

Chapter - 7

Concluding Remarks and Discussion

M.N.Roy as a thinker, philosopher, revolutionary, activist, visionary, among others, has been one of the few influential actors in the history of Indian political and social arena, on whom, very little has been written by social scientists in India. Besides his political involvements in the national and international sphere, he made a significant intellectual and political contribution in India to the philosophy of what has come to be known as the radical humanism that led to an intellectual and social movement – The Radical Humanist Movement. Having explored both the philosophical ideas of M.N.Roy and the Radical Humanist Movement, in its various ramifications, together with mapping its growth and phases in the post independence period in the previous chapters, it is pertinent here in this chapter to spell out some conclusions. As the focus of the study has been on Roy's ideas and the Radical Humanist Movement (RHM), I would like to discuss firstly, the shortcomings, limitations, viability and future prospects of RHM and secondly will explore the relevance of Roy's ideas in the contemporary context, both Indian and global.

As Radical Humanist philosophy forms the basis of RHM, it is relevant here to first elaborate on some basic ideas of radical humanism, which have been controversial and have been under constant attack by critics of the philosophy. It may however be pointed out at the outset, that the philosophical premise which forms the basis of RHM is sound as it is systematic and consistent in nature. This is reflected recurrently in the views of various participants in the discourse. Further, there is a general consensus on Roy's advocacy of scientific philosophy of materialistic monism which views the world

as a cosmos, a causally interrelated whole, which can be understood in terms of the laws of its being and becoming.

The most crucial formulation in 22 theses that has often been disputed is the statement that 'Rising out of the background of the law-governed physical nature, the human being is essentially rational.' Critics have taken the words 'essentially rational' in a loaded sense, in isolation from the overall formulation of twenty-two theses and have implied as if the basic assumption of the thesis is that human rationality or reason is something infallible and that men always behave in a sane, logical and harmonious way, which obviously is not true in reality. If this were the case, neither the philosophy of radical humanism nor the movement for renaissance would have been required. So what is meant by 'essentially rational' is that man as against other animal species is endowed with capacity for reason and it is not something extraneous to man's biological being. Aristotle also defined man as a 'rational animal' and it is his rationality that makes him unique and distinct from other species. However, men are not always conscious of their rational nature and irrational behavior of man can be explained as a consequence of mistaken application of reason. Therefore, as Nigam (1988) points out, irrational or vicious behavior of man is not a refutation of Roy's thesis but is indication of human failure, individual and social. As we have already seen, the core of the major task of RHM lies here, which is to make a conscious and sustained effort to convert man's potentiality to be rational into actuality so that there will be a continually rising number of consciously rational men and women who guided by their reason will behave in a rational moral manner. Roy did not exclude human will and emotion in his analysis of human nature as is believed by some, but in his scheme of thinking they could be reconciled with reason.

Morality is another important aspect of human nature to which Roy attributes significant importance. It has its basis in rationality as morality is envisaged by Roy as

mere translation of reason into social idiom. Since man is inherently rational, social relationships can be rationally harmonized and therefore it can be expected that a moral order can result from a rationally organized society. However, the relationship between rationality and morality is not as simple as it appears to be in certain expositions propounded by Roy. And moreover most people take rational in a loaded sense in that it carries a stamp of approval. Even during his Marxist phase Roy believed right knowledge would inevitably lead to ethical conduct. He wrote, 'materialist is virtuous not out of fear, by coercion, for greed, he is virtuous, because he can not be otherwise, and it is knowledge that enables him to be so.'¹ Basic assumption is that men use their knowledge and rationality for enhancement of human happiness. Driving morality from rationality is however not substantiated by facts. In reality we find men guided by their own narrow selfish interests, indulging in all kinds of wrong, immoral, unethical and vulgar practices knowing fully well what is right. Vested interests are important causes of continuance of unjust institutions and unjust social order. The merely rational man may well be a self-seeker, an egoist or a tyrant.

Another inherent feature of human nature, which has been a subject of controversy, has been Roy's insistence on man's spirit of co-operation as a more fundamental trait as against other combative and destructive elements. Roy did recognize the existence of destructive human attributes like competition, ambition, struggle, jealousy; envy, combative instincts etc., but regarded them as only secondary. He wrote, 'an impartial study of history reveals that the desire to be helpful to fellow man is a more fundamental human trait than competition and conflict.'² Again his optimism about human nature is not borne by empirical facts. Human selfishness,

¹ See Jail Volumes, 1941, p.156a.

² see *The Marxian Way*, volume II, 1946-47, p.195

irrationalism, immorality are in certain situations far more glaring and manifest than man's rationality, morality and cooperative spirit.

Rationality, morality and man's urge for freedom are in fact social categories and human nature should be viewed in the context of socio-economic and political, environment, as one cannot conceive of man in isolation to society of which he is an integral part. The position taken by Roy is not sustained by modern sociological theory, which does not regard society as a mere aggregate of individuals. It is conceived of as a network of intersecting and conflicting group interests. As observed by Osborne (1966:53-54), 'to think of human individual apart from society is to think in terms of misleading abstractions; that the individual is a social being, his qualities of individuality, his distinctiveness, his rationality, his morality develop through social experience. Roy's overemphasis on the importance of individual as against group was perhaps in reaction to the then prevailing irrational, authoritarian culture with little regard for human freedom and individuality. But nevertheless in the process he neglects the dynamics of socio-cultural processes at work, which enable one to understand the complex relationship that exists between man and society. Man's personality traits encompassing reason, freedom, and morality are to some extent products of the process of socialization and therefore they cannot be understood in abstraction. Further, to conceive of freedom as elimination of all restraints on human individual is again unrealistic and questionable, as freedom also has to be viewed in a social context and absolute freedom is neither possible nor desirable. In post industrial society with virtual disintegration of old community ties and transition from primary to secondary relations one problem that constraints us today is that individuality is confused with rank individualism and individual interests. By and large individual is set free to experiment with his/her life and one is guided by one's narrow reckoning of private gains and losses. This has led to our moral isolation as the ideal of absolute

freedom and excessive individualism can be rather inadequate because of its lack of proper emphasis upon the development of social life of man, with moral isolation we are also suffering from emotional isolation or alienation. At theoretical level RHM has sought to tackle the problem of moral isolation by regarding man as the archetype of society and laying stress upon his adequately discharging social obligations. But, in reality the number of such responsible, enlightened individuals who are sensitive and responsive to the needs of society is diminishing at a fast rate. Emotional security can come only through participation, which presupposes associations, and organizations that can bind people and provide them with a sense of belonging.

One may point out that Roy's contention was that in order to create a better society we must first create better men. But it can have disastrous consequences in the sense that if we wait for social reconstruction until men have become rational and moral through education, the goal becomes utopian. In fact our study clearly brings out that while Roy's band of dedicated followers have been busy in introspection, working unsuccessfully towards cultural renaissance specially during initial two decades after launching RHM, the society has drifted into an ever greater moral crisis where the so called iconoclastic ideas have no role to play. Radicals themselves on the basis of their personal experiences have realized this fact and they have come to believe that it is important to begin with contemporary social issues plaguing our society rather than steering the RHM to philosophical revolution. The process of transformation of human nature and social reconstruction has to be a simultaneous one. But this realization has however come a bit too late.

These observations however, do not undermine the importance of Roy's advocacy of scientific philosophy and its humanistic spirit, which is the need of the times to tide over the crisis mankind, is confronted with. Roy was first and foremost a social philosopher and an analysis of his theory of social reconstruction from a

sociological point of view has resulted in a shift of emphasis on the need to understand the two-way interaction between man and society rather than giving primacy to human individual over society.

We have seen that as far the theoretical framework pertaining to the philosophy of RHM is concerned there are hardly any limitations. In a large measure, it seems systematic and coherent as reflected in the discourse. However one major internal limitation relates to its comprehension. The understanding of 22 theses requires one to have a high degree of intellectual level and knowledge from various sciences, which is seldom possessed even by the so-called educated elite. So understanding the philosophy and projecting it in a way that the ordinary people can relate to it is a most challenging task. As a result, as was pointed out by late prof. Nigam during the course of interview, very often, entire time and energy of the radicals is spent in defending themselves against frequent challenges posed by alternative ideologies and system of thought.

Members of a social movement are concerned with presenting to others and to themselves an image, which is socially acceptable. Since the movement develops within the context of the society it seeks to change, and also since the members are products of the society, it is constrained to reconcile its values with those of the society at large, no matter how revolutionary it may appear. Being radical in nature the very character of RHM is such that it puts a lot of persistent and continuous strain on the mind of the people which ordinary people are not prone to sustain. Here it is important to point out that, Roy, himself was quite uncompromising as is evident from his stand on question of league of radical congressmen's participation in *satyagraha* or on crucial issue of supporting British war efforts, or his views on Gandhian leadership. On all these important issues he was dictated by his own rational analyses of the situation even though his rigid stand resulted in his isolation from both the masses and other important

leaders on the national scene. This prompted even Takunde, his close associate to retort that, 'leaders should be ahead of their following, but if they are so far ahead that followers should loose sight of them, they serve no useful purpose.'³

Roy was an open minded intellectual who analyzed every system of thought critically and believed in its constant re-examination in the light of the new developments as is evident by his own ideological development. So initially the source of the growth of the movement was Roy, who encouraged people to think independently and come out with novel ideas. In today's fast changing, dynamic world RHM as a movement should not remain theoretically stagnant if it has to be of any consequence. The world has changed radically since the times Roy's ideas were developed. Intellectual and practical dynamics have to be appreciated and realized in action. RHM should provide for the growth of ideas and should outgrow 22 thesis comprising Roy's scientific philosophy.

Under the compulsions of new circumstances not only in India but world over philosophies and ideologies no longer seem to be influencing human beings and societies. It would be unrealistic to assume that the principles of radical humanist democracy formulated more than half a century ago would help to meet contemporary crisis. All philosophies are by-products of material and nonmaterial conditions and play a declining role with rapidly changing conditions. World has changed profoundly since World War .II. So in case of Roy's philosophy also it is important that while retaining the fundamentals of Royism, which constitute the permanent heritage, radicals should incorporate changes both in the ideology and in its application, which they think, are essential in the light of their own new experiences. Roy himself always used to do that and therefore RHM can survive only if radicals instead of remaining orthodox Royists adopt a more pragmatic approach and redefine their role in the context of latest global

³ Letter from Tarkunde to M.N.Roy, Pune 15 April 1940.

experiences. Radical humanism being integrated to science is not a closed system. It provides for constant assimilation of new facts and therefore it cannot be seen as a system but as a process. Roy strongly believed that philosophy is not something that is evolved at any particular time by any particular individual, but it evolves continuously and becomes perennial. Just like science philosophy is a pursuit in which each new philosopher will carry further the work accomplished by his predecessors. And therefore, the basic challenge that lies before radicals is not merely of carrying on the movement and its organs but one of broadening, deepening and developing the philosophy of radical humanism by applying it to various fields of activity, particularly the areas not touched by Roy. What is required is creativity in ideas in order to prevent the philosophy of radical humanism from becoming a closed system of thought, a set of dogmas about ultimate truth. It is here that the movement has suffered the most, as a few radicals possess that creativity and dynamism. Nigam (1988:26) rightly writes, 'the philosophy of radical Humanism in the Theses, if it is not to suffer the fate of earlier philosophies, will have to be continually examined and re-examined in the light of advancing knowledge and new experience. This is an inherent and permanent obligation on the part of those who prefer this philosophy'. Even though some radicals like, Sibnarayan Ray, G.D.Parikh, R.L.Nigam, V.M.Tarkunde, R.S.Yadava have made some important contribution in the realm of ideas in the movement as it has grown in post Roy era, yet their number is less and is shrinking with time. This no doubt constitutes a major limitation of the movement. The analysis of the actual functioning of RHM clearly reveals that in its present state it seems incapable of such an achievement both at theoretical and practical level.

For any movement to develop apart from having a futuristic vision and a belief in the possibility of changing the structure of the society, an enduring organization devoted to the attainment of their vision, which can serve, as an active nucleus of the

movement is equally important. In retrospect one could conclude that the movement has suffered tremendously due to historical fact that radicals did not develop any formal organization since the dissolution of RDP in 1948, which could have acted as the main center for coordinating the activities of the scattered and atomized individuals without a sense of belonging. As has been pointed out by late Yadava (1988), the transformational gap of 21 long years without any organization since the dissolution of RDP in 1948 significantly wilted the movement after 1948. During that period most of radical humanists became inactive and isolated or merely undertook unorganized and limping individual activities, lost their youthfulness and settled down to private routines with little zeal left for any sustained public work, and a whole new generation with different orientations had sprung up in the country. And that period was the most crucial- initial and formative- period of independent India when the revolutionary fervor of the people had not fully petered out, hurdles in the way of revolutionary work were much less than what they have been since 1969, and the need of the organized efforts on the part of humanists was, in a sense, the greatest.

Sociologically, one can say that for success of any social movement organizational phase i.e. when an incipient and informal movement matures and gets formalized is important because it is in this stage that a movement becomes stable and poised for success. Organizational phase results in quickening of external development of a movement. In this phase innovations at the level ideas, strategy, tactics etc. are collectively propagated and promoted through the organization. It is precisely for lack of organization for 21 long years that the RHM remained in oblivion despite the fact that Roy had provided the necessary initial momentum to the movement. But neither Roy during his lifetime, nor his followers worked out in detail the kind of association or organization that was needed to put the great ideals in to practice and this constitutes one of the main limitations of RHM. It is only after his retirement, Tarkunde's dynamism

and realism retrieved whatever was left of the movement by 1969 when IRHA was formed. So RHM amply testifies our hypothesis that no social movement can spread significantly without an effective organization to promote it.

Further, the nature of IRHA is such that it cannot be conceived of as a centralized organization and it grants total autonomy to its members to work with various groups and organizations including political parties in accordance with their respective tastes and competence. Such a movement obviously cannot have any official line like party line on various issues. Therefore when faced with the real life problems every individual radical has to decide for himself/herself the kind of role he /she has to perform, whether or not he should work in association with other groups to accomplish his task within the framework of his philosophy, which remains the only force which binds him with other radicals and RHM. In the absence of any official line, finding themselves in a state of confusion in crisis like situations, most radicals tend to think that their 22 theses would provide them with readymade solutions to the problems at local, national and even international level which is not true as has also been pointed out by Nigam, who writes, 'that is asking too much of a philosophy. Philosophy gives us a vision or a model, provides a paradigm and stimulates creative, critical thinking. But in every situation, in dealing with every problem, choices have to be made within that framework and paradigm. The choices have to be made necessarily by individuals. And these may not coincide except in some very extraordinary situations as happened in case of 1975 Emergency' (Nigam, 1988:39).

Success of any movement depends on its numerical strength. In this respect one major limitation of RHM owing to its predominantly intellectual character is that its leaders have not been able to mobilize people in large numbers because of their failure to attribute what Blumer calls a popular character to their movement which remains too logical and too abstract to be comprehended by a common man. It remains primarily a

movement of intellectuals whose number and impact is diminishing at a fast rate in contemporary era characterized by what is called an end of ideology. As a result in case of RHM also, like other strong ideological movements, there has been a shift in priorities away from social activism and towards self-maintenance. A living movement cannot operate and survive for a long time, unless, its membership is enhanced by bringing younger generation to its fold. In fact RHM itself began as a movement of enthusiastic, dedicated young social activists. Roy himself, time and again emphasized the need to form youth clubs and addressed many a student's gatherings at various universities during his lecture tours with a view to educate and enlighten the young minds. The continuous task that the founder leader had set for the movement i.e. one of educating themselves and others and thereby multiplying themselves endlessly has not been accomplished. By and large RHM has remained a very limited, sectarian movement confined to urban middle class, English speaking, educated elite. Even though time and again radicals at individual level have expressed the need to actively participate in people's struggle and cooperate with like minded people and organizations including political parties to bring about social transformation as mere preaching in a vacuum will not suffice, Yet, in actual practice with few exceptions, not much is being done in this direction in an organized manner at the concrete level.

The empirical investigation of character, structure and functioning of the leadership of RHM reveals certain facts, which have definite implications for the future prospects of the movement. As the things stand today, we can conclude in no uncertain terms that the scope of effectiveness of the leadership of RHM is limited for a number of reasons. We have seen that RHM like most other movements on Indian scene has revolved around personalities. It can be identified with its founder Roy who was at the center stage till his death in 1954, followed by his wife Ellen till 1960. After her assassination a vacuum was created as there was a leadership crisis and the movement

was orphaned primarily for lack of any formal organization, which could have given the scattered, atomized individuals a sense of belonging. During this period the radicals attended the scantily organized study camps more out of nostalgia and as a mark of devotion to their beloved leader as was conceded by number of radicals during their interview. Roy remains immortal and still evokes an attitude of reverence. As Sibnarayan ray rightly observes. 'like all original and unorthodox thinkers, Roy, too has been subjected by his followers to mythologisation and scriptualisation' (Ray 1979:17-18). Without any effective leadership the question of survival of the movement loomed large. Formation of IRHA in 1969 can be described as a revitalization phase with V.M.Tarkunde being the central figure who with his tireless efforts and organizational capabilities along with some of his old associates played a commendable role to carry forward the movement on various fronts by forging alliances with several non-governmental organizations, particularly CFD, PUCL and other organizations fighting for democratic rights. He along with some of his old associates has been instrumental in keeping the movement alive by giving it a new direction in tune with the changing circumstances. But now with his departure the existing leadership is bound to feel the vacuum and become more and more ineffective as few possess the dynamism, innovativeness and organizational capacity to keep the movement alive. As the movement has centered around personalities, it has not undergone the process of institutionalization which is essential for the development and social acceptance of any movement, more so if it happens to be an ideological movement and projects the grand vision of establishing a radical humanist society which calls for a perennial process of transformation. Thus our initial hypothesis (4), that a movement starts declining if the organizational structure and its functioning is not appropriately institutionalized and the membership does not increase over a reasonable period of time stands testified against the empirical facts pertaining to RHM. Further, on account of projecting the long term

goal also the movement has suffered. As the objective appears to be utopian and unattainable, the movement has lost the impetus as it fails to generate any public interest in its objectives. Moreover, broad utopian goals and slow growth of the movement also results in the lack of urgency on the part of the people involved in the movement and if at all it is there it is very intermittent.

One can speak of radical humanists with a few exceptions, particularly in period before late 1970s as arm chaired revolutionaries, busy with their discourses in their ivory towers and their movement being far removed from the real needs, aspirations or problems of the common people in India. Formation of people's committees and cooperatives form the core of process of decentralization as envisaged by radical humanist philosophy. But in actual practice none of the radicals have really tried to run a cooperative and seek its functioning and limitations. Few have tried to experiment with the idea of forming people's committees and that too only during election times without any persistent follow up action to make it in to a movement.

For success of any revolutionary movement it is important for the leadership to organize itself and mobilize the masses by directly participating in their struggle against their repression, exploitation, social injustice and other agonizing experiences, which they meet at the hands of the dominant sections of the society within the given socio-cultural status quo. In post independent era it was only during peculiar authoritarian regime of Indira Gandhi when emergency was imposed that RHM showed signs of revival. Tarkunde's association with Jaiprakash narayan and formation of CFD and PUCL provided an opportunity and forum to increasing number of radical humanists to awake from their deep slumber and participate in cooperation with many leaders of the opposition political parties and other democrats to wage a determined and organized battle against rising authoritarianism in the country. Various organs of RHM (IRHA, IRI, and RH) were instrumental in bringing the movement and its ideas in focus. Even

though it has been realized by the RHM activists that their grand theory can not help them in redeeming the situation yet little precious has been done by the central leadership to relate their activities in an organized manner to the people's struggle. Even though there have been several instances where we can see RHM has contributed to social transformation in newer ways in areas like education, health, civil liberties and human rights by converging their efforts with other movements and organizations yet we can say the leadership of RHM neither has the number or resource, nor the dynamism to bring other like-minded people and organizations in the country to their fold to accomplish the stupendous task they have set for themselves.

Radicals are caught in a situation where on the one hand they can not carry on the movement on their own as they are too few in numbers to be effective and on the other hand working with other groups wedded to disparate ideologies and outlook promotes confusion of what Nigam calls 'of blurred distinctions.' In the process there always remains a fear of radical humanists losing their identity. Nigam points out 'the practice pursued over a long period of time results in the confusion of the by-way with high-way, of the inn with the home. The practice results sometime in the adoption of an alien concept to superimpose on our own, perhaps for pragmatic reason.' He further notes and rightly so 'The cumulative effect of the consequences of such practice is to make the unwary lose sight of the very *raison d'être* of the movement and of its distinct methodology and mode of working.'⁴

Nigam was not the lone figure to raise these fears. RHM remains a divided house on many a crucial and controversial issues and the situation becomes still worse because discussions, debates and practice over five decades has done little to mitigate these controversies. Under such circumstances it is just a matter of time that the movement will go in total oblivion. Nigam remarks, 'we have become so many islands

with no bridges thrown over. Our 'togetherness' consists in the fact that the islands float over the same sea a very different scenario from the one visualized by Roy, a 'brotherhood' of 'spiritually free men' holding up before the world an example of new values, new interpersonal relationships, new institutions which it badly needed' (Nigam 1988:29). Despite having a formal organization at all India level one observes that scattered radicals are engaged in mutually unrelated activities. Sociologically it is difficult to conceive of a revolutionary movement without whole time leaders and active members who are totally devoted to their cause. Here again RH does not exhibit this essential element as our study shows, for most of the radicals their activities relating to the movement are just casual or spare time activities and the few full time activists are those who have already retired from their jobs and can contribute only marginally keeping in mind the age factor which is against them. Therefore the scope and effectiveness of such a leadership is bound to be limited indeed and one wonders if in its present shape and state one can speak of RHM as a movement in conventional sociological terms.

There is no doubt that at theoretical level RHM has raised many a pertinent issues relating to future of democracy, education, human rights, party less democracy, cooperative movement in economic sphere, authoritarian culture and has suggested ways and means to realize their dream of establishing radical democratic society. But as we have seen a wide gap exists between theory and practice. Roy no doubt contributed both at theoretical and practical level. His activities were not confined merely to research work and writing but he was actively involved in various real life struggles and movements, beginning with his 'revolutionary' activities at a very young age. But the same cannot be said about his followers in the present scenario.

⁴ Here prof Nigam is referring to Radical's adoption of Jaiprakash Narayan's 'Total Revolution', as conceptually and practically the same as Radical Humanist revolution.

But now once again for the reasons discussed above we see the question of survival of the movement looms large. Individual radicals who played an important role during emergency and later through CFD, PUCL and other rationalist and secular organizations are either no more or have become too old to be effective. There have been very few recruits since last quarter of a century and even the relatively younger radicals do not share the same zeal and intellect as the old veterans. In contemporary India one finds a whole plethora of limited purpose non-governmental organizations working for oppressed sections (like, women, dalits, child laborers, backward classes, scheduled castes or tribes) of the society. But one finds only a fraction of radicals working through these organizations. Radicals have never played the role of social activists and therefore we do not find RHM working in cooperation with many of the alternative movements in the country pertaining to environment, education, nuclear issues or problems pertaining to increasing corruption, socio-economic disparities etc. At concrete level one does not find radical humanists involving themselves with people's struggle whether it is pertaining to rehabilitation of slum dwellers in cities or of displaced persons as a consequence of mega projects like Narmada valley project or of victims of Bhopal gas tragedy and others. One only finds reference to these problems in the columns of RH. As we have seen in last chapter, even the old veterans of the movement, who have engaged themselves with people's struggle, are working through forums, which are not directly the organs of the RHM. Thus it is difficult to conceive of scattered and disparate activities of radicals spread over different parts of India and beyond, as constituting a social movement in terms of traditional sociological conception of social movements. Nonetheless if we take a broader view of social movements in the global context, the activities of the radicals do form a part of the transnational movements concerned with human rights, civil liberties and plight of the marginalized sections of society beyond the boundaries of nation states.

In the light of the above stated facts one could conclude that the prospects of the success of the RHM in foreseeable future in our country are indeed very dim, particularly if such a success is envisaged in terms of the movement's long term goals -which is one of creating rational, moral and cooperative individuals having a firm belief in the fact their well being is conditional upon other people's well being. In other words it consists of accomplishing the task of mental or philosophical, cultural revolution. For Roy the emphasis has always been on culture, which being a way of life surely encompasses political aspect of the society. So the cultural transformation has to precede political transformation.

As we have already discussed, keeping in mind the complexity and the objective conditions in our country such a process of social transformation can be painfully slow. Time required for such a revolution might look frighteningly long. But when faced with such objections Roy always asked, 'what is the alternative? -----If someone can suggest another way, which will take less time --say twenty, or perhaps two years, and also bring about a democratic society, that question might arise. But if there is no such alternative, the fact that it may take a long time is no argument against this plan.' (Ro1960: 62). He was also hopeful that if the right start was made, the time required could be much reduced. (Ibid: 63-64)

As far as the RHM is concerned the fact remains that radicals have done precious little to transform their theory in to practice. Mere possession and transmission of theoretical knowledge cannot ensure human emancipation. Prof Yadava rightly points out, "If fertile emancipatory theories are not vitally married to organized emancipatory struggles in day to day human interactions, at the local, regional, national and even international level, an emancipatory movement soon tends to degenerate in various ways and wither away."(Yadava 1983:56)⁵ RHM truly corroborates this contention.

It is true that the success and progress of the movement of the nature of RHM is not to be judged in terms of the following or by how widely it has come to be known. As Roy observes, 'the work and progress of the RHM will no longer be judged in terms of mass following, but by the spread of the spirit of freedom, rationality and secular morality amongst the people, and in the increase of their influence in the state'. (Roy 1953:68). But how to measure the 'spread' of that 'spirit' and the 'increase' of that 'influence' has not been spelled out either by Roy or his dedicated followers involved in the movement. So even if we take something like 'generating the awakening' among people, of values basic to the movement as the index of success, it's prospects do not seem to be too bright.

Apart from these internal limitations, objective Indian conditions like overpopulation, illiteracy, obscurantism, traditional value system, our authoritarian culture, socio-economic inequalities, linguistic barriers etc, constitute external limitations that radicals believe can be overcome only by putting their agenda in to practice. But their optimism appears to be unrealistic keeping in view the physical limitations in terms of the movement's shrinking numerical strength, inability to recruit young people and limited financial resources. So if one analyses the RHM in actual practice not a very bright future awaits it.

An important question that would bother any serious student on Roy would be to ask what place Roy occupies in history and what is the relevance of his ideas and the movement in contemporary scenario?

It is important to point out at the very outset that the limitations, as discussed in the previous section, pertaining to the functioning of RHM and the new questions and challenges thrown up by experience of working in dynamic existential situations within the framework of twenty two thesis, do not invalidate the philosophy of Radical Humanism which forms the basic core of the movement. No philosophy in the world

can be said to be true for all times to come. It is only natural that with accumulation of new knowledge and new experience new questions arise with the passage of time. It is the same with Roy's thesis.

Roy is often accused by his critics that several aspects of his philosophy and his ideas are not new. But then, at this stage of human development, it is not possible for any thinker to come up with entirely new ideas. Roy's originality and contribution however lies in his analytically examining the existing philosophies in the context of contemporary world crisis and suggesting a way out of the present crisis.

Roy's philosophy is a product of twentieth century which has also produced many diverse and rich philosophical streams like pragmatism, existentialism, phenomenology, linguistics, and logical analysis as is represented in the philosophical ideas of prominent philosophers like Pierce, Whitehead, Dewey, Santayana, Russell, Croce, Sartre and others. In a way this century can be called an age of analysis and uncertainty primarily because the issues concerning human history, culture, society, individual, science and technology in relation to human individual and organizations has been the direct concern of various thinkers as never before and secondly the rapidity and enormity of change has made 'consensus' about various complicated issues gripping mankind virtually impossible. The events of this century beginning with the First World War reflect the devastating, disorienting and breath-taking changes. It has been a century which has witnessed two world wars, Russian Revolution accompanied by the rise of left totalitarianism (communism), the Great economic depression, wide-spread struggles for national liberation against colonial imperialism, rise of right totalitarianism (fascism and Nazism), atom bomb, Chinese revolution, cold war in bi-polar world, independence of India and other colonies, proliferation of nuclear weapons, emergence of post industrial societies, breakdown of Soviet Union as a consequence of liquidation of communism in Soviet Union and East

European countries, neo-economic imperialism as a result of processes of liberalization and globalization, anomie, alienation and eventual loss of self confidence.

Roy was not just a mute spectator to the vast changes that engulfed the entire globe. He played a modest role in many events of historical significance as is evident from his roles in Indian nationalist movement, in Mexican politics, in the Comintern and in Indian politics again in thirties and forties. So his philosophy as it is embodied in Twenty-two theses is not just a speculative thought but is a response to the wide ranging experience that Roy had acquired over a period of almost forty years spread over more than a dozen countries in three continents. This is what makes Roy a figure of some historical significance and will always be accorded a due place in recorded human history. Appreciating Roy, writes Sibnarayan Ray, 'as a thinker, M.N.Roy, I believe, has his peers, if not in the East, certainly in the West. But in the wealth of experience, which went to the shaping of his thoughts, he was altogether unique and had none to compare either in the past or in the present. From Socrates to Santayana, from Kung- Fu-Tze to Croce, I know of no philosopher who possessed his sweep of experience.' (Ray 1966:28)

As is evident from his writings on varied fields, what impresses one most is his encyclopedic mind, his literary brilliance and his in depth knowledge about range of disciplines including science, philosophy, politics, sociology, psychology and anthropology. New Humanism as an integral system of thought is a product of such a mind. He came to believe that, it was due to failure of philosophy that the human affairs were in such a mess and only a sound moral philosophy can get us out of the present crisis. He rightly emphasized that a sound social and political theory presupposes a sound moral philosophy. His philosophy of New Humanism firmly

rooted as it is in reason and experience is a sound contribution both in the realm of theory and practice of humanism.

One of the most remarkable achievements of Roy was that he succeeded in retaining his faith in reason despite facing hostility of organized irrationalism of the right as well as left. His relentless pursuit of the logic of his ideas and subjecting them to constant re-examination in the light of the latest developments is manifest in his own ideological evolution from a militant nationalism, to Marxism and finally to Radical Humanism. The relevance of Roy's ideas can only be analyzed in the context of the times he was writing in as they evolved as a direct response to the rapid changes brought about by modern scientific and technological revolution both at national and international level.

The central fact that lies at the root of the crisis of our age is that the pace of the Renaissance has been much slower than that of the technological revolution. Roy's call for a cultural renaissance in India in order to modernize the nation especially at a time when Gandhi with emphasis on Hindu revivalist nationalism was dominant on Indian political scene was significant. Roy's trenchant criticism of religious morality and traditional Indian value system was indeed a break through. In intellectual and cultural domain Roy's criticism of the spiritualist culture 'as an instrument of reaction and bulwark against higher civilization' (Roy 1955:242-243) and a check upon the spiritualist liberation is very much relevant even today to the problem of social emancipation and reason based political system in the country.

The scientific technological civilization as is manifest in rapid industrialization, urbanization, complex division of labor, specialization, bureaucratization, mass communication, growth of mass society and mass culture etc. has increasingly destroyed community life everywhere and created impersonal societies. As a consequence of all these alienating conditions human individual feels

totally atomized, severely alone, helpless dehumanized, powerless and has lost confidence not only in others but in oneself. This problem of alienation has been at the center of many a sociological and philosophical discourse in the twentieth century and several scholars have addressed themselves to the intricate relationship between 'individual' and 'society'. The key issue which lies at the core of all central issues today is whether human individual is primarily an end in himself/herself and the architect of his/her own destiny or a mere servile means to the ends of some self seeking individuals or collectivity like corrupt politicians, bureaucrats or some other vested interest groups. Here perhaps lies the key choice that will determine the future of vast majority of hapless masses and the nature of society itself. It is here that the contribution of Roy has been greatest. It was the penetrating humanist insight of Roy that enabled him to discover this key issue which seemed to have been lost in the bewildering complexity of our extremely dynamic times, to highlight it in a modern idiom, and to opt for intrinsic value of the related human individual. As we have seen, Roy discovered the scientific- philosophical foundation for his option after deeply reflecting upon the whole history of human thought on the basis of his own experience as an active participant in the shaping of the history of his own times. His philosophy of New Humanism with its roots in reason and experience can be regarded as a sound contribution to moral philosophy.

Important thing about his philosophy is that it has been developed in a cosmopolitan perspective, basic assumption being that philosophy concerns every aspect of life and therefore it has to be the business of every man. Moreover, Roy did not look upon the contemporary crisis in local, regional, or national context. His was a comprehensive and integrated approach and he studied it in its full magnitude and in all its dimensions. And therefore in his quest for solution to the contemporary crisis he draws not only from all the existing available experience but also from various

disciplines including social and natural sciences as is reflected in his conception of his magnum opus 'The Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science'. Therefore the solution i.e. the philosophy he evolved has global dimension. As we have already seen the scientific social philosophy appropriate for our era, as formulated by Roy is that of Radical Humanism and it transcends both time and space. It is 'radical' because it treats the human individual as the root of mankind and believes no social status quo prevailing anywhere can play the needed progressive role any longer. It is 'humanist' because it is imperative for human beings today to raise above all narrow considerations of caste, creed, religion, race, language, nation, for a universal person imbued with fellow feeling, having a secular orientation and cosmopolitan spirit is the dire need of the hour. It is perhaps this aspect of Roy's thought that has prompted his critics to reject it as over ambitious and irrelevant. But the fact is that there has been a rapid shrinkage of the world and emergence of composite cultures of mixed populations due to increasing interdependence of different nations and of different groups or sections of society within each nation or state as a result of rapid advances in modern science and technology. Hence all problems have become global now.

The global dimensions of modern science and technology had given birth to extensive colonial imperialism in the past, which resulted in two world wars as well as in the great rise of nationalism after world war one. As the things stand today the interaction between nationalism and internationalism has become very intricate. Therefore, no vital problem anywhere can be solved satisfactorily within the strict confines of nation-states. This has increased the frequency of even the armed intervention by one or more states, much more easily by the super power in the internal affairs of other states. After the liquidation of Soviet Union, in today's unipolar shrinking global world, Roy's cosmopolitan humanism seems to be the necessary condition for the survival of civilized humanity, even though it may not be generally

realized due to narrow and sectarian perspectives and goals of a vast majority of people.

There have been others also who have propagated the need for internationalist cosmopolitan outlook and unlike Roy; their authenticity can not be easily called in question as has been pointed out by Nigam (1988:443)

The task of human self preservation has now become a problem whose dimensions are as large as humanity itself. One of history's clearest lessons is that problems cannot be solved on a scale smaller than that on which they arise. This was the lesson the Nation-State taught to the medieval baronies it superseded. It is the lesson the Nation-State must now learn from world order. Human society has come to the point of no return. In unconsciously creating a unitary industrial society throughout the world, man has made his survival depend upon his ability to follow it with a consciously created world political order.

Nothing in the nature of things insures regardless of what man does that civilization will always survive. The successive cons of the past are the historical graveyards of biological and cultural species that turned out to be incapable of coping with the catastrophe that confronted them. World order is not inevitable. It is only necessary."

Thus, we see Roy was a visionary whose penetrating analysis always centered around the future of things to come and how they could be improved upon. He possessed a profound knowledge of the science of history and society. His analyses of the trends of events and his predictions regarding the possible outcome of these trends have been sufficiently substantiated by facts.

Cultural aspect of cosmopolitan order as visualized by Roy is of particular relevance in present day set up. A vital handicap that the humanist movement the world over has suffered is the hiatus between 'humanist renaissance' and 'scientific-technological revolution'. While the former has never been able to assume mass proportions, the latter has pervaded all aspects of human life. If our historical past could be a proper guide, it does not seem likely that humanist renaissance will be able to overwhelm or even keep pace with scientific-technological revolution, which for Roy was so essential for the free and dignified survival of

humankind. But as we have already discussed, Roy being an optimist not only believed and hoped in his call for twentieth century renaissance being a reality but also offered a concrete program to realize it. For the purpose he strongly advocated the need for educating the people in the values of freedom, justice, rationality and instilling in them a scientific outlook and self-confidence. His contribution lay in the fact that he emphasized the importance of education, in as early as 1937, when himself being a part of congress, he strongly criticized the organization for not carrying out the task of political propaganda to politically educate the masses and limiting itself merely to Gandhian propaganda.

The mess we find ourselves in today is in fact a direct consequence of our educational policy over the years, which has rendered almost half our population illiterate. Perhaps the greatest failure of congress while it was in power has been the low priority accorded to the task of educating the masses. Roy had suggested various measures constitutional as well as educative to activate and democratize congress committees but he was absolutely no match to predominant Gandhian leadership. This criticism of Roy is valid even today as the national ruling leadership both past and present, has been preoccupied more with short term political goals rather than long term one of educating the masses and one sees total lack of will and half hearted effort to implement various programmes pertaining to achieve even the goal of free primary education to all which was set by our leaders at the time of independence. Various governments have been shirking from making primary education a fundamental right. In today's world characterized by moral vacuum, powerful elites usually lack the necessary humanistic and cosmopolitan vision and the masses lack the requisite capabilities and competence to have any say in the decision making process even in matters directly affecting their lives. No wonders then, the masses are invariably exploited by the elite more particularly by the governing elite. It is only the doctrines of

humanism and rationalism, which can be instrumental in countering the inhuman irrationalism that has gripped our society. And here Roy's contribution both as a theoretician and at practical level has been immense. He was a consistent propagator of rationalist and humanist ideas in India till his death. His followers in their limited capacity have tried to keep the secular scientific outlook alive through their educational activities.

As we have already discussed, despite moving away from Marxism, Roy's contribution both as a Marxian theoretician and at the practical level to the development of communist movement was immense. Lenin described him, 'as the symbol of revolution in the East'. Roy acquired the reputation of being 'undoubtedly the most colorful of all non-Russian communists in the era of Lenin and Stalin,' (Dalton 1966:206). In Mexico, he was converted to communism and helped form the first communist party outside Russia. In Moscow, he contributed to revolutionary strategy for communist activities in colonial areas. In Europe, he rose to a position of authority in the Comintern, published a series of books and pamphlets on Marxian theory and edited a communist paper. His contribution in the field of application of Marxism to the problems of Indian society as reflected in *India in Transition*, *What do we want*, *One year of Non-Cooperation*, *Future of Indian politics* is recognized even by the Marxists. So, one can conclude that Roy's contribution to Marxism both as a theory and practice was indeed spectacular.

Another striking feature of Roy's personality, in every phase of his life has been his total commitment to human freedom and uncompromising opposition to every form of injustice. The fact that against heavy odds and the ideological opposition of communists and wide spread popular nationalist hostility, Roy during Second World War supported British war efforts against fascist forces reveals his commitment to internationalism and the values of democracy and freedom. At present one can see a

general trend towards centralization in every sphere of life. Modern governments are increasingly becoming totalitarian in the sense that with increasing might of the state one can see growing drift towards centralistic trends in political economy. In India from time to time, decentralization has been advocated by various personalities like Tagore, Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan etc. But Roy in his writings has worked out in minute details the implications and processes of devolution of power and participatory democracy. His analysis of party politics in the context of democracy and its logical conclusion that political parties engaged in the scramble for power could not serve the cause of democracy and freedom was dictated at theoretical ground not only by the logic of philosophy of Radical Humanism but is in fact backed by empirical evidence. Once the power is captured by any party, it is never diffused and our experience over fifty years amply demonstrates how political parties are instruments of centralization and for all the parties power has been an end in itself. Therefore we can say Roy was right in concluding that 'decentralization of power was conditional upon disappearance of the instrument of centralization.' (Roy 1960:76) which the political parties are. He rightly observed 'the problem of democracy can, therefore, no longer be served by political parties. It is a deeper and more comprehensive problem than one of institutional adjustment. It can be solved only by a comprehensive social movement, developed on the basis 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.' (Ibid: 102). So Roy's notion of 'people's committees' and 'revolution from below' blue print of which is contained in his formulation of 'Draft Constitution' and 'People's Plan' seem to offer an alternative to present day corrupt and inefficient formal democracy and also totalitarian dictatorship.

Roy's ideas are often regarded as being too ambitious, optimistic and utopian and Roy himself is considered as a failure despite the fact that his intellectual eminence was never beyond doubt. As we have discussed earlier as well the problem with Roy's ideas does not lie at the theoretical level as most of us today, like Roy are concerned with the progressive deterioration of rational and moral standards in public life everywhere and restoration of moral order is viewed as a corrective measure to the present day crisis on all fronts. Roy's contribution lies in the fact that he has offered us a much needed solution in the form of a self contained philosophy -- a philosophy which will give an integrated picture of human existence without going outside the physical world, that is, without having to fall back upon some transcendental order or force controlling and determining the course of the natural order of things. The basic problem, however, lies at the practical level as it is one of translating these ideas in action. It is true that a radical humanist society as envisaged by Roy can never materialize, but nevertheless it remains desirable. How far such a society can be approximated depends upon the extent to which radicals continue to draw their inspiration from their philosophy and are in turn able to inspire others thereby multiplying themselves and function in accordance with their philosophy towards their goal.

To evaluate whether Roy was a success or a failure depends on the yardstick one uses to measure it. It is true that political success in conventional terms of capturing power always eluded him and Roy failed to make any mark on Indian politics where as several persons who were no match to his intellectual stature and personal attainments occupied very important positions at our national political scene. But reasons for this state of affairs are not difficult to understand. His unorthodox and unpopular views on religion and nationalism, his trenchant criticism of Gandhi, his anti fascist policy and therefore pro-British stand in Second World War, his total

commitment to his values and uncompromising and unpragmatic approach contributed to what may be viewed by some as Roy being a political failure. But then with evolution of his ideas, towards his 'New orientation' phase Roy in fact sought deliverance from politics, as he was getting more and more skeptical about power politics. In 1946, He wrote, 'I feel very uncomfortable in politics. I feel like a fish out of water. But having been drawn in to this whirlpool since my early youth, I have not been able to get out of it. Perhaps the time is coming when I shall at last do so'. (Roy 1946:59) And the time did come soon enough. He diverted all his time and efforts to formulation and popularization of his new philosophy of New Humanism. He evolved as a pioneer thinker with a mission, a truly disinterested and spiritually free man and dichotomies like success and failure, victory and defeat no more matter to him any more. He had risen much above these mundane attributes of life and he was concentrating on much more important and deeper questions pertaining to philosophical aspects of life. There fore it is difficult to account such a rich and enlightened personality as Roy with his wealth of knowledge and experience, as a failure. If this is to be seen as a failure, writes Nigam, 'it is a failure in the sense in which one might call Jesus a failure or the great Budha a failure.' (Nigam 1988:19) Roy was much ahead of his times and was too radical in his thinking to capture the imagination of average common man or even the so-called educated segment of Indian society languishing in pre modern era. Tarkunde says it all when he observes, 'A prophet of a new order, he (Roy) could not be the leader of the old.'

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