascension to heaven, the description of hell in the Koran, the anecdote of Prophet Mohammad's trip to heaven and hell in Abu-l-Ala al-Ma'arri's *Rishalat al-Ghufran*, the *Futuhat* of Ibn Arabi, who drew precise diagram of life hereafter, described the hell below and heaven above Jerusalem, wrote about the nine levels of hell and heaven, portrayed the mystic rose and wrote about the choirs of angels round the Divine Light, etc. Dante had a polyglotic mind and absorbed the legends, influences, anecdotes, and everything of his time. But his touch transformed all these which formed integral parts of that grand orchestra called the *Divine Comedy*. Dante had a scattering knowledge of al-Farabi, Avicenna, al-Ghazali and Averoes. He accepted St. Thomas' emphasis on the Beatfic Vision as the final and only satisfying goal of man. He also blended together Virgil, the Greek classics, and many, many other things in his fiery and passionate imagination.

Italy of Dante's time was fervent with intellectual activity and a jest for explorations in all fields. It was at this time that Niccolo Pisano introduced Greek sculpture in Italy and Giovani Cimabue (1240?-1302) laid the foundation of Italian art on which its edifice rested for almost three subsequent centuries. A bevy of learned men gathered round Cosimo de' Medici among whom was Niccolo de' Niccoli (1363-1437) and Giovanni Boccacio (1313-1375). Petrarch was expelled from Florence for supporting the minority there. Earlier, by a decree of 2nd of January, 1302 Dante was condemned to lifelong exile for similar reasons. Exiled Petrarch struggled in poverty, continued with his studie4s and was constrained to take orders. In due time, he advanced to the rank of priest. After a hectic life as an exile, he established himself at Vaucluse where he began a life of solitary study coupled with communion with nature in her loneliest and widest moods. The reputation of his epic, *Africa*, and of his sonnets and poems travelled far and wide. As a sequel to this he was given the poet's crown in the Capitol by a Roman senator in April, 1341. In Petrarch the ancient and modern eras met together and a new stadium for the human spirit, the Renaissance, was opened.

Petrarch formed a firm friendship with Boccaccio (1313-1375) who carried his admiration for Petrarch to the point of worship. It was primarily because of Boccaccio's efforts that in the spring of 1351 Petrarch was invited to accept the rectorship of the newly founded university and his rights as a citizen of Florence were restored. He was also offered restitution of his patrimony. But Petrarch declined both the offers. Petrarch had varied experience as ambassador to different courts of Europe. But nothing could distract him from his primary vocation – pursuit of scholarship and literature.

At Avignon both Petrarch and Boccaccio came into contact with Barlaam, a great scholar in

Greek, from whom Petrarch studied the Greek language. Barlaam had to return to Greece where he provoked the wrath of swarms of fanatic monks by attempting to substitute faith by the light of reason. He returned to Naples after a lapse of three years and on Petrarch's recommendation settle in a small bishopric in his native Calabria.

In 1360 Leo or Leontius Pilatus came to Avignon and Petrarch and Boccaccio became his close students. On Boccaccio's recommendation Leo became the first Greek professor to teach that language in a Western University. With his help Boccaccio produced a literal prose version of the Iliad and Odyssey – a translation much appreciated by Petrarch himself. But Leo was a turbulent character and could not settle down anywhere for long. In one of his journeys in the Adriatic he was struck dead by a flash of lightning. When the news reached Petrarch, he wept but was most anxious to learn whether some copy of Euripides of Sophocles which Leo might have had carried with him might not be saved from the hand of the mariners. The faint rudiments of Greek learning which Petrarch and Boccaccio encouraged soon withered. But by the end of the 14th century there was a revival of Greek learning. Among those who laboured for the revival of Greek learning the most prominent is Manuel Chrysoloras who migrated from Constantinople and opened a school at Florence. Thanks to the background work already done by Petrarch and Boccaccio among others, the school became very popular and the school was attended by a crowd of students among who was Leonard Aretin who wrote eloquently on his life at the school.

> I was a student of the civil law; but my soul was inflamed with the love of letters; and I bestowed my application on the sciences of logic and rhetoric. On the arrival of Manuel, I hesitated whether I should desert my legal studies, or relinquish this golden opportunity; and thus, in the ardour of youth, I communed with my own mind – Wilt thou be wanting to thyself the fortune? Wilt thou refuse to be introduced to a famil9ar converse with Homer, Plato, Demosthenes? With those poets, philosopher, and orators of whom such wonders are related, and who are celebrated by every age as the great masters of human science? Of professors and scholars of civil law, a sufficient supply will always be found in our universities; but a teacher, and such a teacher, of the Greek language, if he once be suffered to escape, may never afterwards be retrieved. Convinced by these reasons, I gave myself to Chrysoloras; and so strong was my passion, that the lessons which I had imbibed in the day were the constant subject of my nightly dreams. (Quoted by Gibbon: Vol. V. pp. 376-77)

While the above was going on, study of Latin classics was also cultivated. John of Ravenna, a pupil of Petrarch, was teaching the Latin classics. Inspired by Boccaccio's elegant prose, the Italians started taking care of their own language.

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) is remembered as the "father of Italian prose." He also exhibited the first example of the *octva rima,* metre which was adopted by Tasso and Ariosto and in English by Byron in his *Don Juan*. Chaucer adopted the main features of the plot of Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and literally translated parts of Boccaccio's work without mentioning his Italian source. Boccaccio influenced the whole gamut of subsequent literature in Europe. His *Decameron* is a marvellous expose of prudery and clandestine indulgences of the Church Fathers as well as of the noblesse of his time. It is full of humour, biting sarcasm and leg-pulling. Most of these stories in English translation appeared in the *Palace of Pleasure* by William Painter, published in 1566 and 1567. These stories served as a storehouse from which the Elizabethan dramatists drew many of their plots.

Boccaccio wrote in a new idiom, flexible, tender and capable of rendering different shades of

feeling – from the coarse laugh of cynicism to the sigh of forlorn love. Boccaccio is remembered not only as a sponsor of Greek learning but also as the "father of Italian Prose."

After Chrysodoras, many Byzantines found refuge in Western Europe. Byzantium was too disturbed for the pursuit of scholarship. Thus came to Western Europe men like Theodore Gaza, George of Trebizond, John of Argyro Bulus, Demetrius Chalcocondyles and many others. Enthusiasm for Greek learning affected even the Pope. Pope Nicholas V (1397-1455) collected books and manuscripts from the ruins of Byzantium, from the monasteries of Germany and Britain. Wherever the original could not be removed, he ordered a faithful copy for his use. The Vatican became a repository of old classics. The Latin world owes to him the versions of Xenophon, Diodorus, Polybus, Thucydides, Herodotus, Appian, Strabo's Geography, the Iliad, the most valuable works of Plato and Aristotle, Ptolemy and Theophrastus in addition to the works of many fathers of the Greek Church.

Historians generally think that the Middle Ages in European history begin sometime in A.D. 6th century, yet its map was cast by the twin revolution that emperor Constantine the Great introduced. Constantine died in A.D. 337. The first of the revolution was his transfer of the imperial capital to Byzantium on the Bosphorus; and the second was introduction of Christianity as the dominant religion of the Empire. These two decisions of Constantine lay down conditions without which medieval Europe could hardly have been shaped and grown. Soon the institution of Roman Catholic Church was firmly established. This institution had to safeguard its interests from not only the attacks of the so-called barbarians, many of whom were Christians, though not belonging to the Roman catholic Church, but also from the fissiparous tendencies from its own ranks. They had to deal with the so-called heresies as well as the infidels. For this the Roman Catholic Church needed political power. Constantine had shown them the way. They had to deal with the interests of the rising feudal lords and kings. For this purpose they had to close up their ranks; their religious doctrines became rigid. Theologians gave the Catholics their theoretical framework. This was reinforced by St. Augustine and Ancius Martius Torquatas Severius Boethius (A.D. c. 480-c.524).

Boethius was a great scholar, like St. Augustine. He translated a small treatise by Porphyry – *Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle* into Latin, which formed the basic book on logic for many subsequent centuries. Porphyry (A.D. 233 c.-304) was a Greek scholar and was born in Syria. He wrote voluminously on Philosophy, history and on the lives of his predecessors like Pythagoras, Plotinus and others. He wrote vigorously against Christianity as a result of which his books were suppressed by the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431. But his small treatise on Aristotle's Categories not only survived but also, when translated into Latin by Boethius, formed the basis for discussions among the Roman Catholic scholars. Denying Aristotle altogether would have made the Catholics unpalatable to the scholars. Hence Aristotle was served in his Porphyrian and Boethian garb. The endeavour was to show how Aristotle formed supporting material for Christian orthodox beliefs. As the Catholics, like all other religions, wanted that their religion should be universally accepted. They evinced keen interest in the discussion on the Universals in Greek and Latin philosophies. Thus arose the three major schools of medieval philosophy – Realism, Nominalism and Conceptualism.

Realism maintains the reality of 'universals' or characters, which remain the same in more than one individual. If, for instance, it is held that there would be no man-ness unless there were men, the doctrine is that of *universalia in re*; but if man-ness is held to be eternal, only its manifestation will end with the disappearance of its individual instances, the doctrine will be that of *universalia ante rem*. As against this, Nominalism holds that things called by the same name have only the name in common. The name of a thing is determined arbitrarily, i.e., by human convention, though not without regard to human convenience – the convenience of conforming our nomenclature to

what experience shows us of the grouping of qualities in things.

Conceptualism attempts to compromise between the Realists and the Nominalists by holding that different individuals do not share a common nature, because no common nature, but individuals exist. Yet we form concepts which somehow correspond with each of a number of individuals, and by their means we are able to have general knowledge about an unlimited number of individuals at once. Conceptualism, then, is the doctrine of *universalia post rem.*

While the Catholic faith and philosophy expended their energies on mostly inane and jejune discussions on the nature and status of universals and on the only way to reach the kingdom of heaven, symptoms of a widespread desire to grasp at something simpler than what Latin theology afforded became slowly discernable despite religious ferocity. Slowly a vivid recognition of the goodliness of man and nature emerged. A just perception of the dignity of man as a rational, volitional and sentient being, born upon this earth with a right to use this endowment, enjoy it, reject those visions of a future and imagined state of souls which held the imagination of the middle ages captive, as the only absolute reality slowly gathered momentum. This brings us to the 15th century Renaissance in Europe.

(*To be continued*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist*****,** August 1994.

A Brief History of Humanism
The Renaissance and Western Historiography – I

On the 28th of August 430, Saint Augustine, the greatest theologian of Christianity, died in Hippo when the Vandals appeared at the gates of Hippo and laid siege to it. In St. Augustine an implied philosophy of history can be discerned. Profane history is sinful. History was reduced to a narration of sermons in praise of the majesty of Christianity. Secular history formed a very cursory part of history writing to establish the supremacy of Christianity. At their best, for about a thousand years after the demise of St. Augustine, historians became uncritical chroniclers or antiquaries associated with the court of Frederick II (1200-1250), emperor of Germany and king of Sicily. Frederick, while competing against papal supremacy was also a great connoisseur of learning and scholarship. In his court he gave shelter to many scholars, specially to those who ran away from Byzantine tyranny and autocracy and papal obduracy. In the shelter of Frederick's court the intellectuals raised their voice against miracles, the super-natural universe, angels and devils, a physical Heaven and Hell – things traditional Christianity accepted without any question. At Frederick's behest, scholars also undertook a programme of translation of the ancient classics. Frederick himself knew many languages and had a vigorous mind. But Frederick's efforts tapered off after his death giving place to a revived set of traditional Christian beliefs. Italy and the rest of Europe had to wait for seven to eight decades to pick up the lost threads of the 13th century *Auf.* The most important figures in this rejuvenation are the two friends – Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375).

Petrarch was not only a great poet but also a profound scholar. Among his writings on historical subjects mention should be made of *Rerum Memorandrum Libri* – a collection from a students' commonplace book – and of *De viris illustribus* – a collection of the biographies of the roman worthies. In his voluminous writings he included remarkable satires on the papal court. We find these in his *Epistolae sine titulo.* Prudery and pettifogging of the papal court, the decadent feudal lords, their subalterns and gendarmerie were, however, exposed more poignantly by his friend, Boccaccio. But both Petrarch and Boccaccio approached their task in the spirit of an artist, more so did Petrarch. In them the ancient and the modern met together and laid the foundations of a new grand stadium of the human spirit, generally known as the Renaissance in Europe.

Boccaccio, a younger friend of Petrarch, passed the last thirty years of his life in compiling an analysis of classical mythology – *Genealogiae Deorum Gentelium* (Genealogy of the Pagan Gods). The book was immensely influential in education even in the 19th century. European literature bears witness to the influence of the two friends. Chaucer picked up some Boccaccio stories and incorporated them in his writings, evidently without acknowledgement. The two friends travelled widely in continental Europe and met their likes. Wherever they went, they left their mark. Whoever came in contact with them could not escape their impact. Both friends were collectors of ancient manuscripts.

When Boccaccio, in search of ancient manuscripts, visited the famous monastery of Monte Cassino, he was shown a dusty room where many valuable ancient manuscripts were stored. A number of these manuscripts were mutilated due to neglect or vandalism of the monks. He was informed that monks tore off leaves from the codices and turned them into psalters for children, or amulets for women at a price of four or five *soldi* apiece. Boccaccio tried to rectify this barbarous callousness. He purchased or copied with his own hands some of the valuable manuscripts.

Boccaccio was an admirer of *Aucassin et Nicolette* – a book which was popular in France in the 13th century. The book was written in prose alte3rnating with verse. Boccaccio adopted this form for his *Ameto*. This form can also be found in old and middle Latin. The immediate influence on Boccaccio was, however, the *Aucassin*.

Boccaccio's absorbing interest in the ancient world led him to learn Greek; and it was owing to his

efforts that the first professorship in Greek was instituted in Italy. On his recommendation, his instructor in Greek, Leone Pilato was appointed as a professor of Greek in Florence. Boccaccio gave Italian prose a new diction, a new style, and elevated it to a stage of maturity. He is truly known as the father of Italian prose.

The efforts of Petrarch and Boccaccio, though a bit amateurish, opened up new vistas for future historiography. Their efforts were continued by Leonardo Bruni (1369-1444) author of *History of Florence*. He resurrected historiography from the morass of uncritical acceptance of fables, sermons and telltales handed over by oral or written tradition.

Bruni's work was carried forward by his student, Laurentius Valla (c. 1406-1457) who launched a vigorous attack on the so-called *Constitutum Constantine* (donation of Constantine) – a document which was forged sometime between the 8th and 9th centuries. In this document it was claimed that emperor Constantine, as a mark of his obligation to Pope Sylvester I (314-355), ordained that the Pope will have spiritual superiority over all the patriarchs of the Church. It was also said in the document that Constantine had donated temporal authority over Rome and Italy and its provinces to the Pope. It was further claimed that the *Donation* was to be enjoyed not only by Pope Sylvester I but also by all succeeding Popes.

Though there were objections to the *Donation*, yet, because of the absence of the application of the critical method to history writing, they were not given any importance; and the Pope's claim continued to be operative and virtually went unchallenged. In 1440, by applying the critical method in history writing, Valla proved to the hilt that the *Donation* was nothing but a mass of forgery and fabrication. Valla accused the venerable Saint Augustine of heresy. He escaped inquisitor tribunal thanks to the intervention of Alphonso V of Aragon (1416-1458), who patronised men of letters. Valla could not be silenced. In his *De Elegantiis Latinae Linguae,* Valla expressed his sympathies with the Epicureans. Despite all this, possibly because of the intervention of Alphonso, Valla received the favours of Pope Calixtus III (1455-58) and was taken into the Roman Curia. This has been rightly acclaimed as "triumph of Humanism over orthodoxy and tradition." It is also an instance of a silver lining (of which there are many instances) in the history of the scurrilous obduracy of the Orthodox Church and tradition, or for that matter any fundamentalism. Reason can be suppressed for some time; but it cannot be kept in chains for all time.

Valla's work was continued by Ulrich von Hutten (1488-1523) who, by the application of the critical approach to history, rehabilitated Henry IV (1050-1105) from the mess of monkish tales. Henry IV was a German king and became emperor of Rome. Naturally the defeated papacy which was enjoying sovereignty over Rome, Italy and its provinces, under the *Donation* of Constantine did not like his guts. They circulated tales on his perfidy and satanic zeal. Renaissance Humanists like Valla, Hutten and others introduced the scientific method in the study of history, which, in its turn, led to a sobering of the over-zealous humanist tendency to sacrifice truth for aesthetic effect.

The Renaissance Humanists do not stand so much for a direct confrontation with or a conscious revolt against authority and orthodoxy as they champion the secularisation of thought, especially in the field of non-spiritual areas. The Renaissance replaced the ideals of brooding mediaeval asceticism by a joyous pride in the individual, the power of his mind and the beauty of his body and surrounding nature. Mediaeval gloating on the spiritual nature of man and his prospects in an imagined heaven or hell were substituted by a critical enquiry into the achievements of man on this earth, including his moral life. The Renaissance spirit of exploring the infinite potential of man affected the people of Europe. A spirit of adventure motivated the people to explore not only their inner world but also the external world.

During the Crusades this spirit of adventure, spirit to explore unknown climes and lands, spirit to know other people was taken advantage of by the Roman Catholic zealots. Though the Crusades failed, the spirit of adventure continued to live. It soon jettisoned the religious wrappings and took up some

other more meaningful and forward-looking dress. The spirit of adventure this time was feudal lords. The merchants wanted to extend their market and the feudal lords desired to acquire new territories.

Quest for new markets spurred the merchants not only to explore safer land routes to other lands but also to avo9d over-land journeys which were hazardous for the merchandise. Through the sea route not only it would be safe to trans-shift goods but also it would be cheaper to do so. Hence a rigorous search for sea routes to the fabulous East was started. In search of that route Columbus landed in the new world in 1492 and Vasco de Gama landed on the western coast of India in 1498. But the safe route soon became hazardous. Wars and feuds among the different countries of Europe spilled over into widespread sea piracy. In this competitive atmosphere the British registered phenomenal success.

Soon the traders discovered that their trade could not be so successful, if the land where they wanted to trade was not under their control. In regions where population pressure was not much, they took the diabolical policy of extermination of the native people and settled their own people in the land so acquired. Those whom they could not exterminate too shelter in faraway places, away from the European settlers. This is precisely what happened in the North American continent. But in the South American continent, the European merchants had to face a civilisationally more advanced people which, however, did not have fire arms. The defenceless native population were either exterminated or forced to take shelter in difficult terrain. This is what happened in the countries which are known to-day as the Latin American countries. The European settlers could not get indigenous people to work in their newly acquired land. It was difficult to enslave people in their own land. Hence they went to far off West Africa and other African countries to bring their labour force. A flourishing slave trade started. Some merchants and conquistadors settled down in the South American countries and became owners of latifundium where they kept agriculture in a semi-primitive state with native labour often in a state of partial servitude. In Australia almost a total extermination of the native population took place. But such policies could not be pursued in countries where there were powerful native governments having almost complete arms parity with the European expansionists. The merchants took advantage of the feuds between the native rulers – a series of conspiracies, betrayal, etc. followed. The weighing balance of the merchant was transformed to a royal sceptre. In this expansionist adventure the British came out most successful. A day came when the Sun never set in the British Empire.

While European expansionists were busy in implementing their expansionist policy, the different countries of Europe were embroiled in wars land feuds among themselves. Expansionism fuelled their grandiose dreams. Not a single day went by without a big or small war. Competition outside Europe spilled over into competition inside Europe; and competition inside Europe accentuated competition outside Europe. In the meanwhile democratic ideas ushered in by the Renaissance were being intensely debated. People desired to replace autocratic rule by democracy. French Revolution spread the message of democracy. No ruler, after the French Revolution, could afford to govern without at least gaining some sanctions from the people, at least formally. In order to keep the people under their control a new opium was devised – the cult of nationalism, when it was found that the cult of loyalty to the feudal kings, and the call of religious solidarity were no longer effective. A new religion, called 'nationalism' was ascendant. Nation intoxication elbowed out God intoxication. In this welter of confusion and precipitate thought, the very spirit of Renaissance Humanism became a victim. The very spirit of renaissance Humanism was forcibly pushed into the background. An ebbing away from the surging tide of renaissance Humanism slowly took hold of the minds of the European intellectuals and academicians. Surging tide of nation states with their collateral benefit of nationalism became the 'in' thing. The slogan – my nation right or wrong – came as a handy weapon in the hands of those who were not only to tighten their strangle-hold on their own people but also eager to expand their territorial possessions through intrigues, conspiracies, wars and betrayals. No means, foul or fair, was excluded from their repertoire. Power is a valuable human endowment; but absolute power is an absolute menace.

Rise of nationalism vitiated the writing of history. The Renaissance Humanists were neither nationalist nor were they parochial bigots. They were essentially rational and human. It would, however, be a travesty of recorded facts if the Renaissance Humanists are called anti-religionists. Their eyes were opened to the human predicament by the lofty sayings of the religious seers. They, however, found that religion loses its humanistic content whenever it bogs down in rituals, and sacredness is thought to be identical with ritualistic purity and performance. Whoever does not practice the rituals of my religion is an infidel to me. Even those who abide by the rituals of my religion yet question any aspect of it, are also heretics. Heresy is a worse crime than infidelity. If I am powerful, I can either exterminate the alien or convert him to my religion. But what is to be done with the heretic? He is an enemy within my ranks. He is more dangerous than the infidel. He is an enemy within. The nationalists follow the same paradigm. Yet, nationalism, like religion, has its positive aspect too. It gave the subjugated people a negative point found which to rally for their freedom. Historians, particularly the humanist historians should assess whether the anti-humanist forces unleashed by nationalism were at all necessary. The concept of necessary evil is an ahistorical abomination. An evil is an evil; and that is that.

Without rational education, all political power, or for that matter any power, hungers for more and more power. It tends to become messianic. Political leaders of the newly independent countries always claim that they know best what the people want; and that too in a situation created by them where they are getting richer and richer, while their electors are living in abject poverty, with only a semblance of education thrown to them by the political leaders as a sort of leftovers, rotten and petrified leftovers. People must sacrifice for the nation, and the nation is what the politicians say it is. The intellectuals and the academicians in search of pelf in an atmosphere of keen competition erect scaffolds for nationalism. The appearance of these scaffolds varies from country to country according to their attachment to this or that leader.

In Europe and other Western countries, the historians gave a Eurocentric view of history. The roots of European or Western culture and civilisation they find only in Europe, especially in ancient Greece. To them all subsequent history of Europe or the West after the eclipse of the great ancient culture and civilisation of Greece can be summarised in one sentence – it is nothing but additions of footnotes to ancient Greece and by courtesy to Latin Rome which is projected as a corollary of ancient Greek civilisation. From this preliminary format, nation-centric historiography is not a far cry. This attitude of the modern historiographers is in sharp contrast with that of the ancient Greek who recognised the influence of Egyptian, Phoenician, and Eastern civilisations on their own. Mystical idealism in behalf of a cherished cause was introduced by the Christian Church. Such mystical idealism is not entirely ahistorical; it only denies all history which does not fit in with its cherished goals. It is simply forgotten that long before Greece could be called civilised, civilisations in other regions flourished. The Mit Rahineh inscription at Memphis in Egypt discovered under a colossal statue details land and maritime expeditions in the 20th century B.C. The portrayal of a thoroughly mixed population in the southern Aegean in the 17th century B.C. can be seen in the remnants of the frescoes in Thera. A list of such things will require volumes to cover. All these things were happening long before Homer when mainland Greece was inhabited by some pre-literate northern tribes. Most probably writing was introduced in Greece by the Phonecian sea-farers. Yet we are told by nationalist historians that non-European countries contributed very little, if they contributed anything at all, to the birth and development of the European ethos. This attitude is in sharp contrast with that of the renaissance Humanists who were never reluctant to acknowledge influences wherever they were due.

Renaissance interest in Egypt can be discerned in the efforts of Cosimo de Medici (1389-1464), the Florentine Financier (not the Duke of Florence) who was a great collector of ancient manuscripts and a connoisseur of Greek learning. A monk brought to him a manuscript of *Corpus Hermeticum* from Macedonia. Cosimo could appreciate the value of this manuscript and asked Marselio Ficino (1433-1499), the great polyglot and translator to leave all other manuscripts and take up the work of translating

the *Corpus Hermeticum.* Cosimo was deeply interested in Plato. Under his patronage Flicino also took up the work of translating many Greek manuscripts including Plato. His translation of Plato is still regarded as one of the best. Greek scholarship and pagan vigour received patronage from the great Cosimo.

Much later, in the beginning of the twentieth century, James Breasted truly wrote in his *The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest* (1901) that "the Greek tradition of the origin of their philosophy in Egypt contains more of the truth than has in recent years been conceded." The great Netherlands scholar, son of an equally great illustrious father, Julius Scaligur, and a scion of the famous Scaligur family, initiator of scientific chronology in his *De emendation temporum* (1583), showed that ancient history is not confined to Greece and Rome; it also includes the history of Persia, Babylonia and Egypt. The same view was expressed by Giordano Bruno who wrote that "We Greeks owe Egypt the grand monarchy of letters and nobility, to be parents of our fables, metaphors and doctrines." Quoted by F. Yates in his *Giordano Bruno and the Hermatic Tradition; p. 223. 1964).*

The monks of Asclepius, the neo-Platonists, the Hermatic writings of Psellos, the writings of Byzantine, Arab and Hebrew scholars were available to the renaissance Humanists in addition to the works of ancient Greece and Rome. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463?-1494) wanted to use both *Magia* (Knowledge of the secrets of the heavenly bodies) and the *Kabbala* (The system of Jewish theology) to act upon the world so that man could control his destiny by science.

Many Hermatic texts from Arab sources were translated into Latin during the Renaissance. From Hermatic and neo-Platonic tradition which was profoundly influenced by thoughts from non-Greek and non-Roman sources, including Indian, the Renaissance Humanists drew their view of the infinite potential of man. The Sophist dictum *homo mensura* without its being fertilised by the vision of the infinite potential of man easily slides into Pyrrhonism, leaving the individual adrift in a valueless vacuity. It is worth noting that the Renaissance thinkers knew more about Plato's *Timaeus* than of any other of his *Dialogues. Timaeus* contains explicit references to the wisdom of the Egyptians. Plato had visions of the infinite but not of the infinite potential of the individual man – the hallmark of the Renaissance Humanist concept of man. Renaissance approach to historiography, however, waned under the pressure of rising Euro-centrism. Most of the great writers of the Western countries who have evinced penetrating scholarship in their studies on the Renaissance think that the springboard of European Renaissance was provided by the revival of Greek learning. They hardly mention other influences on the renaissance, giving merely cursory notes even on the Arab influence. The rising cult of nationalism accelerated Euro-centrism – a resultant of European expansionism.

While European merchants were discovering and exploring a veritable Tom Tiddler's Ground from where they picked up gold and silver, many dilettante intellectuals laboured to rationalise European expansionism and started a novel canard – "The Whiteman's Burden." Christian Fathers either accompanied or followed the merchants and their guns. If any one of the Christians died, the Fathers were there to perform absolution. If the infidels were converted to the True faith, at least their religious animosity against the Christian merchants would be mellowed. Through ages of experience the Europeans became past masters in the use of religion for mundane purpose. Even the learned societies, like the Royal Geographic Society, sent their men out with the ostensible purpose of pure research and rendered help to exploration of new markets. The East India Company of England owes its origin to the ravel accounts of some travellers. Travel accounts of sponsored and unsponsored travellers were used for understanding the new markets. Many ostensible travellers were sent out as a sort of advance guard.

That a large number of Christian proselytisers came from the ranks of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders should not be surprising. Their zealotry for the defence and propagation of the True Faith has already been witnessed during the Crusades and Inquisitions. Moreover, their help was needed by the European merchants and their gunmen to save their souls from perdition. Christian love flowed from the superior to the inferior – the Whiteman's Burden. Though the primary beneficiaries of their activities

were the European expansionists, they provided a sort of catalytic agent to bring out the potentials of a semi-stagnant society crying for a metamorphosis. To this some pious Christian missionaries, individuals, administrators, educationists and scholars contributed a lot though some doubting Thomases can still suspect their motives.

The European expansionists knew from their own experience in Europe, how to take advantage of the feuding kings and chieftains specially in lands where whatever powerful authority was there was waning. The Europeans carried their prejudices, spiteful and malevolent ill will against one another to the colonies. In this race for hegemony, the British were the most successful. They used British loyalty to the crown and the nation to keep their own rank and file as a cohesive whole. Doubtless, the people of the colonies also benefitted from colonial expansion. Even so, one can argue in retrospect that their semi-barbaric midwifery was not historically needed; left to themselves, the people of the regions where the colonialists established their hegemony would have found breakthroughs in their moribund plights. To think of negative possibilities is a mark of intelligence and is a lesson for the future.

Be that as it may, Europeans developed an obstinate sense of superiority as against the victims of their expansionist designs. Christianity, with its deriding attitude towards the infidels, contributed to this superiority complex in large measure. A new dimension to this superiority complex was added by the rise of Protestatism.

Schismatic movements within the Roman Catholic Church were evident from early times. But none of these heretical groups could register any measure of success. The Greek orthodox was sent to idle away its time outside the main hub of the European complex, as it were.

German protest against papal supremacy has a long history. The Germans even managed to throw the Pope out of his seat in Rome for some time. The Renaissance brought Greek learning to Germany; and the Germans started seeing similarities between their own language and Greek. Both German and Greek have four cases while Latin nouns have six cases. Both German and Greek made copious use of particles and prepositions with verbs; and both use the definite article. Protestants accepted Greek as more authentic than Latin as a sacred tongue. Protestantism spread from Germany to France.

One of the most sordid chapters in the history of the conflict between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants is the massacre of the Protestants in Paris and the provinces of France which started from St. Bartholomew's Day on the 24th of August 1572. (St. Bartholomew was one of the twelve apostles of Christ. Tradition makes North India his missionary field. He was flayed alive and then crucified in Armenia with his head downwards. Michelangelo, in his celebrated "Last Judgement", depicts him with his own skin hanging over his arm.) Catherine de' Medici instigated the king of France to order the massacre of the Protestants when they came out in large number to celebrate the martyrdom of St. Bartholomew. The massacre started on the morning of 24th of August and continued unabated till 17th of September in Paris. After this it spread to the provinces where it continued till 3rd of October. Not less than 50,000 Protestants were massacred, their properties looted and houses burnt. Catherine de' Medici received congratulations from the Catholic rulers; and Pope Gregory XIII commanded bonfires to be lighted and medal to be struck in her honour. The Protestants were the main purveyors of Greek leaning in France, which suffered a setback because of the massacre, so much so that that even the great Hellenist scholar Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614) had to go to Germany to pursue his studies. The Hellenist husband and wife team of Andre Dacier (1651-1722) and Mme. Anne Lefevre Dacier were brought up as Huguenots. Though Europe was divided into many feuding kingdoms, the Holy Roman Empire tried to bring at least a considerable part of Europe under one rule. The rise of Protestantism and local interests frustrated these efforts toward unity of the Roman Catholic Church. Round about this time many European countries, motivated by economic interests, launched a vigorous expansionist programme which later developed into what is known as capitalism. Max Weber found a connecting link between Protestantism and the rise of Capitalism. (*To be continued*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, September 1994.

A Brief History of Humanism
The Renaissance and Western Historiography-II

A feeling of superiority is implied in the very process of expansion. The expansionist feels superior to the people into whose land he intrudes. The Europeans have a birth right to be superior, otherwise how could they bring so many non-European countries under their direct or indirect hegemony? But a feeling of superiority is not enough; it must be bolstered by theory, however wonky that theory may be. A search for the roots of superiority led to the conviction that superiority is a birth right. From such a position ethno-mania is not a far cry.

The most shameful and crude formulation of ethno-mania was given by the arrogant and eccentric scholar Comte de Joseph Arthur Gobineau (1816-1882), a virulent advocate of racism. It will suffice to quote just one small paragraph form his writings to have a glimpse of his pernicious theory and prejudice.

> (They) have little physical vigour, tend towards apathy ... feeble desires, a will that is obstinate rather than extreme ... In everything they tend to mediocrity. They have an easy enough understanding of what is not too elevated or too profound ... The yellows are a practical people in the strict sense of the word. They do not dream or enjoy theories. They invent a little, but they are capable of appreciating and adopting what they can use.
>
> (Quoted by Martin Bernal in his *Black Athena:* Vol. I. p. 240. Vintage Edition. 1991).

Gobineau's racism must have pleased the European business community. The Yellows were capable of appreciating and adopting what they can use. The European business men were there to supply them the things that they could use, but the Yellows are racially inferior all the same. Here is a jingle published in Punch in 1858:

> John Chinaman a rogue is born,
> The laws of truth he holds in scorn;
> About as great a brute as can
> Encumber the earth is John Chinaman.
>
> Singh Yeh, my cruel John Chinaman,
> Singh Yeo, my stubborn John Chinaman.
> Not Cobden himself can take off the ban
> By humanity laid on John Chinaman.
>
> With little pig-eyes and large pig-tails,
> And their diet of rats, dogs, slugs and snails,
>]All seems to be game in the frying pan
> Of that nasty feeder John Chinaman.
>
> Singh lie-tea, my sly Chinaman,
> No fighter, my John Chinaman,
> John Bull has a chance – let him, if he can

Somewhat open the eyes of John Chinaman.

The jingle has been quoted in full as it is a typical reflection of racial prejudice as well as the do-gooding self-image of the western mind. Such jingles on foreigners can be found in all the European languages. Racial superiority also forms the background of many accounts of European travellers and explorers. Submerged tendentiousness forms part of Western reportage on any alien civilisation and people, with seldom any factually intelligent or sympathetic understanding. Even so, these accounts are valuable sources of information on social and cultural anthropology, if they are read with circumspection and understanding. Even so, these accounts are valuable sources of information on social and cultural anthropology, if they are read with circumspection and understanding. They also throw light on how the Western mind works when it faces alien peoples.

Despite all that has been said above, many Western intellectuals evince some measure of objectivity when they think about the Non-western people. The French Physiocrats felt closer to China. Most of the centralising economic, sanitary and social reforms suggested by the Physiocrats in the mid-18th century China, in the eyes of the westerners, became a filthy country where torture and corruption prevailed. All this talk about filth came when the Indian traveller Mirza Abu Taleb in his travel diary depicted how one could not walk in the narrow streets of Paris without being showered by the filth of the chamber pots which were emptied on the streets from the balconies. About torture and corruption in Europe of those days, it is prudent not to elaborate. This, however, should not read as denial of the facts mentioned by the western travellers. What we are concerned with is the attitude behind such reportage. Facts are facts; what is important is their understanding and not so-called 'objective reporting' as pure objectivity is a chimera. To see everything in the light of Spinoza's vision is a limiting concept. One can only aspire to attain it with the understanding that under human limitations one will never be able to achieve it.

Be that as it may, even de Tocqueville, who wrote the most perceptive and penetrating account of American democracy, wondered how the Physiocrats could have admiration for China. It may be mentioned that de Tocqueville was a patron and admirer of Gobineau and that the great historian Earnest Renan was a close friend of theirs. de Tocqueville had the right perception when he remarked that Gobineau would return to France via Germany. One of the first books that were reprinted in France immediately after German Fascist occupation of Paris in 1940 was Gobineau's book.

Gobineau's predecessor, Baron Georges Leopold Chertien Frederic Dagobert Cuvier (1769-1832) wrote:

> The Negro race ... is marked by black complexion, crisped or wooly hair, compressed cranium and flat nose. The projection of the lower parts of the face, and the thick lips, evidently approximate it to the monkey tribe; the hordes of which it consists have always remained in the most complete state of barbarism.
>
> (Quoted by F. Curtin: *Imperialism: the Documentary History of Western Civilization*: p. 8. New York: Harper & Row: 1971)

And Gobineau wrote:

> The black variety is the lowest and lies at the bottom of the ladder. The animal character lent to its basic form imposes its destiny from the moment of its conception. It never leaves the most restricted intellectual zones ... If its faculties of thinking are mediocre or even non-existent, it possesses in its desire and as consequence in its will an intensity that is often terrible. Many of the senses are developed with a vigour unknown in the other two races: principally taste and smell. It is precisely in the greed for sensations that

> the most striking mark of its inferiority is found.
> (Gobineau: *Ouvres*: Vol. I, pp. 339-40. Paris: 1983)

In the same book Gobineau also wrote that "I need not add that the word honour, like the concept of civilisation which contains it, are equally unknown to Yellows and the Blacks.' (Ibid. P. 342). Gobineau's race theory stood completely refuted by masses empirical data. But racism dies hard. It took up different ploys.

Knowledge of the classical languages, knowledge of non-European languages, linguistic researches into the languages of the so-called primitive languages, archaeological evidence of forgotten languages, etc. provided crutches to some linguists to classify languages into higher and lower, superior and inferior. The great linguist and humanist, an embodiment of Renaissance man, Baron von Humboldt (1778-1833) suggested that language progresses from agglutinative to inflectional. If inflection is the hallmark of the status of a language in an evolutionary ladder, Sumerian should occupy a status higher than that of the Indo-European languages as Sumerian is more inflected than the Indo-European languages. Finality on this point was, however, reached by Baron Christian Charles Josias von Bunsen (1791-1860) who, following Hegel, held that true history did not exist in the East. He dumped histories of Egypt, China, etc. into an anti-dilluvian, ahistoric past full of anecdotes, fables, mythologies and wish-fulfilment. Indo-European linguist august Schleirchar (1821-68) found three stages in the evolution of languages – the Indo-Aryan group occupying the highest stage while other groups of languages were pushed into the limbo of less civilised.

Language is a social inheritance. Language colours our vision of society and the world. Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Whorf (1897-1941) developed a suggestion implied in Humboldt's writings and danced the theory that language has a pragmatic function to perform and is a determinant of how one views the world. Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889-1951), at some stage of his penetrating philosophical investigations, held similar views. He also held the view that grammar and logic are one and the same. Avram Noam Chomsky (b. 1928) tried to recast the rationalism of Plato and Descartes in terms of biology and advanced the theory that grammar is not there to organise scraps of information and images; it is innate in us and is a biological endowment.

Social historians, inspired by the sociolinguists and ethnographers of communication technology, are drawing our attention to different 'speech codes' of different people belonging to different social groups, even of the same society. From all this, an unwarranted corollary is drawn: the development of rationality and scientific thought depend on the grammar of the language that we speak. Users of markedly different grammar arrive at, somewhat, markedly different world views. Even our ideas of truth, freedom, democracy, etc. are language determined and language bound. No one can deny that language is an important determiner of our view of the world; but to assert that it is the sole determiner will land us into the pitfalls of overall and extreme determinism. Moreover, the phenomenal achievements of pre-literate societies unearthed by modern archaeology and social scientists cannot be explained by the language determinists. When language oriented theories of development of civilisation and culture could not cover empirically observed facts, the theorists who believe in the endemic and innate differences between societies, the upholders of the theory of dominant culture, took a different route.

Jean Bodin (1530-1596), though he wrote that different people, even of different faiths, could live together in charity and tolerance, and cease from disputations on religion, etc. maintained that geography and topography determine human character and culture. It may be noted that the great 16th century French scholar was a credulous believer in witchcraft and many other superstitions. Baron de la Montesquieu (1689-1755), better known as only Montesquieu, followed Jean Bodin in his belief that climate, geography and topology determine human character.

Massive empirical data show that racism is a tendencious and prejudice-motivated product. Gobineau thought that the three sons of Noah – Ham, Shem and Japheth – were born somewhere in Central Asia. The three brothers and their successors travelled away from their homeland. The successors of Ham and Shem could not maintain the purity of their clan. They fell victims to the polluted allurements of the Blacks. Only the Japhethites or Aryans who stayed in the north could retain the purity of their race. Earlier J.F. Blumenbach in his *De Generis Himani Varietate Nativa* published in 1795, had introduced the term 'Caucasian' to designate the progeny of Japheth. But the 'Caucasians' of Blumenbach included the Arabs and the Jews. Gobineau threw them out of his list of Caucasians as he thought that they were the progeny of either Ham or Shem, outcome of "diseased contaminations".

German Fascist ideologues replaced the term 'Caucasian' by 'Nordic' and brought the children of Japheth to their own homeland. The Germanic people, specially Germans in Germany, became the pure Aryans. But that purity had to be protected from contamination from outside the stock, specially from the Jews. Fascist Germany instituted a most criminal and diabolical pogrom; thousands of Jews either had to flee Germany or were sent to extermination camps. We have already seen how anti-Semitism hounded the supposed children of Shem in different countries of Europe. But nothing could be worse than what was witnessed in Germany. What is most painful to note is that there was hardly any protest from the people of Germany against Hitler's holocaust. Even international public opinion did not react appreciably against the policy of extermination of the Jews though many Jews could find shelter in different countries after escaping from the Gulag that Germany was under Hitler. German people were given the dope of nationalism; and the Jews were seen as responsible for Germany's sliding down the scale of progress. Similar pogroms were pursued in Soviet Russia, again without any appreciable protest either from the Soviet people themselves or from the international community, possibly because of the age-old animosity of Christian world. The thoughts of Renaissance Humanism were forgotten and in its place came in nationalism in various garbs.

Writing of history in the West continued to have a blatant racial bias in spite of Renaissance historiography. Historians who do not have any apparent racial bias either projected Euro-centrism or the nation-centrism of their respective nations. Take for example, Barthold George Niebuhr (1776-1831) on whom unsparing encomia have been showered by most subsequent western historians. Jules Michelet (1798-1874), the greatest historian of the French Romantic School, went almost hysteric in his eulogy on Niebuhr, who, according to him (Michelet), did immense service to historical scholarship by drawing the attention of scholars to the great importance of the ethnological differences between the patricians and the plebeians which decided the fate of history. Michelet followed Niebuhr in his Roman history. He declared that the Punic wars between Rome and Carthage in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. did not decide merely the fate of the two warring cities; the war were fought to settle which of the two races, the Indo-Germanic or the Semitic, was to rule the world. Michelet further wrote that on the side of Rome there was heroism, art, spirit of industry, navigation, commerce - all that was forward-looking. But on the other side, on the side of Carthage (the Semites), there were only "perfidious neighbours."

Motivation for writing history was provided to Niebuhr by the Prussian king, Frederick William III (1797-1840). Germany at that time was suffering the agonies of "frustrated ambition". Frederick appealed to "Germany to make up by intellectual strength what it had lost in material power, and regenerate the youth to make them capable of doing great things by putting before them the noble examples from antiquity. No wonder German scholars undertook exemplary vigorous work on antiquity. German antiquity itself had very little to offer. They turned towards antiquities specially of Greece. The ethnic principle of Niebuhr gave the German historians the necessary bark to sail. The Germans were Nordic, so were the people who colonised the ancient soils of Europe. The

glory of the ancient Greek world peopled by the Nordics would cast glories on Nordic Germany. German glory would be reinstated via the Nordic principle.

Earlier Giovanni Batista Vico (1668-1744) had tried to give a new turn to historiography by maintaining that history is the account of the birth and development of human societies and their institutions. Yet the capacious mind excluded the Jews from his profane history. Old anti-Semitism continued to haunt the western Christian Eugene Burnouf (1801-1852) the eminent French Oriental linguist, described the Semitic race as follows:

> A real Semite has smooth hair with curly ends, a strongly hooked nose, fleshy lips, massive extremities, thin calves, and flat feet. And what is more he belongs to the occipital races; that is to say, those whose hinder part of the head is more developed than the front. His growth is very rapid, and at fifteen or sixteen it is over. At that age the divisions of the skull which contains the organs of intelligence are already joined, and in some even welded together. From that period the growth of the brain is arrested in the Aryan races this phenomenon, or anything like it, never occurs, at any time of life ...

(Emil. L. Burnouf: *La Science des religions* translated into English by J. Liebe as *The Science of Religion:* 1888: pp. 190-91.)

Many racists believe in such gobbledegook. Divisions of races in terms of physical and anatomical characteristics are no longer held to-day. But yet the feeling of superiority of the Europeans and their progeny settled outside continues to haunt them. Unable to find slave labour in their colonies, the colonialists started a slave business exporting Black Africans mostly from West Africa to the new world. The Blacks are "born inferiors" and could be used only as slaves. Even great thinkers like Locke and Hume could not remain unaffected by racial prejudice. Racist Euro-centric historians wrote about the "autogenesis" of the Greek civilisation. There were, however, views to the contrary. Charles Francois Dupuis, President of the Legislative Body during the Consulate of Napoleon and Director of Cultural Affairs, in France (1795-1799), in his *Origin of the Cults,* first published in 1795, argued that all religions could be traced back to one source – Egypt. In this he was influenced by Napoleon who had a strong affinity with the Freemasons and was deeply interested in Egyptian antiquities.

According to the Freemasons, Egypt is the home of Geometry or Masonry. They believe in a hidden God – the *Jabulon* – who is too sacred and magically too powerful to be revealed to any but the higher grades of the initiates. The first syllable of the name of their God – *Ja* – stands for *Yahwe*, the God of Israel; and *Bul* for the Canaanite *Baal.* Though a supposedly secret group of people, the Freemasons had wide-spread influence on European intellectuals, Tolstoy was deeply interested in Freemasonry; and so was Dostoevsky. The origin of Freemasonry is, however, shrouded in mystery. (cf. S. Knight, *The Brotherhood,* New York: Granada: 1984 and G.P. Jones: *The Genesis of Freemasonry: an Account of the Rise and Development of Freemasonry in its Operative, Accepted in Early Speculative Phases,* University of Manchester Publications; 1948.) The Freemasons were instrumental in renewing the interest of the historians in ancient Egypt in the post-Renaissance period.

Eighteenth century enlightenment rejuvenated history scholarship. Voltaire (1694-1778), whose real name was Farcois Marie Arouet, wrote copiously on history and brilliantly exposed the prudery of the clergy and of the gentry. He looked at history from the standpoint of the half pessimist ad half self-satisfied philosophers of his contemporary France. His historical writings are models of clear narrative and ingenious thought though he exhibits, sometimes, a superficial grasp and

arrangement of his materials. His narratives contain a great miscellany of interesting matter; he had access to much private information of his times. Voltaire did not suffer under the weight of any centristic bias. With his mighty pen and witty candour he exposed the oddities and prudery of the orthodoxy, specially of the mediaeval Christian Church and was unsparing in his observations on his contemporary world. Only a very astute and perceptive person may be able to write on Voltaire's philosophy of history.

In the nineteenth century scholars renewed the vigorous search for and collection of materials on history. Archaeology and allied sciences gave a significant helping hand. But Euro-centricism with sentiments for ethnic diversity and superiority continued to haunt them and to this was added the rise of the pernicious cult of nationalism with subterranean racial prejudices. This had is effect on the historians of the newly independent countries. A thesis that only a man of the soil can write the history of his own country was projected. At this rate then, only autobiographies could pass as the truest books on history.

In India, a massive project of rewriting Indian history from an Indian point of view, which in effect became the Hindu point of view, was launched by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan under the leadership of the late K.M. Munshi. Jawaharlal Nehru with his basic training in the sciences at Cambridge and in law in a British Inna took pride in being an historian and started pronouncing on history. Under his leadership some good and some not so good Indian history academics were commissioned to write history, specially of the Indian freedom struggle against the British raj – a struggle in which Nehru himself was one of the chief actors. Be that as it may, the Indian historians, by and large, projected a jaundiced view of Indian history. After banishing Buddhism lock, stock and barrel from the land of its birth, India observed 2500 years of Buddhism under the leadership of Nehru without any attempt to throw light on how the Hindus achieved the phenomenal éclat of wiping out Buddhism from the land of its birth. A new dimension to writing of Indian history from India's point of view was added by the Marxist and leftist historians.

Marx was an astute analyst of the 19th century development of capitalism, mainly in Great Britain, where he went through masses of material on the history of British colonialism in the British Museum. Other sources of the development of capitalism were not available to him. His analysis based on a priori paradigms overtook his analytical powers. Marx plagiarised Hegel's monumental confusion of dialectical logic, predicted the future course of history and thought that all economic, social and political contradiction will end in the grand synthesis of Communism, which will be an embodiment of the classless society. In the beginning, men lived in a classless primitive society. But as per the laws of dialectical development primitive communism gave rise to class divided societies. After that, all subsequent history, according to Marx, is a history of class struggle – one class in conflict with another. This period may, in short, be called the period of anti-thesis; and the grand synthesis will come when all class-struggles will be things of the past. But Marx was also a votary of revolution. Without revolution, future communism could not become a reality. Even the necessity of revolution is needed according to Marx's version of dialectical logic. The instrument of the coming revolution will be the class of the proletariat. The proletariat is one who has no stake in the present social arrangements; he has nothing but his chains to lose. The proletariat is both in conflict and for conflict. But the peasantry is not. Hence the peasantry is not revolutionary; they have some vested interests in the present structure of society. Because of intellectual lethargy and allurements of imagined revolution, the Marxist intellectuals hibernated in Marx's historicism. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, its self-generated collapse, shook the Marxists to the core. Yet, there are Marxists who hold that though the Soviet experiment has collapsed, it does not lead to a falsification of Marxism itself. Apriori systems of thought cannot be falsified by empirical observed facts. Falsifiability does not confer meaning to an apriori system.

Left-oriented historians lapped up Marxist interpretation of history and Marxian historicism.

Where they see conflict, they smell germs of the coming revolution and try to accelerate the same. If one is in line with the revolution, one is in line with the inevitable; and the rest are either votaries of the upper class or parasitic dilettanti.

The Hindu-oriented historians of India got a boost from the researches of the Western orientalists. From time immemorial there have been contacts between Europe and the Indian sub-continent. The rise of British Imperialism motivated the European scholars to go into the sources of the enormous wealth of imperialism. Many of the Western scholars concentrated their efforts on studies in Egyptology, Assyriology, ancient Persia, China and many other regions. Indological studies made phenomenal strides forward.

In 1754 Anquetil Du Peron travelled to India in search of copies of books on Zoroastrianism. He returned to Paris in 1772. His translation of *Zend Avesta* with an account of the customs and rites of the ancient Persians appeared in 1771. Meanwhile, the East India Company started training their subalterns in different Indian languages and in the languages of the Eastern countries. Business could flourish only when they could directly talk to the people whose language they could speak. But willingly or unwillingly they could not resist scholarly interest. Interests in India led to studies in Sanskrit. The great scholar William Jones (1746-1794) opened a new branch of studies – Indological Studies. Some of his translations of Sanskrit texts profoundly influenced not only the romantic poets and philosophers but also great savants like Goethe and philosophers like Schopenhauer. Goethe read Kalidasa's S*hakuntala* in translation and remarked that when the name of *Shakuntala* is mentioned, everything is said. And Schopenhauer found the solace of his life and death in the *Upanishads*.

The contributions of an army of Western scholars to Indological Studies cannot be overstated. In the awakening of Western scholars to the ancient East, French Sanskritist Eugene Burnouf became the second founder of Zend Studies. He brought out a Commentary on the *Yasna* using a Sanskrit translation of the sacred book of ancient Persia. He also studies the cuneiform inscriptions of Persepolis and carried forward their interpretations. It was on the foundations laid by Burnouf that Alfred Gutschmidt (1835-1887) and Theodor Noldke (b. 1836) built their reconstruction of ancient Persian history.

The first comprehensive and encyclopaedic survey of Sanskrit literature was published between 1847 and 1862 by Norway born Christian Lassen (1800-1876), a literary collaborator of Burnouf and August W. von Schlegel. The range of Lassen's monumental scholarship covered old Persian, Sanskrit, Pali, Buluchi, Brahmi, Lycian and many other languages. His *Indische Altertumskunde* is a monument to his untiring energy, devotion and critical scholarship. No scholar of Indology, however, can forget the contributions of Henry Thomas Colebrook (1765-1837), Franz Bopp (1791-1867), Horace Hayman Wilson (1786-1860), James Prinsep (1799-1840), who performed the unique task of deciphering the Asokan inscriptions written Brahmi without the help of any bi-lingual stele – a feat performed by Ventris in his decipherment of Linear B-Horace Hayman Wilson (1786-1860), Friederich Max Muller (1823-1900) and many others.

The Indian nationalists scarcely mention the contributions of Warren Hastings, the architect of British imperialism in India, in connection with Indological Studies. Under Hastings' auspices the Bengal Asiatic Society was established in January, 1784. William Jones became its first President. The Journal of the Asiatic Society published voluminously on Indological subjects. Indian scholars like Rajendralal Mitra and many others found a forum to publish their researches. Activities of the Society encouraged many Indian Indologists. The old ways of Sanskrit scholarship were jettisoned; and a modern outlook on Indological studies developed.

One of the most important landmarks in the history of Indological studies is the work of Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800-1894). Hodgson came to India in 1818 as an Assistant Commissioner at Kumaon. In 1820 he went to Kathmandu as Assistant Resident of the East India Company. With

the help of Sanskrit Pundits, he collected copies of invaluable manuscripts relating to Buddhism from the monasteries in Nepal. He divided his collection among six libraries of Europe; the largest share went to Paris. Hodgson's studies extended from Buddhism to the aboriginal tribes of India, to Education and Himalayan flora.

Only a cursory account of the immense interest that the European scholars evinced in the 19th century has been given above. Their interest had a phenomenal effect on Friederich von Schlegel (1772-1824), who learned Sanskrit from Alexander Hamilton (1762-1824). Hamilton was an employee of the British East India Company in Bengal. On his return to England he continued his studies in the British Museum Library and later in the Paris Library where he taught Sanskrit to Schlegel and Fauriel. Subsequently he joined Haileyburry College as a Professor of Sanskrit.

Romantic Schlegel literally fell in love with Sanskrit. In his romantic adoration of Sanskrit he said everything, absolutely everything, is of Indian origin. Egypt is nothing but a colony of India; Greek is a derivative of Rig-Vedic Sanskrit. German adoration of India did not end with Schlegel. The belief that the Brahmins were the true descendants of the Aryans fitted in very well with the racist belief that all civilisations are Aryan in their origin and development.

In India the Pundits and Maulavis were chewing the old cud. They busied themselves with the niceties and subtleties of theological disputations. The Hindus avoided history writing possibly because time, according to the most dominant theology in India, is an illusion. This life is not the end, we will be born again and again according to our *Karma*; *the account of our Karma* is being maintained somewhere and the law of *Karma* dispenses whatever is to be dispensed till the cycle of birth and death is snapped and dour soul submerges in timeless, quality-less eternity. With this kind of philosophy one can be human without being a Humanist. The Humanist is not bereft of human sympathies and love; but his love and sympathy for the human being is based on his recognition of the infinite potential of the individual. Despite all this, Western orientalist research opened the eyes opened the eyes of the Indians and they started reassessing their own heritage. We had forgotten even the history of India as told by her own historians. In this reassessment of the Indian heritage some basic challenges were thrown by men like Rammohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, R.G. Bhandarkar and others from different parts of India. The critical method of reading history, the method cultivated by the Renaissance Humanists, was introduced. But soon, by and large, Indian historians failed to pick up any other thread of historiography except the thread of nationalism. The approach of the critical method was side-tracked; and what emerged is nationalist history. But in the multi-lingual and multi-religious sub-continent of India, nationalism itself developed in different forms. There was Hindu nationalism, there was Muslim nationalism, there was Bengali nationalism, there was Maharashtrian nationalism, there was Tamil nationalism, and so on and so forth. They were, however, more or less united on one account – to get the political power in their hands. Nationalism itself is a comparatively new cult in Europe; it is more so in India.

Western scholars have done monumental work not only on the history of the western countries but also on other people's history. They have collected material from all sorts of places and they are still at work. They reflect a genuine interest in and admiration for the subjects of their studies. But such interest and admiration are often viewed in a symbiotic relationship with a sub-terranean contempt. In short, a perceptive and meticulous reader can discern a bicameral vision, as it were, of admiration and covert or overt contempt for the people who do not fall under the paradigmatic view of the European ethos.

The concepts of ethno-centricity, race-centricity, Euro-centricity – all thinking in terms of collectives are different are different manifestations of collectivist thinking. Generalisation, categorisation, classification, etc., arise out of man's rational thirst for knowledge. Knowledge is not a booming, buzzing confusion of sensations and images adrift in an incomprehensible vacuity.

Kant thought that there are no isolated particular images; even the possibility of particular images could not have been there, if they were not organised by a priori elements of sensibility. But they become knowledge only when they are organised under the categories of understanding. Kantian a priori is a logical a priori. Kant tried to arouse philosophy from the dogmatic slumber of empiricism; but he put philosophy in still deeper slumber by bringing in the a priori elements of forms of sensibility and categories of understanding. Without going into the merits or demerits of the Kantian approach, one can safely say that classification, categorisation is a rational necessity for knowledge. Classes and categories are characterised by characteristics which serve as their identification marks, as it were. There are classes without any member. Without going into a discussion of the 'null-class', a very mundane example of a class without any member can be given. Take, for example, the class of Unicorns. There is no member answering to the qualities of the class of Unicorns. The same is the case with Marx's class of proletariats. Is there any man who has nothing but his chains to lose? Despite this, classes as "necessarily" real things continue to haunt the intellectuals. But they become worse when they become stereotypes and are used as a sort of Procrustean bed. If you do not accept my idea of religion, you are an infidel; if you do not accept my definition of 'nordic', you are fit to be thrown into the gas chamber; if you do not accept my definition of 'nation', you are am 'anti-national' and so on and so forth. Classification, rigid classification, and its obduracy had played havoc in history. Because of this some classes try to accommodate flexibility. Take, for example, Christianity which has time and again shown relaxation in their orthodox belief. The latest instance is the role of the Christian Church in the recent developments in the strife-ridden land of South Africa. The role of the Christian Church in the recent developments in South Africa cannot be bypassed.

After the defeat of Fascism and the collapse of the Soviet empire, the fundamentalist, collectivist and historicistic ideas are raising their heads in the assertions of Islamic, Hindu, Christian, ethnic and even Communist orthodoxies, which remain entrenched in their Rhadamanthine inflexibility. As against this, the Renaissance Humanists desired that history should not provide justification for or rationalisation of enslavement of the individual under any specious slogan, be that the claims of progressivists; be that the welfare for all. One of the most dangerous things in life is to subordinate individual human beings to the state, forces of production, spiritual betterment of the collective, evolutionary march towards progress, racism, nationalism, etc. as such subordinations curtail or even militate against the infinite potentialities of the individual man. The Renaissance did not predict the future of man. Generalisations, classification, prediction etc. have meaning only because they are falsifiable. Predictability in history even in terms of computerised statistical averages is just baloney.

History is not a postscript to a grand book on biology, nor is it an addendum to the story of class-struggle or spiritual betterment of man. It is a story of how the individual has struggled for freedom through ages and is struggling for hi freedom, the only guarantee for exercising his infinite potential. Freedom is not irreconcilable with law; and that is the lesson which Renaissance Humanists taught us – a lesson which many historians forgot or neglected.

Footnote: Years ago when this Journal was coming out as a Weekly, the present writer published a series of articles on individual Renaissance Humanists, particularly of Italy. Those articles need thorough editing and correction. Yet, the reader may consult them and see how individual Renaissance Humanists took up the task of projecting the infinite potential of the individual and how freedom gives full scope to the realisation of this infinite potential. The law must protect freedom and continually enhance its domain.

(Concluded).

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, October 1994.

The Man

Review Article:

M.N. Roy – The Man

B. S. Sidhu*

J.B.H. Wadia, well-known film maker of Wadia Movietone fame, had the privilege of playing host to M.N. Roy and his wife, Ellen Roy, whenever they visited Bombay from 1938 to 1954. Wadia was initially attracted to Roy for his political exploits within India and abroad but on closer contact he found that Roy not only had a rare tenacity of will to pursue political causes which he considered worthwhile but also had a rare intellect devoted to philosophical concerns for the social emancipation of mankind. So, the hospitality initially offered chivalrously to an unfamiliar couple, though held in esteem, later resulted in a devoted friendship and life-long association. Wadia's book** in a sense redeems a debt of gratitude which its author owes to Roy, who was his guide, friend and philosopher. Though limited in scope it vividly shows the human aspect of Roy's many-sided personality. In fact, whatever one imbibes from life is reflected ultimately in one's relations with men and women with whom one shares one's joys and sorrows, one's triumphs and failures. Therefore, the type of life Roy lived should be indicative of Roy's concept of an ideal life pattern of socially emancipated men. Wadia discovered in Roy "The most representative man of our 20th century Indian renaissance, barring none."

Roy was an uncompromising rationalist. At no stage did he mortgage his thinking to anyone. He was ever the eternal questioner and as such offended those who accepted the facile assumptions of civilisation. He was totally uninhibited as is evident from his attitude to drinks. It was not for Roy to do any such thing which was against the unreasonable conventional norms with a sense of guilt. In one of his Letters from Jail to his wife Ellen he wrote, "It is unfair to be mortifying with the flesh with coarse woollen texture and not have a Benedictine and Chartreuse Verti to drink as the jolly old monks used to." In another letter he approvingly referred to Eduard Fuch's view that Marx, Mehring, and Thalheimer were intellectually great because they knew the taste of good wine. This very openness he brought to bear to his political conduct. He was a rationalist and an atheist. He considered religious rituals, taboos and prayers an impediment to social progress. As such he was uncompromisingly opposed to bringing religion in politics. Therefore, while being a Congressman he refused to attend the evening prayer meetings of Gandhi at Faizpur Conference of the Indian National Congress in 1937. He maintained unequivocally that prayers had no place in the secular political programme of the Congress. This open defiance must have annoyed Gandhi and cost Roy heavily in political terms. That it would be so Roy could not have been unaware of, but he did not submit his intellectual integrity to expediency.

Roy could be tolerant to human failings. Even when he knew others to be in the wrong from the rationalist viewpoint, he had all the compassion for them. He could even comfort them without caring to insist on removing their ignorance, if it did not do damage to a cause. Once, in Germany, Roy treated an Indian nationalist who was fond of drinks and meat to a meal of beef steaks. The nationalist enjoyed the meal but was awfully unhappy when he came to know that he had eaten the meat of a cow, which was prohibited in Hindu scriptures. "I have committed a heinous sin," said his guest, "How shall I go to Swarga? My spirit will rot in Narka." Roy consoled the nationalist by telling him that he could still go to Swarga and nothing much wrong had happened because "our *Shastras* have enjoined that we should not eat the flesh of Indian cows and what you have eaten is the flesh of a foreign cow," This attitude was typical of Roy's tolerance in private life. When

someone questioned Roy if his above explanation was not in contradicti9on to his anti-God attitude, he clarified: "Who am I to deprive a man of his crutches if he cannot walk without them?" So,, while he himself was a rationalist, he could sympathise with the need of an individual to adhere to his religious beliefs if they were the only avenue open to him for psychological relief.

In personal relations Roy was perfectly humane and treated his friends and comrades with utmost affection and respect. He never placed himself at a higher level because of his political standing or intellectual attainments. Wadia's account of a number of incidents brings out this trait in Roy, though he hardly ever became sentimental in the presence of his friends and expressed his affection for them in a rather prosaic manner. When Roy came to know that Wadia's son Vince, aged 10 years, had suffered a concussion in the brain while playing cricket, he immediately posted a handwritten letter to Wadia and his wife expressing his own and Ellen's concern for Vinci's health. And when he was informed that the boy was out of danger Roy wrote again expressing their relief to receive the glad news. Once when G.D. Parikh was in Dehra Dun, Roy found him struggling with the strap of his holdall. He got up from his desk, rushed up immediately put his foot on the holdall and fixed the strap firmly. Though a small incident, it speaks volumes of the greatness of Roy, the man. This touch of affection was not limited to the everyday problems of his comrades; it got extended to save them from their political predicaments as well. After resigning from the President-ship of the Indian National Congress in 1939, Subhas Bose took the initiative to form the Left Consolidation Committee set up by all Leftist groups which were supposed to work outside the Congress. in a meeting of the League of Radical Congressmen held in Poona the proposal to associate with Subhas was approved. And V.B. Karnik who was most enthusiastic about it took upon himself the task of attending the meeting of the Left consolidation committee. Initially Roy tried to dissuade Subhas from that venture because he felt sure that such a step would invite for Subhas expulsion from the Congress (which ultimately happened). But when Subhas did not heed his advice, and decided to go ahead with the formation of the Committee then Roy advised Karnik and other comrades of the League of Radical Congressmen not to participate in the formation of that Committee, because at that stage according to his judgement it was not good for leftists to come out of the Congress. However, against Roy's advice Karnik attended the meeting of the Left Consolidation Committee at Gowasji Patel Hall, Bombay, on July 9, 1939. And the reaction of Roy to that defiance of him by Karnik is instructive. Soon after July 9 Roy came all the way from Western Ghats, where he was staying at that time, to the plains of Bombay in the grip of torrential July rains. When Wadia enquired from him the purpose of his surprise visit in that bad weather, he replied, "I thought Karnik needed me by his side," and quipped, "Well if the mountain does not come to Mohmed, Mohmed must go to the mountain." Probably, more than arguments this gesture on the part of Roy must have persuaded Karnik to veer round to Roy's point of view and an unfortunate parting of ways was avoided.

Gifted with pristine memory and a rare intellect Roy acquired not only masterly understanding of politics, economics and philosophy but also made original contribution to all these fields of knowledge. In spite of his hectic life he found time to study the works of literary masters of various European languages. He appreciated western art and culture, and enjoyed listening to classical western music and even seeing films. He was equally fond of Bengali literature and Indian foods; he was a cosmopolitan in the true sense of the term; a man who had no hesitation in picking up all that was good, true and beautiful from all climes and cultures. He was connoisseur of all that is good in life. He was a man of this world, for whom enjoying life on earth was the supreme end of human existence. That is why he could get lost in fun whenever possible with the esteem of a child. On the eves of Christmas and New Year Roy enjoyed the revelry leaving aside his philosophical concerns. He believed that Christian message of "Peace on Earth and Goodwill to Mankind" transcended its narrowly religious connotations and "sanctified superstition". He wanted to open

the avenues of enjoying life for all mankind and o this end were devoted all his political and philosophical concerns.

No wonder Roy's attitude to life and living was diametrically opposite to that of Gandhi. Gandhi as he rightly quipped "belonged to middle ages" and was a captive of the past". On the contrary Roy was a man who looked ahead and wanted to usher in a 20th century renaissance. In his flights of fancy Wadia forgets being a rationalist when he remarks: "It is an irony worthy of the Greek classical tragedy that despite a common focal point in morality the two great men of destiny could not join hands." Gandhi derived his moral code from religious orthodoxy while for Roy being moral meant respecting human values which are based on the rational nature of man (man being part of law-governed monistic nature). Renaissance of Roy's concept can flourish only when irrational superstitious beliefs which Gandhi supported are clearly recognised as such. At the rational plane there was nothing common between the two great men. For Gandhi social emancipation of mankind depended just on rediscovering and acting upon the glorious revelations already made in the religious scriptures and no new discoveries were required to be made. For Roy social emancipation was possible only after getting rid of the old orthodoxy and reshaping the world order on the basis of discoveries made and yet to be made by modern science.

It was Roy's recognition of ever-expanding areas of knowledge and the need to accept the limitation of any viewpoint, because any thesis at best could be taken to be true only until it was discovered to be false, that made him deplore deification of Marx, which of course Marx himself never desired.1 Roy's remark: "Even Marxism has been transformed into some kind of religion," must have been made in anguish on observing the functioning of communist parties rather than in derision for Marxist philosophy, the fountain springs of which are the same as those of radical humanism.2 And being true to his rationalist conviction Roy never considered himself infallible, much less to expect any deification of himself. Wadia informs us that the well-known twenty two theses of Radical Humanism are originally propounded by Roy were only eighteen and the other four were added later on discussion with comrades V.M. Tarkunde, Philip Spratt, G.D. Parikh (and Sibnarayan Ray). Therefore it would be perfectly in tradition if they are further altered, amended or changed as and when it is felt rational to do so in the light of new experience or knowledge. This limitation of human knowledge and perception can be well illustrated from Roy's life experience.

Roy started his political life by becoming a terrorist in order to help India gain freedom from foreign rule. At that stage of his understanding any means were good for helping his country gain freedom. He even toyed with the idea of collaborating with German militarists during the initial stages of the First World War basing his strategy on the principle, 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. But very soon after having seen militarists at work and reading Marx he concluded that Marxism alone could be the basis for true freedom for all mankind. Therefore, freedom of India became for him a part of a bigger process; freedom of all mankind from existing injustices. He started working with that end in view; went to Mexico to organise the first Communist Party outside Europe, went to China to help Communists there, worked in the Kremlin on the executive of the Communist International, till he discovered that emancipation of mankind through the work of communist parties was also an illusion. He observed that Marxism was being distorted beyond recognition. The call of the *Communist Manifesto* to workers of the world to rise in revolt to throw the existing bourgeois regimes in the dust-bin of history and create a new world order "in which the free development of each in the condition for the free development of all,"3 had become an empty slogan. Then onwards his perceptive mind started a search of new vistas on his voyage of discovery to his goal of helping create an ideal society of free and equal men and women. On return to India he was put in Jail by the British Government. He remained in jail from 1931 to 1936. He used that time to read, contemplate and write. In 1937 he joined Indian National Congress. and when he found that the Congress leaders for expediency's sake4 were not cooperating with the

Britishers to defeat fascists who were as much a danger to India as to Britain, and could even jeopardise the freedom movement in the entire world, he had no hesitation in waling out of the Congress. he founded his own political instrument the Radical Democratic Party in 1940. Absolutely sure of India gaining freedom once the war was over he got busy with preparing his cherished models of politi9co-economic framework for free India. He himself wrote the text of Draft Constitution of Free India and his esteemed colleagues prepared the People's Plan for Economic Development of India (1944). But then to his dismay the post war elections in India (1945-46) made his party politically irrelevant. He came to realise that because of the prevailing ignorance it was not possible for a rational political stance to succeed; that a 20th century cultural renaissance ushering in humanist revolution was a condition prior to any possibility of creating a genuine social-democratic set-up pervading all the institutions of free India. Hence his recommendation and acceptance by his colleagues of the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in 1948. After that till he breathed his last he had been busy in his educative role as a radical humanist missionary. This tradition of continuing search of the means of social emancipation of mankind and positive action on the basis of existing understanding must continue and it ought not to end where Roy had left it.

A few incidents mentioned in Wadia's book throw some light on a recent controversy of *The Radical Humanist* about the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in 1948. While the campaign for 1945-46 elections was on, Roy reportedly told his colleagues more than once: "If only eight or ten or our friends were to find their feet planted in New Delhi I will feel satisfied." Evidently not one of his comrades succeeding must have convinced Roy that time for rational politics had not yet arrived. In the meanwhile a movement for the education of the masses must intercede. The same strain is again evident when Roy reportedly told D.B. Karnik, "Do you know, D.B., I have played with the lives of my comrades so far in the hope that we would succeed in our aims on a modest scale, at least. But now that I have realised that it is not possible within the ambit of active party politics, I do not desire to do so any more." So there is no inherent contradiction between the aims of the Radical Humanist Movement launched in 1948 and the Radical Democratic Party dissolved in 1948.

In his book Wadia has raised and himself answered many questions about Roy's personality. Whether Roy was impatient, arrogant, egoist and uncompromising etc. Wadia had the benefit of very close association with Roy and we can take him on his word in evaluating these traits. But the question 'was Roy a failure?' is of another genre. It involves assessment of all the work which Roy did in his life time, including an assessment of his philosophical insights. This is a stupendous task and is, in our view, beyond the scope of Wadia's book. To the extent, however, Roy had left behind a legacy of ideas which would continue to guide men and women of scientific temper for a long time Roy, surely, did succeed. Wadia had no doubt tried to make an objective, impartial study of his subject but here and there some bias of his own has crept in: (1) He admires Roy's appreciation of good qualities in M.K. Gandhi and Sardar Patel in spite of having basic differences with them but when Roy does the same liberal appreciation of Stalin it makes Wadia comment, "When Stalin died Roy paid him a rather biased tribute ... Roy slurred over the innumerable horrifying deeds of the ruthless Russian dictator and tried to exonerate him as a creation of circumstances." (2) There is no purpose served, except revealing his dislike of Gandhi, in quoting Sarojini Naidu as having reportedly said, "It takes Birla's millions of rupees to keep Mahatma Gandhi poor." (3) Roy had expelled Tayab Shaikh from the R.D.P. in 1942. Wadia informs us that he has not understood till this day why Roy did such a thing to a dear comrade? He should have better questioned Roy about it then. He has unwittingly cast an aspersion on the functioning of the R.D.P. What were other members of the party doing? Also, at places where Wadia has tried to delve a little deeply in philosophy of Royist politics his writing becomes confused, i.e., "But once he (Roy) was convinced

that it (Economic Determination of Marx) had become unserviceable, in the light of historical development, he refuted it with all the strength of his intellect. He submitted that a rational political theory becomes a sham if it is not tied up with a rational moral practice. It was but natural that Roy should extend his rationale to all fields of human activity. It is the totality of personality in every individual in society, which alone will enable man, as a result of co-operative effort to reach the desired goal – the ultimate co-operative commonwealth of the world." Whatever this statement means we do not get to know. The book could have been better edited.

Notwithstanding the above criticisms Wadia's book, *M.N. Roy – The Man* is a timely addition to the recently growing literature on Roy's life and work. Importance of Roy's contribution to human knowledge is going to become increasingly relevant with the passage of time, more so in India where in the name of democracy an ersatz politico-economic structure is corroding all human values. Roy's life could well be a model for rationalists in the mould of which they can cast their own lives. We wish that the book was priced lower so that it could be within the purchasing capacity of larger number of persons unless the unstated purpose of keeping a high price is to use the profit for some other Royist causes urgently in need of money.

*Dr. Sidhu teaches Economics at Shivaji College, Delhi University.

** *M.N. Roy – The Man* by J.B.H. Wadia, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, pp. 121, Rs. 50/-

Notes and References:

1. It is on record that Marx could not tolerate mechanistic formulation of his views by his followers and quipped: "I am not a Marxist."

2. On publication of Roy's *New Humanism* when Wadia proposed a toast saying, "To the end of the century of *Communist Manifesto* and the beginning of the century of Humanist Manifesto;" Wadia informs us that "Roy appreciated the sentiment but hastened to add that it was necessary to differentiate between the Communist politics and humanist philosophy of Marx." See also my article "*Marx, Roy and the Present Times*", Radical Humanist, January, 1983.

3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, Penguin Books, 1987, p. 105.

4. Congress leadership was of the view that since Britishers were in difficulties on the war front, they could be made to concede immediate freedom or some definite promise of freedom in exchange of support from India to their war effort.

Published in *The Radical Humanist*, March, 1984.

M.N. Roy - When Shall Be Like His Again?

Ram Singh

On January 25, twenty one years ago, passed away M.N. Roy in sleepy Dehra Dun. No gun carriage was there to take him to the cremation ground; nor was sounded the Last Post. At least, this writer cannot help being emotional in recalling not so much his death as the unrequited roils and sacrifices put in by him during his life-time to help our people be lifted up from their abominable life of superstition, intellectual darkness, social backwardness and consequent political slavery. It is a little exaggeration to say that in the realm of intellectual history of this country, for the last two centuries to put it modestly, no other figure appears on the mental horizon of any objective observer that could challenge comparison with M.N. Roy. No ivory tower denizen was he.

Hardly in late teens, M.N. Roy – Narendra Bhattacharya then – negotiated an arms deal with the Germans in what is now Jakarta at the outbreak of World War I, in a bid to overthrow the British rule in India through a nationwide uprising. The whole enterprise ended in a fiasco, as perhaps it was bound to, and his self-exile while arrest warrants awaited him at home, the most serious one among them for organizing a conspiracy at Kanpur to overthrow His Britannic Majesty's Government "established by law." Incidentally, this was the case that brought, for the first time, the present Chairman of the Communist Party of India, S.A. Dange, into limelight though the case centred on the activities of M.N. Roy principally.

This may well be dismissed by a serious student of human affairs as at best a romantic episode. The consequent six years' imprisonment in the thirties for him too may deserve no more respectful attention especially by those who went to British-run prisons as some kind of holiday resorts, all found in some cases. But this is exactly what has not impelled this writer to jot down these reflections to be read as a single piece. His main concern today is to invite attention to the less glamorous and less noticed but intellectually more abiding highlights of M.N. Roy's career particularly since after the end of its "romantic" phase. Had he been heeded in time – now quite a few of his critics look like those who came to scoff but stayed to pray – some of the more nagging problems the people of this sub-continent are faced with today might not have been there and our politics would be freer of its confused thinking and imprecise, nay impulsive, groping.

Let us begin with the World War II. What ought to be the attitude of nationalist India to a war in which her British masters had been forced to measure swords with Hitler's might? At the beginning, perhaps the most sensible and far-sighted response came from the Father of the Nation whom this country remembers occasionally when it finds time from whole-time adulation of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. After his first meeting in this connection with the then (British) Viceroy, Mahatma Gandhi openly declared that India's independence would be worth nothing if the war led to the ruin of Westminster and St. Paul's and that if he had his way he would ask the Congress Working Committee, the brains-trust of India's "non-violent revolution", to support the British war effort "unconditionally."

This is exactly what M.N. Roy pleaded for, especially after the seizure of Paris by Hitler's hordes. His was a response neither sentimental nor quasi-religious. He was convinced that if the British prosecuted the war against Hitler seriously India's independence would fall into her lap like a ripe plum, provided the nation's leadership remained prepared to receive the "gift".

The Congress was already in power in eight out of 11 provinces of India then. M.A. Jinnah's Muslim League controlled no province. On the eve of the Congress Working Committee's fateful session at Wardha where Gandhi ran his famous *Sevagram*, Roy addressed a moving appeal to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, then President of the Congress, to do everything in his power to prevent the threatened resignations *en masse* by the Congress ministries in different provinces.

The Congress High Command – incidentally the term was for the first time used by M.N. Roy himself – in its sublime wisdom decided instead to go into worse than wilderness.

By the end of the war, when the time came for negotiations with the British, for transfer of power, the Muslim League had carved out for itself a position among the Muslims none could in his senses ignore. Moreover, mainly thanks to the thoughtless boycott by the Congress of the British war effort and sedulous discouragement to the Hindus to get recruited in the army, the British Indian Army as it was then called was over 60 per cent Muslim in composition. Partition became inevitable. What was until then Hindu-Muslim communalism now became an apparently endless Indo-Pakistan conflict capable of infinite exploitation by outsiders. The tragedy could have been averted. But nobody had listened to M.N. Roy.

With its virtual control of mass media, the Congress leadership, as today, deafens us into believing that it is busy building Socialism through its series of plans for the country's economic development. It would not like our mute masses to realize that the more planned is our economic life under its aegis, the worse becomes their plight – increasing poverty, spiralling prices, unarrested unemployment, etc. What did M.N. Roy have to say about it?

Anticipating that the British would have to quit as soon as the war against Fascism was over, he had a draft of planned economic development plan prepared – the editor of this magazine was one of its authors – which had chosen priorities different from those preferred by our destiny-makers in independent India. Entitled, "People's Plan", its priorities were agriculture, small scale industries and last but not the least heavy industries in that order. Caught in the miasma of the so-called Tata-Birla Plan of economic development, the late Jawaharlal Nehru and his successors turned the priorities upside down. Hadn't Stalin done the same in Soviet Russia?

Most of us are quite capable of being wiser after the event. To how many has it been given to foresee events involving vast multitudes of human beings with their multifarious aims and aspirations? To very few indeed. M.N. Roy was one of those few, very few. Securely, more correct would it be to say that M.N. Roy acquired the extraordinary "gift", through a device that might sound quite pedestrian to some. In judging public issues, he never put himself in them. Self-enlightenment is impossible without selflessness.

M.N. Roy was not even a member of any legislature in India, and the Congress as a whole had not taken very kindly to his logic and perspective, when he opposed resignation of Congress ministries. And he was nowhere in sight of power personally when he placed before this country the draft of a plan of its economic development which not only some of the Congress leaders but China's Communist Prime Minister, Chou-En-Lai too stand for now. When shall this country "look upon his like again?"

Published in *The Radical Humanist*, February 1975.

Remembering M.N. Roy on his 50th Death Anniversary

Dr. R.M. Pal

After the defeat of the Congress Party in M.P., Rajasthan & Chhattisgarh, a number of commentators, including some intellectuals in the Congress Party, have analysed the reasons for the party's defeat in those states. The reasons include lack of economic development and poor quality of leadership in the Congress Party. None of them, however, have gone into the past of the Party. The Congress Party was not a revolutionary party even during the freedom struggle. In fact the party leadership including the supreme leader of the party, Gandhiji, did not encourage the emergence of a revolutionary leadership in the party. Gandhiji never made any secret of the fact that Subhash Bose's election as the President of the Congress defeating Gandhiji's nominee, Pattabhi Sitarammaiya, was not to his liking. Subhash Bose was not able to form the working committee because none of the leaders were willing to join the working committee. In fact he was almost forced to resign. A few years later M.N. Roy, on his release from jail in 1936, joined the Congress with a view to revolutionizing the party. Immediately after his release from jail he issued a statement, which reads inter alia as follows –

He was thrown out of the party in 1940 primarily because of his support to the war efforts of the British Govt. His opposition to fascism was not appreciated by the Congress leadership. None of them would appreciate the fact that if Hitler won the war India becoming a free and independent country would remain a distant goal. Events have proved that Roy's war thesis, namely that after the war, the British would be left with no other alternative except handing over power to Indians and quitting India and that the fascist powers would be defeated and the allied powers would come out victorious was true. It is no use blaming Sonia Gandhi's emergence as leader of the Congress Party, for the defeat of the party in the elections. The party has always reposed faith in personality cult and not ideas. At one time it was Gandhiji, then it was Nehru, then Indira Gandhi. Had the Congress Party been guided by ideas, a man like Acharya Narendra Dev would never have been defeated in a bye-election. It is regrettable that none of his colleagues in the Socialist Party have ever analysed the real cause of his defeat in the bye-election. Are we being honest in blaming only BJP n being an enemy of secularism? The Congress Party itself was an enemy of secularism during the bye-election campaign against Acharya Narendra Dev. If the Congress Party and Congressmen were secular, the Acharya would not have been defeated. There must be new blood in the Congress Party generating new ideas. M.N. Roy tried to do it. He did not feel as greatly hurt by the abuses hurled on him by communists and congressmen as by Gandhiji when he asked him to render mute service to the people instead of starting a weekly paper. Had his ideas been followed, the Congress would by now have gone from strength to strength instead of becoming a spent force. A party like the BJP could never have won in such a manner.

Roy said, "It is my firm conviction that an effective struggle against Imperialism can be conducted only under the leadership of those who are inspired by revolutionary social ideals. I am of the opinion that simple talk about Independence will not take us far towards the much-coveted goal. Parliamentarism may prove to be a blind alley. In any case, it can never be more than an auxiliary weapon. Office acceptance is a minor issue. Election campaign should be conducted primarily with the purpose of mobilizing mass energy for a more effective form of struggle, for frustrating the sinister plan of reinforcing Imperialism through the introduction of the Government of India Act. Our immediate objective is no Socialism; but it is a mistake to place political freedom and establishment of Socialism in watertight compartments of history. All sincere and earnest well-wishers of the masses must realize that the economic evils that are eating into the vitals of Indian society cannot be eradicated unless larger and larger part of the fruit of their labour remains in the

possession of the producers of wealth; that is the workers and peasants. So, in order to serve its historical purpose National freedom must be defined as the establishment of such a form of government as would give real political power to the masses. That is to say, National freedom must be conceived as genuine democratic freedom."

The Congress even today does not have any revolutionary social ideals that Roy refers to. In 1947 the Congress only succeeded in replacing the white bureaucracy by brown bureaucracy. Roy stated that he would place before the nationalist movement a clear programme of democratic revolution accompanied with concrete plan of action. The Congress organization and leadership must be democratized and brought under the influence of rank and file. The only Congress leader who appreciated Roy's leadership quality was Jawaharlal Nehru. Immediately after Roy's release from jail Nehru welcomed Roy as 'an old and well-tried soldier in India's fight for freedom. Com. M.N. Roy has just come to us after a long and most distressing period in prison, but though shaken up in body, he comes with fresh mind and heart, eager to take his part in that old struggle that knows no end till it ends in success,'

Those Congressmen who are sad at the defeat of their party might give thought to what Roy said in his statement referred to above. Those of us who want India to be a real secular democratic country remember Roy on the occasion of his 50th death anniversary, which falls this month (Roy died on 25th January 1954).

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, January 2004.

Remembering M.N. Roy on his 50th Death Anniversary

Sumanta Banerjee*

This year is the 50th death anniversary of Manabendra Nath Roy (1887-1954), the controversial ideologue and revolutionary of the international communist movement. Generally reviled by Indian communist politicians, and only revered by a small group of his devoted admirers, Roy is yet to receive the recognition that he deserves as an original thinker. Much of his reputation remains mired in allegations of unscrupulous behaviour in his personal and political life, and marred by criticism of the failure of his political experiments in China (in 1927), land later in his homeland India. The acts of some of this followers further tarnished his image in the cold war period, when in their opposition to the distortion and dehumanisation of the Soviet socialist system they went to the other extreme of totally identifying themselves with the US warmongers.

But it is about time that we take a fresh look at M.N. Roy, clearing his image of the cobwebs of prejudices borne out of accusations – some genuine, some false – which have tended to push his otherwise outstanding contributions into oblivion a revaluation of Roy is necessary not only for historians engaged in a more objective analysis of the world communist movement during the 1920-30 period, but also for today's generation of left intellectuals and activists. They may discover in Roy's later writings anticipatory echoes of their present concerns, and alternative points of view that it may be relevant in their search for more democratic and insightful means to reach the goal of socialism.

Roy's life reads like an adventure on two levels – one of a revolutionary meteor fly8ng up in the skies as it were, bedazzling the observers, and the other of a restless soul down below rowing in the rough sea of politics, moving from one political harbour to another in his ideological odyssey. Born as Narendra Nath Bhattacharya in a rural home, he joined the anti-colonial armed revolutionary movement in Bengal at the age of 18 (1905), and when the first world war broke out, he clandestinely left for abroad in search of weapons and armaments to be smuggled into India for an armed insurrection against the British. This journey took him to Japan and then the US where he took the name of Manabendra Nath Roy and married an American radical woman Evelyn Trent who contributed considerably towards the transition of Roy from a militant nationalist to a Marxist theoretician and activist. In 1917, both fled to Mexico, which was a turning point in Roy's political career. Here he got involved in Mexico's radical politics, studies Marx, became a communist, propagated Marxism among the Mexicans, and in 1919, founded the *El Paretido Communista de Mexico* – the first communist party there. This was followed a year later by a message from Lenin inviting him to attend the second Comintern Congress at Moscow, where the 33 year old Roy dared to express his differences with Lenin on the tactics to be adopted by communists towards the 'national bourgeoisie' in the colonies in their struggle for independence as well as a future socialist society. Impressed by the young Indian's arguments, Lenin urged him to formulate a supplementary thesis on the national and colonial question – which along with Lenin's – was adopted by the 1920 Comintern Congress 9a sign of the democratic acceptance of dissident views in the international communist movement in those days). Soon after this, the Comintern sent him to Tashkent, where in 1920 Roy established the Communist Party of India in-exile with the help of Indian revolutionary émigrés in Europe.

He also guided the new communist groups which were operating independently in India, in their efforts to found a communist party (which was to come into existence in Kanpur in 1925). Along with these activities, Roy also formulated his theoretical perspective in his book *India in Transition* (1922) and his journal *The Vanguard* – both of which played a significant role in the moulding of the consciousness of a generation of Indian communists.

In early 1927, by when Roy had become an important member of the Presidium of the Comintern, he was sent to China to advise the Chinese Communist Party. During his stay there, around mid-1927 the main body of the Chinese Communist Party was decimated by Chiang Kai-shek's armed forces, and Roy returned to Moscow in August that year – a disgraced hero. The Comintern blamed Roy for the debacle and later communist historians also reiterated the same view, stamping him with the stigma of betrayal of the revolutionary cause in China. But Chinese historians today have come out with hitherto unrevealed documents about that period in the light of which Roy stands exonerated. To quote one of them (based in mainland China): "To find scapegoats for his own failures was Stalin's working style. Roy had sincerely worked for rescuing the Chinese revolution when he was in China which ultimately became a nightmare for him." (Feng Chongyi – '*Betrayal or Loyalty?'* Reproduced in *China Report*, Vol. 24, Number 1, January-March 1988, New Delhi)

The Comintern's unfavourable assessment of Roy's role in China, as well as his theory of 'decolonisation' (which was severely criticised by the sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928) led to his isolation in the international communist movement. The parting of ways came in 1929, when the Comintern expelled him on charges of joining its critics – known as the communist opposition.

Roy in India

The next year, Roy returned to India in the same clandestine way in which he left its shores 15 years ago – to carry out the same objective which he had been nurturing all these years abroad as an exile: a communist revolution in his homeland. But ironically, the leaders of the then CPI (many among whom were his recruits and brought up on his theoretical treatises) now treated him as a political pariah – just because their mentors in Moscow had ostracised him. Even before he could get his act together in the alien and hostile environs that he found himself in, Roy was arrested in July 1931. Although the Comintern indicted Roy as a 'lackey of imperialism' (the term used by a Comintern leader O. Kuusinen to describe Roy, at its sixth Congress), the British imperialist administrators in India were far more enlightened than their Comintern enemies to recognise the threat posed to them by Roy. They charged him under Section 121 A of the Indian Penal Code ('conspiring to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty in India'). Brought manacled to the court, Roy was not allowed to make the defence statement prepared by him. It was smuggled out from jail and published by the Roy defence committee of India, New York Office, 228 Second Avenue New York in 1932.

Entitled 'I Accuse: My Defence', Roy's statement may touch a chord in the hearts of today's Naxalites:

" A revolution, that is, a radical social and economic transformation of society is, conditional upon the overthrow of the state defending the established order. Consequently, by its very nature, revolution is inseparable from violence. The resistance of the established order is responsible for it." At the same time, apprehending the emergence of sectarian terrorism (as brought about by today's religious, ethnic and linguistic xenophobic groups), Roy made his position clear: ".. revolution is not a conspiracy and ... conspiratorial activities are not always necessarily revolutionary ... I have been opposed to secret activities and acts of individual terrorism. Political assassination has no place in my theory and practice of revolution."

On January 9, 1932, Roy was sentenced to 12 years' transportation. Following strong protests in India and abroad against the manner of Roy's trial and the harshness of the sentence, on May 2, 1933, the Allahabad High Court reduced Roy's sentence to six years' rigorous imprisonment. On September 17, 1934, Albert Einstein wrote to the British ambassador in Washington that a scholar

of M.N. Roy's standing should at least be given all facilities to pursue his studies and researches, even inside jail.

This helped Roy to embark on a vast theoretical project during his imprisonment. His prison manuscripts (which are preserved in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in Delhi), suggest how he moved from an unorthodox Marxist framework to interpret the Indian reality and seek solutions within it, to a much larger conceptual paradigm of a cultural revolution, a renaissance of sorts, as an alternative.

Roy's political praxis after his release, was marked by vicissitudes that often appear as confusing and out of tune with reality. He first joined the Congress (turning his back on his earlier thesis that described it as a 'counter-revolutionary force). But soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, he resigned from the Congress on the issue of fascism, which he felt was the more dangerous enemy at that time than British imperialism. In 1940, he formed the Radical Democratic Party which declared full support for war effort and opposition to industrial strikes – a policy that was to be adopted soon also by his arch enemy the CPI which in 1943 asked workers to 'regard production as their foremost patriotic task' during the war. After independence, Roy dissolved his party, and founded the Renaissance Movement in 1948, propagating the theory that a cultural renaissance must precede a political revolution in India.

Roy's Relevance Today

But despite these mercurial political swings, Roy remained consistent in his ideological pursuit, in the course of which he tried to formulate certain theoretical propositions on a variety of issues which still affect us today. Writing on the caste system for instance he anticipated the debate that we are engaged in today. Agreeing with the proposition that "... this ugly relic of the past can be cleared away only by the secular authority of the state" he added: "Superstitions cannot be dispelled by legislation. When the leaders of the nation are wedded to hoary traditions (that is, cultural nationalism) who will make iconoclastic laws?" (*The Marxian Way,* Vol. I, No. 4, March 1946). His observations after Gandhi's death, still remain an apt and sound assessment of the Mahatma's personality and politics: "While conceding that the doctrine of non-violence did represent an effort to introduce morality in political practice, one may find it difficult to accept the view that Gandhism allows individual freedom, rational thinking, and cherished the ideal of cosmopolitanism. Blind faith in a divine power, and also in his being its vehicle, was the sheet-anchor of the Mahatma's life. Therefore, for the sake of introducing morality in political practice, Gandhism is hardly preferable to Marxism. In fact, the former may be more dangerous, because of its insidiousness." (*The Marxian Way, 1948-49, Vol. III, No. 2).* Rejecting both Gandhism and Marxism, Roy towards the end of his life talked of the need for a "psychological revolution and moral regeneration inspired with the ideal of freedom," and based on what he conceptualised as "rationalist humanism."

In retrospect, we may deprecate acts of political misjudgement, but cannot dismiss his intellectual sagacity. Pleading for a "secular ethics with rational and humanist sanction," he forewarned: "In an atmosphere of religious revivalism modern dictatorship would easily acquire divine sanction like the mediaeval monarchy." He was equally prescient in foreseeing "a religious fervour in the frenzy of flag-waving, whether the sacred rag be multicoloured or red." (*The Marxian Way, 1947-48, Vo,. III, No* 1). Roy certainly never intended that his observations should mirror the ills of our society almost half-a-century hence. But if they do, it is because we as a people have not only progressed little, but have begun to backslide in our moral perceptions and behaviour.

Courtesy: **Economic and Political Weekly**
Published in ***The Radical Humanist,*** November 2004.

Book Review:

A Biographical Check-List

The Twice-born Heretic - M.N. Roy and Comintern by Samaren Roy, Firma KLM Private Ltd. Calcutta 1986, pp. 262+6. Rs. 150/-

M. K. Haldar

This is the second book on M.N. Roy written by Samaren Roy. Samaren seems to be obsessed with the idea that if one is born in a particular caste, he cannot outgrow the stamp given to him at his birth. His first book on M.N. Roy is entitled *The Restless Brahmin;* and the second is ***The Twice-born Heretic*.** Restless or heretic, a Brahmin or a twice-born cannot shed the stamp which he received at his birth.

In the first book Samaren at least tried to justify the title of his book wherein he showed that Roy was indeed restless; but, he was hardly able to convince the reader that Roy's restlessness had anything to do with his being born in a Brahmin family. In this book also, the reader will scarcely be able to discern any relationship between Roy's intellectual Odyssey, his life of travels and adventures through three continents in search of the goodness of men, and his being 'twice-born'.

The book covers the period of M.N. Roy's life from 1916 to 1930. The earlier book covers the period of 20st March, 1887 – Roy's birthday – to 15th June, 1916 when he arrived in San Francisco; from here the book under review takes over.

Samaren has tried to follow the hackneyed pattern of biography writers by giving us a cursory resume of Bengali cultural background at the time of Roy's birth and during the formative years of Roy's life. Even as a collection of notes on the Bengali cultural background of M.N. Roy the chapter is full of hurried and at times unauthentic *obiter dicta*. He seems to be under the misapprehension that the word 'Roy' is derived from the word 'Rais'. For he writes, "... a group of Hindus influenced by association with Muslims carried the title of Rais or Roys ...." The word 'Roy' however has its origin in the Sanskrit word 'Rajan'. While talking about Rammohan, Derozio and Dwarakanath who according to Samaren, "ushered into India the enlightenment...," he says that before the days of Rammohan, Dwarakanath and Derozio "India had come near to bring influenced by the European Renaissance..." We wish Samaren had given us some indication of the facts from which he drew such a conclusion. However, this is not the main theme of his book. This opening chapter has really very little to do with the rest of the book. Before we come to the next chapter we read in the note on swami Vivekananda prepared by Samaren that the great Swami "became the chief guide and philosopher of the nationalist revolutionary movement." This is another instance of his recourse to unnecessary and unauthentic facts.

The next chapter, "The Early Life", is a casual summary of his earlier book, *The Restless Brahmin.* In the next Chapter, "New Name, New Life", begins the period of Roy's life with which the book is mainly concerned. It is here that Samaren should have tried to re-enact the atmosphere in a section of the Americans round about the tie when Roy reached America. Instead he simply throws around some names. 'These include Charles Ricker, Arthur Ryder (who taught Sanskrit), Fritz Krueger (who taught Political Science), and Thomas Harrison Reed, besides Arthur Upham Pope. On the fringes of this academic circle were the danseuses Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan and the writer Jack London." Roy stayed in America exactly a year as he arrived at Mexico City on June 15, 1917 travelling over land from the USA. Roy's life during this one year must have been hectic. He was being hounded by the US police at the instance of the British police, married Evelyn Trent, met Lajpat Rai and Agnes Smedley and others already named, studied Marxism at New York Public Library, wrote an open letter to the President of the USA – Woodrow Wilson - and thereafter went on to Mexico. In the meantime he was arrested by the US police on March 7, 1917, but was released on bail on the 9th of March. During such a hectic life in the USA, Roy could not have studied much of Marxism or for that matter any other ism. It was in Mexico that Roy was exposed not only to Socialism and Marxism but also to some international culture.

Roy got lessons in art from the wife of a German merchant who did a portrait of Roy, "Pablo Cassals, the great Cellist and his singer wife … taught Roy how to appreciate music." Roy participated actively in the politics of Mexico and soon became one of its leading figures. It was in Mexico that he came in contact with Borodin and possibly it was Borodin who made him a through-going Marxist. He became the General Secretary of the Mexican Socialist Party. On August 25, 1919, Roy founded the Mexican Communist Party. In December he left for Moscow on Lenin's invitation to attend the 2nd Congress of the Communist International. While in Mexico Roy published at least two books in Spanish and several articles. Roy reached Berlin in the beginning of 1920. In Berlin he came very close to some Marxists like Brandler, Thalheimer and others. These Marxists were not the doctrinaire Marxists and did not belong to the tribe which was being trained by Lenin. Samaren's chapter on "Development of Socialist Thought" is just a rough breezy and overview of a very lively intellectual movement which drew some top intellectuals of the West into its fold. With many of them, their Gods failed, some were liquidated while others became henchmen of the Communist International conspiracy to protect the interests of Soviet Russia. In the second meeting of the Third International Roy differed with Lenin. But the difference was not important; at least it was not important for the interests of Soviet Russia at that time. Roy was elevated to one of the top positions of the Communist International and was sent to China by Stalin. From Moscow Roy tried to export Communism to India. This led to at least two Communist Conspiracy cases in India. In both these two conspiracy cases Roy's name figured prominently.

Samaren has given a chronological narration of Roy's life in Europe and China. But the question is whether biography is only an account of the physical existence of a man. If that were so, biographies would be the most boring of books. By and large, Samaren's book suffers from the defect of shallow narration under which all chronicles labour. The a-historical Hindu attitude seldom produces good biographies.

Though Samaren travelled in Europe and America in search of facts on Roy's life, he has not cared to find out the date on which Roy and Evelyn married; neither has he been able to ascertain when Evelyn arrived in the USA from Europe after bidding adieu to Roy. There is hardly any mention of Roy's meeting Ellen (Roy's second wife) in Germany. Moreover, a comparison between Roy's different styles of writing – from 1917 to 1925; from 1926 to 1927, from 1928 to 1930, and from 1931 to 1936, and from 1937 till his death – might have revealed the significant influence that two brilliant women – Evelyn and Ellen – exercised on Roy's intellectual development. But these are not things to be analysed by a chronicler. Neither has the intellectual ferment in Europe and America of the 20s and 30s, of which Roy was not only a beneficiary but also to which he himself contributed in no meagre measure been brought out in this biography.

The reader, however, will find a chronological account of the events in Roy's life-account which can never be complete. It appears that Samaren was in too much of a hurry to see this book into print; otherwise it would be difficult to justify such statements as "Just as Marx had worked out that industrialization led to increasing socialisation (sic) and created conditions for a socialist revolution..." (p. 183). Or, take this sentence: "The great flowering of the intellect and creativity in Weimar Germany (sic) was the culmination of a process which had started nearly 200 years earlier in the time of Schiller, Wieland, Goethe, Holderlin, Heine and Herder," (p. 184). None of the persons named was even born nearly two hundred years before the "Weimar Germany" where "M.N. Roy watched the repeated failure of Socialists and Communists," (p. 183). M.N. Roy was in Germany during part of the short lived period of the Weimar Republic. Samaren seems to be making a confusion between the post World War I Germany, known as the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), and the brilliant cultural period known as Weimar Germany, which centred round the 15th to mid-19th century Saxe-Weimar Court and extended roughly from the works of J.S. Bach to those of J.W. von Goethe. Is this confusion the work of the printer's devil only? Or, is it a symptom of the chronicler's enthusiasm to purvey scissored information?

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, April, 1986.

Assent and Dissent with M.N. Roy

Balraj Puri*

Manabendra Nath Roy's life and philosophy have been the subject of scholarly studies by academicians of the world and galaxy of intellectuals that he had attracted around him. He had mastered the vast knowledge in various fields of the West and ancient India and developed his own integrated philosophy.

Roy's voyage from nationalism to Marxism and to Radical Humanism reflected an eternal quest for a system of thought and a society in which his basic values could be fulfilled.

Three pillars of these values wee supremacy of reason, freedom and secular morality. Evolution of his ideas took place during freedom movement of India, threat of fascism in Europe in inter war years, triumph of communism in Russia and rise of Stalinism. In this period, Roy took notice of many new ideologies that attracted popular attention, as also of the impact of developments in physical sciences. He, for instance, traces trend towards falling back upon religious and transcendental authorities to the consequence of transition from Newtonian physics to quantum theory. Hence he realized need for secular basis of ethics.

I had believed in the three basic values I have referred to above since formative years of my life and have also admired the scientific method which he used to integrate the human knowledge in diverse fields to arrive at his philosophical tenets.

I will not attempt to summarize or evaluate Roy's contribution to the human thought. There are more qualified persons who have already done it or would do it. I am here concerned with future of the Radical Humanist movement at the level of practice and ideas. As Roy was an evolutionary mind, he would not have shirked the task of further innovations at both the levels so that RH movement remained a living reality and relevant for the needs of the modern world, in particular of India. Roy propounded theories not for the sake of it but to make the world a better world. his efforts had always been to combine theory with praxis.

But how far did he succeed? How relevant Radical Humanists are to today's India – as a movement of ideas or as force in public life of India? Accordingly to Sibnarayan Ray, who could be qualified than him to know the life and ideas of the master? – "The new philosophy never got off the ground." Of course Roy's preoccupations personal compulsions and death, before he could crystallize all his thoughts to put them into practice are cited to answer these questions.

That, however, does not absolve the inheritors of that legacy to take ahead the unfinished task. Let me hasten to add that the entire legacy has not been frittered away. Some of the ideas of Roy have become part of the folklore of Indian politics. But a fresh look with an open mind is needed to update these ideas and devise a mechanism to link them with practice. In doing so a note must be taken of the developments in the field of, say social and physical sciences in post Roy period of last half a century including post-modern thought, globalization, info-technology, genetic engineering etc. if it necessitates re-examination of the earlier concept, there should not be any inhibition, within the framework of reason, freedom and secular morality.

A complete comprehensive new manifesto will be beyond the scope of the present paper or even beyond the competence of a single author. But my purpose is to throw broad hints on the possible lines on which a debate may be started. For instance, globalization and revolution in information and communication have also increased urge for identity. From Eric Fromm to David Apter, need for a sense of belonging and a group identity has been emphasized. The fear expressed by Roy about "frenzy of collectivism threatening individual" freedom may be discounted if collectivism does not become a frenzy and provides protection to individuals against other collectivities and meets his sociological and psychological needs. Further, no single collectivity

can satisfy all human urges. Multiple collective identities that are required to satisfy a modern human being cut across one another and check exclusiveness and frenzied form of each of them.

India offers a unique model of multiple identities based on religion, region, language, class, profession and ideology which can be effective checks against fanaticism and authoritarianism. A theory of democracy must provide for a system which recognizes and accommodates all types of diversities and dissent within each of them. Appropriate institutional arrangements must be devised for that purpose. It has also been observed that urges of various identities are capable of finding expressions through different ideological outlets. It should be possible to provide democratic outlets for diverse identities. The earlier debate between individual and collective right thus as become irrelevant.

As individual freedom is essence of democracy, any democratic system which denies freedom of dissent within any collective identity is not democratic. Thus while Roy is right in pointing out the seeds of fascism in nationalism, the vast diversities of India have certainly provided an effective checks to it.

Again I have more in common with Roy than Gandhi on the question of primacy of reason. I would not dismiss Gandhi's philosophy as "fanaticism and intellectual narrowness". I would agree more with Philip Spratt who found "something in common" with him, for "it does, as to one side of it, encourage free, individualist rational thought and feeling, and the consciousness of world citizenship, and discourages narrowness and fanaticism." Similarly Amlan Dutta was not far wrong when he considers it "desirable to preserve and propagate magnificent emotional kernel of Gandhian humanism."

The big gap between intellectual heights of Roy and popular mass appeal of Gandhi was bridged when their followers joined together in the movement headed by Jayaprakash Narayan. Unfortunately their meeting point was my point of departure from both of them. From day one, I have been raising my voice of dissent on practical prescriptions of Roy on party-less democracy in each camp of Radical Humanists and various articles in RH and other journals.

I need not recount all the arguments that I have been using in the last five decades; nor draw any consolation from the fact that I have been vindicated. A few broad points will illustrate my position. Roy did not trust parliamentary democracy – only form of democracy so far known to us – as it was "only a veiled dictatorship". Accordingly to him "democracy itself did not suit people of India with an authoritarian mentality and a reactionary cultural heritage." People of India, he said, "cannot conceive of human freedom and human creativity.'

While dismissing parliamentary democracy, Roy did not believe any alternative system could be more democratic, for "as long as human nature cannot change, freedom would always be abused. All attempts for creating any new social order would also have to be abandoned." That is precisely what the most talented group of Indians, i.e., the Radical Humanists did. They abandoned all attempts to create a new social order and rendered themselves irrelevant to Indian situation.

To change man has been the endeavour of many saints and prophets for many millennia. How much have they achieved? How did profound conclusions of modern psychology escape the attention of an intellectual genius like Roy which assert that psychological evolution is slower than physical evolution. Graham Wallace said in *Human Nature in Politics*, "in essentials, type of each human stock may be supposed to have remained unchanged ... If a stone-age child were transplanted into 20th century or vice versa, except a few biological changes, there would be no difference."

Human ingenuity is continuously evolving less and less harmful means of expression of basic human urges like social recognition, envy and power. Victory in an election, satisfied urges similar to what winning a bloody duel used to do. No system can rid human beings of their basic urges. None can survive without providing them adequate outlets. Power is known to have been abused

as sex had depraved many people and led to many crimes. But within an appropriate system of checks and balances, urge for power can lead people to make great achievements for the good of the society. But attempts to suppress this urge and block avenue of its expression can only cause perversions just as unhealthy outlets of sex do.

In any case the present situation has to be taken as given. Whatever the achievements or lack of them in Indian parliamentary democracy, one can intervene to improve it. There is no way to supplant it root and branch by an ideal system and ideal human beings. If we do succeed in supplanting it, through some miracle, there is no guarantee that the new system will in any way be better because we will have to deal with the same people.

I had conceded that M.N. Roy's thought has left some impact on Indian society. While rational component of it and contribution of some of his followers on some contemporary problems may be positive, I crave indulgence of the present leaders of the Radical Humanist Movement to share my confession that by confusing concepts of democracy, shaking democratic convictions of intellectuals, discouraging democrats from participating in democratic process – spelled as scramble for power – undermining respect for democratic institutions and deflecting the course of democracy to illusory goals, the Radical Humanists in collaboration with Gandhians have on the whole a paralysing influence on Indian democracy. What a colossal waste of an unusual intellectual and moral wealth of the country.

I do not entirely blame the masters for making their ideas lose their relevance. As I said in the beginning about Roy, which is true about Gandhi, evolution of his thought continued throughout his life; nor need it stop after him. As followers of Roy and Gandhi, the greatest personalities of the twentieth century in India, have discovered some common ground between them, both owe it to their masters to do some serious rethinking to make their magnificent legacy relevant for today's and tomorrow's India.

*Balraj Puri is a leading intellectual, particularly in the area of Kashmir politics.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March, 2005.

J.P. on M.N. Roy

Jayaprakash Narayan

(*After the death of M.N. Roy in January 1954, there was a proposal to bring out a book on him under the title "M.N. Roy – Man and His Ideas." The following contribution was sent by Jayaprakash Narayan for being included in that book. The proposal was later abandoned and this contribution, as far as I am aware, was never published. Readers will find it of great interest and significance.* – Editor)

The first time I came to know anything of M.N. Roy was in the United States. I was studying at Madison, Wisconsin, then. It must have been the year 1925. I had been introduced there into a communist study cell by a brilliant young Jewish student, who was an ardent admirer of Leon Trotsky, who was still the hero of the Revolution, second in importance only to Lenin.

Through that communist cell came to my hands flaming political tracts powerfully written, closely reasoned, and attempting to tear to shreds the ideology of Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement. "The Aftermath of Non-Cooperation", and a pamphlet whose exact title I forget, but which dealt with the question – "What is to be done now?", I still vividly remember. Later, when I was working in Chicago in the stock-yards, among other places, I came across "India in Transition", which impressed me as a masterly exposition. Then also came issues of the Masses, published from Paris.

Thus was it that I made my acquaintance with M.N. Roy. Naturally he had a great hand in moulding my thought and leading me to Communism, which was still a revolutionary doctrine. That Roy was a colleague of Lenin and was a big personality in the Communist International, made him in young eyes a hero and a great India. I did not know much about his life then; but Manuel Gomez, a Mexican, who was then in charge of the Oriental Section of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., and had been an associate of Roy, told me a few things about his adventures in the New World. The romance of Roy's dangerous life, which no Indian, not even Netaji, has equalled in recent times, and the impelling force of his intellect made me an ardent admirer. This admiration I maintained even when the gulf of political differences was wide between us.

It has been a matter of deep satisfaction to me that, after a middle period of difference, we had moved close together at the end just as I was close to him at the beginning. In the States I was drawn towards him as a disciple to the master. Towards, the end, both of us, each in his own way, had moved away from Marxism in the same direction and to the same goals. I cannot describe the sense of tragedy that overtook me when I had gone to talk with Roy about non-party democracy, in which I was becoming deeply interested and about which he had done more thinking than anyone in this country, or for that matter in any country, and found him stricken down by paralysis. That was his second stroke. It was a pathetic sight, to see that large powerful frame lying helpless in bed. Mrs. Roy and the doctors were, however, hopeful and she and I talked about his projected American trip. He did in fact improve considerably, and when I sent up again to see him, he was much better, though no serious talk was yet possible. I was looking forward to visiting him again when he had fully recovered so that we could discuss the topic that was uppermost in my mind, that is, a non-party political system. But death, alas, got there earlier.

In the death of Roy India, nay, Asia, lost a great leader, who was perhaps never more wanted than just when he went away. But his life, so packed with drama and achievement, so completely dedicated and selfless, will be a source of inspiration for generations to come. And his recent path-

finding work in the realm of political and social thought would serve as a beacon light through the thick pervading smoke of power politics – national and international.

For those who follow the beaten path and would copy more or less defined patterns, the way is easy and no disturbing doubts are ever likely to dog their steps. But for those who want to break new paths, the obstacles are many and many possible digressions. For these Roy would prove to be an invaluable guide.

M.N. Roy was so utterly unlike Mahatma Gandhi that it would sound queer if I were to suggest how their lines of thought were strikingly similar and fast converging to a point. The Radical Humanism of Roy, which approaches socio-economic questions from the point of view of the whole man – that is, from the human point of view, as distinct from the class, race, group or nation point of view – is so similar to the approach of *Sarvodaya*, that one wonders why the two have not moved closer to each other. Perhaps the idioms that the two movements use produce the appearance of dissimilarity. But I do hope that appearance will not stand in the way of reality. Radical Humanism must not remain confined to a small group of high grade intellectuals. It must go to the people, talk a language that they will understand, give them a programme that they can carry out here and now, individually and collectively.

I hope those on whom has fallen the task of carrying on Roy's great work will give serious thought to this. Only in that way could they discharge their debt to Roy and build him a fit memorial.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, March, 1978.

Roy, J.P. and Indian Democracy

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

[*This article was written for the special issue on M.N. Roy brought out in August 1976 by Marathi weekly* Manus. *The article is reproduced by courtesy of* Manus. *– Managing Editor}*

Gandhi's Sarvodaya and M.N. Roy's Radical Humanism developed from opposite philosophical moorings. The two movements, however, have reached a remarkable similarity in certain socio-political areas. This similarity is illustrated by the formation of Citizens For Democracy, a non-party organisation for the defence and stabilisation of democracy, which has been set up by Jayaprakash Narayan and some of his Sarvodaya followers in close association with leading Radical Humanists. A majority of members of the Citizens For Democracy do not of course belong to either group, but the cooperation between Sarvodaya and Radical Humanists workers is itself an interesting development which would repay some critical examination.

The main similarities between Radical Humanism and Sarvodaya philosophy may be noted to start with. Both the movements agree (1) that morality must play a central role in social (including political and economic) life; (2) that political work can and should be done without forming a political party striving for power; (3) that democracy should be organised from below, by forming appropriate local republics in villages and towns; and (4) that the agro-industrial development of rural India should be the foundation of the economic development of the country.

There are some basic differences between Sarvodaya and Radical Humanist philosophies, to which a reference will be made later on. It is desirable at this stage to trace the development of these similarities.

Gandhi, Roy and J.P.

Both Gandhi and Roy changed some of their basic ideas from time to time in the light of experience. Where they changed their ideas, they said so in explicit terms. They did not make a bugbear of consistency. Gandhi in fact declared that "when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he should do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject." ('Harijan' 29.4.1933, Quoted in *Village Swaraj,* Navajivan Publishing House, p. 2).

It so happened that in and after 1946 Roy had adequate time to formulate his latest ideas into a consistent and comprehensive philosophy, which he called New Humanism or Radical Humanism. Hence, on the four points of similarity mentioned above, the views of Radical Humanism were clearly formulated during Roy's lifetime. Gandhi, however, did not live long after the attainment of Indian independence. Although the primacy of morality was the central feature of his philosophy from the very beginning, his ideas on the other three topics – party-less politics, grass-root democracy, and rural economic development – remained in a germinal and somewhat nebulous form till his death. Sarvodaya philosophy on these three topics is largely a post-Gandhian development. The development was brought about first by Vinoba Bhave and then by Jayaprakash Narayan. The latter in particular has developed Sarvodaya ideas on these topics on lines very similar to those of Roy. His article on "Participating Democracy" (published in his book *Communitarian Society and Panchayati Raj,* Varanasi, 1970), which contains an outline of his ideas on these three topics, could have been written by a competent Radical Humanist. It appears to me therefore that, unconsciously rather than consciously, Jayaprakash Narayan stands somewhere midway between Gandhi and Roy. This is probably the reason why Sarvodaya workers

and Radical Humanists have found it so very easy to work in cooperation for the defence of democratic values and institutions.

Readers may not find it easy to accept the above conclusion without some corroboration. For that purpose it is necessary to examine the main ideas developed by Gandhi and Roy on the subject with which we are concerned. The subject with which we are concerned is the principles of political and economic development of India after it became an independent country. What were the ideas of Gandhi and Roy on the political and economic development of independent India?

Gandhi's Picture of Free India

Gandhi was an intensely religious man. He had a living faith in God. In fact, he believed that his principal tenets of truth and non-violence were not possible "without a living belief in God meaning a Self-existent, All-knowing Living Force." ('Harijan', 28.7.1946, Quoted in *Panchayat Raj*, Navajivan Publishing House, p. 9). What is more pertinent he rejected modern civilisation, which he regarded to be materialistic, and wanted India to revert to its spiritualist heritage. Initially he was wholly against modern science, medicine, industrialisation, machinery and all the characteristics of the so-called Western civilisation. He even supported the division of Hindu society into castes, though he insisted that all the castes should have an equal status. In the course of time his opposition to some of the characteristics of modern civilisation became qualified to some extent. He remained opposed to "industrialism" but admitted that a machine can be valuable provided it did not become the master of man and did not "save" human labour.

Given his opposition to industrialism, he naturally preferred village life to city life. "The village civilisation and the city civilisation," he said, "are totally different things. One depends on machinery and industrialisation, and the other on handicrafts. We have given preference to the latter." ('Hindustan Standard,' 6.12.1944, Quoted in *Village Swaraj,* Navajivan Publishing House, p. 22).

His ideal was a village which was economically self-sufficient as far as possible and whose government was conducted by a *Panchayat* of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, "possessing minimum prescribed qualifications." ('Harijan', 26.7.1944, Quoted in *Panchayat Raj,* Navajivan Publishing House, p. 11). As far as I am aware, Gandhi did not visualise any such republic in towns and cities.

What is more, Gandhi did not formulate any concrete ideas on the connection between village republics and the legislative and executive power in the country as a whole. In fact he appeared to believe that no Central Government was required in the ideal society which he visualised. He said: "In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but eve humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units." ('Harijan', 28.7.1946, Quoted in *Panchayat Raj,* Navajivan Publishing House, p. 9).

Thus Gandhi's ideal society consisted of a number of villages whose economy was confined to agriculture and handicrafts and whose political organisation consisted of annually elected *Panchayats*. As far as I am aware, towns and cities, large-scale industries, and Central and State Governments did not find any identifiable place in the Gandhian picture of an ideal society. He did, however, express his agreement with Thoreau's classical statement that that government is best which governs the least. ('Young India', 2.7.1931, Quoted in *Sarvodaya,* Navajivan Publishing House, p. 74).

There were two other ideas of Gandhi which have a vital bearing on India's economic planning.

He insisted, in the first place, that real planning consisted in the best utilisation of the whole man power of India. ('Harijan', 23.3.1947, Quoted in *Village Swaraj,* Navajivan Publishing House, p. 35). It is only recently that our planners have begun to realise that full employment should be one of the central objectives of economic planning. Secondly, Gandhi emphasised repeatedly that cities in India were exploiting the villages and that city people were getting big profits and good wages "by sucking the blood of villages." ('Hindustan Standard,' 6.12.1944, Quoted in *Village Swaraj,* Navajivan Publishing House, p. 23). What Gandhi probably meant was that the industrial development in cities had the effect of destroying handicrafts and spreading unemployment in villages. Although the Gandhian remedy of reviving the traditional cottage industries has not been found to be practicable, his comments on the pauperisation of villages have brought out the necessity of economic decentralisation and agro-industrial development of rural areas. Decentralisation, both political and economic, was a basic feature of Gandhian thought.

To regulate the relations between the rich and the poor, Gandhi developed the idea of trusteeship. The rich should regard themselves as the trustees of the rest of the community in respect of the income which they derive in excess of what they require for subsistence. This idea was later developed by Vinoba Bhave and given the form of *Bhoodan*, *Gramdan* and *Sampattidan*.

In the last days of his life, Gandhi advised the Indian National Congress to dissolve itself and form a non-political body to be called *Lok Sewak Sangh*. On 29.1.1948, the day before his death, he drafted at the request of the Congress Working Committee a resolution which has come to be known as his "Last Will and Testament". (Pyarelal's *Mahatma Gandhi – Last Phase,* Vol. II, p. 819). It was stated in the draft resolution that "the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e., as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns, ... It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies. For these and other similar reasons, the A.I.C.C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organisation and flower into a *Lok Sewak Sangh*.." Gandhi did not live to elaborate the relations between the proposed *Lok Sewak Sangh* and the Government of the day.

Roy's Conception of a Free Society

Roy was a thorough-going materialist. He did not believe that any super-natural force intervenes in the affairs of man and the universe. He did not admit any dualism between spirit and matter, between the human soul and the human body. Man is part of nature and, like the rest of nature, he is law-governed. On this basic postulate, Roy gradually evolved the philosophy of Radical Humanism.

Radical Humanism is both a personal and a social philosophy. The personal philosophy of a Radical Humanist is mainly based on the three values of freedom, rationalism and secular morality. Since man is part of nature, Radical Humanism traces these values to the physical and biological evolution of human beings. It is not possible in this article to present even a cursory account of the personal philosophy of Radical Humanism. But it is necessary to say a few words about the Radical Humanist concept of morality. Like other human attributes, morality also is of naturalist, biological origin. In order to succeed in his struggle for existence a human being has to live in human society. Social living, however, is not possible unless man learns to live harmoniously with other human beings. Morality consists of the values which are necessary for cooperative social living, which itself is necessary for the individual's success in life. Morality thus is of secular origin, being rationally connected with man's struggle for existence, and does not stand in need of any super-natural sanction. Being of rational-naturalist origin, morality grows with the growth of reason in society. That indeed is the main lesson of European history in the last three hundred years.

In social philosophy, Roy insisted that there was a logical relation between the values conceived by human beings and the social institutions created by them. Human beings create social institutions

to give expression to the values cherished by them. Democracy is one such institution. Its purpose is to give expression to the value of individual freedom in the sphere of the political administration of society. It follows that the institution of democracy can be successfully run only by people who cherish the basic value of individual freedom. So long as man remains unconscious of his urge for freedom, so long as he believes that his destiny is determined not by himself but by some inscrutable super-natural power, he will not be fit to run the institution of democracy. Roy pointed out that modern democracy was born in Europe only after a prolonged Renaissance movement which destroyed man's faith in pre-destination to a large extent and generated the humanist values of self-reliance, rationalism and individual freedom. A similar movement has arisen in India in the nineteenth century under the inspiration of free thinkers like Rammohan Roy, Mahadev Govind Ranade and others, but the movement was overwhelmed by reactionary nationalism in the beginning of the present century, mainly under the influence of Gandhi himself. Roy looked upon Gandhi as a bulwark of orthodoxy, blind faith and social conservatism in India, the removal of which was a pre-condition of the success of Indian democracy. Roy knew that the successful working of democratic institutions would itself lead to the further strengthening of the values of individual freedom and cooperative endeavour, but he was of the view that the successful working of democratic institutions would be impossible unless those values inspired an adequate number of persons by whom land amongst whom those institutions are to be worked. The kernel of these ideas appears to have been developed by Roy during his period of imprisonment from 1930 to 1936. Soon after coming out of jail, he declared that every worthwhile social revolution must be preceded by a philosophical revolution. A strong secular and rationalist movement based on human freedom was in his view the necessary pre-condition for the success of India's democratic revolution.

Concretely, the difference between the *Sarvodaya* approach and the Radical humanist approach in the cultural field can be put in this way. For the success of any *free* institution, two cultural attributes are essential – self-reliance of the persons concerned and their ability to work harmoniously and in cooperation. The second attribute requires a certain moral standard, and both *Sarvodaya* workers and Radical Humanists place adequate emphasis on this requirement. But the first requirement of the successful working of a free institution, namely of individual self-reliance, is largely overlooked in the *Sarvodaya* approach. Reliance on oneself necessarily means reliance on one's reason and rejection of fatalism and blind faith. Such an approach appears *prima facie* to be un-Gandhian. Radical Humanists believe that without such an approach, a democratic institution cannot succeed.

Roy suggested many novel institutional changes which he believed would be suitable to a free society. The success of these institutional changes depends, however, on the cultural precondition referred to above. The fact is often overlooked by those who have advocated the same or similar institutions, often without acknowledging the source.

In the political sphere, Roy suggested that parliamentary democracy should be replaced by what he called "organised democracy". Democracy should mean rule *by* the people, and not rule *for* or *on behalf* of the people. Parliamentary democracy implies representative government, and representative government meant government not by the people but by their representatives. Representative government involves delegation of power by the people in periodic elections. The people have no role in such a government except that of casting their votes once in four or five years. Roy was of the view that delegation of power should as far as possible be replaced by direct exercise of power by the people themselves. For this purpose the suggested that the people in villages and towns should be organised in primary democracies which he called People's Committees. These People's Committees should have a constitutional status as organs of People's power. The Parliament should be an apex based on a network of such People's Committees.

It will be noticed that Roy's idea of organised democracy was not confined to rural areas, nor did it visualise the disappearance of Central Government. It implied political decentralisation and a fair

degree of direct exercise of power by the people themselves.

Roy appears to have developed these ideas as early as in 1936. However, as soon as it became clear to him that India would attain independence as a result of the defeat of the Axis Powers in the last World War, he prepared a Draft Constitution of India, which was published in December 1944. His idea of "organised democracy" was given a concrete shape in the Draft Constitution.

By 1947 Roy realised that the existence of political parties is inconsistent with the concept of organised democracy. The main reason is that political parties strive for the power which is delegated by the people in a parliamentary democracy, whereas organised democracy implies the direct exercise of political power by the people themselves. The functioning of political parties leads to party government, whereas organised democracy implies people's government. Roy did not imply that political parties should be dissolved by force, much less that they should replaced by one party. He felt that as people's power grew in a country, the existing political parties would become increasingly irrelevant. He placed these views before a Study Clamp of the Radical Democratic Party held in Dehra Dun in May 1947, and his lectures in that Camp and on subsequent occasions were later published in a book entitled "Politics, Power and Parties". These and allied views led to the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in December 1948.

In the economic sphere, Roy's ideas of planning for India were given a concrete shape in the "People's Plan for economic development of India" which was published in April 1944. Contrary to the then prevailing opinion, the People's Plan gave the first priority in economic development to agriculture, second to consumers' goods industry, and third to basic industry. In justifying this order of priorities, the People's Plan said, "Whatever the development of industries that we can visualise within a period of ten years, agriculture will still continue to provide employment to a major portion of our population. That being the case, it is essential that labour employed in it must be made far more productive than what it is at present." More than thirty years have passed since the publication of the People's Plan, but it is only now that our planners seem to have agreed that development of agriculture and the rural sector must receive the first priority in our economic planning.

Another idea in the economic sphere which Roy suggested in and after 1948 was that of "cooperative economy" as an alternative to both the capitalist economy characterised by private ownership and the socialist economy characterised by State ownership. Roy developed the view that land and industry should be owned by autonomous cooperative associations, and not either by individuals as in a capitalist society or by the State as proposed by "scientific" socialists. Cooperative economy, Roy said, "will be a really socialised economy without the evils of regimentation and bureaucratisation". Roy went on to say "State-ownership of the means of production, called nationalisation, and State-control of the economic as well as other aspects of social life, means so much concentration of power as rules out the possibility of democratic freedom. An autonomous cooperative economic organisation of society will prevent political power becoming totalitarian and the State the dreaded Leviathan". (*Radical Humanism*, Eastern Economist pamphlet, pages 54-55).

J.P.'s Position

J.P.'s ideological development was somewhat similar to that of Roy. Like Roy's he was a nationalist to start with and then became a Marxist. He has stated more than once that he became a Marxist largely on account of the pungent writings of M.N. Roy which found their way to the United States where he stayed from 1922 to 1929. Later, like Roy, J.P. became disillusioned first about communism and later about Marxism as well. But whereas Roy in his post-Marxian days developed the philosophy of Radical Humanism, J.P. joined the *Sarvodaya* movement and devoted several years to its development.

Another similarity between Roy and J.P. is worthy of note. Roy regarded freedom as the basic human value. "Freedom," he declared, "is the supreme value of life, because the urge for freedom is

the essence of human existence." (*Radical Humanism,* Eastern Economist pamphlet, page 17). J.P. also regards freedom as the passion of his life. He says, "Freedom, with the passing of the years, transcended the mere freedom of my country and embraced freedom of man everywhere and from every sort of trammel – above all, it meant freedom of the human personality, freedom of the mind, freedom of the spirit. This freedom has become a passion of life and I shall not see it compromised for bread, for power, for security, for prosperity, for the glory of the state or for anything else," (*from Socialism to Sarvodaya,* Sarva Sewa Sangh Prakashan, pages 11-12).

J.P. Has one major difference with the philosophy of Radical Humanism. He was invited to inaugurate an All-India Conference of the Radical Humanist Association which was held in Calcutta in December 1973. For that Conference a Draft Declaration of the aims and objects of the Radical Humanist Association was prepared and a copy of the Draft was sent to him in advance. In his inaugural address J.P. said that he had carefully gone through the Draft Declaration and that he found himself in complete agreement with the Draft except for one point and that he felt that the *Sarvodaya* movement would also be in complete agreement with the Draft except on that one point. The point of disagreement was the statement in the Draft that "Humanism excludes super-naturalism and affirms that man with his increasing power over nature is the maker of his future." Disagreeing with the statement J.P. said, "Whatever the nature of the human spirit may be, it definitely seems to be of a higher order than the Mind.' He expressed the view that reason alone will not enable man to shape a better future for himself and referred with approval to Vinoba's statement that the Age of Reason and Politics is over and a new Age of Spirituality and Science has dawned. He, however, added, rather unexpectedly, "It may be discovered that what is called 'super-natural today is after all a part or an aspect of nature, but whose laws are different from those that are termed 'natural laws' at present," (*The Radical Humanist,* January 1974, page 11).

Although J.P. differs with Radical Humanism in this respect, he is clearly not a supporter of Indian orthodoxy. I believe that his views on life and on social problems are materially different from the orthodox views that Gandhi entertained. J.P. had no objection to the following statement in the Draft Declaration referred to above: "In order to build up and strengthen political and economic democracy, the contemporary world, and in particular the under-developed part thereof, requires a new renaissance based on the humanists values of freedom, rationalism and morality,' (*The Radical Humanist,* January 1974, page 23).

The fact, however, remains that J.P. does not appreciate the nature of the "philosophical revolution" which according to Roy is necessary for a successful democratic revolution in India. Roy was of the view that the cultural backwardness of India preceded the imposition of foreign rule and that it was the cause and not the consequence of foreign rule. In other words, India came under foreign rule because it was culturally backward and not that its cultural backwardness resulted from foreign rule. The beginning of the Indian dark age, accordingly to Roy, is to be traced to the triumph of the Vedant philosophy on the defeat of Buddhism in India in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. and the resultant other-worldly, anti-humanist outlook of the people. The very spiritual heritage of India which was upheld and applauded by Indian nationalists was regarded by Roy as the cause of India's cultural decay. That this aspect of Roy's ideas was either missed or not appreciated by J.P. is clear from many statements made by him. For instance, while pointing out the necessity of educating the people for the realisation of *Panchayati Raj* J.P. observed, "A hundred or two hundred years of slavery of a kind which this country had never seen before completely destroyed the power of the people to think for themselves and to come together and face their tasks together," (*Communitarian Society and Panchayati Raj¸* Navachetna Prakashan, pages 136-137). J.P. does not appreciate, or does not agree with, Roy's view that the Indian nationalist movement, while it created a good deal of popular discontent against foreign rule, failed to prepare the people for democratic freedom, that the independence of India came as a result of the forces generated by the defeat of fascism in the last

World War and was not won on the democratic strength of Indian nationalism, and that Indian democracy in the post-independence period has remained weak because the bulk of the people in India still lack the will to individual freedom and are willing to accept authoritarian rule. Hence although J.P. is not opposed to a renaissance movement being developed in India on the basis of rationalism, self-reliance and exposure of all forms of orthodoxy and blind faith, he does not take the positive stand that such a movement is pre-condition of the success of Indian democracy. Significantly, his writings are silent on this topic.

For the rest, the ideas developed by J.P. in recent years age very similar to those of Roy, and where Roy differed from Gandhi, J.P. appears to be nearer to Roy. The concept of *Panchayati Raj* developed by him is indistinguishable from Roy's concept of organised democracy depicted in his Draft Constitution of India and other writings. Like Roy, J.P. visualises local democracies not only in villages but in cities and towns, and also an organic link between these local democracies and the Governments at the State and the Central level. What is more, J.P. advocates *Panchayati Raj* for the same reason for which Roy advocated organised democracy, namely that this type of democracy would avoid concentration of power at the Centre and would secure its diffusion amongst the people J.P.'s advocacy of party-less politics is also on grounds similar to those advanced by Roy.

In the matter of economic development, J.P. advocates economic decentralisation which was a common feature of the ideas of both Gandhi and Roy, but J.P. is clearly nearer to Roy in opposing the mere revival of traditional handicrafts. He says in this connection: "I should like, first, to make clear that it is not my concern at all to preserve traditional modes of production. For my purpose the debate between the modern and the traditional is irrelevant. What I am suggesting is, indeed, a most modern type of economy, the like of which does not exist or has existed anywhere, and to create which the utmost possible help of science, including social science, would be required. In other words, a new machine technology as well as a new socio-economic technology, would have to be created,' (*Communitarian Society and Panchayati Raj*¸ Navachetna Prakashan, page 90). It appears to me that Gandhi would not have advanced this view.

Conclusion

Both *Sarvodaya* and Radical Humanism are genuinely democratic movements. Since they have renounced power politics, they are free from sectarianism and are tolerant of differences of opinion. Indeed these virtues are symbolised in the personality of J.P. I therefore visualise no difficulty in the two movements cooperating with each other, purposefully and without reservation, for the defence of democracy in the country. Indeed the cooperation can extend further if Sarvodaya workers are willing to oppose orthodoxy and blind faith prevalent in the country, as I believe many of them are.

I would like to make a further remark in conclusion. There is complete consistency between the personal and the social philosophy of Radical Humanism. Radical Humanists desire to live the life of free, rational and moral individuals and they desire to work for a society of free, rational and moral men and women. Radical Humanists do not have one philosophy for themselves and another for the rest of the people I would like *Sarvodaya* workers to consider whether they have a similar consistency in their personal and social philosophies. Their social philosophy urges them to strive for the economic betterment of the poverty-stricken people of India, while their personal philosophy, if they are true to India's so-called spiritual heritage, requires them to strive for a condition of complete desirelessness so that the soul may be free from the bondage of the body. There is a clear inconsistency between the personal philosophy of desirelessness and the social philosophy of material progress. I urge that this social philosophy is right and this personal philosophy is not. If an attempt is made by *Sarvodaya* workers to bring their personal philosophy in line with their social philosophy, I think they will come much nearer to Radical Humanism.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, September, 1976.

The Revolutionary
M.N. Roy: Trial of a Revolutionary

B. R. Agarwala

The first concentrated attack by the British Rulers to suppress the Communist Party and Trade Union Movement in India was made when the Kanpur Conspiracy Case trial was held, in which N.B. Das Gupta, M.S. Usmani, M. Ahmed and S.A. Dange were tried and sentenced to 4 years' R.I. on 20.5.1924. The main accused M.N. Roy being out of India could not be prosecuted and sentenced. His trial was kept in abeyance.

On May 10, 1924, i.e., after the arguments in the Sessions trial were concluded and before the judgement was pronounced in Kanpur case, Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Kaye, counsel for the prosecution, requested the District Magistrate to issue warrants for the arrest of M.N. Roy. The warrant was issued and made over to Cecil Kaye. It was presumed that it would be sent to England for execution as Roy, according to Scotland Yard's information, was likely to go to England and the continent.

M.N. Roy returned to India secretly in December, 1930. Since his return to Bombay, British authorities had made strenuous efforts to capture Roy for, as one intelligence officer later told him, he was considered to be "the only man who could make communism a real danger in India". An intelligence report, reviewing communist activities in India during this period, acknowledged that Roy had managed to do "very considerable mischief, despite the fact that the police were continually hot on his heels." During the brief seven months in his disposal, he had gained many supporters for his views – including important Congressmen – in various parts of the country. "Roy, ever the realist", the report continued, "stands out heads and shoulders above all other Indian communist leaders with the possible exception of Dr. G.M. Adhikari, and his continuous exhortations to eschew the dangerous ultra-left policy," would have won more converts to communism "in the end" than the CPI's sectarian polities. "His conviction," it was felt, would "remove from the political arena a dangerous enemy of capitalism, landlordism and imperialism and (will) strike another blow at Indian communism in general."

Seldom had the Indian police worked as hard to capture a man as in the case of Roy. Within a few days after the arrival in India the authorities had suspected his presence. By late March, Roy was reporting "the atmosphere" was "getting hot" and that consequently he "must always be on the run." A few days later, he wrote form Karachi that "the secret is completely out," thanks to the services of the official communists who consider it their revolutionary duty to exterminate the "danger" by whatever means necessary. At the same time the CPI was attacking Roy as a "renegade" and as a man who had diverted "Bolshevik gold" to his own personal use.

Despite the determined efforts of the police, Roy managed to elude them for several months while at the same time making creditable progress toward the realization of his goals. A contemporary press noted that on several occasions he had narrowly averted arrest and that "but for his amazing cunning, Roy would have been in custody within a week after his arrival." He was finally arrested at Bombay on 21st July, 1931.

Roy was sent to Kanpur to stand his trial on the warrant issued in 1924 in connection with the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. Kanpur had been selected originally as venue of trial to avoid jury trial and demonstrations. He was first produced before the Magistrate who committed him to stand trial before the Sessions.

His charge-sheet was prepared by Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Kaye who was head of the anti-Bolshevik Bureau in the British Intelligence Service. The case started with Mr. Rose-Alston, chief counsel for the prosecution, reading the charges to the Court. The charges framed were as follows:

(1) That there exists in Europe a revolutionary organisation, known as the Communist International;

(2) That a section of the said organisation, acting under the name of the Executive Committee of the 3rd Communist International, had as one of its objects the formation of affiliated organisations in Eastern countries;

(3) That some time in the year 1921, the said section determined to establish a branch organisation in British India which was to be placed under the control of a person who called himself Manabendra Nath Roy (M.N. Roy) who, it is believed, was at the time residing at Berlin;

(4) That one of the objects of the Branch organisation to be established as aforesaid was to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India;

(5) That in pursuance of the said determination, the said Manabendrra Nath Roy and the accused already names, who resided at different centres in/outside British India, communicated with each other and with others and entered into a conspiracy to establish the said branch organisation throughout British India with the aforesaid object, that is to say, to deprive the King Emperor of the sovereignty of British India;

(6) That with a view to furthering the aforesaid object, it was decided to make use of an association of workers and peasants or a People's Party under the leadership of the above-named accused and others;

(7) That the said association was to be under the guidance and support of the said revolutionary organisation, the said Communist International, so that the same might be used as an instrument for securing the complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain by a violent revolution and so deprive the King Emperor of the sovereignty of British India;

(8) That to gain the ultimate cooperation of the said association of workers and peasants and the People's Party in carrying out the aforesaid object an economic programme of such a character as to attract both peasants and workers was to be advocated, thus effecting what the said Manabendra Nath Roy described as an organisation which would have a legal as well as an illegal object;

(9) That as yet further means of ultimately attaining this object, it was also decided to make an attempt to secure the control of the Indian National Congress;

(10) That as yet further means of attaining the said object, the said Manabendra Nath Roy and the accused as well as others introduced into and circulated in British India newspapers, pamphlets and circulars of a revolutionary character."

Cecil Kaye emphasised vehemently that drastic action should be taken against M.N. Roy and other communists:

> "The immediate and potential dangers of the communist movement in India even as an isolated factor are sufficiently obvious. On the one hand, there have been communications with the representatives of the Old Bengal revolutionaries, many of whom are personal friends of M.N. Roy and who since the failure of the non-cooperation movement have been moving towards resumption of their former activities. On the other hand, C.R. Das and the extreme left of the Congress Party have not concealed their intention to 'organise the proletariat' to resort to 'direct action'. Between these two groups, Roy's communists occupy a dangerously convenient tactical position."

In May 1924, the Session Judge at Cawnpore had sentenced four of the accused – Dange, Usmani, Nalini Gupta and Muzaffar Ahmad to four years' rigorous imprisonment each when charges against Roy were kept pending.

Roy could not be arrested at that time but he was in constant touch. At that Kanpur trial he wanted that the Communists should utilise the court-room proceedings to propagate the main tenets of communism, as well as the immediate programme of the Indian Communist Movement, so that it may obtain a very wide publicity. But the accused at Cawnpore, unfortunately on the advice of their lawyers, took a narrow legalistic stand and missed this grand opportunity (a mistake that was amply rectified during the Meerut trial). M.N. Roy was very much disappointed and in a letter to a friend in India, in November 1924, he wrote:

> "Poor fellows, if they could only have put up a better defence, four years in jail would have been worthwhile. The great opportunity was lost."

M.N. Roy had been committed b the Magistrate to Sessions on 15.10.1931.1 After several postponements, his trial in the Court of Sessions began on 3.11.1931.

"Roy's trial did not take place, as usual, in open court. It took place in the jail in which he was locked up. The Government, it seems did not want any popular demonstrations to take place. Roy refused to appear before a court sitting behind prison walls, but he was forcibly taken to the court. He applied for trial by jury. The application was refused and he was tried with the help of assessors. At the end of the trial two of the four assessors found him not guilty, but that did not prevent the Sessions Judge from convicting him and imposing a savage sentence upon him.

The evidence against Roy consisted of letters from M.N. Roy to his associates in India and letters from them to him. These were the original letters which were intercepted and retained or found in the possession of Roy's associates when they were arrested. Copies of letters which were intercepted and either copied or photographed and re-posted and pamphlets, leaflets and other publications which accompanied the letters or were obtained from other sources.

Roy, during the Session Trial, wanted to make a lengthy statement in his defence but was not allowed to make it. It was later smuggled out from jail and published under the title MY DEFENCE. It is a remarkable legal document which has established its place in legal history. It gives ample proof of industry, intelligence and the wide knowledge of Roy. Taking up first the question of conspiracy, he contended that the evidence on record does not prove conspiracy as the documents produced disclosed differences of opinion amongst the alleged conspirators and no agreement to commit any crime. He then made submission under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code penalising a conspiracy to deprive the King of his sovereignty of India and disputed its legality and constitutionality. It stated that the British Government of India has been a machine of an 'enormous tyranny and oppression', that 'the people of India owe no allegiance to the British Crown' and that they have the right to revolt. He supported his arguments from the quotations of Locke, Hume, Bentham, Bagehot, Dicey and other political philosophers and legal experts who wrote about the legality of the British conquest of India. Replying to the accusation of the intention to use 'criminal' force he stated:

"But in reality force is force. The moral philosophy of the ruling power is that force becomes criminal when directed against it but that is an instrument of virtue when employed for the preservation of the ruling power. In other words, the mercenary army with which the sovereignty of the British is maintained in a foreign country is an instrument of moral or virtuous force. The rifles employed in putting down the pauperised peasants of Malabar or Burma are the arms of God. But the same weapon in the hands of the oppressed people of India fighting for freedom will be instruments of crime. Aeroplanes bombing the Frontier tribesmen are vehicles of virtue, teaching those deprived people a moral lesson but any resistance on the part of the latter is 'criminal'. The oppressed people and exploited classes are not obliged to respect the moral philosophy of the ruling power," and concludes:

"The only law for the oppressed and exploited people of India is the law of revolt, the majestic law of revolutionary struggle for freedom. The imperialist rulers of India violate it every day; this is the only law that the people of can observe under the present condition. My arrest and trial represent 'an

instance of such violation of our law. To accuse me of any offence is to add insult to injury. I stand here not to answer any such absurd charge and insolent accusation. I stand here to indict the British Government of India at the bar of civilised world for wanton aggression against one-fifth of the human race, for robbing our land, for obstructing our progress in every sense."

Dwelling on the history of constitutional developments in England, Roy pointed out:

"The history of England teaches s that resistance and rebellion against the established state are the motive force of political progress."

He said that:

"Indians shall give their country a political system better than the rusty British Constitution. They will not be satisfied with a puppet parliament at Delhi eventually set up by the dispensation of the sham at Westminster. Nor will they recognise the sovereignty of the British Crown even if some day it will be exercised through an Indian Viceroy. We will make our constitution not at any Round Table Conference in London but here in India in the midst of the struggle for the assertion of our right to self-determination. The British Crown presumes to deprive us of his inalienable right. So, the way to the establishment of a constitutional regime in India lies unavoidably through a revolutionary war against the British King who has usurped power in India. We are not making the ar. It is levied against the Indian people by the British King." And lastly, he dealt with his association with the Communist International and the aims of communists. He also separately dealt with imperialism, national revolution, agrarian revolution and the Communist International and its relations with communist parties.

It is a great pity that he was not allowed to read his defence in the Court. Made in Court, it might have received wider publicity and attention all over the world. The message was prophetic.

The trial was concluded on 6.1.1932. Judgement was reserved until 8th January, 1932 when Roy was sentenced to 12 years' transportation. The severity of the sentence came as a shock not only to Roy but to all others and immediately plans were made for appeal to the High Court and the Privy Council, if necessary.

Since all of Roy's friends, except Brajesh Singh, lived in other parts of the country, Brajesh Singh was given the sole responsibility for making arrangement for the appeal. Unfortunately for Roy, several months before the appeal was to be heard, Brajesh Singh renounced Roy's doctrines and returned to the orthodox Communist fold. By the end of 1932, he had returned to Europe. With Singh's sudden departure, Roy was crippled in his effort to prepare for the hearing of his appeal. It proved difficult to assemble the papers of the case, which had been in Singh's care. Most of Roy's loyal supporters as well as many leftwing nationalists, who had come to his defence, were in jail.

The appeal was heard and decided on 2.5.1933 by Thom, J. It was argued by young and able Dr. K.N. Katju assisted by Mr. D. Sanyal, whereas the Government Advocate appeared for the Frown. The Government Advocate summarised the case against M.N. Roy. He said that the case for the prosecution against the appellant is that between the years 1921 and 1924, in co-operation with a number of persons in India, the appellant who was in Europe, resolved to embark upon an attempt to introduce the doctrine of communism into India, the final objective of the conspirators being to set up a communist state in India – a state which would be controlled by the workers and peasants, the institution of such a communist regime was to be preceded by the violent overthrow of the existing constitution in India and the destruction of the sovereignty of the King Emperor.

The learned Judge of the High Court discussed the evidence upon which conviction was based, which was almost entirely documentary. The evidence consisted of

(a) letters from M.N. Roy and associates in India and letters from them to him. These were original letters which were intercepted and retained or found in possession of M.N. Roy and associates when they were arrested.

(b) copies of the letters which were intercepted and either copied or photographed and re-posted.
(c) pamphlets, leaflets and other publications which accompanied the letter or were obtained from other sources.

The Judge said:

"Various technical/legal objections were taken by the learned counsel Dr. K.N. Katju in the appeal. It was argued that the Sessions Court in Kanpur had no jurisdiction to try Roy, that he was not legally committed as no proper and legal, regular charges under Section 121-A of the Penal Code were framed and he was convicted upon the evidence which was irrelevant and incompetent. The learned Judge, after fully considering the submissions, held

(1) that the Sessions Court at Cawnpore had jurisdiction to try the appellant;
(2) that he was legally committed and tried on a proper and regular charge under Section 121-A, Penal Code; and
(3) that he had been convicted upon the evidence which was relevant and competent.

He further held that the correspondence and the other documents produced by the prosecution establish beyond all doubt:

(1) That the intention of the appellant (M.N. Roy) and his associates was to overthrow the Government of India by violent means and set up a communist State;
(2) with this object in view the appellant endeavoured to arrange conferences to be attended by his associates both in India and in Europe;
(3) that his intention was to set up two parties, a legal party which should be called the People's Party and ands illegal secret party to which only avowed communists would be admitted, this latter party was to be a member of the People's Party which was to be used as an instrument for stirring up dissension and strife amongst the masses and sowing the seeds of evolution and rebellion;
(4) the appellant provided certain sums of money to finance delegates who were invited to come to attend the conference in Europe;
(5) by holding out hopes of better economic conditions the appellant and his associates essayed to enlist the support of workers and peasants and by means of personal canvass, seditious literature and propaganda they endeavoured to inflame the masses against the existing regime and by linking up all the extremists, terrorists, and revolutionary elements they intended to compass the4 vi8olent over-throw of the Government of India.

The learned Judge further commented;

"Counsel for the appellant Dr. Katju argued that the appellant should not be punished for holding extreme views. It has never been suggested that he should. The law does not prohibit a person from forming his views however extreme they may be and if the appellant had confined himself to an academic discussion as to the soundness of his views he would have been guilty of no crime; his letters and pamphlets however are not mere erudite academic discussions, it is clear that the appellant had left the regions of economic discussions and had entered the regions of political action. In his statement before the Sessions Court, the appellant prays in aid the works of Hume and Bentham which, he claims, are authorities for the proposition that it is permissible to engage in an attempt to overthrow a Government by violence. The writing of Hume and Bentham are quite irrelevant to the present issue however

weighty the opinion of these philosophers may be in academic matter. Having decided to go beyond the stage of academic discussion, it was necessary that the appellant should have regard not merely to the attractive doctrines of political philosophers but to mundane matter of fact and provisions of the Indian Penal Code."

"This court has no concern with the justice or otherwise of the claims of the appellant or with the rectitude of his political views but the Court may take cognizance of the fact that he does hold certain views; for as a guide to his conduct and intention these views are more relevant consideration. With the knowledge that the appellant considered that he could morally resort to force it is impossible to put an innocent interpretation on his actions and to hold that he was engaged between the years 1921 and 1924 in peaceful legitimate political propaganda...."

The learned Judge upon consideration of the entire evidence held that M.N. Roy was guilty of offence under Section 121-A of Indian Penal Code but reduced the sentence to one of 6 years R.I.

M.N. Roy was kept throughout in jail since his arrest in 1931. He remained imprisoned, unwell and practically in solitary confinement. By the time the appeal was decided on 2nd May, 1933, most of his friends had deserted him. He had to make arrangements for further appeal to Privy Council. All attempts were made and papers were sent to Dr. Rosenfield2 in Germany who was to engage some Barrister in London.

Sir Stafford Cripps agreed to look into the papers for filing of the appeal to the Privy Council. He gave opinion that it would be difficult to get any relief in the Privy Council.

He said that an unfavourable verdict of the Privy Council would not only cause harm to the case but may set an adverse precedence in England as well., however, Roy was of the opinion that as far as India was concerned, situation would be hardly affected by adverse decision of the Privy Council whereas favourable verdict would be advantageous. In his opinion, "the extension of the possible evil to British is a very remote possibility too remote to counter-balance the immediate advantages of a favourable verdict.' Though he wrote a number of letters to express his opinion, he left to the lawyers in England to decide, but unfortunately for various reasons, long delay took place and the appeal papers including certified copy of the judgement were lost and no appeal to the Privy Council was filed. The case, in fact, ended with the Judgement of the Allahabad High Court.

Thus closed the trial which was started with the arrest of N.B. Das Gupta, M.S. Usmani, M. Ahmad and S.A. Dange.

There can be no two opinions that British rulers did their best to curb any organised movement whether communist or nationalist to overthrow British Government in India and even an attempt to organise any trade union for legitimate purposes as it threatened their capitalist interests.

Roy was an international figure, a distinguished revolutionary. His defence speech would have been as celebrated as that of Emil Zola in Dreyfus Case. His arguments and research was utilized subsequently in the I.N.A. and Sheikh Abdullah Trials by lawyers Bhula Bhai Desai and Asaf Ali.

Notes:

1. The Commitment proceedings before the magistrate commenced on August 31, 1931. Roy's trial application was rejected by the magistrate. He appeared in person in court at the time of hearing of his trial application. The trial applications both to court of sessions and to High Court were also rejected. (Ed.)

2. Dr. Kurt Rosenfield was a famous criminal lawyer. He was a member of the Social Democratic Party and as such was the Minister of Justice in the first Republican Government. Later on the disagreed with the policy of the party and headed its left wing. (Ed.)

The author is an advocate of the Supreme Court. It is an excerpt from the author's forthcoming book Trials of Independence to be published by National Book trust, New Delhi.

Published in **The Radical Humanist,** July 1991.

An Assessment of Roy – The Man and His Work
Remembering Roy

Sangeeta Mall

It is surprising that year after year, one of the very few surviving legacies of M.N. Roy *The Radical Humanist,* has been unable to produce a special issue on its founder. It is surprising and also very sad, because the legacy of Roy, the legacy of humanism, instead of being propagated more and more, is gradually declining. Royists, a rapidly diminishing breed, will attest to the time when the mere invocation of the name of Roy was enough to bring a response for any activity that was conducted in his name. Be it a study camp or a seminar or a memorial lecture, there were enough torchbearers of the Roy legacy to carry the message forward. This, quite clearly, is no longer the case, and the skeletons of many discussion groups and seminars bear testimony to this situation. Yet never were Roy's thoughts, his writings, his whole conception of humanism more relevant than today.

As with all great thinkers, Roy was also turned into an icon by his followers. His legacy turned into merely remembering his accomplishments rather than turning them to fruitful tools for growth. Roy's legacy is the legacy of Radical Humanism, not the legacy of 'M.N. Roy the great philosopher revolutionary'. Yet it has always been hard to convince converts to Roy's way of thinking that the best service they can do to him is to ignore him as an individual and promote him as a philosophy for today. Tomes have been created on Roy's writings, hi life, his evolution from a revolutionary to a philosopher. All this is to the good, for an entity that is not constantly brought to people's mind will soon be forgotten. But what about Radical Humanism? How much is being written contemporaneously about this philosophy? Sadly, very little. There could be only two reasons why this has happened. One, the philosophy of humanism has lost its relevance in today's world of science and progress. This is, obviously, not the case. There are any number of proponents of humanism and human rights in the world who have learnt to stand up for themselves and their cause with an effectiveness that wasn't prevalent sixty years ago. Events like the World Social Forum bear testimony to the rising importance of the alternative voice.

The second reason for the absence of a genre of work based upon Roy's considerable body of writings is that there is not enough interest in him as a philosopher of relevance in India. Though this may be a bitter pill to swallow for Royists, that club of people who almost worshipped Roy, it may not be far from the truth. If one makes an empirical statement that there 'is not enough interest in Roy', Royists will shout that there must be data to back that statement. The data lies in the absence of Roy from the political course work of most of the universities, the embarrassingly small number of academic seminars on the philosophy of Radical Humanism, the lack of fresh research verifying various hypotheses of Roy, the almost non-existent research studies and Ph.D. theses on M.N. Roy. One of the reasons for such atrophy could lie in Roy himself. The dictat to the erstwhile comrades of the Radical Democratic Party to go out and propagate humanism at the grassroots level in preference to party work ensured that there was neither grassroots work nor party work.

There are many debates on how relevant Roy's basic draft for Indian democracy is. Though he was proved correct on most counts where the future of Indian democracy in the context of power politics is concerned, there is scope for debate on many of his other hypotheses. Some writers in this issue have analysed Roy's work and highlighted some of the problems inherent in it. This Roy would not have minded. He was courageous enough to negate his own convictions in the light of new developments. He wrote in the context of events that were unfolding at a very traumatic time

in India's history. Much has changed and evolved since then. Surely, then, it is all the more important that a genuine critique of Roy's philosophy emerge with a view to enhancing his significant contribution to modern Indian political thought. It may be argued that such focus need not necessarily occupy the energies of Royists, many of whom are continuing to contribute to their own sphere of activity. This thinking brings with it the assumption that Radical Humanism is being sufficiently promoted on its own and needs no additional encouragement. To the most ignorant observer, this is not the case. The rise of superstition, fascism, religious fanaticism, obscurantist practice in the name of religion, all are proof that humanism needs to create a huge space for itself in this country. Humanism in India without Roy is incomplete, and therefore Radical Humanism must create a space that is significant and not stay on the fringes of modern Indian political thought.

The legacy of Ropy, thus, is not the legacy of Royism. It is the legacy of a way of thinking that can find a use for itself in today's social set up very effectively. Yet discussions on Roy invariably are in the context in which he wrote, and tend to ignore today's reality. Seminars on Roy, few and far between as they are, tend to have the same participants, those who have an intimate understanding of Roy's wok. This frog-in-the-pond mentality has to be discarded, and the idea of a new beginning using Roy's philosophy as a launch pad has to be created. *The Radical Humanist* has tried to stay relevant precisely because it has tried to adopt a more inclusive approach. It is a credit to the people who have create and run this journal over the last almost three quarters of a century that it survives while organs like *Young India* and *Harijan*, launched by Gandhi, have atrophied and died. Its survival is a commentary on its continued relevance, and though Roy may not have agreed with many of the articles that have been published in this journal over the years, he would surely have found something to smile about the fact that his medium of communication has prospered.

This special issue of *The Radical Humanist* is dedicated to its founder, a man of great vision, perspicacity and good, solid intelligence, who, had he lived for just a few more years, might well have created a blueprint for converting his ideas into a workable reality, even modifying them to fit the new Indian society.

February 23, 2005.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 2005.

The Message of 'Independent India'

M. N. Roy

(*This account of the birth and early history of the* **Independent India***, the forerunner of the* **Radical Humanist** *appeared on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the journal, April 1945. It was captioned* "SOME REMINISCENCES". *The piece is a moving but authentic account of the early history of the journal and the movement it generated. It is the impetus imparted to it by Roy that has sustained the journal through thick and thin until this day*. – R.L. Nigam)

This week the 'Independent India' completes eight years of continuous publication, except for one month, under what circumstances, I shall narrate presently. Some reminiscences may be permitted on this occasion.

During these years, we have won the patronage of a sufficiently numerous stable cadre of readers. They have stood by us through thick and thin. We owe them an autobiographical account, but only an outline.

The history of the 'Independent India' is much longer than eight years, and it covers a much wider ground than that hastily surveyed here. It is coincident with the history of political thought and political action of contemporary India. Critically reacting to the kaleidoscope of theories and practice in the political life of the country, we have endeavoured to generalise the lessons of experience in a particular field, thus contributing to the science and philosophy of politics.

Chronologically, the publication of the 'Independent India' commenced in 1931, soon after my return to India. In those days, I had to live in hiding. Ever since 1924, there had been a warrant for my arrest – in connection with the Cawnpore Communist Conspiracy Case. I returned to India nevertheless but not to court arrest, although that was bound to happen sooner or later. I wanted to make it later, so that I might have the most minimum time to gather the vanguard of an army of the people to fight for an independent India. I had been convinced long ago that the liberation of the Indian people could be attained neither by a multitude mesmerised by a Mahatma nor by the infinitely smaller but inordinately ambitious "army of God."

It was a period of anti-climax. The first "Salt War", beginning with the much advertised "Dandi March", had ended in one of the successive debacles of "the Gandhian technique of bloodless revolution". As a commentary on that saintly technique, it may be recalled that, admittedly, it was the spectre of revolution which persuaded the Mahatma to stage the circus; it might lure the gullible multitude away from the siren call of the "force of evil". Once again, the anti-imperialist crusader stood between revolution and the Empire. The Christian Satrap, who in those days occupied the Viceregal Throne, was duly impressed by the Jesuitic, if not Jesus-like, performance of the friendly foe, and very generously helped him to colour his defeat as a glorious victory.

The "historic march" did not end in Swaraj. The fizzled-out Salt War was formally concluded by the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which threw the verbose Lahore resolution (of complete independence) in the waste-paper basket, and committed the Congress logically to the Government of India Act of 1935. The heralds of independent India, a small band then organised the League of Indian Independence, as the rallying ground for the disillusioned fighters for freedom complaining against the greatest betrayal since Bardoli". The "Independent India" was founded as the mouth-piece of the new movement.

By that time, the expected had happened. I was arrested. But others had come forward to take up and continue the work. I did no more than set the ball rolling. I aspired to accomplish nothing greater during the short period of eight months. From jail, while under-trial, I managed to write for

the 'Independent India', week by week. A new ideology for the confused struggle for freedom was outlines, a new tradition was established. We stood for independence from the spiritual slavery of Gandhism, as the essential condition for an effective struggle for freedom. A philosophical revolution must precede any social revolution. Independent India must be a socially revolutionised India. That was the message of the "Independent India".

To carry on a weekly, more than an ideology and political programme is needed. The founders of the 'Independent India' lacked financial resources. They had also to run the gauntlet of law, which in those days penalised the preaching of independence. For various reasons, the publication was suspended after a time. It was resumed on my release. Meanwhile, our ideology had developed in all details, and our political programme popularised. When the pu8boication of the 'Independent India' was resumed on April 4, 1937, it immediately attracted the attention of the country. it raised the standard of revolt against Gandhism, and gave an expression to the revolutionary social urge underlying the mass movement which destined to pull down gods as well as kings, was saddled with a Mahatma who claimed it as his own creation, and sycophants fostered the fiction.

In 1937, we had no more financial resources than in 1931. I set my foot on Indian soil, relatively free to move about, after twenty-two years – sixteen years abroad and six years in jail. The only thing I possessed was the clothes I put on to come out of imprisonment. They were worm-eaten, mended at the instance of loving friends who made them available to me at the time of release. They belonged to the necessarily scanty kit of my exciting journey from Europe, seven years ago. However I had been enriched otherwise. The number of friends and comrades had increased. Chance acquaintances of six years ago had matured into firm friendship, and romantic admiration had deepened into undying affection. But paper had to be purchased and printers' bills paid.

With mental reservations, the Congress bosses thought that I could be useful, particularly, as a counter-blast to Nehru, whose "socialist extravagances", as they put it, were going on their nerves and against their grain. There was a distinct desire to patronise me, though not quite to pamper. It was suspected that "the notorious revolutionary" might have a joker up his sleeve. At the time of the Faizpur Congress, the press advertised me as "the mystery man". That only mystified me. What was the game, I wondered. However, I could not remain altogether unaffected by the prevailing atmosphere of credulity. I broached the question of helping me to publish a weekly as the instrument for my making available to the country the lessons of my rather rich experience of the world. i was advised to win the good graces of the Mahatma; thereafter, everything would be done. This is not the place to follow up that line of events, which were highly interesting and significant, not without a bearing upon subsequent political developments in the country.

Meanwhile, V.B. Karnik and Maniben Kara scraped together four hundred rupees. With that capital, publication of the 'Independent India' was resumed. The first issue happened to synchronise with the fateful Delhi meeting of the A.I.C.C. which decided in favour of Congress accepting office in the provinces. Half of our capital went in as security deposit with the Court. In a FEW MONTHS, Bombay, together with other provinces, was blessed with a Congress Government. The iniquitous Press Act was not actually repealed by the popular Ministry. But security deposits of all the Congress press organs and other nationalist papers were refunded. The 'Independent India' was the honourable exception, sharing the distinction with one or two other papers. We had to keep on moving the authorities for a year or so before the invidious discrimination was removed.

Soon after its rebirth, the 'Independent India' was experiencing the first financial crisis. A dissenter Congressman, the late Laxmidas Tairsee, had promised to raise for the 'Independent India' five thousand rupees from his friends among the Gujarati share-brokers and merchants of Bombay. On returning from Delhi I was told that he was hedging. That was surprising. He was a rationalist, and fully approved of our ideas and political programme. As without money the 'Independent India' would again be suspended, I went to Tairsee personally. He readily paid the

amount he had himself promised. Regretting his inability to raise anything from others, he observed: "If you proposed to carry on Gandhist propaganda, you could get money easily; or, start a cow protection league, and I shall raise ten lakhs in no time. In this country, you cannot expect patronage for talking sense."

Finally, I made up my mind to approach the Mahatma. I wrote to him, saying that I had returned to India to participate directly in the struggle for freedom; I could do so most fruitfully by letting political workers have the benefit of the lessons of my experience abroad; with that purpose I had started the 'Independent India'; would the Mahatma kindly help me obtain some funds? Prompt came the reply in the form of the advice to the cause of freedom. That was clearly more than advice. It was an injunction that the 'Independent India' should stop. It was a post card written by the Mahatma himself, a rare honour to heretical dissenter. I have treasured the cryptic epistle as a highly significant document of history. There are ways and ways of gagging disturbing voice.

The first issue of the reborn 'Independent India' carried an article called "Science and Superstition", It was a fragment from a book by me with the same title to be published shortly. The Mahatma's attention seems to have been drawn to the article by some scandalised zealot. It ruffled saintly equanimity, and anathema was pronounced against the heretic. I was branded as the "enemy Number One," who was to have no quarter among the flock. The news reached me subsequently through the intermediary of one who had access to the inner circles of the "*Sevasangh*."

All illusions were gone. Thereafter, the 'Independent India' had to rely exclusively on its only asset – independence. It was carried on by the devotion of a band dedicated to the ideal of the independence of spirit. Its cry was "Gandhi is not the Congress", "Nationalism is not identical with Gandhism". Within a year, the heresy was being spread through nearly two-hundred newspaper dealers who sold the 'Independent India' throughout the country.

Two years late, a veteran journalist congratulated me upon the success of the 'Independent India', saying that without financial subsidy no political weekly had previously lasted for any length of time. The credit did not belong to me personally. The secret of the success of the 'Independent India' was that it was the product of labour of love, for years it had no expenditure except on paper and printing. Even now the entire editorial work is done free. The managerial staff, which is quite big now, receive only subsistence allowance, and occupies one small room.

To write is the easiest part of the work of running a journal. The more difficult part is to produce the writing in print, week after week, and sell it. This essential part of the work was, from the very beginning undertaken by V.B. Karnik. The entire credit of this unprecedented venture, therefore, belongs to him, our unpaid Managing Editor. How did he do the miracle? By sacrificing a promising career at the bar; by getting into indebtedness personally; and by doing for years several men's jobs quietly alone.

But even with all that inestimable asset, the 'Independent India' was not out of the woods. The life of a political journal is subject to the vicissitudes of the political life of the country. soon after the outbreak of the war, the "Independent India' experienced another crisis. At last I had to part company with the Congress. Thereafter few Congressmen would dare read the 'Independent India', even if they wanted to do so. All of a sudden, we lost about half of our customers. Overdue subscriptions could not be collected from many. Newspaper dealers, particularly those in small places, never good pay-masters, also defaulted on the plea that they had lost customers. The hardest blow was loss of advertisement. Most of the advertisements were from Bombay firms. Word went around, and advertisers boycotted the 'Independent India'. Soon the time came when we could not pay the printer's bill. The difficulty was aggravated by the political hostility of the press owner. He wanted to kill the 'Independent India'. Without any previous notice, one week he refused to print the paper only when the manuscript was delivered. There was no time to make an

alternative arrangement. The 'Independent India' could not come out. The news reached me in Calcutta. Karnik's telegram giving the heartbreaking news was delivered early in the morning while I was still in bed. I actually wept; there was none around to compel restraint of the strong feeling of loss and pain. I am ashamed of repeating how I characterised the loss.

Before long I regained hope, if not yet confidence. Karnik was in Bombay. He won't let the 'Independent India' die. How could that happen before the Indian people was free? The publication was resumed before the month was over. Karnik had settled up with the owner of the press again at his cost. He had undertaken to work for a Marathi weekly owned by the pressman; the salary would not be paid to him; it would be counted as instalments of payments of our debt on account of the 'Independent India'. Karnik had thus to slave for more than a year. Even then the entire liability was not paid off. The remainder he took over as his personal indebtedness.

Having survived the severest crisis of its life, the 'Independent India' had still to face great odds. It took quite a long time to approach new circles of readers, and enlist new subscribers. Advertisements could not be recovered. Even to-day we carry on with considerably less than the most minimum necessary to make a journal self-supporting. But we have still the old asset labour of love to make up for all these disadvantages.

However, on this anniversary, the 'Independent India' is again out of the woods. The number of its customers has not only regained the old position, but exceeded it. That indicates political triumph. For three years, the 'Independent India' was engaged in a bitter political and ideological struggle. During that struggle, it has made contributions to political thought. All fair-minded people are beginning to realise that in the midst of madness that Indian Nationalism was during the last four years, the 'Independent India' raised the only voice of sense and reason. It can proudly claim to represent whatever is really independent in this country, submerged in spiritual slavery glorified as united Nationalism. Representing the spirit of independence, the 'Independent India' will keep on illuminating the road to freedom. Let us resolve to enlarge the circulation of the 'Independent India' still more, so that three will be an ever growing number to hold high the blazing torch of the spirit of independence.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, April 1987.

Forty Years After Roy

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

Forty years have passed since the death of M.N. Roy shortly before the midnight between 25th and 26th January, 1954. The present issue of this journal aims at inducing its readers to undertake an objective and critical review of the relevance of Roy's ideas to the conditions of today, including the socio-economic rends which we find in India and in the contemporary world.

In considering the relevance of Roy's ideas to the contemporary situation, one is likely to attach primacy to the various political and economic institutional devices which Roy proposed for safeguarding and promoting individual freedom and social progress. In the political field, Roy propagated the view that parliamentary democracy should be replaced by an organised democracy based upon a network of people's committees, that power must be radically decentralised and effectively vested in these primary committees, that the party system is basically antithetical to the preservation and development of a genuine democracy, that such power as may have to be delegated to centres higher than the people's committees should be in the hands of candidates proposed by the people's committees and liable to be recalled by them, and that the functioning of the higher centres including the Central Government should be under a standing control of the primary people's committees. In the economic sphere, Roy proposed that planning in countries like India should be directed towards the supply of the basic needs of the people, that the primary objective of planning in developing countries should to increase employment and enhance the productivity of labour, that priority in the allocation of resources should therefore be given to agriculture and small-scale industries in preference to large scale and basic industries and that adequate attention should at the same time be paid to population control. Roy also pointed out that both the laissez-faire doctrine of capitalism and the wholesale nationalisation of industry under communism were highly defective and that they should be replaced by the development of a cooperative economy in which production, distribution and exchange would be managed by cooperatives owned by self-employed workmen.

In my view it would be wrong to assess the relevance of Roy's ideas to the contemporary world by merely concentrating on the institutional devices which Roy had visualised for ensuring the freedom and progress of individuals in political and economic spheres. Advocacy of novel institutional devices in political and economic spheres was not the main contribution of M.N. Roy. His main contribution was to formulate in clear terms the philosophy of scientific humanism and to project it as the basis of an all-sided social transformation. He visualised a broad-based cultural movement – a modern renaissance movement – for propagating the values of scientific humanism. He was firmly of the view that the spread of a humanist culture was essential for the successful functioning of the institutional devices in political and economic spheres which he propounded and which we have noticed earlier. He was the one revolutionary who pointed out that a philosophical revolution must precede any worthwhile social revolution.

The basic principles of scientific humanism have been stated by Roy in the first six of the 22 Theses of Radical Humanism. While all the 22 Theses would always be open to review and re-examination, Roy himself often emphasised that the first six Theses are more fundamental and are likely to be more lasting. He said that the remaining Theses were of an experimental nature and were, therefore, more liable to require adjustment and alterations.

It follows that in considering the current relevance of Roy's ideas, we should first consider whether the basic philosophy of Scientific Humanism as stated in the first six Theses has stood the test of time, and only thereafter we may turn our attention to the consideration of the propriety or otherwise in the context of the contemporary situation of the institutional devices which have

been suggested in the remaining 16 Theses.

Dealing then with the first issue, there can be no doubt that scientific humanism propounded by Roy is more relevant today than it was fifty years ago. Communism has collapsed throughout the world and that has exposed the limitations of Marxism. The theory of economic determinism, otherwise described as the economic interpretation of history, which was the basis of the Marxian prognosis of the replacement of capitalism by proletarian dictatorship, has lost its credibility. Roy stated in the Fifth Thesis: "The economic interpretation of history is deduced from a wrong interpretation of materialism. It implies dualism, whereas materialism is a monistic philosophy." The practical deductions made by Marx and Engels from economic determinism – that the wages of workers would always remain at the subsistence level; that the middle class (the petite bourgeoisie) would gradually be reduced to the position of the proletariat,; that world capitalism would be involved in a permanent crisis; that capitalism itself would create the objective as well as the subjective conditions for its own overthrow and that the capitalist State, which in reality is only an executive committee of the capitalist class, would be replaced in a successful revolution by proletarian dictatorship – have been found in practice to be largely chimerical. After the collapse of communism, there has been a worldwide upsurge in favour of capitalist free enterprise. The upsurge is, however, gradually subsiding. It is being increasingly realised that contemporary capitalism, dominated as it is by multi-national and trans-national corporations, cannot be given free reins to exploit the consumers in developed countries and the people of the developing world. State interference in economic affairs is being found to be inevitable. The State will have to interfere not only to avoid inflation and industrial stagnation, but to grant relief against the increasing scale of unemployment which has become endemic to contemporary capitalism and also to provide security to the people against various contingencies in developing countries, State interference is essential for increasing employment opportunities and relieving poverty. Thus, while Marxism has lost its flavour, capitalism in the sense of free enterprise is again becoming increasingly more suspect. Liberalism has to give up the doctrine of laissez-faire. Bereft of the faulty doctrine of laissez-faire, the shorn of its relativist morality (the greatest good of the greatest number) as a result of modern knowledge about the source of morality in the evolution of the human species, liberalism can be looked upon as the inspiration of scientific humanism. Under the circumstances, it is reasonable to predict that scientific humanism is likely to be the philosophy of the future. In India, scientific humanism was formulated and propagated by M.N. Roy. That is why Roy is even more relevant today than when he passed away fifty years ago. His relevance is linked up with the relevance of scientific humanism.

The continued relevance and durability of scientific humanism is based on the correctness of two basic propositions. One is about the centrality of the human individual in all social collectivities. This centrality arises from the fact that while the human individual is possessed of consciousness and can experience progress or regress, no consciousness is possessed by any social collectivity and the progress or regress of such collectivity must depend upon what is experienced by the individuals composing it. Man is, therefore, "the measure" of things. The second proposition is that the universe is law-governed that the knowledge of the laws of nature can be obtained by the methods of science, and that man being part of nature, knowledge about the human individuals, including their will, intelligence and other attributes, can be acquired by adopting a scientific approach.

The correctness of the first of these propositions can hardly be doubted. It is obvious that the happiness and progress of any social agglomeration can be measured only by the happiness and progress experienced by the individuals who compose it. In spite of the obvious fact, there has been a tendency to put one collectivity or another above the individual and to ask the individual to venerate that collectivity and sacrifice for it. This tendency was graphically exemplified by the

rise of fascism before the Second World War. The defeat of fascism has checked this tendency to a large extent but has not eliminated it. Chauvinistic nationalism, which was the basis of fascism, continues to exist in different degrees in almost all countries. It is more in evidence in underdeveloped parts of the world. In India, chauvinistic communalism and casteism are also found to thrive, sometimes in association with chauvinistic nationalism. There can be little doubt, however, that with economic progress and cultural advancement, cosmopolitan humanism will increasingly eliminate the tendency to merge the human individuality into an aggressive collectivity.

Regarding the correctness of the second proposition on which scientific humanism is based, there can be little doubt in view of the development of modern science that man is part of nature and that, therefore, the scientific approach should be adopted for the understanding of man, society and their place in the world. However, because of our love of mystery and the awe which it inspires, there has always been a tendency, even in educated persons including some eminent scientists, to place artificial limits on the scope of scientific knowledge. In the first few decades of the century, some features of quantum physics led to the theory of probability and the conclusion that there is inherent "indeterminacy" in nature. This implied, not only that scientific knowledge is unreliable, but that it can never be reliable. While the probability theory seems to have receded into the background in recent years similar limits to human knowledge are being perceived and expressed from time to time. There is, however, no reason to assume that truth will always and necessarily lie beyond the capacity of the human brain. While the acquisition to knowledge at any particular stage is bound to be limited and while some of it may be found to be defective, no limit has been discovered to the potentialities of the scientific approach. While many things about man and the world are yet to be known, there are no set limits to the potentialities of the human mind to know them. The second proposition of scientific humanism regarding the approach of science to the understanding of man and the world remains vindicated by the entire history of science. The history of science has shown that there is no justification for assuming that any supra-natural force interferes in the shaping of natural events. There is therefore every reason to believe that scientific humanism is the philosophy of the present and the future.

As explained in these columns on previous occasions, the philosophy of scientific humanism leads to the view that the personal conduct of an individual should be inspired by three main values, each one of which is derived from the science of biological evolution. They are the values of freedom, rationalism and self-sustained morality. Freedom represents the biological urge for existence on the human plane of intelligence and emotion. Rationalism is recognition of the value of reason, which itself is a faculty derived by the human species through biological evolution, and which enables an individual to distinguish between truth and falsehood and between right or wrong. Morality is a function of the human conscience, which is also a biological heritage and which enables a human being to derive happiness by promoting the happiness of others. Every Radical Humanist who has tried to shape his life on the basis of these values has come to realise that he could not possibly have lived better than what he has done, except on those occasions when he may have failed to live up to these values. The relevance of Roy's ideas is not required to be explained to them because they have realised through their living the incalculable value of those ideas.

We now turn to those institutional devises proposed by Roy which were regarded by him as experimental in nature and which were described in the Seventh to the Twenty-second Theses. In the political sphere, Roy's concept of organised democracy, a democracy based on a network of people's committees which would be the real repositories of power, still remains valid. The principle that in a genuine democracy power should be radically decentralised and that it should be wielded by the people to the maximum possible extent is unexceptionable. The institution of people's committees as the real repository of power will be realised only when a substantial section of the

people have come to cherish the ideal of freedom, have become self-reliant, have replaced their blind faith in religious and political saviours by faith in themselves, and have learnt to be cooperative and mutually helpful. As indicated earlier, Roy insisted that such a cultural transformation based on the values of scientific humanism must precede any worthwhile social transformation. A cultural transformation is bound to take time, but it appears to the present writer that very gradually it is taking place in India. In the meantime, the idea of decentralisation of power is gaining strength and even the Indian Constitution has been amended to ensure, as far as law can do it, that a substantial part of the power should go into the hands of *gram panchayats* and other *panchayat* bodies. At the same time, Roy's criticism of the party system has been fully vindicated. It has been established beyond doubt that political parties have concentrated power in a few hands and they also have depressed moral standards by promoting communalism, casteism and blind faith. Moreover, the struggle for power between political parties has increased manifold the corruption prevailing in the administration of the country. What is required is a cultural transformation visualised by Roy and the consequent radicalisation and democratisation of *Gram Panchayats* and other *Panchayat* and municipal bodies.

In the economic sphere, Roy projected particular type of planned economic development and also a particular type of economy, cooperative economy, as an alternative both to capitalist free enterprise and to communist nationalisation to all industries. Although with the collapse of communism, there is a wave throughout the world in favour of a free market economy, people have begun to realise that State interference is necessary and it is particularly necessary in developing countries for the creation of increasing opportunities for gainful employment and for the removal of poverty. Roy's idea that primacy should be given to the development of agricultural and small scale industry and the large scale industry will develop on the basis of the increased demand generated by the increased income of those engaged in agriculture and small undertakings, is borne out in both theory and practice. A number of economists in India accept the type of development which Roy had visualised as the only way in which employment can be increased and mass poverty reduced. The phenomenal economic growth which is taking place in China at present is based on the type of development which Roy had visualised, a development starting with agriculture and small scale industry and leading to a situation in which large scale industry can be rapidly developed. It is true that a cooperative economy as visualised by Roy has not yet become a practical proposition. A higher democratic-humanist culture is required for the development and successful functioning of a cooperative economy. There can, however, be little doubt that an economy characterised by a free competition between a number of efficient producers and consumers cooperative societies and cooperative banks would be the economy most consistent with freedom and democracy.

Roy was not a successful politician, because he always looked too far ahead. It is for the same reason not surprising that his ideas should become more relevant with the passage of time.

New Delhi
Dated: 20.3.1994.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, April, 1994.

Some Reflections of a Radical Humanist
On Roy, Revolution and Renaissance

Sibnarayan Ray

I

> "We never ripen with respect to reason except through *our own* efforts which we can make only when we are free." Kant, *On History*.
>
> "As long as I breathe I shall fight for the future, that radiant future in which man, strong and beautiful, will become master of the drifting stream of his history and will direct it towards the boundless, horizon of beauty, joy and happiness." Young Trotsky, quoted by Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*.

I call myself a radical humanist not because the twenty-two theses of radical humanism have for me any kind of an axiomatic validity, but because my own understanding of nature, man and history and my value-commitments are best indicated by the combination of those two words, radical and humanist. Humanism to me is a philosophy which affirms that man (which, in this usage and throughout this essay, means both man and woman) makes history, that every human being is a reservoir of creative potentialities, that unfoldment of these creative potentialities is the measure of personal growth and social progress, that all the achievements of the human species are the common heritage of mankind and not special possessions of particular groups, that every individual is unique and valuable in himself or herself, that voluntary cooperation to protect and promote the freedom of every individual is essential to good society, that knowledge is the necessary condition of human growth, and that the pursuit of truth requires both intellectual steadfastness and toleration of doubts and differences. This is, in no way, an exhaustive statement of the implications of humanism, but it serves the purpose of explicating what makes me call my view humanist. To me humanism is cosmopolitan but it also stresses the inalienable centrality of the individual to any human discourse and enterprise. It is libertarian but it recognises the crucial function of reason in the pursuit of human freedom. It rejects all varieties of collectivism, totalitarianism and absolutism, and considers violence to be the very negation of freedom, reason and personal integrity.

Humanism is critical of tradition and the current state of human affairs, but its pursuit of improvement or excellence does not involve total rejection of either, nor does it consider conflict and confrontation as unavoidable conditions of growth. Radicalism, on the other hand, views tradition and the established order with complete distrust. It seeks to minimise (if not altogether eliminate) the influence of the former and to replace the latter by an entirely new and more rational and moral system. One is a radical because on seeks change from the root and does not believe that the existing state of things can be really improved by pruning something here or tinkering with something else there. A radical insists that not only is the present system rotten to the core, but those who run the present system are certain to use their organised power and resources to resist and crush any effort to bring about structural changes. Consequently, confrontation land conflict arte unavoidable if the oppressed stand up to their oppressors, or if a person of conscience wishes to be more than a merely anguished witness to injustice.

Radicalism views history as a constant struggle between freedom and unfreedom, knowledge and prejudice, justice and injustice, in which silence or neutrality is a betrayal. The radical is inspired by the vision of a perfect society or utopia the realization of which is believed to be within the competence of men and women,. But such realization requires overthrow of the current

oppressive system with its vested interests and repressive mores. Violence is involved in the destruction of a regime which is itself based on violence. The radical is persuaded that application of force, guided b reason and morality and directed towards freedom and justice, can be kept within bounds, except where the upholders of the oppressive regime would rather destroy the society than concede defeat, even when they have complete lost credibility and public support. The radical would rather take the risk of temporary chaos and disorder than allow a fundamentally unjust and immoral state of affairs to continue indefinitely.

While there are affinities between the two points of view – both believe in man's innate ability to improve himself and make history, and both are committed to the pursuit of freedom and knowledge – there are apparently also very strong dissimilarities amounting almost to antinomies. The militancy of the radical, his impatience and penchant for confrontation and conflict, his total rejection of tradition and preparedness to employ force, as and when required, for achieving structural changes – these are altogether unacceptable to the humanist. On the other hand, the humanist's patience and tolerance, his broadmindedness and preference for piecemeal improvement, his reluctance to get involved in conflict situations, his appreciation of the good things of the past ad concern for the preservation of good things of the present, his profound distrust of violence and militancy – these are seen by the radical as signs of compromise, passivity, conservatism and fear. If to the humanist the radical's fiery passion for justice carries within it an incipience of incendiarism – 'a single spark will kindle a prairie fire' – to the radical the humanist's cultivated serenity – 'to understand is to forgive' – is but a cover for inaction and coldness of the heart.

II

> "An idea is nothing else than the conception of a perfection which has not yet been experienced. For instance, the idea of a perfect republic governed by principles of justice – sis such an idea impossible because it has not yet been experienced," Kant, *On Education.*

However, quite early in life I was drawn to both humanism and radicalism. I wanted to be a responsible member of the human species to understand the human condition and to work for its improvement, to create and to reshape, to give voice to the oppressed against thrones and powers, but at the same time to retain and develop my ability to respond positively to a plurality of views. Marx impressed me much because in his writings I sensed the possibility of reconciling humanism with radicalism. Marx incorporated the spirit of the Aufklarudg and the French revolution. His theses on Feuerbach proclaimed the dual responsibility of philosophers – to interpret and to change the world. i did not accept Werner Sombart's D*ie Zwei-Seelen-Theorie,* that philosophers and revolutionaries were persons of incompatible temperaments and inclinations, that by trying to combine two opposite traditions and responsibilities one may only make a mess of both. I still find that theory unacceptable, except with substantial modifications, but the point of the antithesis is now at least clearer than it was forty years ago.

I moved away from Marx firstly because I became increasingly aware of several major inadequacies and shortcomings of his philosophy, but even more because I was profoundly shocked and distressed by my growing knowledge of the happenings in the Soviet Union where Marxism had been proclaimed by its new rulers as the official ideology of the state. The Bolsheviks were Marxists according to their own repeated declarations; and although this was disputed by several Marxist theorists and groups in Europe after the Bolsheviks had established their total dictatorship in Russia, their interpretation of Marxism, backed by money and power, because most authoritative and widely influential. The deliberate extermination of millions of people in the name

of revolution, the establishment and administration of a vast and growing network of slave-labour camps, the systematic suppression of human rights and liberties, the Moscow Trials and the liquidation of the old Guard, the Stalin-Hitler pact, the attack on Finland – during the late thirties and early forties the pressure of the knowledge of these horrifying events crumbled my confidence in the highly publicized achievements of the Bolshevik state and wore out my intellectual and moral sympathy with the ideology which was claimed to be its inspiration and justification. Even then, however, I recognised that Marx could not be held altogether responsible for these horrors. Lenin's very special interpretation of Marxism – his theory and practice of a highly centralised and secret organisation of professional revolutionaries in the role of history's midwife – was rejected not only by his Menshevik rivals but also by many of his leading Marxist contemporaries in Europe – Rosa Luxemburg, Rudolf Hilferding, Anton Pannekoek, and others. Marx had envisioned revolution as a necessary consequence of the operation of dialectics in human history. In his prognosis, capitalism would collapse under pressure of its inner contradictions, and socialism would be ushered by the proletariat, and not the party. But the process of *embourgeoisement* of the working class in the industrially developed societies seemed to take away from the proletariat their revolutionary role.

Nevertheless, a revolution did take place at the end of the First World War, not in the industrially developed countries of West Europe but in backward Russia, and its successful leaders claimed to be followers of Marx. Nothing succeeds like success. By founding the Communist International and bringing step by step, in a planned manner, all Communist Parties in other countries under the relentless control of the Bolsheviks, the Russians in the course of a decade succeeded in investing their version of Marxism with an absolute authority and the slightest criticism of which was heresy to be promptly punished and silenced.

But although both Leninism and Stalinism were to a considerable extent distortions of Marx, there remained in Marx's own theory and practice many elements which contradicted both humanism and radicalism, and which provided legitimacy and guidance to the Bolsheviks. Marx's amazing blindness to the role of ideas in history, his virtual reduction of individuals into replaceable elements of reified collectivities, his almost obsessive notion of class-struggle as the source of pro9gress and social dynamism, his reduction of conscience to class-interest and refusal to give weight to moral considerations in human affairs, his emphasis on force and advocacy of proletarian dictatorship, and the highly authoritarian and intolerant style of his polemics – these and several other features were compatible neither with the spirit of free inquiry nor with the ethic of personal responsibility. Since the victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia Marxism has been used to justify totalitarian systems, their highly repressive conduct within their own territories and colonies, and their opportunist policies abroad. This could be done because in the writings of Marx and Engels there are ideas and arguments which are anti-libertarian and hostile to morality in public affairs.

III

> "Our task is to spread enlightenment which will dispel obscurantism in the political and the spiritual life of the country ... We want the disinherited to come to their own and enjoy the richness and fullness of life on this earth," M.N. Roy.

In any case by the time my first book *Prekshita* was published (1945), my assessment of Marxism had changed considerably. But I had not abandoned my search for a philosophy which would be both humanist and radical. It was at this point that I came into close contact with M.N. Roy. He had joined the revolutionary underground in India at the age of eighteen and taken an active part in revolutionary movements in Mexico, west Asia, Germany and China. He had

experienced at first hand the tragic degeneration of the Communist International from an organ of revolutionary movements on a global scale into an instrument of the Russian State run by the Bolshevik *apparatchiki* whose single concern was power at any cost. He had broken with the Comintern (1929) and spent six years in Indian prisons. He had gradually moved beyond Marxism, but he did not abandon his revolutionary ideals and perspective. Over the years his perception of the role of ideas and culture and of the centrality of the individual to any fruitful development became clearer and more profound. When I heard him at the Dehradun Study Camp in 1946, he was trying to reformulate his philosophical position. His explorations at this stage were published at the end of the year as a book under the title *New Orientation.* My own explorations, aided further by discussions with him during the camp and a week immediately after, resulted in my second book, *Radicalism*, which was published at the same time with an introduction from Roy. I thought then, and I continue to think now, that the position outlined at the Camp land subsequently developed in the Twenty Two theses and elaborated in *New Humanism* and *In Man's Own Image* offers on the whole a more satisfactory reconciliation of humanism and radicalism than other comparable schools of thought. However, the reconciliation is not without problems and their consideration may be neglected only at the cost of intellectual integrity and effectiveness.

To his last major theoretical undertaking which Roy was able to complete before the terrible accident incapacitated him in 1952, he gave the title *Reason, Romanticism, Revolution.* To the end thus he remained committed to the ideology of revolution. But from the thirties onwards he had been emphasising the crucial importance of a renaissance without which a revolution was an impossibility. In his youth he had believed that a dedicated band of educated young men, fully committed to the goal of political independence, would be able to free India from foreign rule, and he had courageously worked on the basis of this belief. Experience, studies and reflection made him realise that political independence did not necessarily mean an end to exploitation of the vast majority of the people by a small minority that both for the attainment of political independence and establishment of an exploitation free society it was essential to involve peasants, workers and the lower middle classes actively and intelligently in the struggle for a free and just order. His unambiguous emphasis on "revolution from below" distinguished his Marxism from that of Lenin, and eventually led to his break with the *apparatchiki*-run Comintern. However, the experience of the political victory of the Fascists and the National Socialists in Europe and of the unscrupulous exploitation of the religious sentiment of the people by nationalist leaders in India and elsewhere forced him also to enquire closely into the psychological and cultural determinants of social change. His readings and reflections, of which he kept elaborate notes in his Prison Manuscripts, indicate that he began to see cultural backwardness and psychological retrogression to be among the principal obstacles to social revolution. Without the freeing of the mind of the common people from the powerful and pervasive influence of the authoritarian and obscurantist mode of thinking, without an awakening of the spirit of inquiry and self-affirmation, without, in short, a renaissance or a philosophical revolution, no revolution from below or grassroots democracy was likely to succeed. The discontent of the masses might be accentuated and utilised by unscrupulous political leaders to bring down an exhausted establishment and to put themselves up in positions of dictatorial power, but this might very well reduce whatever rights and liberties existed before, and usher in a totalitarian tyranny. This, in fact, happened in Germany, where the collapse of the Weimar Republic gave absolute power to the Nazis. Mass-discontent, mass-mobilization and mass-struggle do not on their own ensure the replacement of an unjust regime by a just and democratic system. Having spent nearly his whole adult life as a revolutionary, Roy began from the mid-thirties increasingly to stress the fact that if the masses were not enlightened, if they continued to remain steeped in ignorance, if their energisation was brought about by stirring up their destructive passions, then a revolution would end only in terror and dictatorship. A renaissance

preceding a revolution may alone save the latter from the tragedy.

During the last eight years of his life when I had the privilege to work with him as a close associate, the twin concepts of revolution and renaissance constantly occupied his mind. I do not propose here to try to summarise his arguments. Whoever is concerned with the issue must read his last magnum opus, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution.* I intend instead to offer a few reflections of my own on these two concepts which in my view are related to the previously mentioned pair, radicalism and humanism. My thinking is, of course, deeply influenced by Roy, but I alone am responsible for the reflections offered here.

IV

> "We can distinguish the nations where we may expect revolution to be introduced gently by perhaps the belated wisdom of their government, and those nations where violence of revolutions, intensified by the government resistance, must involve all alike in a swift and terrible convulsion," Condorcet, *Sketch of a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind.*

Originally revolution (from Latin *re* and *volvere* = to turn) referred to "action on the part of celestial bodies of moving round in an orbit". It meant rotation, or "the return of a moving object to its place of origin". Observation of the phenomena of planetary motion, of the cycle of seasons, of circular movements of certain objects, gave rise to this notion in quite early times. By analogy it came to be used to describe what was believed to be a similar phenomenon in human history and society. Human history, it was widely assumed, started with a norm or archetype. It then moved away from it, degenerated, became "abnormal". But inner compulsions or laws brought it eventually back to the norm, thus completing a circle. Such circular movements are invariably repeated in history, each complete circle constituting a revolution.

This notion of history and society has not disappeared. In fact, its basic features would seem to have been incorporated, with minor modifications, in many modern views of history and revolution. By the eighteenth century certain specific features began to be articulated as forming elements of the phenomenon of revolution. In its application to history and society, revolution meant, first, the degeneration of an established order, system or regime which had become an anachronism and was consequently beyond redemption; secondly, widespread popular discontent with the regime expressing itself in uprisings and rebellions; thirdly, emergence of ideologies, classes, groups and organisations which offered a radically different and superior scheme of organised living in contradictions to that of the established but exhausted order; fourthly, the actual overthrow of the old order by the new forces, which involved a period of violent conflict and civil war, and fifthly, radical and rapid transformation of the structure of that society, its political-economy and culture by the new rulers who replaced the old. The theorists of revolution generally assumed that a revolution invariably meant social progress, that the new regime which replaced the old would, in accordance with some inner law, be morally, institutionally, and technologically much more advanced, that in the new scheme of things individuals would be less repressed and exploited and labour would become more productive, that the common people would have a bigger share of the produce of their toil, that there would open up new opportunities for general development in consequence of the structural transformation. Revolution was not a return to the starting point but an advance to a superior stage in social evolution. History was not an endless rotation in circles, but a spiral going progressively upwards from lower to higher planes.

Before the end of the eighteenth century the theory came to be exemplified by two revolutions.

The first took place in North America (1775-1783) when the white colonists declared independence, set up a sovereign federal republic, and made the brave declaration that "all men are created equal" and that all men had "certain inalienable Rights among them Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness". The second took place shortly after in France (1789-1795) where the ancient regime was violently overthrown, the ruler beheaded, and the justly famous *Declaration des droits de l'homme et des Citoyen* adopted as providing "a system of principles" on which to base the new republic. Although the American example did inspire nationalists in many colonies fighting for independence against their foreign rulers, it was the French revolution which became the model for nearly all intense and large scale movements for structural change in the following centuries.

Looking back at the French revolution and putting subsequent revolutions in the general frame provided by this archetype, one is struck both by the achievements and the tragic course and heavy costs of this phenomenon. The French, the Russian, the Chinese – each revolution swept away an ancient, corrupt and moribund regime, and introduced in its place a structurally different and dynamic order, social, politico-economic, and cultural. Each was inspired by what I have broadly called the spirit of radicalism, impatience with an exhausted and oppressive system and commitment to a just and rational form of organised living. Each brought about noticeable improvements in many respects in a relatively short period of time in the lives of the traditionally downtrodden and deprived people. But at the same time each ran a strikingly similar course – a rapid movement towards ruthless and unscrupulous centralisation of power, violent suppression of criticism and differences, and establishment of a dictatorship. The model was set by the French revolution. The representative assembly soon became ineffective. First the Girondists, then the Jacobins assumed power by fanning and exploiting popular discontent. Robespierre's twelve-men Committee of Safety which imposed the Reign of Terror which gave way to the five-men Directorate, which in its turn gave way to a three-men consulate. In the end, the revolution which had guillotined Louis XVI, enthroned the First Consul as the Emperor. More than a century later, the concentration of power in the hands of Stalin and Mao was far more total and absolute than ever in the hands of Napoleon. The Jacobins provided the model to the Communists, except that the Communists not only captured absolute power but also succeeded in retaining it. The costs also increased enormously. In one year during the Reign of Terror forty thousand people were executed by the Jacobins. In Russia under Stalin, and in China under Mao, the victims ran to millions. Besides the physically liquidated, there were many more who were subjected to years of forced labour, imprisonment, torture and endless indignities by the *apparatchiki* of the new tyranny. And, of course, under the new regime, freedom of the individual was non-existent.

V

> "Even when nature herself produces revolutions, political wisdom will not employ them to legitimize still greater oppression. On the contrary, it will use them as a call of nature for fundamental reforms to produce a lawful constitution founded upon principles of freedom, for only such a constitution is durable," Kant, *The Metaphysical Principle of Virtue.*
>
> "Had this revolution (i.e., the French) been conducted consistently with its principles there was once a good prospect of extending liberty through the greatest part of Europe, but I now relinquish that hope," Thomas Paine's letter to Thomas Jefferson, 20 April, 1793.

Would this looking-back the mean that the cost of revolution is too high and its tragic course is almost too certain for persons of conscience and intelligence ever again to opt for it voluntarily as a way of securing social justice to the oppressed? Of course, the question assumes that a

revolution in history is not a predetermined happening like analogical phenomena in nature, that conscious, deliberate and voluntarily organised participation by men and women in the making of history does have an important role in bringing about a rapid and far-reaching structural change in society. If social revolutions were really of the same nature as planetary motion or the cycle of seasons, then they would be inevitable in their periodicity, and there would be nothing that men and women could do about them. But there is large enough evidence that there have been and there still are societies which have never experienced revolutions. Changes in them have been so slow as to be almost imperceptible. Some collapsed as a result of slow decay; others were destroyed by invaders who were often superior only in their ability to destroy, but they were not immediately replaced by new systems or orders, emerging from the one destroyed. A few of the most primitive type have even maintained themselves for millennia till they have been exposed in the modern period of history to extermination by coming into contact with people belonging to more complex and aggressive civilisations. On the other hand, there are societies where all-embracing structural changes have taken place in a spectacular fashion, and in them individual and groups have had a decisive role as agents of such transformation. Revolutions thus do not seem to be inevitable, and while objective factors certainly are of major importance, the construction of the subjective factor is also very considerable, probably even decisive at a certain stage and in a certain configuration of events.

Revolution then, at least in modern history, implies freedom to choose. But if past experience indicates that revolutions as we have known them lead to terror, extermination on a large scale, and establishment of dictatorship, should persons of conscience, who seek greater freedom and justice in society, choose revolution, or knowingly participate in it? If the perspective of far-reaching structural changes in a short period of time brought about largely by people committed to perfectionist ideals is eliminated it being morally unacceptable, is not that also the end of radicalism as an ideology, or as a source and guide to conscious *praxis*? For persons who consider the existing order to be basically wrong and to be demanding structural change without delay, wheat then would be the feasible and morally acceptable alternative? The constructive programme proposed by Gandhi made very little impact on Indian society. The persons who were attracted in the past to it, thanks mainly to the Mahatma's charisma, are either dead or have become decrepit with age. The programme now attracts very few young people and the institutions which were created to implement it are either moribund, or depend very much on state protection and subsidy. The alternative of patient and skilful reform by removal of minor faults, or improvements here and thereby peace-meal social engineering, advocated by liberals, moderates and thinkers like Karl Popper, may suit societies where existing regimes are not altogether unjust, oppressive and corrupt, or where they are not recognised to be so by critics and those regimes, or where they are relatively open and responsive to public criticism. But where the existing system is thoroughly exploitative and repressive and is altogether closed and incapable of improving itself, where attempts at reform merely secure legitimacy and prolongation of life to tenacious vested interests and moribund customs, beliefs and institutions, would not there at least the way of revolution be a morally worthier choice than ineffectual reforms, even though the risks and costs can be anticipated in advance? That, at least, is the kind of question which troubles a radical who is not innocent of the tragedies of human history.

It is my understanding that Roy did not exclude revolution from his view of the future, nor abjure his commitment to revolutionary ideals, but he gradually reached the view that social, political and economic revolution must be preceded by or must synchronise with a cultural or philosophical revolution if the hazards of centralisation and dictatorship were to be eliminated. He often used the term 'renaissance' to describe this philosophical revolution. In radical humanism he tried to weave into a whole the two distinct phases of revolution and renaissance.

VI

> "In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness ... lay dreaming or half a awake beneath a common veil... Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation – only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air, there developed an *objective* consideration and treatment of the state and of all things of this world; at the same time the *subjective* asserted itself with fuel power, man became a spiritual *individual*; and recognized himself as such,"
> J. Burckhardt. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy.*

If one archetype or model was provided by the French revolution, the other came from the renaissance in Italy, so very vividly described by its earliest chronicler, Giorgio Vasari (1511-74). The most comprehensive account and interpretation of the historical phenomenon may still be found in Jacob Burckhardt's *magnum opus*, first published more than a century ago. There is a vast and growing literature on renaissance as there is on revolution, and debates on facts and interpretations are sustained and sharp. I have considered a number of them in several of my books, but the basic features of the renaissance are quite clear.

A great change took place in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – a spectacular reawakening, after a long time, of the spirit of inquiry and imagination which expressed itself in the arts, literature and philosophy, in inventions and discoveries, in new attitudes to the world and styles of living. Man rediscovered himself as a creative animal, able to transform himself and his surroundings, daring to explore unknown seas and continents and the most hidden recesses of the inner life. The new man of the renaissance "turned from the medieval absorption in the problem of salvation to the task of making themselves more fully at home on a friendly earth". The renaissance man was "characterised by his joy in the senses, his turning to nature, his roots in the world, his individualism, his endless curiosity, his commitment to freedom.' Each person was recognised to be unique (*l' uomo unico*) and capable of developing himself into a many-sided and universal individual (*l' uomo universale*).

The spirit of the renaissance spread from Italy to other parts of Europe, and subsequently from Europe to other countries of the world. by analogy, historians of this century have written about a Renaissance Orientale, the Chinese Renaissance, the Indian Renaissance, etc. Roy, however, thought that, unlike in the West, in Asia, especially India, the renaissance had yet to be accomplished. It was central to his argument of the late-Marxist and post-Marxist periods that a renaissance was absolutely necessary if India's human and material resources were to be released from the vicious grip of moribund and retrogressive systems, that without a renaissance India's structural transformation was inconceivable, even though such a transformation was urgent and essential. In the last phase of his philosophical development he came to the conclusion that not only India but the world needed a renaissance; both capitalism and socialism had proved to be bankrupt, and the vested interests in both camps were driving the world to annihilation. Mankind may save itself from this collective suicide by devising alternative philosophy which is cosmopolitan, secular, libertarian, rational, cooperationist and decentralist. The development and spread of such a philosophy would, in his view, mark the beginning of a global renaissance which would provide inspiration and guidance to a radical restructuring of societies and politico-economic systems. A renaissance alone may preclude the emergence and establishment of dictatorships which in the past have characterised revolutions.

As in the case of revolution, a look-back at the archetype of the renaissance and the general

frame which it provides raises questions and suggests lines of inquiry. The efforts of the Italian renaissance (and subsequent phenomena in other countries which bear family resemblance to it) were limited to relatively small and highly gifted sections of the community. The common people had hardly any part in the daring explorations, innovations or creative expressions which constituted the renaissance, although the achievements in the long run profoundly influenced the history of mankind. The agents of renaissance are thus the real cultural elite of the society – artists, thinkers, visionaries, explorers, entrepreneurs, innovators. Since they are way ahead of their times, there is bound to be a great gulf separating them from the rest of the still tradition bound community. How the gulf is to be spanned with minimum of delay, how the authority of the new may gain general recognition without resorting in any way to the use of organised force, how such authority may not bring in privileges and establish new hierarchies – are problems which are not easily answered. Besides, in Italy itself spectacular developments in literature and the arts were not complemented or followed by comparable developments in political economy or the material conditions of the people. How is one to explain or interpret the gap or dissimilarity of development between the aesthetic-intellectual and the material-institutional elements? Of this discrepancy Italy was not a solitary instance. In Bengal, too, the impressive cultural achievements of the period from Rammohan Roy to Rabindranath Tagore did not lay the foundations of equivalent growth in political economy. Bengal's artistic and intellectual efflorescence in the nineteenth century has not saved it from economic decline and political degeneration during the last half a century.

The renaissance moved from Italy to Europe. But it was nearly three centuries before revolutions occurred in any European country. The revolution in France brought in the Reign of Terror, succeeded by the Thermidorean reaction and then by the Napoleonic despotism. Neither the French renaissance nor the philosophical revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could prevent the tragic sequence. There were great structural changes in western societies. Nonetheless, many of the nations of the West thrived for centuries on exploitation of non-Western societies. In our century, two global wars causing suffering and wastage on scales unprecedented in human history issued from the megalomania of the West. The achievements of the renaissance were without question considerable. Nevertheless, exploitation, injustice, dominance of the many by groups of power elites continue to beset the human race. It may thus seem that neither renaissance nor revolution, each defined by its respective archetype and frame of reference, offers an adequate answer to the problems of injustice, exploitation, violence, tyranny, and in our times, the growing threat of global disaster. Nor, in the light of experience, is the relation between the two as clear and certain as it is often assumed to be.

VII

"The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptre less, free, un-circumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself, just, gentle, wise ..."
Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*.

> "There is an unconquerable tendency in all power, save that of knowledge acting by and through knowledge, to injure the mind of him who exercises that power; so much so, that the best natures cannot escape the evil of such alliance," Wordsworth, *Letters*.

The problem may not greatly trouble those who are either 'pure' humanists or 'pure' radicals. The humanist may be content to become a light unto himself, to offer what illumination this may provide to the surrounding darkness, to help in bringing about re-awakenings here and there, hoping this will eventually lead to a renaissance. He would rather not engage in mass-movements since he cannot pretend to be innocent of their highly destructive potential. He admits the elitist nature of the renaissance, but the elite in this conception consciously abjure force as a means to social change and are primarily occupied with self-expression and knowledge rather than with justice and social institutions. For him renaissance, limited or widespread, is its own justification, and does not require revolutions to fulfil its historic role. Pursuit of beauty, truth and virtue is its own reward, even if that pursuit is repudiated or repressed by contemporary social institutions and mores.

The 'pure' radical, on the other hand, is not prepared to make any compromise with the existing order which he sees as corrupt, exploitative, unjust and unredeemable. He is passionately opposed to its prolongation. He does everything possible to undermine its legitimacy, and recognises public discontent and mass movements as essential to its overthrow. If the renaissance is limited primarily to aesthetic and intellectual efflorescence, if it needs centuries to spread among the common people or to bring about a social revolution then renaissance to him is an elitist luxury which goes against his grain. For him renaissance or no renaissance, structural change in a short period time is what matters most, change which will bring to the wretched of the earth justice, freedom from exploitation and opportunity to develop themselves, change which promises to usher in an altogether new and better society. He is prepared to pay the price of violence and to take the risk of the reign of terror rather than tolerate indefinite prolongation of the present iniquitous order.

The problem torments me because I am by choice a radical humanist. I do not want to persuade myself or others that I know how *in practice* humanism and radicalism, renaissance and revolution are to be reconciled and unified, although *in theory* such harmonization may not be beyond my comprehension or competence. However, this much I clearly recognize after a life time of experience and inquiry that a radical or structural transformation of modern societies is overdue, that reforms here and there, useful as they are, to dot meet the deepening crisis of our age, that revolutions brought about by violence tend to defeat their proclaimed ends and strengthen the forces of unreason and un-freedom in the name of justice and the collective good, that reawakening of the spirit of inquiry, creativity, cooperation and enterprise is essential if meaningful structural transformations are to be accomplished and maintained, that the renaissance of our time, even if it starts with a gifted few, must actively involve sooner rather than later the general body of ordinary men and women in whom lies latent the power to recreate themselves and their society, that neither humanism nor radicalism by itself is enough. Whatever meaning and direction my life may possess, come from this recognition, which is the source both of my anguish and my hope.

7th June, 1987.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, August 1987.

What Roy Said:

Gandhism and Humanism

M. N. Roy

(*Soon after his formulation of New Humanism, Roy was being asked if he was not behaving like the biblical man who came to scoff and stayed to pray. What after all was the difference, if any, between Gandhism and Roy's New Humanism? Here we have some pointed remarks of Roy on this rather vexed question. The occasion for it was provided by Sri Pyarelal's report of* "Gandhiji's Last Discussion with Fellow Workers". – R.L. Nigam).

Until now my public reply to the question has been begging it. I have simply suggested that the interrogator should judge, and if he believed that there was no difference between Gandhism and Humanism, I would not demur. I have all along been a critic of Gandhism, frankly doubtful about the claim that it offers the only hope for mankind. If my doubt was proved to be unfounded, I would readily stay to pray. But I never came to scoff; my criticism and doubt have never been prejudiced or malicious. Even now I do not feel that I was wrong, although I do feel a strong sympathy for those who are desperately trying to differentiate Gandhism from the practice of triumphant nationalism, which still professes to worship the Mahatma as its patron saint. That however, does not mean that I have suddenly discovered Humanism in Gandhism. The sympathy is for an endeavour to stand by one's conviction.

The Mahatma did have some humanist tendency and he was a moralist. As such he has claimed my homage. But he was rather a humanitarian than a humanist. The distinction is not generally made. The desire to do good to all men without discrimination is very laudable. But it does not necessarily mean to place the highest value in man. The Mahatma did not regard man as an end in himself, but as the means for the operation of the purpose of God. This may be a sublime view of life; but it deprives man of freedom and sovereign creativeness. Therefore it is not Humanism. Moreover, in the attitude of surrender to a superhuman will, one may find justification for having done what he would not do as a free agent.

In the last days of his life, the Mahatma was painfully conscious of having deviated from the path of truth and non-violence. But the sublime attitude of surrender to a higher power enabled him to disown the responsibility for his own action. Humanism leaves no such convenient loopholes; it holds man responsible for his actions, and consequently offers greater guarantee against possible deviation from the chosen path of rectitude. It claims freedom, and deserves it by assuming responsibility. The Gandhist view of life offers the comfortable freedom from responsibility in return for the surrender of freedom of human judgment.

Sri Pyarelal reports the Mahatma exclaiming penitentially: "My eyes have now been opened. IL now see that what we practised during the fight with the British under the name of non-violence was not real non-violence. God had purposely sealed my eyes as He wanted to accomplish His great purpose through me. That purpose being accomplished, He has restored to me my sight." With this attitude any human delinquency could be justified. It brings God down in the world of pragmatism, to be guided by the questionable maxim that the end justifies the means. Faith in God is the sheet-anchor of Gandhism. For that distinction, it may be regarded as superior to Humanism by the faithful. But others may differ. Here I do not raise the issue. Now the point is that, if Gandhi himself endorses the maxim that the end justifies the means, how can it be rejected by Gandhism? What God does is good: man cannot be better than God. Yet, to have rejected the maxim, not only in theory but also in practice, is said to be one of the most distinctive merits of Gandhism. I have always been doubtful in this respect; now my doubt is borne out by the authority of the Mahatma himself.

The first principle of Gandhism – that man can only serve the purpose of God – caused the failure of the Mahatma's attempt to introduce morality in politics to "purify politics" – a failure admitted by himself and a number of his close associates. For the same reason, religious moralists of all ages and all counties preached divine doctrines only to be set aside in practice by their professed followers. Humanism agrees with Gandhism as regards the importance of the purity of means; but its demand for morality in politics is more uncompromising; and it holds that, so long as power remains the basic incentive of political practice, it cannot conform strictly with professed moral principles.

Gandhism also is supposed to reject power-politics. On this point, Sri Pyarelal's report throws a flood of light. In course of the discussion, the Mahatma is reported to have said: "The conception of non-violence as the weapon of the strong must remain a chimera and a dream, and non-violence has no future as a world power and harbinger of universal peace, unless it could be shown to the capable of retaining and defending the power which it had helped to win; in other words, unless it could successfully act upon and guide power-politics." That is clear enough; Gandhism is not against power politics; it would not participate in the practice directly, but only guide it. It is further admitted that it has been instrumental in the attainment of power (by political party) and wants to prove its capacity to retain and defend power. Since admittedly Gandhism approved of political practice in pursuit of power, it could not insist upon the purity of means.

During the discussion, some of his followers advocated that true Gandhists (other than political Congressmen) should enter the Government to "use it for the purpose of building up a non-violent social order." The Mahatma disagreed, insisting upon the spread of *Nai Talim* (new education) to create an atmosphere in which non-violence would triumph. New Humanism proposes to do the same. Is it not following in the footsteps of the Mahatma? He added that who have come to power, thanks to the misuse of the instrument of non-violence and to the will of God that he should condone their questionable practice, they would hand over the power to him any time he wanted. But he would not. That does not look like an act of supreme self-abnegation – not to be tempted by power when it is within reach. But there is another way of looking at it. He was the all-powerful. Why should he want more, which might indeed be less?

The Gandhist attitude towards political power became still clearer when the Mahatma proceeded to visualize the result of the *Nai Talim*: "By abjuring power and devoting ourselves to pure selfless service of the votes, we can guide and influence them. It would give us far more real power than we can have by going into the government. A stage may come when the people themselves may feel and say that they want us and no one else to wield power. The question cold then be considered. I shall most probably be not alive then. But when the time comes, the Sangh will produce from amongst them someone who will take over the reins of administration. By that time, India shall have become an ideal State."

Late on, he added: "We can send men of our choice without going into the government ourselves." And "Today we have our own Government. Under adult suffrage, if we are worth our salt, we should have that hold upon the people that whomsoever we may choose, should be returned." Then again, "Suppose you don't take power but gain hold on the public, you will be able to return at the polls whomsoever you may wish. Forget member ship (presumably of the ruling party of the government) so long as the voters are in your hand." Finally the peroration: "Banish the very idea of capture of power and you will be able to guide power and keep it on the right path."

Why should king-makers bother for kingship which involves responsibility? Almightiness is irresponsible. To aspire for that status is hardly the same as to abjure power. The use of terms like "hold on the people", "choose our men", "guide power" is not accidental. Language is determined by the logic of the thought it expresses. And Sri Pyarelal testifies that "the words of wisdom that

dropped from his lips on that occasion have an exceptional significance. They afford a glimpse into the working of his mind on the future role of constructive work in independent India as he envisaged it, and its relation to power-politics."

We also get a glimpse into the Ideal State of Gandhism. Someone (note the singular number) of the Gandhists will gather in his hand all the reins of power as the result of a complete hold on the people who would then do whatever they are told to do. That might be a non-violent social order; although it will be based on emotional coercion (otherwise the total regimentation of opinion will not be possible). But it hardly will be a democratic or humanist social order. The Gandhist social order is the terrestrial reflection of the teleological world order. In the latter, man is the vehicle for the operation of a super-human Divine purpose. In the former, the citizens will blindly follow their non-violent rulers or a Benevolent Despot. It will indeed be a return to the legendary Ram Raj.

As against the teleological first principle of Gandhism, the fallacy of its ethics deduced therefrom and its consequent failure in practice, Humanism rests its ethics on the rationality of man. The purpose of its practice, therefore, is to make man progressively conscious of his innate rationality and be guided by it in all his behaviour. Gandhism would teach man to surrender his freedom of judgment to the inscrutable Divine Will, believing that goodness results form that attitude. It regards man only as an instrument, a means, not the end. Humanism does not recognize any metaphysical power to which man must be subordinated. Its ethics is based upon rationality, which is the essence of human nature. It declares that man as man can be moral, and therefore political practice being a form of human activity, can be guided by moral principles.

Humanism reaches the same conclusion also from its attitude to power. Uncompromising criticism of power politics leads it to the rejection of party politics. In that position, political practice can do without the incentive of power. In the absence of that corrupting agency, morality in political practice becomes possible, power inasmuch as it means ability to do things is not necessarily corrupting. Centralisation of power is an evil. In the Gandhian ideal State, power will be concentrated in the hands of "someone". That is the extremist form of centralisation. In view of the fact that each human being is possessed of unlimited potentialities, Humanism can visualize a social order in which power will be progressively decentralized, until it is equally distributed. That in short is the difference between Gandhism and Humanism.

Independent India, Vol. XIII, No. 12,
March 27, 1949, pp. 139-140.
Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, December 1976.

M.N. Roy : A Futile Quest?

Ivan Fernandes

Freedom is the watchword of our age. It surely is the greatest question of our time. The concept dominates the modern spirit – freedom of the individual, freedom of political units and freedom of peoples. The concept itself in its primordial effect originated in Greece and at first meant political and social freedom. For spiritual thinkers, freedom meant a liberation from passions and emotions and just not a political liberation of free jurisdiction. Yet, for the social thinker, freedom is an embarrassing concept for though vital, it remains vague, over which there remains many an opinion.1

In India, perhaps the greatest of all political thinkers untouched in terms of realization was M.N. Roy, who chose to define and re-define freedom, and yet unable to impress upon the nation his vision of freedom. Perhaps too, a look at just what his Humanist concepts dealt with might choose to inflict upon our conscience the waste of un-tapping such wealth. Perhaps too, a re-reading of his concepts might help us understand our social character, forcing us to see him in different light. But this is not the object here. A mere curiosity into what his subject dealt with, the thought process of an unpretentious man whose life cried out for freedom, is what is aimed here.

Why? Simply because he moved far ahead of his times, speaking an idiom lost on his political contemporaries. He is bound to be heard of more and more as history moves towards the Third Revolution – the Humanist Revolution. Its promise held potential in both the French and the Bolshevik Revolutions but withered because material conditions were missing, nor did there exist a philosophy of freedom. Now that there is a philosophy and scientific progress which holds out a promise of unlimited opportunities for the realization of the individual's potentials, M.N. Roy could very well be the prophet we all need.

India in the decades preceding, and just following independence, produced a number of outstanding men of genius. There was Tagore, the poet; Aurobindo, the spiritual philosopher; Gandhi, the moralist-politician; Nehru, the statesman; and Jaya Prakash, the socialist *sarvodayee*. To this list belongs M.N. Roy, the political theoretician and humanist.

Yet M.N. Roy was a remarkable failure in the history of the Indian National Movement. He showed all the proverbial qualities of a successful avant-garde politician. If as a politician he was unaccounted for among the heavyweights, he nonetheless had the flair to put on an impressive appearance of political reckoning.

As an individual, Roy matured great qualities of intellect and character. Well read, he was apt to polemicise, and was at least as good as Nehru. He lacked Nehru's literary talent but was compensated in superior skills of arguing and presenting arguments economically. His purpose and determination were acute and were spent almost compulsively on forlorn causes. His ability to organise accounted for this ability to inspire loyalty. Perhaps his failure was not inevitable but rather due to his inability to mix politics with diluted morality and to rise above scruples which often distinguish politicians. A recurring interest in Roy must have something to do with his legacy.

Manabendra Nath Roy was born in the 24 Pargana village of Arbalia, West Bengal, on March 21, 1887. The son of a Bengali Brahmin school teacher, Roy was educated in the village school but completed his studies in the Calcutta National College.

To explain the nature and significance of M.N. Roy's political thought, one first has to construct his own identity and the context of his ideas on which he made his intervention.

Broadly speaking, M.N. Roy was first and foremost a nationalist whose life can be divided into three principal stages. During his unremarkable childhood, he was attracted to nationalist terrorism but did not rise to eminence among terrorists, although it did set him on his political career as an apprentice in revolution making. His aim was to set the overthrow of the British and liberate India. In

1907 and again in 1910 he was arrested in connection with political dacoities but was released by the Magistrate who was unconvinced over the age and possibility of the young Roy's involvement. As a terrorist, or rather a nationalist anarchist, he was entrusted with the4 task of meeting a German steamer off the coast of Bengal, which the Indian revolutionaries used a s conduit to carry arms against the British. The steamer did not arrive and he eventually made his way to the United States in 1916 where he met Evelyn Trent and came into contact with socialist ideas. His second stage begins here. Becoming a committed Marxist, he participated i the formation of the Mexican Communist Party and represented Mexico in the Communist International Second Congress in Moscow in 1920. Both Roy's Supplementary Theses and Lenin's Theses on the National and Colonial Question were adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern after important revisions. In 1927 Roy headed a delegation of the Communist International to China. Roy's mission was a failure with the result that he was expelled by the Comintern.

He returned to India in 1930 and was promptly imprisoned on a six-year term for his implicity in two earlier cases of communist conspiracy. On release from jail he joined the Indian National Congress whose leadership he tried to radicalize unsuccessfully, largely due to the influence of Gandhi, who he believed was a mere pseudo religious-cultural revivalist. Disillusioned, he left the Congress party and founded in 1940 the Radical Democratic Party, which was to be a broad united front for workers, peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie. The party from the start was inconsequential. Over the Quit India Movement, the British had M.N. Roy's support. It was sincere, they felt, but of little consequence. He had broken from the Congress and has set up his own. The Intelligence Bureau reported that it was likely that it would be just another Party without a following. True, it was dissolved in 1948. The final phase in Roy's biography begins in 1947 when he went beyond Communism and evolved a step-by-step philosophy which he termed Integral, Radical, and New Humanism.

After his break with the Comintern, Roy's political fortunes became decisively narrower. He was a comparatively young man increasingly peripheral to the Indian Nationalist Movement, a tragic, alienated figure, unpopular for, among other things, his diatribe against Nehru, whom he called the ultimate prophet of fascism. He had with a bang begun his political career as an international politician. He ended with a whimper a savant to an ineffective sect that just could not make up its mind whether it was a political group or not.

The biographical evolution of M.N. Roy passed through three stages. At first he was a national anarchist, then a Marxist and later the founder of his own philosophy – New Humanism. These stages, though different from the other, underlie the linear progression of a thought process culminating in an organic whole. Freedom is the common denominator. Evelyn Trent, Roy's wife, held, "... the integrity was derived from two basic elements in the structure of his personality – his love of freedom and his devotion to truth." To Roy, "man is the measure of everything."3 The individual, he felt, had created society and the state and was prior to these institutions. He stated, "We find that the society is the creation of individuals. The individual comes first; he is prior to society; society is for attaining the end, which is the freedom and progress of the individual."4 And at another place he writes, "Social institutions and relations must, therefore, contribute to the freedom of the individual and help the realization of his full stature."5

The remarkable feature of Roy's Humanism is his emphasis on the importance of the individual and his freedom. Defining the term freedom, Roy said, "Freedom is the progressive disappearance of all restrictions on the upholding of the potentialities of individuals, as human beings, and not as cogs in the wheels of a mechanised social organism."6 In other words, freedom was an instinctive urge in Man. Man always sought freedom from his environment – at first physical and subsequently social and economic. For Roy, the "quest for freedom in human evolution is purposive. The struggle for existence is no longer carried out by mechanical adoption on the human level, it is carried out by purposive efforts for the conquest of nature ... Science is a search for truth and it is the result of

man's quest for freedom. Therefore, we say that search for truth is the corollary to the search for freedom."7

Roy regarded freedom as a basic human value. "Freedom is the supreme value of life, because the urge for freedom is the essence of human existence."8 He did not equate it with a nation's political independence nor with the end to the exploitation of the masses. He believed that it was only the free individual who could build up a society of freedom and equality. He defined this by saying, "In the modern world an individual to be free, must not only be able to enjoy economic sufficiency and security but live in a social psychological atmosphere free from cultural regimentation and helpful to the development of his intellectual and other human potentialities."9

M.N. Roy was not satisfied with physical freedom. He had his own hierarchy in his concepts on freedom. At first the removal of the colonial power from India held sway. That was physical freedom from foreign oppression. Then enchanted with the Marxist belief in economic freedom, he changed his views. With maturity later, came his advocacy of intellectual freedom, for according to him, intellectual freedom was foremost in importance for man's attainment of happiness and cultural progress. Intellectual freedom he placed at the top f his structure. He said, (Intellectual) "freedom is not a beautiful castle built in the air of imagination. It rests on the triple pillars humanism, individualism and rationalism."10

Roy ignored every philosophy that aimed at the destruction of individual freedom. Any system that gave the individual less than his due of freedom was to be despised. Under flak from Roy was Liberalism, Socialism, Fascism, Nazism. Even the concept of Nationalism was rejected. The "nation is a metaphysical concept, yet, human beings, of flesh and blood, must sacrifice everything to make the nation great and glorious. That is the essence of nationalism. That is, to sacrifice a reality at the altar of fiction, of an illusion."11 He had gradated in his understanding. A nation full of foreigners would not necessarily mean a nation enslaved; neither a nation full of nationalists, a nation free. "It makes no difference whether the relationship of exploitation s between men born in the same country or those born in different countries."12 Nationalism, an ideal he cherished in his early youth, was a mediaeval concept that could lead easily in a progressive movement towards a totalitarian regime, as was seen so clearly in his time with the Nazi experiment of Germany.

His love for intellectual freedom was so great that he rejected the ideal of God and religion. Being a practical man, Roy founded his theory of freedom on very practical observations. He wrote, "I deduced my conclusions not from books but from experience ... Even since my childhood I have fought against injustice and freedom. When I realised that God presented the greatest obstacles on the path of human freedom, I rejected God and since then I have fought against those who claim to derive their authority from God."13

Roy may have rejected God but he did substitute God for the supreme value – freedom. He regarded freedom – this supreme value – as a derivative of all human values. He wrote, "However, I regard freedom as the supreme value, from which all human values are derived. Freedom is the supreme value because the urge for freedom is existence of human existence; and it is never in the danger of being mystified because it can be traced all the way down the progress of biological evolution; indeed it is coincident, if not actually identical with life. Since all the ethical values are derived from the soulless, animal heritage of man, they need no sanction, which transcends human existence."14 He is far from uncertain when the categorically states, "There is nothing more divine than freedom."15

Staunchly, as always, Roy's emphasis was on individual freedom. His philosophy is concerned with neither nation nor class but solely with man. Once a great admirer of Soviet Russia, Roy became its severe critic for the want of freedom in the system. He rejected the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat on the one count that it lacked an envisioned democratic system. His belief that only individuals could experience freedom was unshakable. "The position of the individual, therefore," he

wrote, "is the measure of progressive and liberating significance of any collective effort or social organization. The success of any collective endeavour is to be measured by the actual benefit for its constituent units."16 In other words, perhaps more accurately, he himself says, "There can be only one measure of the degree of freedom enjoyed by any class or country, and that measure is the actual amount of freedom enjoyed by the individuals composing the country or class."17 Prophetic words, for by 1991, the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics ceased to exist – exactly 74 years since the first Bolshevik Revolution.

For Roy, freedom was not an instrumental value. "It is not a means to something; it is an end in itself. It is not an ideal to be attained in some distant time, but something to be experienced every day of our life. And those who experience freedom can only be the real defenders of freedom,"18 Roy explained. Accordingly to his concept, freedom lay in the relation between the privileges of self and the others because man is always dependent on others through tradition, co-operation and nature. Culture was the foundation of freedom. The one who blended harmoniously with his cultural background, should feel himself unreservedly free. He said, "Economic wellbeing and political freedom are also ingredients of the total human culture... But in the last analysis, greater emphasis should be laid on the deeper layers of the human nature. Freedom does not concern merely the relations between man and man. In the first place, it must be experienced individually. Keenly conscious of the urge for freedom and capable of experiencing it, individuals will build a really free society. Culture, therefore, is the foundation of freedom, which can be reinforced by the satisfaction of all other human requirements."19

On the basis of freedom, Roy differentiated between the civilised and the uncivilised society. Civilization had nothing to do with racial or economic superiority, or even technological advancement. Civilization had everything to do with a society's ability to enable an individual to live in freedom so essential for the development of the intellect and every other human potential. Freedom enables man "to be progressively free from the tyranny of natural phenomena and physical and social environments."20

To Roy, "Man is born free," and "freedom is his birth right."21 His life witnesses his fight for freedom. In his own words, "My whole political life, which is nearly a tormented soul's search for freedom."22

Notes:

1. Here are some descriptions and definitions about freedom:

Cicero says in his *Paradoxa Stoicorum*: "Indeed, what is liberty? The ability to live as one desires. But who lives as he desires, excepting the man who follows the rules of equity, is happy to do his duty... who does not obey the law out of fear, but observes them and respects them because he judges this conduct to be more salutary..." By his definition Cicero implies two elements: freedom of choice and freedom to pursue one's goal in life – something that is conducive to man's nature.

According to *Herbert J. Miller,* freedom means "the condition of being able to choose and to carry out purposes." His definition of freedom also implies two things: first, one should be able to make the choice and secondly, one should be able to act according to the choice one has made. If one of the aspects is missing then there is lack of freedom.

According to *P.H. Patridge*, freedom exists "only where exists the possibility of choice, and the possibility of choice in turn implies not only the absence of direct coercion and compulsion but also that the availability and the characteristics of alternatives must be capable of being known." His description implies the absence of coercion and the choice is deliberate with full knowledge of the consequences of a particular choice as well as the consequences of not choosing some other course of action. If there is only one option then there is no choice and hence it is not a free action.

According to *Bernard Basanquet*, our liberty is "the condition and guarantee of our becoming

the best that we have it in us to be, that is of becoming ourselves." He lays clear emphasis on the purpose of freedom, i.e., freedom for (self-realization). Anything against it will not be true freedom.

According to *Bertrand Russell,* freedom is "the absence of obstacles to the realization of desires."

According to *Thomas Hobbes*, "By liberty i8s understood, according to the proper significance of the word, the absence of external impediments." These two emphasise the external aspect, i.e., freedom from any obstacle for using one's legitimate freedom. They imply that a free man is he who is not prevented from doing what he wants to do.

According to *John Stuart Mill,* "The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental and spiritual." His understanding of freedom is strongly biased towards individualism. The social aspect of man and his dependence on others for practically everything, even for the right choice of things for his personal fulfilment, is left out.

Accordingly to *Mortimer Adler*, "A man is free who has in himself the ability or power to make what he does his own action and what he achieves his own property." His understanding of freedom implies that if a man cannot enjoy the fruit of a free action then there is no freedom.

2. 'M.N. Roy: The Man and His Ideas' (Editorial), *The Radical Humanist*, Vo. XX, Nos. 3-4, January 25, 1956: p. 27).

3. M.N. Roy and Philip Spratt, *Beyond Communism* ('Principles of Radical Democracy', Twenty-Two Theses adopted by the Third All-India Conference of the Radical Democratic Party, held in Bombay, from December 26 to 30, 1946). (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1947. Reprint, 1968), Thesis No. 22, p. 152.

4. Ibid., p. 116.

5. *The Radical Humanist* February 12, 1956: p. 63.

6. Principles of Radical Democracy, op. Cit. 'Thesis No. 3, p. 142.

7. V.N. Ojha, *M.N. Roy and His Philosophical Ideas* (Muzaffarpur: Shankhand Prakashan. 1969), p. 312.

8. *The Radical Humanist,* Vol. 40, No. 6, September 1976, p. 18.

9. Ibid.

10. K.C. Jena, *Contributions of M.N. Roy to Political Philosophy* (New Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1968), p. 14.

11. V.N. Ojha, op. cit., p. 205.

12. K.C. Jena, op. cit., p. 15.

13. Ibid., pp. 15-16.

14. M.N. Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties* (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1960), pp. 10-11.

15. Ellen Roy and S.N. Ray, *In Man's Own Image* (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1948), p. 46.

16. 'Principles of Radical Democracy, Twenty-two Theses, M.N. Roy and Philip Spratt, *Beyond Communism*. Op. cit., Thesis No. 3, p. 142.

17. M.N. Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties* op. cit., p. 205.

18. 'M.N. Roy on Freedom' *The Radical Humanist*, Vol. 40, No. 4, July 1976, p. 3.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. M.N. Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution,* (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1952), p. 288.

22. M.N. Roy, *New Orientation* (Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1946), p. 59.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, November 1994.

Relevance of M.N. Roy's Philosophical Materialism in the Contemporary World - 1

Nirmal Mukherjee

(*This article, though specially written for the April Special Issue, could not be published in that issue due to its length and late arrival. We are publishing the Ist part in this issue. Two other parts will be published in the June and July issues*. – Associate Editor)

(1)

M.N. Roy was one of the greatest revolutionaries of the twentieth century. He was, in the last analysis, a great **Philosophical Materialist** and made thorough revision of Materialist Weltanschauung and, in a sense, ultimately rejected Marxism by declaring that 'the crisis of our time is moral crisis.'

There is no place of **Moral crisis** and the concept of **Moral man** in any writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and Mao and in the writings of any other Marxist. Roy rejected the Marxist concept of class struggle, economic determinism, seizure of power by violence and believed that good society can be sustained by good men and embodied the identity of ends and means. Barring few Marxists of our time, nobody had searched for a place of morality in politics and public life. I do not know of any Marxist (I am familiar with the Frankfurt School of Marxism), who made such a sustained study of modern science to rehabilitate his Philosophical Materialism, except Eric Fromm, who ultimately rejected Marxist framework.

The last quarter of the twentieth century has witnessed the ultimate collapse of communism. The glasnost and perestroika must be regarded as the most convulsive and significant revolution no less important than the French Revolution and the so-called Bolshevik Revolution. The Gulag Archipelago was terminated and there was a lift from communist serfdom to a kind of open society.

On the other hand, contemporary parliamentary democracy is a spent bullet – it has lost its fertilising soul and spirit. Party politics has further aggravated the scramble for both political and economic power. Amoral power elites and pressure groups have multiplied, leading further to the vicious circle of amoralism in politics. Politics now determines economics. Ethics in politics is denied and everything is now permissible.

The class of intelligentsia in our country and in Europe have lost their role and now largely compromise with non-ethical views and politics. The so-called callow, greedy and false-hearted progressive intellectuals are conspicuously ignorant of the abiding heritage of their country. Muslim intellectuals are shockingly poor about their short-lived enlightened heritage of Isla,. In spite of some fatal limitations of Roy's assessment of the *Historical Role of Islam* (1939), some of his observations relating to Koran and the Prophet are substantially true. His quest for truth and urge for freedom were ingrained in his mighty personality. So he had the Socratic courage to state the truth. He comments that every prophet established his pretension by the performance of miracles. On that token, Mohammed must be recognised as by far the greatest of all prophets before or after him. The expansion of Islam is the most miraculous of all miracles.1 He observes: 'Islam as religion is irrationalism par excellence, it so easily triumphed over all other religions which, with all their metaphysical accomplishments, theological subtleties and philosophical pretensions, were defective as religions, being but pseudo-religions.'2 He also had the courage to emphasize that the crudities of the Koran did not prevent its basic idea from flourishing into all its revolutionary consequences.3

This kind of truth cannot be made by progressive intellectuals. In writing so, Roy simply expressed, revived and continued the courageous spirit of Rammohun Roy who boldly expressed his critique in *Tuhfa-tul-Mawahhiden* (1804), written in Persian with a Arabic preface more than two hundred years ago to hammer the truth and falsehood of every religion.4 This kind of truth cannot be made by progressive intellectuals. In fact, fanaticism – both religious and secular – is fostered by a moral politics and by intellectuals rather than by the common people. More than seventy years ago, Rabindra Nath Tagore made a prophetic statement: There is a class of people, politician by name, whose ideas cannot tally with great ideas and they can tell innumerable lies, they are so aggressive and violent that they try to take over the rights of others on the pretext of independence of their country. They have spread the hatred and partisanism and such politics of the evil spirit of discrimination generally spread among the students.5 Only Roy could fully accept Tagore's view about the amoral politicians. The spirit of fanaticism and amoralism has expanded in the world today. I have deliberately emphasised this dimension of Indian intellectuals since they are up to eliminate the so-called Fundamentalism of religion along with professional politicians. Far from cultivating the moral spirit and ethics in our industrial society, growing with faulty five-year plans since independence, they are now moving in the vicious circle of so-called Fundamentalism. Fundamentalism can be eradicated only by ceaseless efforts for increasing the areas of *Humanist Ethics* or *Rational Humanist Axiology.*

Bharatiya Janata Party has completely eroded the liberal heritage of Hinduism by its insidious amoral politics. Roy rejected the ethical consequence of collectivist ideas, which completely discards consideration of ethics and morality in social life. Roy has believed in the identity of ends and means.6 Dennis Dalton's essay is substantially misleading. Roy has completed his Weltanschuung of moral politics. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi had hastened the creative moral politics. Roy has mainly initiated the moral politics since 1946 and more boldly from 1947 before the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in January 1948. Roy's lecture on January 31, 1947, in fact considered the entire moral politics or integral humanism by rejecting the socialist collectivism in order to ensure the freedom of the individuals.

(2)

The global peril of eco-catastrophe, global warming and acute crisis of energy and non-renewable power and natural resources along with crazy philosophy of industrialism have already raised the peril of human survival. The so-called sophisticated growth models with a theory of games without any ethical concern for dehumanisation have multiplied. Economic dynamics and dynamic growth models are also of little use for a viable and sustainable development. Economics must be sustained ethical paradigm.7

Roy's Philosophical Materialism and Revolution in Modern Science

Expelled from Comintern, Roy returned to India and ultimately was imprisoned for six years and this period of confinement gave him an opportunity for deeper reflection and thinking on several crucial affairs of his time more objectively and in a detached way. It, is a sense, fortified his searching soul and spirit. Roy planned to write on many things on the eternal of man and cosmos. He started to make a sustained and indefatigable study of modern science, particularly of modern physics, to find out its epistemological as well as ontological paradigms. His *Letters From Jail,* volume III, is the most reliable guide to understand his future course of action. Coming out of jail, Roy undertook to express his views on the philosophical consequences of modern science. Roy's sustained study of modern physics, made in jail, was first expressed in his critique of Sir Suleiman's book *New Theory of Gravitation* in the *Independent India* (1937). While appreciating Suleiman's bold position for defending the reality of matters, Roy took him into task for his misleading understanding of the

Theory of Relativity and the objective reality of matters. He explains the finiteness of the velocity of light resulting from Maxwell's equation and points out the implication of Michelson-Morely experiment, which involved the necessary hypothesis of Fitzerald contradiction and Lorentz transformation. Roy believes that the special theory of kinematics exposed the underlying connection between gravitation and electromagnetism. Indicating the origin of time and space in four dimensional continuum, which is an artificial method and rather compelled by the necessity of explaining the observed facts which cannot be fitted into the classical concepts. Roy criticised Sir Suleiman for rejecting creative discoveries of quantum physics with a philosophical interpretation placed on them. The defence of matter, according to Roy, must be ontological and not a matter of logic. It must be stated that Roy's sustained study for years together was to re-establish the reality of matter and as such he asserts that 'neither Schordinger nor Heisenberg, not even mystically inclined Bohr, nor probabalist Max Born expressly denies the existence of matter.'8

Roy was aware of the latest theory about the origin of the relativity physics and quantum theory, apart from Minkowski's mathematical restatement of the kinematics of the special theory that showed that time could not be traced as the fourth member of a system of co-ordinates. Roy believes that the mathematical expression of the physical implication of Einstein's kinematics subsequently developed into his General Theory. It appears that the full significance of the fact had to be resolved by the Theory of Relativity. Time cannot be abstracted from energy, nor energy from time, because oscillation is a periodic as well as physical phenomenon. Energy is equivalent to mass; mass implies extension which is the physical equivalent of space.9 Roy's most significant conclusion relating to Relativity Theory lies in the fact that, according to him, the theory of relativity reduces cosmic scheme, including space, time, mass, motion, force, energy, to a single category – matter. The ultimate unit of this fundamental is conceived as 'event', instead of mass-point in order to emphasize on its dynamic character. So wave mechanics does not deny the reality of matter. It deals with physical processes and cannot be analysed down to particles and propagation of energy through medium. Roy could not argue and develop like Ernest Cassirer, the philosophical implication of modern physics or discuss history and epistemology of the concept of atom and probability as expressed in latter's *Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics*, though systematic work on the subject was written 1910 under the title "Substance and Function" (Substancbergriff and funktinosbergriff) and the specific of relativity physics, which was written in 1909 under the title *Einstein's Theory of Relativity considered from the Epistemological Standpoint* and its English translation is included in his 'Substance and Function' as supplement.

Popper's theory of falsifiability has some weakness and limitations, which I shall discuss later on. His book *Realism and Aim of Science* is the first volume of his long awaited postscript to *The Logic of Scientific Discovery.* It contains a new and highly expanded development of Popper's views on induction, demarcation and corroboration, and also presents his *propensity theory of probability.* This book also contains detailed considerations of his reply to numerous criticism and objections that have been made to his views over the years since *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* was first published. He makes a propensity interpretation of probability as well as the meaning of probability. He also makes a distinction between relative and absolute probabilities. Though his propensity interpretation appears most acceptable, it also suffers from some difficulties. His criticism of probabilistic induction also needs some modification.

Hans Reichenbach's C*ausal Anomaly* possibly contains a kind of propensity interpretation of probability. Reichenbach grappled with *causal law* and tried to explore a different dimension of it throughout his life. The scientific revolution in the first quarter of the twentieth century physics raised the most enigmatic and the most crucial problems of causality. Probability and determinism and indeterminism as well as the problem of induction and deduction created philosophical convulsion. Karl Popper's elaborate discussion of propensity interpretation of probability or Hans Reichenbach's

limiting frequency concept of probability in a sense can be considered as objective features of the physical world, though both of them have offered different dimensions.

Russell's earlier work *Foundation of Geometry* (1897) is imbued with a temper of neo-Kantianism that blazed a significant effort to recast Kant's theory of space with non-Euclidian geometries. It is incorrect to consider that Russell was simply a logical positivist. He was more than that. All his works embody different dimensions. The joint venture of *Principia Mathematica* by Whitehead and Russell (1910-1913) was not the philosophical terminus of each of them. Whitehead became a great metaphysician of the twentieth century and whose views have influenced different philosophers in different ways. Modern revolution in twentieth century physics has fostered diverse and numerous philosophical interpretations. Whitehead's interpretation of both relativity and quantum physics is exceptionally different and unique. In 1920, he summarised the general philosophical theory of *Relativity of Space and Time* as well as physical ideas involved in Einstein's research that are in some respect critical and suggestive of an alternative exploration of Einstein's great achievement.10 Both Cassirer and Whitehead maintained a *vision of continuity between classical concept of causality* and the *modern notion of causal law and determinism.* Besides, both of them have explained those in identical terms and concepts.11 I firmly believe that these analytical positions do contain substantial truth in the perspective and heritage of modern physical science. Their views largely substantiate some views of Roy.

Mac Black and R.B. Braithwaite have offered justification of induction in modern epistemology. Popper claimed that he solved in 1927 the problem of induction showing that induction has no place in science. Popper's deductive theory is, according to Wesley Y. Salmon, actually another form of the very sort of thing, which Reichenback set out to do, namely to provide a pragmatic justification of certain form of scientific induction.12

Roy's basic ideas of his sustained scientific study of modern physics are found in his numerous articles, published in *The Marxian Way* (1945) and *The Humanist Way* (1946), particularly his articles *The Reality of Matter* (The Marxian Way, edited by him, January-March 1945, Vol. I); *Science and Philosophy* (The Marxian Way, October-December 1945, Vol. I); *The Fatalism of Physicist* (The Marxian Way, April-June 1945, Vol. I); *Probability and Determinism* (The Humanist Way, 1950, Vol. IV) apart from other articles written since 1937-40. Roy's analysis of probability and determinism is largely confirmed by Ernst Cassirer. Besides, Whitehead also rejected the idea of subjectivistic interpretation of both relativity and quantum physics. Roy's philosophical materialism is not unfounded and survives in spite of sustained interpretations by logical empiricists, logical positivists and logical syntaxists. The problem of causality (Kausalitat) still remains unresolved. The logical analysis of physics as a part of the logic of science (i.e., syntax of the physical language) does not necessarily deny the possibility of causal analysis. Reichenbach's causal anomaly is not adequately clear and only shows the different ways of rejecting the law of causality in quantum mechanics. The importance of scientific methods, induction and inference cannot be rejected in spite of Karl Robert Popper's imaginary attack. The problem of probability still remains somewhat perplexing and knowledge of external world cannot be denied. What is the real implication of Popper's 'Objective Knowledge'?13

(3)

In explaining the meaning of probability Popper makes a distinction between relative and absolute probabilities for the discussion of the probability as the number of favourable cases of divided by the number of possible cases. This suggests that we may interpret probability as a measure of possibilities. Russell asserts that if induction or the principle of induction in rejected, then 'every attempt to arrive at general scientific laws from particular observations is fallacious, and Hume's criticism is inescapable for an empiricist. 'Roy in this respect upholds a view of empiricism when he

hammers the causal connection as empirical indisputable fact. Most of the materialists have tried to reconcile classical mechanics and causality with the modern problem of probabilistic causality as well as the reality of matters in quantum mechanics or wave mechanics. But Roy's views need further clarification of the probabilistic determinism and causality. Popper, unlike Polanyi, in fact makes a difference between his theories on falsifiability to foster the aim of science and the logic of scientific discovery and he has not included a kind of personal knowledge of values and aesthetic vision, forgetting the deeper fact that his discussion of the logic of the scientific discovery rejects all forms of determinations of causality. I am inclined to accept that a kind of acritical acceptance of scientist consists of his passion for true beliefs and valuations forming the premises of science. Besides, a kind of 'intuitive discoveries' becomes inevitable and Polanyi has expressed his views with numerous facts of discoveries from Kepler to Einstein. But while trying to say something that is true about a reality, believed to be existing independently of our knowing it, all assertions of a fact necessarily carry universal intent. Our claim to speak of reality serves thus as the external anchoring of our commitment in making a factual statement. An enquiring scientist's intimation of a hidden reality is personal. It is his own belief, which, owing to his originality, as yet he alone holds. Yet it is not a subjective state of mind but convictions held with universal intent and heavy with arduous projects. It was he who decided what to believe, yet there is no arbitrariness in his decision, for he arrived at his conclusions by the utmost exercise of responsibility. He has reached responsible beliefs, born of necessity, and not changeable at will. In a heuristic commitment, affirmation, surrender and legislation are fused into a single thought bearing on a hidden reality.14 Karl Popper's book *The Open Universe: An Argument for Indeterminism,* which is the second volume of *The Logic of Scientific Discovery,* is a most sustained attempt to resolve the problems relating to the question of determinism and indeterminism of modern science. Popper makes a bold argument to refute the doctrine of historicism, which very much predominates in the social science to predict the course of human history. But it is not possible to predict the growth of theoretical knowledge and this he has strongly emphasized in his book *The Poverty of Historicism.* Besides, he also shows the impossibility of self-prediction, which is most decisive in his treatment of historicism.15 The question of determinism and indeterminism in physics, according to Popper, lies beyond the concept of humanist axiology and Popper describes movingly the idea of an Open Universe. He criticizes the doctrine of reductionism. Human values cannot be reduced to scientific reduction. In fact, Popper's discussions of the so-called scientific reductionism are quite illuminating and splendid. What Popper rejects is the reductionist fallacy and that constitutes his defence for indeterminism. Polanyi is, in this respect, more vivid and animating. Popper's unintended quest is the involution of his intended quest based upon the acritical acceptance of abiding values of mankind.

Notes and References:

1. *The Historical Role of Islam* by M.N. Roy, 1990, Ajanta Publications, p. 4 and 5.
2. *Ibid. p. 52.*
3. *Ibid. p. 53.*
4. Rammohun, Islam and Deism by Nirmal Mukherjee in Rammohun Samran, Bicentenary Volume, a Bengali anthology edited by Dr. Pratul Chandra Gupta & Prof. Dilip Kumar Biswas and published by Rammohun Memorial Committee in March 1989.
5. Mahatma Gandhi by Rabindra Nath Tagore, written in Bengali, pp. 18-19.
6. Politics, Power and Parties by M.N. Roy, pp. 16-32.
7. A paper on eco-catastrophe and global warming by the present author, prepared for the Indian Science Congress, Indore, 1991, contains a scholarly discussion of the problems and perils of careless large scale technology and indicates a viable sustainable development.
8. Heresies of the 20th century Philosophical Essays by M.N. Roy, Renaissance Publishers,

Second edition, 1943. Originally published in *Independent India*, 1937. See also pp. 153-172.

9. *Ibid. p. 27.*
10. Essays in Science and Philosophy, Rides and Company, London, 1948, pp. 141-148.
11. Cassirer, op. cit. Chapters 11 and 12, Whitehead, op. cit. 100-111 and Part IV, pp. 166-176.
12. Hans Reichenbach: Logical Empricist, edited by Wesley C. Salmon, D. Rediel Pu;blish9ng Company, Dordrecht, Holland; Boston, U.S.A.; London, U.K., pp. 21-22, 1-83. See also Reichenbach J., The Theory of Probability, 2nd edition, 1949, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles; Reichenbach H., The Rise of Scientific Philosophy, 1951, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles; Reichenbach H., The Direction of Time, 1956, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles; Reichenbach H., The Philosophy of Space and Time, 1958, Dover Publications, New York; Reichenbach H., Modern Philosophy of Science, 1959, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Reichenbach H., Axiomatization of the Theory of Relativity, 1969, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles; Reichenbach H., Laws, Modalities and Counterfactuals, 1976, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.
13. Karl Popper, Logic and Scientific Discovery and its Postscript Realism and the Aim of Science (Volume I), The Open Universe: an argument for Indeterminism (Volume II), Quantum Theory and the Schism in Physics (Volume III). See also Popper's Conjectures and Refutations, 1963. Popper completed and published three new books: Objective Knowledge: an Evolutionary approach, 1972, Unended Quest, 1974 and 1976; and The Self and Its Brain, 1977 (with Sir John Eccles).

    For the need and viability of induction and logic, and scientific explanation, see Braithwaite R., Scientific Explanation, 1953 University Press, Cambridge; Carnap R., The Continuum of Inductive Methods, 1952, Basic Books, New York, reissued as An Introduction in the Philosophy of Science, Harper Torchbooks; Carnap R., The Logical Syntax of Language, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. Broadway House, London; Carter Lane & Hempel C., aspects of Scientific Explanation, 1965, The Free Press, New York; Nagel E., The Structure of Science, 1961, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York & Burlingame.

    On different interpretations of probability and probability physics, see Reichenbach H., The Theory of Probability, 1949, 2nd edition, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles; Cassirer Ernst, Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics, 1956; Carnap R., Logical Foundation of Probability, 1950, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Suppes P., A Probabilistic Theory of Causality, 1970, North Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam; Von Mises R., Probability, Statistics and Truth, 1957, The Macmillan Co., New York; Von Neumann J., Mathematical Foundation of Quantum Mechanics, 1955, Princeton University Press, Princeton; Personal Knowledge Towards a Post Critical Philosophy by Michel Polanyi, pp. 1348, and all the books by Popper mentioned earlier largely confirm Roy's view on probability.

    I largely agree with Cassirer's interpretation of probability and determinism in modern physics.
14. Polanyi, op. cit., pp. 124-193.
15. Popper, op. cit.: Open Universe: An argument for Indeterminism and also his other books mentioned earlier.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, May 1995.

Relevance of M.N. Roy's Philosophical Materialism in the Contemporary World - 2

Nirmal Mukherjee

Radical Humanist Axiology

Humanist ethics and morality will remain incomplete without making its creative unity with Kantian morality and ethics. Kant's moral theory will enhance and enrich Roy's essential morality and ethical ontology of beings. The mid-twentieth century has witnessed a veritable Kant and Hegel renaissance and retention of many dimensions of the ethical values, which involve rejection of some time-honoured conceptions of these ethics, aesthetics as well as philosophies. One dimension of Roy's ethics and morality must be grounded upon some flash of Kant's moral laws and Imperative Categories. Leibniz was not much concerned with ethics like Spinoza. His vision of axiology is based upon the conception of his God. But his philosophy is most important and can be related with axiology. Roy's concept of law-governed universe is derived from Plato. The identity of ends and means involves new view of ethics or what Kant calls the realm of ends land human dignity in the axiology of Roy. His critique of Kant is, in a sense, clear and well defined. He avoided the complexities of Kant's groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals or Moral Law as well as the Categorical Imperatives. There are numerous versions of the Groundlegung or the foundation of morality. Kant's axiology comprises his writings on history, politics and religion. The norms for moral judgment, nature of morality, moral norms of persons and his revolutions need an integral discourse. Roy observes that Kant's all-shattering' philosophy, in its ethics, was inspired by the tradition of the angels, it rehabilitates religion of shifting its basis of dogmatic morality sanctioned by super-sensual reason. Kant's is not a dogmatic ethics and his Categorical Imperative does not postulate to provide sanction for a servile ethics. Roy the Rationalist could discover new vision of Kantian ethics and moral laws.

Modern Kant scholars have unveiled different dimensions of Kant's moral law, philosophy of science and politics in their essential togetherness. In his Kant's Theory of Science, drawn from the Critique of Pure Reason, Gordon G. Brilliant Jr. clarifies the relation between the philosophy and science an provides an unified account of Kant's philosophy and mathematics and his philosophy with the metaphysical foundation of moral science, indicating their relation with the Critique of Pure Reason again. The reasons of Kant's criticism of metaphysics have been explored by W.H. Walsh. Besides, Kant's theory of morals and aesthetics has also to be taken into account in understanding his entire Weltanschauung (worldview). Roy has no fascination for aesthetics. Kant's theory of mind contains another dimension. Karl Ameriks makes an analysis of the paralogism of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason in integrating the entire philosophy as a whole and emphasizing the key arguments of the foundations of the metaphysics of morals and critique of practical reason. Thus, the entire Kantian philosophy and ethics may be formulated as follows: (1) Critique of Pure Reason hammers the limits of a reason which is metaphysical as well as scientific philosophy; (2) Critique of Pure Reason is integrated with metaphysical foundation of moral or moral law: (3) The Categorical Imperative is connected with freedom, autonomy, moral values, morally obligatory ends, defence of morality, moral norms of a person as well as moral judgment.

Speaking about Kant's Ground work of the Metaphysics of Morals, H.J. Paton, a great Kantian scholar and author of The Good Will, Kant's Metaphysics of Experience, The Categorical Imperative and In Defence of Reason, rightly observes that in moral philosophy t ranks with the Republic of Plato and the Ethics of Aristotle. In elaborating the background of the Categorical Imperative, Paton has discussed both the practical reason and its objective principles. Kant's main object of writing the groundwork was to "seek out and establish" the ultimate principle of morality – to

formulate the principle and to show that we are bound by it. It is understandable then that he devotes more space in that book to the Categorical Imperative than to any other topic. He offers three different formulas of that law, but because there can be logically only one ultimate moral law, he also asserts that the "three ways of representing the principle of morality are at bottom merely so many formulations of precisely the same law." Kant believes that the first formula is the most precise, enabling it best to exhibit what it means to say that morally maxims must fit to serve s universal laws. The second turns out to be as formal as the first, but it emphasizes, what Kant nonetheless calls, the "matter" of moral principle – **Persons and their worth.** The third combines the first two and sets out the nature of our moral goal."16

After making a sustained study of the philosophical consequences of modern science, including the search for the materialist content of Indian Philosophy along with the *Historical Role of Islam,* Roy has founded his humanist axiology in the context of the moral crisis of our time. Roy writes: "The condition of the temporary world present a dismal picture of a decay, degradation and demoralisation. The threatening perspective appears to be either of a ruinous war or a slow breakdown of modern civilisation. While peace is obviously the crying need of a distracted and tormented world on all sides, there is 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 the limit. Plausible political theories and doctrines of social justice are still preached. They all talk of democracy, freedom and equality. But the realities of the contemporary world contradict the promising theoretical pictures presented in the nineteenth century. It is not because of the theories were false or deliberately deceptive, but because man has failed to take the fullest advantage of the knowledge acquired in modern times also as to apply it to the solution of the problems of actual life." Criticising the Marxist conception of freedom, which implies slavery for the individual and emphasising in fact that a society composed of voluntary slaves can never be free, Roy, like Alexander Solzhenitsyn, observes that by conversion to the modern faith of Marxism man willingly surrenders his right to freedom and cultivates a cynical attitude to morality. Marxist faith and human freedom cannot go together. In this respect Roy appears rather to reject the entire philosophy of Marxism. Roy writes: The breakdown of the old social and political systems and the pragmatic discredit of their theoretical sanctions has brought about the crisis of our time, the errors, inadequacies and failure of these ideologies, either of reform or of revolution, created an atmosphere of frustration, despair and disgust which aggravated the crisis. Civilised mankind is asked to choose between modern barbarism promising material well-being and security in a socially regimented and spiritually enslaved life, or a return to mediaeval obscurantism in search of an illusory safety in the backwaters of faith. The crisis of our time is the result of an inability to appreciate the great human heritage, to differentiate between its abiding and transient values. The elements ever since the appearance of homo-sapiens should be the foundation of a new philosophy. A philosophy thus founded will have no difficulty in solving the complicated problems, which have been baffling conventional philosophers. The solution however will not be just theoretical; it will come from action inspired by the new philosophy."17 Polanyi has affirmed Roy's theory of the animal heritage of both language and rationality. *Gestalt Psychology* has established the intelligent learning of apes. An analysis of the inarticulate manifestations of intelligence in animals and children is highly instructive to understand Roy's biological foundation of axiology. No Roy scholar has done it so far. Polanyi observes: "When animal contrives a new trick, it recognises its behaviour to serve a purpose by exploiting a particular means-end relationship; and similarly, the animal learning a new sign recognizes its sensory field by establishing in it a valid and useful coherence between a sign and the event signified by it."

Further, the capacity of deriving from a latent knowledge of a situation a variety of appropriate

routes or alternative modes of behaviour, amounts to a rudimentary logical operation. Learning becomes then an act of 'insight', preceded by a period of quiet deliberations; this is demonstrated by the performance of Kohler's chimpanzees. The function of a latent understanding as a guide to the act of problem-solving comes out most clearly by contrast, when understanding is only partial. The chimpanzee, who piles up lacking cases in a grossly unstable4 manner (for example, by placing them edgewise), shows that he has grasped the principle of gauging height by constructing a tower on which to climb up, without knowing the condition for making the construction stable. We shall presently see this manifested further in the process of transposing practical problems into verbal terms. The performance of Kohler's chimpanzees, preceded by a quiet deliberation, embodied a signal in learning. K. Koffka, one of the leading authorities of gestalt psychology, has examined Kohler's *intelligent learning* in the experiment with chimpanzees.18 Koffka, however, appreciates the experiments and observations of Kohler, and indicates its importance. He observes: "With respect to the problem of achievement considered at the beginning ...., Kohler's experiments show that chimpanzees accommodate themselves to new situations and solve new problems by actually undertaking new modes of behaviour. As Kohler has stressed it, the direction, curves, etc. of these solutions could arise autonomously (not necessarily "from experience") in the static situation. This conception also supports the explanation, given above, of the animal experiments reported by some American psychologists. In the achievements of Kohler's chimpanzees we find new creation of a pure type occurring, in these experiments, quite free from chance, instead of the solution first arising by chance, and thereafter more of less "understood". Understanding, or an appropriate transformation of the field, precedes the objective solution. We may, therefore, be permitted to call solution of this kind **intelligent performance** of a private order. When a solution is found, the situation is altered for the animal in such a way that a gap in the situation is closed.

Roy rejects the so-called positivistic difference between facts and values.ds according to him, a monistic naturalism does not allow evolutionary ethics and values from a world of facts and a monistic philosophy cannot have a dualist ethics. Roy asserts that values are sui generis; they are born in our **conscience** and they are not deduced from facts: they are facts. Michel Polanyi, the celebrated scientist philosopher of our time, confirms the views of Roy in a different perspective. Polanyi regards universal commitments, discarding so-called bifurcation of facts and values. Values are ingrained in our accredited facts within the commitment situation. Roy speaks about this in clear ideas and from conviction in upholding his humanist axiology. No wonder that he considers freedom as a supreme value from which all other human values are derived. His deduction of axiology, built on the foundation of exact knowledge of the biological phenomenon, is not unfounded deduction. In fact, the rise of man involves a thorough understanding of the **levels of emergence** leading to the ultimate development of **freedom and consciousness** at a certain phase of biological evolution. But the rise of the phenomenon of conscience which Roy so boldly asserts, is also the result of biological evolution. So conscience is innate in man. Values, Roy says, are born in our conscience and morality is a **dictate of conscience** on the higher level of human evolution, superseding soulless animal heritage towards a rational order which may be regarded as a **law-governed universe** or **moral order**. Evolutionary ethics is sustained by commitment of universal intent. Polanyi has uniquely described the animal heritage of knowledge. He shows how animal learning establishes a latent knowledge the range of which is indeterminate.19 In unfolding the tacit components of articulate language ad thoughts of man, Polanyi examines in detail **inarticulate intelligence** in animals and children. He explains the inner ideas of implication of three types of inarticulate intelligence.20 Roy has rejected both the philosophical idealist and the so-called collectivist ideology based upon materialism. But he firmly believes that philosophical materialism is a more rational and consistent system of philosophical thought. He has rejected the historical materialism or economic determinism to foster and build up a new Weltanschauung and

axiology which merit serious consideration and critical examination, apart from its further expansion. Roy writes: "For a more rational reconstruction of the social order of this world, we should not have to break away from materialist philosophy. All the ethical relativists swear by the concept of the economic man, which derives its sanction from economic determinism. But curiously enough, this concept belongs to the bourgeois radicals, to those liberals whom all the collectivists condemn. They have rejected bourgeois liberalism, but they have taken over its basic concept, the economic man." It is instructive to note that Roy has not simply used materialism. He has used the concept of philosophical materialism and intelligent materialism and this has some deeper implication. He could realise that materialism as such cannot be a viable philosophy or Weltanschauung. Another significant aspect of his materialism relates to the fact that he has several times used the concept **metaphysics of materialism**, in spite of the fact that he wanted to reject metaphysical speculation. Roy has done this not without serious thinking and philosophical reflection. From the youth Roy had an unusual and extraordinary searching mind and temper. His quest for truth was unbound and so he always repeated that his philosophical system is an open system. By deeper reflection, Roy could realise the inadequacy of the so-called time-honoured materialism.

Therefore, philosophically 20th century humanist radicalism proposes to make a synthesis between history of material progress and dynamics of ideas. Regarding the development of ideas also as a process, Roy says that once ideas are created, they have a logic of their own, and go on serving as incentive for further development, including the dialectics of economic development. These parallel lines which go through history are continually influencing each other, new ideas leading to new material developments, and material developments giving rise to new ideas. He believes that such a synthesis is possible.

Roy's biological foundation of axiology is further confirmed by the originality of animal and we have already discussed this aspect earlier. But further observations are essential. Explaining the experiment of Kohler's chimpanzees, Polanyi further observes: "The first time I mentioned the inventive powers of animals, I used Kohler's examples, in which a chimpanzee achieves a set purpose by suitably recognizing his field of vision. The Yerkes-Heck experiment showed how earthworms can recognise latent knowledge indefinitely in the case of the new circumstances. Kohler's conclusion of his experiments is significant. He writes, 'The chimpanzee manifests intelligent behaviour of the general kind familiar in human beings. Not all their intelligent acts are externally similar to human acts, but under well-chosen experimental conditions, the type of intelligent conduct can always be traced. Chimpanzees not only stand out against the rest of the animal world by several morphological and, in the narrower sense, physiological characteristics, but they also show a type of behaviour which counts specifically as human. As yet we know little of their neighbours on the other side, but accordingly to the little we do know, with the results of this report, it is not impossible that, in this region of experimental task, the anthropoid is nearer to man in intelligence too than to many of the lower monkey species. So far observations agree well with the theories of evolution; in particular, the correlation between intelligence and the development of brain is confirmed."21 Animal originality and intelligence in the human level involve a transcendence and levels of emergence. Popper also has emphasized this kind of emergence. Skinner's reductionism is exploded. Polanyi asserts that by appreciating the evolutionary trend we can integrate biology to axiology. But, according to him, the achievements of man's evolution are exceptionally high. While animals are acknowledged as centres of interest to themselves, man owes respect to his fellow man considering this entire evolutionary achievement. Polanyi observes also that this entire evolutionary achievement can be localized within a circumscribed material system. Its operation must have taken within this system while interacting with its environment. The logic of successive rising of man has deeper implication. He writes: "This progression made me realize that biology can be extended by continuous stage into epistemology, and more generally,

into the justification of my own fundamental commitments. And sod this ultra-biology went on extending further into acknowledgement of all my obligations. In the course of evolution this series should present itself as a series of successive existential achievements. It should show how in the course of anthropogenesis the descending lines of our ancestors have taken on by stage the full capacities of personhood and have inherited eventually all the hazardous aspirations of humanity."23

We do not know at what stage of evolution consciousness awakened. But as poly-cellular organisms grow in size and as their complexity increases with their size, a nervous system is formed to carry out ever more extensive and elaborate operations of self-control. The inarticulate mental capacities developed in o0ur body by the process of evolution become the tacit coefficients of articulate framework: these tacit powers kindle a multitude of new intellectual persons. They set in motion heuristic endeavours. They make us love human greatness and accept as our guides those who have achieved it. By accepting this man testifies to the existence of ground on which he can claim freedom. Roy could not fully explain the nature of biological evolution of ethics or axiology in the light of modern biology or palaeontology. Julian Huxley believes in an evolutionary ethics though it is not fully satisfactory. But his description of biological evolution leading to the emergence of man and his axiology paradigm merit attention in spite of some limitation. Roy could use his great work *Evolution, The Modern Synthesis* (1944). The so-called critics of Roy's biological foundation of axiology are not justified since they are not aware of modern biological science, gestalt psychology and palaeontology apart from human genetics and physical anthropology. Conscious and conceptual thought is the latest step in life's progress. It is, in the perspective of evolution, a very recent one, taking shape perhaps only one or two, and certainly less than ten million years ago. Although already it has been the cause of many radical changes, its main effects are undoubtedly still to come. What will they be? Prophetic phantasm is a dangerous pastime for a scientist, and I do not propose to indulge in it here. But at least we can exclude certain possibilities. Man, we can be certain, is not within any near future destined to break up into separate radiating lines. For the first time in evolution, new major step in biological progress will produce but a single species. The genetic variety achieved elsewhere by radiating divergence will be with us depending primarily upon crossing and recombination. The precise formulation of human progress cannot be decided on the basis of the past. Each step in evolutionary process has brought new problems, which have had to be solved on their own merits; and with the new predominance of mind that has come with man, life finds its new problems even more unfamiliar than usual. This last step marks a critical point of evolution, and has brought life into situations that differ in quality from those to which it was earlier accustomed. The future of progressive evolution is the future of man. The future of man, if it is to be a progress and not merely a standstill on a degeneration, must be guided by a deliberate purpose, and this human purpose can only be formulated in terms of the new attributes achieved by life in becoming human. Man, as we have stressed, in many respects possesses unique features as well as features shared with other life.

Notes and References:

16. Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory by Roger J. Sullivan, Cambridge University Press, Part III, pp. 149209; Five Types of Ethical Theory by C.D. Broad, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, pp. 116-134;
    The Categorical Imperative; a Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy by J.J. Paton, Hutchinson, London, Book III, pp. 129-191;
    The Concept of the Categorical Imperative by T.C. Williams, pp. 22-35; and
    The Development of Kant's View of Ethics by Keith Ward, pp. 125-26.

For critical judgement of Categorical Imperative, see Generalization in Ethics by Mercus George Singer, particularly pp. 217-299; also the Essays in Morality and Universality: Essays on Ethical Universalizability, ed. by Nelson T. Potter and Mark Timmons.

17. See Politics, Power and Parties, p. 9.
18. See The Growth of the Mind: an Introduction to Child Psychology by Kurt Koffka. Translated by Robert Morris, Cornell University, Second edition (revised), eighth impression, The International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method, pp. 198-226;
    The Mentality of Apes by Wolfgang Kohler. Translated from second revised edition by Ella Winter, Penguin Books. Introductory chapter *Roundabout Methods* and the chapter *The Handling of Forms.*
    See also in Gestalt Psychology the chapter *Insight* by W. Kohler. The Gestalt Theory and The Problem of Configuration by Bruno Petermann; Principles of Gestalt Psychology by Kurt Koffka.
19. See Polanyi, op. cit., Part IV, chapter XI, sections 4, 5, 7 and also chapter 12, sections 6 and 7.
20. See Jean Piaget's numerous studies on child psychology, which Polanyi refers to: The Language and Thought of the Child; The Child's Conception of Physical Causality; The Child's Conception of the World; The Child's Conception of Number; Judgement and Reasoning in the Child; The Moral Judgement of the Child.
    See also The Mental Development of the Child by Karl Buhler; The Psychology of Intelligence and Will by H.G. Wyatt; The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes by S. Zukerman; The Psychology of Animals in Relation to Human Psychology by Friedrich Alverdes.
21. See The Mentality of Apes by Ella Winter, Penguin Books, pp. 226-227.
22. See Polanyi, pp. 361-373.
23. See Evolution: Modern Synthesis, 1942, 1943, 1944, Julian Huxley.

(*To be concluded*)

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, June 1995.

Relevance of M.N. Roy's Philosophical Materialism in the Contemporary World - 3

Nirmal Mukherjee

Melvin Calvin, a great scientist, wrote a paper sponsored by U.S. Atomic Energy Commission on the *Origin of Life on Earth.* After discussing different aspects of chemical evolution, he showed the nature of origin of biological evolution with different kinds of sequence of events of living organism. Calvin observed, "Whether the conjunction of the use of visible light-absorbing substances, such as the porphyrins, with the boil-synthetic demands of the more highly evolved chemical systems took place before or after the appearance of what we would today call living organisms matters little for the purposes of our present discussion, important though the question may be. It seems quite clear, however, that these two parallel lines of development did meet, as mentioned earlier, giving rise to the very efficient energy conversion processes resembling those which we know today. It is not unlikely that the final step in the development of modern photosynthesis, namely, the evolution of oxygen, did not take place until relatively late in the sequence of events. From here on the fossil record is quite complete and there is little point for us to pursue in detail the ascent and divergence of life, leading ultimately to mankind in the last million years."24 Roy was not acquainted with Teilhard de Chardin's writings. He was a world famous palaeontologist with mighty ethical and spiritual insight and developed and evolutionary vision of man in his numerous books. Julian Huxley also developed and evolutionary ethics and higher human values. His is an exploration of depth and abyss. Being in time and space with a touch of what Max Scheler calls the *Eternal in Man.* He may be regarded both as a materialist and spiritualist at the same time.

Unlike most scientists, Teilhard de Chardin is not a pessimist about the future of mankind in spite of massive echo catastrophe and imbalance. By emphasizing the primacy of consciousness, faith in life, faith in absolute, priority of the whole and the creative vision he tries to uphold the **essential unity of matter and spirit** of the one and the many (conceiving every unity as monad). And he rather spiritualised the matter. According to him, mankind is a 'hominised Earth of hominised Nature'. Hominisation means the process by which the original proto-human stock became and is still becoming truly human. Speaking about the future of man, Teilhard asserts that mankind must yet adopt a general perspective and habits of mind appropriate to its participation in a universe of conversant consciousness. Human reflection is not an epi-phenomenon of *vitalisation,* socialisation is not an epi-phenomenon in the sphere of the *reflective life,* but the essential phenomenon of *hominisation*. Teilhard does not deny or criticize the growth of technology and mechanisation, unlike other thinkers, but considers them as parts of the evolving process of involving vision and growth of our reflective concept of Universe. Teilhard unveils and unfolds the spirit of Earth, integrating both mankind and science and also of unanimity of super-life transcending mega-synthesis towards personal relationship which implies the convergence of the person and the omega-point. This point gives an insight of the discovery of the human object and conjunction of science and religion.25 The humanist ethics of Spinoza inspired the romantic revolt (German Renaissance) against the rationalized materialism of modern philosophy.26 But as a mystic he upholds that god alone is real and there is negation. For him thought and extension are both attributes of god and evil is considered as a part of whole which ultimately leads to a kind of mystic vision. The metaphysical system of Spinoza is of the type inaugurated by Parminides. There is only a substance, "God or nature"; nothing finite is self-subsistent.

Leibniz was not much concerned with ethics like Spinoza; his view of axiology is based on the conception of his god. But his philosophy is most important and can be related with axiology. Kant's is not a dogmatic ethics and his Categorical Imperative does not postulate to provide

sanction for a servile ethics. Roy the rationalist could discover new vision of Kantian ethics and moral laws. Modern Kant scholars have unveiled different dimensions of Kant's moral law, philosophy of science and politics in their essential togetherness. In his Kant's Theory of Science, drawn from the Critique of Pure Reason, Gordon G. Brilliant Jr. clarifies the relation between philosophy and science and provides a unified account of Kant's philosophy of mathematics and his ph9losophy with the metaphysical foundation of moral science indicating their relation with the Critique of Pure Reason again. The reason of Kant's criticism of metaphysics has been explored by W.H. Walsh. Besides, Kant's theory of morals and aesthetics has also to be taken into account in understanding his entire Kantian Weltanschauung.

In elaborating the background of the Categorical Imperative, Paton has discussed both the practical reason and its subjective principles and practical reason and its objective principles. Kant's primary purpose in writing the *Groundwork* was to "seek out and establish" the ultimate principle of morality – to formulate the principle and to show that we are bound by it. It is understandable, then, that he devotes more space in that book to the Categorical Imperative than to any other topic. He offers three different formulas of that law, but because there logically can be only one ultimate moral law he also asserts that the "three ways of representing the principle of morality are at bottom merely of so many formulations of precisely the same law." Kant believed that its very formality makes the first formula the most precise, enabling it best to exhibit what it means to say: **that morally acceptable maxims must be fit to serve as universal laws.** The second turns out to be as formal as the first, but it emphasizes what Kant nonetheless calls the "matter" of moral principle – persons and their worth. The third combines the first two ands sets out the complex social nature of our final moral goal.27 He then makes the claim: an analysis of the concept of morality can show both that the law of autonomy is the sole principle of ethics and hat this law must appear as a categorical imperative to contingent moral agents; but because it is a synthetic claim more conceptual analysis cannot show that this imperative actually does obligate us. He then contends that we need a priori argument – the transcendental deduction he eventually offers in the third section of the *Groundwork.* Until that defence, however, whether that imperative binds us remains an open question, Moral deliberations, therefore, require us to know empirical facts (what Kant called "anthropology" and "empirical psychology") but usually only facts that are commonplace and readily accessible to everyone or ordinary intelligence.28 Since reason is an intrinsically teleological faculty, the ideal moral world, which is based on reason alone, must be a world of objective and mutually compatible ends. The Enlightenment ideal of freedom convinced him that one can be morally good, but he may not have the "courage to stand on his own feet" by following his own reasoning.29 Roy was not simply satisfied with materialism or 'metaphysics of materialism.' The formula of autonomy or universal law, part I, reconsidered the law of autonomy or universal law, which is also the first formula of Categorical Imperative, and states the maxim through which alone one can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.30 Kant regards the law as the supreme principle of right.31 Kant resolves the problem of noumena and phenomena in morality on the basis of our own reason. Besides, he asserts that morality can be based not on feeling but only on reason. The Kantian transcendentalism is often misunderstood. Kant's morality is out and out humanist; and he supremely emphasized on humanity, dignity of persons and rationality of man in a secular world. The second formula commands us to recognise that all persons have subjective value and so are obligatory "matter", requiring us to limit our pursuit of private ends both by self-respect and by respect for others. The third formula is the most comprehensive variation of the Categorical Imperative, combining the idea, form and matter stressed in the first and second formulae.32 Kant's moral foundation of perpetual peace embodies another dimension of his axiology. Kant has placed political justice under the broad heading of morality but still has claimed that "all (external) duties, simply because they are duties, belong to ethics."33

III. Roy's Concept of Moral and Good Society and His Theory of Creative Minority

Plato was the most learned man of Greece – Cicero.

Roy has rejected both formal democracy and dictatorship. He has also rejected the political parties and developed a concept of radical direct democracy, which, by its implication, in identical with good society by good men, i.e., moral society must be sustained by moral and rational individuals. By rejecting the Marxian concept of society, Roy has shown how both economic and political powers are concentrated in Marxist communist society. He had grappled with the problem relating to viability of decentralisation of both political and economic powers, which, according to him, is the crucial problem of our time.34 Besides, genuine democracy cannot be realised without moral education and without gradually raising the intellectual level of the people.35 Enlightenment, civic education and spread of knowledge are essential imperatives. And all this is possible by expanding the number of qualitatively superior individuals. Significantly Roy had strongly emphasized in this context the wisdom of Plato, who said that education was the condition of democracy which involves transmutation of the Weltanschauung of the people and the individuals. Every human being is, according to Roy, potentially rational and therefore potentially good. The beginning of the genuine democracy and good society would be initiated at first by small groups of good rational men, which implies a kind of rational society.36 These small groups of individuals will form, what Arnold J. Toynbee calls "creative minority", and what is known today as a theory of elites in modern sociology. All Marxists reject both "creative minority" and moral and rational ethics. Roy has emphasized the fact that only rational men can constitute a moral society.37 while indicating the baffling problem of modern democratic practice, Roy states that genuine democracy must be direct democracy since indirect democracy means delegation of power.38 Roy has repeatedly emphasized the wisdom of Plato and believed that the latter could really understand the real content and spirit of genuine democracy. Roy wrote, "It is an unfortunate fact that owing to long disuse, because traditions and social institutions never appealed to them, a large number of men have been made to forget that they are born as thinking being and endowed with the power of judgement, that they can discriminate between what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad without having to rely on and external authority for that knowledge. Plato, one of the oldest sages, attempted to visualise the possibility of an ideal state. Roy was the first to formulate a democratic theory based on the experience of the practice of direct democracy in the Greek city states. On the basis of that experience of the politics in the market place of Periclean Athens, he came to the conclusion that democracy presupposes education. Even when democracies were composed only a few thousand people voters could be misled, unless they were educated. This ancient wisdom is even more true in our time. Those who are trying to give democracy a chance to be practised must realise that without education democracy is not possible. Albert Einstein also emphasized the need to foster ethical qualities among the leading personalities of a generation. More non-ethical intellectual qualities are not enough. Roy's rediscovery of the wisdom of Plato is one of the most noble and significant dimension of his philosophical materialism and humanist politics. The wisdom of Plato is most essential today for overcoming the moral crisis and for founding a moral political good society, since good society can be made and sustained only by good men. According to Kant, a rational being must always regard himself as making laws in a kingdom of ends, which is possible through freedom of the will as member or as head. In the ideal world – the kingdom of ends – at which moral reasoning aims, the Categorical Imperative is, of course, the ultimate norm that defines the formal relations.39 The kingdom of ends must be a community in which "each individual is his own judge" and the members obey only laws they can rationally prescribe for themselves.40 Kant's politics is based upon the second moral principle of human dignity and respect for freedom. It is a philosophy of moral freedom. It seems that Kant's third and final principle of a republican government states that both the authority of the

government and the legitimacy of its laws rest with the rational consent of the governed.41 Kant's quest for freedom makes him the pioneer in western philosophy. Freedom is a key to his moral problem. The Greeks never really came to grips with the subject and did little to carry it beyond the limited questions of legal responsibility. Kant separated the problem of freedom from its legal and theological setting and simply told how freedom can be compatible with the causal law which prevails throughout nature and, apparently, also throughout human nature. Kant begins his discussions by suggesting that the concept of freedom is the key to the explanation – he should rather have said 'justification' – of the principle of autonomy.

Here Roy comes closer to Gandhian concept of non-violent ethical society and grass-root participatory democracy or G*ram Swaraj*. Future of humanity depends upon the actualisation of such a moral vision and practice of ethical politics and sociology. Roy has indicated a new vision of sociology, which none has so far worked out fully. Kant's theory of moral community sustained by moral men firmly substantiates Roy's vision of moral and good society. As indicated earlier, Toynbee thought almost like Roy. In his analysis of the growth of civilization, Roy observes that "Human beings cannot be themselves without interacting with their fellows, and a society is a field of action common to a number of human beings. But the 'source of action' is in the individuals. All growth originates with creative individuals of small minorities of individuals."42 Roy once again emphasized the wisdom of Plato when he said, "The original sin of the discredited democratic practice was to forget the wisdom of Plato, who said that education was the condition for democracy. Without education, democracy is not possible. The modern democrats took the backwardness of the electorate for granted. And since experience taught that it was easier for political parties to sway a backward electorate and obtain their votes by demagogic promises, democratic politicians, even later when in power, neglected the task of educating the people in such a manner that the democratic way of life might then be consciously appreciated and pursued by every member of a democratic society."43 Roy has again and again stressed the role of ethics. He said, "The new elite is no longer constituted by divine right, but by the right of qualitative superiority. They alone are considered to be competent to acquire the ability to rule. There must be a ruling set and the masses, and ruling becomes increasingly a prerogative of experts. Under these circumstances, democracy is not possible because an individual has no possibility to assert his sovereignty, unless he belongs to the elite. If we want democracy, then this system must be changed and replaced by the system of an increasingly direct democracy, that is, a system in which every individual citizen would have the opportunity of understanding and influencing the affairs of society and participate in them. Such 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. Scientific humanism can make that assertion."44

Notes and References

25. Science and Christ by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, translated from French by Rane Hague, Collins, London, 1965, pp. 14-15, 22-94; Hymn of the Universe, Chapter III; The Future of Man, translated from French by Norman Denny, Collins, London, 1964, Chapters II, IV, V; Turmoil or Genesis, pp. 214-20; The Phenomenon of Man, Book IV, Chapter II. See also Future of Man, Chapter X.
26. Reason, Romanticism and Revolution by M.N. Roy, Vol. 1, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, pp. 193-95.
27. Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals by H.J. Paton, 87-88/440.
28. Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory by Roger J. Sullivan, Cambridge University Press, pp. 149-159.

29. See What is Enlightenment? by Ted Humphrey.
30. Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals by H.J. Paton, Chapter XI, pp. 113-119.
31. Paton, Chapter XXVI.
32. Sullivan, op. cit., Chapter XIII, pp. 180-211.
33. In Perpetual Peace, Kant writes: "With advancing civilization reason grows pragmatically in its capacity to realize ideas of law. But at the same time the culpability of the transgressions also grows." See Immanuel Kant: Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View by Mary J. Gregor, Parts I and II. Kant held that personal moral responsibility depends on the development of culture and the emergence of moral consciousness. Therefore, he may be interpreted as holding that in the beginning, when pre-historical humanity had not yet freed itself from 'bondage to instinct', there apparently was no blame for moral maturity. For Kant's rational version of the story of the Garden of Eden and of the Fall, see Speculative Beginning of Human History by Ted Humphrey, pp. 110-115.
34. Reason, Romanticism and Revolution by M.N. Roy, Vol. 1, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, p. 250; Politics, Power and Parties by M.N. Roy, Chapter I.
35. ibid., pp. 117-121.
36. ibid., pp. 97-102.
37. Kant also believed that a rational being must always regard himself as making laws in a kingdom of ends, which is possible through freedom of the will, whether it be as member or as head.
38. ibid., pp. 184-287.
39. In the ideal world, the kingdom of ends, at which moral reasoning aims, the Categorical Imperative is, of course, the ultimate norm that defines the formal relation between individuals. (Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals). The kingdom of ends must be a community in which "each individual is his own judge" and the members obey only laws they can rationally prescribe for themselves. (Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone by Theodore M. 95/87.
40. According to Kant, no state has the right to intrude into the internal life of an ethical community, but a state may legitimately restrict any activity that "might prejudice the public peace". (The Metaphysics of Morals, p. 327). But unlike the state, an ethical commonwealth explicitly recognizes the importance of moral motives, but it may not use statutory laws to try to compel its members to act from the motive of duty.
41. See also Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy by Hannah Arendt, pp. 44-59; Ends and Principles in Kant's Moral Theory by John E. Atwell, pp. 174-193; Kant's Theory of Revolution by Thomas Bohm.
42. Politics, Power and Parties by M.N. Roy, p. 57.
43. ibid., pp. 58-59.
44. ibid., pp. 117-121.

(*Concluded)*

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, July 1995.

The Non-Contemporaneity of M.N. Roy[1] Radical Democracy and the Party-Form

Aditya Nigam*

Author's Note:

This paper was written last year, the fiftieth anniversary year of Roy's death. I dedicate this paper to my father, R.L. Nigam, a life-long Royist who might have liked to read this, even while disagreeing.

"What tends to disappear in the political world that is shaping up, and perhaps in a new age of democracy, is the domination of this form of organization called the party, the party-state relation, which finally will have lasted, strictly speaking, only two centuries ... a period to which belong as well certain determined types of parliamentary and liberal democracy, constitutional monarchies, Nazi, fascist or Soviet totalitarianisms. Not one of these regimes was possible without what can be called the axiomatic of the party." – Jacques Derrida.2

Introduction

On the morrow of Independence, Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a tragic figure – all but abandoned by his followers, who were all set to take power and become the guardians of the new nation-state. Gandhi, in sharp contrast was at his utopian best, arguing that the Congress should disband and transform itself into an organisation for the service of the common people. The continuous strain in Gandhi's thought, which considered politics as a necessary evil that had to be engaged in for the sake of freedom from colonial rule, now came to the fore. Gandhi's gesture was an attempt to underline his disavowal of power, which he had always seen as suspect. At around the same time, another figure, a sworn enemy of all that Gandhi seemed to represent, also came to the conclusion that politics as such was mainly concerned with power and was therefore, an evil and decided, against the wishes of his party comrades, to disband his party. This figure was M.N. Roy and the party concerned, the Radical Democratic Party that he had led for its brief life of eight years. This is about the only time that Roy succeeded where Gandhi failed, for while the Indian National Congress ignored the Mahatma, Roy almost forced his followers to accept his position. Of course, this was possible largely because the RDP was really a small sect of Roy's personal followers who did not really 'represent' any social force within society at large.

In this period Roy came to believe that "spiritual liberation is the condition for social and political liberation" and in the inseparability of means and ends. He began to increasingly argue that good ends could not be secured by bad means and scholars have noted that in both these respects his position came quite close to Gandhi's, even if in contrast to Gandhi, Roy believed this spiritual liberation could only be grounded on a secular rationalist ethics.3

Gandhi and Roy actually present a study in contrast. For, Gandhi, despite his disavowal of power, was always in the thick of power and politics leading the nationalist struggle, while Roy, fired by the 'will to power', almost always operated on the margins of mainstream politics. In a sense, it was Gandhi's magical hold over popular imagination that probably puzzled Roy the most. It was what he called the "Gandhist cult" that occupied Roy to a considerable degree and as Shiviah notes, in the days of the Radical Democratic Party, he saw this cult as the chief obstacle to the democratic revolution in India. The masses, Roy believed, "have been accustomed to the language of Gandhism" and hence "do not easily respond to any other language."4 Roy's reading of Gandhi and "Gandhism" was quite one-sided and hopelessly off the mark, abstracted as it was from all social and political context. In fact, as Sudipta Kaviraj has astutely noted, Roy's critique of Gandhi followed a peculiar trajectory, starting from the more complex appreciations of his early communist days to the more simplistic and one-sided ones of his later writings.5 As Kaviraj points

out, in his earlier Marxist assessment, he acknowledged Gandhi's role in breaking "the class insularity of the Congress" and making it "truly representative of the national aspirations of all classes of Indians." He even considered non-cooperation "much more dangerous than an armed uprising, which can always be met face to face and put down."6 This shift in Roy's assessment is all the more interesting for it was precisely in the period that Roy moved closer to Gandhi in his disavowal of power and his insistence on morality and ethics in politics that he became more intolerant of Gandhi – whom he even termed 'fascist' quite often, in this period.

But Roy was not responding merely to the Gandhian puzzle. As I will argue later, in his later period, Roy retreated almost entirely from the world of real politics and was pre-occupied with a contemplation of 'world-historical' questions. In this period, he was theoretically more preoccupied by the disastrous experience of the rise of fascism of the very recent past. He lived in the twentieth century but was increasingly deeply troubled by his times. He had begun to see the twentieth century as a disastrous one that saw the unprecedented rise of totalitarian regimes of both the Right and the Left. Somewhere in between, he felt, the great aspirations for human freedom that the European enlightenment had aroused had got smothered. The 'sovereign individual' lay buried deep under the edifice of these regimes. To recover this sovereign individual from the clutches of totalitarian ideologies became, eventually, his life's mission.

It is important to remember that Roy, who has been often severely criticized for his high rationalist predilections and what Sudipta Kaviraj has called his 'heteronomous radicalism', actually began his journey as a staunch 'cultural nationalist'. Drawn into the terrorist movement in Bengal at an early age, Roy was influenced, according to his own account, by Bankimchandra's A*nanda Math*.7 Shiviah has suggested that the terrorist nationalist group of Bengal with which Roy worked, had through the influence of Pramatha Mitra, imbibed much from both Vivekananda and the mystic nationalism of Aurobindo Ghosh. In the course of his nationalist career, he was sent on a mission to collect a cache of arms for revolutionary activities, from Germany and landed up in the event, travelling through Java, Japan and the United States to Mexico. It was during his stay in the US, where he met Evelyn Trent (who became his first wife), that he encountered different currents of socialist and anarchist radicals. Yet socialist radicalism did not come easily to him. Even though he was persuaded by their concern for the oppressed, by his own admission, "as Indians, we vehemently opposed Marxist materialism with our spiritual genius."8 It would be quite awhile before he would become a convinced universalist rationalist and atheist. It was wile in Mexico that he underwent a major transformation and through his contact with Mikhail Borodin, came in contact with the Comintern. It was Borodin, Roy acknowledged later, who introduced him to the "intricacies of Hegelian dialectics as the key to Marxism" and it was through this introduction to European philosophy and culture that his 'lingering faith in the special genius of India faded."

He became active in Mexican politics and having played a central role in transforming the Mexican Socialist Party into the first communist party outside Russia, was invited to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International. That was when, as we know, he entered into his famous debate with Lenin on the "National and Colonial Question."

Let us also register here a point of some importance, made by Shiviah, regarding the nature of Roy's disagreement with Lenin. It was Aurobindo Ghosh who had argued against the "moderate" leadership of the Congress of his time, that "the proletariat is the real key to the situation" and that "our first and holiest duty is the elevation and enlightenment of the prolettriat."9 The reference to the *sarbahara* (proletariat) and *samyabad* (communism) was of course not peculiar to Aurobindo. Vivekananda himself had spoken and written about them. Aurobindo however, invoked the proletariat in his critique of the moderate leadership whom he ridiculed for their "policy of prayers, petitions and protests." In Roy's debate with Lenin, Shiviah detects a trace of this critique of the bourgeois leadership of the Congress: "To the nationalist Roy the 'moderate' attitude of the

bourgeoisie was suspect; to the Marxist Roy, it was even more so."10

Another article of faith that Roy presumably retained from Aurobindo's trenchant critique of the moderates – and which gelled perfectly with his new Marxist beliefs – was the idea that "a subject nation does not prepare itself by gradual progress for liberty" but "opens by liberty its way to rapid progress." In other words, political freedom and capture of state power were the precondition for progress and social transformation. Eventually not only did Roy abandon this idea; he also became the most inveterate critic of both his earlier creeds, namely, nationalism and communism. It was his new belief, what he described as Radical Humanism or New Humanism, that prompted him to dissolve the RDP and proclaim that a philosophical revolution or an Indian Renaissance would have to be the precondition of true human freedom – a freedom that would be predicated upon the sovereign, autonomous individual.

It is in the period of his transition from Marxism to New Humanism that Roy begins to think most productively about radicalizing democracy and offers one of the most interesting critiques of representation as such. However, once he disbands his party and moves fully on to the terrain of the new philosophy his concerns increasingly shift towards an elaboration of this philosophy, away from the world of real politics. In this period, which I shall briefly return to, later in this paper, Roy's retreat into the world of philosophi9cal contemplation signals, in fact, a highly problematic regression into eighteenth century European philosophy. Nonetheless, this should not in any way, detract from a proper assessment of the normative value of his critique of democracy and representation, for, however wrong-headed his philosophical positions might be, he was at some level pointing to a real crisis.

In this paper, I shall not be concerned with a comprehensive assessment of Roy or his legacy; nor will I try to discuss his entire *oeuvre.* My concern will rather be with a limited part of his work and writings, which relate to his critique of parliamentary/representative democracy, and attempt to relate it to some wider discussions on the subject in political theory. In the final section, I will offer a critique of what today appears to be Roy's naive faith in Reason and Progress, upon which he based much of his critiques of representation.

The Crisis of Representative Democracy

The key question that Roy was grappling with, once he was convinced that Soviet-style communism was not the way to 'real freedom', was the problem of radicalizing democracy itself. He agreed with Lincoln's famous aphorism that democracy was rule "of the people by the people and for the people." However, in the actual practice of democracies, the best that one could get, he argued, was government *for* the people. The problem as he saw it was that 'the people' had been swamped by another entity of modern polities, namely the *masses.* It was with the emergence of 'the masses', so easily amenable to nationalist, fascist or other totalitarian mobilizations, that the entity called the 'people' had dissolved. He held all modern political ideologies and thought responsible for this eclipse of 'the people' by 'the masses', for in his view, the people 'could be composed of 'sovereign' individuals. Modern thought had denigrated the individual and come to "characterize freedom of the individual as a fictitious abstraction, an illusion."11 And freedom, according to Roy, was a property of the individual alone; it was not compatible with any "collective ego".

All totalitarian mobilizations, whether of the Right or of the Left, Roy believed, were based on the same idea of a "collective ego" that demanded the surrender of individual autonomy to collective interests. He believed that it was such collectivist ideas that privileged some larger collective entity over the individual that resulted in "the mental attitude" which "completely disregards considerations of ethics, of morality in social behaviour", presumably al at the cost of growing emphasis on the State because they could always refer back to those "larger interests" to justify

any amoral act. This was also what led to the continuous privileging of ends over means.12

At another level, Roy saw a profound contradiction at the heart of the democratic project, arising from the privileging of the state over the individual. But more importantly, he holds two concepts, which were coeval with democracy, as responsible for the degeneration of democracy. In the political field, he held *parliamentarism* and in the economic, *laissez faire* to be squarely responsible, for, both of them, in their own way, gave unbridled power to a small minority to exploit the majority.13 In his words: "although the problem of reconciling the apparent contradiction of man and the State has occupied political thought ever since antiquity, the eclipse of the individual at the cost of growing emphasis on the State, first under theocracy, later in monarchies and yet later in parliamentary democracies, not to mention modern dictatorships, is one of the outstanding features of history."14 While the eclipse of the individual under other forms of government was understandable, it was simply not, with respect to democracy. His critique of laissez faire, of course, draws directly from Marxism and important though it be, is not directly relevant for our purposes here. What is interesting from our present point of view is his claim that while "parliamentary democracy formally recognized the sovereignty of the individual", *in practice*, "it deprived all but a privileged few of the effective use of that sovereignty."15 A word here about the use of the term "in practice" in this statement. From the detailed examination of the problem of contemporary democratic theory and practice that Roy undertakes, it is clear that he is not referring here to the cruder sense of 'practice' as opposed to the theory of democracy – which he would somehow exonerate. A reading of his speeches and articles where he elaborates his critique is enough to show that it is democratic theory itself that he finds wanting in this regard. In other words, there is an implicit distinction here between the idea of democracy and the actual *theoretical practice* of elaboration of that idea as a workable one in modern polities.

Now, how did this state of affairs come about? Roy examines the history of parliamentary democracy at one level and democratic theory at another, in order to find his answer. His conclusions are startling: Delegation and representation are the very negation of democracy. "The delegation of power to elected representatives is the legal sanction of parliamentary democratic governments. Constitutional pundits declare that this is democracy itself; but in reality *it is a negation of democracy, based on the contempt for the demos."*16 This in itself is not very novel for we can already hear the voice of Jean Jacques Rousseau here: sovereignty is inalienable, un-transferrable and indivisible. Sovereignty cannot be represented as it lies in the General Will and this Will does not admit of any representation. Now if this were all that Roy were arguing then he would merely be echoing Rousseau, whose critiques of representation in the name of 'direct democracy', as Lucio Colletti among others, has reminded us, provided the basis for generations of radical critiques of bourgeois democracy including Lenin's. But the point is that this is precisely what Roy is not saying, for as we have seen, he has already identified any fork of the 'collective ego' as an enemy of the sovereign individual – and to him the General Will is the Collective Ego *par excellence.* Roy *does* want to speak in the name of direct democracy but he will not yield any quarter to any theoretical stance that will allow any new oligarchy to assume power in the name of some larger collectivity, be it nation or class. It is at this stage that Roy begins to identify that organism of modern society that has gradually, over the last century, *usurped the sovereignty of the people*: the political party. In an article entitled "Democracy and Party-Politics" published in 1951, where he surveys the developments in the party system in Britain, he explicitly says as much and compares this situation with the early days of parliamentary democracy where the electors directly elected the representatives whom they knew. Individual merit alone counted, for, the representative represented none but those who elected him. With the emergence of political parties, the entire situation had changed. Thenceforth the elected representatives were answerable to the party they belonged to. In parliament, the representative is responsible, not to the people who elected him

"but to the party machinery which has ensured his election by supplying money and the brass-band."17 On another occasion he wrote that "it is through the instrumentality of political parties that power is concentrated in the hands of minorities ....."18

This identification of the political party as the main organism responsible for the decline of democracy goes hand in hand, in Roy, with another equally important recognition that we have already mentioned. The rise of the 'masses' or what Hannah Arendt, in her studies of totalitarianism, has called the 'mass man'. With the emergence of this 'mass', says Roy, "on the one hand, we have the mass of people and on the other, we have parties. The individual man and his judgement, his discretion and will are nowhere in the picture." Parties now appeal, not to the reasoning of the individual but to "the sentiments of the masses." "The purpose of election propaganda is to create a state of mass hysteria."19 But it is not enough, in Roy's reading, to simply say that the parties mislead 'the people' when they mobilize them. It is equally important to explain why the people follow certain parties or leaders? And here he sees a fundamental problem with parliamentary democracy and "its philosophy", namely Liberalism, in that they see individuals as scattered, atomized beings. This notion of the atomized individual parallels, in Roy's view, the emergence of the phenomenon of 'the mass'. The helpless, atomized individual produced by modern society begins to seek security in the mass, giving rise to the tendency to identify themselves with others who are equally helpless, in some collectivity such as the nation or the class.20 Roy seems to be drawing here on the work of theorists like Erich Fromm, since he mentions "works" that have described this "mass mentality" as "*the fear of freedom"* though he does not explicitly refer either to Fromm or to other more conservative theorists of 'mass society'. This view, as we know today, runs counter to the dominant strands of liberal and rationalist/secular thought that assumed, somewhat natively, that modernity would usher in the rational, autonomous and disengaged subject by progressively dissolving all community bonds. That the very processes of modernity would – or could – bring forth a kind of dis-embedded agent who was fundamentally "afraid" of 'his' autonomy or freedom and sought the comfort of a new figure of authority was something that this Enlightenment inherited view found difficult to deal with.

Roy concedes that in modern polities, with large populations spread over vast areas, it is utopian to expect that everybody can individually participate in administration and decision-making. He acknowledges therefore, that it was out of this contingency that "a system was devised by which people constitutionally delegated their authority to a smaller group of people which ruled the country as custodians of the sovereign people and its power."21 He traces the problems of contemporary democracies, often wrongly, to Rousseau's notion of the General Will, which he seems to suggest, lies at the heart of the principle of delegation and representation. In fact, much as Roy might like to deny it, his own critique of representation seems to draw precisely on Rousseau's claim that "the moment a people gives itself representatives, it is no longer free; it no longer exists."22 He also concurs with a particular tradition of liberal scholarship that sees in Rousseau's "metaphysical conception of the General Will" a "moral sanction for dictatorship."23 There is, it seems to me, a conflation, here of the liberal, representative idea with the more expressivist strains of Rousseau's notion of the General Will but that does not directly concern us here. For the moment, let us return to Roy's critique of representation as such.

The problem that presented itself before him was the same that Carl Schmitt had in the 1920s and 1930s noticed: the rise of mass democracy – even if their concern were diametrically opposed to each others'. The most serious crisis of representative democracy in Europe, which formed the backdrop of the frightful rise of fascism had to do with this phenomenon. Schmitt's scathing critique of liberal parliamentary democracy, let us recall, had to do with liberalism's belief that democracy was about free and fair exchange of ideas, of deliberation and what Habermas calls rational-critical discourse. Schmitt, who celebrated the rise of mass democracy was convinced that

the point where liberalism had got it all wrong was in its refusal to recognize that politics was fundamentally about 'friend-enemy relations' where opinions were formed, not on the basis of the correctness or the force of logic of an idea but by interests. Passion and interests were what motivated people to act. Here Schmitt, that inveterate enemy of liberalism, pointed to the one major elision of all liberal thought: the institution of the political party. What Derrida has called the "axiomatic of the party", in the epigraph to this essay, has remained a blind spot for liberal political theory. Let us remind ourselves also that the late nineteenth century had seen the rise of huge, bureaucratic, mass political parties throughout Europe and it was these that had engaged the attention of a scholar like Robert Michels when he propounded his famous 'iron law of oligarchy' – which incidentally, was based on the study of the German Social Democratic Party. If it was Michels' argument that large bureaucratic organizations inevitably led to concentration of power within them, in the party oligarchy, that was not a problem that worried Schmitt. To him, on the contrary, the political party *was* the instrument modern mass politics – of propaganda and mass mobilization. Unlike Roy, two decades later, Schmitt was concerned primarily with the question of sovereignty and the ways in which the "will of the people" is constituted. In his critique of liberal democracy, Schmitt touches the raw nerve of modern democratic politics when he points to the hiatus that divides the enlightened elite and he "masses". "It often happens," he argues, "that democrats are in a minority. It also happens that they decide on the basis of a supposedly democratic principle in favour of women's suffrage and then they have the experience that the majority of women do not vote democratically."24 Schmitt then goes on to mount his attack on the "programme of people's education" or the belief that the people can express their "true will" only when they are properly educated. He then goes on to suggest that this "educational theory" is really a form of dictatorship, insofar as it "suspends democracy in the name of true democracy that is still to be created."25 If that be the case, says Schmitt, then it follows that democracy is not quite incompatible with dictatorship. It is then basically a question of *who controls the means with which the will of the people is to be constructed.* Among these "means", Schmitt indentifies military and political force, propaganda, control of public opinion through the press, party organisations, assemblies, popular education and schools. In short, in a breathtaking assertion of realism, Schmitt turns the classical problem of democratic political theory on its head: "*Only political power, which should come from the people's will, can form the people's will in the first place."26* This is Schmitt's wager that democratic theory has yet to come to terms with.

As we have seen this hiatus between the enlightened 'democrats' and the 'backward' people, was something that Roy, like a good Enlightenment humanist, recognised very candidly. Even if he did not think in terms of education through the state, his role for the short-lived RDP and later the Radical Humanist movement, was certainly one that would lay the basis for a philosophical revolution that would liberate the people from their 'enslaved' ways of thinking. Roy would have agreed with Schmitt that, as things were, it was political power that really formed the people's will, but while the latter took that situation as a given, it was precisely what Roy wanted to challenge and change. He believed that this situation could be transformed and the more he thought about this problem the more convinced he was, that what had really changed the terrain of democracy was the institution of the political party. It was this that had become the instrument of the rule of an oligarchy in the name of the people Schmitt too saw the party as that key instrument which had transformed the terrain of liberal democracy. Parties now faced each other as organised groups representing interests and relying on a propaganda apparatus for mobilizing the masses through an appeal to their interests and passions.27

It may not be out of place to mention here that the two factors that Habermas considered to be responsible for the decline of the public sphere were the rise of the mass media and mass political parties. To Habermas too, these had fundamentally changed the character of the public sphere as

public opinion was now often manipulated through these institutions to the extent that rational-critical exchange between citizens was no longer possible.28 Clearly, the rise of mass political parties, in close conjunction with the notion of the 'masses' in one form or the other, seems to have been noticed by more than one scholar. So when Roy set out to find a way out of this complex problem of the constitution of the people's will within the democratic framework, there was no doubt in his mind that it was the party form itself that had to be abandoned. But this can only be achieved if and when people are able to exercise their critical faculties. And this, Roy was quite clear, could not be done by asking governments to provide education because awakening people's critical faculties is a subversive task and no government would do it. All governments, he held, wanted people to "sing patriotic songs, salute national flags and read patriotic history as compiled and edited by governments so that all people be merged into a homogeneous collectivity and forget that they are individuals."29 This had to e the work of an autonomous intellectual movement. It was an intellectual resurgence spurred by such a movement that alone could change the situation. And "such an intellectual resurgence," he believed, "will take place together with the resurrection of the individual from the grave of the mass."30 Then alone will democratic practice become possible in which governments by and of the people can be established.

Outlines of a Radical Democratic Polity

Even though Roy is a passionate advocate of some kind of direct democracy, he makes it clear that the anarchist ideal of a society without the state is too utopian for his tastes. Even in his retreat from the world of politics into philosophy, he wants to spell out a *workable* ideal. He is not satisfied by offering a mere critique. He therefore argues for a form of party-less democracy where the relationship between the represented and the representative will be direct, unmediated by the institution of the party. He spells out his notion of radical democracy in the context of his much expected intellectual resurgence of the people, when "the individual will rise from the grave of the mass." It is in such an atmosphere that the possibilities of a really radical form of direct democracy will open up. It will then become possible "to practice direct Democracy *in smaller social groups."* This proposition is of critical importance in his scheme of things "because to make the individual self-reliant, they must be freed from the feeling of being helpless cogs in the wheels of the gigantic machines of modern States, which allow them no other function than to cast a vote once in several years."31 It is of critical importance, an my view, to recognise here that this vision is being spelt out by a 'high modernist' in the period when the gigantic and the monumental forms of political and economic architecture were quite an article of faith. Ecological critiques that spoke of the "small" as "beautiful" had not yet emerged and it was only in incorrigible romantics that one could expect any desire to reclaim the small and the beautiful. It is probably here that we might find the crucial clue for Roy's fascination with Romanticism which keeps appearing repeatedly in his works.

To continue with his argument: Roy believed that once this precondition of an intellectual resurgence materializes, people can then "create local democracies of their own." Voters need not remain like scattered atoms any longer but can "organize themselves into People's Committees and function like *local republics*."32 At the time of elections, then, "they will not have to vote for anybody coming from outside" but can nominate their own candidates from among themselves. Creating such conditions then becomes, for Roy, the most important political activity. Roy even believed, naively, that this process could begin right away, by picking up a few constituencies and getting 20 or 25 people dissatisfied with the present state of affairs together, to start this experiment. It would be possible, he thought, to begin the preliminary work of "educating" the people, and at some later stage, call local conferences in a constituency to elect delegates for a constituency-level conference, which could at the time of elections elect a candidate from among themselves to

contest the elections. Such a candidate, if elected, would not be responsible to any party machinery but only and solely to his electors. In this initial stage then, 'delegation' would have to remain in some form. Eventually, "a growing network of such organised local democracies will be the instruments through which the electorate can assert its influence from day to day and ultimately exercise a standing control over the State as a whole."33

It is interesting that, despite Roy's aversion to Gandhi's 'irrational' religious communitarianism, there is some strange resemblance of this idea of a network of local republics with Gandhi's own emphasis on village communities, where the state would have a marginal role. The significant difference between his vision and Gandhi's, of course, lies in the fact that Gandhi's was a more culturally nuanced and rooted one. However, Gandhi's culturally rooted notion of village republics, as Ambedkar was to point out, was itself quite problematic from the point of view of the Dalits – which is why he characterized them as "sinks of localism". But where Ambedkar's rejection of Gandhi's emphasis on tradition took him to a strong advocacy of a centralized modern state, Roy seemed to offer a way that retained the best of Gandhi's vision while aligning himself with the kind of rationalist anti-traditionalism that Ambedkar valued. Scholars have drawn attention to the close similarity of some of Roy's ideas on radical democracy with those of Jaya Prakash Narayan's idea of "party-less democracy". D.C. Grover claims that Jaya Prakash Narayan "shows remarkable influence of Roy in his plea for the reconstruction of Indian polity and acknowledges it on the evolution of his political ideas."34 In fact, JP seems to repeat Roy's precise argument that "present-day mass elections, manipulated by powerful, centrally controlled parties with the aid of high finance and diabolically clever methods and super-media of communication represent far less the electorate than the forces and interests behind the parties and the propaganda machines."35 Others like Niranjan Dhar see a striking resemblance of Roy's idea with Rabindranath Tagore's idea of "*swadeshi samaj"*, even if Roy, unlike Tagore, did not draw on the "age-old Indian tradition of the *panchayati* system."36

It is of course, quite surprising – or may be not so surprising – that Roy seemed to be, all through his writings in this phase, completely unmindful of the debates and actual political developments that were taking place within Indian politics. Gandhi is probably the only personality that he occasionally refers too, usually in a highly dismissive way. Other personalities and their thought figure in their complete absence in his writings. It was as if he was merely responding to some global developments, from the standpoint of an abstract rationalism and as Kaviraj has argued, merely expecting European history to be re-enacted on the Indian stage.

However, to return to Roy's elaboration of the idea of radical democracy, we have noted that he, unlike the anarchists, recognised that the state was an indispensable institution for large and complex modern societies. He therefore, found the Marxist idea of its 'withering away' also too utopian and empty a concept. He visualised a situation where the state could become "coterminous with society." He claimed that such an idea of a future state, gave content to the Marxist ideal of the state withering away, for "when it will no longer remain an institution over and above society, it will cease to be an instrument of coercion, and *as such* it will wither away."37 In present conditions, the state had become an abstraction that only existed in some central place, far beyond the reach and influence of members of society. When the state becomes 'coterminous with society', the requisite decentralization of the state will have taken place and it will then become no more than a clearing house of information, an advisory and administrative machinery to coordinate and supervise policies framed directly by the people as a whole operating through local People's Committees.38

Roy saw the possibility of the state becoming coterminous with society in the fact that "until a few centuries ago, the government did not interfere, for instance, in the economic life of society, beyond raising taxes." In those times, "the requirements of the community were met by peasants, artisans and traders."39 In order to posit a different kind of state in the future, he had to show that

such a state was not a logical impossibility. Thus, apart from his theoretical and normative argument, he searched for historical instances to show that a different relationship between the state and society was indeed possible. He there4fore occasionally seemed to make claims that would neither be historically sustainable in their entirety, nor justifiable in terms of his own theoretical framework. "Individual freedom and institutional autonomy in the educational and cultural fields were particularly beyond the jurisdiction of the State. The government of Pericles did not dictate what philosophy Plato or Aristotle should teach. In those days, here was no national education. The educational institutions not only of the ancient, but even of medieval times were autonomous."40 He went on to suggest that this was not true only of Europe but also of the classical seats of learning in India, like Taxila and Nalanda.41 At the moment the historical veracity of these claims is not really relevant. What is interesting is that where his theoretical predilections were such as would see nothing but the 'irrational' and the oppressive in the past, especially India's past, there are such odd moments when he seemed to see some value in pre-modern societies and their ways of being (for instance, the reference to the ways in which needs of 'the community' were taken care of by artisans and peasants, or the relationship of the state to society). He had a very positive assessment of classical Greek antiquity and the spirit of free inquiry in what he called the "pagan rationalism" of those times. He in fact, held Christianity squarely responsible for the regression into spiritual slavery of the Church. Before we proceed with his elaboration of radical democracy further, let us register that in the passage cited above there is not only a positive reference to some aspects of pre-modern societies, there is a simultaneous juxtaposition of the pre-national state with the modern nation-state, its reach into everyday lives of all sectors of society and its attempts at homogenisation through national education. Roy's counter-point to homogenisation, however, is not the pre-modern community but the sovereign individual.

Roy was aware that despite his repeated insistence to the contrary, he too would be open to being labelled as a utopian. How else could he argue, in the face of such overwhelming evidence of the "crisis of modern civilisation", that the innate rationality of 'man' would one day assert itself. At one level, his was a normative *project* which, he claimed, could only be realised when the "modern philosopher-kings" will take charge of the world. These modern philosopher-kings would be the "spiritually free 'men'" of Reason, detached from any passion for power. He therefore, posited a politics without power. His modern philosopher-kings would actually have to be people who, while detached from the passion for power, would not be confined to a contemplative life but be centrally concerned with the affairs of the world. at the same time, they had to be philosophers-in-opposition for, they could not really be true to the project defined by him if they linked themselves with any figure of authority, however benevolent and benign it might be. These "spiritually free men", Roy believed, will function as the "guides, friends and philosophers of the people, rather than as their would-be rulers."

It may not be out of place to mention here, that with the collapse of the socialist world and the end of the Old Left imagination, there have been renewed attempts to think through a possible new project of radical democracy. Some of the more explicit articulations of this project have followed the extremely significant intervention of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, first articulated in the mid-1980s, and later continued by Mouffe. Needless to say, these articulations are lodged within a much more certain world than the one that Roy lived in. At least theoretically speaking, Laclau and Mouffe made their intervention in a context where the old certitudes of the *Telos* of History, Progress AND Reason had given way. It is also relevant to note that there have been other kinds of articulations in political practice, especially from the country of Roy's political and intellectual 'rebirth', namely Mexico. The legendary revolt in 1994, in the Chiapas mountains, by the Zapatistas, is significant in two respects, in this context. First, there is a conscious effort by the Zapatistas to eschew the 'representational' mode of politics that so troubled Roy.42 Second,

despite the fact that they formed their own army (the EZLN), the Zapatistas have declared that they do not want to 'capture power'. John Holloway's recent book, *Change the World Without Taking Power,* which attempts a theoretical articulation of the Zapatista position, in fact, is a tract that picks up these concerns with representation and power, that animated Roy but in a time and context very different from Roy's own.

One can go further and suggest that much of what is often derisively called "postmodernism" by its detractors, has been centrally pre-occupied in the last few decades with precisely the two concerns mentioned above: representation and power. Jean-Francois Lyotard's well-known call to "wage war on Totality" as that precise epistemic category, behind which lies concealed the drive towards totalitarianism, and the more generalised critiques of power and the paradigm of sovereignty made by Michel Foucault, resonate with some of the concerns that preoccupied Roy some decades in advance. It is post-modernism's critique and disavowal of the politics of "taking power" that has in fact made the target of much Marxist critiques, especially in the last two decades. Coeval with the philosophical assault of "post-modernism" on many of the certainties that are so dear to Roy, there is however, another point of convergence: the move away from the large, monumental forms towards a greater attentiveness to the local and the everyday. Here, the philosophical critiques of modernity offered by 'post-modernism" have found important resonance with the new ecological movements that seek to reclaim the local, especially local control over natural resources, thus throwing into question the very idea of the state's "eminent domain". If one were to work through the implications of Roy's own idea of a network of local republics in the present context, one suspects, the idea of such an eminent domain could not remain untouched.

It is also important to register that many of the struggles of the recent past, both in India and in the West, have sought to articulate themselves outside the framework of the party-form as such. In India, this phenomenon was noticed by scholars like Rajni Kothari and D.L. Sheth, and other intellectuals associated with the *Lokayan* initiative, as far back as the early 1980s, and characterised as the non-party political process. Many of these movements have, in fact, even had a local character, though in ways entirely different from the kind visualised by Roy. It is not possible to go into a discussion of these movements here but it is important to note that they too, represent a search for forms of political action that go beyond the framework of representation, even if in somewhat limited ways.

In this sense, we could say with some justification, that Roy's was a visionary critique of contemporary democratic politics and the problems inherent in the representational frame work. In this sense, politically, he was probably able to see far ahead of his times. And yet, in philosophical terms, Roy's move, in this period of his move away from Marxism marks a sort of regression into eighteenth century humanism. In that sense, there is a vast gulf that separates Roy's attempts to articulate a project of radical democracy from the more contemporary attempts to imagine "another world."

The Return to 'Man': The Search for Foundation/s

Even if Roy is a political being, his is a philosophically oriented mind. He is therefore, not content to merely lay out a normative framework for politics; he must ground it in a first-order Truth. His search for a philosophy that will provide the foundation of his new politics based on the 'sovereignty of the individual' therefore, leads him to a journey into the philosophical world.

Roy, as we said, began his first journey as a nationalist revolutionary political activist in a highly provincial milieu in Bengal and set out from there on an odyssey that took him around the world in different capacities. From being the founder of the first communist party outside the Soviet Union, to being the special emissary of the Comintern to China, his was a life full of adventure on what can only be called the stage of World-History. By the time he came back to

India in the 1930s, his horizons had become truly world-historical. From then on, he thought almost entirely in terms of the world as a single entity, and India and the specific trajectory of Indian political history figured in his discourse almost entirely as an episode in the larger world-historical drama. That is why, for instance when the Second World War began, and Roy and his RDP were the first to support the war, their decision was entirely guided by what he saw as the logic of world-historical developments and at no stage did the specificity of Indian politics and context figure in their assessment. The logic of world-history was to remain his sole point of reference all through his life.

Quite naturally then, once the idea of world-history as a singular entity became embedded in his thought, everything else became a corollary of this recognition. If the world is a single entity, there can at any movement be only one historical present – and needless to say, that 'present' is elsewhere. All other societies, including Indian society became a relic of the past, struggling to catch up with that present. It was with this belief that Roy launched on his second journey, now through time – philosophical time. Once he reached the realisation in his political life that Marxism no longer provided the answers to the central question of 'freedom' that he was seeking an answer to, he became restless for an answer. As we have already seen the fundamental problem that he saw with Marxism was that it privileged a collective ego over the sovereign individual and he had already come to believe that it was the individual who was the subject of the freedom he was seeking, he had to urgently find an answer.

It is seek this answer that Roy, in the period after the dissolution of the RDP, embarks on his philosophical journey through time. We may note, in parenthesis, that as he began his journey, he made some initial attempts at grappling with the Indian philosophical tradition. He recognised that in India "the Vedic age of natural religion was followed by a period of rational enquiries, fragmentarily recorded in the Upanishads," out of which arose different systems of philosophy. "Hindu religion as expounded in the Vedanta and Gita was a later development,"43 However, he notes that the sequence of these developments is not very clear "with a good deal of overlapping and many long gaps, because Hinduism is not a revealed religion." As D.C. Grover notes, Indian philosophical history too, appeared to Roy as following essentially the same trajectory "as everywhere else". As everywhere else, philosophy in India too, was originally materialistic; physics preceded metaphysics. It was the materialist speculations of the rebels against Vedic natural religion, contained in Vaisesika, Sankhya and Nyaya, which provided the inspiration for what Roy considered the "greatest event" in the history of ancient India – "the Buddhist revolution."44 This great philosophical event, according to Roy, was finally overwhelmed by the forces of superstition and Hindu orthodoxy. That was the greatest tragedy that, in a manner of speaking, arrested Indian thought for centuries to come.45

These are some fragmentary indications that in the initial period of his quest Roy did make some attempt to inquire into the philosophical traditions of India. But very soon he decided that the actual history of these philosophical systems had yet to be recorded. Hence the next best thing that he could do was to concentrate his energies on Western thought, since thought everywhere, basically followed the same movement. To quote: "In the present stage of world history, pending the composition of a universal history, the evolution of thought in the western world has to be taken as the general pattern."46 Thus began his new journey and he decided to start "more than six hundred years before the rise of Christianity" when "there developed in Greece an intellectual life which had laid the spiritual foundation of modern civilization."

We need to register at the outset that Roy's decision to extricate the individual from the clutches of the 'collective ego' was a political project, that is, in some sense, a pre-philosophical decision, born out of his aversion to twentieth century totalitarianism. Even as he began his philosophical sojourn then, he already knew where he wanted to go. He had to reinstate the

individual human being at the centre of his philosophy. To that end, he rushes through centuries of philosophical debates like a restless traveller picking and choosing what he wanted, in order to fashion his new politics. His main philosophical work, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution* is a work that betrays a singular lack of engagement with major philosophical debates and their contexts and in fact puts together a vast range of positions from which he then picks and chooses according to his liking. This search for the sovereign individual and his consequent move away from Marx takes him back to the humanism of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. The complex debates on subjectivity that ensued since leave practically no mark, nor cause any anxiety in him. so for instance, Marx's famous assertion in the *Theses on Feuerbach* that the "human essence is no abstraction inhering in each individual, but the ensemble of social relations" is read by him as a burial of the individual under the social. So, he claims that despite his partially valid criticism of Feuerbach, instead of improving him, Marx actually "buried Humanism for a long time to come." His effort to improve upon Feuerbach "led to the burial of the individual man who was submerged in the collective being of society."47 He considers this "a throwback" as "modern political theories developed in the seventeenth century, all started from the individual."48

Roy then sets about reclaiming the legacy of humanism. His problem is to find a humanist philosophy that will establish the individual as a moral being. His explorations lead him to the conclusion that "the tradition of eighteenth century naturalist Humanism and of its development in the nineteenth century alone can inspire a philosophy that will set man free." He calls this phi8losophy, now recast by him, New Humanism: "new because it is scientific and integral; because it conceives human sovereignty not as a differentiation from the mechanistic processes of nature, but as their highest product."49 His problem with the "former conception of the sovereignty of man" of both "classical as well as romantic Humanism" is that it "logically leads to two alternative conceptions: one is the doctrine of free will; and the other is the old Stoic faith taken over by Christianity, that man is a moral entity *because* through his soul he is in unison with the universal moral order." While the latter is logically sound, if one grants its premises, he believes it is unable to serve as a foundation for a revolutionary social philosophy, since in the last analysis, "man's" sovereignty here is "derived from a greater or higher power", which essentially means that 'he' is not really sovereign. The former, that is, the doctrine of the free will, on the other hand, is perpetually caught in the riddle of deriving the *ought* from the *is.* Imperceptibly, says Roy, this conception converges towards transcendentalism.50

The fundamental problem of moral philosophy, he felt, was of deducing values from facts, as it was felt that there was no causal connection between ethical values and the world of science, The additional problem with the doctrine of free will was that such a conception atomizes the individual and precludes the possibility of social organisation, cooperation and harmony in human relations.51 Here we see a glimpse of the other aspect of his search. Merely to reinstate the sovereign individual through the doctrine of free will does not seem to provide a ground for understanding the moral being of the individual.

Roy's answer to this problem is devastatingly simple. The only alternative is to ground moral philosophy down to "the entire process of *pre-human biological evolution."* "An appeal to his animal ancestry will yield more satisfactory result."52 The mystery of man, he claims, has been solved by modern biology. This unbelievable more, is accomplished by Roy by referring back to the idea of the "law-governed universe" – the *Ontic Logos,* as Charles Taylor would call it – where the biological evolution of 'man' is but the extension of the cosmic mechanism. "Man's rationality and moral sense, which are causally connected, are the expression of cosmic harmony. Therefore, it is in the *nature of man*, as a biological organism, to be rational and moral, and as such he is capable of living with others in peace and harmony."53 So, with his New Humanism, we are back to the idea of the Essence of Man, with one small, though not unimportant modification that this

Essence is now not distinct from the Universe or Nature. Man becomes a part of Nature. In this way, by insisting on a "materialist monism", Roy does attempt to break free of the ontological dualism between the Subject (Man) and the Object (Nature), that grounds modern post-Cartesian epistemology, but remains caught nevertheless within the foundaionalism so pervasive in his times. In actual practice, though, even the apparent dissolution of dualism does not really seem to work, caught as Roy himself remains within the representational mode, epistemologically speaking. Nowhere does Roy attempt to chart out a different epistemological position from the subject-centred ones that Heidegger called 'metaphysics' where the world is always represented to the subject from the position of the subject. At this stage, it might also be useful to refer back to Marx's sixth thesis, which Roy attempts to dismantle. Marx's point in this critique, as we know, was to interrogate precisely this notion of the Essence of Man, thus he began by stating that Feuerbach resolves the "essence of man". However, because Feuerbach does not recognise that the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each individual but "the ensemble of social relations", he is content to therefore focus his attention of the abstract individual. He cannot really explain why religious sentiment comes to hold such a sway over human beings. Unable to historicise religion, he is constrained to deal with it as a self-contained entity. Thus, in the seventh thesis, he asserts that this is why Feuerbach cannot see the "religious sentiment" itself as a social product and the individual too, as belonging to a particular historical social form. Hence Marx's claim that "social being determines consciousness". One can legitimately quarrel with Marx on the precise meaning of "social being": can it be reduced to the "mode of production?" Or, can it be even further recast as the discursive or linguistic constitution of the human world with the complex play of meanings, as post-structuralism would claim?

Whatever be the case, in a sense, through this intervention Marx is able to displace the question of the "essence of man" from the realms of speculative philosophy to the terrain of history and provide a way of understanding the actual so-called "irrationality" of "real-empirical" human beings. The fundamental question involved here, as we know is as old as humanism itself. What is the Essence of Man? Clearly 'Man' here does not refer to the real-empirical human beings, for they are precisely what Roy's project of social transformation (or the Enlightenment project) wants to change. They are the human beings who are today mired in 'irrationality' and 'tradition'. The 'Man' here then, refers to some Real Essence. The problems with such a conception are only too well-known today. In the first place, they do not really take us beyond a metaphysical notion of the Real Essence, whose 'reality' remains untouched by the 'corruptions' of the empirical-real. In the second place, such a notion of Essence of Man requires that there are at least some people who know 'its Reality', who then become the agents of Enlightenment. It is this notion that lies at the root of the pedagogic mission of 'making people aware' of their 'real nature'.

In Roy's specific construction, it is an Essence whose reality, as part of a law-governed universe, can only be derived from the laws of the Universe itself. If we were to stretch the implications of this proposition to its logical end, we could then have to assume that the human world too, is as rationally law-governed as the natural world. This is where the problem of human volition becomes apparent to Roy. If human society is really law-governed, can human beings really do anything to change it? He, however, does not enter into the question in all its ramifications. He merely posits an idea of determinism that subsumes "human intelligence": "But just as in nature, there are more than one determining factors in history. Human intelligence is one of them ... The logical development of ideas and the generation of new social forces take place *simultaneously,* together providing the motive force of history."54 He acknowledges that philosophy has its own independent logic and cannot be reduced to an expression of any 'class interest' or the interest of any other social force. Nonetheless, he must still retain a close, largely unspecified, organic connection between the "new social forces" and "new ideas", since without recourse to this, the attempt to subsume

human intelligence in the "law-governedness" of society, while retaining a sense of human volition, cannot be sustained. It might be interesting to contrast this position with say Louis Althusser's attempts in the late 1960s, to argue on the contrary, that the time of philosophy, punctuated by its own specific rhythms, is irreducible in principle to the time of politics or the time of the economy. Althusser laws led, in the course of his investigations into the different levels (economy, politics, philosophy etc) to recognise that the relationships between these different levels were *essentially relations of dislocation.* In other words, there was no correspondence between the specific histories of these levels: "the lonely hour of the last instance never arrives." Where Althusser, despite his Marxism, sees dislocation, Roy must hold on to relations of correspondence. It is in this context, that it becomes important for Roy to continuously assert that the will to change the world is fundamental to determinism in the social world. it is in this context too that his connection with romanticism is established. "The passionate belief in the creativeness and freedom of man is the essence of the romantic view of life. The idea of revolution is therefore, a romantic idea."55 This problem of reconciling determinism with volition remains one of the key difficulties in Roy's exposition of his philosophy.

Determinism however, is not the only problem with Roy's attempt to replace post-Cartesian dualism by monism. In the absence of an alternative account of epistemology, his method remains almost entirely lodged within the subject-centred representational framework. This, along with his recourse to the idea of the Essence of Man, leaves his philosophical position well within the humanist tradition that sought to enthrone Man as the new God.

In his comment on post-war French philosophy, especially as represented by Sartre and Derrida points out, even though the concept of history is quite pervasive, "there is little practice of the *history of concepts*" and the history of the concept of man is never examined. "Everything occurs as if the sign 'man' had no origin, no historical, cultural or linguistic limit."56 Much of that ahistorical notion of 'man', torn from all context/s is evident in the philosophy that Roy attempts to expound. And as Derrida further points out, this "unexamined concept of 'Man', named in an allegedly neutral and undetermined way, something that was "nothing other than the metaphysical unity of man and God, the relation of man to God, *the project of becoming God* as the project constituting human-reality." In this new philosophical anthropology [of Sartre, for instance], he suggests, "(A)theism changes nothing in this fundamental structure" and that in this respect, humanism or anthropologism was the common ground of Christian and atheist existentialisms.57

We need not delve any further here on the metaphysics of Man and the profound philosophical discussions that have occurred around it. In fact, in concluding this section, I would like to suggest that a critique of this metaphysics (philosophical humanism or anthropologism) does not necessarily imply the end of the political task that renaissance humanism or the humanism of Roy seeks to put forward. In fact, taking the cue from Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, we might ask what would humanism be after the philosophical 'death of Man'? The critical question here is to resist the temptation of grounding politics, that is contingency par excellence, in any foundational Truth. For, that Truth, if one were to paraphrase Gandhi, is not available to anybody; we all live with partial truths and it is the politics of Truth that often becomes the carrier of new forms of totalitarianism that was so centrally of concern to Roy.

(*This paper was written for a seminar on "Reconstructing Democratic Concerns in Modern India", organised by the Lokniti Programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, in October 2004. I am grateful to Rajaram Tolpady and Peter De Souza, the organisers of the seminar for pushing me to write this paper. I am also grateful to all the participants of the seminar whose comments on the earlier draft were immensely helpful. Finally, my thanks to Nivedita Menon for reading and commenting on two earlier drafts.)*

*** Aditya Nigam** is Senior Fellow at Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi.

Notes:

2. Jacques Derrida (1994), *Spectres of MARX,* Routledge, New York and London, p. 102.
3. M. Shiviah (1977) *New Humanism and Democratic Politics – a Study of M.N. Roy's Theory of the State,* Popular Prakashan, Bombay, p. 91 and D.C. Grover (1973) *M.N. Roy: Study of Revolution land Reason in Indian Politics,* The Minerva Associates, Calcutta, pp. 66-73.
4. Ibid. p. 166.
5. Sudipta Kaviraj (1986), "The Heteronomous Radicalism of M.N. Roy", in Thomas Pantham and Kenneth L. Deutsch (Eds. 1986), *Political Thought in Modern India,* Sage Publication, New Delhi and London, p. 226.
6. Ibid. pp. 226-27.
7. M.N. Roy (1984), *Memoirs* Ajanta Publications. p. 59.
8. Ibid. p. 27.
9. Cited in Ibid. pp. 2-3.
10. Ibid. p. 10.
11. M.N. Roy (1981), *Politics, Power and Parties,* Ajanta Publications Delhi, p. 23.
12. Ibid. p.22.
13. Ibid. pp. 19-20.
14. Ibid. p. 19.
15. Ibid. p. 19.
16. Ibid. p. 77. Emphasis added.
17. Ibid. p. 53.
18. Ibid. p. 76.
19. Ibid. p. 53.
20. Ibid. p. 56.
21. Ibid. p. 51.
22. Cited in Peter Gay's 'Introduction" to Ernst Cassirer (1989), *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 28.
23. Ibid. p. 51.
24. Carl Schmitt (1992), *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, p. 28.
25. Ibid. p. 28.
26. Ibid. p. 29. (Emphasis added).
27. Ibid. p. 6.
28. Jurgen Habermas (1994), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere – An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* Polity Press, UK. See especially, pages 204-07.
29. Roy, *Politics, Power and People,* p. 59.
30. Roy, Ibid. p. 59.
31. Ibid. p. 59.
32. Ibid. pp. 50-60.
33. Ibid. pp. 60-61.
34. D.C. Grover (1973), M.N. Roy: A Study of Revolution and Reason in Indian Politics, *The Minerva Associates, Calcutta, p. 70. Grover cites JP's own tract* socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy (1964), Asia Publishing House, to substantiate his claim.
35. Cited in Ibid. p. 71.
36. Niranjan Dhar (1966),*The Political Thought of M.N. Roy, 1936-54,* Eureka Publishers, Calcutta, p. 164.

37. Ibid. p. 81.
38. Ibid. p. 84.
39. Ibid. p. 74.
40. Ibid. p. 75.
41. Ibid. p. 75.
42. The Zapatista eschewal of 'representational' politics goes much further beyond pure 'political representation' in the electoral sense. However that is a separate discussion and need not detain us here.
43. M.N. Roy (1989) *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution,* Ajanta Publications, Delhi, p. 23.
44. D.C. Grover, op. cit., p. 103.
45. Ibid. p. 106.
46. Ibid. p. 23.
47. Roy, *Politics, Power and People,* op. cit., p. 105.
48. Ibid. p. 106.
49. M.N. Roy (1989) *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution,* Ajanta Publications, Delhi, op. cit., p. 490.
50. Ibid. This part of the discussion is based largely on the chapter "New Humanism" in this work.
51. Ibid. p. 491.
52. Ibid. p. 491.
53. Ibid. p. 492.
54. Ibid. p. 10.
55. Ibid. p. 11.
56. Jacques Derrida (1986), *Margins of Philosophy,* The Harvester Press, Great Britain, p. 116.
57. Ibid. p.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 2005.

M.N. Roy's rejection of Parliamentary Democracy and *Laissez-faire* Economy

Swaraj Sengupta*

If we, the Radical Humanists are called upon to choose between dictatorship and parliamentary democracy, I, as one of them, shall have no hesitation in choosing the latter. I shall choose the latter not because I am unaware of the shortcomings and inadequacies of parliamentary democracy, but because I am keenly aware of the denial of human freedom by dictatorship. Parliamentary demo0cracy is not perfect democracy. It has serious defects, it has reduced democracy to a formality, but its basic democratic principles are essentially sound, and it keeps the door of further human progress open. Dictatorship, on the contrary, is the rejection of all the moral values and progressive social institutions which humanity has built up by its ceaseless efforts throughout the ages. It seeks to close the door of further human progress. Radical Humanism has certain points in common with parliamentary democracy, but it is opposed to dictatorship in every respect. Our defence of parliamentary democracy however ends here.

M.N. Roy is painfully conscious of the serious defects of parliamentary democracy and because of these defects he feels the need for reorientating democracy. Party-less democracy as conceived of in his philosophy of Radical Humanism is the only answer to the crying need for giving democracy a new content and form.

For two reasons parliamentary democracy has failed to realize the ideal of democracy in full. One of the two reasons is the character of Representative system in parliamentary democracy, and the other one is domination of this limited democracy by groups of people organised in political parties.

The representation system as it prevails now, leads to concentration of power in the hands of the representatives leaving those who are at the base, the people in general, absolutely helpless, once the elections are over. Democracy under these circumstances ceases to be democracy of the common men but becomes autocracy of the representatives.

Even this limited democracy is vitiated by the party system which controls the representatives. Once the representatives pass through the battle of ballot-boxes, they cease to owe any allegiance to the electorate but pledge their allegiance to the political party which nominates them, helps them and finally gets them elected. Separation of the electorate and their representatives is thus complete. Representatives are no longer representatives of the people in the Parliament; they represent their different political parties. All their actions are controlled ad determined by the parties to which they belong. Whatever little democracy the present parliamentary system tries to establish is completely washed out by the political parties, party system is dictatorship in disguise.

It is logical, therefore, that Roy's attack is primarily directed against the political parties which have reduced democracy to a formality and a farce, he wants abolition of all political parties. But there is a substantial and fundamental difference in his attitude towards parliamentary democracy. He seeks to reform this system by removing its defects and giving parliamentary democracy new dimensions. He rejects neither Parliament nor all kinds of representation systems. In any modern democracy we cannot do without parliament. His opposition is not to the system of having parliament. He wants that the character of parliament must change not by abolishing parliament but by introducing fundamental reforms in the system. He is therefore seeking to reorientate present form of Party-dominated parliamentary democracy into party-less radical democracy.

Party-less democracy is an ideal yet to be achieved. We are far behind the ideal. Party-less democracy is an ideal which cannot be achieved through any sudden change on a particular date

on the calendar like 14th July of the French Revolution or 17th November of Russian Revolution. Its achievement will be through a continuous process and each step in that process will be partial realisation of the deal. Within the frame-work of the present day democracy the process of introducing the essential features of party-less democracy can be started. As this process continues the character of democracy also goes on changing till due to their cumulative effect a complete change takes place and party-less democracy becomes a reality.

In the light of the above, Roy advises, when people are getting growingly disgusted with the conduct of the political parties, the Radical Humanists should take up immediately a two point programme as the first step towards their ideal.

The vicious influence of the political parties is mostly manifested in the functioning of the legislative bodies. The members of these bodies as already pointed out, are never free to speak or act; they are all the time controlled and guided by their parties. Our legislatures do not hear the voice of the people, but they hear the voice of the parties. They cause of this distortion of democracy lies in an extremely harmful parliamentary practice. At present if a particular piece of legislation moved by the Government is rejected by the legislature or if a particular action of the Government is censured by the legislature, the ministry is treated as having lost the confidence of the legislature and is required to resign. The fate of the ministry depends on the fate of every single piece of legislation.

When the legislators of the Government side speak or vote on any particular item, obsessed with fear that anything adverse said or done to them might affect the fate of the ministry, they allow themselves to be directed solely by the Party whip. Similarly the legislators in the Opposition speak and act all the time with the sole object of dislodging the ministry regardless of the merit of any piece of legislation or any other action of the Government. Neither the Government supporters nor the opposition supporters act and speak in an unprejudiced manner. The struggle for power among the parties turns the legislatures into battle-fields where truth and welfare of the people become the principal casualties, in consideration of party welfare. Our first blow must be aimed at this vicious practice. It should be the demand of all honest democrats that the discussions and voting on any particular legislative measure must be absolutely free from party bias and every legislator must be allowed to express his views freely and frankly, without affecting the fate of the ministry. At the same time the ministry must also be removable by a vote in the legislature. To combine the two, Roy proposes that a new parliamentary practice should be introduced to the effect that a Ministry will fall only if a direct vote of no-confidence is passed in the legislature by the majority vote. A particular action of the ministry may be disapproved or a piece of legislation introduced by the ministry may be lost, but that should not automatically lead to resignation of the ministry. If the constant fear about the fall of the ministry is removed from the minds of the legislators, the proceedings of the legislatures will be substantially free and frank, which will produce better administration and reduce the vicious domination by the parties.

While the above change in the Constitutional practice will remove the unhealthy influence of the Party on the proceedings of the legislatures another process may be started simultaneously at the bottom on the level of the electorate. Roy believes that it will reduce the scope of the activities of the political parties. Organising the electorate to maintain vigilance on their representatives must be the second point of our immediate programme. Every constituency is to be divided into smaller areas coinciding with the present *Panchayat* areas. Each of the areas must organise a public forum, where the people can meet and discuss the various problems and the conduct of their representatives and express their opinion on these subjects. They should demand the presence of their representatives in these meetings for discussion of various problems and their activities in the legislatures. A bridge between the electorate and the representative4s will be built through these local committees and meetings. The present *Panchayata* may serve the purpose of these

committees, though officially they are not yet empowered to perform this vital function. Proceedings of the legislatures are not guided by consideration of the welfare of the people but by the party whips. Yet unofficially they may do so and help the process of crystallisation of public opinion in this manner. In course of time, a strong demand may be made by the local people to give legal sanction to the *Panchayats* or these local committees to work on this line. These local committees when properly organised will set up candidates of their choice in the elections.

Again, Roy believes that these two changes, the change in the parliamentary practice and organising the electorate at the very base, will eliminate the hold of the political parties on these representatives. No democracy can be effective, whatever may be the constitutional provisions, unless the people take active and intelligent interest in all the affairs of the state and voice opinion. The basis of democracy is an active and virile electorate. Democracy cannot be imposed from above. It must be built up from below. The radicals from the very beginning of their political activities in this country, emphasise on the need of organising the people at the bottom. The programme, M.N. Roy gave when he made his first public appearance on the political scene after his return from abroad was to 'Organise the Primary Congress Committees'. This has tremendous revolutionary significance. Since then organising the people from the bottom has been the corner stone of the programme of the Radicals whether they are in the League of Radical Congressmen or in the Radical Democratic Party or in the present Radical Humanist movement. But those politicians who want to retain power in their hands in the name of the people, never allow that programme to be seriously undertaken lest their own authority may be challenged by the people in course of time. The Radical Humanists true to this revolutionary tradition must today seize the opportunity and make democracy real and effective. We cannot expect the political parties to voluntarily give their consent to this self-liquidating process, but if the people keep their control on their representatives the parties will have no opportunity of exerting any influence on the political life of society. The parties will not disappear immediately but as a result of the process of the people coming up to play more positive role the parties will cease to have any function and will gradually "wither away" in course of time.

As the process of eliminating the influences of the political parties will become more and more effective, the people will demand introduction of recall and referendum, when this process matures and the local committees are properly organised and become effective, the people should demand that the nomination of candidates should be the responsibility solely of the people organised in the local committees. The political parties will thus lose the most effective means by which they have so long been dominating the political life of the country. We know that the political parties will resist this development. But the electorate must bring sufficient pressure on their representatives in the legislature to compel the parties to agree to these changes. If the legislators press for these changes, the parties cannot resist them. If the parties still resist, the legislators must ignore them and get the changes passed in the legislatures. The electorate must see to it that only such candidates are returned to the legislative bodies who are committed to this programme and ready to act accordingly.

The idea of radical democracy as in M.N. Roy's vision gets its concrete form in these local republics or people's committees. As members of these basic units of the state, individual citizens will no longer be atomised and helpless. The committees will be standing bodies with wise powers and direct influence on similar committees for larger areas and through them the citizen will be in possession of power always. The result will be a far reaching decentralization.

***Laissez-faire* Economy**

There are two opposing sets of ideas about changing economic conditions for the purpose of raising living standards. But in the well intentioned declarations from both sides, one crucial fact

is being ignored; it is the problem of population. The rapid rate at which the population is growing is bound to make all economic problems more complicated. Roy does not find a solution for the economic problems in either of the two ways, *Laissez-faire* economy or socialist economy.

These two methods both postulate rapid industrialisation through the application of modern science and technology to the process of production. Both maintain that the cause of India's poverty is her industrial backwardness, and unless modern industries are built rapidly, the standard of living cannot be raised. One method advocated is the old capitalist one – leaving it to private initiative and capital – a *Laissez-faire* economy to bring about the result.

Driven by the experience that these methods have failed elsewhere and therefore are not likely to succeed in India either M.N. Roy explores the new method of co-operative economy.

Laissez-faire economy under capitalism produces goods not to supply people's needs, but to sell at a profit. When goods cannot be sold at sufficient profit, capitalists curtail production. We have had this experience in the sugar industry in India, where mills close and cane prices go down although people never get enough sugar to ear. Industries can succeed only on the basis of a home market. A healthy export trade begins only when the home market is satisfied. The check on the development of Indian industry in the past is not merely political, as we have been told; the real cause is that the purchasing power of the people is so very limited. Removal of foreign rule has not changed that condition.

In modern times, when countries are industrialised without reference to the needs and purchasing capacity of the people a way is found in subsidising export trade. This is how Japan became a great power. India cannot succeed in this plan without heavy Government subsidies. The Government can produce the finance for subsidies only by taxing the people which means lowering their standard of living even more. Thus, we may have a prosperous export trade, but even poorer people.

To produce for the restricted home market is not an attractive proposition for the private Indian sector. It promises small profits and involves risks. While some advocate government financing, other clamour for foreign capital investment, as a way out. It is true that India is a poor country, but it does possess enough resources for industrialisation on a useful scale. With the resources she has, a modest beginning can be made. It is by no means certain that a very high degree of industrialisation would be at all good for India. On the other hand, small scale industries are of little interest to big capitalists, but they can be started by people themselves on a local scale.

Roy feels that economic problems must be approached first from a purely economic point of view. The main cause of the peasant's poverty is the low level of agricultural productivity due to fragmentation of land into uneconomic holdings and the absence of enterprise on their part, such a problem which has roots deep in the social soil of the country, cannot be solved by merely passing laws. The primary and perhaps the only condition for improvement is to change the methods of production and of rural economy as a whole.

The first consideration is to meet the primary needs of the people, food, shelter and clothing; the basic purpose of the economy is to supply these needs.ds there is more than enough labour to produce the food. If this labour could be employed in a more rational manner, production could be greatly increased. An improved irrigation system, based on numerous wells, reservoirs and dams should be made available.

The start has to be made from below. From the top, only big schemes can come, and these are likely to turn out to be 'white elephants'. The peasants are apt to be suspicious; they will do what they are told to, but the moments they are left to themselves, they will let everything slide back to the traditional ways. The method of reorganisation from below, through co-operative self-help, pre-supposes a certain democratic spirit, the confidence that the affairs of the people can be

managed by the people, in their localities. That is how the humanist economic approach is linked with that of building a democratic state.

Roy does not visualise an over organised collectivist agriculture, but there should at least be provision for a minimum size of holding. The alternative to uneconomic holdings on the one hand, and huge collectives on the other, would be co-operation between farms of reasonable sizes. The peasants can be easily convinced that cooperation with others, holding their own land, will produce great benefit and profit for all.

Whenever the initiative is taken by the government experience tells that the result is not as desired. The action has to come from the peasants themselves and co-operative organisations should never go beyond what they are voluntarily prepared for. Only then will their resistance be eliminated. If it can be shown to them that their problems of irrigation and fertilisers, of selling and buying can be solved by their own co-operation and initiative, they will certainly understand. Not only the peasants' income will increase, the food problem will be solved. There does not seem to be any other way to increase the purchasing power of the majority of the population and with it our national wealth.

Roy emphasises on this approach that should be applied here and now, provided the young people of the country realise there is no other way for them to do anything tangible immediately. If they will go and spread this outlook among the people, and show them how it can be applied, not only will they improve the people's lot; they will at the same time lay the foundation of a new democratic social and political order. Gradually small industries also can be developed on the principle of co-operation.

***Dr. Sengupta** is a former professor at Presidency College, Kolkata. He is Secretary of West Bengal Radical Humanist Association.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 2005.

A Space of Encounter: M.N. Roy's Struggle for Liberation and the World of Berlin, 1919-1930

Kris K. Manjapra*

"For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live." Adorno. *Minima Moralia,* p. 51.

Abstract:

M.N. Roy was one of the intellectual founders of Indian Communism. He was the 'expert on the East' *par excellence* at the Communist International of the 1920s, adapting Marxism for the independence struggle and for socialist revolution in India and China. But there was a philosophical aspect in Roy's early work which emerged in his Berlin writings of the 1920s, and which came increasingly to the fore in his later life, after his imprisonment in India and his increased estrangement from effective political life. In this paper I argue that the world of Berlin conditioned and informed Roy's early intellectual pursuits in significant ways, and also that he must be better appreciated, not only as an anti-colonial Communist, but also as a post-colonial thinker *avant la letter,* translating his displacement between the so-called East and West into a theory of the emancipated colonial consciousness.

A Figure in space

Berlin. Even to suggest it played a significant and structuring role in Manabendra Nath Roy's life is to advance a controversial claim. The case against the assertion is obvious enough: since M.N. Roy was a Comintern Communist and one of the founders of Communism in India, Moscow was his "holy land."1 Although, it is true he spent time in Berlin, this was always in transit. When he finally settled in Berlin after his expulsion from the Comintern in 1928 until his return to India in 1930s, he did so by dint of necessity. Berlin, for Roy, was less a place than a non-place – a holding-zone, a terrain of transit – not a home. This is the case against seeing Roy as a figure set in Berlin.2 In this paper I oppose this commonly held view and instead demonstrate the ways in which the space of Berlin was critical in defining Roy's social network and his intellectual project. We know that the post-colonial writers Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire lived in Paris. We also know that Chinua Achebe lived in London. But we still are lacking an appreciation for M.N. Roy as a *living* person. All too often in the historiography he is either portrayed as an disembodied mind slipping furtively into a conversation between Marx and Lenin:3 or as a man who failed to effectively apply Marxist theory to India.4 Both of these portrayals do not allow us to truly appreciate the richness of Roy's life or his message. In this paper, I draw a different circle around Roy – one that highlights his affinity with post-colonial intellectuals such as Fanon and that emphasises his distance from the Comintern world of Moscow. I hope to show that Roy's struggle for liberation, while phrased in terms of a political project for the freedom of India from British rule was at all times also a philosophical endeavour to address the question: What does it mean to be free from colonization? What would an Indian consciousness once liberated from imperialist domination consist in?

That Roy was not only proposing political solutions in his voluminous writings of the 1920s, but also continually asking this central question, has not been adequately appreciated. Roy has too often been taken only as a political strategist. The philosophical aspect of his thought – his reflections on the possibility for a post-colonial consciousness – has generally been ignored. Here, we take a first step in redressing this astigmatism in our view of M.N. Roy by considering the space of encounter in which Roy developed his theory of liberation.

The Map of Berlin

To speak of the space of Berlin is to use both an analytical category of current academic research and an "actors' category". If space as a structuring element for social life is of contemporary interest, the idea was also fascinating to social thinkers writing in the years around 1910. It was in that year that Rudolf Hilferding published his book on *Finanzkapital,* and in 1913 that Rosa Luxemburg's *Akkumulation des Kapitals* appeared. The idea of the world as an interconnected space was central to both works. In fact,

although not for present consideration, this specialisation of Marxist thought which began around 1910 greatly informed M.N. Roy's project. Roy, born Narendranath Bhattacharya in a Bengal village in 1887, wrestled with obstacles of space since the time he departed India in 1915. In his daily life, he was a chronic traveller. In his literary production, one is struck by his audacity in shipping his bi-monthly newspaper to India from Berlin during the height of colonial censure. His writing also continually grapples with the problem of space: space between the 'east' and 'west', between the proletariat in India and their confreres in Europe, and more abstractly, the space between the consciousness of colonial and European subjects.

Since space was so important to Roy's life, it is useful to lay out exactly how the notion of the world of Berlin as a 'space of encounter' might be studied. Here, I propose three perspectives. First, we might think of the idea of the life-world, as taken originally from Husserl, but interpreted through Jürgen Habermas. Habermas writes in his *Theory of Communicative Action* that "communicative practice produces a life-world"5 (or a horizon within which to see and make sense of social reality). Habermas defines modernity as the state in which conflicting life-worlds exist simultaneously without eradicating one another.6 In a metropolis such as Berlin in the 1920s, there was an extreme diversity of life-worlds living side by side. After the First World War, Berlin was peeling with the dissonant voices of its sundry inhabitants: pan-Germanists, social democrats, colonial subjects, romantics, bohemians, anarchists, reactionary modernists, communists, etc. Indeed, it is not accurate to speak of "the Berlin world", instead "the Berlin *worlds"* would be more appropriate. The robust quality of these multiple worlds that coexisted, but only tensely, created a space in which Roy could think about 'liberation', while it also provided the social setting in which he could experiment with and perform his own personal acts of emancipation as a colonial intellectual – the act of writing being chief among these.

The second way in which we might conceive of "the world of Berlin" refers to the growing literature on the role of actual geometric space and infrastructure in delimiting the possibilities for social interaction and thought. David Harvey in his *The Limits of Capital* introduces 'space' as an actual component of capitalist planning, alongside such traditional variables of profit maximization such as wage ad surplus-value. Indeed, geographical space, how it is to be used, and how different areas in the world are held in relation, forms a perpetual, if inconspicuous, preoccupation of modernity. Moving from the macro to the micro perspective, Marc Augé's fascinating anthropological work on space and social meaning, points to the complex relationship between thinking and space. In his book *Non-places,* he defines an 'anthropological place' as a "concrete and symbolic construction... which could not of itself allow for the vicissitudes and contradictions of social life, but which serves as a reference for all those [people] it assigns to positions, however, humble and modest."7 Thus, space shapes human activities, and is constituted by the interaction between a physical environment and the symbolic importance ascribed to that environment. For example, a mosque is a space of prayer, which because of its symbolic values, actually brings the individual into a prayerful mood. A square, on the other hand, is a space of conversational and crossing one might make one suddenly more garrulous. Along a similar line, French historians have introduced the study of 'places of memory.'8 A valuable assertion to take away from such work is that spaces "aspire" to affect their inhabitants; they have an impact on those who transit through or inhabit them. It is this insight that I would like to apply to M.N. Roy's alternating transit and domesticity in Berlin.

Third, 'space' can also mean a space for words. Michel de Certeau remarked that spaces are not only defined by geometric co-ordinates but are tied up with the production of language. To come into a space also always means to come into a narrative. Seen oppositely, terrains where there are thought to be no words produced or no possibility for narratives (this was the way, for example, in which Africa was often portrayed in colonialist discourse in Germany in the 19th century) are pictured as radically empty, somehow shy of being real space.9 So physical space is always related to the production of language and vice-versa. In relation to this point, it is crucial to appreciate the role of Berlin in providing a space for Roy's vast literary production in the 1920s. He published books, such as *India in Transition* and *Revolution und Kontrarevolution in China,* tens of brochures, newspaper issues, and wrote magazine articles. Roy's

production of words must be seen as an integral part of his labour for liberation – again, it served a political purpose, but also a philosophical one.

Taking these meanings of space altogether, we can then ask: How did the space of the city, seen in terms of its geographical particularity, it's symbolic import, and its environment for authorship, effect, form and cultivate the sensibilities and ideas of M.N. Roy? When he arrived in Berlin in 1919 with his wife of the time Evelyn Trent, he was 32 years old. And yet, in his own words, his awakening had just begun. But, it is crucial to appreciate that Berlin did not function as a space where Roy felt himself appropriating "western" knowledge of *learning* from Europeans. In fact, his aversion for tropes of tutelage expressed itself both early and persistently in his writings. Instead, Berlin served as an environment where Roy could put into question what "liberation from colonial rule" actually meant.

City of *Aufbruch*

Berlin in 1919 was a city exasperated from war but already giddy with the possibilities in the wake of collapse. The cityscape was a palimpsest – a symbol of old Prussia10 and an icon of modernity.11 After the November Revolution of 1918 and the Rätebewegung a month later, the 'white terror' in January occasioned the birth of the Weimar Republic and the death (by assassination) of Rosa Luxemburg – one of M.N. Roy's intellectual and political models.12 In 1920, the bounds of the city were redrawn and Berlin became *Grob-Berlin,* with the aggregation of 59 boroughs (Landgemeinden) and 27 estate territories (Gutsbezirken). The new city had 3.8 million inhabitants, twice as many as Old Berlin, and covered 878 square kilometers.13 After Los Angeles, Berlin was the second largest city in the world in terms of territory, and the third largest after London and New York in terms of population. Densely packed, with 4330 inhabitants per square kilometre, Berlin was known as the 'Asphalt-stadt'. Every 16th German was a Berliner and the population was fifty-four per cent female and forty-eight percent working-class.14

There were still no cars at the time and buses, propelled by methane gas canisters, rolled along on full rubber tires.15 The city was mostly filled with five-storey houses, since buildings any taller would require elevators. To the north of Alexanderplatz lived many of the Jewish immigrants from the East. The area around Orienburgerstrasse was a poor quarter filled with Eastern immigrants and the least fortunate workers. Many of the Asians in the city, Indians, Chinese and Japanese, lived in Charlottenburg, generally as renting guests in the homes of German hosts.16 The Moabit was a densely populated workers quarter as was 'red Wedding'.17 In Grunewald, on the other hand, lived the most wealthy inhabitants. Further out, at Ruhleben the internment camps which had kept British and colonial prisoners during the war, were being torn down.

If the city was a place of *Zusammenbruch*, it was also one of construction. Particularly after 1925, construction took off. With the high number of workers and the extreme economic crisis experienced between 1919 and 1924, new housing strategies were introduced such as the *Grossiedlungsbau*.18 However, innovations in public works did not prevent the increasing misery of many in the working class, some of whom were relegated to living in cow sheds on Frankfurterstrasse – with the cows.19

The cultural *Aufbruch* that occurred within Berlin's 878 square kilometres found spatial expression in the architecture of Walter Gropius' Bauhaus and Bruno Taut's *Neue Sachlichkeit.* The city was a world centre for cinema and for new media. And in the field of literature, one thinks of the innovations of Bertolt Brecht, as well as non-German artists such as W.H. Auden who translated the unfinished and expectant quality of Berlin life into their work.20

Berlin was also a space for sexual education and activism. Alexandra Kollontai (*Die neue Moral und die Arbeiterklasse* was published in Berlin in 1920) and Magnus Hirschfeld (*The Institut fur Sexual-Kunde* founded in 1919) challenged society's sexual norms. The atmosphere of openness is mirrored in the works of Friedrich Wolff and Bruno Alfred Döblin. Leftist groups, particularly Communist *Vereine,* fought against paragraphs 218 and 175 of the civil code which criminalized abortion and homosexuality. It is interesting to note that many of the Asians who took up residence in Berlin in these years saw it as a space to experimentation in what was quaintly termed at the time 'free love.'21

In the metropole the distance between bodies was dramatically felt. As Detlev Peukert noted, the condition of modernity is one of contradiction and paradox.22 This insight can also be spatialised: in one's daily life walking down the street, one encountered people from different socio-economic conditions, and rubbed up against a multitude of foreign and strange life-worlds. Class relations in 1920's Berlin grew increasingly tense and antagonistic. After the communist uprisings in 1921 and 1923, a culture of paranoia and anxiety developed among many in the middle-class.23 In this context, *the flaneur* Walter Benjamin first grew interested in the redemptive moments strewn amongst the shards of fragmented urban life.24

This space marked by heteronomy, experimentation and contradiction constituted M.N. Roy's world, at least for a significant portion of the 1920s. But the more specific circles in which Roy travelled were red in political hue. Berlin's communist culture was astoundingly learned. Communist presses published *Elementar-Bücher* and sold them at low cost to teach workers about the writings of Marx and about Marxism. Near Alexanderplatz in the Scheunenviertel were many of the leftist bookshops. This area formed the center of communist life. Workers met in trade union associations, or in groups organized by the Communist Party generally on weekly basis for cultural programs, lectures and discussion. Communist presses, such as the *Internationale Bibliothek,* published leftist interpretations of the German classics such as Goethe and Schiller. And education was also mixed with leisure. For example, the Naturfreunde was a Communist group that made expeditions in the woods to hear lectures on political and cultural topics in workers' cabins. The Volksbühne, one of the largest being in today's Kollwitzplatz, put up dramas of social critique for a 75 pfennig admission. As space was at a premium in the city, schoolrooms or the backrooms of pubs were generally used for workers' education.25 There were was also certain magnates of communist intellectual life in Berlin: individuals such as Eduard Puchs and Willi Münzenberg who owned publishing houses and ran informal salons.

The year that M.N. Roy reached Berlin, 1919, was one in which the revolutionary potential was growing in Germany. The January revolt in which members of the USPD joined the KPD in street protests ended in violent state suppression. In March, there were more communist demonstrations and more arrests. In that month Minister Ebert ordered a crackdown on the communist party. But despite repression, the KPD grew in size during that year.26 And in 1920, before leaving for his first fateful encounter with Lenin in Moscow, Roy met the communist leader August Thalheimer – a Jew, and one of the foremost intellectuals in Rosa Luxemburg's circle. Roy's relationship with Thalheimer would develop throughout the 1920s and inform the thinking of both men. Even in Roy's *Letters from Jail* written from prison after his return to India, one is struck by how alive his intellectual connection with Thalheimer remains. Indeed, the world of Berlin as not only a physical space, but also as a liberatory terrain for thought, remained with Roy even after he left Europe for his face-down with British colonialism and Indian 'spiritualist politics' in India.

Notes:

1. Roy uses the term himself (with irony, I would claim) to describe Moscow in his Memoirs. See Roy, *Memoirs,* Part 3. New Delhi, Allied Publishers Private Limited. 1964.
2. Almost all the historiography on Roy sets him exclusively in the Comintern Moscow context. Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism in India* (1959). Adhikari, G. (ed) *Documets of the History of the Communist Party of India, Vol. 1* (1971); Haithcox, John. *Communism and Nationalism in India: M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy – 1920-39.* (1971); R.C. North, *The Soviet Union and the East.*
3. Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: the Case of Colonial India,* New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1995.
4. Overstreet and Windmiller *op. cit.*
5. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* 13.
6. Habermas, 72. Life-worlds in spaces of modernity are continually 'decentered' and relativized.

7. Auge, *Non-Places: Introduc;tion to an Anthropology of fSupermodernity.* Translated by John Howe, New Yodrk: Veso. 1995.
8. See Louis Marin, *Production des lieux exemplaires.* Les Dossiers des seminaries TTs. 1991, p. 89. Also Pierre Nora, Les Lieux de Mémoire Paris: Gallimard (1992).
9. Russell Berman, *Empire and Enlightenment.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska (1998). See John Noyes' analysis of 'boundless space' in German travel literature on Africa. J.K. Noyes, *Colonial Space: spatiality in the discourse of the German South West Africa 1884-1915.* Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers (1992).
10. James Joll, "Die Grossstadt – Symbold des Fortschritt order der Decadenz"? in: Peter Alter, *ed. Im Banne der Metropolen: Berlin and London in den zwanziger Jahren.* Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993.
11. George Simmel in *die Grossstadt* for example described the metropolis as the place where the old stable world dies and personal ties atrophy. See *Grossstadt. Vortrage zur Städteausstellung* (Jahrbuch der Gehe-Striftung, Bd. 9), Dresden 1903. 204.
12. Roy, Memoirs, 176. For M.N. Roy's indebtedness to the political thought of Luxemburg, particularly in terms of the 'mass strike' and 'spontaneous uprising' see Roy, *Vanguard*, "The Use of Mass Strikes as a Political Weapon," June 1, 1923, 2:8.
13. Günther Schulz, *Von der Mietskaserne zum Neuen Bauen,* in: Alter, 43.
14. Joll, 34.
15. Most of the details provided in this section are taken from an interview with Theodor Bergmann by the author, Stuttgart, October 30, 2004. I am very grateful to him for sharing his reminiscences.
16. Humboldt *University.Listr One: Students at Humboldt Univerisitat 1928-1938.* Humbold Universitaet Archive: auslaender Kartei-Indien.
17. Günther Schulz, "*Von der Mietskaserne zum Neuen Bauen",* 44.
18. Joll, 70ff.
19. Jacobeit, Sigrid und Wolfgang. *Illustrierte Alltags- und Sozialgeschichte Deutschlands,* 1900-1945. Münster : Westfalisches Dampfboot. 1995, 118.
20. Eckardt, Wolfgang. *Bertolt Brecht's Berlin: a Scrapbook of the Twenties.* Garden City: Anchor Press, 1975.
21. See Agnes Smedley's autobiography of life in Berlin married to an Indian expatriate, *Daughter of the Earth,* New York: Coward-McCann, 1935. An Indian, Hedayat, involved with the German Foreign Office in 1918 wrote a report to the *Legationsrat* Wesendonk complaining that 'free love' was widespread among the Indian ex-patriot community in Berlin. See Foreign Office Files: PA AA 21121-2-0000109. 18.6.18. Hedayat to Wesendonk.
22. Peukert, Detlev. *Max Webers Diagnose der Moderne.*(Göttingen : Vandenbhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989.
23. Detlef Lehnert, "Fragmentierte Gesellschaft und modern Massenbewegungen", 204.
24. Benjamin, *Berliner Chronik*. 1936.
25. See Abelshauer, Werner, Faust, anselm und Petzina, Dietmar, *Deutsche Sozialgeschichte:* 1914-45. München: Verlag: C.H. Beck, 1985. 327-347.
26. Bergmann, T. (2001). *"Gegen den Strom". Die Geschichte der KPD (Opposition).* Hamburg, VSA-Verlag Hamburg, 31.

***Kris Manjapra** is a doctoral candidate in the study of History at Harvard University. He is working on an intellectual history of M.N. Roy and August Thalheimer, and the philosophical and cultural implications of 1920's Communist cosmopolitanism. This essay includes research from one chapter of his dissertation.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 2005.

M.N. Roy and Political Structures

Surendra Mohan

(*This note relates only to M.N. Roy's views on political parties. I believe that his views on the subject do not necessarily flow from his basic philosophy*.- Ed.)

M.N. Roy the great revolutionary and a political philosopher of eminence had excellent opportunities to study the working of revolutions and po9st revolutionary developments in Mexico and Russia. He was in close touch with the developments in China from 1923 onwards. He must therefore have become familiar with the militaristic mind of Chiang Kai Shek and his colleagues of the Koumintang Party. He was in Germany at a time when the Nazis were on the upswing, though he had shifted to India before Hitler assumed power. In all these cases, the post revolutionary regimes brought into being non-democratic regimes, whether of the left, right or centre.

Whether these experiences of the situations where people were struggling for democratic rights and for fundamental changes in the socio-economic structures of their countries exposed his thinking to western parliamentary democratic systems is difficult to say. During his stay in India, he saw the working of the Indian National Congress which was, then, more of a movement than an established parliamentary democratic party. The exercise of power had not gone through the rigours of democratic norms. When Roy died, Indian parliamentary democracy was six and a half years old, and the first elected parliament in India had not completed even two years.

It therefore appears that Roy's study of western parliamentary democracies was mostly academic, while his familiarity with the non-democratic regimes was personal and to an extent, intimate. In what manner these factors influenced his thinking relating to power and its exercise in a democratic polity might have been explored by scholars who have written about his political philosophy. The deep though which went into his formulations about the party system, however, does not appear to us to have taken into account the rich tradition of western democratic politics.

It might not be relevant in 1946-48 that Roy was schooled in a tradition when western parliamentary democracy was dismissed as bourgeois democracy which was no democracy at all. He could have looked at the party system, possibly, from his knowledge of the Communist Party of China, an equally young National Socialist Party of Germany led by Hitler and the Indian National Congress led by Gandhi. The last experience when, in the heat of the anti-imperialist struggle, all dissenters appeared opponents serving the enemy, might have galled him the most. He had not approved of the Congress' leaders' call for the Quit India struggle, as he thought that it distracted from the crucial and historical struggle between forces of Fascism and Democracy. Hence, he and his colleagues in the Radical Democratic Party suffered persecution by the partisans of the Quit India struggle.

Even in the west, parliamentary democratic polity had evolved by stages as a consequence of the rise of new social groups and power elites. Adult suffrage could be introduced gradually, so much so that in France, women got full franchise in 1928 and in Switzerland in 1972. Yet, power changed hands; the powerful legislated in favour of social, economic and political changes as they also worked to safeguard their class interests. However, political parties came in and went out of power, and wherever they were, and are, they serve the people accordingly to their lights. Politicians suffered from inner rivalries and power skirmishes, they got intoxicated with power, they indulged in personal aggrandisement, and yet, there are very few cases when they clung to power at all costs. Or, that the *sine-qua-non* of a political party was merely the achievement of power and that was its end all and be all.

The workers' parties, generally, have not only represented the trade unions from other similarly

placed groups, organised cooperative societies, study classes for adults and other kinds of constructive activities. Had Roy spent a year or so in France, United Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries or the USA, his opinions in this regard might have changed but that was not to be.

The creation of the Welfare States in Europe, the autonomy granted in France to the 'departments' and to 'landers' in Germany demonstrates that the tendency of centralisation of power can be reversed within democratic polity with the consent of political parties themselves. In our own country, devolution of power to *panchayati raj* institutions is a fair example. Democracy has certain self corrective devices because of the fact that, as Roy always argued, human beings are potentially rational people and possess the capacity to learn from experience.

It is not necessarily so, however. The degeneration of the party system in our country would show how the irrational in man distorts reason. Karl Mannheim, the distinguished German sociologist had argued, therefore, that what his country was going through during the late 1920s and the early 1930s was negative democratisation of culture. That is to say that the basic or the potential rationality of man (or the functioning of political parties) depends for their fruition on other social factors as well.

However, the devolution of power, the need to democratise the internal structures of political parties, the building up of consensus among them on the issues before the country and the tendency to create autonomous institutions free from the pulls and pressures of political parties or the ruling classes and trying to reform the electoral system are welcome steps that have been adopted in our country from time to time. They express the positive elements in our party system and in the democratic polity that India has adopted,. The recent phenomenon of empowering the people by legislating their right to information is another welcome feature. There can be little doubt that in most of these developments the teachings of Roy and the work of Radical Humanists active in the People's Union Civil Liberties and other institutions has contributed greatly.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 2005.

M.N. Roy's Attitude Towards Indian National Congress

Suneera Kapoor and Kiran Kanta

Indian National Congress, which was founded in December 1885, played an important role in India's struggle for independence. The ideology and programme of the INC before the advent of Mahatma Gandhi was a history of two vitally different thoughts – the Moderates and the Extremists. The Moderates dominated the Congress from 1885 to 1904 and 1907 to 1915. During 1905 to 1907 and 1916 to 1919 the Extremists were on ascendancy. The Moderate thinkers like Ferozeshah Mehta, W.C. Banerjee, Surendranath Banerjee, Dadabhai Naoroji, Madan Mohan Malavia, M.G. Ranade, Gokhle, etc. had faith in the British sense of justice. The Congress ideology under the leadership of the moderates was vague and indefinite. The influence of the moderates declined with the rise of the extremists. The Extremists in the Party came into prominence in 1905 under the leadership of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal. The new party succeeded in destroying many of the old illusions, which the leaders of moderate school passionately cherished. The era of petitioning came to an end and the era of agitation and resistance saw the light of the day. The strategy of the Moderates was defensive, of the Extremists aggressive. The Moderates believed in prayers and petitions, the Extremists in protest and agitation. The year 1920 marked the beginning of a new era – the Gandhian era. The Congress under the leadership of Gandhi touched the emotions of the multitude. Gandhi knew how to speak in the people's tongue. Under his leadership Indian Nationalism forged the unique and novel weapon of non-violent direct action, based on the law of self suffering instead of the device of inflicting suffering on the opponent.

Roy's attitude towards INC changed from time to time. In this search paper we would make and enquiry into M.N. Roy's attitude towards INC and observe as to how and why he changed his attitude towards INC.

Writing in the 1920s Roy argued that though INC claimed to be a national organisation representing the interests of the entire nation, in reality as dominated by bourgeois leadership and advocated the interests of the bourgeoisie. Its every act betrayed its ignorance of or indifference to the material interests of the majority of the people. He said, "The Congress assumed the title 'national' as if the bourgeoisie whom it represented was ordained providentially to be the custodian of the popular welfare. The small number of government officials, merchants, manufacturers, progressive landlords and intellectual liberals constituting it, believed themselves to be natural and legitimate representatives of the inarticulate masses the grievances of the office-seeking intellectuals were put forth as those of the people. The ambitions of the native capitalist class were identified with the right of the nation."1

He believed that the working class had been abused, exploited, denounced and betrayed by the Congress. The Congress had never paid any attention to the removal of its immediate grievances. It had only exploited the ignorance of the people for its political ends and had expected them to follow its lead blindly.2

He argued that the repudiation of the mass demonstrations during the Prince's visit, the condemnation of the revolutionary actions of the poor peasantry in the United Provinces and the stout defence of landlordism contained in the Bardoli Resolutions proved that the Congress was not the political party of the masses of the people, and that it did not stand for the entire nation, but for a certain class.3

He opined, "*If the Congress makes the mistake of becoming the political apparatus of the propertied class, it must forfeit the title to the leadership of the nation."*4

Roy argued that the complete national independence of India could be realised only by the efforts of the most revolutionary element of the society which constituted the workers and the peasants.5 So it was necessary to mobilise them in the struggle for the realisation of the establishment of an India Republic. However, this mobilisation of the workers and the peasants could not be achieved unless

their immediate needs were taken into consideration. Thus Congress stood in need of a clearly defined programme. He said, "*The Congress can no longer defer the formulation of a definite programme of economic and social reconstruction."*6 He added, "The Congress should t once launch a programme advocating the fight for higher wages for the workers, an eight-hour day, better housing, recognition of Unions, right of strike, equal pay for equal work. Abolition of landlordism, reduction of rents and taxes, strong measures for the abolition of usury and such other measures as will correspond to the immediate necessities of the masses."7

He asserted that if the Congress was to be a political party, then it was necessary for it to base itself on one or another of the three principal classes into which the Indian society was divided at that particular time. It should be either the party of the landlords or of the propertied upper and middle classes or of the exploited workers and peasants.10

He argued that the whole National Movement was divided into three camps. There were the Right Wing, the Centre and the Left. The first contained the Moderates, Liberals or Co-operators. In the Centre stood the Extremists, orthodox non co-operators,; and the Left was composed of the oppressed lower middle class, pauperised intellectuals and the masses of workers and peasants.11

According to him at first the Congress was dominated by the Moderates. But Moderates, representing the upper classes, together with the landlords followed a policy of compromise with the imperialist exploiter. After that Extremists, who were the mouthpiece of middle class, came to dominate the Congress. To quote him, "the Extremists or the non-co-operators do not represent the entire nation anymore than do liberals."12 He added, "The Extremists, who have always based their nationalism on the superiority of India's Spiritual Civilization, in the field of pure politics prove themselves equally ardent defenders of the material interests of the national bourgeoisie."13

According to Roy, while the Moderates representing the interests of large vested capital found it convenient to follow a policy of compromise with the imperialist exploiter, the Extremists had also proved themselves unable and unwilling to risk a decisive struggle. The Extremist nationalism came to an end of its rope, owing to its socially reactionary character and the consequent confusion in political ideology.14

He argued that the reactionary tendencies inherent in extremists' nationalism precluded the possibility of its ever becoming a dynamic revolutionary force, which alone could shake the foundation of foreign rule and start the people on the road to further progress.15

Roy said that under the leadership of the latter the Congress inaugurated the non-cooperation movement. However, he believed that the Congress filed to enforce the non-cooperation programme because it ignored that the toiling masses were the body and soul of the movement, and only they could make it effective. To quote him, "Non-cooperation movement collapsed because the Congress refused to mobilize and lead those revolutionary social forces that alone could make it a success."16

Roy argued that the foundation of British domination was the exploitation of the Indian masses. The profit that British made out of their domination in India was not produced by the lawyers, doctors, or students. It was made out of the labour of the workers and peasants. To quote him, "the actual amount of profit made by the British is not produced by the native upper and middle classes; it is produced by the workers and peasants."17 So it was only the latter that could cut out into the roots of British domination by refusing the produce value for the British Capitalism.

Thus, according to Roy, though both Moderates and Extremists had taken their turn in leading the national struggle, they had failed in their job. However, Roy undermined the role played by the moderates and extremists in promoting the cause of Indian national movement. The Moderates were the early nationalists who sowed the seed of nationalism. They worked for the development and consideration of the feeling of national unity among the Indians. They educated the Indians and aroused political consciousness among them. They worked within the framework of the constitution because the circumstances permitted them to do so. If they had adopted revolutionary and violent means, they

would have been easily crushed by the British by force. The spade work done by them proved very beneficial to the leaders of extremists group. There is no doubt that the extremists succeeded only in reaching the educated and urban people and their ideas could not reach the masses or the common people. Their movement could not assume nation-wide proportions. However, the achievements of the extremists cannot be underestimated. They tried to cripple the administration by weapons of non-cooperation and boycott. They propagated the use of *Swadeshi*. They infused among the Indian people the spirit of militant nationalism. In this way both the Moderates as well as the Extremists played a very important role in the freedom movement of India.

After the First World War, INC was dominated by the leadership of Gandhiji. Roy believed that under the leadership of Gandhi, INC came under the domination of spirit which was essentially reactionary and non-revolutionary in character.18

Roy criticized strongly INC for adopting such tactics, viz., non-violence, *Charkha* and *Khaddar*, under the leadership of Gandhi. He visualised that these tactics would not bring *Swaraj* to India.

Roy stressed that the revolutionary leadership was essential for national movement. He wrote, "We will no longer exhort the hungry people to suffer some visionary *Swaraj* to be attained by soul-force purified in the fire of poverty. Although it will be stupid to talk of premature violence, we are nevertheless, of the opinion that non-violent revolution is an impossibility."19 He regarded the violent struggle to be essential for the national movement. Roy maintained, "the overthrow of one political institution will inevitably be followed by a period of disturbance. The government maintained by violent and brute force cannot be overthrown without violence and brute force..."20 Therefore, Roy advised militant action of the masses. According to him, the cult of non-violence was not the cornerstone of Indian nationalism. He wrote, "On the contrary, it is the clever stratagem of the upper class to head off a revolutionary movement, without which nationalism will never come into its own, although the debris of our old society will be swept away, along with the British rule, by this convulsion. The cult of non-violence, therefore, is meant to serve the interest of those who have built castle of social privilege and economic exploitation upon this stinking debris."21 Roy said that non-violence was a positive hindrance in the way of broader kind of nationalism. According to him, "the Social System cannot be changed without violence and injustice."22

The reactionary economics of *Charkha* and *Khaddar* adopted by Congress under the leadership of Gandhi were not accepted by Roy. According to him, "these are not the *means* by which the subsiding mass enthusiasm can be kept up and the people led into action."23 According to Roy, the *Charkha-Khaddar* programme had two aspects; one constructive, the other destructive. One purely economical, the other political, agitational. Roy was concerned with its political, aspect. He argued that if the inauguration of civil disobedience was made conditional upon the realization of the *Charkha-Khaddar* Programme, it would follow that before Civil Disobedience was declared, the *Charkha* must be introduced into every house and at least in the majority of families, and that *Khaddar* must be worn by all. Roy questioned: Was the creation of such a condition possible? He raised the question from the point of view of possibility. He said, "The Charkha is an economic impossibility. None but the poor Indian toilers will be injured by its very problematical temporary success... The best method to be adopted at this stage of our struggle is not to put the people to sleep by the hum of the *Charkha*, but to organise mass-strikes involving larger and larger number of workers."24 Further he added, "The *Charkha* has been relegated to its well-deserved place in the museum; to expect that in these days of machinery it can be revived and made to supply the need of 320 millions of human beings is purely visionary."25 He said that reactionary economics of *Khaddar* was also impractical and non-revolutionary. He said that the price of Khaddar was higher than that of the mill-made cloth and *Khaddar* being more expensive left ht peasants and workers less for food. The average income of workers and peasants was very low and they could spend a certain amount and no more on clothing a year. According to Roy, their income was so paltry as not to cover the expenses of two meals a day. He contended that the *Swadeshi*

Movement in Bengal failed on account of economic impossibility, and not for any lack of enthusiasm or spirit of sacrifice. Roy concluded, "A propaganda for the revival of cottage industry does not prepare the people for a purely political movement."26 In this way Roy declared, "Neither *Charkha*, nor the cult of non-violence will bring *Swaraj* to India."27

Roy said that Congress had no clear-cut programme and "A political party is of no importance without a programme; because in that case it cannot count upon the conscious support of any social element."28 After the events at Chauri Chaura, the Working Committee met at Bardoli on 12 February 1922, suspended mass Civil Disobedience and adopted the Constructive Programme. Roy was not happy with all this. He argued that the INC did not stand for the entire nation, but for a certain class.

In 1922 he commented, "Today the National Congress as a political organisation is dead. Its corpse waits either to be buried or resurrected by a new breath of life."29 Roy argued that time had come for the appearance of a party voicing the sentiments and aspirations of those sections of Indian people whose interests had not been taken into consideration by any of former political parties.30 He said leadership of the national struggle should be taken over by a mass party consciously representing the immediate as well as ultimate interests of the workers and the peasants. The growth of such a party would again breathe vigour into Congress organisation, which was lying prostrate. He asserted, "Therefore what is wanted at the present crisis is a political party of the masses based on the principle of class-interest and with a programme advocating mass-action for carrying forward, the struggle for national liberation."31

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

Moreover, Roy's assessment of Indian National Congress under Gandhian leadership also cannot be fully accepted. It was Gandhi who provided a national base to the INC. Under his leadership the national movement became a mass movement for the first time. The INC became a revolutionary organisation because it adopted a new and changed programme and a new constitution. It was Gandhi who gave the political struggle for independence its socio-economic content and considered the struggle for economic justice and social equality in an overall democratic and peaceful framework of political functioning.

Roy suggested that the revolutionary factions believing in mass action should form an 'Opposition Block' within the Congress with the object of criticizing any attempt to lead the Congress away from the high road of revolution. "This Opposition Block, which will eventually grow into the revolutionary party of the people destined to be the leader of the final struggle, should put forth a programme calculated to give fresh impetus to the waning enthusiasm of the masses and thus draw them into the political struggle."32

Roy proposed the formation of a communist party.33 Writing in 1923 he said, "It is only under the banner of the communist party that the masses can be organised and led into the national struggle as the first stage of a great revolutionary movement for liberation. So, those who sincerely stand for the interest and welfare of the toiling masses must swell the ranks of the communist party, the leader of the workers and peasants – the *Vanguard* of National Revolution."34

He also favoured the formation of an open, vast, all-India political party of the workers and peasants with a clear cut programme of economic and social emancipation, and under the slogan of "*Not the Masses for Revolution, but Revolution for the Masses."*35 Roy said that there were two reasons as to why a revolutionary mass-party based upon the class interests of workers and pauperized peasantry should be immediately organised. According to him, "First such a party is alone capable of leading the anti-imperialist struggle further; and second, such a party must come into existence in order to prevent the fruits of national freedom conquered by the workers and peasants, from being totally misappropriated by the bourgeoisie."36 He said that the party of workers and peasants would be the conscious vanguard

of Indian working class in its struggle, first for national and then for complete economic and social liberation.37

Writing in 1926 Roy highlighted the necessity of a 'People's Party' broad enough to cover all the forces of national revolution. According to him, that party would include the petty-bourgeoisie, peasantry and proletariat.38 Roy argued, "The future of Indian politics will be an intensified fight for national liberation with revolutionary democratic ideals, under the standard of a People's Party. The proletariat, led by its own party – the Communist Party – will exercise hegemony in this revolutionary struggle for democratic national freedom."39

Whether the Indian National Congress could be transformed into the proposed 'People's Party' or a separate parallel party of revolutionary nationalism with a minimum programme of national democratic revolution would have to be organised, was left open at this stage.40

It is observed that in the 1930s there came a change in Roy's view towards INC. On his return to India, he attended the Karachi Congress of 1931. And was believed to be the author of the 'Resolution on Fundamental Rights' adopted at this session;41 though Jawahar Lal Nehru claimed that he himself drafted it and Roy had "absolutely nothing to do with it."42

Roy joined the Congress after his release from jail in 1936. Now he stressed the usefulness of the National Congress as an instrument in the struggle against imperialism. He wanted that all radical should join the Congress and believed that the Congress itself must be transformed into the united front of the Indian people. He vigorously opposed all attempts to undermine the Congress, or to set up rival organisations and regarded any attempt to weaken the Congress or to lead the workers and peasantry away from the Congress, or to set up organisations rival to the Congress as counter revolutionary. He was also opposed to the formation of any group or party within the Congesss.43

At this stage, Roy was of the opinion that all activities required for promoting the welfare of the peasantry, which constituted the overwhelming majority of India's population, were permissible inside the Congress organisation. Thus, according to him, there was no need to organise peasantry separately, independent of the Congress.44

The official Communists on the other hand condemned the Congress as a counter-revolutionary party of the Indian Capitalists. Consequently, their declared policy was to disrupt and destroy it. They opposed any participation of the workers and peasants in it. They stood for the formation of a new revolutionary mass organisation on the ruins of the Congress. Down-right thorough-going opposition and hostility to the Congress was their motto.45

It is observed that in the earlier phase of his thought, Roy had advocated the formation of progressive and revolutionary parties within the Congress with a view to capturing its leadership. However, now he gave up that idea. One of the reasons which led to this change in Roy's view was that he began to realise the potentiality of Congress to develop into a revolutionary party and stood for its transformation into an effective national revolutionary party by larger and more active participation of the masses, so he laid emphasis on work inside the Congress.46

Roy appreciated National Congress for its broad social basis, and tremendous influence upon the masses. He argued that National Congress was a movement embracing a variety of classes and sub-classes. It was not the political party only of the bourgeoisie as regarded by the official Communists. According to him, for a pr4oper understanding of the character of National Congress, it was necessary to distinguish between the objectively revolutionary rank and file and the subjectively anti-revolutionary leadership of the Congress.47

He said the National Congress offered the rallying ground to the oppressed and exploited classes in their struggle against imperialism. It commanded the confidence of the masses. It was a movement which expressed the highest degree of political consciousness of the masses.48

However, Roy argued, that National Congress was not a homogeneous political party. The leadership of the Congress was not the Congress. There was a contradiction between its leadership, which was

under the influence of the anti-revolutionary bourgeoisie, and the Congress as a movement. He highlighted the necessity of supplying a new leadership – an alternative revolutionary leadership – to the Congress movement. He said, "There is social basis for an alternative radical democratic leadership to replace the present outfit. The rise of such a leadership is necessary for the next stage of the revolution."49 He argued that the way of the liberation of the Congress from the bourgeois influence and its consequent conversion into a militant mass organisation was the overthrow of the Gandhist leadership and it replacement by a radical democratic leadership. Roy argued that the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, in collaboration with the proletariat, could provide the necessary alternative leadership.50

The main consideration that led Roy to change his views towards the Congress was its organisational structure. He was very much impressed by the countrywide net of primary committees built up by it. These committees, he believed, could be used as the basic units of the future democratic state of India. To quote him, "Local Congress Committees in a revolutionary crisis can function as instruments of mass uprising and become the basic units of the revolutionary state."51

In order to use the Congress Committees for this revolutionary purpose Roy tried to bring the Congress movement under the revolutionary leadership instead of forming groups or parties within it. Roy wanted the Congress to become a pyramidal structure raised on the broad base of a country wide net of primary committees which, by virtue of systematic day to day activity, would assume the character of really democratic local self-government, the most reliable basic units of a powerful democratic state.52

He wanted the Congress to assume the function of the Constituent Assembly. Roy argued that only a Constituent assembly elected by the people of India cold have the right to frame the constitution of the Government of India. According to Roy, the Constituent Assembly must precede the act of capturing power. It would be the instrument through which the people would capture power.53 In this context Roy highlighted the supreme importance of the Congress organisation, and specially of the primary Congress Committees.54

He argued that for the purpose of capturing political power, the people of India must have a suitable instrument. According to him, a condition for the seizure of power by the people of India was the creation, within the established State, of an organisation, which was competent to take over the State power. Roy said, "The Congress organisation is the framework of such a State within the established state."55

However, Roy wanted the Congress to be democratised, in order to have behind it the sanction necessary to assume the function of the Constituent Assembly. For that, according to him, it was necessary to realise the supreme importance of primary Congress Committees and to democratise and activise them. He argued that the demand for Constituent Assembly must be given a new formulation – "*All power to primary Congress Committees.*"56 Roy asserted, "Everything that serves the purpose of activising and democratising the primary Congress Committees must be encouraged and regarded as of revolutionary significance."57

Roy gave certain suggestions to strengthen the Congress and to solve some of its organisational problems. He pointed that there was too much of authoritarian, non-democratic centralisation in Congress amounting to virtual dictatorship. This, according to him, "not only reduced the open session of the Congress to a periodical political demonstration and the A.I.C.C. to mock parliament; it deprives the lower Congress Committees of all political significance and has been lately transforming them into electoral machineries."58

Roy was of the opinion that no organisation could have a stable structure if it was built on a foundation of sand. According to him, the ordinary membership of the Congress was politically illiterate and bogus to an increasing extent. He suggested that the bogus membership could be easily eliminated. He argued that regular periodical membership meetings and some specified day to day activity on the part of each and every member of the Congress would go a long way to eradicate the evil.59

Roy also suggested certain changes in the electoral system of the Congress to make it more representative. He supported 'indirect election' and 'proportional representation'. He believed that the intr4oduction of 'indirect election' would put an end to all the factional fights that were paralysing the political life of the Congress. and 'proportional representation' would provide the guarantee against the suppression of minority opinion.60 He argued, "Under the system of indirect election, the delegation to the Congress, and membership of the Committees will depend upon propagandist and political work among the rank and file. Enrolment of bogus or political illiterate members will no longer serve the purpose. Eventually the leadership will belong to those who will put in the largest amount of solid constructive work and thereby command the confidence of the rank and file."61

Roy's differences with the Congress arose soon after the Tripuri Congress which was held on 10-12 March 1939. After the leftists' challenge to the Gandhian group failed at Tripuri, the 'League of Radical Congressmen' (LRC) was formed to bring about a change in the Congress leadership from below.

Immediately after the Congress session was over, a meeting of the Royists was held at Tripuri where they decided to form the League and to issue a manifesto explaining its nature and objective.62 It is observed that when Roy joined the Congress in 1936 he was opposed to the formation of any group or party within the Congress and asked his followers to work simply as Congressmen. Though the formation of the LRC was certainly a deviation from that principle, Roy still sought to maintain that stand as far as possible. Referring to the Tripuri meeting of the Royists where they decided to form the LRC, Roy said in a statement: "The consensus of opinion was that while categorically rejecting the tendency of forming parties inside the Congress, those opposed to the present policy and the Gandhian leadership of the Congress must conduct their activity in a co-ordinated manner. The suggestion for the formation of a League of Radical Congressmen was generally welcomed as a step in that direction."63 In that statement Roy described the proposed LRC as a "non party left wing inside the Gongress."64

Talking about the LRC Roy said, "This particular group obviously does not represent any centrifugal tendency. It is a group of loyal Congressmen who earnestly wish to strengthen the organisation to which they belong."65 He added, "When it criticises the policy of the present leadership, and suggests the necessity of an alternative leadership thereby meaning a change of the policy, not necessarily the personnel, it should not be accused of 'bidding for power'."66

All the basic ideas of Roy propagated by him since his release from jail – alternative leadership, uncompromising struggle against imperialism, democratization of the Congress, activization of its primary committees, adoption of a concrete programme of democratic revolution, policy of revolutionary parliamentarism and the formation of the Constituent assembly – were summed up in the draft manifesto of LRC which was published in April 1939.67

In a letter to the members of the A.I.C.C., dated 7th October, 1939, Roy said that the central point of the plan should be to train every single Congressman as a conscious revolutionary soldier of a mighty political army, as a prospective basic unit of the future Democratic State of India.68

The Ramgarh Session held in March 1940 was the last Congress session attended by Roy. Serious differences emerged between Roy and Congress during that session. In subjects committee meeting at Ramgarh Roy e4xplained his views on the Constituent Assembly, which he said, would be elected by the local 'People's Councils' formed throughout the country challenging the British authority directly. Rajendra Prasad, who presided over the meeting, criticized in his speech the Royist Programme of the Constituent Assembly and said that the Congress was wedded to the constructive programme of Gandhi as the means to attain *Swaraj*. Gandhi proposed to turn every Congress Committee into a *Satyagraha* Committee in order to prepare the country for a new civil disobedience movement. When the Congress leadership took steps for converting the character of the Congress Committee according to Gandhi's proposal, the members of the LRC found themselves in an embarrassing position.69

When Roy joined the Congress he felt that the potentialities of the Congress were two-fold. It

could develop into a revolutionary political party, and it could also supply the framework of the new state.

Roy wanted to create a revolutionary party of the Indian people he believed that for the development and success of the Indian Revolution, a certain type of political party was necessary. He discovered that a considerable section of the masses destined to go into the making of that party were partially mobilised in the Congress. Therefore he joined the Congress. he appreciated the Congress, as it was a mass movement, and believed that being a mass movement, the tendency of its growing into a political party was inherent in it.

The immediate object of Roy's work in the Congress was "to raise the political level of the rank and file, to radicalise and activise them progressively".70 He hoped that in course of time the defects existing in the Congress would be eliminated and the masses mobilised under the banner of Congress, would be crystallized in a revolutionary political party.

However, it is observed that with the passage of time, Roy became disillusioned with the functioning of the Congress. by examining his views as expressed in 1940, it becomes clear that he by now came to realise that the task of mobilising the masses in a revolutionary struggle was not possible within the organisational framework of the Congress.

By experience, Roy realised that his desire was not shared by the leadership of the Congress, which was reactionary in nature, and which formed the organisational machinery of the Congress. It was so because the existing leadership of the Congress thrived on the political backwardness of the masses. Thus the organisation and consciousness of the masses could be a danger for the reactionary leadership, because if the masse would be organised there could be a pressure for the democratic control of the Congress and its policy. To quote Roy, "The crystallisation of the reactionary elements as the machinery of the Congress makes it impossible for the revolutionary forces to organise themselves into a political party within the Congress.71

Thus the organisational machinery of the Congress, according to Roy, served the purpose of checking all revolutionary development. He said, "To-day, the Congress is identified with a definitely anti-revolutionary organisation. The organisation functions as a powerful apparatus, checking the revolutionary urge of t its own components."72 The problem was aggravated, according to Roy, by the fact that masses incorporated in the Congress, because of their political backwardness, were completely controlled by the organisational machinery. He said, "To-day, whatever exists of the mass movement is an adjunct to this machinery, completely controlled by it. You cannot have any access to this movement without the permission of this machinery.73 He further said that experience had shown that organisational machinery could not be removed constitutionally.

Thus Roy came to the conclusion that it was not possible to transform the Congress as such into a revolutionary people's party. He argued that under such circumstances, it would become necessary to party company with the Congress machinery in order to fulfil the object of organising a revolutionary party of the people. To quote him, "But the split is inevitable. It is a condition for the attainment of our object of organising a revolutionary party of the people. Sooner or later, we shall have to party company with the Congress machinery."74

When Roy joined Congress, he was quite optimistic about the role which could be played by the Congress Committees. However, he learned with experience that the Congress Committees could no longer become the organs of popular power and that no revolutionary political propaganda or revolutionary struggle could be conducted through them. In 1940 he said, "The Congress Committees have practically ceased to be what we thought they were or could have been. They are no longer the local organs of struggle. They are not representatives of the local population."75 He added, "The men who control the Congress Committees need not have the confidence of the local people. They rely upon the patronage from above. That enables them to function as leaders of the local Congress organisations. Therefore, the Congress Committees have ceased to be popular organs."76

Roy now felt that the slogan, "All power to the Congress Committees" must be abandoned. Instead he introduced the idea of People's Councils. He said, "People's Councils will be a continuation of our programme of building up the local Congress Committees as the units of Democratic State."77

He said that People's Councils would also represent those sections of the people who were not in the Congress. Therefore, the propaganda for the organisation of People's Councils could not be carried on through Congress. Now he believed that greater importance should be given to work among the masses outside the Congress.78

Roy now began to think in terms of the formation of a new party. He said, "As long as there was a possibility of developing the Congress into a people's party, it was correct tactics on the part of the leftists to make it popular with the masses. But once it became clear that the Congress could not be freed from the control of National-Capitalism and other more reactionary interests, it was no longer permissible for the leftists to act as the political link between the Congress and the masses.79

It was on the issue of the Second World War that differences of grave nature arose between Roy and the Congress. Roy decided to support the war against Nazi Germany without any condition.80 This attitude brought Roy and his group of League of Radical Congressmen in direct conflict with the Congress policy towards the war. The policy of the Congress towards the war was that in spite of its sympathy for the victims of Fascism it could not support the war unless the independence of India was assured by Britain.81

Roy was opposed to this policy of Congress and he advocated unconditional support to the anti-fascist war. He said, "If the present policy of the Congress will be carried on to its logical consequence, it will mean a virtual support to Fascism. And as far as it depends on me, I shall not tolerate that."82 These differences ultimately led to Roy's break with the Congress and the formation of an independent party by him – The Radical Democratic Party in December 1940 – outside the Congress and in direct opposition to it.

References

1. M.N. Roy, *India in Transition in Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, 1917-1922, ed. Sibnarayan Ray (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 321.
2. For details see M.N. Roy, *One Year of Non-Cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya* in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, 1923-1927, ed. Sibnarayan Ray (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 61.
3. M.N. Roy, "What is a Programme?" (Part-III) in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. I,* p. 447.
4. M.N. Roy, *One Year of Non-Cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya* in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 46. Emphasis in original.
5. Ibid. p. 60.
6. Ibid. p. 45. Emphasis in original.
7. Ibid. p. 62.
8. M.N. Roy, "What is a Programme?" (Part-III) in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. I,* p. 450.
9. M.N. Roy, "What is a Programme?" (Part-III) in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. I,* p. 440.
10. M.N. Roy, "What is a Programme?" (Part-III) in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. I,* p. 441.
11. For details see M.N. Roy, "*What shall We Do At Gaya?" in Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. I, p. 455.
12. M.N. Roy, "What is a Programme?" (Part-III) in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. I,* p. 444.
13. M.N. Roy, *India in Transition in Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, 1917-1922, ed. Sibnarayan Ray (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 342
14. M.N. Roy, "*What shall We Do At Gaya?" in Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. I, p. 456.
15. M.N. Roy, *India in Transition in Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, p. 345.

16. M.N. Roy, "The Next Step" in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* II, p. 147.
17. M.N. Roy, "Mass Action" in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, p. 428.
18. M.N. Roy, *India in Transition in Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, p. 349
19. M.N. Roy, "Our Object", in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, p. 384
20. M.N. Roy, "Danger Ahead", in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, p. 393. c.f. Roy says that "Governments which have been established by force and which are maintained by force, usually end by being overthrown by force." M.N. Roy, "Is British sovereignty in India Legitimate?" in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 250.
21. M.N. Roy, "The Cult of Non-Violence: Its Socio-economic Background", in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 156.
22. M.N. Roy, "What is a Communist Party", in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 421.
23. M.N. Roy, "Mass Action" in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, p. 430.
24. M.N. Roy, "Constructive Programme" in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol.* I, p. 388.
25. M.N. Roy, *One Year of Non-Cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya,* in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 47.
26. M.N. Roy, *India's Problem and its Solution in Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. I, p. 554.
27. Ibid. p. 554.
28. M.N. Roy, "What is a Programme?" (Part-II) in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. I,* p. 440.
29. M.N. Roy, "Wanted a New Party" (Part-II) in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. I,* p. 421.
30. M.N. Roy, "*What shall We Do At Gaya?" in Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. I, p. 456.
31. M.N. Roy, "Wanted a New Party" (Part-II) in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. I,* p. 425.
32. M.N. Roy, "*What shall We Do At Gaya?" in Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. I, p. 458.
33. The details of his organisational proposals were provided in a series of confidential epistolary instructions to his communist contacts in India. Several of these letters were intercepted and copied by the intelligence department before forwarding them to the addressees; they were subsequently produced aw prosecution evidence in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. In them Roy proposed the formation of a secret and tightly knit Communist Party, which would be a section of the Communist International. For details see Sibnarayan Ray, Introductory Editorial Note" in Sibnarayan Ray, ed. *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 453-54.
34. M.N. Roy, "Ourselves*" in Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 95.
35. M.N. Roy, *Political Letters* in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 239. Emphasis in original.
36. M.N. Roy, *One Year of Non-Cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya,* in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, pp. 109-110.
37. For details see M.N. Roy, *Political Letters* in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 230.
38. For details see M.N. Roy, *The Future of Indian Politics* in *Selected Works of M.N. Roy,* Vol. II, p. 527.
39. Ibid. pp. 531-32.
40. Ibid. p. 454.
41. Thomas A. Rusch argued in his unpublished thesis, "The Role of the CSP on the Indian National Congress" that Karachi Resolution was authored by three persons, Gandhi, Nehru and M.N. Roy, with the main body of ideas drawn from Roy and Gandhi and with the skilful editing, drafting and slight additions by Nehru to produce a compromise acceptable to Congress. For details see S.M. Ganguly, *Leftism in India: M.N. Roy and Indian Politics: 1920-1948* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1948), pp. 127-129.
42. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1962), p. 268.
43. For details see M.N. Roy and V.B. Karnik, *Our differences* (Calcutta: Saraswaty Library, 1938), p. 167.

44. M.N. Roy and K.K. Sinha, *Royism Explained* (Calcutta, Saraswaty Library, 1938), p. 41.
45. For details see M.N. Roy and V.B. Karnik, *Our differences,* pp. 156-66.
46. Ibid. p. 165.
47. Ibid. p. 128.
48. For details see Ibid. p. 122.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid. p. 123.
51. Ibid. p. 125.
52. For details see M.N. Roy and K.K. Sinha, *Royism Explained*. p. 8.
53. Ibid. pp. 34-35.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid. p. 35.
56. Ibid. p. 36. Emphasis in original.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid. p. 5.
59. For details see Ibid. pp. 6-7.
60. Ibid. p. 7.
61. Ibid.
62. Dipti Kumar Roy, *Leftist Politics in India: M.N. Roy and the Radical Democratic Party.* p. 31.
63. M.N. Roy quoted in Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. M.N. Roy, *The Alternative* (Bombay: Vora Publishers, 1940), p. 76.
66. Ibid.
67. Dipti Kumar Roy, *Leftist Politics in India: M.N. Roy and the Radical Democratic Party.* p. 31.
68. For details see M.N. Roy, *The Alternative,* p. 72.
69. For details see Dipti Kumar Roy, *Leftist Politics in India: M.N. Roy and the Radical Democratic Party.* pp. 35-36.
70. M.N. Roy, S*ome Fundamental Principles of Mass Mobilisation* (Calcutta: D. Goonawardhana, 1940), p. 12.
71. Ibid. p. 17.
72. Ibid. p. 12.
73. Ibid. p. 9.
74. Ibid. p. 28.
75. Ibid. p. 20.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid. p. 22.
78. For details see Ibid. p. 23.
79. M.N. Roy, *National Government or People's Government* (1934: rpt. Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1946), p. 63.
80. For details see Dipti Kumar Roy, *Leftist Politics in India: M.N. Roy and the Radical Democratic Party.* p. 44.
81. Ibid.
82. For details see M.N. Roy, "My differences with the Congress", Vol. 4, No. 48 (Dec. 1940), p. 598.

Dr. Suneera Kapoor is Reader in the department of Political Science, Himachal Pradesh University. Dr. Kiran Kanta had done her Ph.D. on M.N. Roy from the same department.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, February 1997.

The Development of the Political Ideas of M.N. Roy

Kiran Kanta

An intellectual of international eminence, M.N. Roy was the most gigantic and prominent figure of 20th century Indian politics. He was the most controversial figure of modern India. He was very much different from others who dominated the scene of Indian politics of that time. He was definitely the most learned thinker India has ever produced. He distinguished himself both as a man of action and as a man of thought. As a man of action, he was a devoted and dedicated revolutionary. As a man of thought, he developed into a profound and original philosopher.

It is observed that Roy did not remain consistent in his ideas. He shifted his position from a National Revolutionary to a Marxist and finally to a Radical Humanist. The present study is concerned with the development of political ideas of Roy. It aims to explore the views held by Roy during these phases ad to examine as to what promoted him to shift his position from time to time.

The first chapter of the thesis includes a biographical note on the life and activities of Roy. Chapter two is concerned with the political ideas of Roy till the end of 1919. In this chapter an attempt has been made to examine Roy's ideas as a Nationalist and to see as to what factors influenced Roy in shifting his position from a Nationalist to a Socialist and then to a Communist. The main concern of the third chapter is to examine Roy's political ideas during the 1920s. An attempt has been made to examine Roy's views on Marxism, Indian society, revolution, Indian National Congress and Gandhi. Fourth chapter deals with changes in Roy's ideas from 1930 to 1946. It examines various factors which encouraged Roy to develop his philosophy of Radical Humanism. Finally, an attempt has been made to examine the various aspects of Roy's philosophy of Radical Humanism in the fifth chapter.

It is observed that Roy joined politics as a young boy of fourteen. He was attracted towards the politics of armed struggle and revolution for the liberation of his motherland. Like other revolutionaries and radicals of Bengal, Roy was influenced by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. He was also impressed by Vinayak Sarvarkar who was a well-known revolutionary. Moreover, Jatindra Nath Mukherjee, who was one of the most dangerous anarchists and a terrorist leader determined to overthrow British rule by means of an armed insurrection also exercised influence on him.

At that time Roy was ready to do anything for the freedom of his country. He became involved in a number of political robberies to raise money which was needed for revolutionary purposes. He believed that *Bhagavadgita* gave the sanction for adopting any means, provided they were performed in a spirit of detachment and as a matter of fulfilment of one's duty.

He left India in search of arms in 1915 and reached America in 1916, with the ultimate aim of going to Germany from where he expected assistance of arms and money to be used for the liberation of the country.

However, Roy's experiences in America drifted him in a different direction. He found that the Indian revolutionaries in America were very much divided and poorly organised. He lost touch with Indian revolutionaries. He also could not get any help in America in order to go to Germany.

However, he met a number of Socialists in America and was influenced by their views. Another experience in America marked a turning point in Roy's life. He attended a socialist rally in New York addressed by Lajpat Rai. Lajpat Rai's remark that it did make a difference whether one was kicked by one's brother or by a foreign robber struck inadequate to Roy and he felt that there was something lacking in the nationalist blueprint for freedom. He began to wonder if exploitation and poverty would really cease in India with the attainment of political freedom from alien rule. He read the works of Karl Marx which gave him new insights. Soon he came to accept Socialism. However, he did not believe in materialist philosophy. Culturally he was still a Nationalist.

Roy went to Mexico in 1917. His writings in Mexico represent some very important nationalist ideas of M.N. Roy advocating unconditional freedom of India. He asserted that freedom was the innate right of all human beings. He said that every country had the right to overthrow and alien or despotic government in accordance with the doctrine that affirmed that 'Governments are based on the consent of the governed and derive their powers from the consent.' He added that the British yoke in India could not be accepted as it was the rule of a strange race upon another which was absolutely different in religion, blood, language, manners and traditions.

The Britishers justified their rule in India by arguing that the British rule in India was a great step in human progress which had saved the Indian people from bad government and endemic anarchy. They denied national freedom to India on the contention that the Indians were not fit for the same. Roy tried to refute that argument by high-lighting the superiority of Indian civilization.

The Britishers argued that the object of British rule in India was the well-being of the Indian people and Indians had advanced greatly under the British rule. Roy asserted that the theory that England brought a higher civilization and a better government to India was false. He differed from the Moderates who believed in the providential nature of the British rule in India. Roy highlighted exploitation of India under the British rule and concluded that India had not benefitted in any manner under British rule. He argued that it was England which had benefitted from India and said that the industrial supremacy of England originated in the plunder of India.

Roy believed that freedom of India from British yoke was of world significance. The liberation of India, according to him, would not only give freedom to a fifth of the world's population, but would also prepare the way for humanity towards its goal of peace and fraternity. He argued that India had been made to bear all the costs of Britain's imperialist wars and conquests.

Thus, Roy believed, that Indians were justified in seeking the moral and material assistance of all nations, who sincerely believed in the progress of mankind, for the liberation of their country.

Roy was of firm conviction that India could not gain freedom by peaceful and constitutional means advocated by the Moderate section of Indian nationalist movement. Nor did he have faith in British justice and fair-play. He believed that India could only be liberated by a bloody revolution.

Roy stayed in Mexico for two and a half years. However, his stay in Mexico was very important from the point of view of the subsequent develop-0ment of his political thought. In a sense, Mexico was the land of his rebirth he was influenced by the study of the origin and development of the 'Monroe Doctrine' and observed how Mexican people were struggling against exploitation and U.S. imperialism. The spectacle of poverty of the Mexican people made Roy realise that national independence was not the cure for all the evils of any country. He resolved to take up the struggle for Socialism.

During the last year of his stay in Mexico, Roy shifted his position from militant Nationalism, through Socialism, to Marxism. Russian Revolution had an impact on the development of his political ideas. The most decisive role was played by Michael Borodin in converting Roy to a Marxist. Roy had discussions with Borodin quite frequently on the philosophical aspect of Marxism. These discussions played a crucial role in Roy's conversion to Marxism.

It is observed that during the 1920s Roy remained an orthodox Marxist and believed in the various tenets of Marxism. He was a materialist and differed from the majority of Indian thinkers who were spiritualists. He also believed in dialectical materialism and determinism. He argued that great ideas originated in and were determined by the prevailing material conditions.

He believed in class-differentiation and class-antagonism and was opposed to the Gandhian notion of class-collaboration. He believed that class war was the inevitable attribute of civilization, and argued that human history was a history of class-struggle. He believed that the root cause of class-struggle was the fundamental fact that there was private property.

Roy stood for the abolition of classes and consequently of class-struggle, but believed that

classes could not disappear unless private property was abolished. He argued that capitalism itself had created the conditions that rendered the abolition of private property necessary and therefore possible. Under it private property lacked moral sanction.

Roy criticized capitalism and argued that in a capitalist system the labourer was deprived by the employer of the greater part of the value that he produced. Thus, according to him, capitalism led to the exploitation of human labour. He believed that capitalism should be replaced by Socialism.

Roy advocated Marxian brand of Socialism which, according to him, stood for the abolition of private property, classes and exploitation 0of man by man. However, he believed that it was not possible to establish socialism through some compromise with capitalism and its state. He argued that the capitalist state opposed the development of Socialism because like any other state it only defended the interests of a particular class of the society, which was the propertied class. Therefore, according to Roy, for bringing about Socialism it was necessary to overthrow the capitalist state ad capture political power by means of an armed revolution.

It is observed that Roy's notion of revolution underwent a change. Like Marx, he argued that maturity of social forces was the objective condition for a revolution. He believed that as the class struggle sharpened it ultimately broke out in an open clash and the society entered into a period of revolution, which brought about the subversion of the old decayed system and created a new system.

Roy's idea of freedom also changed. As a Nationalist, Roy thought in terms of freedom of the nation. But now he no longer believed in political freedom without the content of economic liberation and social emancipation. He regarded the political independence of the country as the first step to economic freedom and social emancipation. Thus it is observed that during the 1920s Roy subscribed to most of the Marxist ideas.

During this period Roy also gave a Marxian interpretation to Indian society. Talking about Indian society he said that class exploitation within the structure of the exploited nation had become a social phenomenon, and the economic cleavage between the propertied and the wage-earning classes was becoming wider.

He argued that after 1918 the bourgeoisie became an important factor in the Indian society. However, according to him, the rise of native bourgeoisie was followed by the increasing exploitation of the worker by the native capital.

He said that the unbearable economic conditions were forcing the Indian workers and peasantry to fight for their interests and added that the revolt of the wage-slave against the propertied rich was rocking the country. Thus he argued that in India, national struggle and class struggle were going on side by side.

Roy believed that in India the way to Socialism lay through the national liberation struggle which would set up a democratic republican state. According to him, the democratic republican state would do the preparatory work for the reconstruction of Socialism by removing the feudal patriarchal traditions from the Indian society. He believed that in India bourgeois democratic revolution would precede proletarian revolution. The former, according to him, would pave the way for the latter.

However, Roy doubted the revolutionary potential of the Indian bourgeoisie and argued that it would not be able to lead the bourgeois-democratic revolution. He said that the bourgeoisie would enter into a compromise with British imperialism. He argued that the proletariat with the help of poor peasantry would lead the revolution and bring national struggle to a successful end. He added that the worker would struggle for national freedom to ultimately achieve his social and economic emancipation.

It is found that Roy changed his views on the role of the petty-bourgeoisie during the 1920s. In the early 1920s he regarded them as reactionary in nature but during the latter half of the 1920s

he argued the petty-bourgeoisie would join the workers and peasants in the revolutionary struggle. However, he continued to argue that the revolution would be brought about under the leadership and hegemony of the proletariat. During this period, Roy regarded proletariat to be a significant factor in the Indian society.

Roy's belief in Marxism made him criticize Gandhi and Gandhism. He regarded Gandhism reactionary in nature and argued that its creed of non-violence was inseparable from and anti-Revolutionary spirit. He differentiated Gandhism from Marxian Socialism and argued that whereas Marxian Socialism stood for the interest of the oppressed and the exploited majority and talked of the struggle for capture of power by them, Gandhism could not provide any practical method to solve their problem. Roy believed that Gandhism would not be able to misguide the people for long and even predicted its imminent collapse.

Roy also analysed Indian National Congress from the point of view of Marxism. He believed that any mass party could only be organised on the principle of class interests. He said that Congress had falsely claimed to be an all-inclusive national party based upon the principle of class-collaboration. In reality it was dominated by the bourgeois leadership and advocated their interests only. It had ignored the interests of the working class.

He argued that Congress was first dominated by the Moderates representing the upper classes and then by the Extremists who were the spokesmen of the middle classes. But both of them were unable to lead the national struggle. He believed the national independence of India could only be realised by the efforts of the most revolutionary elements of the society which consisted of the workers and the peasants. Thus he argued that the leadership of the Congress should be taken over by a mass party representing the interests of the workers and the peasants. With this end in view he suggested that an 'Opposition Block' should be formed within the Congress by all the revolutionary sections believing in mass action. He was hopeful that the 'Opposition Block' would eventually grow into the revolutionary party of the people which would lead the struggle.

It is observed that from 1930 to 1946, Roy changed his views on certain aspects radically. His experience of the actual situation prevailing in India disappointed him. He realised that the picture which he so far had in his mind about Indian society was not correct. He observed that a social and political revolution was not immediately possible in India as Indians were not politically conscious and that was mainly due to the fact that they believed too much in religion and spiritualism and were culturally backward. Thus Roy realised the foremost necessity of making the people conscious about their plight and this, according to him, could only be achieved, if they were liberated from ignorance and orthodoxy and were made to think rationally. This led Roy to advocate a philosophical revolution as a prerequisite to social and political revolution.

Roy rejected the religious mode of thought and spiritualism. He laid emphasis on rationalism, and scientific mode of thought. He highlighted the necessity of spiritual freedom by which he meant the freedom of man from the clutches of religion, spiritualism, ignorance and superstition. Roy believed that the materialism philosophy was the right instrument for the spiritual liberation of mankind. He started a Renaissance Movement with a view to replacing the religious outlook of people by the scientific mode of thought. Roy now believed that India needed three revolutions. It needed a philosophical revolution, a bourgeois democratic revolution and a proletarian revolution. He was also of the view that there was a possibility that the bourgeois democratic revolution in India might create conditions favourable for a direct development of Socialism.

He continued to believe that the bourgeois democratic revolution would be brought about by the joint efforts of the peasants, workers and the petty-bourgeoisie under the hegemony of the proletariat. However, it is observed that Roy's views on the position and role of the different classes in Indian society underwent a great change. In the earlier phase of his thought, Roy believed proletariat to be a tremendous force in India and argued that it would lead the revolution.

However, now he argued that the proletariat was an insignificant factor in the Indian society. As such it was not in a position to lead the revolution. He also argued that there was no sign of any revolutionary consciousness in the Indian peasantry. Now he believed that the petty-bourgeoisie rather than the proletariat would lead the revolution.

Roy began to believe that the most important and decisive factor in the revolution was the subjective factor and he believed that the petty-bourgeoisie was the most important subjective factor of the revolution. He rejected the theory of a spontaneous development of revolution, and believed that in India capture of power could not take place in consequence of a spontaneous upheaval. It could not be a sudden event but it had to be an organised process. Accordingly to him, the most important problem of the Indian Revolution was the problem of building up the party which would organise and lead the revolution.

Roy realised the potentiality of Congress to develop into a revolutionary party and joined it in 1936. He recognised the necessity of supplying a new, alternative revolutionary leadership to the Congress. He was also impressed by the country-wide net of primary Congress Committees and believed that these committees in a revolutionary crisis could function as the instruments of mass uprising and become the basic units of the revolutionary state. Thus he wanted to democratise and activise the Congress Committees.

It is observed that in the earlier phase of his thought, Roy had advocated for the formation of progressive and revolutionary parties within the Congress with a view to capturing its leadership. However, now he gave up that idea. Now he was opposed to the formation of any group or party within the Congress and regarded any attempt to weaken the Congress as counter-revolutionary. He asked his followers to work as simply Congressmen.

However, it is observed that with the passage of time, Roy became disillusioned with the functioning of Congress. He began to realize that the task of mobilizing the masses in a revolutionary struggle was not possible within the organizational framework of the Congress. He also learned with experience that the Congress Committees could no longer become the organs of popular power and that no revolutionary propaganda, or revolutionary struggle could be conducted through them. Roy's differences with Congress led him to form the League of Radical Congressmen – a non-party left wing inside the Congress in 1939. It was on the issue of the Second World War that differences of grave nature arose between Roy and the Congress. These differences ultimately led to his break with the Congress in December 1940 and the formation of an independent party by Roy.

It is observed that Roy continued to criticize Gandhi and Gandhism during this period also. He went to the extent of saying that Gandhism resembled Fascism and argued that Gandhi's ideas appealed to the majority of the Indians as they were culturally backward and ignorant.

Roy's writings in the later part of the 1930s reveal that he no longer understood Marxism in a narrow dogmatic sense. He gave a broader interpretation to Marxism and argued that Marxism implied rational approach to everything. He stressed the necessity of elaborating, amplifying and even revising the teachings of Marx in the light of the knowledge of modern science. It is observed that during this period, he gave his own interpretation to Marxism which sometimes went against the entire spirit of Marxism.

During the 1940s Roy deviated more and more away from orthodox Marxism. He challenged certain fundamental principles of Marxism, and criticized the Marxist ideas of class-war., surplus value, dictatorship of proletariat, revolution and withering away of the state. However, he admitted that he still accepted the positive contributions of Marxism.

During the 1940s Roy also criticized Communism, Fascism, Nationalism and Parliamentary Democracy. According to him, they ignored individual and denied freedom to him. Roy's disillusionment with the existing philosophies led him to develop his own philosophy of Radical

Humanism.

During the Radical Humanist phase, Roy continued to be a materialist. He was of the view that materialist philosophy must recognise the objective reality of ideas. Thus he proposed to make a synthesis between the dynamics of matter and the dynamics of ideas. He criticized Marxian materialism and rejected dialectical materialism. He also criticized Marxism for its economic interpretation of history.

In his philosophy of Radical Humanism, Roy attached supreme importance to the individual, who according to him, was a moral and a rational being. He replaced the concept of economic man by moral man. He regarded freedom as the supreme value of the individual and believed that the purpose of all rational human endeavour, individual as well as collective, was the attainment of freedom, in ever increasing measure. Now he talked of freedom neither in terms of nation, nor in terms of class, but in context of individual. He believed that freedom to be meaningful should be enjoyed by individuals.

Roy during this period believed in secular, rational morality and argued that man could behave morally without any compulsion. He suggested that politics should be based on ethics. He regarded society and states as means created by man to promote his freedom. Therefore, he argued that they had no right to subordinate individual. Unlike Marx, Roy believed that the state was indispensable. However, he wanted the state to perform a limited function of only regulating and coordinating the diverse activities of other autonomous social institutions.

In his philosophy of Radical Humanism, Roy stressed that the existing political and social institutions were not conducive to individual freedom. The centralisation of power, either political or economic, was considered by him as inimical to individual freedom. That was the spirit behind his concept of Radical Democracy or Organised Democracy and Cooperative Economy. He believed that to be real and effective democracy should be practised not simply in the state legislatures or in the national parliament but in the local bodies, where people could actually participate in the affairs of the state.

Roy suggested an Organised Democracy which was a direct democracy and was based on decentralisation of power and elimination of political parties. He highlighted the necessity of education for the success of democracy.

Roy also developed the idea of Cooperative Economy, which aimed at ending exploitation of man by man and guaranteeing a progressively rising standard of living to all the members of the society.

Unlike Marx, Roy now believed that the lever of revolution was not class struggle but philosophy. He no longer believed that revolution meant a sudden change from the past. He favoured a gradual replacement of the old by the new social order. He advocated a philosophical revolution and stressed the importance of educating the people and appealing to their reason. He believed that to remake the society, it was first necessary to remake man.

It has been observed in the course of the study that many views expressed by Roy during this phase were similar to those of Gandhi. Still essential differences remained between the ideas of these two thinkers. It is also found that Roy's views during this period were quite different from Marxism. Now his ideas resembled the doctrines of classical liberalism. However, he tried to replace the practice of liberalism by humanist practice.

Dr. Kiran Kanta has done her Ph.D. on M.N. Roy from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla. This article is the abstract of her Ph.D. Thesis.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, September 1997.

Communism and M.N. Roy

Samaren Roy

M.N. Roy was provoked into studying Marxism by the American Radicals questioning him and Lajpat Rai as to what guarantee there was that Indian workers would not be exploited in a free India. Till then U.S.A. was not involved in World War I and the European controversy about the Socialist attitude towards the war was no concern of those Radicals. Nor did it concern them after America had entered the war on the side of Britain, a country which had not been popular with Americans for the preceding 140 years. Most of them, except the leaders like Eugene Debs, a Socialist, had escaped to Mexico to avoid being drafted and they included Maurice Baker (poet and cartoonist), Irwin Granwich (novelist, subsequently known as Michael Gold), Henry Glintenkamp (painter and cartoonist) and Carl Beals (journalist). Roy had also sought refuge in Mexico to avoid extradition to British India where he would have been tried and jailed for waging war against His Majesty's Government. They continued to be his company until Borodin's arrival in Mexico in the summer of 1919.

Jean Juarez's murder occurred while Roy was at sea. It could not have affected him a great deal. Nor the breach in the movement at Grunewald. Roy had acquired some knowledge of the debates in the Second International for in 1920 he did refer to the exchange between Plekhanov and Lenin. He could not but dismiss the Socialists as "had been' for they had ceased to be a factor in spite of the Weimar Regime in defeated Germany being Social Democratic. In victorious France the atmosphere was closer to what it had been in Nepoleanic times, and worse because of the alliance with Britain.

Though the intellectual climate of Mexico was close to that of France prior to the Revolution, and Eduard Bernstein held hopes of an evolutionary trend from the French Revolution, Roy could not bank on Kautsky's ideas for they held no hopes for India. Roy was still a nationalist politically, though he had abandoned cultural nationalism. It was not only Roy who saw that the future lay with the Communist, and not the Socialist International. Even American Radicals like Luis Fraina and Charlie Philips, joined the Comintern. They might have been infected with the enthusiasm that the American journalist John Reed had shown in his reporting of the Russian Revolution.

On his way to Moscow, Roy had halted at Berlin, and met the Marxist theoreticians then still alive. Marx and Engels were dead but had left Bernstein and Kautsky as repositories of the tradition. The two differed widely. Bernstein had Marx's hope that political democracy will enable the establishment of socialism in a predominantly industrial country. Kautsky advocated a seizure of power while the rulers were engaged in war.

Neither of the two ways was applicable to India. World War I was over and a projected insurrection with German help had failed to materialize. So that way was out of question. A dependent country like India could not count on the Bernstein way for the country was neither democratically governed nor industrialized, and the British proletariat believed that the possession of colonies like India was essential to its prosperity. On the colonies his views were closer to Rosa Luxemburg than anyone else's

Taunted by Bernstein as being a convert to or disciple of Leninism, Roy proceeded to Moscow where he hoped to have a better audience than other Indians at earlier Socialist International Congresses. He represented the Mexican Communist Party while others had not been nominated by any affiliate of the International for no socialist Party existed in India. Roy tried to remove the anomaly of an Indian representing Mexico by founding a Communist Party of India without much delay at Tashkent in October 1920.

At the 1920 Comintern Congress Roy found his viewpoint on colonies little understood except

by Maring (Sneevliet of Holland) who had been to Indonesia. On the one hand Lenin invested the national bourgeoisie in the colonies with as revolutionary a role as that of their counterparts in the French Revolution. Lenin put his trust in men like Sun Yet-Sen. Roy had met Sun Yet-Sen before he became a Marxist and found disappointing Sun's faith in Japan becoming Pan-Asian liberator. Lenin conceded that he did not know enough about colonies but other European delegates would not admit their ignorance.

We are not sure if Roy invented the term Twentieth Century Jacobinism but he did make it his ideology. It could also be described a Radical Democracy, what the 1973 French Constitution had roughly sketched out. The terms are largely interchangeable, but Roy insisted that the programme had to be accomplished under the leadership of a Marxist elite operating within a movement for national liberation. He went further and held that proletarian revolutions could hope for success only if the bounty from the colonies stopped reaching the metropolitan countries.

Very few Asian and African delegates were present at the 1920 Congress. Their number increased subsequently. The delegations from Africa were entirely European but there was a significant departure from the Second International debates on the Colonial question in the sense that Dutch and German delegates no longer thought that their countries had a right to colonize as much as the British and French had. The British at the Congresses were a trifle apologetic about having an Empire over which the sun never set.

This noticeable change in the attitude towards colonies was due to the disgrace of Social Democrats over the issue of participation in World War I. They had turned patriots overnight and voted war credits. The atmosphere was very different from what had prevailed at the end of the Russo-Japanese war when at the 1904 Amsterdam Congress Plekhanov and Katayama had done a public handshake to demonstrate workers unity. That unity had been destroyed by World War I and the behaviour of Social Democrats.

Workers unity had been reasserted at Grunewald under Lenin's leadership. Eminent social Democrats like Bernstein and Kautsky were conspicuous by their absence at Comintern Congresses. The British however sent Sylvia Pankhirst and Horace Hyndman. Largely it was a new generation of Marxists in attendance. Only the Russians had stalwarts of the 1909 abortive revolution in fair number. They dominated the Comintern for they had carried out a successful revolution in 1917 and they were men of stature.

Till the failure of the 1925 German attempt at revolution the tendency was to treat the Russian Revolution as a fluke. The country was not industrialised, the proletariat was too small to risk democratic methods within the party as well as outside it in the country. Hence the emphasis on the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Roy theses on the Colonial Question were buried in the archives till developments in China brought them into the limelight.

Stalin repeatedly emphasised in 1927 that Twentieth Century Jacobinism and Roy's theses were relevant to China as well as India. The Russian presence in China was diplomatic and advisory. Hence, neither Roy nor Borodin could impose their will on the local leadership and the revolution failed for the time being. It was a period of disappointment for Communism which had fallen into deep despair and opted to conserve socialism in one state, that was Russia. In Germany, which had lost its colonies during World War I, the decay of capitalism was halted by American aid. The hopes of both Bernstein and Roy had turned into dupes – a large proletariat organized into two large parties, Social Democratic as well as Communist, had failed to take advantage of political democracy to establish a socialist regime, and the loss of colonies had not encouraged the German proletariat to overthrow bourgeois rule. In China the then Communist leadership had refused to arm the peasantry in 1927 to avoid annoying the rural gentry which provided the officer corps of the Koumintang Left.

Evolutionary socialism in an industrialized metropolitan country as well as radical democracy

in an agrarian colony had not lived up to the expectations of Bernstein and Roy. The time was propitious for examining strategies relating to favourable trade balances accruing to metropolitan countries being converted into capital investments in colonies. These statistics revealed a trend towards industrialization of colonies. Bukharin, then the leading ideologue of the Comintern, named the trend decolonization.

So starting was the revelation that it evoked derision from those who had made seizure of power their creed. But Stalin did not express any opinion. Vargas, the Comintern economist, praised the partly worked out theory probably because Roy was then in the good books of Stalin. Even Roy seemed apologetic about his finding's similarity with Bernstein's ideas that he had to plead that it merely indicated favourable conditions for revolutionary action and did not obviate the need for action.

Decolonization did take place in India without any revolutionary action. In most colonies a comparable transfer of power without social change took place. The 1942 attempt at seizure of power, when the Japanese were on the borders of India but not prepared to invade the country till a year later for lack of naval and air support, was a miserable failure. Still the time table outlined in 1920 at the introduction of diarchy, and in 1937 at the introduction of autonomy in the provinces was kept by conferment in 1947 of dominion status with right to secede.

By 1941 Roy was convinced that at the end of World War II, Britain would strike a bargain with the Indian bourgeoisie and transfer power to it. He did not share Lenin's belief in the progressiveness of national bourgeoisie in colonial countries. He had developed reservations about Indian and Chinese bourgeoisie similar to those of American Radicals. That was the provocation which had led him to study Marxism. That was his main difference with Lenin at the Second Comintern Congress. He had repeatedly stated his doubts about the Indian leadership being fair to the peasants and workers in his books, speeches and articles between 1920 and 1929.

His experience in China under Chiang Kai-Shek, favourable of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his successor, had strengthened his views about the bourgeoisie in colonial countries. He was not only an Indian Marxist. His interests were wider than of critics at the Comintern Congresses and at sittings of the ECCI. They were, in spite of having spent years in exile in Europe, primarily concerned with Russian affairs. Roy had organised a pan-American Congress in Mexico before he appeared in Moscow. He travelled over most of Eastern Asia even before he landed in America, and though he rarely aired his opinion about countries, other than India, his acquaintance with t a large part of the world made his outlook broader than that of most others.

On return from China he was convalescent in Germany, and there he was witness to a national upsurge worse than what he had seen elsewhere, even in colonial countries. It was something more hateful than imperialism, for there was no association decolonization to soften its edges. Instead there was a virulent racist facet to Fascism. He had been born a Brahmin, who named India as Aryavarta. He had outgrown both Brahmin claims to superiority and pride in being an Aryan before he had left the shores of his country. He found Nazi persecution of Jews hateful, and the class collaboration which Fascism imposed as an opponent of social change.

Russian Communists were driven by internal struggle for power. Lenin and the Revolution had taken them by surprise. Factional rivalries were between those advocating a cautious approach to problems affecting the party and those desirous of a rapid advance to utopia of Marxist dreams. The former called the latter as suffering from Left Infantilism; the latter retorted with the accusation of Right Senility. After Lenin's death these squabbles became more personal than concerned with policy. Stalin ousted Trotsky from the party and then exiled him. He was later murdered in distant Mexico.

There were several others who could not be driven out, for at one time or other Stalin defeated his opponents with their support. Their nuisance value was alarming; so they were executed or

exiled to Siberia. Those developments belong to a later date. Roy was in Russia when Trotsky was expelled from the party. He had sided with Stalin who had rescued his ideas about Twentieth Century Jacobinism from shelves where they had been gathering dust for seven years. Roy was as grateful to Stalin for this resurrection of his theses as he had been to Lenin for according them an alternate status.

The Russian party was so engrossed in its squabbles that it could not pay attention to happenings in Germany, where changes in the leadership were carried out at the behest of the Comintern. Brandler and Thalheimer were replaced by Haslow and then by Ruth Fischer. The question posed by the attention it deserved. Brandler and Tahlheimer proposed burying the hatchet picked up at Grunewald and collaboration with Social Democrats against Nazis.

For fourteen years Communists had looked down on Socialists, and it was not easy for them to change the attitude. Roy, who had become a Marxist after that split at Grunewald, did not suffer from any hangover from past feuding, wrote in support of that policy. Though Inprecor and other Comintern journals continued to publish his articles till March 1929 even after his expulsion from the organization, Roy sent those articles to periodicals brought out by what came to be called the Communist Opposition.

He was accused of contributing to the Opposition Press and dropped from the Comintern. Attention to the articles was drawn by an Indonesian member of the ECCI. Not being a Russian he did not go to Moscow. Besides in India all members of the CPI which he had founded at Tashkent in 1920 or with whom he had corresponded had been arrested for trial in the Meerut Conspiracy case.

Roy came back to India to build anew the party. The news of his expulsion from the Comintern he had communicated to Gangadhar Adhikari whom he had known in Berlin. People on the fringes of the party were informed and viewed Roy with either suspicion or hostility. But Roy did not see his expulsion as a final break with Comintern and disapproved of the idea of forming a new party or a new International.

In 1935 the Comintern changed its sectarian policy and adopted one of collaboration with other parties but without hearing the Communist Opposition or giving it the credit for change. The change was late and Europe was overtaken by World War II. Roy had come out from jail in India and took upon himself the defence of Stalin's pact with Hitler. It was an unpopular undertaking in a country like India, where the main political demand was for independence, not socialism. There was a general agreement over the demand for most of those voicing it were not liberals but people sympathetic to Hitler for fighting the British and for being aggressively Aryan.

Since 1929 with Roy anti-Fascism took precedence over anti-imperialism. This could have been to a sub-conscious awareness of the correctness of his ideas of decolonization which turned anti-imperialism into something like tilting at windmills, and from a conscious awareness that Nazi Germany would not stop at persecuting Communists in its own country but would eventually attack Soviet Russia. On that point anti-fascism merged into an earlier commitment to defence of socialism in the one country where it had been established.

Roy, with his lingering remnants of anti-imperialism, expected the capitalist countries to back Hitler in his attack on Russia, which did not happen in spite of the Munich agreement. So he saw Stalin, for whom he had lifelong admiration, as buying time, and annexation of Polish and Finnish territory as the reverse of the cordon sanitaire. On both Roy proved right eventually.

As the war progressed and the Germans were being beaten back his hopes for a shift towards liberation among the Communist leadership revived. It was not wholly new, for it harked back to 1929 when he and his friends had advocated the abandonment of sectarianism through collaboration with Social Democrats. Earlier he had warned Indian communists against developing sectarian attitudes, which could be to prevent their isolation. Five years late his support for a common front

with Social Democrats could as well have been dictated b the exigencies of the need for survival of Communism. It is possible that Roy thought Communists' sectarianism and suspicion of outsiders was a response to the capitalist world's hostility evinced by the Intervention, the Cordon Sanitaire, the Zinoviev Letter and banning of the party in India and some other countries.

His disillusionment with Soviet Russia however began in 1943 when the Comintern was disbanded, the *Internationale* ceased to be the signature tune of the Radio Moscow and Russian propaganda against German invasion turned nationalist to the extent of re-establishing the Russian Church. Still Roy clung to the hope that once the threat to it disappeared Soviet Russia would revert to a liberal internationalism which could make it less distasteful, if not welcome to civilised Europe. One item in his apologia for the harshness of Soviet Communism was that under the Czars the country had remained largely uncivilized.

Roy attached much value to the liberating outlook of the Renaissance which did not touch Russia. Also to the Enlightenment which led to a correspondence between Voltaire and Catherine the Great, and the French Revolution. These had civilized Europe. He even thought that Communism was a development, may be industrial, over Radical Democracy, which was agrarian. Industrial production necessitated a certain amount of regimentation, while agricultural and craft production did not.

Germany had been industrialized but rejected Communism in 1923. American aid might have buttressed decaying capitalism but the large and politically organised proletariat had not been enthusiastic enough about Communism, a phenomenon which has baffled most observers.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, December 1996.

The Relevance of M.N. Roy's Ideas Today

Dhawal Mehta

(*This article was written for the April 1994 special Issue on "Ideas of M.N. Roy: Relevance Today". However, we received this article too late to be published in the April issue. We are therefore publishing it in this issue.*- Editor*)*

The world has changed since the passing away of M.N. Roy in 1954. During his times, the world was bipolar and the cold war between the capitalist and the communist blocks was at its high point. Many national and international issues were evaluated in terms of this cold war. We are now seeing the emergence of multi-polar world polarised more in terms of economic development than of ideologies. Again the globalisation of technology through communication and capital movements in advancing rapidly and the rise of East Asian countries as a new force in the world economy was quite unexpected in Roy's time. The two powerful international movements are sweeping the world today: ecological/environmental and women's liberation movement. At the same time the religious fundamentalism in the Hindu and Islamic world is causing international tension. The disintegration of Soviet Russia and the rise of democracy in many of the former communist bloc countries was so sudden that even Roy could not have dreamt that this will happen before the end of the twentieth century. In this rapidly changing world, many of Roy's ideas have remained relevant while some have not stood the test of time. I will touch upon a few of his ideas to evaluate their relevance.

State and its Role

Modern states are becoming more powerful. Even the democratic states are regulating the lives of individuals in hitherto untouched areas. Every year, dozens of new legislations are enacted even in the democratic countries to change society. It seems that society does not change itself. It requires the instrumentality of state to give it a push. State is not merely punitive. It is also promotive and protective. But in the process it gets more power over the lives of citizens who are now accepting the greater role of modern state in welfare activities. While advocating direct democracy, Roy minimised the role of state by stating that the state should merely be a coordinating agency. In the developing country like India, state has still a stronger role to play. In fact, India is criticised as a 'soft state', a state without any political will. Though Roy did not believe in 'withering away' of the state as Marx did, he distrusted it because he had witnessed the state terrorism in U.S.S.R. personally. He therefore assigned to it a passive role. The question is raised by many that if state has no power to change society, could society change itself? How can modern state manage fiercely competitive international relations without the tremendous power to manage its internal economy and polity? While rejecting Marxism in all its forms, Roy threw away its praxis also. He therefore ended up creating an ideology which had limited action content. Roy disbanded the mass movement generated through his indomitable spirit during 1930-1945. Through the philosophy of New Humanist, he dissolved the Radical Democratic Party because he was frustrated with the naked struggle for power and the vulgarisation of politics indulged in by the political parties. Roy therefore rejected praxis at the level of the state though it must be said in fairness to him that he envisaged a larger role for action for social agencies. As the world progresses into the next century, I envision a greater role of state in several sectors, say for an example, in maintaining the ecological balance between regions and nations. Indian state has not even touched the problems of unemployment benefits, social medical insurance or pensions to the widows and the destitute. These measures will surely increase the power of the state to tax, disburse and administer enormous sums of money.

Direct Democracy

Roy saw that the representative parliamentary democracy based on party system and universal suffrage was a negation rather than assertion of individual sovereignty. The political parties appealed to the lowest common denominator among the masses to mobilise their votes. They therefore aroused mass frenzy on the basis of religious, regional or communal fanaticism. Both Roy and Marx disliked representative democracy but Marx disliked it on a different ground. Marx framed his attack on democracy when he announced that the state was the 'executive agency of the ruling class' while Roy denounced it on the grounds that the representative democracy abridged individual freedom. As events concerning the functioning of democracy unfolded in India in the last four decades, one must say that Roy proved correct. The political demagogues in all parties have let loose mass irrationalism. But it must be admitted even by the worst critics of Indian democracy that the oppressed and the poor have found their voice in this system though very slowly. The war on poverty and the reservation of the underprivileged in education and employment as well as the slow but steady recognition of the rights of women in our society are some hopeful signs of our (mal)functioning democracy. No political party – not even BJP can ignore the poor. Roy knew the realities of Indian society. It is probably the most in-equalitarian and oppressive in the whole world. The Indian social structure is more restrictive than the state. The *harijans* and the lower castes in the village society are more terrorised by the dominant castes than by state. To suggest direct democracy or people's councils or party-less democracy as a replacement for parliamentary democracy, to say the least is very unrealistic. Such people's councils are bound to be dominated by the local elites – especially in rural areas. Though Roy advocated a mass enlightenment movement to precede party-less democracy, it seems that the relevance of direct democracy in the current Indian political scenario is limited. However imperfect, the modern Indian democracy has done some good to the poor. Roy should not have thrown baby with the bathwater. If persons like T.N. Sheshan succeed for a decade or so in strengthening the framework of representative democracy through strict enforcement of rules and procedures for fair elections, much more will be achieved in the future. Political equality, the idea of state dominated by no elite and no class or no party has probably been exposed more often than any other aspect of the democratic image. The *Bhoodan* movement and its companion *Sarvodaya* movement are good illustrations of the failure of the people's committees, people's councils or village *samities* to make any dent into the land distribution problems in our rural areas. Mr. V.M. Tarkunde – the foremost exponent of Roy's ideas – in his highly impressive speech at the biennial conference of the Indian Radical Humanist Association held in New Delhi in December 1990 concedes the role of parliamentary democracy. He states, "We are opposed to political parties mainly because parties are the means by which power is taken away from the people and concentrated in a few hands. At the same time, we recognise that so long as the present parliamentary democracy is not replaced by radical democracy built upon people's committees, political parties will continue to exist and are indeed necessary for the functioning of parliamentary democracy." V.M. Tarkunde is a realist and knows that the idea of party-less politics in the near future is not relevant and therefore advocates – and rightly so according to me – that our efforts should be directed to see that the political parties behave more responsibly. He states in the same speech, "We also recognise that in order to prevent the degeneration of parliamentary democracy into a down-right dictatorship, the practice of political parties should be based on moral and social principles."

Materialism

Roy got disillusioned with communism because he saw the worst aspects of state power in Russia. He was shocked to see three things in communist Russia: (1) Stalin's purges of his political opponents, (2) state terrorism unleashed by Stalin on peasantry, and (3) intellectual and artistic

suppression in Soviet Russia. But it must be said to the credit of Roy that he rescued materialism from otherwise Marxist totalitarian philosophy. Roy as a rebel against obscurantist traditions and the supernatural phenomena and ever fighting against religious bigotry and cultural fanaticism will always remain relevant in India and the world. What gave him strength in his fight against religion, superstitions and 'Indian-culture-is-best-in-the-world' attitude was his firm conviction in the materialist philosophy. He considered all talks about spiritualism, supernatural powers of our *sadhus* and *paramhansas* and worship of gods as born out of fantasy or wishful thinking and in some cases out of mental sickness. He valued secular knowledge because it alone can remove poverty and because knowledge is the most democratic source of power. If the radical humanist group today is in the forefront in its relentless fight against all forms of communalism, religious fanaticism and superstitious practices in or society, the entire credit goes to Roy's strong advocacy of materialistic philosophy. And nobody can deny that this fight against narrow and parochial forces is becoming more and more relevant every day. Roy was one of the few ex-communists in the world who had rare courage to stick to materialism after disillusionment with communism while intellectuals like Arthur Koestler embraced idealism, mysticism or some form or religious faith.

Roy and Science

Roy's abiding faith in science as a search for truth was a part of his materialist philosophy. In science, truth is not arrived at in supernatural flash. It must be worked out by constant scientific endeavour. Roy had an abiding faith in science and technology as instruments to increase the scope of human freedom. Roy disliked – and rightly so – Gandhi's espousal of simple, ascetic life. He believed in the material prosperity for all. For him poor and simple life was not necessarily a better life as Gandhians believed. In fact, to have poverty when science and technology have now developed the capability to remove it is a sign of human degradation. Roy would always remain relevant because of his belief that truth can be arrived at through science and scientific pursuits – not through meditation, *tapasya*, *dhyan* or yoga. Knowledge is power and it must be used to remove mass poverty – not for liberating men from the eternal cycles or birth and rebirth. Roy was a universal man and so had no hesitation in admiring the west for its brilliant contribution in creating science and scientific mode of thinking. This point needs to be mentioned because no Indian nationalist leaders during our struggle for independence duly acknowledged the role of science in economic growth. This is because all of them were engaged in creating 'cultural identify' of India mainly based on is religious and spiritual traditions. They considered science as a western concept and hence alien to Indian spirit. Roy's name is synonymous with science, material progress and secularism.

Cooperative Economy

Roy saw the contradictions of the laissez-faire economy and also of the statist economy. His idea of cooperative economy was based on the production and distribution of goods and services through cooperatives. To talk about cooperative economy in the modern world which is globalising at a rapid rate on the basis of market economy is not a realistic proposition. Again Roy's idea of laissez-faire capitalism was based on the nineteenth and early twentieth century practice of capitalism. Since his time, capitalism has modified itself drastically. It has provided a number of welfare measures to its victims. And what is more, it has unleashed tremendous productive powers in several societies. Some of the East Asian societies are creating economic miracles right before our eyes – beating western countries at their own game. It is now very difficult to introduce the principles of cooperation in the capitalist enterprises. In the west, capitalism has contributed enormously to democracy by helping to create a state which could ultimately transcend capitalist interests and become a vehicle of popular liberty. Of course, in some stray cases (like Amul),

cooperatives may succeed here and there but for many years to come I do not see any hope for its being the dominant form of economic organisation. Nobody in the Radical Humanist movement is taking the idea of Roy regarding cooperatives seriously and it is time that it is jettisoned. Somewhat modified capitalism with a human face is in its most vigorous stage at present in the world. And what is more it has also succeeded to a limited extent in providing distributive justice to the masses. At the same time, cooperative enterprises have not done a spectacular job either in production or distribution. Even Mr. V.M. Tarkunde remarks in the editorial of R.H. (October 1992), "Radical Humanists believe in a 'cooperative economy', but the concept of such an economy presupposes that most of the required goods and services will be provided by a network of producers' cooperative societies. Such a development is hardly feasible in the near future." For the present at least, a concept of welfare state looking after the needy and the deprived but preserving the democratic freedom so that poor and the dispossessed can increasingly participate in the fruits of material progress through their demands for distributive justice seems to be quite workable.

Roy and Marxism

Roy was right in rejecting Marxism as the events after his death amply demonstrate. The disintegration of Soviet Russia and the Eastern Block as well as liberalisation of economy in China have demonstrated the bankruptcy of communism – if not of Marxism. But many old Radical Humanists (like R.C. Patel) still argue that Roy should not have rejected Marxism in all its forms. Roy got disillusioned with Marxism because of the Stalinist excesses but Stalinism was not the only form of Marxism. French thinkers like Sartre and Camus were anti-Stalinists but they were not anti-Marxists. They did not reject Marxism. I do not personally agree with the critics of Roy. Though rejecting Marxism took away the praxis – theory of action – from the Radical Humanist movement and rejecting parliamentary form of democracy led to the dissolution of RDP which was growing in mass support, Roy asked his followers to carry out the cultural revolution in India. The specific form in which such cultural revolution is to be carried out, the social agency which is to carry it out and its contents and time-frame are still the vague areas in the praxis of the Radical Humanism. If the cultural revolution as the only aim is devoid of political programme or power, few persons from the lower class will get attracted to it. And this is exactly what has happened. Roy over-emphasised the role of intellect in history. His model of man was rational. When you emphasise intelligence and rationality, you get an ideology of an elite. Two propositions of Roy are relevant here: (1) Man is rational and a part of his rationality is his eternal search for truth, and (2) Truth is the product of men's rationality and intelligence. But what about passions? Passion relates one individual to another. Is not passion a part of human potentiality? And what about men's search for beauty and harmony? We here face the problem of giving a meaning to the term potentiality. Potentiality can be interpreted in an isolated way or in terms of social category. When you define it in terms of isolated individual, you define it in terms of such values as freedom, truth and morality. When define it in terms of social category, you have to emphasise social goals, group norms and social conditions required for actualising man's potential. Here we have to talk in terms of praxis – actions and strategies to realise those conditions. By remaining vague or silent on this issue, Radical Humanism wasted two decades from 1948 (when RDP was disbanded) to 1969 (after which Tarkunde became a moving force behind PUCL & later CFD). I do not see much future of R.H. movement after Tarkunde.

The Concept of Freedom

Roy defined freedom as a movement from potentiality to actuality. This is a teleological view because the movement is determined by the purpose. To locate that purpose is a difficult job.

While talking about individual potentialities, Roy does not talk about social potentialities or the potentialities of group. For an example, there may be a purpose in the movement which may not be the individual. I am not opposed to the concept of individual sovereignty but wish to emphasise the social conditions for the enjoyment of individual sovereignty. In order to enjoy it, every individual has to relate himself to his social milieu. There is no definite strategy of action in Roy's writings about the ways of changing this milieu so that individual can actualise his potentialities. The action suggested by him concerning carrying out a cultural revolution is vague because different radical humanists carry out different actions – even those who are purely humanitarian or are neo-Gandhians – still consider them as agents of cultural revolution. Agreed that the radical humanists have anti-religious, anti-communal, anti-superstition and pro-poor attitudes but how do they translate these attitudes into action? Roy's concept of freedom is his weakest point. It is so flexible that many former Swatantra Party members or 'free enterprise' followers call themselves Royists. Ahmedabad is full of them.

The Relevance of Roy

M.N. Roy was a product of his times. He was both a rebel and a revolutionary. As a rebel against traditional social and religious values he would always be relevant because Indian society (and an average Indian intellectual too) is still highly traditional. His espousal of the value of materialism through which he challenged social hierarchy and religious rituals in India, as well as his atheism are worth studying and preserving even now by the younger generation. His ideal for the fight of individual against state authority, that is fight for the civil liberties in India, was always relevant and is made more relevant for the last so many years by the brilliant efforts of Mr. Tarkunde through his PUCL activities. One must admit that the current Radical Humanist movement has failed to attract (a) the younger generation, (b) females, and (c) the persons from the lower strata of society. Roy's two important action strategies – Direct Democracy and Cooperative Economy – are not found to be of any relevance by the younger generation. No agency in India except the RH has taken his idea of cultural revolution seriously. There are of course some efforts by NGOs which try to educate the masses but they are uncoordinated and not targeted to the cultural revolution we have in mind. There is of course a slow process of formal education but this will go on whether we intervene or not. Those who follow Roy's ideas are a small groups in our society but it is an effective group in some significant sense. Roy did not have much idea about two important movements which have become relevant since his death: Ecological and Feminist. Again the rise of the backward and *dalit* castes and tribes in Indian politics through the very political process which Roy denounced may have surprised him. But the disintegration of Russia within thirty five years of his death will have surprised him most together with the universal spread of market economy. We must incorporate at least the last two movements (Feminist and backward castes-class) in the action armoury of the RH.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, May 1994**.**

M.N. Roy on Fascism

(*The following extracts have been selected by Prof. R.L. Nigam from M.N. Roy's book on Fascism. That book was a part of the voluminous writings of Roy during his detention in jail between 1930 and 1936. These extracts show that even when Roy was under the influence of Marxism, he unlike other Marxist writers was of the view that fascism had ideological roots.*)

Violating all temporal standards of morality, justice and freedom, Fascism claims divine sanctions. The official philosopher of Italian Fascism, Giovanni Gentile, was the first to advance that claim. He writes: "Human being is naturally religious. To think means to contemplate God. The more one thinks, the more one feels oneself in the presence of God. As against man, God is everything."

* * * *

The medieval dictum – "The King can do no wrong" – is stretched by the philosophers of Fascism to the new dictum – "The State can do no wrong."

* * * *

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the roots of the philosophy of Fascism can be traced in the divine philosophy of the Gita, according to which all powers (Bibhutis) on earth are the powers of God. Thus philosophically, Fascism is not a new phenomenon; nor is it correct to say that Fascism has no philosophy. Fascist philosophy is the logical outcome of the spiritualist view of life.

* * * *

Since it was no longer possible to dismiss the material world as an illusion and still call himself a scientific philosopher, Bergson tried to legalise it, so to say. One could be concerned with the material world, but only as a subsidiary to the higher world of spiritual values. That is just as the Brahman lawgivers of ancient India permitted the enjoyment of *artha* and *kama*, provided that the enjoyment was governed by *dharma*, that is, by the established religio-social laws, and the empty ideal of *moksha* was professed. The bourgeoisie had professed the principle of freedom on this earth when they fought for capturing its mastery. When, later on, their power and privilege were challenged, they made the activities of the life on this earth subservient to imaginary spiritual ideals and metaphysical values. Fascist dictatorship, and all its barbarous socio-political doctrines, are sanctioned by this philosophical reaction.

* * * *

So long as the bourgeoisie could rule through the fraudulent institution of parliamentary democracy, the essential spiritualism of their philosophy was somewhat hidden behind apparently scientific and rational forms. As long as their power was obeyed as a matter of course, they did not find it necessary to fall back upon the reserve of divine sanction which they had inherited from the feudal monarchy. The gathering of the forces of revolution, which today challenge the power of the bourgeoisie, the break-down of the parliamentary system under the pressure of the inner contradictions of capitalism, has compelled the bourgeoisie, in one country after another, to throw off the mask of parliamentarism and wield their dictatorship openly. The Fascist movement prepares the way to this dictatorship; the Fascist State is its instrument. The ultra-spiritualism, neo-Metaphysics, and "rational' mysticism of the Bergsonian, Pragmatist and neo-Hegelian schools of philosophy provide the ideological foundation for and justify the bloody dictatorship.

* * * *

Nietzsche's philosophy, justifying crass class domination, bears striking resemblance with the Hindu doctrine of *Karma* and, indeed, is an echo of the voice of God himself: "The four castes are created by me according to quality and merit," (*Gita).* The caste system places different groups of people in different social stations. If that system is providentially ordained, those belonging to lower stations must be reconciled for ever to their positions. Social inequality is thus perpetuated on the authority of divine will. The slave must be slave forever! The ruling class enjoys its power and privileges as gifts of God which only the sinful can ever dare take away from it. In *Gita* the God also announced that all earthly powers are manifestations of his power. Not only are the priestly privileges of the Brahman exercised on divine authority; not only did kings and emperors in the past rule as incarnations of God; but even today the parasitic land-lords claim to be the natural leaders of the peasant masses whom they exploit; and the native princes wield autocratic power with the connivance of orthodox nationalists who clamour for representative Government in the British provinces.

* * * *

The Fascist State is the instrument of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie divested of the deceit of parliamentary democracy. The sole function of the Fascist movement and Fascist State is to suppress with brutal and bloody violence the working class and the associated elements engaged in the task of building a higher civilization on the ruins of the capitalist order.

* * * *

The more backward, and for that reason the most abject, victims of capitalist rapacity were mobilised in the Fascist movement through fraudulent agitation against capitalism. Under the banner of pseudo-socialism, they were marshalled as the storm-troops for the defence of capitalism in distress. That miracle could to be performed except through unrestricted indulgence in brazen lies, shameless deceit and extravagant demagogy. The agitation, ostensibly against capitalism, was in reality directed against the political, civic and cultural freedom, historically associated with bourgeois democracy.

* * * *

Polling booths were jealously watched by the Fascist hooligans. So it was a risky venture to vote for the Communists or even the Socialists. Many did not vote; many others were not allowed to vote according to their conviction. Not a few of those who voted for the Fascists did so under duress – for fear. Thousands of Communists could not go to vote because they were in hiding. On the other hand, Nazi Storm-troopers herded in voters who did not want to vote for Hitler. While the newspapers of the opposing parties were suppressed, their propaganda literature confiscated, meetings broken up by paid hooligans, their supporters terrorized to vote against their wish or to avoid voting altogether, the entire propaganda apparatus of the State was at the disposal of the Fascists.

Unde3r such circumstances a fair election is not possible. The result of an "election" held under such an atmosphere does not indicate the popular feeling. But even such a sham did not give Hitler a majority. The Fascists did not poll more than forty per cent of the votes cast. That again represented an even smaller fraction of the entire electorate because for reasons mentioned above millions of voters did not go or cold not go to the polls.

* * * *

The philosophy of Fascism is militant spiritualism which finds metaphysical sanctions for despotism and violence, it is mystic, and fanatically religious ... Fascism also froths and fumes against the "materialism" of the modern civilization, and declares its determination to cure it of this evil. Its programme is to lead the Germanic race back to the pristine purity and simplicity of medievalism; thus regenerated, the Germanic people will act as the chosen of the God and establish its rule over the rest of the world. It all sounds very much like the professions of the

Indian orthodox nationalism.

....Mysticism is the glorification of ignorance. It makes a spiritual capital out of that questionable asset. Unless mystified, the masses of people cannot be expected to revel in their servitude, much less to galvanize the corroded chains of their own slavery with the blood of their fellows, who are not endowed with the bliss of ignorance. Idealisation of an imaginary past makes the masses oblivious of the rude realities of the present, and prevents them from visualizing a better life in the future. In the frenzy of worshipping the mystical gods of the Golden Age, they easily allow themselves to be led away from the historic duty of destroying the demons who make their present life miserable. Idealisation of the past serves the interest of those who are benefitted by the miseries of the present. The zeal for the revival of the past spiritual culture only perpetuates the vulgar materialist practices of the present.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, December 1975.

From A Nehruvian To A Royist India

O. K. Ghosh*

It is being realised that the time has come to transcend Nehruism. Nehruism stood us in good stead for about a quarter of a century after independence. But the world is changing, and changing fast, especially in the last few years. And we have to change with the times. But whereto, and who will be our guide? I think it will be generally agreed that everybody wants to make India a future-looking modern country. The question is how. This is not the place to adumbrate on the thesis that Nehruism was a half-way house to Royism. But it is my belief that this was so. We have taken a step forward, we have now to take another step in another direction, as M.N. Roy visualised. The beauty of Royism is that it is flexible, as Roy, after he founded Radical Humanism, was no dogmatist.

As regards external affairs, our aims should be to strengthen the United Nations, help convert, in due course, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation into a South Asian Confederation, and encourage a multi-polar world, which is the positive fulfilment of non-alignment.

To do all these things certain changes are necessary. One can write a book, or books, on these changes. In an article, however, one can only give the broad concepts.

Let us start with politics. Our Constitution is not sacrosanct. Constitutions are for people, not people for Constitutions. Our Constitution is basically the Government of India Act, 1935, with certain changes. This Act visualised a Centre holding its components, the Provinces, tightly. With the departure of the British we should have realised that India is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious sub-continent, with various binding features, cultural and informal rather than formal. Society or *Samaj* has been more important here than *Rashtra* or state. In practical terms it means that India, as a federation, should be a federation, and not basically a unitary state after the pattern of the 1935 Act, which is it. M.N. Roy realised this and visualised the following subjects for the Centre in his *Constitution of India – a Draft* (1944) – defence, foreign affairs, foreign trade, customs, currency, posts and telegraphs, railways, ports maritime shipping and navigation. Something like this, and possibly including industry and communications (other than those mentioned above), with all other powers to the constituent units, and enough provision for coordination in all fields should meet all necessities and aspirations.

The present States are too huge for effective grassroots work. We can have sub-states or small states. In Britain, Scotland is, in effect, a sub-state. Education, health, social services agriculture, small scale industries, local roads and infrastructure, etc. can be fields of work for the sub-states. The States should concern themselves with other items, coordination, etc. no sub-state should have more than, say, 12 million people and a State, say, 60 million, sub-states should have Constitutional sanction. Sub-states will increase costs. But it will also increase effectiveness, lead to greater production and satisfy political wills now engaged in mutual quarrelling on the state level.

Such arrangements should solve the Khalistan and Assam issues, and remove a basic cause for terrorism. More effective and better paid police forces as advised by M.V. Tarkunde in the December 1991 issue of *The Radical Humanist*, are also necessary. And people should be given arms licences freely to combat terrorism. It has been the experience of all countries that if all people are armed acts of violence, unless there are other reasons, are restrained. In the case of Assam and Jharkhand, autonomous regions and special development boards would be necessary. The Kashmir issue is different. V.M. Tarkunde in the March 1990 issue of *The Radical Humanist* suggested referendums in both Kashmirs, after 10 years, I would reduce this to 2-3 years, and suggest U.N. monitoring and holding the referendums under U.N. auspices. Whatever may have been Mrs. Indira Gandhi's faults, she watched over India's integrity like an eagle-mother. It is clear that Mrs.

Gandhi and Z.A. Bhutto did not think of merely formalising the line of actual control. If they had, it would have been the easiest thing to have this incorporated in the Shimla Agreement. No one would have dared question Mrs. Gandhi and Pakistan then was the defeated country. What did they actually do? They merely postponed a decision, but agreed that differences should be solved by negotiations, which implied a change in the situation.

Our administrative system is a relic of British days. Where they wanted speedy action – for instance, in case of law and order – thee were not more than two people in a chain, in actual practice, and the decisions of meetings had binding force, without further processing. They followed this system to prosecute World War II activities in India too. This is the only business-like method possible. With several people in a chain, our administrative structures are heavily over-staffed. The extra staff can be deployed in the states and sub-states, or given the golden hand-shake. The concept of frequent transfers of officials should be given up, and prospects should be equalised in some other way. These transfers include secretariat staff, between departments, which was not the practice in the days of the Raj. As a consequence, few in governments have real knowledge or insight of the problems which they handle, a fact frequently mentioned by foreigners dealing with us, with surprise. It is no wonder that our administration is among the slowest and most ineffective in the world.

Three should be public financing of elections. This would strike a blow at the power of black money and its concomitant evils like rigging, booth capturing, hooliganism, etc. Better types of people would join politics.

We should follow the German model in having only half the legislati8ve seats on direct election the rest being filled by political parties who have received votes above a floor percentage.

M.N. Roy wanted a "party-less democracy". This may not be possible, but as programmatic differences are now largely those of emphasis, we should have, as far as possible, "all party governments", leaving out fringe parties of the extreme Right and extreme Left. It would be still better if we have some sort of presidential form of governments. Our politicians and journalists revel in "toppling games", and president/gubernatorial form of rule would ensure stability, and people would be able to concentrate on real problems and not spend unnecessary time in constant ego hassles.

M.N. Roy made some suggestions about professionalization of the political structure. To bring his suggestions up-to-date, Upper Houses of legislatures should have equal numbers of members from all starts (districts in the case of states), and members from professional groups – engineers, economists, scientists, doctors, jurists, social scientists. These would all be elected by their organisations. In addition, governments will nominate a certain number of outstanding thinkers and retired civil servants. All bills, except money bills, would have to be approved by both the Upper and Lower Hoses. In cases of differences, the Lower Hoses will ultimately have the final say. Such measures for the professionalization of politics should be urgently introduced.

I would suggest another proposal. Governments should hold periodic residential gamps of three months' duration where crash courses will be given on the Constitution, economics, sociology, history, archaeology, anthropology and the main laws of India, through lectures and seminars. In addition, talks would be given by members of various political parties, followed by discussions. The Royist camps could serve as a working model. All would-be-legislators would have to have a Certificate of Attendance of these Camp Courses in order to qualify for standing for elections. This will not make them into Plato's "Guardians", but the crass ignorance, or worse still, prejudices and jaundiced views, may well be mitigated.

There should be unified civil services, both at the Centre and the States/sub-states, with various branches and some degree of flexibility, where possible, about movements between them. At present the various services and departments are constantly squabbling over rights, precedence

and emoluments, thus hampering serious work.

Service Associations should be encouraged to work overtime to ensure standards and mitigate injustice to their members and political harassment. This should be possible when there are unified civil services. Just now the service associations are mainly engaged in rivalry. Political harassment is now so acute that this may also induce more constructive work on the part of the association. So far, among the services as well as among politicians, stabbing each other in the back has been the main preoccupation.

The public sector has been, by and large, a great disappointment. It is seen that people do not work to that extent if there is job-security regardless of performance. We just do not have that degree of public spirit. Hence the matter of privatising many units of the public sector should be continuously kept under review, either wholly, or partially.

There should be a missed economy. All countries really have mixed economies. The mix proportions will vary according to circumstances. Privatisation includes the cooperative economy, which should have a greater and greater role. This was suggested by Tagore, land later M.N. Roy. The thrust should be towards a mainly cooperative economy. We should take leaves out of the books of experience of Scandinavian and other countries.

We should substitute income tax and its ancillaries (gift tax, wealth tax, etc.) by a *voluntary* social welfare tax, not exceeding ten per cent of the taxable income, above a limit. This should include agricultural income also. At least half the tax should be given over to the states of collection. The tax should be spent, as far as possible, in the areas of collection. There will be something for people to see and the areas may, ultimately vie with each other to contribute as much as possible. At one stroke *the problem of black money will disappear.* The white money generated and future savings, which will all be white, will be used largely for productive purposes. Government will also get more money by way of sales tax, excise duties, etc.

Instead of the corporate tax, companies should spend sums for sports and cultural activities. This will generate keen competition and lead to enormous progress in these fields.

We should also be pragmatic, and not doctrinaire, about our export and import policies. Textiles, possibly food, and leather goods, as well as possibly computer software could be great export earners. We dare not think yet of exporting cattle in large numbers as mooted by some foreign companies in Lal Bahadur Shastri's time, although this will be a very rich revenue earner, and ease castle and fodder problems at home. If conditions stabilise at home, tourism is another far greater potential foreign exchange earner than hitherto.

Liberalisation and globalisation is in the air, which is very good, but we should also practice *swadeshi* as far as we can. We can cut external and internal deficits by petrol rationing and reduction of subsidies over a period of years. Thus we can have balanced internal and external budgets. With Kashmir out of the way we can start a process of rapprochement with Pakistan and mutual arms reduction. Unilateral arms reduction would be dangerous. We cannot be lambs in a world of wolves. Space studies, etc., however, are a *sine qua non* if we are not to be left behind in the 21st century.

If we followed M.N. Roy, we would be spending double of what we are doing on education, or human resources development, he also gave some details in his C*onstitution of India – a Draft,* which one can follow, with changes due to the passage of time. He suggested that there should be a primary school for every 1000 people, a middle school for every four primary schools, and a high school for every 4-5 middle schools. Primary teacher would have about 25-30 pupils per class. There should be a huge expansion in technical education, according to the needs of the plans. In the initial periods technicians can also be imported from abroad. Great emphasis should be laid on a wiping out adult illiteracy. Accordingly to M.N. Roy, this could be done by clubs, which we may call People's Clubs. A Club might cover every 2000 or so people, and should be equipped with

radio, V, and library and sports facilities. It may also serve as the local museum. Some permanent staff, living near the premises would be necessary. For our population of over 80 crores we would require 4 lakh clubs, including urban centres. The initial cost would be about 4000 crores, which can be spent out over, say, 5 years. If the running costs are, on an average, 1 lakh per year, the club population can well pay for this. It will come to about Rs. 500 per head per annum.

The sub-states administrations and the Clubs will absorb many whom decentralisation will render surplus at the Centre. Indeed, there will probably be scope for much more in really useful work. The Mauryan centralised *mahamatras* were replaced by the private Brahmin *agraharas* during the Gupta times, leading to the predominance of ritual religion and Pauranic Hinduism in cellular fashion. The Clubs will lead to a modernising of the mind, again in a cellular way, and so, permanently.

In social affairs the first priority has to be given, of course, to population control. The reason for our runaway population increase is not lack of information or pills or even security so much as a matte4r of psyche, specially, though not wholly, in the villages. A prominent social worker once told me in despair, "Men consider many children a sign of virility, women of fertility. They compete with other couples, leading to unnecessary increases. Along with this is reckless fatalism – "He who has given birth will also feed them." To change this, again is part of the much-neglected human resources development.

Thirty per cent of seats in village *panchayats* are to be reserved for women under the present dispensation. We should extend this to all legislatures. The judges of all juvenile courts and cases against women should be women. We should aim at feminising the whole of the school teaching profession, except for boys' schools. We should also aim at having more women doctors than men. Only if all this is done will women's status rise and in the new ethos compulsory dowries, dowry deaths, bride-burning, etc. will become shuddering nightmares of the distant past, in psychological – if not chronological – time. The measures mentioned above are the minimum. More radical ones, which can be amply justified, would perhaps have to wait till better times come. It is for the women to work out the future, starting with a clout of thirty per cent reservation in the legislatures. Thus we will have Progressive Feminism.

Reservation for the weaker sections of society should be superseded, after some time, by the application of the merit principle alone. Meanwhile, the weaker sections should be educationally brought on a par with advanced groups through special schemes. Caste surnames should be outlawed. Names of persons of all religions should show, partly, their Indian inheritance. If this is made compulsory for Government purposes, the practice will spread, especially through the good offices of the Clubs.

In the cultural sphere matters should be left to untrammelled individual and private efforts. It has been proposed earlier that companies should finance sports and cultural programmes through expenditure in lieu of the Corporation tax.

What should be our religious policy? It is cant to say that we are a secular society. In uni-religious societies, as in Europe and America, secularism has two meanings. One is that the State has nothing to do with religious matters. The other is that most individuals also do not care much about religion. But the presence of Christianity is always there in the background and in the sub-conscious. The west has not faced the problem of living with many religions. The Jews constitute so small percentage that they do not constitute any problem. Hence the Western "solutions" of rationalism and secularism, in the Western sense, would be only pious hopes in multi-religious India. We, including the Communists, are soaked in religion, and still more, in ritual and superstitions. The best we can achieve is Liberal "Religionism". Liberal Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, etc. can all have meetings of minds. From this point of view the spread of the teachings of Bhaktas, Sufis, etc. should be encouraged. The state can help in fostering Liberal Religionism. By this I

mean state grants to those denominational institutions, schools, hospitals, associations, etc. which are open to all communities. We will thus patronise "communitarianism" at the cost of communalism.

As mentioned earlier, with Kashmir out of the way, relations with Pakistan should gradually improve. In all other foreign affairs, matters pragmatism, and not theoretical dogmatism, should be the aim. The press should be briefed realistically from time to time so that they can build up opinion in the various problems involved. Twenty first century nationalism, not the nineteenth century type, should inform our minds. For instance, the Mcmohan Line is not sacrosanct. Current issues like the Dunkel Draft and Non-Proliferation should be discussed dispassionately. I do not visualise a uni-polar world. but a multi-polar one – USA (including possibly Australia and Canada), the Russian group, Europe (Britain with dual relations - the Continent and USA), Central Asia, Turkey, West Asia (a complex one, with Israel in the region), china-Japan, Latin America, Africa, South East Asia and South Asia. So far as we are concerned South Asia will not be automatic. But as the largest State in the region our position is of immense responsibility. Changes can come about only with continuous *glasnost* and *perestroika* and *swadeshi* thinking and *swadeshi* solutions.

*Author of books like The Changing Indian Civilization, Planning India's Future, How India Won Freedom, Convergence of Civilizations, Science, Society and Philosophy, Etc.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist*****,** January 1993.

Gandhiji to JP, One Continuity*

V. S. Varkhedkar

The question of all questions in September and October last year was, 'is there any such thing as JP's idea of Total Revolution, something ready-made, complete in itself?' the forthright answer to it was, 'No – no such thing exists. But we are on that job.' JP is very much there and resembles not Gandhiji who turned into a closed, complete, book in January 1948. Das Capital was a complete book even when Marx was alive, because it was a 'thought' complete in itself and its maker was a thinker, pure and simple. That was not the case with either Gandhiji or Jayaprakash. Agreed, that both did hard thinking and placed on record their ideas, observations and arguments. But those writings and sayings of theirs had a context of their own, a relevance to the moment the great men were living. What they jotted down are records for a thinker to build a thought upon, and not a thought in itself. Both, Gandhiji and JP were experimentali9sts and men of deeds. For a thinker, and for purposes of building up a thought, Gandhiji and JP are to be taken as objects of study. What they said and wrote on various occasions and left behind on record, calls for a reinterpretation in the wider contexts of their total life of experiments, deeds and achievements. We did it in 1948 and after, and called the 'Thought' that emerged, as 'Gandhi Darshan'. There were Gandhians, followers of Gandhiji, who made texts of Gandhiji's writings and sayings and took Gandhism as a ready-made thing. We differed from them.

History repeated itself in September and October last. Some of them collected the writings of JP went into the field to preach to others the 'Total Revolution'. The villagers and mohalla-men failed to understand the import of the new term. Those who had a sharp intelligence, challenged if there was really such a thing as Total Revolution, a thought complete in itself? Yes, they had to be answered. The answer to both, the villagers and the mohalla-men as well as the sharp and challenging intellectuals, is one and the same. Let us join in the enterprise. We would take up JP's writings and sayings, together with his experiments, deeds and achievements, all together, for a study, and build ourselves a 'Thought' complete in itself and name it, the 'Total Revolution'.

That brings me to this thesis – Gandhiji to JP is one continuity. The ideology therein runs one full cycle. Call it the Total Revolution. Associate this 'Thought' with JP's name and perpetuate it!

JP was a Marxist first. In the August 1942 movement he emerged as an August Hero, a revolutionary. Gandhii had gone into Government's custody after giving to the people his message of 'do or die'. Non-violence was alright. But in preference to inaction amounting to subservience, even a violent outburst was not had. So said the Mahatma. The difference between the Mahatma and JP was abridged. The August movement came to an end. In the meantime the country became free. The old timers were represented by the iron man, the Sardar, and the new blood, by JP. Gandhiji was the golden mean who stood in between. Prabhawatidevi was a link between JP and Gandhiji. The soft link could however ably hold the two together. She wanted to plead the Mahatma's ideology with her husband, though she was not much effective in this regard during Gandhiji's life time. Later, she called it a great day in her life when JP exchanged socialism for *Sarvodaya*. The national course of history was responsible for such an exchange.

In the early months of 1942, I had an interview with Gandhiji. I would recall it. My question was, "You are trotting backwards to reach a stage where man lived like an aboriginal in leaf-thatched huts, on fruits and roots and wore clothes made out of bark threads. That's perfectly alright! But why do you improve upon the *charkha*? There you take to technology which conducts you onwards."

I had made my question deliberately provocative. He replied, "Not so, young man. I am moving onwards and not backwards. Others who claim that they are moving ahead do so after a thrust from behind, helplessly, even blindly. I refuse to fall into the pitfalls which I see ahead. I try to resist the

compelling forces which push me and others ahead whether we wish or not. I propose to change the course ahead to suit my vision on my own will. And I am not opposed to technology. I am for it. But my thesis is – machines should be there, as many as you need, but only until such time that man is their master. They should not be there if they turn out to be a hungry 'Bakasur,' asking endlessly for a feed."

The next provocative question I put was, "With whom are you? The rich or poor? And why are you opposed to Socialism?"

His answer was, "I am devoted to the service of the *Daridranarayan* (god of the poor). I hope you don't doubt that. I am not opposed to socialism so long as it proposes to bring up the poor to equal others. But I am afraid, socialism leads you elsewhere. The society is not that clearly divided into two classes of haves and have-nots. You split the society unnecessarily. You split every man as well, because he belongs to the class of haves somewhere and to the class of have-nots elsewhere. The class-conflict is also many times uncalled for, unnecessary and disastrous. It is not love but hatred which works as a driving force. Such a thing is ruinous. I approve of Abraham Lincoln's maxim – The poor do not become rich by destroying the rich. They must work intelligently to further their own interests. I have in my mind a philosophy where everyone aspires for his betterment and achieves it through his intelligent hard work. I would call it *Sarvodaya* – rise of one and all."

"With your philosophy, the rich should become richer," I observed.

"Yes, I have thought of that possibility as well., my answer to that is to be found in my theory of decentralisation. If too much power is concentrated in the State, man becomes a non-entity. His genius suffers. If wealth is concentrated round a few rich as in a capitalist society or in the State as in a socialist country, the disparities grow between man and man or between the ruler and the ruled. With decentralisation, the higher-ups come down while the down-belows come up."

Gandhiji gave an illustration of a tailor master's shop. He said, "*Aaj ka darji*, (stitch-maker) *Kal ka tailor master*". He also added "*Aaj ka nokar Kal ka malik*." The monopoly of one tailor master went away when his own *darjis* became tailor masters in course of time and opened their tailoring shops elsewhere in the same town. This was decentralisation he said, which reduced the disparities!

Gandhiji disliked communism because there-in the State fully concentrated both power and wealth in itself, leaving man a double slave. Decentralisation of power down to the village level was his ideal. Government was an evil, he said, though you might consider it a necessary evil. If it was so, he pleaded, the lesser the better. In the decentralisation of power, he felt, man had greater opportunities to live with his freedom, grow by himself and realise his god-given genius.

"What would be the nature of freedom when the foreign rule goes away and native rule comes in its place?" He was asked. His reply was quick. "*Swavalamban*!" Man's ability to live independently of the State, according to his genius, all by himself – that would be called freedom, he clarified.

About industry he said, let there be small units to be run, within the means of a few persons. They would all of them be masters. Their labour would have dignity. Bit industry was based upon a master-labourer relationship which was degrading to man. Labour became slavery. Moreover under the big industry, man lost his soul. This was equally true of the capitalist and the labourer. Both suffered the loss of soul.

Gandhiji was opposed to materialism, perhaps in the sense that how much coal was produced, how much iron or electricity, was according to him no progress. Nor were the State's achievements after subjecting the people to forced labour progress either. If man could row, all by himself, and independently of the State and grow well, that was progress. To him, progress meant the qualitative growth of man, achieved through his own wilful efforts.

Gandhiji died at a time when his ideals were lost in a mist. Those who were running the show then, were far from his ideals. The Gandhians did hardly any better. To them Gandhism meant reversion to an outmoded way of life. Instead of interpreting '*Swavalamban*' as man's ability to grow by himself

and independently of the State they reduced the idea to doing one's own part of the daily chore by oneself. Development of cottage industries was not to them a part of the decentralisation process but a revival of the romantic feudal past. The rulers introduced the *Panchayat Raj* system. But again here too the Gandhian ideal was being defeated. Indira Gandhi found the roots of her totalitarian power in this system spread down to the villages. The *Panchayat* men were the nominees of the ruling party and the Centre, supposed to catch the vote and meet their political needs.

It is on this background that we have to study the growth of JP as a national leader.

The most fateful day in the life of JP is perhaps the one when Nehru declared at the Awadi session of the Congress that the State and India's Constitution were both socialistic. The air in JP's sails was completely taken out that day. The Socialist Party lost its role. Nehru gave an invitation to the socialists to walk into the Congress camp. And many of them did it. JP was left high and dry, deserted and disappointed, ultimately to find a recourse to *Sarvodaya* which was of Gandhiji's creation. He joined Vinoba.

In 1948., I was editing a Gandhian journal. My senior colleague, a vigorous protagonist of the Gandhian Thought (Darshan was his favourite word), was strongly of the opinion that Nehru could never be Gandhiji's successor. Vinoba had in him the elements which Gandhiji was made of. At his instance I went one day to hear one of those discourses of Vinoba. His subject that evening was '*Kanchan–mukti–prayog*.'

Vinoba was arguing, that woman and gold lay at the roots of sin. Almost unawares he drifted from gold, a symbol of wealth, to rupee, a symbol of currency. He concluded that rupee was no good. We should revert to the barter system where there was a direct dealing between man and man!

I challenged his logic. He retorted, "You must have had your education in a college."

"What does it matter?" I asked back.
"That explains your challenge. I have to explain my thesis to you from the very beginning."
"Then do it," I said
He named one of his disciples around and said "you sit with him. He will do it."
"I had crossed Gandhiji. And he took pains to clarify his point of view," I pleaded.
"I am no Gandhiji," snapped Vinoba.

Vinoba appeared to me altogether different from Gandhiji. He was egocentric. He had a poor regard for fundamentals. He hit at them at a tangent. He was a cynic. The more queer he was, the more pleased he was with himself. He made remarks more to perplex others.

If it came to action, Gandhiji was a master. Again in this regard, in action, Vinoba was not only emotionally detached but also indifferent. He hardly ever bothered himself to complete the job in hand. Bhoodan was such a mess and a flop because there was nobody to do a thing about the lands collected, once the Bhoodan leader left the place and proceeded further on his *yatra*.

After the atomic implosion, I was deputed to seek Vinoba's views on this enterprise. I had typed my questions and left blank spaces in between to record Vinoba's answers to them. He was going through the papers, as he did so, he muttered a few words. None of them were intelligible to me. I was under the impression that he was constructing his answers and muttering them to himself. The answers were still to follow and when they came, I would be jotting them down. In two minutes, Vinoba left the papers there and moved away. I stood perplexed. Men around told me '*Baba ne sab kuchh kah diy hai*'. His secretary gave me a few sentences from her diary to fill up those blanks between my typewritten questions. When this stuff was creeded to New Delhi, it was used for broadcasting to the world that the Saint had blessed atomic implosion. I was sorry that I was involved in a piece of hypocrisy.

When JP parted company with Vinoba, I was one of those who felt greatly relieved. To me JP appeared a genuine Gandhian, a perfected *Sarvodayi*. He was sincere to the core and unsophisticated. Vinoba was not. JP had to his credit a partial success in *Bhoodan* and a wonder of the world success in bringing about a change of heart in the M.P. dacoits. So far as Vinoba is concerned, I do not remember even one such instance where he called himself a Gandhian. His ego was too big to admit such a thing. He lived among sycophants. Some of them went to the length of putting on record their so-called memoirs where Gandhiji was humble before Vinoba and took lessons and wisdom from him!

Is there any one thing which the Mahatma left behind to pursue and Vinoba carried out? To say that the ashram life that Vinoba led was all what the Mahatma wanted us to live, is to pick up chaff for the grain. Vinoba retained the chaff and threw away the grain.

Indira's arrogance towards the people was increasing from 1974. She emerged as the Supreme Whip in the Parliament. Like Hitler, she worked meticulously to employ democracy and the Parliament for carving out dictatorship for herself. Nehru had sycophants around him; Indira unscrupulous time-servers. Corruption in high places had broken all time records. at this stage JP revolted against the might and Vinoba kept up his saintly stance. He chided JP for his plunge into politics, which according to the saint was degrading to a *Sarvodayi*. Had JP been one of those subservient disciples of Vinoba, he would have remained there to obey the dictates of the Acharya. And the country would have been left without a leader in its hour of trial. Contrary to Vinoba's expectations JP looked straight up to the challenge and came out to lead the people the way in which Gandhiji would have done himself. Where it was a loss for Vinoba, it was a gain for the people.

There were violent outbursts in Bihar and Gujarat. JP did not remain a silent spectator nor assumed a 'holier-than-thou' stance. He led the agitators and at the same time curbed their violence. He lost no opportunity to tell the agitators that the road to democracy was not through violence. Credit should go to JP for keeping violence in perfect control during the emergency. The political detenues in prison shouted during their tortures – '*laathi goli khayenge; haat bhi nahi uthayejnge*!' That was JP's teaching given to them. Yet Vinoba's camp-followers kept accusing JP of his involvement in all the violence that eve took place before and during emergency. The point here is that JP was the direct successor to Gandhiji and none else. Whether while doing constructive work or while meeting the challenge that an arrogant State threw to the People, he behaved exactly as Gandhiji would have done himself. The Marxist had undergone a complete metamorphosis to change into an ideal Gandhian. This itself was a revolution complete in itself, though of a personal character.

Freedom and Equality were the basic tenets of the Gandhian creed. The Nehru-Indira continuity led the country not to socialism, but to State Socialism. Here power and wealth were concentrated into the State and into one person. In State Socialism there is no equality. The State is the Master and Man a Slave. As a *Sarvodayi*, JP introduced '*antyoday*'. Bring up the lowest in the social cadre to reach the level of others, JP preached. If JP remained a genuine socialist, it was because he was made of the stuff which Gandhiji thought socialism should be made of.

The *Lok Samitis* of JP's concept should turn out to be the *Panchayats* of Gandhiji's imagination, where the people resolve their problems, all by themselves, at their own level and independently of the State. That would take democracy to the grass roots. And JP would go down in the history as the maker of the modern democracy purest in form and substance, restoring equality between the State and the Man. That should be called J.P.ean Total Revolution.

* *We regret it was not published in the special issue on Total Revolution – Editor*

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 1978.

The State – M.N. Roy and Jayaprakash Narayan

Bhola Singh

M.N. Roy and Jayaprakash Narayan considered the State as a sub-organisation of the society. It has nothing to do with the individual freedom and initiative. In their conception of democracy, i.e., organised democracy (Roy) and communitarian democracy (J.P.), they accorded sovereign rights to the individual. The state is secondary to them the state is the means to achieve individual freedom which is the end.

M.N. Roy: Being an ardent believer in individual freedom and sovereignty, Roy believed that any institution, e.g., society, State etc. was not above the individual. Every institution had been created by the individuals for their benefit. Society was the sum total of individuals, who compose it.1 The individuals created the society for the sake of their self-defence and self-improvement. There was no divine factor responsible in creation of the society.2 Agreeing with the social contract theory, Roy believed that the society and the state were artificial structures created by men. he wrote, "coming out of the background of biological evolution the human species starts their struggle as individuals. in the course of time, the isolated individuals realised that together they could carry on the struggle more successfully. That was the origin of society.3

Regarding the origin of state, Roy stated that "primitive men created society for 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 phenomenon 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, and increasingly elaborate machinery had to be created for carrying on public administration of society which came to be known as stae."4 Thus, the state came into being as the political organisation of society.

To Roy, state and society were means to achieve the individual freedom which was the end. They cannot deprive the individual of his freedom. He said: "A political philosophy, which cannot guarantee individual freedom, or cannot think of freedom in that sense, is bound to be misleading."5 Regarding his views on the role of the state, Roy was influenced by the Marxian-Leninist interpretation of the state6 in his earlier phase of political career.7 After experiencing the role of the communist state in Soviet Russia, Roy changed his outlook. He realised that individual could not be subordinated to the state. The state would not wither away. It should not be considered as a necessary evil. To him, "The ideal of stateless society is obviously an absurd utopia."8 The state should have limited powers. He said: "The State being the political organisation of society, the widest diffusion of power makes coterminous with society."9 According to Roy, the functions and responsibilities of the State would be limited so that it would not encroach upon the freedom of the individual. He observed that in modern political organisations the sovereign individual has been forgotten and the institutions created by the individual had attained the greater importance. He wrote, "It was completely forgotten that from the primitive time society was formed, all institutions had been created by man like so many instruments to serve the purpose of his being and becoming. Ultimately, it came to be believed that the creation was of greater importance than the creator, to the extent it was entitled to claim the creator of its first victim."10

Thus, according to Roy, the State would be limited by the objective of the freedom of the individual. But he realised that instead of becoming means, the State had become a hurdle in the unfoldment of the individual. It had grown beyond the individual's reach. He stated: "Today the State has become an abstraction. In the written constitutions, the State is divided in three branches – the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. If that is all that the State is, then the state must exist only in the capitals and nowhere else. The State, supposed to be the political organisation of

society on the whole, has come to be completely divorced from the life of society, if you think of society in terms of human beings constituting society. The individual has nothing to do with the State, the political administration of society. It exists only in some central place, far away, beyond the reach and influence of the members of society, and from there makes decisions and imposes its decisions and the people have no say in them."11

The Radical Democratic State, which Roy wanted to establish, was coterminous with society.12 The State should take up as little as possible responsibilities in its hands. Like State, there are other institutions in the society through which individuals – having many faceted personality – seek to realise their freedom. According to Roy, the State should create conducive conditions for individual freedom. It should maintain harmony in social relations and co-ordinate the functions of different autonomous institutions. The only functions that a State should perform, according to him, is "to create conditions in which the individual can enjoy widening measure of freedom, to maintain harmony in social relations and to co-ordinate the activities of diverse and autonomous institutions."13 He believed that there were certain matters, like cultural, moral, educational and even economic, which were to be completely beyond the jurisdiction of the State. The scientific and artistic growth should also be out of the control of the State. He was most critical of the concept of welfare State.

Roy made a distinction between the State and the Government. The State is a political organisation of a country, and the Government is to administer its affairs. He wrote, "The first thing that must be known is that the State and the Government are not the same thing. The function of the Government is to administer the affairs of a State. The Government is composed of a number of individuals, some whom may change from time to time, and others act as permanent officials... The State is a permanent institution."14 The State was the superior to Government. The State did not change by any change in Government. A State could be replaced by another State only by overthrowing the former."15

Roy did not believe in National State and he criticised the idea of Nationalism.16 His ideal was World State. But he maintained that a World State could be possible as long a nation-State existed.17 He visualised a cosmopolitan commonwealth of free men and women.

Thus, we find that the State, according to Roy, had been created by the individuals as a political organisation of the society. He has given secondary place to the State. The State is a means, not an end in itself. He criticised the totalitarian and he welfare state, and believed in a state which has very limited powers. The State would be coterminous with the society. He believed in the world state, and was a critic of the concept of the nation state.

Jayaprakash Narayan: J.P. was not worried about the shape and origin of the State. He was mainly concerned with the State as it was in existence. His views about State evolved with his career and thought process. As a Marxist, the State was, to him, a necessary tool and an instrument of power in society. He maintained that 'no party in the world of today can build up socialism unless it has the machinery of the state in its hands.18 To him state also appeared as a coercive power. He explained, "When the state is in your hands, you can legislate, you can use the whole magnificent apparatus of propaganda and education that modern science had made available, you can enforce your will. And if there is resistance, you can use the coercive arm of the State, the police and army to crush it. Behind every piece of legislation lies the state's power to persuade and ultimately, to coerce."19 During this phase, J.P. attributed to state a progressive role and recognised its continued necessity. The state was for planning and regulating the whole political and economic life of the country, such as the socialisation of the key industries and the monopolisation of the foreign trade by the state.20 In the pre-Independence period he appreciated considerably the achievement of the Soviet State.

As the authoritarian nature of the Soviet State was revealed to him, he gradually lost his faith in the state as an all pervasive force. He felt hat the Soviet Communists had erected one of the most regimented states in the world. It was no more a people's state. He stated, "We have today there a structure which is a one party dictatorship... and in this one party dictatorship we have a completely bureaucratic state, which cannot in any way be described as a workers' state, as a people's state. Obviously for the socialist movement of the world, the Russian picture of political organisation would be found wanting and unacceptable. We would have to devise a different structure."21 In the post-Independence period J.P. seemed to have lost all sympathy for totalitarian state of Soviet Union. In 1946, he observed ... the experience of the totalitarian countries, whether Fascist or Communist, has shown that if the state is looked upon as the sole agent of social reconstruction, we get nothing but a regimented society in which the state is all powerful and popular initiative is extinct and the individual is made a cog in the vast unhappy machine."23 He came to realise that ideal of stateless society was not achievable. He wrote, "The old belief that state ownership and management of the means of production, distribution, and exchange will lead to economic self-government, elimination of exploitation and equitable distribution of the products of the labour, a stateless order of society, has not been confirmed by experience."24 He emphasised on communitarian society in place of centralised state.

In the post-Independence period, J.P. advocated setting up of co-operatives and community-owned industries in place of state-owned industries to avoid totalitarianism. He observed, "I desire to prevent the state from acquiring the sole monopoly in industry and employment. The state under socialism threatens, as in Russia, far from withering away, to become an all-powerful tyrant maintaining a strangle-hold over the entire body of citizens. This leads to totalitarianism of the type we witness in Russia today."25 He pleaded for decentralisation and the necessity of evolving primary social institutions at the grass-root to minimise the dependence on the state. He felt the need of a fully democratic state in India and opposed the idea of dictatorship of the proletariat. He observed, "The state in socialist India must be a fully democratic state. It is a common mistake these days to think that there must be the dictatorship of the proletariat in a socialist state. This is against the teachings of Marx. The dictatorship of the proletariat has a place only in the transitional period from capitalism to socialism... It is, however, the very essence of Marxism that once the transition is over, the state must become a fully democratic institution."26 According to J.P., even in a socialist state "the state will only be an instrument in the hands of popular socialist movement, i.e., of the people organised independently of the state for a socialist way of living rather than the source and fountain head of all authority and will."27 He was critical of the principle of absolute sovereignty of the state. To him, the ultimate source of power ought to be the people, not the state.

J.P. was also critical of one party dictatorship. As a solution, he conceived the idea of a state without any political patty. He suggested the abolition of party system. Logically, he maintained, "If the state is to melt away, to wither away, the party must also wither away."28 In the *Sarvodaya* phase of his political career, J.P. further contemplated on the means of minimising the importance of the state. He pointed out that "the *Bhoodan* or *Sarvodaya* movement insist that if our ultimate aim is to do without the state we must here and now create those conditions, in which the people will rely more and more on themselves and less and less on the state. No one can tell whether the state will ever completely disappear, but if we accept the ideal of a non-violent democracy, we must begin today to work for it."29 Thus, like Mahatma Gandhi, J.P. came to appreciate that form of a society in which greater reliance was to be put on the individual and on self-help than on the state.

J.P. like Gandhi, believed in the withering away of the state. But he was not sure whether the state would wither away fully. Therefore, he pleaded for devolution of power to the maximum extent and a greater role of the individual to achieve a non-violent democratic social order. He

observed, "As questioning about politics were not confined to party system alone, fundamental questions arose in my mind as to the place and role of the state in human society, particularly in relation to the goals of social life that had fixed themselves before me. Perhaps, my schooling in Marxism with its deals of a stateless society, made these questions more pointed and troublesome. Though I had given up the basic postulates of Marxism... I continued to feel strongly that humanism could be fully and wholly realised only in a stateless society. I was, and am, not sure if the state would ever wither away completely. But I am sure that it is one of the noblest goals of social endeavour to ensure that the power and functions and spheres of the state are reduced as far as possible. I became at this time, and still am, an ardent believer, like Gandhi, in the maxim that that Government was the best that governed the least."30 Explaining the aims of *Sarvodaya* on November 23, 1952, at Sitamarhi, J.P. said: "*Sarvodaya* aims at the creation of a society in which the state is relegated to secondary position. It exists only for a case of emergency, which like the alarm chain of the railway trains of which the passengers are not even aware."31

He envisaged the organisation of the social order in such a manner in which the power of the state was to be diffused into smaller units of communitarian centres, e.g., the village *Panchayats*. He believed that the smaller units of power would enable to individual to play a greater part. To save man from alienation from himself and from the fate of robotism, 'the state and other institutions of society should be reduced to human scale.'32 In the recognised decentralised society, the units of power would be located at the bottom not concentrated at the top in a monolithic state. It was his firm conviction that a centralised state could never achieve the ideals of a true democracy.

J.P. was totally against the monistic state because it retained the role centre of power in society. He said that "the intermediate associations between the individual and the state should be purposely and deliberately created so that freedom might not be nominal but real, and democracy might not be only government by consent but also by direct participation."33 To him, the state was only a part of the society.34 His ideal was *Panchayati Raj* or the *Swaraj* from below. There would be devolution of power. To him, it meant that 'the centre has only as much of power as required to discharge its central functions and all the rest is exercised by the lower organs'.35 According to J.P. the state should regulate and legislate for the formation of a *Panchayati Raj*; but the 'day to day working should be outside the purview of the State Government.'36 He wanted not the elimination of the state control altogether but only its curtailment to the minimum possible level so that the working of the communitarian units was not subjugated completely by the state. He did not suggest statelessness in his communitarian concept of Indian polity.

J.P. was also critical of the welfare state. He believed that in the name of the welfare the state had assumed larger powers and responsibilities. He observed, "In the present world the state not only in its totalitarian form but also in its welfare variety is assuming larger and larger powers and responsibilities. The welfare state in the name of welfare, threatens as much to enslave man to the state as the totalitarianism."37 the welfare state had snatched the initiative from the individuals and had retarded development of the individual's personality.

J.P. also criticised the nation state. He gave the concept of a world community in his communitarian polity. As he proceeded from inner to the outer circles of communitarian organisation, he dreamt that a day might come when the national communities might federate together to form the world-community.38 He was a nationalist but did not believe in aggressive version of nationalism.39 According to him, the world community only could do justice to the suppressed sections of Asian and African humanisty.40 He also held that, "A revolutionary at this age and time of history where man is lending on the moon should have no lesser ideal than to build a world community of human beings, a real human family."41

During the final phase of his political life, J.P. advocated for people's government from below against the totalitarian state. He emphasised on the devolution of power reaching to the lowest

level, that is, village level. He wanted to achieve the ideals of Gandhi's *Gram Raj* and Vinoba's *Gram Swaraj* through the establishment of the Janata Governments from the village upwards to the *Panchayat* and Block levels.42 He did not talk about party-less democracy or stateless society during this phase. He felt that it was the ultimate aim to be achieved in future.43

Thus J.P.'s concept of state remained fluid and shifting in consonance to his phases of political evolution. During his Marxian phase, he considered the state as a powerful organisation of society. But after that he talked of sort of anarchism of his own type. He conceded that a fully stateless society was beyond the reach of man, and the goal of human endeavour could only be to reduce the power and scope of the state to the minimum. He maintained this position for the rest of his life.

Comparison

For both, Roy and J.P., the state was a means to an end that was individual freedom and unfoldment. Both criticised the totalitarian state of Soviet Russia. Both were the advocates of diffusion of power to the lowest, of giving the least responsibilities to the state. Both were critical of the nation State and for both the ideal was a world state.

Besides these similarities, there are differences also, whereas Roy gave a full account of the origin of the State and its distinction vis-a-vis the Government, J.P. did not care about the origin of the State. He was mainly concerned with the State as it was in existence.

There was also a difference between Roy and J.P. over the retention of the State. Roy believed that in the organised democracy, the State "will be coincident with the entire society" and consequently, will be "under a standing democratic control."44 He did not want to abolish it altogether. On the other hand, J.P. was under complete influence of Gandhism. He believed in a stateless society.45 J.P.'s ultimate aim was to do without the State,46 though he conceded that a fully stateless society was beyond the reach of individual and the goal of human endeavour could only be to reduce the powers and scope of the State to the minimum.

References

1. Ellen Roy and S.N. Ray, In Man's Own Image (Calcutta Renaissance Publishers, 1948) p. 27.
2. M.N. Roy and Philip Spratt, Beyond Communism (Calcutta Renaissance Publishers, 1947) p. 116.
3. M.N. Roy, Reason, Romanticism and Revolution, Vol. II (Calcutta Renaissance Publishers, 1955) p. 283. And see ibid., pp. 16-17, and M.N. Roy, Politics, Power and Parties, p. 88, Calcutta Renaissance Publishers, 1960 p. 33.
4. The Radical Humanist, January 25, 1955, p. 36.
5. M.N. Roy and Philip Spratt, Beyond Communism, op. cit., pp. 117-118.
6. For Marx, the State was an organ of Capitalism, an instrument of class struggle and exploitation and it would wither away.
7. M.N. Roy, New Orientation (Calcutta Renaissance Publishers, 1946) pp. 14, 19.
8. M.N. Roy, Politics, Power and Parties, op. cit., pp. 73 and 181.
9. ibid., pp. 28 and 61.
10. M.N. Roy, Reason, Romanticism and Revolution, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 61.
11. M.N. Roy, Politics, Power and Parties, op. cit., p. 61.
12. ibid.
13. The Radical Humanist, February 12, 1956, p. 64.
14. M.N. Roy, On the Constituent assembly, Independent India, Vol. IV No. 7. February 18, 1940, p. 77.
15. ibid.
16. x

17. M.N. Roy, New Humanism, a Manifesto (Calcutta Renaissance Publishers, 1947, p. 37.
18. J.P. Narayan, Why Socialism, Benaras, The Indian Congress Socialist Party, 1936, p. 8.
19. ibid.
20. ibid. pp. 45-47.
21. J.P. Narayan, Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy (Ed. by Bimal Pd. Bombay Asia Publishing House, 1964, p. 105.
22. Gen. Secretary's Report of the sixth Annual Conference of the Socialist Party, Nasik 1948 (Bombay, Socialist Party, n.d.) p. 98.
23. J.P. Narayan, A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity (Kashi Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1950) p. 9.
24. J.P. Narayan, Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy, op. cit., p. 46.
25. ibid., p. 46-47.
26. ibid., p. p. 62.
27. ibid., p. p. 107.
28. J.P. Narayan, A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order, Tanjore Sarvodaya Publication 1961, p. 2.
29. J.P. Narayan, Towards New Society (New Delhi, Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1958) p. 32. Also see J.P. Narayan, From Socialism to Sarvodaya op. cit., p. 37.
30. The Search Light, Vol. LVIII, No. 245, November 4, 1953, p. 6.
31. J.P. Narayan, A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity, op. cit., p. 63.
32. J.P. Narayan, Towards Total Revolution: Search for an Ideology, Vol. I by Brahmanand (Bomby, Popular Prakashan, 1978), p. 192.
33. ibid., p. 194.
34. J.P. Narayan, Swaraj for the People Varanasi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1), p. 5.
35. ibid., p. 15.
36. J.P. Narayan, A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order, op. cit., p. 28. Also see J.P. Narayan, Towards a New Society (New Delhi, Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1980) p. 8.
37. J.P. Narayan, A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity, op. cit., p. 56.
38. J.P. Narayan, Nation Building in India (ed by Brahmanand), (Varanasi Navchetna Prakashan, n.d.) p. 413.
39. JP's address as Chairman (March18, 1951), India for Cultural Freedom (Bombay, The Ranaday Press, 1951). p. 39.
40. J.P. Narayan, Dimension of a Double Revolution, Janata, Vol. XXXV No. 28, August 2, 1970. pp. 8-9.
41. J.P. Narayan, Towards Total Revolution, Vol. IV, op. cit., p. 169.
42. ibid., p. 122.
43. M.N. Roy, New Humanism, op. cit., p. 58. Also see M.N. Roy, Politics, Power and Parties op. cit., p. 61.
44. J.P. Narayan, A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order, op. cit., p. 28.
45. ibid., p.

Republished from *Janata*, February 27, 1994.
Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, April, 1994.

M.N. Roy, Nationalism, Communism and New Humanism

M. A. Rane*

Among the innumerable titles penned by M.N. Roy, there is an 84 page booklet *Nationalism, An Antiquated Cult.* It is a collection of articles under different headings written by Roy regularly from August 10, 1941 to May 10, 1942. All the articles deal with various facets of Nationalism with particular reference to Indian Nationalism, The book was published in November 1942 by V.B. Karnik on behalf of the erstwhile Radical Democratic Party (RDP) with an illuminating introduction by Roy. The articles were written during World War II. Apart from exposing the absurd stand of Indian Nationalism to the War, they examine the basic features of Nationalism.

In the first article entitled "antiquated Cult" Roy observes "... freedom is not necessarily identical with nationalism... The ideal of Indian freedom now must be visualized in the context of the future of the whole world. ...A Victory of the Fascist Powers will plunge the future of the world in an impenetrable darkness. In as much as nationalism prevents the Indians from fully cooperating with others, including Britain, for sparing the world that disaster, nationalism has become a self-contradictory doctrine... The essence of nationalism is to place the interests of one's own country above the interests of the world,.. The struggle for the freedom of any particular country cannot possibly succeed so long as the basic impulse of that struggle is characterized by an indifference to the welfare of the rest of the world... Enlightened self-interest should enable her to overcome nationalist sentiments and prejudices. In order to promote the cause of her own freedom, she should be actively interested in the freedom of others." (pp. 6-7).

Roy further observes in the next article "Contradictions of Nationalism" that "spitefulness has become the hallmark of patriotism. The natural desire for the defeat of the detested master has generated a blind faith in the invincibility of the power which is hoped to bring him down. The news of German victory gladdens the heart of the average Indian nationalist, no matter whoever be the victim" (p. 13). The same spirit of spitefulness gladdened the hearts of the Indian patriots, as the Japanese Militarists over ran Korea, China and the whole of South-Eastern Asia right up to the eastern border of India. After all Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose had joined them with his Indian National Army (INA). But neither the Fascists in the West nor the Japanese in the East granted independence to any of the countries conquered by them.

Recently Nobel Laureate Gunther Grass stirred a hornet's nest by making adverse comments on the role of Subhash Chandra Bose by stating that "Bose went to Germany and sought Hitler's help to form his force. He travelled in a German submarine to keep away from the Allied forces. Bose also sought the help of the Japanese, but no one seems to be critical of him. on the contrary he is held in high esteem in Bengal.." He was always puzzled by why Netaji was hero-worshipped in Bengal. "Given his association with Nazis and the Japanese, why people in Bengal admire Bose instead of being critical about him beats me." (*The Asian Age).* There are no reasons to disagree with the adverse comments on the conduct of Bose by Grass, but he need not have targeted the Bengalis only in this behalf. In fact to all Indian patriots Netaji is a hero and an icon. Some of them seriously believed that it was because of Netaji and his INA India became free of British Imperialism. In India, Nehru, Bose and M.N. Roy were the three persons who had personal knowledge of the brutalities committed by the Nazis and Fascists in Europe. Still Bose chose to join the Axis powers in order to drive away the British Imperialists from India, without realising the serious consequences. None doubts the sincere patriotism of Subhash Babu. But one certainly doubts the wisdom of his extreme step.

Similar criticism can be laid against the role of the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji, Nehru and other Congress leaders in passing the Quit India Resolution on August 8, 1942 in Mumbai. In my opinion the said Resolution was passed in desperation, without working out the serious consequences of the Japanese Militarists over-running the Indian subcontinent and thus

enslaving the Indian in the place of the British Imperialism. In the opinion of M.N. Roy and his colleagues in the RDP, the British Empire would liquidate itself in fighting the Axis forces, Britain would itself emerge as a third rate economic power at the end of the War and as a debtor to India. Further as the War was fought by the Allies against the Axis powers avowedly for the protection of human freedoms, progressive and liberal forces would emerge in UK who would be anxious to conger freedom on the colonies including India. In fact at the end of the War, the greatest war hero Churchill and his Conservative Party were rejected by the British Electorate. The Labour Party led by liberal leaders like Attlee was elected. The Labour Party was more anxious to part with power expeditiously than the Congress and the Muslim League were ready to make up their fights.

It is characteristic of Nationalists that they cannot see beyond their noses. In the Congress there was at least one brave and pragmatic leader Rajaji who was the only Congressman who voted against the Quit India Resolution. He was in the company of M.N. Roy and his colleagues in this behalf.

In the booklet *Nationalism, An antiquated Cult* Roy sets out one of the chief characteristics of Nationalism as follows, "The abstract conception of the idea of nation is a characteristic feature of Fascism. The nation is identified with the State, which again is conceived as a metaphysical power. The nation is not the sum total of all the entities – individuals, classes, communities, - comprising it. It is more than all of them taken together and the function of the latte3r is to contribute to the greatness of the nation at the cost of their respective interests. That exactly is the essence of Nationalism which also makes a cult of the nation which is regarded as an abstract, metaphysical, entity." (p. 23). He further observes, "It is not an accident that Indian Nationalism came under the undisputed and indisputable surveyed of a saintly dictator long before the Fascists appeared on the scene. An outstanding feature of the Indian nationalist movement has all along been the fascination for the idea of dictatorship. On the slightest provocation, elected committees were superseded by "dictators" or "War Councils" (Subhash Babu's election as President of the Congress at Tripura Congress was construed as defeat of Gandhiji and therefore he was constrained to resign as elected President and hounded out of the Congress). "In view of this te3ndency, inherent in the ideology of nationalism, it was not at all surprising that the basic principles of Fascism should appealed to the Nationalists, and the "Superman" Hitler be believed to be possessor of the power to make miracles." (p. 23).

It appears that the conclusion of Roy is that Nation States with defined boundaries came into existence in Europe after the Industrial Revolution and the same spread all over the world. "But the freedom of no country can now be attained or defended in national isolation, strictly according to the nationalist prejudices." As the freedom of the people of any country is dependent upon the freedom of the people of all other countries, Nation States have now become an anachronism. Therefore Nationalism has become "an antiquated cult."

According to me Nationalism (Patriotism), Fascism, which are same as Nazism, literally meaning in German as National Socialism, Communism, Communalism, Ethnic and Linguistic Pride. Religions and Religious Fundamentalism belong to a common genus with minor differences. The common features of all these concepts are totalitarianism, wherein the individual is expected to sacrifice his freedom for the larger entity. All the above entities are fed on hatred of an enemy, real or imagined. Tolerance, the highest value of a civilized society, does not form part of their psyche. They cannot bear any criticism, which in fact is the lever of human progress, in the history of mankind. In order to cow down their critics some of them maintain private armies like the storm troopers of Hitler. They create divisiveness among the people and foment riots. Even the Governments share their views and are privy to large scale killings and arson turning a blind eye even to genocide. In our country there is the rise of what is called cultural nationalism which is nothing but Fascism. A civilized and mature people resolve their differences by dialogue and debate and not by indulging in violence, killings, arson and vandalism. Thus civilized behaviour seems to be alien to the above mentioned collectivist entities and egos.

In dealing with Nationalism I have dealt with Fascism and Communism. M.N. Roy has written

extensively on Fascism. From his book *Fascism* published in 1938 four relevant chapters are reproduced in the selected works of M.N. Roy Vol. IV. Roy relates all forms of collectivist philosophies including Nationalism and Communism that ultimately degenerate into totalitarianism.

Roy and some of his colleagues had close contact with the renowned social psychologist Erich Fromm who has several titles to his credit throwing light on Fascism and Nationalism. In his book *Escape from Freedom* published in 1941, he developed his thesis on fear of freedom. According to him, freedom carries with it an onerous responsibility on individuals, particularly in times of uncertainties and large scale violence. In society, individuals instead of acting as responsible and moral citizens cherishing the values of freedom and democracy, choose to delegate the responsibility to a party or group or to a 'superman' like Hitler. Fromm describes this phenomenon as Fear of Freedom or Escape from Freedom.

Roy progressed from being a bomb-throwing revolutionary, joining the ranks of Indians struggling to escape from British imperialism, to a well-read Communist intellectual and one of the founders of the Communist movement in India. Subsequently he got over Nationalism and the Nationalist prejudice and also rejected several Marxists dogmas and doctrines, went beyond Communism and propounded the philosophy of New Humanism, later described as Radical Humanism. I have already dealt with his views on Nationalism and incidentally on Communism. Though he rejected a number of thesis propounded by Marx he had high regard for Marx whom he called as a real humanist for his concern for the deprived sections of the society. Unlike a large number of former Communists like Arthur Koestler and Poet Burden, Roy did not raise his hands in disillusionment describing Communism as "A God that Failed". But he chose to go beyond Marxism and Communism, retaining the abiding values of both.

Roy was very happy that Soviet Russia joined the Allies and became anti-Fascist in the war.

He followed the course of the War and expected Hitler to meet his Waterloo in the Soviet Land. He also hoped that at the end of the War, Stalin and the Russian Communists would change, abandon the dogma of Dictatorship of the Proletariat, which really meant dictatorship of the Communist Party. He also hoped that Stalin and Russian Communists would herald democracy in Soviet Russia. On the contrary Soviet Russia became more Totalitarian. This caused Roy to think furiously and decide to go beyond Marxism and Communism and find a new philosophy for mankind. He in consultation with his colleagues formulated the philosophy of New Humanism in the form of 22 Theses, which were also described as Principles of Radical Democracy.

The discussion of the 22 Theses can become the subject of a long article in itself. The theses deal with aspects of freedom, individual well-being, the search for truth. They look at all aspects of society and economics in the context of these fundamental ideals, and are therefore able to reject the Communist philosophy since it does not recognise the rights of the individual. Simultaneously, while rejecting the Communist doctrine of dictatorship and supremacy of the State, the theses also examine the Parliamentary form of democracy and found it wanting. This conclusion led to the disbanding of the Radical Democratic Party which had been formed by Roy after his disillusionment with the Congress Party. Instead, an alternate vision of society with a high level of people's participation in economics as well as power sharing was propounded. The members of the erstwhile RDP were asked to carry on the work of humanism through their own methods.

The last Theses 21 is worth quoting. "Radicalism starts from the dictum that 'man is the measure of everything' (Protagoras) or 'man is the root of mankind' (Marx), and advocates reconstruction of the world as a commonwealth and fraternity of free men by the collective endeavour of spiritually emancipated moral man."

The Manifesto of New Humanism as embodied in the 22 Theses adopted in 1946 is still valid and a refreshing guide for Revolution. It is still inspiring to read it again and again even after 60 years.

*__Mr. Rane__ was a renowned human rights activist and one of the senior radical humanists in the country.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 2005.

Ideas of M.N. Roy – Relevance Today

* Man is the archetype of society. Co-operative social relationships contribute to develop individual potentialities. But the development of the individual is the measure of social progress.
* Quest for freedom and search for truth constitute the basic urge of human progress.
* The purpose of all rational human endeavour, individual as well as collective, is attainment of freedom in ever increasing measure. Freedom is progressive disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals, as human beings ... The position of the individual, therefore, is the measure of the progressive and liberating significance of any collective effort or social organisation.
* For creating a new world of freedom, revolution must go beyond an economic reorganisation of society. Freedom does not necessarily follow from the capture of political power in the name of the oppressed and exploited classes and abolition of private property in the means of production.
* State ownership and planned economy do not by themselves end exploitation of labour; nor do they necessarily lead to an equal distribution of wealth. Economic democracy is no more possible in the absence of political democracy than the latter in the absence of the former.
* dictatorship tends to perpetuate itself. Planned economy under political dictatorship disregards individual freedom on the plea of efficiency, collective effort and social progress... Dictatorship defeats its professed end.
* The defects of formal parliamentary democracy have also been exposed in experience. They result from the delegation of power. To make democracy effective, power must always remain vested in the people, and there must be ways and means for the people to wield the sovereign power effectively, not periodically.
* The alternative to parliamentary democracy is not dictatorship; it is organised democracy in the place of the formal democracy of powerless atomised individual citizens. The parliament should be the apex of a pyramidal structure of the State reared on the base of an organised democracy composed of a countrywide network of people's committees.
* A social renaissance can come only through determined and widespread endeavour to educate the people as regards the principles of freedom and rational co-operative living... The programme of revolution will be based on the principles of freedom, reason and social harmony. It will mean elimination of every form of monopoly and vested interest in the regulation of social life.
* Radical democracy presupposed economic reorganisation of society so as to eliminate the possibility of exploitation of man by man. Progressive satisfaction of material necessities is the precondition for the individual members of society unfolding their intellectual and other finer human potentialities.
* 9The economy of the new social order will be based on production for use ad distribution with reference to human needs. Its political organisation excludes delegation of power. Its culture will be based on universal dissemination of knowledge and on minimum control and maximum scope for, and incentive to scientific and creative activities. The new society, being founded on reason and science, will necessarily be planned. But it will be planning with the freedom of the individual as its main purpose.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, April 1994.

Human Rights Issues and Education - Need, Scope, Strategies
Human Rights: A Brief Review

Justice R. A. Jahagirdar

The subject of human rights has been rightly evoking public interest all over the world recently. The interest in the subject is no longer confined to the upper circle of people concerned with the affairs of the State. Larger and larger number of people in different walks of life – social workers, persons in academic life, lawyers – are becoming interested in the subject and have been participating in activities for the furtherance of the cause of human rights. Rights, as such, have been dealt with in political and philosophical tomes for several years. They have been discussed mostly in the context of the States individually. The sovereignty of the States determined the boundaries of the subject till at least the end of the Second World War. The United Nations Charter and other international instruments that followed have globalised the subject of human rights. The question of human rights can no longer be contained within the borders of "sovereign" States. As will be seen presently the States have been compelled, as member of the international community, to undertake obligations strictly not consistent with the classical doctrine of sovereignty.

What are rights? Rights are not born suddenly; they grow, they evolve. The bundle of rights has no fixed number; the number grows gradually. In philosophical and political theories, there have been debated over a long period upon the origin and nature of rights and the differences in the approach and the understanding of the subject have led to different schools of thought. a discussion of the same is not being attempted here.

Origin of Rights

It will be sufficient to notice briefly how the rights came into being. When a group of human beings coke together they form a society for the conduct of which rules are formulated. These rules regulate the relationships among the members of the society. They create obligations; they also create rights. At some stage in the evolution of the human society, the authority to enforce the rules for the benefit of the members of the society had to be given to someone and that is how the State came into being. It might have come into being as a result of social contract (Rousseau, Hobbes) or might have just grown up (Henry Maine). A study of history thereafter suggests that in due course of time this authority grew into a State, mostly Kingdom in the earlier stage. The State became all powerful, sovereign which gave orders to all and received from none.

This was bound to lead and did lead to the stifling of the rights of men though for the protection of such rights (and for the enforcement of corresponding obligations) the State was created or born. An early protest against the arbitrary exercise of sovereign power is illustrated by the Magna Carta. The Magna Carta which has been called "the first great step on the constitutional road" (History of England by G.M. Trevelyan, p. 169) was not really the result of any popular movement. It was a document extorted by some barons from King John (1215 AD) who was short of funds. The demands made by the barons and conceded by King John, however, led in the end to the undreamt of liberties for all. This Charter of 1215 along with some other instruments that followed reaffirmed and expanded the liberties of 1215, provided freedom from arbitrary arrest, trial by jury and the *habeas corpus.* Sir Ivor Jennings says that "the liberties of England specified in Magna Carta must seem, to the modern reader, to be very odd collection, and for the most part they are obsolete." (Magna Carta, p. 14). Nevertheless, the path-breaking nature of that document cannot be under-estimated. It set in motion a process, a movement which has not come to rest even now, though the tyrants of today are not merely monarchs but also impersonal States.

Bill of Rights of 1688, enshrined in the otherwise unwritten Constitution of England, was said to be

the product of "the glorious revolution". As G.M. Trevelyan has pointed out, the true "glory" of that revolution "lay in the fact that it was bloodless, that there was no civil war, no massacre, no proscription; and above all that a settlement by consent was reached of the religions and political differences that had so long and so fiercely divided men and parties" (op. cit. P. 472). Though this document was called a Bill of Rights, it was essentially a settlement reached between different interests' groups. Nevertheless it did guarantee certain rights to the Englishmen and in particular it put an end to the divine right of Kings. John Locke who was the inspiration behind this document was after all a propounder of the theory of social contract.

Self-evident Truths

Within a century of the "glorious revolution", two other revolutions took place and they in a sense revolutionised the concept of rights. The authors of The (American) Declaration of Independence (4th July 1776) declared:

> "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

The American Constitution, drafted in 1787 after great debates and ratified in 1791, established a federal State independent of the British power. But the rights of the citizens were incorporated in the Constitution almost immediately by ten amendments together called Bill of Rights in 1791. This was the first time that what can be called fundamental rights were made a part of the written Constitution. It is a matter of common knowledge that England had no written Constitution nor does it have anything corresponding to Bill of Rights. Lord Hailsham once said that you may have "Elective Dictatorship". That is why even in England where, as Nani Palkhiwala says, freedom is bred in the bones of the people, great Judges like Lord Hailsham, Lord Scarman, Lord Gardiner, Lord Salmon, and Lord Devlin have advocated the incorporation f a Bill of Rights in British law. (on p. 165 in Human Rights in the Changing World" (HRCW, for short, hereafter), Ed. Justice E.S. Venkatramiah.)

French Revolution

Almost contemporaneously with the American Constitution came the French Revolution in 1789 and its Constitution. The texts of these Constitutions "for the first time set forth principles which are instantly recognisable as propositions of modern human rights law properly so-called" (The International Law of Human Rights by Paul Sieghart, p. 87). Sieghart then proceeds to summarise those principles as follows:

> "(1) *The principle of universal inheritance:*
> Every human being has certain rights, capable of being enumerated and defined, which are not conferred on him by ruler, nor earned or acquired by purchase, but which inhere in him by virtue of his humanity alone.
> (2) *The principle of inalienability:*
> No human being can be deprived of any of those rights, by the act of any ruler or even by his own act.
> (3) *The Rule of Law:*
> When rights conflict with each other, the conflicts must be resolved by the consistent, independent and impartial application of just laws in accordance with just procedures." (Ibid. p. 8)

These developments freed the concept of rights from the shackles of divinity or the boons from the State. The human rights are those rights which inhere in human beings by virtue of their being human.

They are necessary for the realisation by man of his potential as a human being. As a result of possessing and exercising these rights, a human being is able to have recourse to "pursuit of happiness". It must also be noted that these rights are human rights and not the rights of persons belonging to any race, nation, region, religion, caste or sex. They are in that sense universal. Human beings everywhere must have them. If a distinction is made among them, it must result in the deprivation of these rights for some, leading to discrimination. It may be, at a given time, that in some countries people or some people are not able to exercise those rights. But that is not a reason for denying those rights to those people. Freedom is indivisible; so is liberty. It is this realisation which has resulted in the international concern for human rights everywhere and has led to the adoption of several declarations, covenants and conventions to which reference is being made later. These instruments have imposed several obligations on the members of the international community and the States have taken or will necessarily undertake modifications of their laws and practices to conform to these obligations.

Western Concept?

An objection is taken in some quarters that the concept of human rights is a western concept, alien to oriental heritage and culture. Mr. V.N. Gadgil, a product of London School of Economics and the Law Inns of London, is the regular spokesman of the Congress Party. He says:

> "The Western view of these (human rights) was based essentially on liberalism of the modern West with its emphasis on civil and political rights such as freedom, right to a fair trial, right to political participation and so on. The non-Western perception was that there can be in a given society alternative conceptions of human dignity that seek that dignity through devices other than human rights. Cultural differences justify even fundamental deviations from 'universal' human rights standards," ("Upholding Human Rights", *Indian Express*, 1st April 1992).

The fallacies in this argument are obvious. In the first place, human rights are not "devices". They cannot be manipulated by other devices though an attempt was made to do so through "guided democracy" or "discip0lined democracy" during the infamous Emergency (*Anushashan Parva*) of which Mr. Gadgil was a captive. Differences in culture among the peoples of different countries do not make those peoples less human deserving lesser or no human rights. The argument must lead to the position that oriental sae less human or human in a different way so that they must be content with lesser human rights or human rights of a different kind.

Despotisms may also take different forms in countries with different climes. The core of despotism is the same everywhere just as the core of human dignity is the same everywhere. The benevolent dictatorship in which Bal Thackerary believes, according to this view, is best suited to the Indian genius. This view can very conveniently be used in support of Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Ital or for that matter "*Anushasan Parva*" in India.

There may be differences in culture, different peoples may be and are in different stages of economic and social development. It is for this very reason that it is necessary to universalise the concept, practice and protection of human rights. Concepts of the justice of laws, the integrity and dignity of the individual, safeguards against arbitrary rule, freedom from arbitrary arrest and persecution, participative democracy – these are relevant to human beings everywhere.

Human Rights and Poverty

In connection with the argument that human rights and ideas of liberty are not feasible in countries which have not solved the problem of poverty and want, Mr. F.S. Nariman recalls the words of late Jose Diokno, the great human rights activist of the Third World and the leader of the Philippines grass-roots movement called "FLAG". Rejecting what he called the 'currently fashionable justification for

authoritarianism in Asian developing countries', Diokno said:

> "One (justification) is that Asian countries are authoritarian and paternalistic and so need governments that are also authoritarian and paternalistic; that Asia's hungry masses are too concerned with providing their families with food, clothing and shelter, to concern themselves with civil liberties and political freedoms; that the Asian conception of freedom differs from that of the West; that in short Asians are not fit for human rights. ... (This) is racist non-sense... Authoritarianism promotes repression not development – repression that prevents meaningful change and preserves the structure of power and privilege."
>
> ("It Pays To Be Free", HRCW, p. 154)

Freedom and food are not alternatives. That is the rationale behind the International Covenant on Economic, social and Cultural Rights. More on this a little later. This should also dispose of Mr. Gadgil's another argument (in the article mentioned earlier) that the Western view does not "highlight the right to subsistence, right to education and above all right to development."

It cannot be doubted today that the enjoyment of human rights bears an essential connection with economic development, each being necessary to the other. Paul Sieghart treats development as conceivable in two directions – the right vested in the individual and the right vested in the State (that is, the "peoples"). The individual's right to development is the right to participate in, and benefit from, the process of development intended by the State for all members of the community so that each individual may enjoy all his human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural. On the other hand, the State can demonstrate that it has fashioned such an environment for its citizens and claim international assistance for its progress. (See "The Lawful Rights of Mankind, by Paul Sieghart, 1985 OUP). In this context the Delhi Declaration (December 1993) on World Education rightly called upon the donor countries to give assistance without putting any ceiling on it.

U.N. Charter

The recognition of the universal nature of human rights and of the need to make provision for upholding them immediately in the post-Second World War situation were recognised in the United Nations Charter. Article 1(3) of the United Nations Charter (UNCH) includes, among its purposes, the achievement of "international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion".

Article 55 of the Charter recognises that conditions of stability and well-being are necessary for the peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the equal rights and self-determination of peoples. For the creation of such conditions, the United Nations is enjoined to promote, among other things, "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion". Under Article 56, the Members of the UNO pledge themselves to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the UNO for the achievement of the purposes set out in Article 55.

There has been some debate on the nature and extent of the obligation imposed by Article 56 read with Article 55. International law which is not backed by enforcement machinery (there is not a World Government yet) imposes duties which are obeyed by the States under international pressures and the States' desire to be and continue to be member s of the comity of nations. No State has stated that it has, despite its signature on UNCH, no obligation by that document. It has also been suggested by critics that promoting respect for human rights does not mean protection of human rights. The argument is self-defeating. You cannot promote respect for something which you trample upon. Paul Sieghart has pointed out that "The International Court of Justice has had occasion to consider, albeit obiter, the legal effects of UNCH 55, and has stated that they bind Member States (of the UN) to observe and respect

human rights" (ILHR, p. 52). This was in the "Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia" in 1971. (For a fuller discussion and proper understanding of the binding nature of international law, Paul Sieghart (supra) may be consulted).

Universal Declaration

Next came the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10th December 1948. Hence 10th December every year is observed as Human Rights Day. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of President Roosevelt, the author of *Four Freedoms,* was the Chairperson of the drafting committee of the Declaration. The UDHR declared, in the first paragraph of the Preamble that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and *inalienable rights of all members of the human family* is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". (Emphasis is mine). The human family is treated as one family and it is as members of this family that human beings are to be treated. The rights are human rights and for the protection of these human rights the States are required to take action. The rights are enforceable against the State. It is necessary to remember this viz. the primary correlative duties in respect of human rights fall on States and their public authorities, not on other individuals. More on this in the discussion later on the human rights and the terrorists.

The UDHR contains an elaborate catalogue of human rights and, as the document itself says, UDHR is "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations ...".

In due course it became necessary to particularise and classify the human rights. In 1950 the General Assembly of the UNO passed a resolution declaring that "the enjoyment of civil and political *freedoms* and of economic, social and cultural *rights* are interconnected and interdependent". (Emphasis is mine). The two drafts, one on civil and political freedoms and the other on economic, social and cultural rights, were prepared in 1954 and the General Assembly gave the widest publicity to them. The Governments were invited to study and comment on them. The preparation of the drafts to be adopted was completed in 1954. However, it took another 12 years before the General Assembly adopted these instruments on 16th December 1966.

Covenants of Rights

We are here concerned with three documents. First, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICES). It came into force on 3rd January 1976, three months after the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the thirty-fifty instrument of ratification or accession, as provided in Article 27. As on 31st December 1987, the Covenant had been ratified or acceded to by 91 States, India being one of them.

The second is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICPR) which came into force on 23rd March 1976, three months after the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the thirty-fifth instrument of ratification or accession as provided in Article 49 of the document. As on 31st December 1987, the Covenant had been ratified or acceded to by 87 States, India being one of them. Till then the United States had not signed either instrument.

Before proceeding to the third instrument viz. the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICPROP) it would be advantageous to briefly review the first two instruments. ICES, which was drafted parallel with ICPR contains 15 articles. The Preambles and Articles 1, 3 and 5 of ICES and ICPR are almost identical. Both the instruments define a set of rights largely derived from UDHR. The Preamble to each covenant recalls the obligation of States under the UNCH to promote human rights reminds the individual of his responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of those rights. It also recognises that in accordance with UDHR, the ideas of free human beings enjoying civil and political freedom and freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his civil and political rights as well as his economic,

social and cultural rights.

ICES deals, naturally, with economic, social and cultural rights which include the rights to equality, equal remuneration, fair wages, equal opportunity in employment, association of workers, etc. These rights are "recognised" by the State parties to the Covenant. Article 2 states that each State Party "*undertakes to take steps"* for realisation of the rights and "undertakes to guarantee" that the rights will be exercised without discrimination. Because of this language in Article 2 and other Articles, it has been suggested that the obligation assured by the State Parties under ICES is qualified ad progressive. As will be seen presently, the language in ICPR is different – and for valid reasons.

Civil and Political Rights

ICPR contains 27 Articles defining and circumscribing in great details a variety of rights and freedoms. Part III contains the list of these rights which include the rights to seek pardon in case of death sentence, not to be subjected to 'double jeopardy', freedom from torture and bondage, right to security of person etc. The important point to be noticed is that in Article 2 each State Party "undertakes to respect and ensure to all individuals ... the rights recognised in the present Covenant without distinction of any kind ...". The undertaking is not qualified to taking steps. It is only where the necessary law or machinery is not in existence that the State Party undertakes to take necessary steps, by legislation or otherwise, to give effect to the rights mentioned. The rights mentioned are the well known civil and political rights which need not be enumerated here.

These civil and political rights are often referred to as "first generation rights". These are the traditional rights which mostly called for a negative obligation on the part of the State to desist from interfering with the exercise of individual freedom. The rights covered by ICES require the States to discharge a positive duty to create conditions for the realisation of these rights. They were traditionally not recognised as rights. But the expanding concept of human rights embraced these rights and since they arrived on the scene later than civil and political rights, they have been called "second generation rights". However, they are not less important in the modern world.

These three documents, UDHR, ICES and ICPR, are historic documents, setting before mankind at one time ideals that should inspire men and nations everywhere. UDHR has come to be recognised as a historic document articulating a common definition of human dignity and values. The other two documents, ICES and ICPR, have placed upon the States a legal as well as a moral obligation to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. These three documents together constitute Inte4rnational Bill of Human Rights. From these documents have issued a large number of other conventions and treaties – both universal and regional.

A brief reference may now be made to Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Optional Protocol came into being at the same time as ICPR and under it a State Party ratifying the Protocol accepts the right of an individual in the State to submit a communication to the Human Rights Committee for the violation of the Covenant. In such a case the HRC can sit in judgment over the action of a sovereign State and give its opinion. As on 31st December 1987, 40 States which have subscribed to ICPR also became parties to the Protocol. India is *not* one of them.

Step Towards Global Unity

The rights of man which are recognised by international agreements to which States are parties naturally form the subject matter of international concern. In the long run this recognition of the universality of human rights may bring about global unity. The process may be slow and halting but the direction is promising. Several organisations, both formal and informal, have been monitoring the violations of human rights. Mention must be made, on the international level, of Amnesty International, established in 1971, reports of which have high credibility and have embarrassed several Governments. In India we have, among others, People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL).

Theoretically India has an impressive array of rights given to its citizens. We have in our Constitution an entrenched bill of rights in the form of Fundamental Rights contravention of which is impermissible by either legislative or executive action. Our Constitution makers found it desirable and possible to include a chapter on fundamental rights despite the unsettled, gloomy conditions in the immediately post-independence period. This was partly because even during freedom struggle, the need for having a provision for fundamental rights was kept in mind. A resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy had been passed in Karachi Congress in 1931. India has acceded both to ICES and ICPR, though as late as on 10th April 1979, that is, during the Janata regime.

India's Record

In practice, however, India's record in the field of human rights has been dismal. Punjab and Kashmir have been the grave-yards of human rights. Amnesty International has repeatedly indicted India for its violation of human rights by citing authentic, verifiable instances. Custodial deaths and violence have been rampant and event eh Law Commission has called for an amendment of the law providing for presumption of guilt on the part of the officer in charge of a police station in the case of custodial death. The nation having been shamed by the atrocities committed on women in custody, the Parliament has provided for higher punishment in case of custodial rape. What is shocking and shameful is that none of the political parties in India has taken up the question of human rights on its agenda.

Whatever has been achieved in India is the result of an alert judiciary and active social groups. The prisoners' rights, equal pay for women, the freeing the bonded labour, minimum wages for building workers, the enlargement of the concept of 'life and liberty' – these and several other such questions have been handled by the Supreme Court of India.

> (For a slightly more detailed discussion on this subject, reference may be made to my article "Human Rights – The Indian Experiment" and "Human Rights decisions and Techniques" by Dr. Dhananjaya Chandrachud, both in HRCW).

The questions of human rights in a society of terrorism must be squarely faced and properly understood and explained. This is necessary because human rights activists have been accused of condoning the human rights' violations at the hands of the terrorists and of unjustifiably criticising the State actions much o the discomfiture of the State. It has been stated on behalf of the Government that the violations of human rights of innocent citizens at the hands of the terrorists cannot be ignored. Indeed, they cannot be and nobody, none among the human rights activists, suggests that it should be. The criticism against the human rights activists in this regard is the result of confused thinking or for scoring a debating point or both.

Early in 1993, five Chief Ministers (notable among them Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister) argued in the preparatory meeting of the National Human Rights Commission that the Commission's task should also include the examination of human rights' violations by the terrorists. Strange thoughts! The terrorists are not indulging in violations of human rights – they are indulging in crimes. The law of the land and the State machinery must take care of the same. You do not need a Commission for this. It is elementary that human rights are distinguished from other rights by the fact that the primary correlative duties in respect of human rights are on States and the public authorities and not on other individuals, let alone the terrorists.

Terrorists and Human Rights

The terrorists are by definition anti-social disruptive and criminal elements. There cannot be a debate on the question whether the terrorists' acts are condemnable or not. To say that terrorists should adhere to human rights is to betray a total lack of understanding of terrorism and of human rights. Terrorists strike at democracy and peaceful life of society and they need to be dealt with firmness

and determination. No one, not even the strongest human rights' activist, can quarrel with the Government's efforts to eliminate terrorism.

The conscience of democrats and believers in the rule of law is shocked when, as in Sopore in January 1993, Security Forces ran amuck and massacred 60 innocent citizens as a reprisal for the killing of two B.S.F. men by the terrorists. Law does not permit and cannot condone such actions. Democratic conscience is shocked when it is claimed that some men were killed in encounters when all the injuries on these men are on their backs. Conscience is also shocked when people taken in custody disappear. It is the lawlessness of the law-enforcing agencies that makes an assault on the human rights and this needs to be monitored and curbed by the Human Rights Commission.

In the field of human rights the role of non-governmental voluntary organisations has always been important. It is now recognised that much of the initiative for the development of the concept of human rights came from non-governmental organisations such as the Lawyers' associations, Trade Unions etc. Even after the formal adoption of International Bill of Human Rights, NGOs have been active in seeing that proper action is taken and proper law is made and implemented by the Governments. The Amnesty International has been playing a unique role in this regard. On the role of NGOs one may profitably read the article on this subject in HRCW (p. 112). *The Radical Humanists* will find in this field a task suited to their intellectual equipment and temperament.

The activity in the field of human rights is not philanthropic work; it is not humanitarian worm. The individual human being is no longer the object of compassion; he is the subject of rights. The connection between humanism and human rights is unbreakable. Let me quote V.M. Tarkunde:

> "Humanism may be defined as a philosophy and an attitude of mind which gives primacy to the individual, ad recognises his or her right to live in freedom and with dignity. Since the recognition of the freedom and dignity of the individual is the basic principle of democracy, humanism can properly be described as the philosophy of Democracy. It also provides the philosophical background of human rights, because these rights can be enjoyed only in a society which is inspired by the values of democracy in all aspects of life – social, economic and political ..."
>
> ("Philosophical Background of Human Rights" in HRCW, p. 350)

And finally the number and contents of the human rights cannot remain fixed or frozen. First came the civil and political rights; then came the economic, social and cultural rights. The "third generation rights" are already being talked of. They are the rights of individuals as belonging to a group, neighbourhood. A typical example of such rights is the environmental protection. The unfolding of the potential of the human beings will demand formulation of fresh human rights, fresh policies and fresh programmes.

Abbreviations used:

UNCH: United Nations Charter
HRCW: "Human Rights in a Changing World" Edited by Justice E.S. Venkatramiah
(Pub: International Law association Regional Branch, India)
ILHR: The International Law of Human Rights – by Paul Sieghart (O.U.P.)
UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
ICES: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICPR: International Covenant on civil and Political Rights

Late Justice R.A. Jahagirdar *prepared this paper for the All India Study Camp (Hyderabad) of Indian Radical Humanist Association in December 1993.*- Ed.

Published in **The Radical Humanist,** June 1994.

Human Rights Education – India's Heritage

Dr. R. M. Pal

Indian scholars and human rights intellectuals have been talking and writing, apropos of human rights violations, about India's glorious past of 5000 years, written in gold, and pleading that that past must be revived to usher in a new India where the values of tolerance, non-violence, friendship for all, equality, respect for the human person, human dignity and rights, and freedom will be respected and cherished. They, however, leave us in the dark as to which past is to be revived/reborn, of which we can be proud; and which one needs to be buried. Obviously we want to revive that past which will help India come into the inheritance of the blessings of modern civilization. Which means that we have to resist the temptation of reviving an imaginary Golden Age of India's past.

Furthermore, as Professor Romila Thapar puts it: 'The supposed perfection of the past has hampered our understanding not only of the social processes but also of our own cultural identity … An analysis of the totality of Indian society today has to account for a variety of transitions taking place and involving tribal groups, peasant groups, and, at the most articulate level, the change to industrialisation. The nature of these changes will often involve a basic change of social values. The confrontation can no longer be evaded as it once was by recourse to the theory that our concern has alw2ays been only with things spiritual, or by an escape into the past. But the process can be facilitated by an awareness of the past, deriving from a realistic assessment … It is only the awareness that history is made by an entire people into its total activity, which can bring us nearer to explaining the past in its concrete actuality. And, this, after all, is the ultimate purpose of historical investigation."1

At the fag end of the 20th century we cannot afford to go round in circles of ideological confusion. We need to raise our voice of reason and wisdom, discover our old literature, philosophy, and civilisation to make us wiser and constantly remind us of our journey forward. This is how Europe recovered from the savagery of the ark Age and many of the crudities of the Middle Ages. The idea behind revivalism/rebirth (I use these two words interchangeably, for the sake of convenience, even though they mean different things) is to look at our past, that past which can guide us to respect the individual's dignity, and to build a future of which we can be proud. In the process we should have no hesitation, indeed we must be brave, in discarding those aspects which hamper our progress, like, for example, the theories of Karma, Transmigration of Soul, Maya, the principle of division of society into castes, the forms which the system of exploitation assumed in by-gone days was declared to be the creation of God, the 'spiritualist' culture that seeks to persuade the poor, the depressed, the oppressed, and the exploited to reconcile their lot to suffering, sacrifice, love, and voluntary poverty – all that signify complete surrender, and absence of the spirit of revolt. We must be brave to discard these even if they are backed by scriptures – indeed, we must bury such scriptures.

The highest appreciation of our past would be to find out how it could generate in us the spirit of revolt against social injustice and human rights violations. Indeed a very large canvas, and a huge agenda for our historians in the above context, to prepare a course of study based on our heritage for human rights education to be taught in schools, colleges and universities.

As regards, tolerance, respect for human rights, dignity of, and respect for the individual and his/her freedom, that have been part of our heritage, one need not be a great sophisticated scholar or historian to know that even the philosophies of religious movements in the not-too-distant past, not to speak of the materialist philosophy of ancient India2, incorporated such values. Regrettably, the human rights intellectuals and activists have hardly taken note of these movements, possibly of the fact that most of these originated from, and inspired by, the lower strata of society. And also that, to quote Romila Thapar again: "The cultural identity which we have forged in recent times has been that of a Sanskritic upper caste, or else its equivalent in a Persian upper caste. Yet these identities are as

elitist as the English speaking identity of contemporary Indians … (The fact remains that) the common features of religion for the majority of Indians lie in the worship of the mother goddess and fertility cults and in the teachings of what have come to be called the devotional or *Bhakti* sects and the '*sant*' and '*pir*'. Emphasis is continually given by historians to the spread of Islam symbolized by the *Quran*. Yet so little recognition is given to the fact that, in the practice of religion, it is the local cult, the non-Sanskritic tradition, which is often predominant."3

It is in his context that I give below a summary account of this non-Sanskritic tradition with special reference to the mediaeval age (this period should not be confused with what is known as the Middle Ages in Europe), that is, before the advent of European learning which came to India with the British. I suggest the contributions made in this period can inspire human rights activists in their work, and also scholars and educationists including the Government of India appointed National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), involved in the task of framing courses of study for human rights education.4 The NCERT with the active support of the NHRC has brought out a Source Book on Human rights education which contains summaries/excerpts from various UN Charters and Covenants, and also from our own Constitution. One wonders, however, if a mere textbook reading of constitutional provisions and UN Charters can develop a human rights culture which is what the NHRC's stated objective is. Furthermore, aren't these already taught in the Civics, Political Science, and Law Courses?

II

During the Buddhist period, interest in man, man in his own image, and man's affairs on this earth, unlike interest in gods and goddesses and good life in heaven after death, this earth being a vale of tears, became the primary concern of thoughtful men and women. Buddha rejected the caste system.5 Human sufferings made Prince Gautam Siddhartha restless and he left all luxuries and comforts of the King's palace in search of remedies for all human miseries on this earth. The basic tenets of Buddhism are non-violence, non-hatred, and friendliness to all. Emperor Ashoka who became a devoted follower of the Buddha took to the non-violent, humanitarian and humanist philosophy of Buddhism, also, he became a great champion of freedom and tolerance. He pleaded for universal tolerance. One of the most significant contributions of Buddhism was the introduction and spread of secular education – education for all. Organized universities came to be established under the direct influence of Buddhism.

There were other sects – non-Vedic – like the *Nath*, *Yoga*, *Siddharcara* who too, like the Buddhist, found the key to all religious mysteries in the human body itself. "The position of the *nath-panthi siddhas* and *jogis* in Hindu society needs to be understood. Most of the *nath-panthi siddhas* and *jogis* belonged to the low castes, opposed caste-based inequalities, denounced the religion of works favoured by the Brahmins, and did not favour image worship."6 Women played an important part in these sects, particularly in the Tantra.

There are other folk religions/sects which came into prominence in the mediaeval period the well-known *Bhakti* movement, and the Baul movement in Bengal. They are remarkable for their simplicity, directness, and for preaching and practicing tolerance, love, and friendliness.

III

Bhakti, the path of devotion, implies a belief in the Supreme Person, not a Supreme *Abstraction*. It is, therefore, a very straightforward and unsophisticated belief. This movement has non-aryan roots; in fact, according to some scholars, it originated in the Dravida country. It was opposed by the Brahmins for a long time because of its utter disregard for caste divisions, religious rituals and ceremonies.

The tradition of Bhakti has played an important part among the Tamils as mentioned in the works of the *Alvar* saints, most of whom came from low castes. In the beginning the movement was

restricted to the lower strata of society who were oppressed by the Brahmanical religion. At a later stage, Vaishnavas of even higher castes hailed their literature. One *Alvar* saint, Andal, belonged to a low caste; she was accepted as a religious leader by the society in general. This is an indication of the popularity of the Bhakti movement. The great scholar Ramanuja, the best known exponent of this movement, was influenced and inspired by the "works of Altars, which were collected by the disciples of Ramanuja at his special request, and from which Ramanuja himself drew much inspiration and food for this system of thought."7

At this point, a brief look at the advent of Islam in India is necessary. In India, Islam led to a series of responses. We can ill-afford to ignore them as also the creative influence of Islam. An analysis of the Muslim conquest of India is of practical value today, and will help Indians – both Hindus and Muslims – appreciate the positive results of Muslim conquest of India. (This is necessary, among other reasons, for a solution of the communal question which has been one of the major sources, along with the caste system, of human rights violations.)

It may be noted in this context that Europe came out of the shackles of the Dark Age and the Middle Ages, and entered the civilized ea by learning from the Muslims. It is equally true that a large number of Hindu reformers, largely in the Bhakti movement in mediaeval India, who revolted against orthodoxy, were considerably influenced by the Muslim conquest and its social effects.8 The devotional Bhakti and the Islamic Sufis (the first Sufi teacher, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti came to India in 1193) have much in common. In mediaeval north India mysticism was the product of both the Bhakti movement and the tradition of the Sufis. One important aspect of this mysticism is its complete independence from orthodox scriptures. These teachers practiced and taught tolerance.

The interaction of Bhakti and Islam, specially the Sufi idea, gave rise to a number of progressive movements with the core philosophy of tolerance. Human rights educationists should give the utmost importance to this aspect. It is regrettable that is has, with some notable exceptions, been generally studies in isolation. It should, therefore, be emphasized in our text books that "relations between Islam and the religions of the area (South Asia) were marked by mutual understanding and tolerance. (This) spirit of mutual understanding, tolerance and cooperation were, to a large extent, promoted by the rise and spread of Sufi and Bhakti ideas."9

Our students must be reminded over and over again of what Rabindranath Tagore said: "the Sakas, the Hunas, the Pathans and the Mughals, all have been merged into the body" – with a view to combating the religious frenzy that has been playing havoc in our country. We must remind ourselves of the forgotten fact of history that "a distinctive feature of the thought and life of the people of South Asian region is their adherence to the tradition of tolerance, syncretism and co-existence, (and in this context) the coming of Islam was an event of outstanding significance for the history of this subcontinent. This syncretic and humanist tradition in South Asian society and social thought is remarkably portrayed in the following poem of Kazi Nazrul Islam:

> *"I sing the song of equality/ where all barriers have crumbled,/ All differences have faded,/ and Hindus-Buddhists-Muslims-Christians/ Have come together and have merged./ I sing the song of equality."*

In short, we must remind ourselves over and over again that a pluralistic society can flourish only if its basic value remains tolerance.

IV

Namdeva and Tukaram from Maharashtra, the former a tailor, and the latter a peasant, made the Bhakti movement increasingly acceptable to the people. Namdeva taught: "The stone image speaks not, see the lord within. The *Tirthas* (holy pilgrimage) cannot wash away sins: clean your heart instead. Fasting and other observances are futile unless your being is purified. What can ceremonies

do if love awake not in your heart?"

In Bengal, the well-known Vaishnava poets, Jaidev, Vidyapati, and Chandidas, as also Chaitanya popularized the movement. The Bhakti movement during this period spread to almost all parts of India.

Though the movement did not succeed in breaking through caste barriers, the very fact that many of its leaders belonged to lower castes, and also that it believed in the equality of men, must be taken note of by human rights educationists.

In the fourteenth century, Ramananda (1370-1440) challenged castes divisions, revolted against traditional religious rituals and started preaching in Hindi, and not Sanskrit which was the preserve of the upper castes. His thought is well reflected in the following words of his: "Wherever I go, I see water and stone; but it is you who had filled them all with your presence. In vain do they seek you in the Vedas …" (*Granth Saheb*). Ramananda had 12 important disciples. They all belonged to low castes, one of them, Ravidas was a cobbler. "The recitation of the Vedic *Mantras*, even for many millions of times, will not satisfy the pangs of the longing (to see You)," sang Ravidas (*Granth Saheb*). The most famous disciple was Shaikh Kabiru Din Momin Ansari, popularly known as Kabir, a Muslim weaver. The Sufi and Bhakti traditions of the Islamic and Hindu religions blended in his teachings. He struck at the very roots of ritualism and superstition. "O God, whether Allah or Rama, I live by Thy name," sang Kabir. Since Kabir composed songs for the common people he chose Hindi. "Sanskrit is like water in a well; the language of the people is a flowing stream," said Kabir. A married man, with a son and daughter, Kabir did not practice celibacy and asceticism. He practiced and preached the gospel of universal tolerance and was one of the exponents of the idea of India without any communal discord. Kabir gave the utmost importance to human equality and denounced inequality based on caste, station, and wealth.

The founder of the great Sikh religion, Guru Nanak, was greatly influenced by Islamic and Sufi ideas. Sikhism is known for its simplicity, and this was derived from Kabir's teaching. Both Kabir and Guru Nanak found a common link between Hinduism and Islam. "The supreme significance of Nanak was that he was the harbinger of Hindu-Muslim unity, for he sought sincerely to reconcile Islam with Hinduism as the following verse will show: "*Guru Nanak Shah faquir / Hindu Ka Guru aur / Musalman ka Pir.*"11

Dadu, a Muslim cotton-curder, was another of Kabir's outstanding followers. "When I look upon the beauty of this universe, I cannot help asking, 'How, O Lord, did you come to create it? What sudden wave of joy coursing through Your being compelled its own manifestations? Was it really due to a desire for self-expression, or simply on the impulse of emotion? … That is why Your Universe … has charmed me so … Dadu has no desire to know; he is satisfied to remain enraptured with all this beauty of yours; and to rejoice in it with You,' so sang Dadu – so very different from the hair-splitting and complicated intellectualism of *Jnana* and *Karma.*

V

Bauls are not known outside Bengal. The philosophy of the *Baul* movement lies in the simple man's (*sahaj*) search for the "Man of his heart" – his God. The movement traces its origin to the fall of Buddhism and Vaishnavism.

Bauls are like the wind (*Baul* means wind, *vayu*) – always free, not tied to any religious traditions. They accept no caste division; they do not worship any special deity nor do they accept any temple or mosque. Baul devotees belong to the lowest strata of both Hindus and Muslims. "What need have we of other temples, when our body is the temple where our spirit has its abode?" they sing. They do not observe asceticism, nor do they believe in celibacy. Earthy love, they maintain, helps them to feel Divine love, and harmony between material and spiritual needs. The following Baul song contains the core philosophy of the Baul movement:

That is why, brother, I became a madcap Baul. / No master I obey, nor injunctions, canons, or custom / Man-made distinctions have no hold on me now. / I rejoice in the gladness of the love that wells out of my own being. / In love there is no separation, but a meeting of hearts forever. /So I rejoice in song and I dance with each and all. / That is why, brother, I became a madcap Baul.

One of the most famous Bauls, Faquir Lalon Shah sang thus:

Everyone asks Lalon what is your religion: / Lalon says, I know he is a Musalman; / But how would you identify the religion of a female? / A Brahmin male is identified by his **poita** *(sacred thread); / But how would you identify a Brahmin female? / One holds rosary in hand, the other wears* **tasbi** *(bead) in his neck, / That is how one's religion is known; / But at moments of birth and death do these signs remain? /People everywhere talk of gossip about religious differences. / Lalon says, I have dropped all polemics about religion in free market.*

I may add that Rabindranath Tagore was greatly influenced by Kabir and translated many of Kabir's poems into English in collaboration with Evelyn Underhill., Guru Nanak, too, left a lasting impression on Tagore's mind. Tagore was also greatly influenced by Bauls like Lalon Faquir and Gagan Harkarai. He composed many songs under their influence.

Notes:

1. *The Past and Prejudice*, by Professor Romila Thapar, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 60-63.
2. The school of philosophy, *Lokayata* considered physical sense data to be the only source of knowledge. It challenged the whole of Hindu metaphysics, and rejected after-life and reincarnation. This rejection is found elsewhere too. In the Ramayana a Brahmin, Javali, advises Rama thus: "I grieve for those who, abandoning the pleasures of the world, seek to acquire merit for felicity hereafter and sink to an untimely death, I do not grieve for others. Men waste food and other precious things by offering them up yearly, as sacrifices in honour of their departed ancestors. O Rama, has a dead man ever partaken of food/ If good that is eaten by one nourishes another, then those who journey need never carry provision on the way. Relatives might feed a Brahmin, in his name, at home. O Ramachandra, these scriptural injunctions were laid down by learned men, skilled in inducing others to give, and finding other means of obtaining wealth, thus subjugating the simple-minded. Their doctrine is 'Sacrifice, give in charity, consecrate yourselves, undergo austerities, and become ascetics.' O Rama, be wise, there exists no world but this, that is certain. Enjoy that which is present and cast behind thee that which is unpleasant. Adopting the principles acceptable to all, do thou receive the kingdom offered thee by Bharata." (*Ayodhya Kand*). (Quoted by K.M. Sen in his book *Hinduism*, Penguin, 1961, pp. 63-64.
3. Romila Thapar, op. cit, p. 6.
4. I have not dealt in this essay with the short-lived Renaissance that was ushered in India, especially in Bengal and Maharashtra, under the direct influence of European learning and philosophy and which gave rise to a large number of reformers and reformist movements, intellectual-activists, and political thinkers whose contributions have been recorded and acknowledged by most historians. Contributions made by European learning and philosophies in the field of human rights, civil liberties, and individual liberty have been significant, and they find elaborate mention in text books.
5. The Hindu caste system, in the context of human rights, must be dealt with in great detail,

for it represents inequality and has played an important role in stratification of Indian society – particularly because of its so-called 'divine' origin. The caste system by its very nature, goes against respect for an individual's dignity and freedom to express himself. Further, the caste system had a racial origin in its association of castes and colour. For example, an important verse in the *Mahabharata*: Bhrigu explains the nature of castes to Bhardvaja, "Brahmins are fair, Kshatriyas are reddish, Vaishyas are yellowish, and the Shudras are black." What should be of interest for human rights education is how it is questioned by Bhardvaja: "We all seem to be affected by desire, anger, fear, sorrow, worry, hunger and labour; how do we have caste differences them? (*Santi Parva*). (Quoted by K.M. Sen in his book, *Hinduism*, Penguin, 1961, p. 28).

That in ancient India, the caste system was repudiated in also illustrated by a number of characters in the Mahabharata: (i) the story of King Yayati and Devayani – Devayani, a Brahmin, marries Yayati who is a Kshtriya with the consent of her father, Guru Sukracharya, (ii) Vidura, one of the wisest men in the *Mahabharata* and also described as the very incarnation of *Dharma*, was the son of a Sudra woman, (iii) Rishi Vaisishtha was born of a prostitute, (iv) Parashara was born of a *Chandala* woman. Another example of argument against caste divisions, from the *Bhavishya Purana*, "All human beings have the same Father, the children of the same Father cannot have different castes."

6. Professor Salish Chandra in *Cultural Interaction in South Asia*, edited by S.A.I. Termini, Handed Institute of Historical Research, New Delhi, 1993, p. 103.

   Human rights educationists should find this book useful in preparing reading material for school students. I t is a collection of papers written by scholars from South Asia, presented before a Colloquium organized by Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Handed Institute of Historical Research, New Delhi, and Jamie Hamdard, New Delhi, in 1991. Three papers, "Aspects of Society and Social Thought in South Asia: The Syncretic and Humanist Tradition" by Professor Salahuddin Ahmad of Dhaka University, "South Asian Sufis and their Social Linkage" by Professor Riazul Islam, Professor Emeritus at Karachi University, and "Interaction of Bhakati and Sufi Movements in South Asia" by Professor Satish Chandra of Jawaharlal Nehru University of New Delhi, deserve special mention in the context of human rights education.
7. S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, 1940.
8. In spite of the fact that Islam had played out its progressive role before it penetrated India, Islam was welcomed as a message of hope and freedom by victims of the Brahmanical reaction which had overthrown the Buddhist revolution resulting in a state of chaos in Indian society. How is it that the Mohammedans, though not large in numbers, managed to rule a vast country for such a long time, millions of people converted themselves to the new faith? The fact remains that the Mohammedans satisfied certain objective requirements of Indian society. The historian Havell (not an admirer of Islam, he is a great admirer of ancient Hindu culture) in his book, *Aryan Rule in India* writes: It was not the philosophy of Islam, but its sociological programme which won so many converts for it in India. The victorious progress of Islam in India is not to be accounted for by external reasons. It was mainly due to the political degeneration of Aryavarta which set in after the death of Harsha. The effect of the Musalman political creed upon Hindu social life was two-fold: It increased the rigour of the caste system and aroused a revolt against it. Islam made the Sudra a free man and potentially a Lord of the Brahmins. Like the Renaissance of Europe, it stirred up the intellectual waters, produced many strong men, and some men of striking originality of genius. Like the

Renaissance also, it was essentially a city cult; it made the nomad leave his tent and the Sudra abandon his village. It developed a type of humanist full of *joie de vivre*," (Quoted by M.N. Roy in his book, *Historical Role of Islam*, Ajanta, 1990, reprint, Delhi, pp. 84-85. M.N. Roy wrote this book in jail during the period 1930-36 to indicate the way to a solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem in India. This book deserves to be read by human rights educationists as also by members and officials of the National Human Rights Commission).

9. Satish Chandra, op. cit, p. 100. What Professor Satish Chandra writes with special reference to Tulsidas, the chief exponent of one trend of the Bhakti movement which was devoted to Rama, should be specifically by human rights educationists even though Hindutvavadis will take objection to Professor Chandra's comment and views; "Tulsidas laid considerable stress on the need for social and political stability with the framework of which alone religious duties could be properly performed. The basis of this was his belief that the overwhelming sections in society consisted of people with wicked and evil propensities … Social control implied the maintenance of a reformed caste system in which people did not transgress their prescribed duties .. Tulsi's own approach was fundamentalist or traditionalist in the sense that he based his teaching on the scriptures which along with the Brahmins, were to be respected and were to be regarded as the bedrock of religion. He also strengthened and revived the tradition of image worship, the deity being worshipped and treated with the deference due to a person of high status. The tradition of reincarnation was automatically reaffirmed," pp. 109-110.
10. Professsor Salahuddin Ahmad of Dhaka University in *Cultural Interaction in South Asia*, op. cit. p. 87.
11. J.N. Sarkar, *Thoughts on Trends of Cultural Contacts in Medieval India*, Calcutta, 1984. P. 102.

Published in ***The Radical Humanist***, March 1997.

A note on Human Rights Education - Need, Scope, Strategies

Dr. R. M. Pal

(Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi held a symposium on "Human Rights Education in India – Need, Scope, Strategies", and an expert committee to draft a course outline on the subject which the Political Science discipline proposes to introduce in the University. This writer was an invitee in the symposium and the expert committee. The following is a brief summary of his presentation at the symposium and the expert committee meeting. – R.M.P.)

I need not speak on the need for human rights education, except to say, by way of making observations, that if we want India to occupy her rightful place in the comity of nations, we have to reorient our present and future keeping in mind that the fundamental inspiration for human progress comes from the demand for freedom, respect for human rights and dignity. In fact, these are cultural values which are eternal as well as spiritual, and without such values there will be no human heritage worth cherishing. It is regrettable that not much well-informed discussion on human rights education in India, has taken place. Such discussions have not been common even among groups and activists working for civil liberties and human rights. An attempt was made to have a symposium through the columns of the PUCL Bulletin in which scholar-activists like Rajni Kothari, Sibnarayan Ray wrote on the subject. Subsequently, a one-day workshop was held in March 1995 organised by the Delhi PUCL with the assistance of the NHRC.

When I speak of lack of concern, I am not unaware of the mini-industry that has come up in the name of human rights and human rights education during the last 3 years or so particularly after the NHRC came into existence. I don't wish to list these 'industries", many of which are funded by the government, and some under the inspiration of the NHRC, and some funded by the foreign funding agencies. Let me however refer to a couple of instances: UGC Sikri Committee Report; a committee constituted by Professor Upendra Bakshi, then vice-chancellor (a human rights intellectual) in 1994 (not many of the names in the committee would inspire confidence); and a Source Book prepared by the NCERT on a request made by the NHRC, which gives a summary of international covenants, our constitution, etc.

For a long time, nobody knew about anything about the Sikri Committee recommendations, the Delhi University committee has hardly ever met; and if a study of UN covenants and out Constitution is what is needed, well we have been studying these for a long time now – why do we need one more source book? This is not the way – I hope the NHRC and the NCERT will not misunderstand me – to go about inculcating a human rights culture as per Section 12 of the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 – "The Commission shall undertake, protect and promote research in the field of human rights (and) spread human rights literacy among various sections of society and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, the media, seminars and other available means."

Let me mention very briefly as paradigms a couple of areas which need special attention: (1) How do we "teach" tolerance which is the most important value to be imbibed in a pluralistic society like ours? All the three religions in India, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, see women as inferior to men, and deny equal rights to women. Even Buddhism practices segregation of sex in monastic life. (3) Any theory and philosophy of human rights would reject the notion of social hierarchy in terms of birth, i.e. the caste system. (4) The right to question authority, for example authority of the Bible, or of the Koran; or of the Gita. How does one reconcile this to criticize

authority which is central to the philosophy of rights?

Let us hope the NHRC will take up such questions and problems and place them on their agenda. What the NHRC is doing now – introducing human rights as a subject (just another subject) right from primary school continuing upto college and university level – will at best add to the growth of the mini-industry I referred to. I am sure the NHRC appreciates the fact that issues relating to human rights education demand open and intelligent public discussion, and also that it is a wrong approach if some central body devises a syllabus and imposes it on a school/college system. Human Rights education issues cannot be settled by any fiat from an authority from above.

We may take up couple of issues by way of giving examples - tolerance and divinely ordained hierarchical system. I think it is important that we trace the values of tolerance in our own heritage, not on any imaginary past, nor in any journalistic flourish that many of our intellectuals/columnists indulge in – like "India has a glorious past of 5000 years written in gold", and so on; we must pinpoint the particular period, movements and leaders whose central theme was tolerance. I also refer to a study of Hinduism as reflected in non-Sanskritic tradition and a study of Islam in the light of the local cult - the interaction of Bhakti and Islam, specially the Sufi idea which gave rise to a number of progressive movements with the core philosophy of tolerance in the medieval period; and how this core philosophy was adopted by a number of our reformist leaders in the 19th century, and freedom fighters in the 20th century. Also, we should lay emphasis on a study of our own ancient philosophies and thoughts which rejected the caste system. Let me refer to a few instances to illustrate this. Buddha rejected the caste system. That it was repudiated in ancient India is also illustrated by a number of characters in the Mahabharata: (i) The story of King Yayati and Devyani – a Brahmin marries Yayati who is a Kshatriya with the consent of her father, Guru Shukracharya, (ii) Vidura one of the wise men in the Mahabharata and also described as the very incantation of Dharma, was the son of a Shudra woman, (iii) Rishi Vashishtha was born of a prostitute, (iv) Parashara was born of a Chandala woman. An example, of argument against caste division, from the Bhavishya Purana, "All human beings have the same Father, and children of the same Father cannot have different castes." The caste system had a racial origin, in its association of castes and colour. For example, in an important verse in the Mahabharata: Bhrigu explains the nature of castes to Bharadvaja: "Brahmins are fair, Kshatriyas are reddish, Vaishyas are yellowish, and the Shudras are black". But what is important for human rights education is that Bhardvaja questions this theory: "We all seem to be affected by desire, anger, fear, sorrow, worry, hunger and labour; how do we have caste differences then?" (Shanti Parva).

Then, the teachings of Hindu reformers, largely in the Bhakti movement in the medieval period were completely independent from orthodox scriptures – in fact, most of them revolted against orthodoxy. They practiced and taught tolerance. They were all against the caste system.

We must also lay emphasis on the interaction of Bhakti and Islam. It should be emphasized in our text books relations between Islam and the religions of South Asia were marked by mutual understanding, tolerance, and cooperation, and that they were promoted by the rise and spread of Sufi Bhakti ideas. The coming of Islam, looked at in this context, was an event of outstanding significance for the history of the sub-continent.

The "strategy" – not a very happy expression, though! - should be: that we begin with the positive aspects of our own heritage and revive them, and prepare a course of study based on that heritage for human rights education. We must, however, guard ourselves against romanticizing the past; instead we must raise our voice of reason and wisdom. Which means that we must revive only that past which can guide us to respect the individual's dignity and human rights with a view to building a future of which we can be proud. Which further means that we must discard those aspects of our past, like for example, the laws of Manu, the principle of hierarchical division of

society and which hamper our progress and which go against the philosophy of human rights. In fact, we must discard all that seek to persuade the poor, the depressed, the oppressed and the exploited to reconcile their lot to suffering, sacrifice, and voluntary poverty – all that signify complete surrender, and absence of the spirit of revolt. We must appreciate the fact that the highest appreciation of our past is to find out how it could generate in us the spirit of revolt against social injustice and human rights violations, and to inculcate that spirit. These are some of the broad ideas which, I think, we should keep in mind while discussing human rights education.

We should then introduce our students and teachers with the western components, like the Magna Carta, the Renaissance, the American Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, Universal Declaration (1948). Another section may be devoted to our Constitution, role of voluntary organizations both in India and abroad, and human rights abuses by the State and its agencies.

Broad Outlines of a Syllabus:

Objectives of a course in Human Rights must be stated, like, for example: (a) to create awareness about the absence of equity in our society – which gives rise to human rights violation; (b) to create awareness among law-enforcing agencies about the need for respect for rule of law in civil society; (c) to create awareness, especially among the middle class – for justice, fraternity, equality, tolerance, and a cosmopolitan outlook. (This is not exhaustive).

1. Evolution of Human Rights: A brief outline: (a) Buddha – Education for all, tolerance, eradication of human suffering; (b) The Medieval Period: specially under the heading, TOLERANCE: a study of Hinduism as reflected in non-Sanskritic tradition; and a study of Islam in the light of the local cult; the interaction of Bhakti and Islam, specially the Sufi idea which gave rise to a number of progressive movements with the core philosophy of tolerance; (c) The British period: Movements for abolishing of Sati, for widow remarriage; role of a section of the Christian Missionaries; Movements for abolishing untouchability and for temple entry; Debate with regard to the Caste System; Criticism of negative role played by the theories of Karma, or Transmigration of Soul, Maya etc; Movement against Communalism; (d) Fight against unlawful laws imposed by the British.
2. 2. Evolution of Human Rights: Magna Carta; The Renaissance; The American Declaration of Independence and The Bill of Rights; The French Declaration of the Rights of Man. (A brief study of various thinkers).
3. Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Covenants: UN Human Rights Commission and various other UN Agencies;
4. Independent India: (a) The Constitution of India: Various laws and Enactments, (b) Unlawful laws enacted by successive governments, (c) Fight against infringement of civil liberties and violation of human rights; role of voluntary organizations, (d) Evaluation of the work of NHRC, Women's Commission, Minority Commission, SC/ST Commission, (e) Societal violations of human rights and how to tackle them, and so on.

(Published in the April 2000 issue of ***The Radical Humanist*** and the ***PUCL Bulletin***, April, 97, Pages 8-10).

Human Rights Education in India
(Part 2)

Dr. R. M. Pal

Continued from April 2000…

I may make a reference to National School Law of India University, Bangalore, which has produced considerable material on the subject. Their material and syllabus, course outline and references may be analysed in the light of what I have stated in this paper. I am not suggesting that our universities have not given thought to the problems that I have mentioned. The Law School of India University has taken note of some of the problems. The Indira Gandhi National Open University is making efforts to produce material on subjects referred to in this paper. Bombay University and Jamia Millia Islamia syllabi have taken note of some of the areas; other Universities, too, I am sure, are seized of the problems referred to here. But unfortunately, beyond a point, we all seem to get scared – especially when we are confronted with societal violations and related reading material – if not paralysed.

Let me mention, as a paradigm, what I presented in the background paper referred to earlier – *varnavyavastha* and human rights violation and infringement of civil liberties. I referred to this aspect in the *PUCL Bulletin* editorial note quoted earlier. A former civil liberties activists of PUCL has written that there was an element of hatred in Dr. Ambedkar and that his conversion to Buddhism was a fraud. He is outraged and very angry that so many statues of Ambedkar have been installed in the country; very angry that he is called the architect of the Indian Constitution. How does one handle this mindset – of hatred and intolerance? Our institutions tend to keep this question of intolerance under the carpet. [It must be acknowledged by intellectuals, at least dissident intellectuals and seats of learning that Ambedkar was primarily a human rights intellectual-activist].

I may make a very brief reference to the practice of human rights within the school education system. The system does not acknowledge the fact that we had a horrendous past. If we don't accept this how can we close the door on this? I may quote from a presentation made by an academic of New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, Dr. Geta Nambissan on the basis of a field study, to the PUCL seminar referred to earlier:

> "Within the school it appears that Dalit students continue to experience social discrimination and this can be seen both in the official curriculum, i.e., in the approved content of education and the hidden curriculum of schooling. Scheduled Caste communities and the experience of untouchability rarely form part of school knowledge. Textbooks are silent about Dalit communities … Practices (untouchability) are rarely mentioned in school books or discussed in the classroom … Children belonging to lowest castes continue to be discriminated within the school and blatant practices, particularly in the attitudes of teachers and school authorities as well as in peer behaviour continue … Given its background it is unlikely that human rights education in the abstract will ring about any significant change in the education environment provided for children belonging to these communities."

Our universities, the UGC, the NHRC and research institutes do not appear to have given much thought to the questions raised above.

We may take note of what the UN Committee on International Convention on the Elimination of

all Forms of Racial Discrimination recommended in 1996 (and India is a signatory). The Committee recommended

> "a continuing campaign to educate the Indian population on human rights in tune with the Constitution of India and with universal human rights instruments , including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. This should be aimed at eliminating the institutionalized thinking of the high caste and low caste mentality."

We have to go a little deep – how does one eliminate "institutionalized thinking?" Again literature produced by NHRC and other educational bodies does not throw much light on this aspect. Let us be honest: we cannot make any headway in transforming society if we do not face these questions boldly.

Let us take note of another area. Have we given enough thought to the question that concern for human rights, concern for the individual and his/her freedom is intimately connected with a particular way of life, that is a democratic way of life where the individual is not a mere cog in the wheel, but is supreme; or that the dignity of the individual and an authoritarian culture are contradiction in terms, or even that we have inherited a predominantly authoritarian culture on which we have been wanting to graft a democratic system? We may perhaps recognize the fact that we have not yet prepared the soil – the soil is still not ready to receive the seeds that the NHRC, the UNESCO, the UGC, the Universities have been sowing. This is what human rights education has to take care of.

Human rights education must teach us that it is our fundamental right to criticize authority – and in the context of societal violation of human rights, religious scriptures, divinities, avatars, prophets, saints, gurus and of course the holy loafers of our time even though they are patronized by our top ranking politicians. (Criticism does not mean condemnation). The scriptures and the divinities have the divine right to prescribe; but why can't we have the right to at least question them? Not many Hindus would openly question the "absolute truth" reportedly contained in the Vedas, or the Gita, or the great Puranas, or even the Manusmriti. Most Hindus accept Chaitanya and Ramkrishna as *avtars*; no Muslim can dispute the authority of the Koran or the Prophet; and no Christian will question the authority of the Bible.

Women:

Let me refer, as paradigm, to another area involving human rights violation and where tenets of human rights are in contradiction with traditional socio-cultural matrices. Our traditions – Hinduism, Islam, Christianity – see women as inferior to men, often on the authority of divine scriptures and sanctions. According to all socio-cultural traditions, women are required to find their fulfillment in motherhood and domesticity. Their duty is to render service to the husband, his family, and to his children. In fact, some of the scriptures have warned that if women enter public life there will be utter chaos and disaster. We are warned that society will break up if men and women forget the sacredness of marriage. The foundation of society would be shaken, we are warned not only by men but also by highly educated women, if women expressed dissatisfaction at the treatment accorded to them. How does one reconcile all these to the UDHR and our own Constitution?

The human rights situation with regard to the woman and the girl child is most depressing. Crimes against them have been on the rise. There has been considerable decline in sex ratio – fewer females than males. Why is it so? This needs research. Why is it that 25% of the girls die before they attain the age of 15? If it is malnutrition, then why is it only in the case of the girl child? Why is it, again, that in some parts of the country, parents resort to the most inhuman and cruel method to kill girl babies?

Not many, not even those women leaders who have been fighting for reservation, refer to our religious scriptures that have considerably contributed to gender bias. For example, one scripture sanctions: "Let them bridegroom ask the bride to join him in the sacred ritual with the prayer, 'Let our union beget sons only' …" There was also the tradition of *Putreshthi Yagna*, praying for *putra*, and so on. We do not hear women's organizations demanding that these ugly relics of our past be buried. They are afraid of lie-hunting. Human rights educationists, including the NHRC and the National Commission for Women, the Universities, the UGC and the NCERT will have to take up this job of lie-hunting which ought to be part of human rights education in India. They may take note of how a significant section of our opinion makers, both ancient and modern, have contributed towards human rights violations – by rationalizing the irrational. They have fabricated many fables about the exalted position of women in our society to convince us and the world portraying them as goddesses. They remain silent on the codes of Manu which have advised en to treat women as their property and slaves; they brush aside the issue by saying that our society is governed not by the codes of Manu but by the Constitution.

This will not do. I appeal to all, especially the NHRC, the UNESCO, the UGC, the Universities, the NCERT, the National Commission for Women and social activists to go a little deep into the problems. I am told a meeting held in Bangalore in 1994 which was attended by representatives of the NHRC and UGC did some plain speaking, especially on this aspect of our past, our traditions, and culture. But they did not, I specifically take up the question of what is to be revived, and which to be rejected. Furthermore, we have to have reading material. I am not aware of any project handling the compiling of material relating to human rights and human rights intellectual activists of India.

I know some human rights intellectuals and activists who have been talking, very loudly indeed, and also writing with journalistic flourish that India has a glorious past of 5000 years – and that this history is written in gold. They want us to revive the golden past. Which past? They are quiet. (I have often wondered whether our glorious past is not a great liability). They refer to tolerance and non-violence. Professor Romila Thapar has exposed this myth thus:

> "The insistence on the tradition of religious tolerance and non-violence as characteristic of Hinduism, which is built on a section of normative values emphasizing *Ahimsa*, is not borne out by historical evidence. The theory is so deeply ingrained among most Indians that there is the failure to see the reverse of it when it stares them in the face. The extremity of intolerance implicit in the notion of untouchability was glossed over by regarding it as a function of caste and society."

Our establishment intellectuals and almost the entire middle class who glorify Hindu tolerance and Hindu non-violence actually confuse this with our pluralism.

In the context of intolerance, I may refer to communalism which is one of the major sources of human rights violations in our country. Any scheme of human rights education must take this into account. It is regrettable that the NHRC has not given any importance to this aspect.

Yes, human rights intellectuals and activists do want to revive/create the values of tolerance, non-violence, friendship for all, equality, respect for the human person, human dignity and rights, and freedom – values of which we can be proud. Obviously only that past has to be revived, and the ugly rest buried, which will help India come into inheritance of the blessings of the modern civilisation. Which means that human rights educationists must resist the temptation of reviving an imaginary golden age of India's past. To quote Romila Thapar again:

> " … changes will often involve a basic change of social values. The confrontation can no longer be evaded as it once was b recourse to the theory that our concern has always been only with things spiritual, or by an escape into the past. But the process can be facilitated by an awareness of the past, deriving from a realistic assessment … It is only the awareness that history is made of an entire people into is total activity, which can bring us nearer to explaining the past in its concrete actuality."

In the process of reviving our past which can guide us, we should have no hesitation in discarding those aspects which hamper our progress, like, for example, the theory of *karma*, transmigration of soul, *maya*, the principle of division of society into castes. This principle took the form which the system of exploitation assumed in the bygone days that was declared to be the creation of God. We must discard that ' spiritualist' culture which seeks to persuade the poor, the depressed, the oppressed, and the exploited to reconcile their lot to suffering, sacrifice, and voluntary poverty – all that signify complete surrender, and absence of the spirit of revolt (see *Selected Works of M.N. Roy*, Vol. IV). If our human rights educationists cannot take up this aspect we might as well not waste public money. Europe did it by ushering in the movement of Renaissance; we too can if only we shed a bit of our necessary arrogance.

II

What follows is no more than a sketch and broad outlines and a few instances of what have been our heritage, i.e., India's contribution to human rights. Competent researchers can give shape to this sketch. I believe this is one of the most important tasks that the NHRC must undertake. [*The first part of the following sketch is a brief summary of a paper*, "Human Rights Education: India's Heritage" *presented at a national workshop*, "Human Rights and Societal Changes with reference to SC/Sts", *jointly organized by DLET and NHRC 3 and 4 August 1996, in Chennai. The paper was originally published in the weekly*, Mainstream, *21 September 1996, and subsequently in a number of collections and periodicals. The second part is a brief synopsis of a paper*, "Rammohun Roy: The First Human Rights Intellectual-Activist of Modern India", *presented at a national seminar on* "The Place of Raja Rammohun Roy in the Intellectual, Social and Cultural History of Modern India", *New Delhi, 10 and 11 February, 1998, organized by Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation Silver Jubilee Celebrations. The paper has been published in the Foundation's journal*, 'Grantham: Indian Journal of Library Studies", Vol. VI, No., 1 and 2, January 1999. *A lesson on these lines has been written by me for Indira Gandhi National Open University for its course on human rights education*].

We may start with an account of Buddhism, Jainism and other scriptures which gave primacy to man and his welfare and non-Sanskritic Hinduism in the medieval period. During the Buddhist period, interest in man, man in his own image and man's affairs on this earth, unlike other worldly interest, became the primary concern of thoughtful men and women. They did not consider this earth as a vale of tears. Buddha rejected the caste system. The basic tenets of Buddhism are non-violence, non-hatred, and friendliness to all, Buddha was a great champion of freedom and tolerance. One of the most significant contributions made by him was the introduction and spread of secular education and education for all.

The caste system had a racial origin, in its association of caste and colour. I refer to an important verse in the *Mahabharata.* Bhrigu explains to Bharadvaja: "Brahmins are fair, Kshatriyas are reddish, Vaishyas are yellowish, and the Shudras are black." How it is questioned by Bharadvaja is of interest to human rights education: "We all seem to be affected by desire, anger, fear, sorrow, worry, hunger and labour; how do we have caste differences then?" That in ancient India, the

caste system was repudiated is illustrated by a number of characters in the *Mahabharata*: (1) the marriage of King Yayati, a Kshatriya, and Devayani, a Brahmin; (2) Vidura, one of the wisest men in the Mahabharata and also described as the very incarnation of Dharma, was the son of a Sudra woman; (3) Vasistha was born of prostitute; (4) Parashara was born of a Chandala woman. Another questioning from the Bhavishya Purana, "All human beings have the same Father, and children of the same Father cannot have different Castes (See K.M. Sen, *Hinduism*, Penguin, 1961).

The school of philosophy, Lokayata, considered physical sense data to be the only source of knowledge. It rejected after-life and reincarnation. We find this rejection in the Ramayana, too. A Brahmin, Javali advises Rama, "I grieve for those who, abandoning the pleasures of the world, seek to acquire merit for felicity hereafter and sink to an untimely death. I do not grieve for others, men waste food and other precious things by offering them up yearly as sacrifices in honour of their departed ancestors. O Rama, has a dead man ever partaken of food? … O Ramachandra, these scriptural injunctions were laid by learned men, skilled in inducing others to give, and finding other means of obtaining wealth, thus subjugating the simple-minded;. Their doctrine is, 'sacrifice, give in charity, consecrate yourselves, undergo austerities and become ascetics'. O Rama, be wise, there exists no world but this, that is certain." (See K.M. Sen, *Hinduism*, Penguin, 1961).

The medieval period:

Professor Satish Chandra writes: "The position of the *nath-Panthi siddhas* and *jogis* in Hindu society needs to be understood. Most of them belonged to the low castes, opposed caste-based inequalities, denounced the religion of works favoured by the Brahmins, and did not favour image worship," (in *Cultural Interaction in South Asia*, New Delhi, 14983).

The movement, Bhakti, has non-aryan roots. According to some scholars, it originated in the Dravida country. The works of Alvar saints are important in this regard. Most of these saints came from low castes. At a later stage, even high caste people hailed their literature. One Alvar saint, Andal who belonged to a low caste was accepted as a religious leader by the society in general. This movement is characterized by simplicity, directness, preaching and practicing tolerance, love, and friendliness, disregard for caste division, religious rituals and ceremonies.

The great scholar Ramanuja, the best known exponent of this movement was influenced and inspired by the works of the Alvars.

The interaction of Bhakti and Islam, specially the Sufi ideas, gave rise to a number of progressive movements with the core philosophy of tolerance. In this period, "relations between Islam and the religions of South Asia were marked by mutual understanding and tolerance. This spirit was promoted by the rise and spread of Sufi and Bhakti ideas (Satish Chandra, in *Cultural Interaction in South Asia*).

Namdeva and Tukaram from Maharashtra, the former a tailor, the latter a peasant made the Bhakti movement increasingly acceptable to the people: "What can ceremonies do if love awake not in your heart?"

In Bengal the well known Vaishnava poets, Jaidev, Vidyapati and Chandidas, as also Chaitanya popularized the movement.

Ramananda challenged caste divisions, revolted against traditional religious rituals and started preaching in Hindi - Sanskrit was the preserve of the upper castes: "

Wherever I go, I see water and stone; but it is You who had filled them all with your presence. In vain do they seek you in the Vedas," (*Granth Saheb*).

Ravidas, a cobbler and Shaikh Kabiru Din Momin Ansari, popularly known as Kabir, a weaver were Ramananda's famous disciples. Kabir struck at the very roots of ritualism and superstition: "O God, whether Allah or Rama, I live by thy name." Kabir composed his songs in Hindi. He practiced and preached the gospel of universal tolerance and was the most important exponent of

the idea of India without any communal discord. He gave the utmost importance to equality and denounced inequality based on caste, station and wealth.

Guru Nanak was also greatly influenced by Islamic and Sufi ideas. "The supreme significance of Nanak was that he was the harbinger of Hindu-Muslim unity, for he sought sincerely to reconcile Islam with Hinduism as the following verse will show: "*Guru Nanak Shah fakir / Hindu ka guru aur / Musalman ke pir*."

Rabindranath Tagore was greatly influenced by Kabir and translated many of Kabir's poems into English in collaboration with Evelyn Underhill. Guru Nanak, too, left a lasting impression Tagore's mind. Tagore was also greatly influenced by the Bauls of Bengal and composed many songs under their influence.

The Modern Period:

In the modern period, the first intellectual-activist was Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833). In his movement for freedom, social justice, and human dignity, he was influenced both by Christianity and Islam. The intellectual movement that the Raja heralded unfortunately paled into insignificance during the freedom movement and the revivalists made their presence felt. Rammohun wrote on almost all aspects of our social, religious and political life and areas which were major sources of human rights violation in his time. He spoke the language of reason. Thus quotes Vasistha: "If a child says something reasonable it should be accepted, but if a Brahmin himself says something unreasonable, it should be discarded as a piece of straw."

Rammohun was a champion of civil liberties and freedom. He stood up against the July 1827 Act, which had introduced religious bias into the judicial system of India. The cause of compulsory basic education was sacred to him.

In the 19th century, we had a galaxy of intellectual activists and reformers who championed the cause of human rights, human dignity and freedom. To mention only a few, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Gopalrao Hari Deshmukh, Agarkar, Sir Syed and many others. In short we should include an analysis of the short-lived Renaissance in Bengal, Maharashtra and a few other parts in the country which was ushered in under the influence of European learning and which gave the utmost importance to human rights.

In the 20th century, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Ambedkar, M.N. Roy and many others gave the utmost importance to human rights.

In conclusion, I may repeat that research in the field of human rights must begin with the positive aspects of our heritage. We must guard ourselves against romanticizing the past; we must raise our voice of reason and wisdom. What is most important is to accept the fact that the highest appreciation of our past is to find out how it could generate in us the spirit of revolt against social injustice and human rights violations and to inculcate this spirit. Our young students must no longer be deprived of the knowledge of the richness of our heritage. Together with the knowledge and learning from ancient Greece, the European Renaissance, and modern European ideas, we must see that our indigenous secular and human rights values and learning from our past blossom with a vigour and splendour surpassing all intellectual movements that I have referred to in this paper.

Note: This article appeared in the June 2000 issue of ***The Radical Humanist***.

Humanism and Social Justice*

Dr. R. M. Pal**

I'm grateful to Dr. Indumati Parikh and the office bearers of the IHEU, specially our young friend Babu G. for asking me to speak a few words as a human rights activist. I'm not here, however, as a representative of the People's Union for Civil Liberties; Mr. Tarkunde is better suited for this role since he is an office bearer of the PUCL. I guess I have been asked because I have written on the subject fairly extensively in the PUCL Bulletin as its editor and also elsewhere, specially emphasising the need for cultivating a human rights culture and promoting education. I have always written and spoken as a humanist, and I believe that only humanists and rationalists can and must undertake the task. It is a great privilege for me as one devoted to the cause of human rights and civil liberties to attend this Congress of IHEU and to greet you. May I place before you a few suggestions for whatever they are worth?

Before I do that, I seek your permission to strike a personal note. And that is about the great contribution made by Dr. Indumati Parikh with the active help of her friends and colleagues, Mr. C.R. Dalvi, Justice Jahagirdar, Mr. Himanshu Kane and many others whom I haven't had the privilege of personally knowing, in establishing the M.N. Roy Memorial Centre in Mumbai where we are meeting for this international Congress. Nothing like this prestigious and unique complex, which will be a centre of learning and research, exists anywhere else in this country in memory of Roy. Posterity will remember Indutai for this singular contribution. She alone, among all of Roy's followers and colleagues, has been able to repay her debt to Roy. A few of us, a very few, pay our homage to M.N. Roy through our writings, but we have not been able to repay our debt to him. Only Indutai has done that. Although I was not in politics, much less in M.N. Roy's political party, I had the privilege of staying with the Roys and being educated by them so that you will, I hope, appreciate my emotional and sentimental attachment to M.N. Roy. On this occasion, I remember with a sense of gratitude the late Prof. G.D. Parikh who treated me with great love and consideration for the reason that I looked after M.N. Roy when he was ill. Prof. Parikh sowed the seeds of this project. Today I also remember another Royist intellectual, the late Professor G.R. Dalvi, who, too, treated me with considerable love and affection. He was the guiding force behind the project which had as its task the reprinting of M.N. Roy's books which had remained out of print for many years. But for Dr. Dalvi, I would not have been able to undertake this all important task. I mention this because M.N. Roy's followers and admirers are not aware of this unique contribution made by Dr. Dalvi.

In the context of human rights, I have always felt – and I have found no reason to change my views, although I'm aware that not many humanist intellectuals and rationalists share my views – that social justice and societal violation of human rights ought to be at the top of the agenda of all human rights groups and humanist and rationalist organisations and intellectuals.

Let me give a couple of examples. The Dalits, i.e. the untouchables, have been deprived of social justice for centuries: in fact they have not even as persons been recognised. This is not on the agenda of our activist groups. At best they are paralysed against the reality – the reality of total absence of social justice. This does not fit the traditional checklist of what humanist, rationalist and human rights organisations should focus their attention on. It is the primary task of people like us, present here, to make it known that a movement against the hierarchical system is a struggle for human rights, human dignity – humanism. The dominating section of our people must take a strong position against caste hierarchy, communalism, anti-minoritysm, gender prejudice which are major sources of societal human rights violations. Humanism as a way of life cannot take root unless these evils are eradicated. It is a veritable challenge for the dominant section who continues to assume innate superiority that its members being clever, intelligent, educated, cultured, and refined deserve what they have. They want the others (the Dalits, for example) to take shelter under their dominance and seek sustenance at their mercy. Humanists and rationalists in India must demolish the structure of hierarchy so that there is no

discrimination on this score. This alone will help in promoting the cause of a humanist way of life.

We know it is difficult and daunting task – the more so because the walls were not created by accident but by some of the most sophisticated scholars and "wise men". It is precisely because of this that pioneers and humanists like the Buddha, Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahatma Phule, Chhatrapati Sahu Maharaj, Agarkar, Narayan Muni, Dr. Ambedkar, Periyar Ramaswamy Naicker and M.N. Roy found it hard to have a dialogue with such "scholars" and law givers. With the result that the philosophy, culture and values of humanism which these great and good men espoused have not yet taken root in our country. Our soil is not yet ready to receive the seeds of these values. It is the most important task of humanists and rationalists – to prepare the soil.

Another example of where we have faltered. This relates to the most obnoxious form of human rights violation – 50 percent of our children being deprived of the basic human rights, namely basic education. I have written and spoken on this subject for over 8 years now. My colleagues in the human rights movement, especially those who run "prosperous establishments" to eradicate child labour, have not been forthright in condemning this human right violation. I was, however, pained to note that my emphasis on the need for compulsory basic education, i.e., all children upto the age of fourteen must be provided education – compulsorily, by the state was not acceptable even to Mr. V.M. Tarkunde and the Radical Humanist Association. I am also not aware of any other humanist and rationalist organisations which have put this and similar subjects on their agenda. Incidentally, who are this 50 percent? They are the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, the girl child and the Muslims. They have been deprived of this basic human right for centuries. There does not seem to be any possibility of any change in the situation, in spite of the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen. Humanism cannot take root in such a climate.

Let us be clear. Merely battling with the religious issue will not do. In the context of South Asia, the issue of social justice, eradication of illiteracy is more important. Religious bigotry can be tackled only when our people have received at least basic education. (Let me emphasise that the caste system is not religious bigotry. It is something much more deep rooted. Furthermore, caste identity has not disappeared from India). There is complete confusion about what the humanist and human rights agenda needs to be in a non-Western, pluralist, highly complex country like ours. We need to have an Indian movement that must provide an agenda for our society which is unlike a Western society – here the State has criminally neglected to play its expected role of promoting and giving social content to economic development.

The humanist and human rights movement in India may well be on its way to becoming irrelevant to face the real issues plaguing India, with the State proving unable to stop communalism, and even keeping its own agencies from involvement in the communal violence; in providing basic education; in giving effect to Article one of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – that all are born equal.

We must not look for paradigms or precedents to draw upon for there are none. We, in India, have to create our own. As a human rights activist and intellectual I appeal to this Congress, especially humanists and rationalists in India, to place societal violation of human rights at the top of the agenda.

Let me make one more observation. In the Indian context, we have reason to feel disappointed that hardly any Dalit Intellectual – followers of the humanist Dr. Ambedkar who was a rationalist and humanist – is present at the Congress. Dalit humanists with many of whom I have had the privilege of interacting, have waged war on the caste system with a view of dismantling what our own Rabindranath Tagore called the "immovable walls" that have divided our society. Let us be clear. Caste divides; it cripples our children's minds and narrows "their lives in order to fit them into her social form". In such a climate, humanism will remain an unattainable goal.

I appeal to you to place social justice at the top of your agenda. Thank you.

* Editor, PUCL Bulletin; former managing editor of *The Radical Humanist* (and later its Editor) and academic, Delhi University.

** Speech at the 14th Congress of IHEU held in Mumbai.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, July 1999.

Societal Violations of Human Rights, the Deprived, the Woman, the Child

Dr. R. M. Pal

(This article is being reproduced on the occasion of Human Rights Day on 10th December 2004. It was originally submitted as a paper at an International Seminar on *Human Rights and Poverty* organised by the Barkatullah University, Bhopal – Mg. Ed.)

Part I

Introduction

On 15th August 2001, we, Mrs. Maja Daruwala, human rights intellectual, activist and this writer, were returning to Delhi after attending a pre-Durban Conference in Hyderabad. (We were there to advocate the inclusion of caste-based discrimination on the agenda of the UN Conference on Racial Discrimination). It is in the context of perpetual human rights violation of dalits, Mrs. Daruwala remarked that it is most unfortunate that a forward looking leader like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru did not take interest in the most important social welfare programme, free compulsory elementary education as provided in Article 45 of the Constitution. *Dalits, Adivasis,* women and other marginalised sections would have benefited immensely if the provisions of Article 45 were implemented. Within ten years of the promulgation of the Constitution, all children upto the age of fourteen would be in school, and would receive education upto VIII standard. In one of my writings, I said, I have maintained that I am not sure if the operative part of the famous "tryst with destiny" speech by Pandit Nehru was meant to be implemented! In fairness to Pandit Nehru, I added, it must be said that the wanted the eradication of illiteracy from India, but like many economists and social activists he was of the view that illiteracy could be removed only if and when, poverty was eradicated. But the fact remains that poverty would be eliminated only when illiteracy was eradicated. He was in haste to industrialise the country in order to eradicate poverty. Pandit Nehru was wrong – he placed the cart before the horse – that poverty could be removed only if the people had received education At least upto standard VIII. [Article 45 of the Constitution has now been made part of fundamental rights in the Constitution in that the Union Government has made compulsory elementary education a fundamental right i.e., justiciable through a constitutional government amendment Act. We have to wait and see if this right is implemented].

After this conversation I read a news item in a national daily published from Hyderabad. It was an interview in the context of the Andhra Pradesh Child Labour Elimination Project launched in 2000, initiated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) under an agreement among ILO, Union Government of India and the Andhra Pradesh (AP) Government. Its aim was "to eliminate child labour in AP by involving people employers and corporate houses." The interviewee's (an ILO Project Officer) emphasis was on eradication of child labour. He does not mention anywhere in the interview the plain and simple fact that once children upto the age of fourteen are in school, child labour would automatically come to an end. Indeed, most of our activists in child labour and *Bandhua Mukti* organisations have hardly ever given their attention to this social welfare programme, i.e., Compulsory Elementary Education, which ought to be on top of any agendas relating to rights and welfare of the child and development programmes.

It is in the above context that I give below my views on the subject of human rights and eradication of poverty. In the context of human rights, the point of reference is in respect of the human person and violation of human rights. And, when we are on this subject it is understood that intellectuals will not be apologetic in exposing human rights violations, specially societal violation.

I

The Child

It is hardly necessary to emphasise that deprivation of human rights leads to poverty – it has always done so in every society across the world – not the other way round. Let me give here an instance. I have always maintained that the denial of the right to basic education (in our country upto the age of 14 i.e., class VIII as per provision of Article 45 of the Constitution) is a human right violation, and that this deprivation has stood in the way of progress, including economic progress, in our country.)I have always held this position. Professor Jean Dreze and Professor Amartya Sen's thesis in India: *Economic Development and Social Opportunities* was published in 1995 quite a few years after I wrote in the context of child labour eradication). Poverty will be eradicated if the provision of Article 45 is implemented.

One of the reasons that has been advanced by most economics and social scientists for the prevalence of widespread poverty in our country is the rising population which means that we have to take urgent measures in controlling population. We now know from the experience of Kerala (where the fertility rate is minus) that if the girl child receives education even upto class VIII, we don't have to take measures like what our rulers did in 1975-77. It is literacy which has controlled population in Kerala. Let us remember that Kerala is not a rich state, its per capita income is less than that of India as a whole. I must as well refer to Janakpur village in Madhya Pradesh. According to an investigative report, published in *The Statesman,* all the people in Janakpur practise family planning with the result that fertility rate is minus, that is, negative population growth. And this is so primarily because of about 95 per cent literacy rate in this village. And, of course, poverty has been eradicated from this village.

Some economists maintain that once poverty is eradicated compulsory basic education will be implemented. This amounts to putting the cart before the horse. I will revert to the state of human rights in this regard later.

The Woman

Let us take another example of societal violation of human rights. The woman in our country (in all the three major religions, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity) has always been treated as inferior to man. (Readers may refer to the editorial in the September 2004 issue of the RH in this context). In fact, the woman is hardly ever treated as a person. Our scriptures have always treated the woman as a non-person. Let me quote Professor Romila Thapar, "It is interesting that whereas these texts [*Dharma Shastra* and similar literature] take great care to classify men with minutiae of distinction, women are generally treated as a uniform category. Furthermore, the status of woman as a whole is clearly defined, for they are unambiguously equated with the *Shudras* as for example in Manu XI, 153. Even the *Gita* places women, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* in the same category and describes them all as being of sinful birth (*Bhagwat-Gita,* XI. 32). According to another text, the punishment for killing either a woman or a Shudra is identical (the Law-book of Parasare, VI, 32). Perhaps the most gruelling of all is the treatment of the widow, which at times borders on the inhuman and this is particularly disconcerting, coming as it does, from the Shastras of a culture which laid so much stress on respecting and caring for the aged. The subservience of women is precisely summed up in the *Manu Dharamshastra* where it is stated that a woman should never be independent. "As a daughter she is under the surveillance of her father, as a wife of her husband and as a widow of her son (Manu, X, 32)". ["Looking Back in History" by Romila Thapar in *Indian Women* (ed), Devaki Jain, Publication Division, Government of India]. In short, 'a woman is not fit for independence", declares Manu.

We are told that society will break if men and women forget the sacredness of marriage. The foundation of society, we are warned everyday, not only by men but also by highly educated women

(and such women's number is not insignificant), would be shaken if women expressed their dissatisfaction at the treatment accorded to them. We may remember that a number of parliamentarians were vehemently opposed to the Hindu Code Bill in the fifties. What is most disheartening is the effort of a significant section of our intellectuals to rationalize the irrational. Both ancient and modern intellectuals have fabricated many fables about the exalted position of women in our society to convince us and the world projecting them as goddesses. They are silent on what Romila Thapar has said about the *Shastras*. Then there are others, including women, who maintain that we must not raise the question of equality between men and women because equality disturbs the national balance.

It is argued by status-quoits that since independence women have reached high positions in India (Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, Supreme Court and High Court Judges, Class 1 civil servants, and so on). Which means, they maintain, women enjoy equal right with men. But the fact remains that women "continue to suffer from traditional inequalities and inequities, that dowry remains the norm, and female infanticide is not at all uncommon, that the percentage of women who receive education is very much lower than that of men, that even after more than four decades of promulgating a modern democratic constitution there are very few women in our national or state parliaments" [Sibnarayan Ray, 'Human Rights Education – a Few Reflections" in *Human Rights Education* (ed.) R.M. Pal, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi].

If around 45 per cent of our people do not have any say in human development, can poverty be eradicated? (Why do I say 45 per cent, and not 50 per cent? I may briefly refer to the ratio as documented by the 2001 Census according to its Provisional Report. The marginally better sex ratio, i.e., 933 as against 927 in the 1991 Census is not as cheering a news if we look at the figures in the 0-6 age group. In this group in the 1991 Census the ratio was 945; in the 2001 Census it is 927. Which means 'the bias against the girl child is deep across the country except for some pockets).

Let me give a few figures in the 0-6 age group from the 2001 provisional census report" Punjab – 793 (875 in 1991); Haryana – 820 (879 in 1991); Chandigarh – 845 (897 in 1991); Himachal Pradesh – 897 (951 in 1991); Gujarat 878 (928 in 1991); Delhi – 865 (915 in 1991). In short the mindset is foul across the country except the North-East and Kerala.

The Deprived

The institution of caste (the *Varna Vyavastha)* has been one of the major sources of societal violation of human rights. Most of us, including the Arya Samajists, affirm faith in the theory of *Karma* which is bondage. How do you eradicate poverty if a significant section of our people is kept in bondage. The theory does not admit of revolt against tyranny; it presents one from shaping one's own destiny.

Let us give a brief look at the intellectual, moral and religious support that has been given to the caste system with a view to examining it in relation to the provisions of the Universal ?Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR). *The Gita*, which is usually referred to as the guide to Hindu way of life, states (Lord Krishna telling Arjuna); "the works of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras are different... The work of Shudra is service. They all attain perfection when they find joy in their work... The work of Shudras is service. They all attain perfection when they find joy in their work... Greater is their own work, even if this is humble, than the work of another, even if this be great. When a man does the work God gives him, no sin can touch this man. And a man should not abandon his work... Because thou art in the bondage of *karma*, of the forces of their own past life; and that which thou, in thy decision, with a good will dost not want to do, unwillingly thou shall have to do." Manu assigned separate duties and occupations to different castes in order to "protect" this universe – *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, shudras* for teaching, protecting citizens, trading and lending money on interest, for serving, respectively. The *dalits* are described as *Varna-sankara,* born out of inter-

mixture, and they are outside the system. The laws prescribe that penance for a Brahmin for the killing of an animal or a *Shudra* is the same; in fact the killing of a cow is more heinous than killing a *Shudra.*

If *Dalits* who are almost all landless and a sizeable section of landless *Shudras* (OBCs) are treated – as they are, in spite of many progressive provisions in our Constitution and laws – in this manner, can poverty be eradicated?

We must examine the system in the context of the 1948 UDHR. The very first two Articles of the UDHR state that freedom, equality and fraternity are the very basis of human rights. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (Article 1). Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, birth..." (Article 2). It is obvious that our system is in contradiction with the provisions of the UDHR. There are a number of other Articles which too are in contradiction: Articles 13 (1), 16 (1), 18, 23 (1), 26 (1).

We are told the caste system does not exist anymore, or has started disappearing. Has caste identity really disappeared? There is no limit in our country to holding up a fiction to obscure facts. We must accept the ground reality, namely, that even though the Indian Constitution is not based on the laws of Manu and the *Gita,* and has abolished untouchability and has made provisions for equality before law, the impregnable walls remain intact.

Human rights values and respect for fellow beings cannot be legislated. But it is our duty to put the issue in the proper perspective. The deprived sections of our population (SC/ST, women, children and the minorities) have not been able to reap the rewards of independence which was ushered in 1947. They must be provided all help in their bid to eliminate every type of discrimination. This is possible only in a non-caste, non-hierarchical society. The dominating sections of our people must adopt a strong position against caste hierarchy, communalism, anti-minoritism, gender prejudice which are the major sources of societal violations of human rights. Our task is to make the dominating sections respond to the national need. It is a difficult task, for we assume an innate superiority that we being clever, intelligent, educated, cultured and refined deserve what we have. We want the others to take shelter under our dominance and seek sustenance at our mercy. In such a social atmosphere respect for human rights can never take roots.

Our Constitution has merely prescribed, but has not given any description of the ground reality. Constitutional provisions are, of course, important, but without a philosophical revolution (like the Buddhist revolution), followed by a social revolution which alone can ensure uprooting of the system, a change for the better does not appear to be attainable.

II

Perpetuating a Fraud

I maintain that non-implementation of the provision of Article 45 of our Constitution is one of the worst forms of human rights violation. I may be forgiven for quoting a long passage from my own writing:

"There is one field... which does not appear to be in the priority list of human rights organisations – education and schooling of children... It was stipulated by our constitution makers that children upto the age of fourteen will be given free and compulsory education... the attempts made by Union and State Governments since the time India attained independence indicate that education is not a subject which deserves top priority. The government has, however, spent huge amount by way of setting up Commissions and Committees which in turn have produced voluminous reports. Some of these Commissions started with the assumption that anything that was recommended by any Commission during the British regime must be scrapped – for example, the Sargent Commission

Report ... The fact remains that an increasing number of children are growing as illiterates... It is said that parents don't send their children to schools because of economic reasons – they want their children to add to the family income and therefore they either do not send their children to school, or children drop out after a year or two. This is at best half-truth, and half-truth is more dangerous than falsehood... Even where schools function the physical condition is deplorable – there are no desks, no drinking water facilities, and no lavatories. You visit any Corporation and Government schools and you find that children in primary sections are not provided with desks, they are required to squat. Children from poor families do deserve better physical environment than in their places of residence where they have no amenities of life. Let them have some amenities at least in their school where they can feel happy, and if they are happy they may not drop out." (Editorial in *PUCL Bulletin*, September 1990; *Human Rights of Dalits: Societal Violation,* (Ed.) R.M. Pal and G.S. Bhargava, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi).

Illiteracy Has Many Adverse Effects

The freedom and welfare of the people, social change, health care, large scale female infanticide, poverty, economic disparity, population control, eradicating social evils like discrimination based on caste and sex, child marriage, child labour – the list is indeed vast. These problems will remain intractable so long as right to education is not accepted as a fundamental right and implemented.

I give below a very brief account of how, since the time the founding fathers of our Constitution began an exercise on this subject, all attempts to make elementary education compulsory and free were frustrated.

In pre-independent India, Gokhale moved a resolution (19 March 1910) in the Imperial Legislature Council to make elementary education free and compulsory. It was rejected. Another effort was made by Gandhiji and Dr. Zakir Hussain through what is popularly known as Wardha Scheme of education. Another important landmark was "The Plan of Post-war Education Development in India" prepared by the Central Advisory Board of Education popularly known as the Sargent Plan (after the name of the then Educational Advisor to the Government of India, Sir John Sargent). The Plan recommended a system of universal, compulsory and free education for all children of 6-14 age group. It was a highly realistic plan; in view of the non-availability of teachers, the committee suggested that the plan would be implemented in forty years. In 1966, when the Kothari Commission Report was published, the Secretary of the Commission, the well-known Gandhian scholar Dr. J.P. Naik, at a seminar, referred to a number of reports and recommendations, but he did not refer to the Sargent Plan. When I drew his attention to the plan, Dr. Naik dismissed it rather contemptuously. His main objection was to the long period of forty years, and that it was made by a British imperialist. The only comment I can make is that 'patriotic zeal' has done immense damage to our country.

The founding fathers of our Constitution played politics with the right to education and free compulsory basic education. It may be recalled that originally the sub-committee on Fundamental Rights of the Constituent Assembly proposed that basic education be included in the list of fundamental rights, but subsequently it was rejected by the Constitution makers. One member said, "Is this a justiciable right? Suppose the government has no money?' (Already in 1947-48 our rulers had come to the conclusion that they would have no money for this social welfare programme). Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant said, "It cannot be justiciable. No court can possibly adjudicate." So, "this clause be transferred to Part I (directive Principles".

Although this committee had self-proclaimed liberals and Gandhians like M.R. Masani, only one member, K.T. Shah had the courage of conviction who gave a dissenting note, a prophetic one. He said that if a right to education becomes non-justiciable, it "would remain as one more than so many pious wishes." He added that if it does not become 'imperative obligations of the state towards the citizen, we would be perpetuating a needless fraud." Furthermore, he wrote in the dissenting note,

"once an unambiguous declaration of such a right is made (justiciable), those responsible for it would have to find ways and means to give effect to it. If they had no such responsibility place upon them, they might be inclined to avail themselves of every excuse to justify their own inactivity in the matter, indifference, or worse." (B. Shiva Rao, 1968, *The Framing of the Constitution – Select Documents,* New Delhi, Indian Institute of Public Administration). No surprise, therefore, that the operative part of Pandit Nehru's "tryst with destiny" speech, as I mentioned earlier, was not meant to be implemented it is also no surprise, given the mindset of our rulers (of all Houses), that even the 1993 Supreme Court judgement declaring Article 45 as fundamental right – which is a law of the land, is being treated by the state with contempt (the state breaking its own law!).

Ruling parties (of all hues including the Left parties) in our country are not interested in the welfare or the people, removing the poverty of the people; they are at best interested in making the "nation" strong; they proclaim from housetops that it is their "patriotic duty to work for the nation." And we know that there are almost always conflicts between people's causes and 'national' causes. One such conflict relates to the right to education. The Indian nation today comprises 200 million people who have the purchasing power – the rest do not exist because they don't have the purchasing power. The "nation's" priorities include programme of nuclearisation, militarisation, increasing defence expenses; eradication of poverty and illiteracy are not on the nation's agenda. Our rulers, who claim to be thoughtful, can think so thoughtlessly! How can a nation survive if the people do not survive; who comes first – the individual or the nation?

(*Human Rights and Poverty in India,* Vol. IV)

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, December 2004.

Societal Violations of Human Rights, the Deprived, the Woman, the Child

Dr. R. M. Pal

Part II

Let me refer to the NGO sector, i.e., social activists. Our NGOs, "progressive" intellectuals and activists like the *Sarvodayists,* radical humanists and other activist-groups do not place compulsory education on the top of their agenda. Justice (Retd.) V.M. Tarkunde once prepared a document on behalf of the Radical Humanist Association, "People's Minimum Programme for Prompt Action by the New Government," the last BJP government, demanding that "resources should be made available to provide free primary education," but not compulsory [see The *Radical Humanist,* June, 1998, p. 11].

Justice Tarkunde does not consider "compulsory education" to be a feasible proposition for legal and other reasons, reminiscent of what our Constitution makers said. Mr. Madhu Dandavate, when he was Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission, did not find time even to have an in-depth discussion on the subject, with experts, not to speak of implementing it. The former Prime Minister, Mr. I.K. Gujaral, dispensed with the subject by making an announcement from the Red Fort that the provisions of Article 45 would be implemented. His government's performance in this regard was limited to the production of a totally unreadable report to make elementary education a fundamental right, and more importantly, a fundamental duty without spelling out the responsibilities of the state for non-compliance. His government, however, prepared a Bill to make elementary education a part of fundamental rights [which has now become law].

Another argument advanced by economists and even Gandhians is that poverty of resources stands in the way of introducing compulsory education. No less a person than J.P. Naik maintained this in a report prepared for the Citizens for Democracy of which Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan was President and Justice Tarkunde General Secretary (*Education for Our People,* a report prepared under the guidance of Dr. J.P. Naik .with a Foreword by Jayaprakash Narayan and Preface by V.M. Tarkunde, allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1978). The main argument in this report is: "One of the principal reasons which has hindered the progress of universal elementary education is the paucity of financial resources. If this is to be overcome the unit cost of educating a child at the elementary stage should be kept within limits ... That, in poor nations, money will always be in short supply...[and] that we have given education a high priority as indicated by reached, [so] that the possibilities of further growth in educational expenditure is limited ... The formal system of education is wasteful and inefficient." In this 77-page document, right to education and non-implementation of the provisions of Article 45 of the Constitution are hardly ever referred to. (Obviously Dr. Naik forgot what he had said in 1966 apropos of the Sargent Plan!). This is a typical middle-class mindset, and it has never taken Article 45 of the Constitution and the right will continue to remain a distant goal.

NGO and Others

At this point, we may take note of the approach of some of our influential full-time activists and their organizations. For a long time now, they have concentrated on eradicating child labour without giving any importance to the right to education and our constitutional provision of free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 years age group. It is only very recently that some of the internationally known activists have started talking about "quality education, education to children below the age of six, free meal," and so on in the context of the 83rd amendment Bill. I don't remember having heard from these NGO quarters about the importance of the right to

education. They don't refer to the middle-class mindset which stands in the way of the education challenge. We as a nation are known for shibboleths. The largest one relates to presentation of chalks and slates to MPs! One should have thought the education challenge and the right to education are very serious matters.

I may refer to a revealing controversy between two activists, who have made themselves known to VIPs, NHRC, governments, both Indian and foreign, and organizations abroad. I quote from both without any comment [see, *Against Child Labour (*Ed.) Klaus Voll, 1991, Mosani Books and TMT, New Delhi.]

Swamy Agnivesh apropos of child labour in India, says in his contribution to the book, "I accuse the Western powers of hoodwinking the poorer countries, politically as well as economically, and their insincerity is writ large, They don't want to grasp the problem and solve it once and for all. They are playing truant with the problem. They are trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. It is a double standard game and therefore I don't trust even the Western media, which initially, I thought, were doing a great service by highlighting the plight of child labour and bonded labour in my country." Note, he does not have anything to say about the right to education and free and compulsory basic education which alone can eradicate child labour. With regard to the much talked about 'Rugmark Label' and the 'Global March' in 1988, widely reported in the West, organized by Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, among others, the Swamy says, "After the initial enthusiasm died down, we found that there were certain other motives ... [in respect of] the problem of child labour in India ... We got to know that it was the German government which has largely funded the Indo-German Export the 'Rugmark' Foundation... We grew a little suspicious... when my own colleague, Kailash Satyarthi drifted away from the mainstream of *Bandhua Mukti Morcha...* Surprisingly, the vested interests started projecting him as the champion of the cause of the child labour in India and thereafter honours were poured on him... Our suspicions and our worst fears came true when we saw a huge march against child labour... The western countries helped him raise the money, around U.S. Dollar 2 million or more... may be doubled it subsequently. The ILO decided to promote it, because the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) was supporting it... We have seen the game-plan through and we think that the Western powers are out to sabotage the real onslaught against child labour exploitation. They are going to cash in on this whole situation. They are propping up leaders; they are propping up NGOs... The American celebrities who participated, and some of them were here in Delhi, were not shown child labour in agriculture or in brick-kilns or in the stone quarries, things which are not exported. They were straight away taken to Jaipur... This made it very clear that the intention of 'Global March' was not to fight the child labour in its entirety, but just to highlight child labour in export-oriented industries... Nearly half of child labour is in agriculture, the other half's predominant share is in industries or activities which are not at all exported."

Regarding the 'Global March' Mr. Kailash Satyarthi says (Chapter 8): "We have been able to initiate discussion, debate and some sort of movement in many countries [other than India and Pakistan] ... that was another important achievement... [Another] aim was to sensitize, galvanize and influence the whole ILO process of the new convention of the worst forms of child labour... One could observe an unprecedented harmony on the issue.. The March was officially welcomed by the whole ILO convention... The most important part is the implementation of the upcoming convention.' In Chapter 22, Mr. Satyarthi says, "People should feel that it [child labour] is a serious problem. If there is a culture shock, so much the better. I believe that we have been able to hammer this into the heads of the politicians, the bureaucracy, the common people and the parents themselves...we could not do more because of our own constraints. I would say that the part of a huge rehabilitative basic education is still lacking it is part of the government programmes and policies. In India we have not been able to build up a national movement for basic education.

Education is the most important alternative to child labour and unless the former is made available the latter will not be eliminated... Regarding the foreign funds, we personally were never influenced by their agendas. Rather, in most of the cases, we have influenced their agendas, [however] I personally know several NGOs where the people believe that if someone is a donor, then that someone is a great person. When any donor comes, they virtually lie at their feet, touch their feet, surrender everything..."

It is hardly necessary to add any comments!

Non-Implementation of Article 45

There are not many takers for the implementation of Article 45 and the right to education. (We must not confuse the provisions of Article 45 – free and compulsory basic education to children upto the age of fourteen... with literacy programme, literacy campaign, adult education, non-formal education package and so on).

Those who maintain that this social welfare programme cannot be implemented for various reasons and yet, at the same time, bring out plans for eradicating child labour, indulge in unalloyed hypocrisy. Child labour is, of course, a human rights violation. Deprivation of the right to basic education is also a human rights violation... equally obnoxious and atrocious, if not more. The second aspect has been almost totally neglected, both by Indian NGOs and NHRC, and those from abroad. They have been concerned, rightly, with child labour; but they have hardly been agitated over the non-introduction of universal basic education. Why? This must be investigated by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the civil society who are engaged in human rights education. They might find that one of the reasons is the middle-class mindset which would have taken this violation seriously if the victims belonged to their class – the NGOs too belong to the middle class; the fact is that the victims, almost all, belong to SCs/STs, OBCs, the Muslim minority, and the girl child.

Politicians and bureaucrats averse to or unable to implement a social welfare programme for the deprived sections of our people, know how to get away with it through the in-built escape route in the system. Over the years, they have perfected and legitimised the art of doublespeak and the language of deceit and arrogance, like George Orwell's four-legged dictator who quietly changed the original thesis of the revolution, "four legs good, two legs bad" to "four legs good, two legs better," and from "all animals are equal" to "all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others". Our politicians and bureaucrats justify and rationalise the non-implementation of Article 45 and non-recognition of the right to education in the kind of language referred to above. Language of reason has been totally lost on them. I give below a couple of examples of such language as also of quibbling and back-tracking which is insulting millions of our illiterate people.

BJP Government

The first announcement made by Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, an eminent RSS ideologue and present Human Resource Development Minister, during the last BJP government even before the Prime Minister sought the vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha (during the second term of Atal Behari Vajpayee's government), that all efforts will be made to provide education to children upto class 'V' – indeed a "fresh" interpretation of the Constitutional provisions!

On another occasion, sharply reacting to India being called the "illiteracy capital of the world", Dr. Joshi angrily retorted, "India has a very large number of literate people also. Why don't you talk about them? The literacy rate is 50 per cent, so we have about 48 crore literate people in India, which is double the population of the U.S." (*Outlook,* 6 July 1998). Victims of human rights violation-deprivation of the right to basic education know why Dr. Joshi and his likes get annoyed when reminded that India's illiterate population exceeds the total population of the U.S.A., Canada

and Japan.

The mindset behind this kind of quibbling and false pride cannot be expected to implement faithfully this social welfare programme and to recognise the right to education: so that a vast number of our people will continue to be deprived of this basic human right; and our country will remain deprived of all the benefits including economic development, social progress, population control, reduction in infant and child mortality rate, and so on.

Dr. Joshi and his ministry seemed to have evolved a new scheme, (reminiscent of former Prime Minister Mr. I.K. Gujaral's scheme of making it mandatory for all fresh graduates to teach at least five children for receiving the Bachelor's degree). It was called the National Reconstruction Corps (NRC) which was to launch the literacy drive, because, Dr. Joshi said, "the ministry didn't have enough money" to impart basic education to our children. Under this scheme, boys and girls in the age group of 18-21, who had passed their 10+2 examination, were to be employed to teach children and paid Rs. 1,500 per month.

Two short points in this regard. One, since the minimum qualification for teaching primary classes is 10+2 pass certificate, why not appoint them as regular teachers and pay them the prescribed pay and allowances? (The spontaneous answer: We don't have the money! The government has not been short of funds for anything except the programme of basic education). Two, girls and boys having +2 certificates are not equipped to teach students of class VII and VIII – children upto the age of 14. The NRC cannot be a substitute for compulsory basic education as a fundamental right. NRC can be introduced in addition to regular schooling with full-time teachers, proper classrooms, and other educational equipment. It then appeared Dr. Joshi decided to stick to his earlier announcement, namely, that primary education will be provided upto class V and not upto the age of fourteen? (Here again, we are reminded of Orwell's *Animal Farm* and the sheep chanting regularly the revised lessons and the animals in the farm begin to believe that these are the true lessons! They forget the original lessons, "all animals are equal," and "four legs good").

Dr. Joshi, at one stage, decided not to revive the Constitutional amendment Bill, making free and compulsory elementary education a fundamental right (which had been moved by the United Front Government). He and his ministry feel that it is not necessary to make it a fundamental right. However, under compulsion of electoral politics, the BJP-led government has revived the Bill. It is known, however, that Dr. Joshi is very unhappy over the development!

This is further reinforced by another exercise undertaken by India Research Institute, the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute in Noida. Sometime back it prepared a draft Bill, the title of which is "The Child Labour Rehabilitation Bill 1998 – an Act to Prohibit and Regulate Employment of Children." Note, it is to regulate child labour! Furthermore, may one ask, what has happened to the number of constitutional provisions and the 21 legislative enactments on the subject? Nobody, certainly not those in the government, need be told and reminded that these provisions as well as the 1993 and 1996 Supreme Court judgements have not made any dent in the Government's immunity from action. Such negative and futile exercise is undertaken because it is an unwritten and unstated fact that illiteracy, which is limited largely to the marginalized section of our society, does not find a place on the agenda of Government's priority.

West Bengal Government's Record

We may give a quick look at the West Bengal government's performance. I refer to West Bengal since the communists, specially CPI-M claim to be the only "progressive" force in the country (the state has now been ruled by a CPM-led front for 25 years). The literacy rate of the scheduled castes in West Bengal is 42.21 per cent of the total SC population of the State. This ranks way behind that of most other states in India. The literacy rate of the scheduled tribes is worse – 27.78 per cent of the total ST population in the state again, way behind that of most other

states in the country. With regard to SC/ST female literacy, the percentage is much lower. West Bengal does not come anywhere near states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, or even Himachal Pradesh in respect of overall literacy and education it is in the company of Bihar and UP. The communists do not seem to regard education as child's right. If it did, it would have implemented the provision of Article 45 of the Constitution. Twenty-five years is a very long period. Communist China did not take such a long time to eradicate illiteracy. According to the latest statistical profile in respect of women's development programmes brought out by the Planning Commission, the ranking of West Bengal (status of women) is "low" as against "very good", "good" and "medium" ranking of the states (except the BIMARU states whose ranking is "very low"). The fact is that the middle-class in our country including the communists, as also their leader Mr. Jyoti Basu – he still wields real power – are bereft of sensitivity.

Human Development in South Asia 1998

It is in the above context that we must take serious note of the report, *Human Development in South Asia 1998: The Education Challenge* (written by the late Mahbub-ul-Haq, one of the best known economists of our time and Khadija Haq, for Human Development Centre, Islamabad and published by O.U.P.).

The report presents a dismal picture. I give below a very brief summary of the report as also a few statistics given in the report relating to India, which should make all thoughtful people sit up and work for a movement to compel the government to implement the programme without diluting the provision of Article 45 [Now, the amended Article]. Once this is done, all other problems like family planning, health care, economic development, successful management of local self-government, and so on will become tractable.

Summary of the Report

South Asia has emerged by now as the most illiterate region in the world, and that income or poverty is no barrier to the spread of basic education. If Sri Lanka and Maldives could achieve over 90 per cent adult literacy rate, and if Bangladesh cold make rapid strides in this regard, why can't India make progress? ... Political commitment to basic education in India remains both faint and fragile, with the result that India has the largest illiterate population in the world. Many countries which are poorer than India have managed a much higher rate of literacy. (1) Tazakistan – real GDP per capita income 1117 dollars, and literacy rate 98 per cent; (2) Kenya – 1404 dollars, and literacy rate 94 per cent; (3) Vietnam – 1208 dollars and literacy rate 78 per cent. In 1994, India's real per capita income was 1348 dollars but its literacy rate was 52 per cent. Poverty of resources [the reason for not achieving literacy not only given by government agencies but also by intellectuals and activists like the late J.P. Naik, as mentioned above] is not the real reason for India's dismal performance in the field of basic education... Even in India, there are some states, which have made rapid progress in this field, which in turn has ushered in improvements in other spheres like population control, healthcare, quality of life. Kerala, whose per capita income is less than the all-India figures, has a literacy rate of over 90 per cent. The other extreme is that about three-quarters of out of school children live in six states – Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal... In short, India, the report points out, is still first in the world in terms of the number of total illiterate persons. According to official sources, female literacy is 26 percentage points below the male literacy, that is, there are 91 one million more adult illiterate females than males in India. About 35 million children in the 6-10 age group do not attend primary school; 37 per cent of all primary school children drop out before reaching grade 5. According to statistics from official sources, vulnerable groups in India are often deprived of educational opportunities. The literacy rate varies from 90 per cent for rich urban males to a mere 17 per cent for poor, rural

scheduled caste women. SCs/STs have a literacy rate of 40 per cent compared to nearly 60 per cent for higher caste Hindus. The enrolment rate of 6 to 14 year-old Muslim children is 62 per cent compared to 77 per cent for non-SC Hindus.

The Main Thesis of the Report

Education leads to many social benefits, including improvement in standards of hygiene, reduction in infant and child mortality rates, decline in population growth rates, increase in labour production and an improved sense of national unity. It is certain that South Asian economies cannot hope to engineer a decisive breakthrough in development or to become the industrialisation tiers of the future without a generous investment in basic education and technical skills.

This thesis was also propounded by Professor Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen in 1995. What they wrote regarding the wilful neglect of this programme deserves to be quoted: "In India, both ancient and modern, biases shape our policies reflecting prejudices of class division as well as of traditional cultures. The difficulty in getting even left-wing parties interested in combating inequalities in education relates to the general social atmosphere in India, including the nature of the leadership of the different parties which takes some major disparities as simply 'given' and not particularly worth battling against in view of other – perceived to be more pressing – challenges".

Some economists hold the view that basic education does not necessarily lead to economic development. They give the instances of Sri Lanka, Jamaica and Costa Rica where the literacy rate is very high but the economy has not grown very fast. These economists maintain, therefore, that economic growth leads to widespread education, and not the other way, which means, in plain and simple language, that eradication of poverty is the precondition for implementing this welfare programme of basic education. This amounts to putting the cart before the horse, for poverty can be eliminated only when the people are literate. In fact, these economists send out the message that the right to education is not a human right.

These economists also maintain that government should not be involved in education, both in regard to finance and provision of education. They do not take into account the fact that implementation of social welfare programmes is one of the primary duties of a democratic government. How can a country like India, where the vast majority of the people are poor, achieve the goal of universal basic education without the active involvement of government? The governments of Japan and Great Britain in the 19th century carried out this welfare programme and took care of the total financial obligation in this regard. The results are there for all to see. Today, there is no Western country, which is not wholly and solely responsible for school education. The private sector and NGOs cannot implement this programme; they can and should supplement as they have done in Kerala. Towards the end, I may add views of Andre Beteille, that the right to education is useless because it is not enforceable. He has, therefore, argued that elementary education must not be made a fundamental right [Andre Beteille, "Record of Rights: The Marie-Antoinette Solution", *Times of India*, 28 January, 1999].

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, January 2005.

Erosion of Rule of Law

N. D. Pancholi

'RULE OF LAW' is the very foundation of a democratic political order. The executive government and its officials have vast powers and they enjoy the backing of police and the army. If the governmental officials and the executive act arbitrarily, any individual citizen, whether rich or poor, would be helpless. In that case, a person could be detained in prison indefinitely without even being told of the grounds of detention. Meetings and organisations could be banned. If there is no rule of law, any government which came to power, could perpetuate itself indefinitely with or without holding formal elections. All dissent could be suppressed and such literature would be confiscated. Every citizen would be living in permanent fear of losing his liberty and property.

Law is the sworn enemy of arbitrariness and any executive power unregulated by law would only usher in a despotic rule. Indian Constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights to the citizens and persons, such as right to equality, liberty, freedom from exploitation, freedom of religion, educational and cultural rights and right to move the Supreme Court for enforcement of any of these fundamental rights. Article 14 in the constitution is the most comprehensive right which says that the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of law.

The declaration of emergency on the night of 25th June, 1975 under Article 352 of the Constitution was the first major attempt towards erosion of the rule of law. Thousands of people – about one lakh seventy thousands – were detained without any reason given to them and without any right of appeal. There was censorship of Press. Nothing was allowed to be published which was hostile to the then government. Voice of dissent was completely muted. Highhanded and arbitrary actions were carried out with impunity by the executive.

After the end of emergency in March 1977, attempts to deprive the people of the civil liberties by the executive have been continuing at different levels. In 1977 a large number of cases were brought to light by human rights organisations in Andhra Pradesh where innocent persons and naxalities were taken into custody by the police and then shot dead by staging fake encounters in the jungles. Such killings in fake encounters used to occur even before the emergency, but its extent and scale was not known to the people. There was a public outcry but the then Congress government in Andhra and the Janata government at the Centre united in protecting the guilty police officials.

There has been escalation of massive repression by the state and upper affluent sections of society on different sections of the people. The violation of democratic rights of the people, especially of the poorer section has been continuing. The struggle of the unorganised labour and economically exploited classes for satisfying basic needs and their aspirations to live as a dignified human beings are viewed with 'alarm' and brutally suppressed.

The aspirations for regional autonomy have also met the same fate in North-East, Punjab and Kashmir. The repression and atrocities being committed by our security forces in the North-East, especially in Nagaland, are not even made known to the Indian people. The manner in which the Indian army attacked the Golden Temple on 2nd June 1984 and the subsequent repression which raged in Punjab, makes mockery of the concept of the rule of law. Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) act was promulgated in Punjab in July 1984 with the declaration that it would survive only for one year as the problem of terrorism was supposed to be rooted out within that period. However, after one year it was replaced by TADA in May 1984 and its period of duration was extended for two years. Though TADA was originally enacted to tackle terrorist problem in Punjab, it was used

all over India. Largest number of detainees, more than 15,000, mostly trade union workers and social activists were in Gujarat alone. TADA continued to be extended after every two years till this year. Though it has lapsed, yet the havoc it caused to the lives and properties of the thousands of innocent people is irreparable.

Kashmir presents one of the gross violations of the civil liberties and democratic rights of the people of the Valley. Thousands of innocent persons are arrested, tortured and detained for months without producing them before the magistrate. Many are killed during illegal detention and their dead bodies are handed over to their relatives by the security forces without observing any legal norm. Crores of rupees are spent in Kashmir in the name of combating terrorism but large amount of these funds are misused and misappropriated by the concerned officials. Corruption is rampant and government guards all the facts from the public in the name of the 'security of the state.' During the 'Charar-e-Sharif' crisis the government blocked the entry of the journalists from 19th March to 12th May 1995 and nobody knew what was happening there inside. The people of India were deprived of their right to know the facts from all sources as they were made to believe the stories coming only from government handouts. When the Shrine in Charar-e-Sharif was burnt on 11th May, the government told the people that it were the militants who set the Shrine on fire. But the truth seems to be otherwise.

Due to the wrong policies pursued by the Government in Jammu and Kashmir, about 2 lakh Kashmiri Pandits had to flee from the Valley four years back. The sub-human conditions in which thousands of them are living in refugee camps in Jammu has to be seen to be believed. Even cattle would refuse to live in those tents. There are no arrangements made for employment and education of the young.

About 3000 Sikhs were killed in between 1st November to 5 November 1984 in Delhi alone in the aftermath of the killing of Smt. Indira Gandhi and their property worth crores of rupees was looted and burnt. But the guilty of this massacre are yet to be punished.

The state had given an undertaking to the Supreme Court that it would protect Babri Masjid and was duty bound to do the same, yet the Masjid was demolished on 6th December 1992.

It is a well known fact that during communal riots, the police plays a partisan role and it is generally the members of the minority communities who are at the receiving end.

It has been one of the basic democratic principles that a separation of judicial power from the legislative and executive branches of government is essential for achieving the 'rule of law' in contrast to the tyranny of power., for this purpose, the judiciary in India is kept independent of other wings in principle. Supreme Court and High Courts are empowered to issue writs for enforcement of fundamental rights. Courts are the most suitable agency for upholding the 'rule of law'. But those in power, with a view to perpetuate themselves try to undermine the independence of the judiciary and look for pliant judges. In May 1973, the government broke the honoured convention to appoint the senior-most judge as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court by superseding the three senior most judges and justice A.N. Ray, who held the 4th rank, was appointed as the Chief Justice. The three judges were passed only because their rulings had displeased the government. In answer to the protest raised, the then Steel Minister Shri Mohan Kumaramangalam frankly told the Lok Sabha that the judges were superseded because the government did not approve of their social and political philosophy, meaning thereby that only that judge would be allowed to continue whose philosophy was acceptable to the government. The power of transfer of the judges was exercised by the government as a weapon to victimize the judges who gave judgements adverse to the government in 'emergency' in cases affecting the liberty of the individuals. A large number of High Court judges and one or two in the Supreme Court refused to submit to the pressure of the executive, while some of them, especially of the Supreme Court went out of their way in order to please the government. The decision of the Supreme Court in the

habeas corpus appeals given in April 1976 is illustrative. A five member bench of that court held by a majority of four to one (Mr. Justice H.R. Khanna dissenting), that while the proclamation of 'emergency' was in force, the right to move the court for enforcement of Article 21 is suspended by a Presidential order made under Article 359, a petition for habeas corpus is not maintainable to secure the liberty of any detenue, even if the order of detention was unlawful and malafide. During the course of arguments, the government advocate submitted that even if a police constable shot and killed any person in arbitrary manner and without any cause, no action against the said constable was maintainable in any court because Article 21 stood suspended; and the Court approved this in their judgement. 'Rule of Law' is threatened when those who are in power or near the Government try to subvert the administrative set-up to serve their personal ends. Goebbals, the spokesman for Fascism, said, "The State must have the courage to break its own laws." The autocrats and vested interests are always there to threaten the 'rule of law'. We have to constantly guard against such threats. Our people are not sufficiently educated in the democratic values and the concept of 'rule of law.' We have to educate them so that resistance to autocratic power becomes stronger.

It is rightly said, "Eternal Vigilance is the price of Liberty."

[*Paper presented in the Seminar on 'Erosion of the Rule of Law' on 8.7.1995 organised by the all India Lawyers Union (Delhi Unit) at New Delhi.*]

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, October 1995.

Attack on Judicial Independence

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

On April 25, without any prior intimation, the Government made the surprise move of announcing the appointment of the new Chief Justice of India after superseding three senior and extremely able and competent judges of the Supreme Court. The new Chief Justice was sworn the next morning. The three superseded judges tendered resignations of their high office the same day. The Bar throughout the country reacted sharply to the incident. Several High Courts closed for the day on account of boycott by advocates. The Supreme Court Bar Association passed by overwhelming majority a resolution in which the Government action was described as "a blatant and outrageous attempt at undermining the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and lowering the prestige and dignity of the Supreme Court." The incident caused an uproar in Parliament, but as we write the issue is yet to be debated fully in the Lok Sabha.

In the meantime the significance of this development is sought to be blurred and clouded in interested quarters by recourse to a number of specious arguments. Reliance is being placed on a Report of the Law Commission, which was allowed to gather dust in the Law Ministry since 1958, in support of the claim that the President (who in this case means the Government of India) is not required to respect seniority in appointing the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Support is also being sought from the practice of England and some other countries where the highest judicial post is not necessarily given to the senior-most judge. It is said that supersession by juniors, supposed to be of higher merit, is a normal feature of public service and that the Chief Justice-ship of the Supreme Court should not be an exception to this rule. These and similar arguments are likely to cause confusion in the absence of a clear understanding of the implications of the principle of independence of the judiciary and the necessity of implementing that principle if we are to advance towards any democratic form of socialism.

The Central and State Governments are parties to a large number of legal proceedings, particularly in High Courts and the Supreme Court. With the increasing role of the State in the economic and social life of the citizen, such cases are constantly on the increase. In only a few of these cases is the validity of any legislative measure questioned. In the vast majority of proceedings the aggrieved party seeks to challenge some executive action of the Central or State Government on grounds such as that his fundamental rights are being violated, or that he was not given a hearing, or that the executive action was otherwise contrary to law. It is vital to the administration of justice as between a citizen and the State that the judge should be in a position to decide such a case without fear or favour. It is even more vital that the citizen concerned should have confidence that the decision will not be affected by the fact that he is required to fight against an apparently almighty Government. It is therefore necessary that the judiciary should be genuinely independent of the Government – independent in the sense that the appointment, tenure and promotion of members of the judiciary should not depend on the favour or disfavour of the executive. The independence of the judiciary, being essential for the protection of the citizen against arbitrary or undue exercise of authority by the executive, is one of the corner-stones of democracy.

As a country develops in the direction of socialism the power of the State goes on increasing in both scope and extent. In relation o the ever-growing power of the State, the individual citizen remains weak and insignificant and faces the prospect of becoming a virtual non-entity. That is why democratic socialists, if they are true to their conviction, must insist that the democratic content of their ideal is not subordinated to its socialist content. In an economically developed country, it is comparatively easy to introduce the substance of socialism without materially increasing the power of the State. This is far from easy in economically under-developed countries

like India. That is why we in India must take particular care to preserve ad strengthen all the essentials of democracy including the independence of the judiciary, during the process of changing the economic structure of society.

In appreciating the significance of the supersession of three eminent judges in the appointment of the new Chief Justice, it is desirable to examine the main provisions embodies in the Constitution, and the conventions developed during the last 25 years, for securing the independence of the judiciary.

At the lowest rung of judicial service, recruitment to what is called the subordinate judiciary in every State is made jointly by the State Public Service Commission and the High Court in accordance with rules framed under Article 234 of the Constitution. The State Governments have nothing to do with the appointment of members of the subordinate judiciary. The subsequent promotion of these judicial officers as well as the appointments and promotions of District Judges is in the hands of the High Courts in various States (Articles 233 and 235). Government patronage is thus excluded up to the High Court stage.

The salary of a High Court Judge and his tenure of service till the age of retirement are protected by different provisions in the Constitution. He cannot be removed from service except by impeachment by Parliament. Appointment of a High Court judge is made by the President (i.e. by the Government of India) "after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State and, in the case of appointment of a judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court" (article 217). Although this provision allows room for some degree of intervention by the Central Government as well as State Governments in the appointment of judges (including Chief Justices) of High Courts, two conventions have developed to reduce such interference to the minimum. One is that the recommendation of the Chief Justice of the High Court is usually accepted in the appointment of judges to his Court, and the other is that on the retirement of a Chief Justice of a High Court the next senior judge normally occupies that post. These conventions worked satisfactorily so far, although some Chief Ministers have interfered with them now and then.

In the case of judges of the Supreme Court also, their salaries and tenure of office are protected by Constitutional provisions. Their appointment is to be made by the President (i.e. The Government of India) "after consultation of such of the judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Court in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose; Provided that in the case of appointment of a judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of India shall always be consulted" (Article 124).

In relation to the Supreme Court also, two conventions have been developing. In the appointment of judges other than the Chief Justice, considerable weight used to be given by the Government of India to the recommendation of the Chief Justice of India, and secondly, the post of the Chief Justice of India went, barring a case of physical incapacity, to the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court.

Both of these conventions in regard to the Supreme Court are being discarded by the present Government of India. It is known in legal circles that since the "massive" victory of the Ruling Congress in the general election of March 1972, the consultation by the Government with the Chief Justice of India in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court has been perfunctory and nominal. The judges are being appointed virtually by the Central Government itself, after a formal consultation with the Chief Justice. The second convention is now broken by choosing for the post of the Chief Justice of India a comparatively junior judge after superseding three senior judges of the highest competence and rectitude. It happens that the judge chosen for the post had delivered judgments in favour of the Government in three important cases – the Bank Nationalisation case, the Privy Purses case and the recent fundamental Rights case – while the

superseded judges had decided these cases against the Government to a certain extent. In making this appointment, the Government have given a go-bye to the principle which lies at the root of independence of the judiciary, namely that the promotion of no judge should depend on whether he gives decisions in favour or against the Government.

The grave consequences of this action can hardly be exaggerated. There are many young judges in the various High Courts who legitimately aspire to become Chief Justices of their Courts in the course of time or be elevated to the Supreme Court. Hereafter, when they are required to decide any important issue between a citizen and the State, will they be sure that their prospects will not be adversely affected if their decision goes against the State. And will the citizen concerned have the same confidence as before in the independence and impartiality of the High Court? Moreover, will this canker of doubt not affect litigants in the Supreme Court as well? The Law Minister is said to have declared in Parliament that the Government are seeking to establish a new precedent of choosing persons for high judicial office on merit and suitability instead of seniority. Since the Government is the principal litigant in the Supreme Court as well as the High Court, is it not obvious that the right claimed by it to appoint judges and Chief Justices of its choice would make a mockery of the principle of independence of the judiciary?

It is perhaps necessary to make it clear that this writer has no doubt whatever that the present Chief Justice and his remaining colleagues in the Supreme Court have always decided legal causes according to their conscience and that they will continue to do so. The question is not of the quality of the present members of the judiciary. What is at issue is the effect of the recent Government action and the policy behind it on the future of judicial independence. There can be little doubt that unless public opinion is aroused and harnessed so as to require the Government to abandon its policy of appointing judges and Chief Justices of its choice, judicial independence will soon be a thing of the past.

It was claimed by the Law Minister in Parliament that the present Chief Justice was chosen on merit and suitability and that his appointment was not made on political considerations. But does not the Law Minister, an experienced lawyer himself, know that a litigant always feels that a judge who decides in his favour is very able and competent, and not a judge who decides against him? Where a Government is a frequent litigant, and when it has no genuine respect for judicial influence, its choice of a judge "on merit" tends to be also a political choice. Outside the charmed circles of the Government and its supporters, it is well-known that the present Chief Justice, undoubtedly a good judge, cannot be claimed to be superior in any way to the three senior judges superseded in his appointment.

No support to the Government action can be derived from the recommendation made by the Law Commission in its Report of 1958. The Law Commission did not recommend that in choosing a Chief Justice, senior judges of proved competence and judicial independence should be superseded by a junior judge who happens to have decided important cases in favour of the Government. On the contrary, the Law Commission recommended that "above all, a person of sturdy independence and towering personality who would, on the occasion arising, be a watch-dog of the independence of the judiciary" should be selected for the high office of the Chief Justice. This writer believes that even in 1958 it was somewhat naive to expect that the Government, if it felt free to disregard the claims of seniority, would have chosen as Chief Justice a person who could be relied upon to protect the independence of the judiciary from Government interference. Supposing however that such an expectation was legitimate in 1958, it is legitimate no longer. The present Government is clearly not a respecter of judicial independence. Our democracy must gain considerably in maturity before our Government can be expected to have a genuine regard for the principle of independence of the judiciary. It is necessary in the meantime that, while judges as a rule should be selected for appointment by senior judges of higher tribunals, the post of the Chief

Justice of the highest tribunal in the land should 'go by seniority, barring cases of physical incapacity.'

Nor can Government action be supported by a reference to the practice in England and some other countries where the highest judicial post is not necessarily given to the senior-most judge. On the one hand those countries have a mature democracy, so that judicial independence is respected in filling the highest judicial post; on the other, those countries are not involved in the type of socialistic experiment which we have undertaken, with the result the citizen there is not required so frequently to approach courts of law for protection against arbitrary or excessive executive action.

One of our contemporaries, unable "to make any sense at all" from the controversy provoked by the appointment of the Chief Justice, has assumed that the struggle between the Parliament and the Supreme Court in regard to Parliament's competence to abridge fundamental rights have not been resolved by the recent judgment of the Supreme Court and that the appointment by the Government of the new Chief Justice was motivated by its desire to resolve that issue by changing the character of that Court (vide editorial of the Times of India – April 28). This view is based on a misunderstanding of the recent decision f the Supreme Court. The right of Parliament not only to abridge but even to abrogate fundamental rights by constitutional amendment has been recognised by seven of the thirteen judges who decided that marathon case. Apparently, seven out of thirteen judges held that the "structure and framework" of the Constitution cannot be altered by exercising the Parliament's power of amendment, but one of these seven judges (Mr. Justice Khanna) of the thirteen judges have now supported Parliament's unlimited right to abridge or abrogate fundamental rights, while the remaining six judges held that fundamental rights can be abridged but not abrogated by amending the Constitution. Surely, after this verdict, it was not necessary for the Government to attempt to change the character of the Supreme Court by superseding three eminent judges in filling the Chief Justice's post.

It is not necessary to travel far afield to find the reason why Government superseded the three judges in making this appointment. The reason is that in every immature democracy the Government of the day tends to be intolerant of an independent judiciary. This intolerance has increased in our country with the virtual concentration of all political power in the hands of a single individual. That is why this appointment was a calculated move to make the judiciary subservient to the executive and dependent on Government pressure and patronage.

The remedy is to build up a powerful current of public opinion which would compel the Government to renounce this policy and give a public assurance that it would not again interfere in this manner in the independence of the judiciary. That is not an impossible task. The ruling party, after the collapse of the slogan of *Garibi Hatao*, is no longer as strong as before. It has, moreover, to face the electorate, presently in Uttar Pradesh and later in other States. If public opinion in favour of an independent judiciary is aroused and organised, the ruling party will have to submit to it or suffer the consequences. And member of the Bar in different centres, apart from other bodies, can play a very useful role in this process of educating the public in the basic elements of democracy.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, May 1973.

Is It Casteism?

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

The question which I am raising in this article is highly controversial. The question is should a conscious effort to uplift the socially, educationally and economically backward castes be disapproved as amounting to casteism? I am of the view that it should not. An attempt to bring about an upliftment of the backward castes should in my opinion, be regarded as a positive anti-caste activity rather than a resort to casteism. The reasons in support of this view are given below. I would welcome considered responses for or against my opinion on the subject.

The relevance of the subject can be illustrated by a conversation which I recently had with an intelligent and leading member of the BJP who is also a former RSS trooper. I asked him whether it was not wrong on the part of the BJP to arouse Hindu sentiments on the Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir issue and create a situation which led to the destruction of the Masjid. He replied that that it may have been wrong but added that what Mulayam Singh was doing in Uttar Pradesh by fomenting casteism was definitely much worse. I politely disagreed with him.

Recently, in several public meetings attended largely by Muslims, I have been advocating the view that in order to counter the menace of majority communalism which was being fostered by the BJP and the Sangh Parivar, the minorities in India consisting of Muslims, Sikhs and Christians should forge an alliance with the Dalit sections of Hindu society. I made it clear that by this I meant that the minorities should suppot those political groups, such as the Janata Dal, Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party and Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party, which were insisting on the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report (as modified by the Supreme Court) and adopting other measures to promote the interests of the backward casts. I found that what I said at the meetings evoked on the whole a favourable response.

It may be recalled that when V.P. Singh as Prime Minister issued an Office Memorandum in August 1990 saying that the recommendations of the Mandal Commission would be immediately implemented, there was a strong public protest from the elite sections of Hindus in Delhi and other northern cities, and the agitation against the Mandal Commission's Report was raised to such a high emotional pitch that several Hindu boys and girls committed public self-immolations. During that agitation, this journal had expressed the view that the only element of casteism which was found in the Mandal Commission Report was that it refused to place the well-to-do families in backward classes in the general category and insisted that the reservations should be available to all the families in backward classes including those which have ceased to be economically and educationally backward.

The agitation against the Mandal Commission Report was continued with the tacit support of the very political parties in the Opposition, including the BJP, which had promised in their election manifestoes that the recommendations of the Mandal Commission would be implemented. Soon thereafter the V.P. Singh National Front Government collapsed as a result of the withdrawal of support by the BJP. A general election was held, but the government which eventually came to power took a decision to carry out the Mandal recommendations with a few modifications. The constitutional validity of the reservation policy was then challenged in the Supreme Court in the case Indra Sawhney vs. Union of India. A decisive majority of a nine-Judges Bench of the Supreme Court which heard the case held that the recommendations of the Mandal Commission were constitutionally valid, except in regard to the forward families in the backward classes (described by the Supreme Court as the "creamy layer") which they held were not entitled to reservations and which would therefore be placed in the general category. The majority judgements of the Supreme Court made it clear that the "backward classes" consisted mostly of backward castes and that

such castes were found not only among Hindus but among the converts who now belong to the Muslim, Sikh and Christian communities. It is significant that the Supreme Court majority did not attach the stigma of casteism to the main recommendations of the Mandal Commission.

Reverting to the general question whether the attempts to uplift the backward castes should be disapproved on the ground that they amount to casteism, it is necessary to distinguish between recognition of the existence of the caste system and an approval of that system. That the caste system exists in Hindu society is an undeniable fact and nothing is gained by simply not recognising it. An incipient idea that the caste system may gradually disappear if it is not officially recognised found expression in the practice adopted in the ten-yearly census in India after 1931. In the subsequent six ten-yearly censuses, the column which described the caste of the individual has been dropped. This has not affected to any extent the existence or strength of the caste system.

A considerable number of enlightened Hindus are opposed to the caste system. Some of the youngsters who believe in the slogan of "Jatti Toro" refuse to use their surnames on the ground that by doing so, their caste would be revealed. While the repudiation of the caste system by reformist Hindus, young and old, is fully commendable, it does not appear that their attitude has affected to any substantial extent the existence and strength of the caste system.

Irawati Karve, the justly famous social anthropologist, has defined caste as 'an extended kin group". In other words, it is an extension of a joint Hindu family. However, while the family remains a laudable social institution, the caste system is undoubtedly harmful. It is harmful for two reasons. In the first place, there are social gradations in the caste system, some castes being higher and superior in status to those below. The higher castes had till recent times the monopoly of education as also of economic resources. The lower castes remained educationally, economically and socially backward. There was, and there still exists to a large extent, a definite social hierarchy between all castes, from the Brahmins at the top to the scheduled castes at the bottom. The second defect of the caste system, which really sustains the first, is that every caste continues to be endogamic. Marriages are confined almost always to couples belonging to the same caste. The caste system is stabilised by endogamy as well as well as by social gradation. It is harmful social institution but its harmfulness is increasingly greater as we go down in the social gradation and reach the level of the scheduled castes.

Nepotism is another great evil associated with casteism, but it is not confined to the caste system. It is found in various types of groups, including family circles. Nepotism is part of corruption, which is beyond the limits of the present discussion.

The caste system has been in existence for more than 2500 years. It was initially opposed both by Buddhism and Jainism. Attempts to eliminate the system were made from time to time. Guru Nanak was opposed to casteism, but his endeavours resulted in the establishment of a separate religion, and some of the Hindus who became Sikhs still continue to have caste distinctions. The Lingayats in Karnataka, Arya Samajis in northern and central India, the Brahmo Samajis in eastern India, were all opposed to the caste system, and although these movements brought about some desirable social reforms, the caste system still continues with undiminished strength in the bulk of Hindu society.

It appears that the caste system will be weakened only if a large number of inter-caste marriages take place so that endogamy, which effectively sustains the caste system, is gradually eroded. At present this is happening to a noticeable extent among the Brahmins and upper class Marathas in Maharashtra. The history of the upliftment of the Maratha community in Maharashtra shows one of the more effective methods by which casteism may come to an end.

There was a strong non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra which started in the second half of the 18th century by a dynamic and progressive leader belonging to the Mali (gardener) community, who is now well known as "Mahatma" Jyotiba Phule. The movement was largely led by Marathas

who claimed to be Kshatriyas and were next in social grade to the Brahmins of the Maharashtra. Till the early 1930s, they were opposed to the Indian National Congress which they regarded as a Brahmin movement, and were supporters of the British Raj. Attempts were made in early 1930s by some Congressmen in Maharashtra led by N.V. (Kakasaheb) Gadgil to bring the leading Marathas into the Congress. I was then one of the youngsters who fully supported Mr. Gadgil's attempt. We were, however, accused at that time by some progressives in the Congress on the ground that we were supporting casteism. Even then we did not agree with that view. The initiative taken by Kakasaheb Gadgil and his friends was successful. Some of the Maratha leaders came into the Congress as soon as Congress in Maharashtra came under the domination of Marathas who were numerically stronger than Brahmins. In a few years Maratha leaders got more than their proportionate share of political power and Marathas also progressed in agriculture, in business and in industries. The status of the Maratha community is now equal to that of Brahmins in Maharashtra, and that appears to be the reason why a large number of inter-caste marriages between Brahmins and Maratha families are presently taking place in Maharashtra. Inter-caste marriages, which were repeatedly condemned in Bhagwat Gita as "Varn Sankar', seem to be the most effective way of eroding the caste system and possibly abolishing it in the future.

About the same time when leaders of the Maratha community in Maharashtra were welcomed in the Indian National Congress, Babasaheb Ambedkar intensified his movement amongst the untouchables, now designated as the Scheduled Castes, for social equality. Nobody, excepting perhaps some elements from the Shiv Sena, condemns Babasahedb Ambedkar on the ground that he was a casteist. His example clearly shows that the endeavour to uplift those castes which are at the lower grade of the caste system does not amount to casteism. The endeavour is almost at reducing caste differences and is therefore an anti-caste endeavour.

Dr. Ambedkar's movement among the Scheduled Castes is now followed by a movement for the improvement of the lot of the intermediate castes called the OBC (Other Backward Classes). Just as Dr. Ambedkar's movement was not casteist, so also and for the same reason the movement for the upgradation of the OBCs cannot be characterised as casteist. It is a movement for the establishment of social, economic and educational equality in Hindu society, which is probably the most effective method of eventually putting an end to the evil of the caste system.

Majority communalism which is now being fostered by the BJP and the Sangh Parivar gets the support of a considerable proportion of the Hindu elite belonging to the upper castes. The majority of the Hindus, however, belong to the lower castes. They are not deeply infected by the virus of communalism, though they are occasionally drawn into communal riots by some of the elitist Hindu fanatics. The ardent supporters of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar are also the bearers of animosity towards the Indian minorities consisting of Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. The danger of majority communalism coming to power in India and establishing a Hindu theocratic State can best be countered by an alliance between the Indian minorities and the backward Hindu castes, which will also get the unstained support of a considerable number of secular elements coming from the Hindu upper castes.

18.12.1994.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, January 1995.

Genesis of Kashmir Problem

Balraj Puri

Kashmir problem underlines failure of Indian nationalism, Indian federalism, Indian democracy and Indian secularism to accommodate Kashmiri Muslim aspirations. Or what means almost the same thing, failure of Kashmiri Muslims to get their aspirations fulfilled within the parameters of the Indian institutional and value system. But above all, it is a diagnostic failure.

The near total alienation of Kashmiri Muslims, who had welcomed Indian troops in 1947, the resort to armed insurgency by a traditionally non-violent community and its split on communal lines despite a tradition of communal harmony are indeed baffling phenomena.

The behaviour of Kashmir Muslims would continue to baffle unless the basic reality that they are Kashmiris as well as Muslims is not appreciated.

They are certainly Muslims. It is for this reason that they had an option other than that of remaining a part of India and that it became a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. But if only Muslim urges had motivated them, they would not have opted for India in 1947 when the rest of the subcontinent was divided between Hindu and Muslim majority parts, and when communal conflagration had surrounded the valley (but could not touch it).

At the time of partition, Kashmiri Muslims were in a dilemma about their choice. But when Pakistan decided to settle the issue of accession of the state first through negotiations with the Maharaja and later through a tribal raid, Kashmiris, like any self-respecting community, were left with no choice except to seek help of the Indian army to protect their freedom and identity.

What further tilted their mind in favour of India was the categorical stand of the Government of India that people, and not the ruler, had a right to decide the future of the princely states. Apart from the emotional appeal of this moral and principled stand, it weakened the resistance of the Maharaja to accede to the Indian Union and justified annexation of the Hindu majority states of Hyderabad and Junagarh by India.

The offer of the Government of India to get the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian Union, legally made by the Maharaja, ratified by a reference to the people was, therefore, not merely influenced by idealistic lead of Gandhi or naiveté of Nehru, as often alleged, but also by considerations of real-politik for that was the only way to legitimize accession of the three vital princely states to the Union.

The Indian policy on Kashmir in the phase aimed at encouraging Kashmiri patriotism – a term used by Gandhi – counter the communal appeal of Pakistan. In order to ensure popular Muslim support for India in a plebiscite to which India had committed for the aforesaid reason and which it hoped to win, tempo of Kashmir patriotism had to be kept at a high pitch.

This was one of the main reasons that the Kashmiri leaders insisted on and the government of India agreed to not making too drastic changes in the terms of the Instrument of Accession.

Accordingly the state retained its right to frame its own constitution. In fact, all the princely states signed the same Instrument of Accession and had a similar right to frame their constitution. But due to the political climate of the times, when wave of nationalism was sweeping away local varieties of patriotism, all other states surrendered their constitution-making right to the Constituent Assembly of India.

Article 370 of the Constitution of India which governed Jammu and Kashmir State's relations with the Centre was thus not a concession given by the government of India to the State, as it erroneously alleged, but was its right under the Indian Independence Act and the Instrument of Accession which it decided to retain as its justification for preferring India to Pakistan. This could be abrogated or modified only by the Constituent Assembly of the state and by Parliament. In fact,

any unilateral decision by Parliament to abrogate the Article might make the legal validity of accession doubtful.

Kashmiri nationalism was, however, a two-edged weapon. One edge cut against Pakistan but soon the other edge against India also came into operation as claims of Indian nationalism started diverging. Dr. Shymaprasad Mukherjee, the founder President of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, was the first Indian leader to accuse Sheikh Abdullah of propounding a three-nation theory as against the two-nation theory of Jinnah. While Kashmiri leaders had their own compulsion to assert autonomy of the state, national leaders including Government of India continued to persuade them to concede more subjects to the centre.

What complicated the matter was the role of big powers which during that period of uncertainty about the future of the state was of crucial importance. Firstly, C.P.I., with the backing of the Soviet Union, during Stalin era, encouraged aggressive trends in Kashmiri nationalism towards more autonomy or even independence of Kashmir. In post-Stalin era, when Indo-soviet relations became friendly, America took over the same role.

Another complicating factor was simmering discontent in Jammu region due to transfer of power from Jammu-based Maharaja to Kashmir-based leadership which was ignorant and unappreciative of Jammu's regional urges. Jammu's discontent was combination of many factors – hurt regional pride, Hind communal sentiments, dethroned feudal vested interest.

The present writer, while supporting Article 370, had urged further extension of its logic so that regions had as much autonomy within the state as it had within the country. This arrangement might have safeguarded and reconciled the interests of Kashmir as well as Jammu and Ladakh. Nehru and Abdullah, in a press statement in July 1952, conceded the principle of regional autonomy and its incorporation in the constitution of the state.

But the Bharatiya Jan Sangh and its Jammu counterpart Praja Parishad were able to articulate Hindu discontent of the region through an apparently nationalist demand of abrogation of article 370 and launched an agitation to achieve its objectives.

The agitation, which received powerful support in Jammu and in Northern India, provoked a very sharp reaction among the Kashmiri Muslims, who became apprehensive about their autonomy and identity for the protection of which they had acceded to India. Death of Mukherjee in Kashmir jail aroused Hindu anger in the country against Abdullah who also reacted angrily to charges against him. it was this vicious circle which created doubts about bonafides of each other that culminated in the crisis of 1953 when Abdullah was dismissed from power.

After putting popular leadership in jail and imposing a regime of corruption and repression, the Government of India, with the concurrence of the fraudulently elected assembly, drastically eroded the autonomy of the state under Article 370 and extended many provisions of Indian constitution to it in the teeth of popular opposition. Thus, Kashmiri's urge for identity and autonomy, which were earlier encouraged by the Indian leaders to win its people against Pakistan, was by 1965 crudely offended by the way integrationist measures were forced on the state.

Another expectation of the people of Kashmir from their association with the Indian Union was that they would be freer than as a part of Pakistan. But boundaries of Indian democracy were not extended to Kashmir except for brief periods and in a limited way.

That elections have usually been unfair is now universally acknowledged. Another plank of India's Kashmir policy has been to maintain what was called unity of all secular forces. In other words, every effort was made to eliminate opposition and perpetuate one party system as far as the valley was concerned.

When Kashmir unit of the PSP was formed in 1954, its leaders including Ashok Mehta and the present writer were beaten up and it was physically prevented from functioning. The Congress leaders including Nehru condemned the party's role as anti-national.

When the leftists, led by G.M. Sadiq, formed an opposition party called Democratic National Conference in 1958, they were treated almost similarly and eventually persuaded by Nehru to rejoin the present National Conference. The reunion was hailed by the National Press.

When Bakshi Gulam Mohammed revived N.C. as an opposition party in 1967 after the official group had merged with the Congress, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi publicly stated in her election campaign that there was no need for and opposition party in Kashmir. Taking a cue from her, the Returning Officers summarily rejected nomination papers of a large number of Bakshi's candidates and the administration did the rest of the manipulation to ensure return to power of the ruling Congress Party. Eventually Bakshi himself was accommodated in the Congress.

It has been empirically observed that during the short-lived experiments of opposition parties considerable dent was made into the formidable following of Plebiscite Front led by Abdullah.

Kashmiris' identity, autonomy and freedom – which were promised by its accession to India – continued to be eroded till the process was reversed in 1975, when with the return to power of a popular hero and the assurance of the Government of India to continue Article 370 and to review all central laws extended to the state after 1953, Kashmir again acquired a sense of dignity.

The fair election in 1977 for the first time made people of Kashmir aware of the virtues of Indian democracy and value of a vote. That people of Kashmir could defeat the Janata Party, which was a ruling Party at the centre, enormously thrilled them and made them feel proud of their Indian citizenship.

For a decade, an effective opposition, first in the form of the Janata Party and later the Congress, met the vital need of democracy. Moreover, while National Conference provided outlet to the anti-centre sentiments of the People, the Congress (and earlier Janata Party) became outlets for the discontents against the state government.

But the outlets were closed in 1986 when Congress-National Conference coalition government led by Farooq was installed. As Farooq had to share power, after two years of humiliating parleys, with a party responsible for his dismissal, he and his Party also ceased to be an instrument of Kashmiri protest and symbol of Kashmiri identity.

As the secular outlet of discontent against central and state governments suddenly disappeared, the Muslim United Front filled the vacuum as a principal opposition in the Valley. But even this communal but constitutional outlet of discontent was blocked when elections were manipulated in a number of constituencies. This time militant Kashmiri Muslim youth articulated the disillusionment of the People of Kashmir with the Indian system in the language of terrorism, of course with the help of arms and training from Pakistan.

The quick success that militancy achieved, which surprised both who sponsored it and who opposed it, was due to some other reasons also. Irrespective of its objectives, its psychological appeal for many people lay in its role of transforming a docile and timid people – subject of universal ridicule for this quality – into a martial community.

However, it was the policy of the state that made a critical contribution at every phase of the escalation of militancy.

The role of security forces has been criticised in varying degrees by various human rights groups, independent observers and journalists, national and international media and by all major political parties – barring the BJP. The criticism is further corroborated by implicit and explicit statements of responsible personalities of the government.

But humanitarian and moral considerations apart, the role of the state, in general, and of the security forces in particular, accentuated the sense of alienation of the people and degree of their involvement with the militant cause.

Finally, a significant factor in the initial success of the militant movement was that Pakistan used the Kashmiri card to start with, instead of the Islamic card that it used to do earlier with little success.

The militant movement was initiated by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front in the name of Kashmiriat and for the independence of Kashmir. This group, which also stood for independence of the Pak-held part of the state, was under persecution there, its chief Ammanullah Khan remained in Pakistan jail for 15 months.

But Pakistan managed to export its problem by persuading the J.K.L.F. and helping it with arms to first liberate Indian part of Kashmir. Indian state responded, as indicated above, by creating favourable conditions for importing the Problem.

Later, however, Pakistan downgraded its support to J.K.L.F. and sponsored and helped Islamic outfits like Hizab-e-Mujahidin. Indian security forces, too, played their part in weakening the J.K.L.F.

It is true that due to many reasons, including emergence of fundamentalist militant groups and exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit minority, Muslim aspect of Kashmiri Muslim identity has become more pronounced. But it is unlikely that Kashmiri Muslims would ever cease to be Kashmiris. Ethnic dimensions of Muslims, either in Pakistan or in the rest of the Muslim world continue to assert. In fact, there are indications that the support of Kashmiri Muslims to the current phase of the militant movement is becoming less enthusiastic, perhaps party due to its changed character.

In a similar way, it is hardly likely that cultural hunger of Kashmiri Pandit migrants will be fully satisfied on diet of Hindutva.

The basic issues of the Kashmiri problem therefore are:

(a) How to reconcile two aspects of Kashmiri Muslim identity;
(b) How to reconcile Hindu and Muslim parts of this identity;
(c) How to reconcile Kashmiris' aspirations with those of the other two regions of the State.

(*Paper presented at Seminar on Kashmir Problem organised by Coordination Committee on Kashmir on March 2-3, 1991*).

Published in **The Radical Humanist,** May 1991.

H.N. Wanchoo Memorial Lecture:

The Kashmir Problem: Possible Solutions

Justice V.M. Tarkunde

We are meeting today to honour the memory of the late H.N. Wanchoo who was one of the truly heroic figures in the Kashmir Valley. He was well-known for his devoted trade union work. He was entirely untouched by communal feelings and was a friend of Hindus and Muslims alike. Although a Hindu *pandit*, he remained in the valley, after the exodus of most of the Hindus, to carry on his social work. He had filed a petition in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court for remedial action under Article 21 of the Constitution against the appalling excesses committed by the security forces against innocent persons in the valley who were not involved in militant activities. He used to file in the High Court every month a list of innocent persons who were killed while in police custody, anothe4r list of innocent persons who were arrested but whose whereabouts were unknown, and a third list of innocent persons who were killed by police firing when such firing was not aimed at militants. My last meeting with H.N. Wanchoo was at Delhi on 23rd November 1992, when we discussed the Kashmir situation at length. He was murdered within a fortnight thereafter, on 5th of December 1992, by persons whose identity is still unknown. Thus we lost a person who could have been very useful to us in resolving the Kashmir problem.

At the time of the accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India on 26th of October 1947, the State consisted of at least five areas which had distinct cultures and histories., the State of Jammu was the headquarters of the Dogra rulers. The Dogras acquired Ladakh, Baltistan, Kashmir and Girgit at different times and in different ways. The small district of Poonch came to the Dogra rulers as late as in 1936 and this may be regarded as the sixth part of the State of Jammu & Kashmir. Since the ceasefire in the Indo-Pak conflict in 1949, Pakistan is in possession of Baltistan, Gilgit agency, a small part of the Kashmir valley and of the western part of Poonch. India is in possession of most of the Kashmir valley, the whole of Jammu and Ladakh and the eastern part of Poonch. Of these, only the Kashmir valley and a part of Poonch are the trouble areas and they are the crux of what is currently described as the Kashmir problem.

The Kashmir problem has many facets. Insurgency in the valley began in the second half of 1989 and assumed serious proportions from the middle of January 1990.In the course of time, many militant gangs grew in the valley, some in favour of Kashmir being independent of both India and Pakistan and others in favour of it acceding to Pakistan. Several innocent Hindus and Muslims were put to death by militant gangs, as also several members of the military and para-military forces. Some of the alleged militants were apprehended and many of them have been killed. The trouble is greatly aggravated by the fact that a very large number of innocent persons in the valley have been tortured or killed, a number of women have been raped and large clusters of houses have been burnt, all by sections of the para-military or military forces. It is true that para-military and military forces in the valley have been working under a great deal of mental pressure and some retaliatory action on their part, even if it was in excess of what was strictly necessary in the situation, was to be expected and deserves to be excused. But all too often, the retaliatory action was so much in excess of what the situation required, and was undertaken so long after the provocation ceased, that it was incapable of any justification or excuse. Very often the excesses of the security forces were committed against persons who were not militants at all and when the militants had left the scene many hours earlier. In the course of the "military crack-downs" which were undertaken in 1992, hundreds of innocent persons were arrested, subjected to inhuman torture, and were released thereafter. It appears that one of the causes of these excesses was that security forces regarded the Kashmiri Muslims, whether they were militants or not as enemies. The local Jammu & Kashmir police had no hand in maintaining law and order; that function was entrusted solely to para-military and military personnel who came

from other parts of India and did not know the local language. Thus the valley presented a picture of a country subjugated and oppressed by "foreign" forces. Consequently, the alienation of Kashmiri people from India, which was evident even in 1989, had increased manifold during the last four years and has now turned into bitterness and hatred. The added fact that many militants are trained by Pakistan and were supplied by it with arms and ammunition, has added materially to the complications of the problem. Thus the existence of militancy, the excesses of the security forces, the complete alienation from India of the local population and the nefarious part being played by Pakistan in fomenting the trouble are the different features which together make the Kashmir problem highly complicated.

Another significant feature of the situation is that the Central Government has hardly any policy in regard to how the Kashmir problem should be tackled. The Central Government is merely allowing things to drift. What is more, the Jammu & Kashmir government consisting of the Governor and his staff is virtually non-functional. Below the Governor and his staff, there is the local administration of the State of Jammu & Kashmir which is sympathetic to the local people and is not regarded as trustworthy by those who are supposed to carry on the civil administration. The consequence is that there is hardly any civil administration in the valley and even the usual taxes are not collected from the people. It is the military and para-military forces who rule over the people. It is not surprising under the circumstances that their rule is ruthless and highly unpopular.

There can be no dispute that the Government of India ought to have a well defined policy to meet the Kashmir situation. There are, however, two distinct and mutually contradictory approaches which can be adopted for the solution of the Kashmir problem. The two approaches imply two different policy decisions. The Government of India has to choose one of them.

One of these approaches can be described as that of aggressive nationalism. It insists that Kashmir is definitely a part of India and it will always remain so irrespective of the wishes of the Kashmir people. This approach calls for even harsher measures to be taken against the militants and their supporters than those that were taken in the last four years. Those who adopt this approach have attachment to the land of Kashmir and not the people of Kashmir. According to them, the people of Kashmir may leave that area and go abroad, but Kashmir must always remain part of India. This approach places the "nation" above the people, as if the nation is an entity different from the people. Those who adopt this approach tend to exaggerate the mischief which is being played by Pakistan in the Kashmir valley. They also ask for the deletion of Article 370 of the Constitution so that Jammu & Kashmir will not have any special status as compared to the other Indian States, although deletion of Article 370 would amount to a clear breach of the condition on which the Maharaja of Kashmir acceded to India on 26th October, 1947. This position is taken not only by the BJP and its supporters, but also by many persons outside their fold.

The consequences of this policy, if it is consciously adopted and pursued, are obvious. India will then impose a new kind of imperial rule over Kashmir, different from the types of imperialism which prevailed in various parts of the world including India before the Second World War. This kind of imperial rule will not be actuated by a motive of economic gain which was the characteristic feature of British and other imperialisms in the pre-war period. It would be a type of imperial rule which Nazy Germany might have imposed in conquered countries if it had succeeded in the World War. The present world situation is, however, vastly different from what it was in the pre-war imperialist era. India's imperial rule over Kashmir will be resented not only by the people of Kashmir, not only by Muslims in other countries but by the whole democratic world. It deserves to be recalled in this connection that, till now, India has financially gained nothing whatever from the accession of Jammu & Kashmir. On the contrary, India's resources are being continuously drained away as a result of our occupation of Kashmir. It has been roughly estimated that apart from the vast amounts which we have spent on Kashmir and its defence in the past, we are at present spending at least Rs. 5 crore per

day for the continuation of our rule in Kashmir. Moreover, Kashmir has been the cause of continuous animosity between India and Pakistan and of the disproportionate military expenditure which both the countries have to incur, to the detriment of their economic progress. Our forcible occupation of Kashmir will not only be a continuous drain on India's economic resources but it will further embitter our relations with Pakistan and the Muslim countries and will earn for us the disdain and contempt of the civilised world. One cannot escape the conclusion that the approach which I have described as that of aggressive nationalism will be disastrous to India.

This is not to say that we should not want Kashmir to be a part of India, on account of the economic or political reasons mentioned above. We would be justified in wanting Kashmir to be a part of India if, but only if, we genuinely regard the Kashmir people as a part of our Indian fraternity. This is the alternate approach which I would describe as the humanist approach. It can also be described as the democratic approach, because humanism is the cultural basis of democracy. The humanist principle of recognition of the dignity of individual as an individual, and not as a person belonging to any collectivity such as a particular nation or a religious community, is the basis of the democratic way of life. If we adopt this approach and if by doing so we regain the confidence of the Kashmiri people which we have now lost. Kashmir will cease to be a source of economic drain to India, our relations with Pakistan may become normal, and in any case our image in the democratic world will be greatly upgraded. Such an outcome will, however, be possible only if we succeed in regaining the faith and confidence of the Kashmir people and this will require the reversal of the entire policy which we in India have followed almost consistently for the last 40 years since the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953.

It is relevant to remember in this connection that Jammu & Kashmir was the only State which had decisive Muslim majority and which nevertheless acceded to India in 1947. The accession was the result of exceptional circumstances. The people of Jammu & Kashmir, and particularly the people of the Kashmir valley, had a strong sense of their independent nationality. Kashmir had a history of its own, it had its own language, and even the traditions of both Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir were different from the traditions Muslims and Hindus in India. When Muslim raiders entered the Kashmir valley soon after the accession, it was expected by those who organised the raids that the local Muslim population will support their entry. The Kashmiris however, resented the entry of the raiders, although they were Muslims. That made it easy for the Indian army to halt the progress of the raiders, although the latter were supported by the Pakistan army. That instance provides ample evidence of the sense of national consciousness which the people of the Kashmir valley possessed.

It was this sense of Kashmiri national independence which led the Maharaja of Kashmir and Sheikh Abdullah to emphasise, when Jammu & Kashmir acceded to India for securing India to support for repelling the raiders that the powers of the Indian Parliament and the Indian Government over Jammu & Kashmir shall be limited to the three subjects of defence, foreign affairs and communications. This limitation was subsequently incorporated in Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. The then leaders of India also felt it necessary, in view of the fact that the majority of the people of Jammu & Kashmir were Muslims, to emphasise that the State's accession to India was to be subject to with the wishes of the local people. India had opposed the accession of the States of Hyderabad and Junagarh to Pakistan although the Muslim rulers of those States wanted to do so, and India's opposition was based on the ground that the accession was against the wishes of the people of those States. Therefore, while accepting the accession of Jammu & Kashmir, it was necessary for India to proclaim that the accession was subject to ratification by the majority of the people of that State. Such a declaration was made by Lord Mountbatten himself on the very day when the accession of Jammu & Kashmir was accepted, and was later reiterated several times by Jawaharlal Nehru. Subsequent history has, however, established that India did not fulfil either of the two conditions on which the accession had taken place – ratification of the accession by the people of

Jammu & Kashmir and the agreed limits on the legislative and executive powers of India over the State of Jammu & Kashmir.

In regard to the ratification of the accession by the people of the State, Jawaharlal Nehru and presumably other Indian leaders were quite agreeable to have a plebiscite on the issue of the entire population of Jammu & Kashmir. This was because Sheikh Abdullah who was undoubtedly the leader of the people, particularly of those in the valley, was totally in favour of the accession to India. At that time, Pakistan was reluctant to have a plebiscite unless it was held in conditions in which Sheikh Abdullah would not be able to exercise his influence on the proposed voting. However, Sheikh Abdullah changed attitude in 1950 when he began to suggest that there was a third alternative to the State of Jammu & Kashmir which consisted on independence from both India and Pakistan. It was because of his change of opinion that Sheikh Abdullah, while he was the designated "Prime Minister" of Jammu & Kashmir, was dismissed and arrested and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad became the Prime Minister. After this event, in view of the absence of the Sheikh Abdullah factor, India was clearly most reluctant to have any plebiscite on the issue of the accession while Pakistan became insistent in having it. Because of India's unwillingness and the various difficulties which were raised by it after 1953, a plebiscite on the accession issue never took place. It is claimed by the majority of Indian nationalists that the consent of the people of Jammu & Kashmir to the accession was implicit in the resolution passed by Jammu & Kashmir's Constituent Assembly in favour of accession in February 1954 (after Sheikh Abdullah's dismissal and arrest), as well as in the subsequent elections which took place in the State and which led to the elections of legislative assemblies and Chief Ministers in Jammu & Kashmir who were favourable to the State's accession to India.

Little value, however, can be attached to the resolution in favour of accession passed by the Jammu & Kashmir Constituent Assembly in February 1954. The Constituent Assembly was not elected on the issue of accession at all. Moreover, it is little known in India that not more than 5% of the voters cast their votes in the election of the Jammu & Kashmir Constituent Assembly. Sheikh Abdullah, although a popular leader, was in reality an autocrat. He saw to it that hardly any person other than a member of his National Conference contested the election to the Constituent Assembly, either by prevailing upon other contestants to withdraw their candidature or by ensuring that their candidature was arbitrarily rejected.

As to the subsequent elections in Jammu & Kashmir, it cannot be disputed that all these elections (except the one in 1977 when Morarji Desai was India's Prime Minister) were manipulated by the Central Government so as to ensure the election of candidates who were favourable to the accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad himself and the subsequent Chief Ministers of Jammu & Kashmir were in reality the nominees of the Indian Government and they were so regarded by the people of that State. It does appear that the Indian Government never trusted the people of Jammu & Kashmir, if left to themselves, to elect a legislature which would be favourable to the State's accession to India. The complaint of the Kashmiris that the promise of plebiscite was breached by India is, therefore, quite substantial.

It must also be admitted that there was a breach by India of the limitations which were imposed in the instrument of accession in regard to the subjects on which the Indian Government and the Indian Parliament were to have the right to deal with the affairs of Jammu & Kashmir. Article 370 of the Constitution provides that the President of India (which means the Indian Government) shall have the right to declare, in consultation with the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, the matters which are covered by the three subjects of defence, foreign affairs and communications. After Sheikh Abdullah was dismissed and arrested, the President of India in consultation with eh then Government of Jammu & Kashmir issued in 1954 an Order consisting of a list of the matters covered by these three subjects. The list was augmented by subsequent amendments. The result was to erode to a large extent the substance of Article 370 and the conditions agreed to at the time of accession, by including

in the 1954 Order a number of matters not strictly covered by the three agreed subjects. The limit of such erosion of Article 370 was reached when Articles 356 and 357 were included in the 1954 Order so that the executive as well as the legislative powers in respect of Jammu & Kashmir could be taken under the control of the Central Government and the Indian Parliament. That is why the present leaders of Kashmir maintain with a great deal of justification, that a breach of trust was committed by India in respect of both the conditions of the accession, namely, holding of a plebiscite and the limits imposed on India's right to deal with Jammu & Kashmir.

The last straw on the camel's back was the coalition government in Jammu & Kashmir which Farook Abdullah was persuaded to form in Jammu & Kashmir consisting of representatives of his National Conference and those of the Congress (I) party. The coalition became highly unpopular because it was a standing demonstration of the rule of India (through the Congress (I) party) over Kashmir, contrary to the spirit of the instrument of accession. It was during this coalition government that insurgency in Kashmir commenced in the middle of 1989.

There is a tendency on the part of many of the nationalists in India to attribute the entire insurgency in Jammu & Kashmir to the machinations of Pakistan. The fact is that Pakistan has been wanting right from 1947 to see that Jammu & Kashmir secedes from India and accedes to Pakistan. But Pakistan could not succeed in its designs till the bulk of the people of Kashmir were wholly disillusioned about the propriety of their accession to India. The people of Kashmir did not support Pakistan either in the first war of 1949, nor in the second war of 1965. Pakistan was never in a position to generate on its own steam the dissatisfaction against Indian accession among the people of Kashmir. Pakistan could take advantage of the dissatisfaction which had arisen by 1989 as a result of India's continued distrust of the people of Kashmir and its failure to fulfil the conditions of the agreement of accession. While Pakistan has not been the cause of the generation of disaffection against India in Jammu & Kashmir, it has certainly fomented it and has assisted the militants by training them and supplying them with arms and other means of terrorism.

The position has been greatly worsened as a result of the policy of wholesale suppression of the people which has been followed in actual practice by the para-military and military Indian forces in Kashmir since January 1990. A reference has already been made to the fact that the excesses committed by the security forces of India as a response to the misdeeds of the militants were not only quite inordinately disproportionate but were also directed against people who were non-militant. In the course of the last four years, a very large number of innocent people have been killed or tortured, some of their women raped and many of their houses burnt to ashes. That is the main reason why the alienation of the Kashmir people against India is now complete.

If we are to follow a humanist – democratic policy in Kashmir and to succeed in winning back the confidence and trust of the Kashmir people we have to reverse the entire policy which has been followed by us in Jammu & Kashmir since the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah since 1953. In the first place, we must change our attitude to the people of Kashmir. We must realise that if we want Kashmir to be a part of India, it can only be on the basis that the people of Kashmir are regarded by us as our own people as our brothers and sisters. It is only with this changed attitude that we can possibly win back their trust and friendship. We must also see that militancy in Kashmir is treated by us in a humane way. The Indian security forces, while it is their duty to do all things necessary to end the militancy in the valley, must always keep themselves within the bounds of law while doing so. Moreover, a distinction must be made between militants and non-militants. The later must not be tortured, fired upon or otherwise harassed, out of mere suspicion or out of a sense of revenge. Offences against the non-militants must be stopped and the offending personnel of the security forces must be tried, adequately punished and the punishments publicised. More powers should gradually be given to the local police force of Jammu & Kashmir so that the military and para-military forces may eventually be confined to their barracks within the State itself. They should be available only when their

assistance is found necessary by the civil authorities. It should be ensured that the civil government is under a Governor and staff who appreciate that Kashmir is a part of India in the sense that the Kashmiri people are our people and have to be treated as such. While these steps are being taken, a meaningful dialogue between representatives of the Indian Government and those of the people of Kashmir can be started.

Such a dialogue is necessary for the solution of the Kashmir problem. For this purpose the leaders of the recent All Hurriat Conference may be taken as the nucleus of the Kashmir representatives. The dialogue should be unconditional on both sides. The Government of India should not insist either that the dialogue would be within the parameters of the Indian Constitution or that the militancy must first be ended before the dialogue can commence.

In the dialogue, the position on behalf of India should be based on a fresh commitment that the powers of the Indian Government and the Indian Parliament in respect of Jammu & Kashmir will be strictly confined to the three subjects of defence, foreign affairs and communications. The provisions by which Article370 has been eroded in the past will be deleted from the Presidential Order of 1954. All future elections will be free and fair. We can then impress upon the representatives of the Kashmir people that they will thus get the right to have their own government with full internal autonomy and with all the civil liberties and human rights which are available to the people of a free country. They will have all that constitutes freedom and democracy, except the right of seceding from India.

If we can succeed in having such an understanding with the leaders of the Kashmir people we can approach Pakistan with the proposal that the present line of control which div ides the State of Jammu & Kashmir into areas occupied by India and Pakistan should, with minor adjustments, be declared to be the international border between our two countries. Such a settlement will be possible only if we are able to reach an agreement with the leaders of the Kashmir valley on the lines mentioned above.

In the eventuality of the leaders of the Kashmir valley being entirely opposed to the above proposal of full autonomy within the Indian Constitution, and if they insist on an early plebiscite on the issue of accession, it will be necessary to take decisions on two rather difficult questions. One question would be whether the plebiscite should comprise the people of all the area which were included in the State of Jammu & Kashmir or whether the plebiscite should be confined to the people of the Kashmir valley. Opinion of the people of the Jammu, Ladakh, Baltistan, Gilgit and the Poonch district would have to be ascertained. Although the people from these areas may want a larger degree of autonomy than they have at present, it does not appear that they have any desire to secede from the country in which they are now included. It does not appear that Jammu or Ladakh wants to secede from India, or that Baltistan, Gilgit and the northern part of the Poonch district want to secede from Pakistan. If this assessment is found to be correct, the plebiscite (if it takes place) would be confined to the Kashmir valley including that part or the valley which is in the possession of Pakistan extending up to Muzaffarabad and also the Southern part of the Poonch district.

Secondly, the people who will be entitled to exercise the right of plebiscite must have three choices – to join India, to join Pakistan or to be independent of both. There must be a prior agreement with Pakistan (prior to the plebiscite) that in case the people who exercise the choice decide in favour of independence from both the countries, then the territorial integrity of the new independent Kashmir will be jointly guaranteed by India, Pakistan and the United Nations. The new Kashmir can remain an independent State only if such a guarantee is given by all the three parties – India, Pakistan and the United Nations.

Dated: 21.11.1993.
New Delhi.
Published in **The Radical Humanist**, January 1994.

The Practice of Fascism

M. N. Roy

(***M.N. Roy wrote a book on the philosophy and practice of Fascism during his jail period. Prof. Sib Narayan Ray has included an abridged version of the book in the*** **Selected Works of M.N. Roy, Vol. IV, OUP.** ***This version is reproduced below. This piece is especially important today in view of fascism raising its ugly head in our country for which all political parties including the Congress are responsible. The article seems to describe not only the events of Nazi Germany, but also of India under the rule of Narendra Modi led BJP government. After all, the character and practice of Fascism remains the same whether it was Nazi Germany some 85 years ago or India of 2018.*** - Ed. RH)

In August 1934, a Manifesto was issued to the world over the signatures of a large number of scientists, writers, and leaders in other branches of intellectual activity, calling for an international congress to combat the cultural menace of Fascism. The following are extracts from that historical document.

We know that in the Fascist countries many highly respected scholar shave been driven from the scene of their activities, or have voluntarily quit their home, because they refused to sacrifice their learning to the violent demands of the totalitarian State. Specially the events in Germany have evoked our most profound concern for the perpetuation of the freedom of science. In that country, the exact sciences have been openly degraded to jobbing for war industries. Only such investigations are favoured, as are likely to bring about economic and technical predominance over the world. All branches of physics which cannot be made to serve political and economic imperialism are therefore hampered and restricted. Studies which have contributed essentially to the broadening of our concepts of the physical universe are thrust aside openly as vain and fruitless intellectualism. Verified scientific knowledge concerning heredity and race is cast aside. In its place, appear new doctrines, unverified by honest research, for the annihilation of hundreds of thousands of human existences. In accordance with the National Socialist belief that it is senseless to help the weak at the expense of the biologically strong social hygiene in shorn of all justification. Colleges are forced to establish 'chairs of natural healing'. The gates are opened to superstition and deceit. Regardless of historical truth, pre-historical and ancient times are so presented as to support the thesis of superiority of the nation concerned and the inferiority of all others. Very often, purposeful mysticism is substituted for an awkward historical truth. The suppression of free research and the violation of truth are most clearly revealed in the new jurisprudence which is designed to give a theoretical basis for the cruel and arbitrary practices founded on legal conceptions of the Middle Ages. Teaching and studying are enslaved along with pure science. Colleges suffer from intellectual terror. Through the misuse and contempt for free research, there is an imminent danger that the whole structure of scientific knowledge will be destroyed, and from the fragments a new series of pseudo-science will be erected, which will be harmful for the progress of mankind.

Within two months after Hitler's accession to power, more than two hundred eminent men of learning were driven from their high academic positions. The vandalism was committed on the pretext that those men were Jews. Many of them were Jews, but their real crime was that they were freethinkers, some were Socialist, most of them Liberals, and others guilty 'merely of the impartiality and integrity of mind which in Nazi eyes are the greatest of all crimes'. (The Manchester Guardian, mid May 1933). Those illustrious victims of Fascist barbarism counted among themselves such men of world-historical importance as Albert Einstein, Professor Bernhard Zondek, famous gynaecologist of Berlin, the greatest

leading chemists, Richard Willstaetter and Fritz Haber, the famous Professor of Psychology in the University of Heidelberg. Otto Meyerhof, the economist of international fame Moritz Bonn, and a whole host of others of equal eminence in different branches of science. Einstein was declared as the 'enemy No. 1 of awakened Germany'. This fact alone is the most damaging testimony for condemning Fascism at the bar of humanity as the mad enemy of civilization and culture. The testimony becomes simply overwhelming when it is known that all the leading light of the scientific, literary, and artistic life of contemporary Germany have been driven out of the Nazi Third Reich.

The Nazis were not content with depriving the seats of learning in Germany of the brilliant lights who had made them infamous. They wanted to inflict their vandalism upon the rest of the world. Upon his leaving Germany Einstein was invited by the College de France to honour it by accepting a chair. Thereupon the Nazi press clamorously demanded that in future the dismissed academicians should not be allowed to leave Germany, lest the 'enemies of Germany insulted her by honouring them'.

The burning of the Library of Alexandria remains recorded as one of the most revolting events of history. The Fascists, at last, have outshone even that act of incendiarism. They made a bonfire of over twenty thousand books, written by great authors in all branches of human knowledge. The Library of Alexandria was burned in the age of barbarism, which followed the collapse of antique civilization. But the deliberate destruction of a vast collection of works of science and literature by the Nazis took place in the twentieth century, in the heart of one of the centres of modern civilization. It was not a random act committed by fanatics in the heat of passion. It was a deliberate attempt to destroy the accumulated result of scientific research, cultural progress, and artistic achievements which did not fit in with the savage cult of Fascism. A long list was made of all such 'objectionable' works, and they were collected by force throughout the country and thrown to the flames in a number of places.

The world was horrified by that organized destruction of scientific and literary treasures. 'All the standards that civilization has created are being uprooted [The Nation, New York, 5 July 1933.]' Commenting on that incredible act of vandalism, a famous German publicist, domiciled in America, wrote:

'The burning of the works of Thomas Mann, for example, damns them (Nazis) more deeply than anything else, since it marks their repudiation of their own highest embodiment of human civilisation and a frank plunge into degenerate savagery. It is to be noted that an attack of unrivalled strength and ferocity is being launched against the life of the mind, against all intellectual values, against all disinterestedness of thought, of research, of aspiration, against the slowly won rights of human spirit, against every principle and every truth and every freedom that men have lived for and often died for, since the Renaissance, against all that had constituted for so long the very character of humanity itself. [Ludwig Lewison in *The Nation*, New York, 21 June 1933.]

The Nazis are proud of their contempt for 'intellectualism'. Indeed, glorification of ignorance is a part of their cult. "The young Nazis today make a virtue of being ignorant and despising the learning and attainments which generations of German culture slowly achieved (Hamilton Fish Armstrong in the Foreign Affairs, July 1933). This is not anti-Nazi propaganda. The Nazi Minister of Education, Rust, declared that 'National Socialism is not unscientific, but only hostile to theories'. One could only smile to hear of science without theory, and wonder what that could be. The Minister, however, does not leave the world in doubt. In their cultural conviction, the Fascists are nothing if they are not brutally frank. The Minister gave a definition of science without theory, when he announced that 'philosophy and science must be reorientated in the spirit of the Storm-troopers'. A description of that spirit will be best given in official Nazi jargon:

So stand the Storm Batallions
Ready for racial fight;
Only when Jews lie bleeding
Can we be really free. (National Anthem)

They must try to make the world understand why Germany on 30 January 1933 has struck out the word pacifism from its vocabulary (Von Papen, as Vice-Chancellor in Hitler's first Government)'. On that day Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany.

'For the living, it is a holy duty to fulfil the mission for which Germans gave their lives in the war. They must be ready to redeem with blood a pledge written in blood (Goering).' The man who best represents the spirit of the storm troopers laid down the function of the women in a community inculcated with that spirit. 'The women's place is in the home; her duty, the recreation of the tired warrior.' And the Nazi young womanhood, inspired with the spirit of the storm troopers, responded. 'There is no higher or finer privilege for a woman than that of sending her children to war (Declaration of the Women's Order of the Red Swastika)'. Finally there is the oracle, the Minister of National Enlightenment and Propaganda, Goebbels: "The woman's task is to be beautiful and to bring children into the world. The female bird decorates herself for the male and hatches the eggs for him. In return the male looks after the food or else he stands on guard and scares the enemy away." The new spirit of 'awakened Germany' knows no difference between man and lower animals. The same instinct that guides the latter holds good also for the former. That is Nazi reorientation of philosophy and science.

The fanatical race hatred of the Fascists, besides being one more token of mediaeval barbarism, is a convenient camouflage. Their diatribes against the legendary Jewish international finance serve as a smokescreen to hide their subservience to the real financial and industrial power. It was not in the economic, but in the scientific and cultural fields, that the Jews occupied prominent positions. In the former, they were no more powerful than traders, often being the smaller fry. The great industrial combines and potential banking concerns which, controlling the economic, life of Germany, also dictate her political destiny, are owned and directed by Christians. Jewish intellectuals (some of them standing in the forefront of the world of science and art), Socialists and traders (mostly petty shopkeepers), are sacrificed on the altar of artificially fomented race hatred as the bait to catch the guileless petty bourgeois victims of Capitalism to become the abject instrument for furthering its rapacious designs. The ferocious anti-Semitism of the Nazis has been explained as follows by an authority of modern history:

In the nineteenth century, social prejudice and practice virtually excluded Jews from higher officers in the army and the civil service. This is one reason why Jews devoted themselves so largely to the practice of law and medicine, to literature and similar professions, thereby arousing the jealousy and envy of the National Socialists who covet these positions for themselves. (Sidney Fay, Professor of History, Harvard University, 'Nazi Treatment of the Jews', in Current History, New York. June 1933).

With still another fiction, the Nazis justify their anti-Semitism. Socialism and Communism are condemned as the product of the conspiracy of international Jewry. Marxism is characterized as the manifestation of Jewish greed, harmful for the interest of the German people and incompatible with the cultural genius of the Teutonic race. With this argument, anti-Semitism is made a part of the crusade against the revolutionary working class movement. But the fact is that the German working class almost completely belonged to the 'Teutonic' race – more completely than any other section of the German people. There were Jews among the intellectual leaders of the movement. But the rank and file is purely Christian.

Even today, more than fifty thousand men and women are held in prison or detention camps in Nazi Germany. Most probably not more than one percent of these victims of Fascist terror belong to the outlawed Jewish race. But ninety percent of them belong to the working class. The motive behind the mad race hatred is neither 'sanctific' nor political, but purely economic. Every Jew ousted from his position either as a professor, or a professional, or a trader made room for a Nazi aspirant who could not be successful by his own merit. The result of anti-Semitism has indeed been beneficial for some Aryan traders. But for the academic and cultural life of Germany it has been a marked

degeneration. The chairs in the famous German seats of learning, vacated by academicians of international fame, have been filled by mediocrities. The repulsive cult of hatred, which has thus ruined the intellectual life of Germany, is given a pseudo-scientific foundation by prostituting the science of anthropology. The foundation of the doctrine of the purity and quality of blood, which has been raised to the dignity of 'science' in the spirit of the storm trooper, was laid by the frustrated sign-painter who has made a hell out of Germany.

The black haired Jewish youth lies for hours in ambush, a satanic joy in his face, for the unsuspecting girl whom he pollutes with his blood and steals from her own race. By every means, he seeks to wreck the racial bases of the nation he intends to subdue. Just as individually he deliberately befouls women and girls, so he never shrinks from breaking the barriers race has erected against foreign elements. It was, and is, the Jew who brought Negroes to the Rhine, brought them with the same aim and with deliberate intent to destroy the white race he hat4es, by persistent bastardization, to hurl it from the cultural and political heights it has attained, and to ascent to them as its masters. He deliberately seeks to lower the race level by steady corruption of the individual ... [Hitler, Mein Kampf].

The outward strength having been acquired through monstrous rearming by ruining the German masses economically, the Nazis are on the war path for shouldering their share of the 'white man's burden'. The other day, Hitler announced that 'it is absolutely essential for Germany to make herself strong so that she can successfully demand the return other colonies'. And Goering, with his characteristic brutal frankness, told the world how the ambition will be realized: 'We must continue our demand for colonies and must make the demand louder and louder until the world is unable to resist it. The main truth is that Germany has now a new and strong army, and she has got rid of her inferiority complex...' Supermen are in power in Germany. They are convinced of their racial superiority, and they are determined to regain the place in the sun. That is the practical expression of the mystic cult of race and blood.

From its very birth, Fascism, as an international phenomenon, was avowedly imperialist. Already in 1919, Mussolini wrote: Imperialism is the eternal and immutable law of life. Now he is all ready with his plan of imperialist expansion. Shortly before the invasion of Abyssinia, he announced the plan.

Italy has no future in the West and the North. Her future lies to the East and to South – in Asia and Africa. The vast resources of Asia must be valorised, and Africa must be brought within the orbit of civilization. We demand that nations, which have already arrived in Africa, do no block at every Italian expansion.

The Fascists do not make a secret about the way to their expansionist ambition. Their cry is: 'A war for space and employment.' Colonies must be conquered in war which, incidentally, will solve the problem of unemployment at home by consuming the masses of unemployables as cannon-fodder. In this period of decay, Capitalism cannot give employment to an increasing section of the working class. No relief can be given to the permanently unemployed, because of the falling rate of profit. Therefore, the solution of the problem of unemployment, born of the decay of Capitalism, is to be found in the abolition of the decayed system in favour of an economy free of internal contradictions. But the historical role of Fascism is to defend the outworn system, which has become antagonistic to the general welfare of the community. Therefore, Fascism seeks the solution of the problem of unemployment in war. It has been correctly said that Fascism means war. This characterization in borne out by the following famous declarations:

Fascism issued from the war, and in war it must find its outlet. Our country cannot advance except through a great war. [Mario Carli.]

Three cheers for die war! May I be permitted to raise this cry. Three cheers for Italy's war, noble and beautiful above all! Three cheers also for war in general! [Popolo d'Italia].

This is an extract from an article by Mussolini written in the very beginning of the Fascist

movement. Two years later, still not yet in power, he wrote in the same paper, the central organ of his party: 'Peace is absurd, or rather, it is a pause in war.' In 1926, speaking in the Chamber of Deputies, he declared 'the Italian nation to be in a permanent state of war'. The next year, he graphically described the ideal of Fascism:

We must be ready at a moment's notice to mobilize five million men and be able to arm them; we must strengthen our navy and also our aviation, in which I believe more and more, and which must be so numerous and so powerful that the roar of its motors will drown every other noise on die peninsula, and the surface of its wings hide the sun from our land.

To fulfil these conditions for the realization of Fascist ambition, the Italian masses have been economically ruined. The echo of their suffering and the voice of their protest have been ruthlessly suppressed so that nothing but the beating of war-drums can be heard on the peninsula of Italy.

Before the Abyssinian war, the Italian government had incurred an indebtedness amounting to the incredible figure of hundred and fifty thousand million liras. It is estimated to have increased at least by fifty per cent since then. Owing to the inability of the financially bankrupt State to make the payments necessary for balancing international trade, imports have been progressively restricted. And in the limited quote of import, preference was given to articles necessary for the preparation of war. The result has been continuous rise of the prices of foodstuff and other articles for consumption. On the other hand, salaries and wages have been continuously falling. With rising prices, falling wages, and decreasing purchasing power of the lira, the standard of living of the entire people, except a thin upper stratum, is being forced further and further down.

In Germany, the Fascists not only follow the footsteps of their fore-runners in Italy, but improve upon them. While preparing for the war of conquest of the 'weak and the backward' races, they have committed unspeakable cruelties for exterminating the enemy at home. Not only the working class, but all progressive elements – Liberals, Pacifists, Humanitarians, true Christians – are included under the category of the enemy to be exterminated in order to make National Socialism triumphant. The numerous prisons and detention camps, where many thousands of these enemies are held, are the scene of mediaeval torture perpetrated to extract confessions from the helpless victims and to make them declare allegiance to the Nazi regime. This method of exterminating internal enemies was defended by the Nazis in the International Penological Congress held in Berlin in autumn 1935. The German Delegation, headed by Goebbels, advocated the doctrine of 'severity in prison' as against the 'treatment of humanity and education' urged by the delegates from other countries.dd Goebbels brazenly maintained that the torture of prisoners was 'necessary and useful'. The shameless pronouncement of the Nazis so horrified the foreign delegates that a famous French jurist exclaimed: 'The idea of revenge must disappear from every utterance of justice. Otherwise, we return to barbarism.' Consequently, a large number of foreign delegates left the Congress, having declared that the gulf between the concepts of penology prevailing in their country and those in Germany was so vast that there could be no basis for even a discussion of the principles propounded by the German delegation which included the Nazi Minister of Justice.

I have been in a German labour camp: I have been in a German prin. I have seen terrible things. Keep out of that hell. Germany is hell, because one loses hope there. I am a Christian. I cannot talk to those people. But I can talk to the Communists, because, for one thing, they have sense, and, for another, they care about the welfare of humanity.

This declaration was made by a Catholic priest in a working class meeting in the Saar Valley on the eve of the plebiscite, the result of which was hailed as another popular support for the Nazis. It depicts the true state of affairs brought about by the practice of Fascism. The experience of that practice compelled a Catholic priest, no friend of Bolshevism, to recognize the defender of the welfare of humanity precisely in that movement to destroy which is the declared mission of Fascism. That evidence alone should be enough to condemn it as a scourge.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, January 2004.

The Myth of Unity of all Religions

Dr. Ramendra

Attempts have been made by several religious thinkers to synthesize various religions in order to remove the conflict among them. It has been maintained by some that (i) all religions are basically the same, and there is a "rock bottom unity" among all religions;1 (ii) that all religions are ture,2 and (iii) that different religions are paths leading to the same goal,3 and so on. This view, though well intentioned, is a myth. I propose to call it "the myth of unity of all religions" and the purpose of my essay is to explode this myth.

All the three statements mentioned above are factual statements. Therefore, it is possible to refute them by showing that they do not correspond with the reality, or, in other words, by pointing out facts that contradict them.

Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism are the main living religions of the world. The myth of unity of all religions can easily be exploded by showing that these religions make conflicting truth-claims, which are incompatible with one another.4 For instance, they have different views regarding the nature of this world or about the nature of "life" after death, or about the ultimate destiny of human beings. They also advocate different moral codes, different methods of worship and different rituals. Since they are not similar, it is not possible for all of them to be true at the same time. It is also not possible to regard them as different paths leading to the same goal, because they do not believe in a common goal.

If we analyse the contents of various religions, as expressed in their religious scriptures, we find that they mainly consist of (i) factual statements about the nature of reality, or the descriptive part, and (ii) normative statements or the prescriptive part. On further analysis, we find that the prescriptive part of these religions consists of, firstly, general views regarding what is right or wrong and how one ought to behave in different situations in his or her life; and secondly, prescriptions regarding the mode of worship and other associated rituals. In other words, apart from other things, different religions consist of (i) a world-view (ii) a moral code and (iii) methods of worship and other related rituals.

The differences between the mode of worship and other related rituals of various religions are so glaring, that even those who try to synthesize various religions do not claim that all religions have similar methods of worship and similar rituals. They concentrate on what we may regard as the philosophical part of religion for demonstrating the supposed basic unity of all religions. Therefore, for exploding the myth of unity of all religions, I, too, will concentrate on the philosophical part of religion. Our aim is to show that different religions do not have identical views either on the nature of the universe or on the moral code to be followed. Besides, on many important issues they have diametrically opposed views that have been a source of perpetual conflict among them, both violent and non-violent.

God

Let us begin with the idea of God. It is widely believed that the concept of God is central to all religions. Many thinkers have treated God as the most central religious conce3pt. So much so, that they have gone to the extent of defining "religion" in terms of "God". For example, according to James Martineau, "Religion is the belief in an eve r living God,, that is, in a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding moral relations with mankind.5

Martineau's definition of religion appears plausible in the context of prophetic religions like Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All these religions are, broadly speaking, monotheistic – they believe in the existence of one God.6 However, if we take into account the

religions of Indian origin, namely, Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, we find that the definition is too narrow, as it results in the exclusion of Jainism and Buddhism from the list of religions.7 Even Hinduism does not fit in neatly into the monotheistic model of religion. In fact, among religions of Indian origin, Sikhism comes nearest to the monotheistic model.8 In the case of Hinduism, on the other hand, the situation is much more complex. In Hinduism anthropomorphism (nature-worship), polytheism, mo9notheism, monism and even atheism appear to be existing side by side.9 In any case, Hinduism is not a strictly monotheistic religion. Finally, Buddhism and Jainism are religions without God.10 Jain and Buddhist thinkers have given many arguments for refuting the existence of God.11 even the literature of Sankhya and Mimamsa, two orthodox schools of Hinduism, contains arguments against the existence of God.12 In Shankara's *advaita vedanta,* theistic God is regarded as ultimately unreal. *Nirguna brahma* alone is regarded as the only reality.13

Even religions, which believe in the existence of God, do not have *identical* conception of God.14 for example, in Zoroastrianism we find, along with the concept of *ahura mazda* (God), the concept of ahriman, who introduces evil in this world. However, it is maintained that, in the struggle between good and evil, *ahriman* and his associates will ultimately be defeated.15

Again, in Christianity we find the doctrine of trinity, according to which "the father, the son and the holy ghost" are three persons in one.16 In Sikhism God is regarded as both attributed (*saguna)* and non-attributed (*nirguna*).17 In Hinduism there are different conceptions of God existing side by side. Incidentally, the concept of *avatar* (incarnation of God) is found in Hinduism, but it is not to be found in prophetic religions except Christianity.18 For Judaism, Islam and Zoroastrianism the doctrine of incarnation is blasphemy.19 The prophetic religions, on the other hand, believe in a prophet as an intermediary between God and human beings, but the concept of "prophet" is absent in Hinduism and other religions of Indian origin.20 Gautama Buddha or Mahavira never claimed that they were prophets or messengers of God. Finally, Sikhism rejects both the concepts of "prophet" as well as *avatar* and lays great stress or emphasis on guru.21

Thus, it is more than obvious that, contrary to the popular opinion, all religions do not have identical views on the existence or the nature of God. According to some religions, "God exists", whereas according to some others, "God does not exist." It is impossible to reconcile these rival truth-claims. Both the3se statements cannot be true. It is logically impossible to reconcile them.

Life after death

Though all religions do not believe in the existence of God, all of them do believe in the existence of "life" after death. However, they have different views regarding the *nature* of life after death.

Here, again, the prophetic religions – Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam – have, broadly speaking, similar ideas. All of them believe in resurrection, the day of judgment and in heaven and hell. On the other hand, the religions of Indian origin, namely, Jainsism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, have more or less similar ideas. All of them believe in bondage – the cycle of birth and death – the liberation (*mukti, nirvana* or *moksha*). They also accept the related doctrine of *karmawad*. According to this doctrine, depending on his or her *karma,* the soul of the dead person is born in a new body – sometimes in the body of a lower animal such as dog or owl. This process continues till the person attains *mukti* or liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

However, in Hinduism, both the idea of bondage and liberation, as well as heaven and hell appear to be co-existing. There are references in the *Puranas* of a person named Chitragupta taking note of all the actions of human beings in a register in accordance with which they are rewarded or punished by being sent to heaven or hell. *Yama* is regarded as the god of death. His agents bring the souls of dead before God, who sends them to heaven or hell on the basis of the

account maintained by Chitragupta. Thus, according to the Hindu view, the cases of the dead persons are disposed of then and there on an individual basis, without waiting for the day of judgment. In any case, the idea of resurrection and the day of judgment are conspicuous by their absence in all religions of Indian origin, including Hinduism.

To be sure, the prophetic religions and the religions of Indian origin, which form two identical sets as far as the conception of life after death is concerned, vary among themselves regarding details. For example, all prophetic religions believe that on the day of judgment all dead persons will come alive with their bodies and taken in front of God, who will send them to heaven or hell, depending on deeds performed by them. But, according to Zoroastrianism, those sent to hell will not stay there permanently. It is suggested that there will be a period of great restoration and renovation in which even "wicked" people will be fully reformed and become perfectly righteous. *Ahriman* and his associates will be completely destroyed, and there will be a life of happiness and bliss for all in the kingdom of *ahura mazda.*

Similarly, though all the religions of Indian origin believe, broadly speaking, in the doctrine of bondage and liberation, they have different views regarding the *cause* of bondage, the *method* of liberation and the *exact nature* of the state of affairs after liberation. Buddhism, for example, rejects both soul and God, and therefore, it explains bondage and liberation without referring to these concepts. Jainism rejects God but accepts soul, therefore, its explanation of bodge is free from God, but is based on the concept of soul. According to Jainism, bondage is caused by the fusion of *karmic* matter with the pure soul. On liberation, soul regains its original pure state. Sikhism believes in both God and soul. Sikh writings support both the doctrine of absorption in the *nirguna brahma*. In Hinduism, according to Shankara's *advaita Vedanta, nirguna brahma* is the one and the only reality. *Atma* (soul) is same as the *brahma.* The realisation of its non-dual character by the soul leads to liberation (*mukti*). Ramanuja, on the other hand, maintains that God (*ishwar)* is personal and with attributes. Individual soul (*jiva*) is a *part* of God, and not identical with it. The liberated soul enjoys the life of perfection in *vaikuntha* (heaven). Ultimately, it becomes like God and enjoys fellowship with him. Atheistic Sankhya, which, too, is part of Hinduism, explains bondage and liberation, like Jainism, without resorting to the conception of God.

Even if we ignore the differences, which exist among the prophetic religions on the one hand, and the religions of the Indian origin on the other, the differences between these two sets of religion are too serious to be ignored. Either soul exists or it does not. Either human beings exist after death with their bodies or they exist without their bodies. Either dead persons are reborn or they are not. Either resurrection and the day of judgment are real or they are not. Either liberation from the "cycle of birth and death" takes place or it does not. Either *karmawad* is true or it is not. It is not possible for the two contradictory assertions to be true at the same time. This is the most elementary rule of logic. To sum up, all religions do not believe in the existence of God; and even though all of them believe in life after death, they have conflicting views on what happens after death.

Prophets and revealed books

The prophetic religions appear to have broadly a *similar form*. All of them believe in one God, prophet, revealed book, life after death, resurrection, the day of judgment, heaven and hell. But it will be totally wrong to infer a basic unity among them on this basis, because they have different views on (i) who is and who is not the prophet, (ii) which book is and which is not revealed, and (iii) who are sent to heaven and who are sent to hell on the supposed day of judgment**.**

The Zoroastrians regard Zarathustra or Zoroaster as the prophet, who was "called upon to preach the message of God for all mankind." They regard the *Gatha* or *Zendavesta* as the final

authority in religious matter. The Jews, on the other hand, consider Moses their greatest prophet and the *Old Testament* of the existing *Bible* or *Torah* as revealed. The Christians treat Jesus Christ as their highest prophet and as "son of God", and the *Bible* revealed, but, unlike Jews, they lay greater emphasis on the *New Testament*, which deals with the life, teaching, death and "resurrection" of Jesus.

The Jews believe in the coming of a messiah, who will bring salvation to all faithful Jews, and will establish a kingdom of universal peace, where lion and lamb will drink at the same fountain without any further fear. However, they refuse to accept Jesus as their messiah. According to them, the messiah is yet to come. The Jews believe in angels and prophets, but not in incarnation of God. For the Jews, Jesus was not even a prophet, because he indulged in blasphemy by claiming to be one with God. For Christians, on the other hand, Jesus was the incarnation of God and greater than any earlier prophet including Moses. Finally, Islam regards Mohammed as prophet and *Koran* as revealed. The cardinal belief of Islam is contained in *kalmia*, "there is no God, but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet (*rasul)*". This is considered so important that it is the first thing to be uttered in the ear of a new born male child! Islam accepts Jesus Christ as a prophet, but it does not accept that he was Son of God. Christians, on the other hand, do not regard Mohammed as a prophet. Thus, among **Semitic religions, Christianity accepts Moses as a prophet, but regards Jesus Christ as the highest prophet and as the son of God, whereas Judaism refuses to accept Jesus as Messiah, prophet or son of God. Similarly, Islam accepts Moses and Jesus as prophets, but treats Mohammed as the greatest prophet. Judaism and Christianity, on the other hand, refuse to accept Mohammed as prophet.**

According to Christianity, on the day of judgment those who have faith in Jesus and Christianity will go to heaven while the non-believers will burn eternally in hell-fire. According to Islam, those who have faith in Islam will go to heaven and others will go to hell. It seems that in almost every religion which believes in heaven and hell, a place in hell is reserved for persons who do not have faith in that particular religion!

It will be totally naive ad unrealistic to suggest that these differences among various religions are not *fundamental* for these beliefs form the very basis of these religions: belief in Mohammed and *Koran* are as fundamental to Islam as the belief in Jesus and *Bible* is to Christianity. In fact, these differences provide the justification for their existence as separate, identifiable religions, and have been a source of large scale violent conflict among these religions. It is also not possible to logically reconcile these conflicting fundamental beliefs. The statement "Jesus is messiah" is regarded as true by Christians and false by Jews. "Jesus is son of God" is regarded as true by Christians and false by Jews and Muslims. "Mohammed is messenger of Allah" is regarded as true by Muslims but false by Jews and Christians. Now, all these statements, and several others, such as "*Bible* revealed" and "*Koran* contains words of Allah" is either true of false. If the Christian claim regarding the prophet is true, then the Jew belief on Jesus is false and vice-versa. If the Islamic claim on Mohammed is true then the Christians and Jew rejection of the belief is false and vice-versa. It is not possible for all these claims to be true simultaneously.

Veda and Varna-vyavastha

All the religions of Indian origin believe in the doctrine of bondage and liberation. This, again, may create a misleading impression about their basic unity. However, as mentioned earlier, they have different views on God, soul, the cause of bondage, the method of liberation and the exact state of affairs after liberation. Besides, Hinduism believes in the infallibility of the *Vedas* and upholds the *varna-vyavastha.* These two beliefs that are fundamental to Hinduism are rejected by Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Guru Nanak was the founder and the first guru of Sikhism, which is a guru-centred religion. Guru Govind Singh, who founded the *Khalsa* (the

military brotherhood of Sikhs), was the tenth and last guru. Since him, the Sikhs regard *Adi Granth* or the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Akal Takhtas* as the highest religious authority. But this is not accepted by Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. The Buddhists attach highest importance to the teachings of Gautama Buddha as contained in *Tripitakas* and their religious books. Jainism, on the other hand, has its own separate religious literature, namely, *Angas.* Jainism is often described as a "religion of *tirthankars"*. The Jain religious literature mentions twenty-four *tirthankars,* Vardhamana Mahavira being the last one. Vardhamana Mahavira is the one who has been given highest importance by the Jains. Thus, all religions attach heist importance to their own religious literature, irrespective of whether they regard it as revealed or not. An attitude of faith towards their religious scriptures and founders is the fundamental "common" trait of all religions, but, ironically this cannot be a source of unity, but only of conflict.

Moral Codes

The potential synthesizer of religion may maintain that, though religions differ on factual issues like the existence of God, soul, nature of life after death, the prophet and the revealed book, etc., these tenets are not *central* to them. They may assert that morality is the "essence" of all religions, and, as far as morality is concerned, all the religions have more or less similar ideas.

Firstly, it is not correct to maintain that the ideas mentioned earlier in this essay are not fundamental to religion, because, as pointed out earlier, the very existence of these religions as separate, identifiable religions is rooted in them,. Secondly, the ethical ideas of various religions are also linked to these factual beliefs. The ethical ideas of prophetic religion are, for example, linked go0 God, prophet, revealed book, resurrection, day of judgment, heaven and hell. Heaven can be regarded as the highest ethical goal only by those who believe in the existence of heaven. Similarly, *moksha* can be regarded as the ultimate ideal only if one believes in the cycle of life and death. Again, a Muslim follows *shariat* because he regards it as divine. The Hindus, too, treat their *dharmashastras* as revealed. The Buddhists follow the teachings of the Buddha, because they regard him as the greatest ethical teacher.

Most importantly, it is also not true that all religions have similar ethical ideals. Let us, first of all, consider what is the highest end of life according to different religions. And secondly, what is the right method according to them for attaining this end.

Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism regard liberation (*moksha, nirvana* or *mukti*) from "bondage" or from "the cycle of birth and death" as the highest ethical end. The prophetic religions, on the other hand, do not believe in rebirth. As the idea of the cycle of birth and death is itself not regarded as real by them, the question of trying to attain "liberation" from it simply does not arise. For prophetic religions, going to heaven or "salvation" is the highest ethical end. Thus, contrary to popular belief, all religions do not share a "common goal".

The differences among various religions become even more glaring when we turn our attention to the *method* of attaining the ethical goal. Even religions, which, on face value, seem to be sharing a common goal are found to be advocating different moral codes. According to Judiasm, for example, salvation can be attained by obedience to the laws of Moses. According to Christianity, however, salvation can be attained by having faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. According to Islam, salvation can be attained by strict obedience to the commandments of Allah as expressed through his messenger, Mohammed.

Similarly, Jainism recommends *triratna* (three jewels) for attaining liberation, whereas Buddhism prescribes *astangika marga* (eight-fold path). In Hinduism, Shankara, and Ramanuja, prescribe different methods for attaining liberation. According to Shankara, knowledge of *brahma*

alone can give liberation. Ramanuja, on the other hand, emphasises *bhakti* (devotion). *Bhagavad Gita* talks of three different paths: *gyanmarga, karma marga* and *bhakti marga* (the paths of knowledge, action and devotion). Sikhism seems to have incorporated both Shankara and Ramanuja.

It is possible to give many examples of conflicting ethical ideas within religions. But I do not want to over-argue my case or to bother my readers with excessive details. Bu now it has become fairly obvious that the so-called unity of all religions is a myth. However, before concluding this essay, I want to mention some relatively important ethical instances that come to my mind. Let us, for example, consider the issue of violence and non-violence. On one hand, we have religions like Jainism and Buddhism, which emphasis nonp-0violence. And, on the other hand, we have religions like Islam and *Khalsa panth* of Sikhism, whose founders themselves were warriors. Jainism is opposed to violence to such an extent that the Jains gave up agriculture. They did not want to kill insects while ploughing! Now, no one in his senses will maintain or should maintain that the ethical stance of Jainism on the issue of violence is similar to that of Islam, Sikhism or even Hinduism.

Varna-vyavastha is another important example of divergent ethical attitudes among religions. Hinduism is the only religion that upholds *varna-vyavastha* – a system of graded inequality based on birth. No other religion accepts it. Buddhism, in particular, specifically rejects *varna-vyavastha*. It will be a travesty of facts to say that Hinduism and Buddhism have a similar attitude towards *varna-vyavastha.*

Worshipping God is yet another important issue on which religions have a conflicting approach. According to Jainism and Buddhism, one can attain liberation by one's own efforts without worshipping God. God is not mentioned at all in either Jain *triratna* or in Buddhist *astangika marga.* Obviously this view is not shared by theistic religions with their stress on "God's grace" for attaining liberation or salvation. The attitude on the issue of idol-worship, too, is sharply divided. Buddhists worship 8dols of the Buddha. The Jains worship the idols of Vardhamana and other *tirthankaras*. Idol-worship is a part of Hinduism as well. But Islam is very strongly opposed to idol-worship. It is easy to show that there is a wise diversity in methods of worship and other rituals of different religions. People, who regard all religions as basically same, admit these differences. But they regard these as merely "external forms" of religion. However, for people who sincerely believe in a particular religion, these so-called external forms are no less important.

Conclusion

Thus, on no fundamental question – God, nature of life after death, morality, etc. – *all* religions have *identical* beliefs. Some beliefs and some ethical ideas are, no doubt, shared by some religions to some extent, but even these religions have many other fundamental differences. In other words, no two religions share all their fundamental beliefs. F they did, they would not have remained two separate religions. Therefore, there is no rock-bottom unity among different religions. Instead, what we find is conflicting truth-claims and discord. The thesis that all religions are basically same can only be maintained by a person with inadequate knowledge of fundamental beliefs of different religions, or by a person who has a non-serious attitude towards religions, or by a person who is so carried away by his enthusiasm to reconcile various religions that he loses his objectivity and becomes selective in his use of religious data. Synthesizers of religion have often been motivated by a desire to prevent religious conflict and to promote communal harmony, which are indeed commendable aims. However, rationalism and humanism or rational humanism is what we really need for achieving fellowship among human beings, and not a confused and illogical approach towards religion.

Notes

1. D.M. Datta, *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1968), p. 53.
2. Ibid., p 49.
3. Basant Kumar Lal, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), pp. 43-45.
4. John H. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall Private Limited, 1978), p. 118.
5. *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (ed. Paul Edwards), Vol. 7, p. 140.
6. Y. Masih, *A Comparative Study of Religions* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990),
7. Ibid., p. 284.
8. Ibid., p. 261.
9. *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (ed. Paul Edwards), Vol. 4, pp. 1-3.
10. Dr. Ramendra, *Samaj aur Rajniti Darshan evam Dharam Darshan* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), pp. 135-138.
11. Ibid.
12. Dr. Ramendra, *Kya Ishwar Mar Chuka Hai*? (Patna: Bihar Buddhiwadi Samaj, Second Edition, 1995), pp. 49-50.
13. Dr. Y. Masih, *Nirishwarwad: Bharatiya evam Paschatya* (Patna: Bihar Hindi Granth Academy, 1973), pp. 63-65.
14. Y. Masih, *A Comparative Study of Religions,* p. 284.
15. Ibid., p. 17.
16. Ibid., p. 79.
17. Ibid., p. 255.
18. Ibid., p. 79.
19. Ibid., p. 43.
20. Ibid., p. 149.
21. Ibid., p. 255.

Dr. Ramendra is reader and head, Department of Philosophy, Patna College, Patna University.

Published in **The Radical Humanist,** January 2004**.**

The Role of The Bhagavad-Gita in Indian History

Premnath Bazaz

Pandit Premnath Bazaz was a freedom fighter in Kashmir. He was a leader of the movement which fought against the Maharaja's misrule. He was a colleague of Sheikh Abdullah. After the Maharaja acceded to India and Sheikh Abdullah became Chief Minister of Indian part of Jammu and Kashmir, he developed differences with him. He was imprisoned and released on condition that he should leave Kashmir. At that stage he joined M.N. Roy's group and the Radical Democratic Party. He came to Delhi sometime in the early fifties and made Delhi his home. Roy relied heavily on Bazaz Sahib on matters related to Kashmir. Bazaz Sahib was a scholar also. He wrote many books including one on the Gita. We publish below the introduction to this book. – Ed. RH.

In the enormous Indian literature, both sacred and profane, produced from pre-historic age to contemporary times, no other book has earned such a tremendous reputation as the poem of seven-hundred verses entitled the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Lord's Song). Not long after it appeared in its present form, in the early centuries of the Christian era, the philosophy of life contained in the dialogue between Shri Krishna and Arjuna fascinated the Hindu steeped in social malaise. The poem became the subject of special study by intellectuals and, in course of time, the most adored scripture of the Hindu community.

Whether or not a Hindu has had the opportunity to read the *Bhagavad-Gita,* or even to have seen a copy of the sacred poem, his ideas, conduct and behaviour are deeply influenced by its teachings because the prevalent Hindu culture is founded on them and the Hindu moral life draws sustenance from them. Aurobindo Ghosh says that the influence of the *Bhagavad-Gita* "is not merely philosophic or academic but immediate and living," and that "its ideas are actually at work as a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and a culture."

Any book to have become so popular and powerful in shaping the destiny of a people must have responded to their inner urges and fulfilled their vital social needs. Popular literature is an echo of national life. If the *Bhagavad-Gita* secured the highest position in Hindu religious literature, practically excelling even the Vedas, it must have ably presented crucial human problems as well as given vent to the excruciating anguishes of the society of the age in which it was composed ad put into circulation. Those problems and agonies must have continued unresolved through the centuries to maintain the undiminished popularity of the philosophic lore. What are those grave problems and intense feelings and why did the remedies proposed by the *Bhagavad-Gita* fail to resolve them? This book tries to answer these momentous questions.

Broadly speaking, Indian scholars have little to offer by way of criticism in their commentaries; their remarks are usually laudatory and if occasionally someone among them raises a doubt on a point he immediately covers it up by long explanations to uphold the integrity and sublimity of the holy teachings. Hindu writers find the most advanced philosophy in the scripture; to them it is the last word in human wisdom. Foreign scholars are not uncritical though some of them are equally lavish in its praise. In his introduction to translation of the Bhagavad-Gita produced jointly by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, in 1945, Aldous Huxley says: "The Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the Perennial Philosophy ever to have been made. Hence its enduring value, not only for Indians, but for all mankind."

Some European commentators have however brought a sense of objectivity to bear on their views of the poem, and while paying tributes to the divine teachings, they have pointed out that the holy text is not free from those blemishes which are more or less characteristic of all other scriptures. On the whole, however, it may be stated that there is not a single thoroughly critical study of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* available for an accurate assessment of the historical role that the great poem has played in Indian society.

It is generally claimed that the *Bhagavad-Gita* is a treasure house of profound knowledge and great wisdom; that it contains the mysterious secrets of spiritual life and is the best moral code for the guidance of a cultured society. Some of the more enthusiastic Indian writers, endowed with imagination, have even suggested that the teachings of the sacred poem can help the world especially Western nations now plagued by intractable social and moral problems born of scientific advance and technological progress. Neither any Indian teacher nor any foreign scholar, however, has taken the trouble of telling the suffering humanity why the Indians deteriorated, intellectually and morally, lost freedom and suffered for hundreds of years after they had given unstinted allegiance to the doctrines of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

There is, I suppose, consensus on two points or facts of history: One, that the Gita has been the most venerated scripture of Hindus from the fourth century B.C., if not earlier, and two, that India plunged into a dark age at almost the same time from which she may or may not have emerged in 1947, when the British power came to an end.

Jawaharlal Nehru has drawn a clear picture of the Indian society in the pre-Gita and the post-Gita periods, though he does not allude to them as such. Dividing the first thousand years of the Christian Era into two, he says about the earlier centuries: "It is a period of a vigorous national life, bubbling over with energy and spreading over in all directions. Culture develops into a rich civilisation flowering out in philosophy, literature, drama, art, science and mathematics. India's economy expands, the Indian horizon widens and other countries come within its scope." And what happened in the second half of the millennium when the Gita doctrines had gained the wide acceptance of the people? Nehru answers, "Yet for all these bright patches, an inner weakness seems to seize India, which affects not only her political status but her creative activities ... as the millennium approached its end, all this appears to be the afternoon of a civilisation the glow of the morning had long faded a2ay, high noon was past... the heart seems to petrify, its beats are slower, and gradually this petrification and decay spread to its limbs... The sense of curiosity and the spirit of mental adventure give place to a hard and formal logic and a sterile dialectic. Both Brahmanism and Buddhism deteriorate and degraded forms of worship grow up." Why did this dismal fate overtake the country when it had welcomed and chosen for its guide and exalted doctrines of the *Bhagavad-Gita***?** Unless and until this riddle is solved any study of Indian history must remain unintelligible.

Contrary to the view sedulously fostered by Brahmin writers after the downfall of Buddhism that the idealist or the so-called spiritualist philosophy is the only system of thought evolved by Indian thinkers since the Vedic Age, the fact remains that for a long period stretching roughly from 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. the widely accepted philosophy in this country was rationalist – materialist. It had bred a radically different outlook and effected basic changes in the primitive social structure raised earlier by Brahmin theology. Notwithstanding persistent efforts made to ignore or underrate the importance of this revolutionary development, its positive achievements from an inalienable part of Indian culture. To accurately assess the historical significance of the Gita-doctrines, it is essential to have an understanding of this deliberately neglected part of Indian study. I have, therefore, endeavoured to shed some light on the thought-processes which led to the unfolding of that glorious era and the main intellectual, social and political features which characterised it.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* represents only one aspect – the idealistic-religious aspect – of Hindu culture. The claim that the poem contains a synthesis of all ancient Indian philosophies is not borne

out by a critical study of the scripture. It mostly ignores other aspects of Indian thought not liked by the other author. If, and when, any opponent's views are referred to, they are distorted and presented in a way as to support the author's cherished assumptions. I have, therefore, deemed it necessary to narrate, briefly in the first part, the history of Indian thought from the early age, which makes it easier to grasp the underlying purpose of the Gita-teachings.

Indian idealist philosophy has developed more from mysticism than common sense, from intuition than reason and is generally beyond the comprehension of the average intelligent person. I have taken pains to summarise the main theories of the different idealist schools and reduce them to terms which I can understand, and which, I think the reader also will be able to understand.

The argument that whereas the Hindus accepted the *Bhagavad-Gita* as their supreme scripture and unquestioned guide, they failed to act upto the ideals preached by Sri Krishna does not hold water. When members of a society apotheosize a person they have the ambition to emulate him and to fashion their lives in accordance with the principles taught by him. They cease to do so only when the hero loses charm and fails to captivate. If there is agreement on the statement that the *Bhagavad-Gita* has been the most popular scripture of the Hindus for the past fifteen centuries, it is absurd to hold that the sufferings of the community have been caused not by doctrines venerated and practised by them but because they acted in defiance of those doctrines.

A dispassionate and objective study of the *Bhagavad-Gita* will show that despite the extravagant claims made on its behalf, it is not an unfailing guide to spiritual freedom or worldly advancement. It is true that the holy poem mentions some lofty ideals, puts forth a few sublime thoughts on different aspects of human culture and lays down certain noble precepts for success in mental discipline. But on the whole, its teachings can help (and have helped) only to subvert human progress and nourish social evils. It is a philosophy of the upper classes meant to be utilised by them as a weapon for maintaining a frustrated society in some sort of stability and equilibrium by inculcating ideas of patience and contentment in disinherited, exploited and downtrodden millions.

Since its appearance, the Gita has been repeatedly invoked to fight against the forces of revolution. If Shankaracharya sought its assistance in the ninth century A.D. to deal a death blow to declining Buddhism, Mahatma Gandhi utilised its teachings to annihilate the rising tide of secular democracy. This is true even though Shankara was dubbed as a crypto Buddhist and Gandhi acclaimed as the champion of democratic freedom.

Not only have the motley doctrines of the holy poem to be properly analysed by application of reason which is, after all, the one reliable criterion as well as the supreme court of authority but we have also to see how Hindus fared in their personal lives and dealings among themselves and with others, after they came fully under the influence of the Gita philosophy. From day to day and year to year, for at least fifteen centuries, the venerated scripture has been powerfully exercising the mind of Hindus and making them think and function in a certain manner, thus leading them towards particular ends. Therefore, the relevance between the divine teachings and the life lived by Hindus during this long period has to be brought out in bold relief in order to make history a profitable study.

The history of India, written and taught in the past, is the history as studied by Brahmin intellectuals. No efforts have been made to present the common man's viewpoint in it because it would have been ridiculed and fiercely opposed. When, for the first time, in the beginning of the present century, T.W. Rhys Davids made an attempt to describe the period during Buddhist ascendancy from the *kshatriya* (warrior caste) angle, he was afraid that "it would be regarded by some as a kind lese – majeste". His *Buddhist India*, however, has become a classic which encourages the approach that the time has come when we may interpret the entire Indian history from a non-Brahmin stand.

The change from the Brahmin stance to the common man's stand in the study of our past makes every event, development and person in Indian history look entirely different. Leo Tolstoy (1828-

1910) describing the consequences of a radical change in his outlook stated: "What had previously seemed to me good seemed evil, and what had seemed evil seemed good. It happened to me as it happens to a man who goes out on some business and on the way suddenly decides that the business is unnecessary and return home. All that was on his right is now on his left, and all that was on his left is now on his right... The direction of my life and my desires became different, and good and evil changed places." While compiling this unconventional study of India's past, I have had the same experience as the Russian sage.

Like some other advanced languages, Sanskrit can be very difficult and, indeed, many books religious and secular, written in it are not easy to understand. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, happily is composed in easily intelligible language; it abounds in poetic art; and its lucid style and musical sound add to its charm. Probably, apart from its religious merit, its linguistic beauty helped it to become so popular. The German Indologist, M. Winternitz, observes: "It is on the strength of its poetic value, the forcefulness of its language, the splendour of the images and metaphors, the breath of inspiration which pervades the poem, that it has made such a deep impression on the impressionable minds of all ages." But the commentators have not infrequently projected their own notions and concepts into the verses of the poem. By doing so, they have made the text mystifying and inexplicable. They have a purpose in doing so.

If studied without aids, while the main theme of the Gita becomes manifest, its contradictions and inconsistencies cannot remain concealed from an intelligent student. By giving far-fetched meaning to words and reading what is not given in the text, the commentators try to cover up the defects and establish the integrity of the author. Sanskrit is a rich language, and many words carry dozens of meanings which are sometimes opposed to each other. By taking advantage of the richness of language the commentators can interpret the poem as they like and, as a matter of fact, many of these works are full of the preconceived views and strongly cherished beliefs of the devoted Gita-lovers. While this device may strengthen orthodoxy and preserves the sanctity of the scripture, it cannot help in estimating the historical importance of the poem and its contribution to Indian social life.

The Gita has in the past played a great role in shaping the mid and character of Hindus and thereby in making the history of India. As long as the social conditions prevail which gave birth to the Gita-doctrine, the scripture will continue to play the same role to exercise a powerful influence. We can discover the nature of this role and its effectiveness by studying the sacred poem in an unbiased manner. The poem is entitle3d to highest respect which it deserves as the adored scripture of the millions of Indians. But regard for truth demands that we should rationally analyse the declarations made and the theories adumbrated in the holy poem. It will be strictly in accordance with our past cultural traditions. Besides, the findings thus arrived at alone can be conducive to the future welfare of Indian society.

I was a lad of fourteen years when I first secured a copy of the *Bhagavad-Gita* with a simple translation by Mrs. Annie Besant. For the last fifty-three years I have carefully gone through scores of translations and commentaries which were available to me. I have had discussions with friendly scholars, both orthodox and liberal, on the philosophical and religious themes dealt with in the scripture. The conclusions set forth here are the outcome of these studies and discussions.

Being the first attempt to write a critical commentary on the Gita after hundreds of books have been brought out by Indians and foreigners eulogizing it, some circles may regard my endeavour as presumptuous. It would be an unfair charge and by no means justifiable. As a free nation we need to develop in us the faculty to criticise not only others (in which we are lavish and especially adept) but also ourselves – our politics, our religion, our culture, our institutions and our traditions. We are woefully lacking in this and have therefore failed to develop on healthy lines and produce the expected results in various fields of social activity. To be thoroughly self-critical was a trait of intellectual thinking in the Upanishadic Age. It has to be fostered again with the purpose of guiding

India towards an intellectual revolution which is a sine qua non for long-needed social transformation. Self-criticism is the lever of progress.

In critically examining cherished beliefs, hoary traditions and age-old customs one cannot avoid treading on corns of orthodox scholar and religious-minded devotees. But the intention far from being to offend anyone is solely to arrive at the truth by sifting the grain from the chaff. In undertaking this arduous task I have drawn inspiration from the venerable Upanishads. In the Taittiriya the sage says: *ritam vadishyami satyam vadishyami tanmamavato* (I will speak of the right, I will speak the truth; may that protect me). Following in the footsteps of the bold thinkers who proved to be the harbingers of the great revolution India has ever witnessed in its history, I venture to present this study in the hope that it might help in instilling a healthier outlook on life among Indian people than the prevailing one laboriously nourished through the past ages by the Brahmins currently called Indian nationalists.

Published in **The Radical Humanist**, August 2002.

Books by M.N. Roy

- Beyond Communism
- Cultural Requisites of Freedom
- From Savagery to Civilization
- Historical Role of Islam
- India's Message
- Materialism
- Memoirs
- China: Revolution and Counter Revolution
- Men I Met
- National Government
- New Humanism
- New Orientation
- Politics, Power and Parties
- Reason, Romanticism & Revolution – Volume I
- Reason, Romanticism & Revolution – Volume II

(These books are Available at www.lohiatoday.com)

Comments about This Book

This is indeed a heroic task and a great service to the cause of the Radical Humanist movement in India. Thank you for this. I'm very excited to read the entire book.

Sangeeta Mall,
Writer and former Managing Editor,
The Radical Humanist

Marvellous dedication and outstanding,
painstaking effort, deserves all praise from us.

Satish Chandra Varma,
Publisher The Radical Humanist & Treasurer, **IRI**