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### I N T R O D U C T I O N

M. N. Roy was in many ways a unique person ; distinguishing 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 social and political philosopher. He passed through three phases of political life. Starting as an ardent communist he ended as an creatively active Radical Humanist. He built up and propounded the philosophy of Radical Humanism which may well become one of the most relevant philosophies, and has influenced many political leaders in the country, so much so a school of Royists has come into existence.

He was the son of a school teacher, Dinabandhu Bhattacharya. He was born in Arbalia District Paraganas, West Bengal in March / April 1887. His father was a reformist, and in those days the priestly orthodoxy was far more rigid. His influence on Naren might well have contributed to the unorthodoxy of the latter. But the impact of revolutionary nationalist movement in Bengal into which Naren was drawn from his early years was also a

decisive and lasting factor. Some of his basic emotional and intellectual attitudes were shaped in these formative years. His earlier name was Narendranath Bhattacharya. He was a revolutionary since his childhood. He took active part in the underground revolutionary activities right from the age of fourteen. He got involved in a number of political offences and conspiracy cases under the leadership of Jatin Mukharjee, his other colleagues who had prepared a plan for an armed insurrection for the overthrow of British Rule. When the First World War commenced, a promise was secured from certain German agents for the supply of arms to Indian revolutionaries. He moved from country to country in pursuance of his scheme to secure arms. In the process when he reached San Francisco in June 1916, he and some other Indians were charged in a conspiracy case. Roy evaded the American police and managed to go to Mexico. By then he had studied basic books on Socialism and Communism and become an ardent socialist both in mind and faith. He joined the Mexican socialist party and became its organising secretary ; and also got elected as its General Secretary. He converted the socialist party into the communist party ; and thus became the founder of the first communist party outside Soviet Russia.

Roy was invited to Moscow to attend the Second Conference of the Communist International which was to be held in July-August, 1920. Roy reached Moscow prior to the Conference and had discussions with Lenin on the National Liberation Movements in Colonial countries like India and China. Roy came to occupy a high position in all the policy making bodies of the Communist International . His main job during this period was to develop a strong communist movement in India. He managed to send a number of communist emissaries as well as literature to India. He had been recognised as the founder of the Indian Communist Party.

In 1927 Roy became the victim of Stalin's plan of the liquidation or expulsion of all persons of independent thinking from the Russian Communist Party and the Communist International. Roy came to India in cognito in Dec. 1930, and was arrested in July 1931, was tried and sentenced to imprisonment of 12 years on the charge of conspiracy to overthrow the British Government. The sentence was reduced to six years on appeal.

After completing the sentence Roy was released from Jail on 20th Nov. 1936. Immediately there after he issued a public appeal asking the people to join the Indian National Congress in millions. At the same time, he made it clear that

the nationalist movement could not be strengthened unless it underwent a process of radicalisation and democratisation. His idea was to develop the Indian National Congress with its net work of village and taluka committees, as a State within the state. The plan was that at an appropriate time the Congress as the alternate state would give a call for convening a constituent Assembly to frame the Constitution of free India, and that the call would be the signal for the launching of the Indian revolution for democratic freedom.

On the basis of this radical programme, the followers of Roy started work in a large number of rural and urban centres in the country and within a couple of years they became a force to be contended with. In 1940, however Roy and his followers had to part company with the Indian National Congress, because of their difference on the issue of India's participation in the Second World War. After that Roy and his friends left the Indian National Congress and formed a separate party called the Radical Democratic Party, in Dec. 1940.

As early as in Dec. 1942 Roy expressed the view that the Fascist Powers were going to be defeated in the war and that India would get national freedom as a result of the Socio-economic changes which were taking place in Great Britain and

the allied countries during the course of the anti-fascist struggle. Roy's anticipations were proved correct. Historians agree that India got national freedom largely as a result of the liberating forces generated by the defeat of international fascism.

When it became clear to him that the Fascist Powers were going to be defeated in the war, Roy switched his attention to the post war reconstruction of India. He prepared two basic documents in 1943 and 1944. The " people's plan for Economic Development of India " and the Second a ' Draft Constitution of Free India '. The documents contained Roy's original contribution to the country's economic and political problems. Contrary to the economic thinking which was then current, Roy gave priority in the ' People's Plan to the development of agriculture and small scale industry.' Production under the people's plan was to be for the use and not for profit and the objective of economic planning was to supply the primary needs of the people consisting of food, shelter, clothing, education and medicine. ' Indian State ' according to the Draft constitution of Free India, was to be organised on the basis of a country wide network of people's committees having wide powers such as initiating legislation, expressing opinion on pending bills, recall of representatives and referendum on important national issues. The idea of People's Committees subsequently popularised by Jayaprakash Narayan was mainly derived from Roy's Draft Constitution of Free India.

After the end of the war, Roy began to express his heretical views regarding Communism and Marxism. He differed with Marxism mainly on the role of ideas in human history and the primacy of moral values. He summarised the philosophy which he was propagating in a number of theses. These came to be known as the 22 Theses of Radical Humanism. He also issued a manifesto on New Humanism. The 22 Theses outline the principles of the personal and social philosophy of Radical Humanism. The basic values of freedom, rationalism and morality are traced in the Theses to man's biological evolution. It is pointed out that quest for freedom and search for truth constitute the basic urge of human progress.

Further discussion of the Principles enunciated in the 22 Theses and the Manifesto led Roy to the conclusion that party politics was inconsistent with the ideal of democracy and that it was liable to degenerate into power politics. Roy was of the view that political power in democracy should reside in primary organisations of the people such as people's Committees and should not be usurped by any political party. He was further of the view that particularly in countries like India, where a major section of the electorate was illiterate, party politics was bound to become an unprincipled scramble for power. ( I believe that his views very much hold good today in India. )

These ideas led to the dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party in an All India Conference held in Dec. 1948 and the launching of a movement called the Radical Humanist Movement.

Thus the political ideas of M. N. Roy had passed through three distinct stages of evolution. And they were Nationalism, Marxism and Radical Humanism. In subsequent chapters we are going to assess his activities and his philosophy, beginning from Nationalism, and ending in Radical Humanism. In this chapter much stress is laid on acquainting one self, may I bring to the kind notice of the readers here that, with the three foremost stages of political thought of M. N. Roy. It is an effort just to bring forth the various factors which have shaped M. N. Roys, political ideas. For this it can be stated that the environment factor in the country has shaped his political philosophy; which is assessed in the forth coming chapters.

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