

# THE RADICAL HUMANIST



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Founder  
M.N. ROY

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# THE RADICAL HUMANIST

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### Founder Editor:

M.N. Roy

### Advisor:

Dr. Narisetti Innaiah

### Editor:

Mahi Pal Singh-Editor

### Editorial Board:

Vinod Jain, Ramesh Awasthi,  
Bhaskar Sur, Dr. Dipavali Sen  
Mahi Pal Singh-Editor (Ex-Officio)

### Printer and Publisher:

Sheoraj Singh,

### Send articles and reports to:

**Mahi Pal Singh** at Raghav Vihar, Phase- 3,  
Prem Nagar, Dehradun- 248007. (Uttarakhand)  
(M) 9312206414, (Landline): 013-53549624.

### or E-mail them to:

[theradicalhumanist@gmail.com](mailto:theradicalhumanist@gmail.com) or  
[mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com](mailto:mahipalsinghrh@gmail.com)

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25<sup>th</sup> January 1954, on his death anniversary:***

## **We Remember**

*December 13/14 Ellen slain (1960); January 25 (1954), Roy no more, going down like the setting sun. The two months merged into one to make a season. The January issue of the journal used to be a memorial number, commemorating the Roys. Later day compulsions led to the discontinuance of the practice. January, nevertheless, remains with us a moment of memories, reminiscences, regrets and resolves. As an aid let us hear Roy himself:*

## **ROY ON HIMSELF**

.... LET US HAVE a growing number of rational and moral men and women, and we will have no difficulty in building up good political and economic institutions. And in this connection, let us remember that example is better than precept. Let radical humanists themselves compose a society of rational and moral men. Their ideal is not something to be realised in the distant future, but it is to be lived here and now and to be growingly approximated. To educate the people by example and precept is the simple way of New Humanism.

I feel that I am peculiarly fitted to conduct such a cultural movement. No, I am not trying to praise myself. But I have worked in politics in different countries for the last forty years, and have acquired a rather unique experience. And, at the end of it all I have realised the futility of what they call politics. I am old now, but I shall devote the remaining years of life to this educative movement, which I am convinced will be of lasting value...

From a speech at **Dharwar**,  
**Independent India**, February 20, 1949.

(Reproduced from **The Radical Humanist**, January 1983,  
Edited by (Justice) V.M. Tarkunde)

## **Editorial :**

# **M.N. Roy and Mahatma Gandhi**

**Mahi Pal Singh**

The month of January took away from us two stalwarts of India's freedom struggle – on 30th January 1948 a Hindutva fanatic, Nathuram Godse, shot Gandhi dead at Birla Bhawan, New Delhi and on 25th January 1954 M.N. Roy died at his 13 Mohini Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand residence after an attack of cerebral thrombosis.

Gandhi was undoubtedly the biggest leader of the Indian independence struggle as a single call by him brought the Indian masses from Kashmir to Kanyakumari on the streets against the British rulers. He was one leader who was respected by all other leaders and followed by them. His principle of non-violent struggle, or *satyagraha* as he called it, was a unique idea for the world although sometimes he took it too far advising the victims to suffer without resistance, even to the extent of laying down their lives. He was also a binding force among all communities including the Hindus and the Muslims. It was a big irony that the country got partitioned on religious basis when the Muslim League demanded and ultimately got Pakistan as a Muslim country under the leadership of Jinnah in spite of the strong opposition by Gandhi. However, those Muslims who did not want to part with their birth places decided to continue living in India and the country got a secular character where people of all religions could live as equal citizens with love and dignity.

M.N. Roy, the revolutionary, had adopted the way of armed resistance against the British like Subhash Chandra Bose and travelled to many countries including Germany in search of arms for the struggle. However, he could not get any success in his efforts. Ultimately, he returned to India and decided to strengthen the Congress in its freedom struggle. But soon after

his return to the country, he was arrested in the Kanpure conspiracy case in which warrant of arrest had been issued in 1924 earlier, and remained in jail for about six years. But soon after his release from jail in November 1936 he met Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders and joined the Congress in its struggle for freedom. But that was not a successful effort. Ultimately, he left the party and formed the Radical Democratic Party (RDP) to continue his efforts to secure for the people not only political freedom but also economic freedom. Democratic values including individual freedom were equally important for him like the political independence of the country. It was for the sake of these values that he relinquished Marxism and developed the theory of Radical Humanism and started a movement for the achievement of a society based on the principles of Radical Humanism.

Although both Roy and Gandhi had the common goal of achieving India's independence in their minds and worked for it, yet their approach was different. Roy was a thorough democrat and wanted the values of democratic freedom to be followed in all walks of our lives. Gandhi on the other hand believed in self-righteousness and wanted all other leaders to just follow his directions. Roy could not appreciate it. He questioned where he thought everything was not right. He came out with alternate plans. Gandhi did not like it and advised him to just 'render mute service'. That was their parting point. He was a 20th century Indian revolutionary, philosopher, radical activist and political theorist.

Roy went his own way for the spread the ideology of Radical Humanism, wrote many books, started 'The Radical Humanist' in

continuation with the earlier 'Independent India' to spread his ideas.

Though there was a lot common between the two leaders, there were some strong differences also. Gandhi was thoroughly religious, fully believing in religious texts although at the same time being against caste or 'varna', which were preached by none other than religious texts like 'Manu Smriti'. Science and modern technology were not his guiding principles. He was making experiments with Truth to guide him personally, whereas Roy was searching for Truth which would bring freedom

to the individual and progress to the society. His search for Truth made him conclude that Man is the centre of all human activity and his welfare is the supreme goal of life. He was an atheist and did not believe in God or any religious texts as rationality was his guiding principle. His 'Radical Humanism' was scientific Humanism. Therefore, differences of religion, caste, language, region etc. had no value for him.

We pay out tributes to both the great leaders, on their death anniversaries, whose deeds and thoughts would continue to guide us for a long time for the welfare of human race. 

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## **Articles and Features :**

# **Election results: What does BJP's hegemony in the Hindi belt mean for Indian politics?**

**Money Sharma/ AFP**

As the results came in on Sunday, 3rd December, the only consolation for the Congress was Telangana, which the party won, defeating the Bharat Rashtra Samithi. However, in the three Hindi belt states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the party has been crushed by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

With this victory, the BJP domination of the Hindi belt reaches something resembling hegemony. Hindi-speaking Indian voters support the Hindutva party. However, the BJP is absent from South India now.

In fact, a glance at a map of India shows the stark geographical division between states that have BJP-led government and those led by the Opposition. This divide is unprecedented in Indian politics.

What does this mean for Indian politics?

The most immediate and obvious take-away is that the BJP is well placed for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Currently, around 44% of the Indian Union speaks Hindi. Being hegemonic in the Hindi belt means the BJP has a significant lead over other parties even before a single vote is cast.

### **Delimitation next?**

However, this domination might not be limited to the results of a single election. The BJP may be tempted to permanently bake the population strength of Hindi speakers into India's power structure. There are, in fact, already strong hints that the Hindutva party is already considering it.

Earlier this year, Modi shifted the Union parliament to a new building. As it so happens, this new Lok Sabha chamber is designed to accommodate 888 Lok Sabha members instead

of the House's current capacity of 552. In effect, this new parliament might be built to accommodate changes made after delimitation is carried out, determining each state's Lok Sabha seats in proportion to the size of their current populations.

Currently, seats in India's Lower House or Lok Sabha are frozen according to the figures from the 1971 census. In the more than half a century since then, the shares of states in the overall national population have changed significantly: the Hindi belt has seen rapid population growth, while the South has low birth rates. This means, the idea of one-person-one-vote has weakened at the national level.

In Uttar Pradesh, for example, one Lok Sabha MP now represents 25 lakh people. In Bihar, 26 lakh. In West Bengal, however, the number drops to 22 lakh. In Tamil Nadu, it is 18 lakh and in Kerala only 17 lakh. In effect, a Malayali has more than 1.5 times the representation of a Bihari in the Lok Sabha.

If a new BJP government elected in 2024 undertakes delimitation, it would result in a significant increase in the proportion of Lok Sabha seats for Hindi speakers. From 42%, the Hindi belt share in the Lok Sabha would rise to 48%. Given the BJP's domination in the Hindi belt, this would result in a permanent majority of sorts for the BJP. Even extreme dissatisfaction in non-Hindi states would do little to change national equations since they would simply be drowned out in a vote.

### **Cash flow**

Delimitation is, of course, the most extreme example of what the BJP's domination in the Hindi belt could mean for India. However, there

are a number of possibilities that don't go that far – but are in themselves also quite significant.

For one, the pressure on giving more funds to the Hindi belt would increase. This has already happened in some measure with the Modi government's direction to the 15th Finance Commission to use 2011 census data rather than the 1971 data the commission was using till now.

This trend would be exacerbated as the current political map would further incentivise the BJP to make sure that money flows from the South to the Hindi belt. BJP state governments in the Hindi belt could use this money to increase the large allocation of private goods (such as gas cylinders) and cash. Since the party barely has a presence in the South, there would be no internal party mechanism to put the brakes on this process.

### Job rush

Along similar lines, the BJP focus on Hindi might increase. Apart from identity and emotion, language is closely mapped to jobs. Language, via exams, education and the written language of an office, is a powerful tool to both include as well as exclude communities. Already, the special status given to Hindi in a number of central exams has resulted in a major advantage to Hindi speakers.

For example, the Combined Graduate Level Examination for Group B and C officers in the Union government is conducted only in Hindi and English. Every year, the exam is taken by millions of Indians but only Hindi speakers can take it in their mother tongue, giving them an advantage over candidates from other states.

Expect this trend to accelerate as the BJP strives to give its voters in the Hindi belt greater rewards.

Of course, this jobs push might also lead to a backlash. Unlike elections, non-Hindi states do have policy options here. For state government jobs, for example, states might increasingly place barriers for people from outside the state. Even more significant is that some states might move towards the idea of nativist reservations in jobs.

### Federal check

Finally, the stark geographical divide in India's political map might mean that the idea of federalism will, for all practical purposes, now be the only check on the Union government. With Southern states unable to protect their interests through the mechanisms of the Union parliament, state governments and the Opposition will increasingly push federal strategies to protect the interests of their citizens. This has already happened to a large extent given even Rahul Gandhi has described India as a “union of states”. Moreover, state parties are increasingly looking to linguistic identity to counter the BJP Hindu nationalism.

Of course, the Modi government understands this well. That is why it has constantly pushed for policy tools that undermine federalism such as simultaneous elections for state assemblies and the national parliament (which would weaken state parties), the Goods and Services Tax (ending independent state revenues) and a muscular role for governors (allows Delhi to control elected state governments).

Courtesy [Scroll.in](#), Dec 03, 2023 

## The Radical Humanist on Website

‘The Radical Humanist’ is now available at <http://www.lohiatoday.com/> on Periodicals page, thanks to Manohar Ravela who administers the site on Ram Manohar Lohia, the great socialist leader of India.

– Mahi Pal Singh

# Why Opposition doesn't have the words or ideas to take on the BJP

*Opposition is struggling to find language and space for a critique that hits the mark. Meanwhile, it speaks to the converted*

The **BJP's emphatic victory in north India** in the recent assembly elections has reopened the question: What can be the strategy for the Opposition, when faced with an overwhelmingly shrewd and popular prime minister, a deeply connected, motivated, well resourced, tactically smart political machine, and, pockets of economic disaffection notwithstanding, no surge of discontent against the central government?

The challenge for the Opposition is that it is not able to articulate a criticism of the government that sticks. A senior BJP leader recently said that while Congress's communication was feistier, it was aimed at those who were already converted. As the powerful election analysis produced by the Centre for Policy Research shows, in the states it lost, Congress vote share has remained mostly constant. Ironically, instead of the Opposition mopping up the anti-BJP vote, the BJP seems better at consolidating the anti-Congress vote. This is most stark in Chhattisgarh where Congress vote share has barely dipped, but the BJP's has increased by almost 12 per cent. The constancy in aggregate vote share could disguise a lot of micro churn. But it seems to suggest that Congress is, at best, speaking to the converted. Why might that be the case?

The main problem is that the Congress intellectual eco system is entirely at cross-purposes with the ideological changes it needs. The bane of the Left and Centre in Indian politics is its lazy social determinism: For years now, it has been searching for some natural

social group, the equivalent of the proletariat, that simply by virtue of its social position acts as an agent of emancipation. Sometimes it is Dalits, sometimes minorities, sometimes caste groups in general. Politics is reduced to an arithmetic of compulsory social identities.

The caste census was the latest enactment of this mistake. It was politically myopic, because there is no serious development agenda that requires the caste census. This social determinism is morally offensive: It continues to treat voters as scripts of an identity, rather than as political agents making decisions under complex conditions. It is empirically false as the BJP has proved by the impressive transformation it has brought about in political identities of Dalits, OBCs and STs. The BJP engages in an identity politics of Hindutva. But it is far more conscious that identity is politically generated. The Left's identitarianism seems even more imprisoning, and deeply anti-political.

Take the latest canard: The north-south distinction. There are differences between north and south. But the intellectual scaffolding that Congress supporters are trying to build around them is counterproductive, bordering on the racist. It belies the fact that there is simmering communalism in the south, even in Kerala. Caste as a social construct is as oppressive in states like Tamil Nadu as anywhere else. And it is odd to claim that Karnataka can go from being the paragon of evil to virtue and Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan from virtue to evil in one election. It underestimates the potential for the BJP in

**Pratap Bhanu Mehta**

the south. These constructs reek of a politics of petty divisions, come across as naïve about the complex sinews that bind India and leave the grandeur of national ambition entirely to the BJP.

The political genius of the BJP notwithstanding, it will be morally otiose to deny the increased risks of authoritarianism and communalism. But, it has to be admitted, these threats are not being widely felt or experienced. This is just a political fact whether we like it or not. Almost all important institutions of the state are being degraded and our liberties are at peril. But it is being done in a way that most citizens do not experience the difference in their ordinary experience of governance. A few arrests here, a few Opposition leaders being targeted, is still seen as par for the course. And the competitiveness of the political space gives many the assurance that this is at best a minor aberration, not a systematic threat. This is an issue that can be amplified only when those who hold disproportionate power in society, its elites, amplify it. Unfortunately, this is not a constituency the Opposition is able to attract or convince.

On Hindutva, the Opposition critique is hampered by two factors. There is little doubt the BJP has created a core amongst Hindus that is comfortable with the political marginalisation and even violence against Muslims. The will to violent nihilism is more prevalent than we like to admit. But like with authoritarianism, many have assured themselves that there is still no widespread violence yet that puts pressure on one's conscience, or raises the spectre of disorder. The threat seems too distant.

But the Opposition keeps falling into arguing on Hindutva's terms. The core concern of the Opposition is not a dogfight over culture; the Congress' ecosystem is not well placed to win that fight. It does have to

meet the charge of being anti-Hindu, and every cultural fight lands it in that trap. The only way out of this is the defence of every single individual's equal freedom and dignity, something that rises above the majority-minority framework. It has to take consistent stands on free expression and blasphemy, riots and political killings, and critique of community power in all communities. In the majority-minority framework, the minorities will lose politically.

The Congress has foregrounded a critique of corruption. This has two problems. The only circumstance in which it works is if there is a credible carrier: Either a rank outsider like JP or in its early days, AAP, or a big defector from the ruling system like VP Singh. The second is the level of critique: There was, for example, a lot of dissatisfaction with corrupt MLAs, or concerns about exam recruitment. But an abstract critique of Adani (in a state like Rajasthan which is receiving a Rs 5,000 crore Adani investment) was beside the point. The other is the economy.

This is a complex issue: The state has to stitch together welfare coalitions, and the competition is often over competence. But more importantly, the Opposition is increasingly being seen as lurching more left: The line between being anti-big business and anti-business is hard to convey. It has no new paradigm that looks like a new deal for the Indian economy.

So, apart from the leadership, tactical and organisational issue, the Opposition, whether Congress singly or the INDIA alliance, is struggling most of all to find a language and a space for a critique that hits the mark. No wonder it is speaking to the converted.

*The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express*

Courtesy **The Indian express**, December 7, 2023 

# Bargain gets harder for battered Cong as INDIA bloc calls meet

**Mohua Chatterjee**

**New Delhi:** The INDIA alliance has called a meeting on December 6 to revive consultations that were stalled by the Congress focus on assembly polls, amid a realisation that the grand old party's rout in the Hindi heartland has seriously weakened its potential to challenge BJP in 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Congress is set to be diminished in its ability to dictate terms and seek better seat-sharing formula in states where regional parties have a primacy, while its own claim of revival to fill the opposition coffers with good number of seats from the heartland states would be rebuffed by the partners. It may also come under pressure to relinquish the leadership role, which Congress had come to assume after its massive victory over BJP in Karnataka.

This sets up the INDIA alliance for animated discussions this week. Yet, a chastened Congress would not be bad news for many of the allies wary of Congress, like SP, JDU, TMC and NCP. These groups are bound to relish the Congress' misery and would seek to nudge the party to a line of their liking. It would be interesting to see how TMC pushes Congress on its alliance with CPM in West Bengal. While Congress has stonewalled calls by AAP for a deal in Delhi and

Punjab, it is to be seen how the party reacts post-rout.

The changed situation is likely to speed up the seat-sharing talks and force their early culmination among the INDIA block partners.

The allies had sought seat-sharing deal by September 30, arguing that it would give enough time to "prepare the anti-BJP voters to focus on a single party on the ground, in each constituency to ensure a defeat for the BJP candidate", according to a key number of

the INDIA alliance. But Congress delayed seat-sharing talks, as the lead opposition player was confident of its chances in the five states going to polls, especially in the straight fights with BJP in MP and Chhattisgarh., it had felt that a good show against BJP in the north would give it a strong leverage to demand a better share in states like Bihar, UP and Maharashtra. Such expectations are sure to come apart now, much to the relief of the allies.

The resentment against the Congress attitude was evident when, within hours of Sunday's results, one of the first INDIA alliance partners to react was Nitish Kumar's JDU. Party spokesperson K.C. Tyagi said, "Congress never invited or consulted any of its allies in the INDIA block even though socialist parties have historically had a presence in these states... It is very necessary now for everyone to strengthen the INDIA block. If the alliance meeting was called a couple of months earlier, it would have been good." However, CPM's Sitaram Yechury made accommodative calls to strengthen the INDIA block.

On his part, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said in Mumbai, "I don't think this will have any impact on the INDIA alliance. We will be meeting at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in Delhi. We will speak to those who know the ground reality. We will be able to comment on it after the meeting only." One must accept that the current trends are in favour of BJP, he added. On Telengana, Pawar said, "Earlier, it was assumed BRS would retain Telengana. However, after Rahul Gandhi's rally, which received a huge response, we realised there will be change in the state."

( To be Contd....on Page -18)

# ‘North-South Divide Is Very Worrying’

Archana Masih

**‘Every Indian who is concerned about the unity, integrity of India should be worried about this growing divide.’**

“I do not know what will be the future narrative of the north-south divide and where this will lead,” **Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay**, author of *The RSS: Icons of the Indian Right* and *Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times* tells *Rediff.com*’s Archana Masih.

**Does Sunday’s outcome mean that the Congress has no chance of revival in the Hindi heartland as long as Mr Modi remains the BJP’s primary campaigner?**

One can never say never in politics. No one can predict what the next twist in politics will be.

But yes, the outcome on Sunday has made it tougher for the Congress than what it seemed at the beginning of the election campaign. The party had a good chance in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, and was in a tight contest in Rajasthan.

This verdict makes the party’s task of winning sections of north and central India tougher.

**What then can the Congress do to regain relevance among this section?**

- Congress needs cohesion as a party unit.
- Greater understanding among its leadership.
- Work harder.

The party needs to learn from the BJP. The BJP does not relax even for a moment. In the initial period of the campaign in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, it appeared that the Congress had a head start over the BJP. Perhaps, this made them complacent.

It does not take the day or weekend off. It has an obsession with power that the Congress does not.

**What factors cost the Congress these elections?**

In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the state units were fending for themselves — either the state leaders did not want the central leaders to get involved or wanted them in a peripheral role or the central leadership wanted the state leaders to face the music on their own.

The central leadership was unable to iron out differences between Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot in Rajasthan.

Before that, it was ineffective in sorting out the power tussle between Kamal Nath, Jyotiraditya Scindia and Digvijay Singh in MP.

In 2018, even though the central leadership wanted Scindia as chief minister, it was unable to enforce that decision on Kamal Nath. This ultimately led to Jyotiraditya leaving the party and the Congress losing the government.

Similarly, in 2023, Kamal Nath did not want the central leadership to step into the campaign in a big way.

However, Chhattisgarh has been a surprise. Even the reporters on the ground did not see this coming. It could be because of the Congress’ complacency coupled with a great campaign run by the BJP.

**Why did Mr Gehlot and Mr Baghel’s social policies fail to have an impact?**

The BJP was also announcing similar schemes at the Centre and people thought why not go with the original rather than the duplicate.

I’m uncertain about why it failed for Baghel because he seemed in absolute command and was all set to return for a second term.

He was already being talked about for a national role. Maybe the conflict between Baghel and T S Singh Deo cost the Congress dearly.

## **Does this mean that welfare schemes are of no consequence unless in the background of Hindutva like in Madhya Pradesh?**

There are four reasons behind the BJP's tremendous performance.

- Modi's personality and popularity.
- Ideology of cultural nationalism or Hindutva. Shunning 'appeasement', which essentially means that no concessions will be given to Muslims or Christians.
- Welfare programmes.
- The massive party infrastructure drawn from the entire Sangh Parivar assisted by resources far greater than what any party has ever had in Indian politics.

## **What can be expected from the BJP politically and governance wise in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections?**

The BJP will fine-tune its welfare schemes. They have already announced free food to 80 crore Indians for five years.

The party will attempt to disguise the fact that 80 crore Indians will be unable to earn enough to make two or three square meals a day for the next five years. It will try to hide its failure and project what it would like to be seen as its successes.

Free food actually shows the failure of a government, but it will be turned around as depicting Modi as a humanitarian leader.

The Opposition's job will be to highlight Modi's failure in reviving the economy that he has to provide free food to nearly 50% of the population. Nowhere in the world have such a large number of people been given free food.

Meanwhile, the BJP remains in poll mood 24 hours x 365 days. It does not take the day or weekend off. It has an obsession with power that the Congress does not.

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### **What can be expected from the BJP politically and governance wise in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections?**

The BJP will fine-tune its welfare schemes. They have already announced free food to 80 crore Indians for five years.

The party will attempt to disguise the fact that 80 crore Indians will be unable to earn enough to make two or three square meals a day for the next five years. It will try to hide its failure and project what it would like to be seen as its successes.

Free food actually shows the failure of a government, but it will be turned around as depicting Modi as a humanitarian leader.

The Opposition's job will be to highlight Modi's failure in reviving the economy that he has to provide free food to nearly 50% of the population. Nowhere in the world have such a large number of people been given free food.

### **Welfarism along with the Ram temple — are these going to be the two aces that Mr Modi is going to arm himself with going into the Lok Sabha election?**

The Ram temple will be one facet of all-encompassing Hindutva within the BJP's election campaign.

Mr Modi has already said yesterday that there would be no 'tushtikaran' or appeasement. This actually means that no favours will be given to the Muslims. The message has been constantly spread that this government under Mr. Modi has 'fixed' the Muslims. This is the message that the BJP wants to convey without using those

very words.

The emerging north-south divide is very worrying. The impending passage of the three criminal laws named in Hindi, coupled with the ever increasing drive to use Bharat in place of India, not because of any historical connect, but because it is more Hindi than India is dangerous.

I foresee future historians concluding that this was the genesis of the divide between the north and south. I do not know what will be the future narrative of the north-south divide and where this will lead.

Every Indian who is concerned about the unity, integrity of India should be worried about this growing divide. There is a disconnect between the BJP and southern India regardless of what is happening in Karnataka.

### **Apart from Mr Modi, what else works for the BJP in the Hindi heartland?**

Hindutva and welfare schemes.

'Welfare' is a socially and politically acceptable word for doles or handouts. It is ironic because Mr Modi used to say that he does not believe in giving anything free to the people.

### **Would you say that the BJP will probably win 400 seats next year?**

Anything is possible in politics. Nobody could sense in 2004 that the NDA government under Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee would get voted out.

Nobody thought that the Congress would shrink to 45 seats in 2014.

### **What are the top few takeaways for you from Sunday's verdict?**

The Congress has stolen defeat from the jaws of victory. This is a lesson in how to lose elections for the Congress.

And for the BJP, it is a lesson in how to win an election that was almost lost. The BJP had nearly lost MP and Chhattisgarh.

Courtesy **Rediff.com**,  
December 04, 2023 

# For 2024, Opposition is still in the game

*The next general election is not a done deal. Not yet. Unless the Opposition surrenders to this psychological warfare and gives a walkover before the match begins*

On the eve of the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, I had written an article, ‘Never Mind the Pollsters, the Race is Still Open’ (The Hindu, March 15, 2004). It made a limited point: Notwithstanding the hype about “India Shining”, a dispassionate look at electoral numbers showed that a defeat for the BJP was a possibility. Something similar needs to be said now in the wake of the hype around BJP’s hat-trick in the three assembly elections: Never mind the darbari media, the race is still open.

Let me clarify what I am not saying. There is no doubt that the outcome in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh is a setback for the Congress, and all those who wish to see restoration of democracy in 2024. The BJP’s victory in three north Indian states does overshadow the Congress’ historic comeback in Telangana. It creates favourable optics for the BJP in the run-up to the national polls. But this does not translate into cold numbers. The outcome of these four states does not change the electoral calculus as it stood before the results. I just don’t see how these reverses for the Opposition close the 2024 contest.

Let us start by counting votes. Before we conclude that a 3-1 victory for the BJP is a ringing endorsement of the regime by the voters, let us add up votes of both the leading parties for these states. Of the 12.29 crore votes polled, the BJP secured 4.82 crore, while the Congress had 4.92 crore (5.06 crore, if you include all INDIA parties). Except in MP, the margin of the BJP’s victory is very small in terms of popular votes. Congress’s lead over the BJP in Telangana is large enough to make up for its deficit in the rest. So the BJP has not

received a massive popular endorsement in the latest round.

Let us convert these votes into parliamentary seats. We have a surprise in store. These states have 83 seats in the Lok Sabha, of which BJP had as many as 65 and Congress secured only 6 seats in the last Lok Sabha elections. Suppose the citizens of these states vote exactly the same way next year as they did in the recent assembly elections, the net gainer will be Congress, not the BJP. Even after this hat-trick, the BJP’s performance is way below its post-Pulwama support in 2019. If we add up assembly-wise votes for each parliamentary seat, the tally will be 24 for BJP and 5 for the Congress in Madhya Pradesh (compared to 28-1 in 2019), 8 for BJP and 3 for the Congress in Chhattisgarh (9-2 in 2019), 14 for BJP and 11 for Congress in Rajasthan (24-0 in 2019) and 0 for the BJP and 9 for the Congress in Telangana (4-3 in 2019). In all, it would mean 46 seats for the BJP (loss of 19) and 28 seats for the Congress (gain of 22). If we merge the votes of the INDIA partners, there would be 38 seats for the BJP and 36 for INDIA. I am not saying that this is the likely outcome. But this notional calculation puts to rest the idea that the BJP has sealed its victory.

Let us now consider the obvious argument that the Lok Sabha outcome may not replicate the Vidhan Sabha verdict. That’s true. We have seen a reversal in the BJP’s favour in 2019 and for the Congress in 2004. But this argument cuts both ways. If the BJP can look to improve upon its position in the next few months, so can the Congress. You can choose which of these scenarios is more likely, but the outcome of the recent elections is no basis to close any

**Yogendra Yadav**

of these. The idea that the BJP is bound to improve its votes in the run-up to the national elections draws upon the misplaced parallel with 2019 when Balakot intervened between these two polls.

Let us for a moment assume that the BJP improves further during the next few months and sweeps the three Hindi states in the Lok Sabha just as it did last time. Assume further that this sweep extends to states like Gujarat, Delhi and Haryana. Does that settle the national contest? Not really, as the BJP had already reached saturation level in these states. A sweep here is necessary but not sufficient for the BJP. The Opposition's game plan for 2024 is not dependent on these states.

Look at the big picture. In 2019, the BJP won 303 seats, just 30 seats above the majority mark. The BJP faces significant depletions in its unprecedented tally in Bengal (where it faces a meltdown), Karnataka (where, going by assembly election results for BJP-JDS combine, Congress would gain 10 seats), Maharashtra (where it faces the MVA), Bihar (pitted against a new Mahagathbandhan) and Uttar Pradesh (even a repeat of the 2022 Assembly results would mean a loss of 10 seats to BJP). Add to it near-certain but minor losses in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Telangana and Assam. Put any number to these losses for the BJP and it is sure to exceed 30. The hard question is: Where can the BJP possibly add to its 2019 tally and make up for these losses?

I am not saying that there is no way the BJP can contain its losses or make up for them. I am simply pointing to the writing on the wall, written in cold

electoral numbers, as it stands today: 2024 is not a done deal. Not yet. Unless the Opposition surrenders to this psychological warfare and gives a walkover before the match begins.

Courtesy **The Indian Express**,  
8 December 2023. 

#### 14<sup>th</sup> Justice V.M. Tarkunde Memorial Lecture:

# Dissemination of fake news drowns out true info: CJI

**KHADIJA KHAN**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1



Justice D Y  
Chandrachud

CHIEF JUSTICE of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud on Friday said dissemination of fake news drowns out true information, replacing the character of discourse from truth-seeking to the loudest voice.

At the 14th Justice VM Tarkunde Memorial Lecture on "Upholding Civil Liberties in the Digital Age: Privacy, Surveillance, and Free Speech", he said: "A cursory glance at the newspaper every day will bring to the fore instances of communal and vigilante violence fueled by fake rumours and targeted disinformation campaigns. Across the globe – be it Libya, the Philippines, Germany, or the US – elections and civil society have been tarnished by the proliferation of fake news."

Remembering Justice Tarkunde, former Bombay HC judge and founder of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, as a "legal luminary", the CJI spoke about having briefed him on several cases when they both were lawyers. "In one such case, *Sodan Singh v. New Delhi Municipal Committee*, which dealt with the right of pavement hawkers to carry on their occupation, he

(Tarkunde) told me you must always look at the law's purpose in such cases," the CJI said. Hailing Justice Tarkunde's courage, Justice Chandrachud recalled the many preventive-detention cases he took as a lawyer, free of charge, during the Emergency, including that of The Indian Express journalist Kuldip Nayyar's, who was detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971.

Recalling Justice Tarkunde's death in 2004 when the digital age was in a relatively "nascent stage", Justice Chandrachud went on to highlight the presence of emerging initiatives and civil society groups in today's day and age that aim to tackle online censorship, Internet shutdowns and mass surveillance. "They represent a contemporary form of protest and activism which is rooted in Justice Tarkunde's tradition of safeguarding citizens' liberties. In many ways, the 'digital liberties activism' of today's Internet age is a way of upholding the pre-existing traditions of civil liberties activism," he said.

# India's 'Amrit Kaal': Hunger, Inequity and a \$30-Trillion Economy

*A near ten-fold increase in the size of the economy and per-capita GDP is being projected to be achieved in the next 25 years in the backdrop of poverty, hunger and unemployment.*

So goes a Press Information Bureau (PIB) note issued on 29 November, 2023: "The Cabinet led by Prime Minister has decided that the Central government will provide free food grains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for a period of five years with effect from 1st January, 2024... This is a historic decision that places PMGKAY amongst the World's biggest social welfare schemes aimed at ensuring food and nutrition security for 81.35 crore persons, at an estimated cost of Rs. 11.80 lakh crore over a 5-year period... The decision reflects the strong commitment of Hon. PM Shri Narendra Modi towards efficient and targeted welfare through fulfilment of basic food and nutrition requirements of the population. Ensuring food security at this scale during Amrit Kaal would play a pivotal role in dedicating efforts towards building an aspirational and developed India."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had suo motto proclaimed this largesse at an election rally on November 4 this year. "Today, I want to tell the poor brothers and sisters of the country from the land of Durg (Chhattisgarh) that I have decided that the BJP government will now extend the PMGKAY providing free ration to 80 crore poor people of the country for the next five years." He claimed that he himself came from a poor family and he considers poor as the "biggest caste [group] in the country."

The scheme involves free supply of five kg of food grains per month to over 810 million people who account for three-fourths of the

**M.G. Devasahayam**

country's rural and half of the urban population. The scheme was initiated by the Manmohan Singh government in 2013 under the National Food Security Act to provide subsidised food-grains to the poor. It has gone through changes since and the Modi government introduced the PMGKAY in 2020 as a free ration entitlement scheme.

It was extended for one year in December 2020 as the country was recovering from the Covid pandemic and has been kept going with short extensions since. It is this scheme which is now being extended by five more years confirming the fact that majority of Indians are so poor that they cannot even afford to buy food, which is a basic necessity.

This deep deprivation has accelerated during the NDA regime headed by Modi if one goes by the Gallup World Poll survey for India focusing on lack of money to buy food. The period covered in the study is 2018 to 2021. About 40.2% of respondents in the survey reported not having enough money for food in 2018. This rose to 48% in 2021. In 2023 it seemed to have climbed up further compelling the prime minister to extend the 'free-ration' scheme to over half of India's population for five more years.

This abject poverty is further evidenced by the 2023 Global Hunger Index (GHI), wherein India ranks 111th out of the 125 countries. With a score of 28.7 in the 2023 GHI, India has a level of hunger that is serious. GHI is a peer-reviewed report, published on an annual basis by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe. The GHI is a tool designed to comprehensively

measure and track hunger at global, regional, and national levels, reflecting multiple dimensions of hunger over time.

The report aims to raise awareness and understanding of the struggle against hunger, provide a way to compare levels of hunger between countries and regions, and call attention to those areas of the world where hunger levels are highest and where the need for additional efforts to eliminate hunger is greatest.

What is distressing is that India's low-income levels and deprivation is accompanied by it being among the most inequitable countries in the world with the richest 1% owning more than 40% of the country's total wealth, while the bottom half of the population together share just 3%. Reality is that the rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer.

It is in this canvas that a near ten-fold increase in the size of the economy and per capita GDP is being projected to be achieved in the next 25 years. NITI Aayog recently announced the draft of the vision document 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047' to make India a \$30 trillion economy by 2047 with a per capita GDP of \$17,590 would be ready by December, 2023. America's Boston Consulting Group would be readying this document in consultation with "business tycoons and corporate honchos" including Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani.

NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said that ten sectoral groups of secretaries from various ministries created around themes including infrastructure, welfare, commerce and industry, technology, and governance have each prepared a vision document in a process that lasted nearly two years.

It is claimed that the Indian economy is currently the world's fifth largest, with a size of \$3.75 trillion. The annual per-capita income, as per the government data, stood at <sup>1</sup> 98,374 in 2022-23 i.e., \$1,183. Atanu Chakraborty, the chairman of HDFC Bank expects the Indian

economy to become the third largest in the next four years and reach the \$30 trillion-mark by 2050, with the per-capita income soaring to \$21,000 by then.

Business tycoon Gautam Adani is more assertive and chips in with this gem, "Following independence, it took us 58 years to get to our first trillion dollars of GDP, 12 years to get to the next trillion and just 5 years for the third trillion. I anticipate that within the next decade, India will start adding a trillion dollars to its GDP every 18 months. This puts us on track to be a \$25-\$30 trillion economy by 2050 and drive India's stock market capitalisation to over \$40 trillion." And he adds to good measure, "Our country is now the most exciting land of opportunities" Indeed, he knows better!

To realise this dream NITI Aayog's Subrahmanyam advocates drastic changes, "...2047 will be a very different India. It will be highly urbanised. Where we live, the way we move, the kind of jobs we do, what we eat—things are going to change massively by that time... The government needs radical restructuring, both horizontally and vertically, such that the lower levels of government be entirely tasked with implementation so that senior officials can spend more time ideating."

But pray, what is the "development model" to achieve this mammoth task? Predatory or participatory? In December of 2020, Subrahmanyam's illustrious predecessor Amitabh Kant laid bare an oligarchic-cum-monopolistic model of promoting select champions, "... For the first time in India a government has thought big in terms of size and scale and said we want to produce global champions. Nobody had the political will and the courage to say that we want to support five companies who want to be global champions." As the Adani story unfolds, we see this model being practiced with vengeance.

Under this model while hunger and extreme inequality persists the bulk of the \$30 trillion

will go to one to two percent of the population and India's economy would look like "the drunken stunted dog" as described in Aseem Shrivastava and Ashish Kothari's book *Churning the Earth*: "Imagine a puppy which is fed a special kind of diet which distorts his growth so that one of his legs grows astonishingly fast, while the other three get stunted to various degrees. Now imagine that the puppy grows into a dog of sorts, gets drunk and begin to spin around the house in ecstasy."

I wonder whether this is the fate of 'New India' in 'Amrit Kaal' which the PIB note is talking about.

**M.G. Devasahayam** is a former Army and IAS officer.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 2 December 2023. 

**Contd. from page - (10 )**

## **Bargain gets harder for...**

A statement from Arvind Kejriwal's AAP on Sunday made it clear that the party was looking forward to INDIA alliance meeting on December 6, "where the future course of action will be decided".

Courtesy **The Times of India**, 5 December 2023.

*(The meeting of the INDIA alliance was held on 19th December in which it was decided to hold a protest on 22nd December 2023 against the suspension of about 146 Parliament Members from Parliament)* 

# **Decaying Institutions and Diminishing Democracy of the Indian Republic**

*As India enters the platinum year of the ratification of its constitution on November 26, the precious gift of democracy is fast diminishing and is being replaced with the notion of 'Hindu Rashtra'.*

**M.G. Devasahayam**

Ratification of the constitution enters its platinum year on November 26 and so is the Indian Republic. This is the occasion for adult citizens of this land in general and senior citizens who were born before that date, in particular, to introspect as to what happened then and where we are now.

I am among those who were born in the decade when India got its independence and went on to become a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic with a written constitution. On that day a miraculous transformation had happened in my life – from a 'subject' of the Maharaja of Travancore, I had become a 'citizen' of India. It is a miracle because a 'subject' in a kingdom is "one who is placed under authority or control such as vassal to a king/monarch and

governed by the monarch's law" and has no rights of his/her own. On the other hand, 'citizens' in a democratic republic have the supreme power and rights which they exercise by voting and electing representatives who enact the laws and govern on their behalf. This was the political transformation.

A social transformation had also happened. The kingdom of Travancore then was a "Hindu Rashtra". Centuries ago, in 1750, Martanda Varma dedicated his kingdom to his tutelary deity Sri Padmanabhaswamy. As a result of this, Travancore state became the property of this deity making the King a servant of Sri Padmanabha. The flagship of "Hindu Rashtra" was the practice of caste and communal discrimination and intolerance. The most

prominent Hindu scripture that advocates the doctrines of the caste system is the Manusmriti. Also known as the Mānava-Dharmaūâstra or Laws of Manu, it is believed to be the first ancient legal text and constitution among the many Dharmaūâstras of Hinduism. With Manusmriti's major caste division into high and low castes, there was a rampant practice of discrimination in terms of untouchability and unseeability, meaning that it was not only the physical touch of the lower caste that was pollutant to the upper castes but even the very sight itself could pollute. And I, by birth, had belonged to this 'untouchable/unseeable caste' and faced political and economic ostracism of the worst type.

All these elements of 'monarchy' and "Hindu Rashtra" crashed once the constitution was ratified and then adopted on January 26, 1950 with four cardinal objectives which are to be "secured by the state for all its citizens": (1) Justice-social, economic and political; (2) Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; (3) Equality of status and opportunity and (4) Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation. It is this constitution that raised me from being an "untouchable subject" to that of a "sovereign citizen" of the world's largest democracy. Can there be anything more precious and priceless?

This is the gift of democracy and it is indeed a tragedy that this profound knowledge was not imparted to my generation or to the ones that came after. In the event even now the vast majority of Indians do not know the difference between the 'subject' and 'citizen' and continue to consider themselves as the former rather than the latter. When I try to explain this to the audience of students and teachers in colleges, I see only bland faces! No wonder successive elected governments have succeeded in treating the Indian public as 'subjects' instead of 'citizens' except for the purpose of casting their votes!

As we enter the platinum year of the Republic, the precious gift of democracy is fast

diminishing and is being replaced with the notion of Hindu Rashtra. This is because in 'New India', the institutions of democratic governance have been decaying rapidly and are fast losing their capacity to uphold the values of democracy and constitutional norms. Let's look at three core institutions of democratic governance.

#### **Parliament**

Parliament, which is hypocritically hailed as the "Temple of Democracy", is in sharp decline and is being ruthlessly stymied and desecrated. Its composition – a large percentage of MPs with declared criminal record, and vast wealth – itself is not conducive to democratic governance. Full sessions have been cancelled and Zero/Question hours severely truncated. Vital issues that haunt the nation and its people – death and destruction caused by COVID-19, Chinese incursion into Ladakh, the critical state of the economy, massive unemployment, brazen sale of public assets, galloping price rise and inflation, rising poverty, festering farmer's/fisherfolk issues, to name a few – are not even discussed in parliament. And MPs who raise these critical issues or ask uncomfortable questions are either disqualified or threatened with expulsion. Rahul Gandhi and Mahua Moitra are typical examples.

Parliament deceitfully passes laws as Money Bills. Several draconian and predatory laws have been rushed through in an arbitrary and autocratic manner, not complying with even elementary principles of democracy. And the way parliament proceedings take place, its watchdog Committees function and the laws enacted could even shame autocratic states!

Chief Justice of India himself castigated this on Independence Day 2021: "If you see debates which used to take place in Houses in those days, they used to be very wise, constructive... Now, (it is) a sorry state of affairs... There is no clarity in laws. It is creating a lot of litigation and loss to the government as well as inconvenience to the public." In the event, the cry that democracy is being murdered in parliament rings true.

### **Supreme Court**

On the role of the higher judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, this is what one of its former judges said, “The public perception of the vast majority of Indian citizens is that the Supreme Court, of late, has largely abdicated its solemn duty of upholding the constitution in its true spirit and protecting the liberties of the people... It is no longer doing its constitutional duty of protecting citizens against political and executive high-handedness, arbitrariness, and illegalities. Instead, it seems to have largely surrendered before the government, whose bidding it is often doing.”

It looks as if constitutional values which define democracy such as liberty, fundamental rights, equity, electoral integrity, human rights, and dignity of the individuals are very low priorities for the apex court!

### **Election Commission**

It is an autonomous constitutional body with a mandate to discharge its onerous responsibility of conducting elections in a free and fair manner. Of late, EC has not been discharging this responsibility well. It looks as if the Commission has been captured and eviscerated as evidenced by these happenings:

- EC has been deliberately and brazenly ignoring and trivialising major flaws pointed out by experts and political parties regarding the conduct of elections. These include integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral rolls to ensure that no voter is left out; EVM/ VVPAT voting and counting not complying with democracy principles and end-to-end verifiability; criminalisation of electoral politics and the evil role of money power including electoral bonds; improper scheduling of elections and failure in enforcing the Model and Media Codes of Conduct.
- Election Commissioners, including CEC, attended a meeting summoned by the PMO and chaired by the principal

secretary to the PM to discuss some “electoral reforms”. By obeying PMO’s diktat, the Commissioners have committed gross constitutional impropriety which has never happened before.

- EC actively facilitated the passage of Election Laws (Amendment) Bill to link voter ID with Aadhaar. This measure, which could sink democratic elections, was done at the behest of the PMO. And though ‘voluntary’, EC is coercing the voters to do the linkage with threats of deletions from the voter’s list.
- When electoral bonds were first announced in 2017, EC had opposed it saying it “compromised” electoral transparency. The Commission flip-flopped later and supported the bonds in 2021 and opposed the plea for a stay in the Supreme Court.
- Even now, Prime Minister Modi and home minister Shah are indulging in brazen violation of the Model Code of Conduct in the poll-bound states (announcing a five-year free ration for 80 crore “poor”, Rs 24,000 crore tribal package, free tour of Ram Mandir, etc.) and EC is not lifting a small finger.

All these indicate that there is a clear and present danger to India’s democracy while the prospect of its return to Hindu Rashtra is rising fast.

The words “election” and “democracy” have become synonymous. As of now, the only way to choose our representatives to govern ourselves is through the electoral process. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states as much: “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”

( To be Contd....on Page -30)

# Why do Nepal, B'desh beat India in social indicators? Starts with caste

Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar

India is falling behind other countries of the region in education and health. Economist Jean Dreze has written a foreword to a forthcoming book by Swati Narayan, "Unequal: Why India lags behind its neighbours." Dreze notes that Bangladesh has long overtaken India in life expectancy, fertility, child mortality, sanitation, school participation and gender equality. Initially this was seen as a quirk, but the gap kept growing paining deeply embarrassing for India. This was attributed in special characteristics of Bangladesh such as outstanding NGOs and strong public health interventions. Its per capita income was also comparable with India's.

But then Nepal, with a per capita income half of India's, also began to surge ahead. For underweight and stunted children, India's latest rates as per NFHS-5 (2019-21) are 32% and 35% respectively. This is an improvement on NFHS-4 but Nepal is far lower at 24% and 31.5%, and Bangladesh even lower at 23% and 28%. Nepal is next door to Bihar, whose underweight and stunting rates are a whopping 41% and 43%. The same is true of many other health and educational indicators.

What is the matter? Above all, India suffers most from the caste system, which exists in some form even in Muslim neighbours. Caste inequality is the mother of all other inequalities – class (income), gender, region, language, and historical advantages. These inequalities reinforce one another, embedding inequality ever more deeply.

So, the most advanced castes and other groups keep roaring ahead while those at the bottom struggle with an educational and health system that barely functions. The result: India has a world-class upper crust that has become a global force in information technology and the

output of engineers, but the lower layers lag progressively behind, with the bottom layer being stark tragedy. Bihar is often called the most caste-ridden state. That is reflected in its pathetic per capita income as well as social indicators.

Most teachers are upper caste ones, and studies show that many of them are contemptuous of low-caste children, who are also difficult to teach because they lack literate parents, books at home, a sizable vocabulary at school entry, private tutors and pre-school learning. The tough curriculum reinforces this. Teachers find it much easier to focus on the rich, most easily teachable children and neglect the others, especially if the rest do not matter socially.

But why is Hindu Nepal not equally handicapped by caste? The answer lies in the different caste composition and culture of not just Nepal but other Himalayan states like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim. All three were very backward in 1950, with very few roads, hospitals, schools or electrified areas. Yet they have improved much faster than other Indian states and now boast some of the best social indicators.

Literacy, according to the 2011 census, was high in Himachal Pradesh (82%), Uttarakhand (79%), and Sikkim (81%), well above India's overall rate of 74%. Some of the worst rates came from Uttar Pradesh (68%) and Bihar (62%). Female labour participation shows a similar pattern, being high in Himachal Pradesh (63%), Sikkim (58%) and to a lesser extent in Uttarakhand (30%), but far above neighbouring UP (17%) and Bihar (9%).

Why are the hill areas different? First, they have a higher proportion of hill tribals without a

caste system. Second, these states got significantly populated only in the 19th century. Sociologist MN Srinivas showed how the lower castes in India always tried to “Sanskritise” themselves, aiming for upper caste characteristics that would enable them to climb up the caste ladder. The Himalayan states have a much higher proportion of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, and a relatively low proportion of shudras and Dalits. It appears that lower castes moving to the hills were able to Sanskritise themselves easily, becoming Brahmins and Kshatriyas in large numbers. They faced little opposition – upper castes were not entrenched in the poor hilly regions.

Sanskritisation meant adopting Brahmin cultural markers like veneration for education. Historically, Brahmins were the only seriously literate caste in India. This hill culture appears to have created higher quality schools,

motivated teachers and students, and parent-teacher relations that yielded consistently improving outcomes.

Nepal is a Himalayan region like the others, with a relatively high proportion of tribals and upper castes. That could have helped it rise faster than India overall. More research is needed on this.

In sum, caste discrimination continues to be the starting point in India of other inequalities that embed unequal access to opportunity. Quotas in education and public service have created a creamy layer among lower castes but no more.

I have no solution or silver bullet to offer. But as long as casteism is rampant, India will be overtaken by one country after another. This should not be the fate of a Vishwaguru.

Courtesy **The Times of India**,  
26 November 2023. 

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*Continued from the last issue...*

## *Chapter 10*

# **Collected Works of Raojibhai Patel** **Development of Radicalism in India**

**Raojibhai Patel**

In my last article, I proposed an explanation of the phenomenon of inaction in the ranks of the R.H. movement. I traced the roots of inaction in the positivist approach and attitude to the problems (political) that have been developing in our ranks. If I am right, the crisis is philosophical and hence goes deeper. In this article, I propose to trace the process of development of the crisis so that a new approach – the rationalist approach may begin generating.

For the sake of the convenience of analysis I shall divide the period of the movement into three subperiods having certain characteristics in predominance. The first runs from 1940 to 1946 during which the movement has a significant beginning. Heroic activity is the characteristic of this period. The second runs from 1946 to 1952 during which the ideology of the movement changes from Marxism to Humanism. This is a period of creative thinking. The third is from 1952 to the present date. It is a period of inactivity, doubt, and sterile thinking.

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### **I – Indian Political Renaissance**

The first period was, for the movement, an exceedingly creative period. Historians have still to seek an explanation of the Radical movement in India and the role it played. Except Beverly Nicholas I know no chronicler who has taken a serious note of this fact. This omission is due to a lurking sympathy for Indian nationalism in spite of negative (if not positively harmful) attitude it took towards the problems of democracy and a civilized way of life during

the Second World War. The emergence of the Radical Democratic Party during this period was a challenge from within to Indian nationalism which functioned during that period in a manner favourable to the Axis Powers. Measured against the terrible weight of nationalism and the sympathy it (nationalism) enjoyed in the fashionable progressive circles (communists and social democrats) in the camp of the Allies, the attempt of the R.D.P. was highly heroic. It is a period of heroism. If the movement today refuses to die it is because the memories of this heroic period are still alive in the minds of many a radical.

A remark (which is a digression from my main theme) is due; that if Indian nationalism turned its back towards democracy during the last war, it is not going to act differently in any future world crisis. The valid reason for this conclusion is provided by the facts that (i) the psychological basis of Indian nationalism is an exploitative personality and (ii) its social basis is a regenerated feudal class. It is because of these characteristics that Khrushchev, in all probability, will be able to turn the apple-cart of Indian Parliamentary Democracy in favour of the Indian Communists. Reverting back to the main theme of this article I raise the question: what was the initial heroism due to? It was I think due to Roy's success in quickening the reason of some Congressmen associated with him and making them see that the object they were seeking viz. Indian Independence, lay in the victory of the Allies rather than in their defeat. The analysis of the

nature of the war as presented in 'India and War' left no doubt in the minds of the young Radicals that in co-operating with the Allies they were fulfilling their own purpose. Roy believed that one of the consequences of the victory of the Allies would be the opening of the flood-gates of a revolution. The concept of the revolution was cast on the ideology of Marxism as interpreted by Roy. The energy of the Radicals was released by providing a reason for expecting a revolution which was a romantic object.

During this period both Roy and his followers had faith in Marxism. This faith comprised in their belief that particular social agencies (peasantry and the working class) were the agencies of an Indian revolution which they were seeking. The Marxist sociology provided the ultimate reasons for this belief. But they were rejecting the Leninist concept of a cadre party, since the political agency for a revolution was characterised by a democratic outlook. This democratic outlook prevented Roy from falling the way Stalinists were falling when they were joining hands with Nazism to fight Imperialism. The socio-economic programme deduced from such a concept of Marxist revolution is incorporated in 'People's Plan' and the 'Constitution' pictured by Roy for a future India. The whole attempt was to interpret Marxism democratically. This content of a concept of revolution generated initial heroism which ushered in the establishment of certain institutions.

From the viewpoint of institution-building also the period was creative. Not only the foundation of the R.D.P. was laid but it was broadening fairly rapidly within the limits imposed by the challenge of a weighty nationalism. Publication of books, pamphlets, periodicals and newspapers were also advancing. Many trade-unions in important industrial towns were organised and managed by able trade-unionists. Co-operative societies and peasants'

organisations began to sprout. No activity was neglected. And Roy used to tour the country annually educating the young democrats, instilling spirit in them and inspiring them to creativity. On all sides there was hope and confidence. There was an atmosphere of joy of creativity and a sense of belonging. The solidarity of the cause generated such a sense of brotherhood that even not after a period of twenty years the accidental or otherwise meeting of two Radical excites the memory of that glorious past.

Of course almost none of these institutions is in existence today. But the activity of that period has some abiding features. It is the crystallisation in the R.D.P. of a group composed of predominantly humanist personalities. It is this differentiation which brings new traditions in Indian politics – the traditions of free and objective thinking. The proposition that the Indian National Congress and other allied political groups were composed of predominantly exploitative personalities is borne out by the political situation that to-day exists in India. Corruption, nepotism and futile power struggles within the ranks of nationalism are some of the evidences. I do not know whether Roy was conscious of what he was doing, in the connection. But in achieving this differentiation he had laid down the foundation of a political renaissance in this country which if duly preserved and carefully nurtured will ensure democracy in this country in all foreseeable future. He could do this by emphasising reason in solving the problems of politics. Everybody knows his emphasis on scientific politics and science to him was not merely a description of phenomena but an activity for acquiring knowledge of causal laws. It was not as a positivist that he could lay the foundations of a political renaissance, the rationalist in him was the cause.

Before I close this chapter I shall remark on one character of the movement during this period. The number participating in this

movement was very much restricted. There is a reason for this restriction. The rate at which humanist personalities develop in this country is palpably low. It is restricted by the authoritarian character of Indian family and the emphasis on the authority of the text in the education system, geared to job-hunting. These conditions are hardly conducive to the flowering of human personalities whose essence is responsibility of thinking and acting. Looking from this angle Roy's success in collecting such personalities and inspiring them to stand the challenge of authoritarian and opportunistically oriented nationalism, on their intellectual convictions only, is stupendous.

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## II – From Marxism to Humanism

The second phase of the movement commenced in 1946. By this time the war had ended. General elections in India were held as a preparation for transferring sovereignty to the Indian people. The total defeat of the R.D.P. in the election was expected. Still it was an experience on the basis of which parliamentary methods should be evaluated from the viewpoint of the problems of democratic politics. Under backward conditions the mechanics of Parliamentary Democracy cannot stop a political group of exploitative personalities from seizing the political power, and making it an instrument of exploitation. Here it is significant to note that the issue framed by the Congress for fighting the elections was determined by their intention to exploit. The suspicion of the British Parliament made it amply clear that after the elections the Parliament would transfer power. However, the transfer of power in 1947 altered the problem of existence of the R.D.P. The independence became a fact. What was the R.D.P. to do then?

Indian independence and revolution (Marxist) were the goals that fired the imagination of the Radicals during the war

period. The first goal having been achieved, the attention immediately turned to the next. It is this second goal that is responsible for the transformation of the movement from its Marxist phase to the phase of Humanism. In this connection the experience of political changes following the termination of the war has a bearing.

The victorious Soviet began to expand its sphere of influence. The Soviet military might became the chief instrument or an agency of 'Marxist Revolutions' in the eastern European countries. The Stalinist theory of revolution appeared vindicated to the faithful. The Soviet military installed the communist parties in power in these countries, crushing during this process such anti-fascist elements which leaned in favour of democracy. The communist dictatorships, euphemistically called the dictatorships of the proletariat started in the face. The relation between democracy and Marxism had got to be reviewed in the light of this experience. Can we be Marxists and democrats at the same time? This was the question which urged and finally compelled the movement to switch on from Marxism to Humanism.

The shrinkage of imperialism and Stalin's bid to fill the vacuum frightened American Capitalism and European Democrats alike. Added to this political question there was already a moral problem of saving the European Communities from an immediate economic collapse as a result of the severe damages wrought by the war operations. Steeped in the methods of political exploitation the communists (Yugoslavia excepted) rejected the Marshall plan on the basis of national sovereignty. As a result of this political and immoral attitude on the part of the communists, Europe divided itself into two hostile camps and became a seat of terrible conflict. There was nervousness on both the sides of the barricade; because any precipitation of yet another war

meant either total extinction of the human race or existence at the level of barbarism.

To Roy such a situation was deadful and to his sensitive and rational mind it became increasingly clear that the situation was a consequence of the application of the Marxist theory of revolution. His doubts were confirmed and he finally rejected Marxism. The second goal of the Radical movement during the war was thus relegated to the museum. It no longer could ignite the fire. The romanticism of the initial period calmed down, The ideals having disappeared, the heat of action was bound to come to a low temperature. Each agency (institutional) of revolution, as a consequence, either toppled down or became a drab mechanical affair devoid of any purpose. That experience was necessary for the next phase of the movement. It was valuable in formulating the new ideology.

The formulation of the new ideology was continuing from 1946 to 1952. It was necessary to think anew for finding out the relevance of the experience of the initial period to Marxism. Till 1946 Roy moved with the conviction that every society experiences a revolution more or less along the lines of Marxist ideology. He could summon the loyalty of his comrades on the basis of his democratic interpretation of Marxism. It was a common venture to put India on the road of a Marxist revolution of his own pattern. The failure of such a revolution in India at the end of the Second World War and the use of military as an agency of communist dictatorship by Stalin (and lately by Mao) falsified beyond doubt the democratic implications of the theory. The application of the theory did not guarantee freedom and social progress. Such a situation perturbed Roy. The failure meant a dissolution of the agencies he was creating. Such a dissolution was inevitable at that stage, because the new concept of revolution he was formulating was conflicting with the conventional forms of action. For the new forms

to evolve, the new concept that was emerging must be assimilated. What was this new concept? The new concept was formulated as Humanism. It evolved through discussions in the annual study camps and writings in the Independent India or Radical Humanist over a period from 1946 to the date of that fatal accident of Roy's fall at Mussoorie.

It is not proper to maintain that Roy rejected the idea of a revolution. In a meeting at Bombay in the year 1946 Roy made this point clear. Only the concept of revolution changed. So far as I know he did maintain that revolutions take place of necessity. But the determining factor is not merely sociological. The structural conflicts within a social system do not by themselves determine a revolution. Besides the structural conflicts, the idea of a revolution and a will to it also enter into the causal process as determining factors and give a shape to the emergent revolutionary society. These factors are autonomous.

He also formulated the criterion of individual freedom as a mark of distinguishing a revolutionary change from other socio-political changes. In doing so he rejects the Marxist criterion of the change of property-relations. Accordingly to Roy the function of a revolution is to expand the idea of freedom. The concept of freedom brings in philosophy.

Involvement of philosophy bewildered many a Radical whose primary interest was action. They were unable to assimilate the new spirit. The chief difficulty lay, in my opinion, in their searching for an agency of revolution. Steeped in Marxist scheme of revolution which lays down definite social agencies (workers and peasants) such persons unconsciously searched for such definite agencies within the social system which would provide the guarantee for the success of their acts. In the humanist theory, no such agency exists. The revolutionaries cut across all social forms and associate freely for action. Roy's rejection of a political party was

based on this fundamental concept of a humanist revolution. The conflict between an unconscious search for definite agencies of revolution and conscious rejection of a political party as the vehicle of the movement gave rise to a pathological situation. It was not realised that a humanist revolution is not predetermined – is not a fate, but a conscious creation by revolutionaries.

The indifference of those who were primarily interested in action towards the movement was forestalled by Roy who at the very outset of the change published the Humanist Manifesto. This Manifesto makes easy reading and could be understood by any one who had a critical appraisal of the world political process between the two world wars. But the Manifesto, in my opinion, fell flat on the Radicals because they were unconsciously searching for revolutionary agencies in society. The movement was stripped of the actors.

Thus during this period there is furious thinking as a result of which Marxism was rejected and Humanism was accepted. But the acceptance of Humanism was, in many cases, due to Roy's authority. There was an inner doubt which hardly anybody could formulate. Authority as the basis of the acceptance of an idea stultifies action. It can at most be mechanical. Thus comes the separation of thought and action which in the subsequent period keeps the movement at a low ebb. Such a situation inevitably brings in attitudes of positivism

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### **III – From Humanism to Positivism**

Soon after Roy's death despair overtook the movement. There was no direction of the movement because nobody within the movement had that experience of politics which would humanise it. The result was an unnoticed disintegration of the movement. The occasional outbursts of unity were an expression of the inward weakness. This internal disunity was

caused by the passing away of Roy's authority and the consequent subjective reasons of Radicals to events. During earlier days Roy's writings used to strip off the subjectivity of the individual reaction and unify them in a single whole. After Roy's death, with the passage of time the subjective divergences began to increase creating conditions of lack of mutual confidence. And lack of mutual confidence does not conduce to action. Everyone within the movement was a leader unto oneself without in many cases having the requisite qualities of leadership. It is an accident of history that Roy passed away before a mature leadership could emerge within the movement.

During this period the country experienced many events showing that the political stability of the country was merely apparent. The reactions of the Radicals to such events began to harden and there emerged attitudes which were dispersed over the whole range of humanism – from the pole of Radical Humanism to the other pole of transcendental Humanism. In the absence of a continuously active organ which would formulate and apply political standards of Radical Humanism to such events this was bound to happen. I shall cite some of the attitudes crystallized during this period. As to the various direct actions taking place within the country the opinions ranged from active participation within the limits imposed by Humanism to an outright rejection of such mass actions, on the basis of the defence of the parliamentary democracy. On the problem of the defence of the country the opinions (before the Chinese Aggressions) ranged from non-alignment to an active alliance with the Western Powers. It is none of my concern to justify one or the other attitude. What I wish to state is that in the absence of an objective proposition of the politics of Radical Humanism such a dispersion of opinions and attitudes is inevitable. Whether one deplores such a dispersion or not, is quite a different matter.

The above mentioned consideration of the conditions within the movement does indicate to a process which leads to the absence of a Radical political standpoint. With the recession of such a stand-point the individual is thrown to his local environments for judgment and for action. While the judgment and the action are determined by local environments the profession of Humanism helps him to the delusion that it is 'I' who is responsible for this judgment and this action. Such determination of attitude by local conditions taking place unconsciously leaves to Humanism the task of rationalisation. The objectivity of Humanism postulated by Roy slowly recedes to the background. If this process is not checked and checked in time there will no more be a Radical movement. Such a state of the movement when viewed, against Roy's outburst – 'Yes! the light will come from the East' – cannot but be deplored.

This exactly is the process by which classical liberalism of Europe finally succumbed either to the nationalism of Hegel (finally adopted by Green and Boscuque) or to the classicism of Marx (finally adopted by Bernstein and Rosa Luxemburg). I agree, it is difficult to out-grow the conditions created by classical liberalism. But Roy formulated his New Humanism to mitigate these conditions. While tragedies occur it will be a tragedy if yet another tragedy should be taken as inevitable.

What the above analysis reveals is that the process of identifying the humanist 'I' with a local 'T' is determined by a certain weakness of the Radical movement. This weakness consists in the lack of an organisation for the realisation of the Humanist 'I'. Summer camps, intermittently taking place, hardly suffice for this purpose. There must be continuously existing linkages binding the various elements of the movement for the development of the Humanist I. In the absence of such linkages the ideals imbibe the character of transcendence. The negative proposition that there is nothing within

the statement of new Humanism which precludes organisation is not enough for the rise of an organisation. The proposition that an organisation is necessary for enlivening the ideals of the movement must be affirmed. The ideology must be made active.

In the absence of such an organisation the participants are compelled to resort to the existing forms of action like political parties and other pseudo-political organisations. The compulsion issues from the fact that those who have been associating with the movement are primarily active beings and active in politics. To realise this primal nature they have to seize organisations as they come to them. And during the process hmanism is either lost, distorted or compromised.

The phenomenon of the lack of organisation needs to be explained. I start from an assumption that every activity of organising is a rational activity. All organisations reflect some reason at some level. Hence the absence of organisation must be traced to some want of rationalist traditions on the part of the participants. Roy's philosophy of New Humanism is based on the postulate of the innateness of the rationality of man. New Humanism stands or falls with this doctrine of rationalism because the sanction behind the sovereignty of man (which is a postulate of democracy) is his reason. Hence if there is any item of principle in the Manifesto of New Humanism which guarantees the emergence and development of Radical democratic institutions, it is this doctrine of the innateness of reason of man. Any doubt on this score must stultify action proper to the ideals.

However many concerned with the movement do entertain doubt about this proposition of rationality. These doubts are variously formulated and expressed. Some reject the innateness of reason. Some reject the value of reason for building institutions and particularly political institutions. The implications

of these doubts lead either to Marxism or any allied ideological system because if reason is not innate it is acquired. And the source from which it is acquired is Society and not the individual. There is no escape from the sociology of knowledge – the keynote of Marxist sociology. Again the corollary to the view, that reason is not of value in the reintegration of a society, is that reintegration should take place on the basis of emotions. Exploitation of emotions is the bane of totalitarian politics. Hence if the view that reason is not a value in the reintegration of society is true, we have no alternative to the totalitarian political practices.

Doubt about the doctrine of the innateness of reason coupled with an instinctive abhorrence of totalitarian systems bring in attitudes proper to positivism. It makes man cynic towards all action or compels him to merge in the existing institution through the consciousness proper to mechanical actions. Such attitudes are characterised by an instinctive abhorrence of mass action and an increasing concern for the status-quo. This is what happened to the European liberal movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It leaves the masses to a leadership

which is theologically oriented. In the Radical movement today such attitudes give rise to over-emphasis on the value of intellectuals and an over all concern for the deference of Parliamentary democracy. It is hardly realised that Parliamentary Democracy in India is succumbing to the Machiavellian tactics (supported by mass agitations) of the communist and this process cannot be arrested without direct action.

Doubt about this principle of nationalism is rooted in certain experiences. Since all existing institutions reflect some reason and since these existing institutions are judged as valueless for freedom, reason itself becomes suspect. Behind such a suspicion there lurks a meaning of 'Reason'. 'Some reason' is identified with 'all reason'. Reason is not viewed as a process – as a self-evolving entity. It is not realised that the concept of institutions to replace the existing ones also emerges from the rational activity of man. While the experience of emotion has as its object some existing institution and hence leans towards status-quo, the activity of reason creates the possibility of new institutions. But reason must be active.

**R.H. Weekly** 

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**- Mahi Pal Singh, Editor, The Radical Humanist**

# M.N. Roy: Mahatma Gandhi's Weighty Opponent

*Few Indian revolutionaries matched Manabendra Nath Roy's international stature. Born Narendra Nath Bhatta-charya, he was feted both by Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin as founder of two communist parties—the Mexican Com-munist Party and the Indian Communist Party*

**Pranay Sharma**

In his engagement with a wide array of people, few had the ability or the temerity to unsettle Gandhiji. Manabendra Nath Roy was perhaps, an exception. “He strikes at my very roots” was Gandhiji’s response as he told his supporters to ignore and stay away from him.

Few Indian revolutionaries matched Roy’s international stature. Born Narendra Nath Bhatta-charya, he was feted both by Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin as founder of two communist parties—the Mexican Com-munist Party and the Indian Communist Party—as well as enjoying the respect and admiration of a host of leaders in the Soviet and international circle of communists and socialists.

For a man who had the int-ellect to present a supplement to Lenin’s draft theses on “National and Colonial Questions” and was elected to serve as member of the presidium of the Comintern (Communist International), Roy also had a wide range of admirers in India, Jawaharlal Nehru, who kept himself abreast of

dev-lopments in the outside world, being one of them.

Roy’s re-thinking of political methods began in earnest on his ret-urn to India and while serving a six-year term in jail. He joined the Indian Nati-onal Congress in 1936 in a bid to “radicalise the party” and urged other communists to join it to strengthen the democratic liberation struggle.

His only meeting with Gandhi was on the eve of INC’s Faizpur Session in 1936. But though the two leaders had a lengthy 90 minute interaction, they differed on most issues apart from the need for India to be free. The unease of Gandhi about Roy’s views and opinions was clear when he suggested to him, “Since you are new to the organisation, I should say you would serve it best by mute service.”

Unable to be in an organisation where Gandhi and his coterie took all decisions without wider consultation, M.N. Roy left the INC after four years.

Courtesy **Outlook**, 27 September 2019. 

## Decaying Institutions and Diminishing...

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This is further fortified by the ‘Social Contract’ theory propounded by political philosophers Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, through which democracies have emerged and evolved, that state power is justified and lawful only when consented to by a majority of the governed. This consent can be derived only through an honest and genuine electoral process which is not possible when core institutions of democracy decay and then die. Because democracy is championed and sustained by institutions, not individuals.

Hindu Rashtra rising and democracy diminishing in ‘New India’ could devastate world order and cannot be countenanced.

**M.G. Devasahayam** is a former Army and IAS officer.

Courtesy **The Wire**, 25 November 2023.

# M.N. Roy and the Mahatma

## *A radical critique and assessment of Gandhi and Gandhism*

When Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India in January 1915 after nearly twenty-one years in South Africa he was a relatively obscure figure known to very few people in his own motherland. His acknowledged political mentor, Gokhle, advised him to devote a year to acquainting himself with the Indian reality. Gandhi himself had remarked before leaving South Africa that India was a strange country to him. India was in the midst of war, and Gandhi pleaded for unconditional and wholehearted support by Indians in the war effort. In the New Year's Honours list of 1915 he was awarded Kaiser-in-Hind gold medal for his proven loyalty to the British empire. He was then forty six, and no-one could have foreseen that in a few years time he would establish himself as the most popular and powerful political leader of nationalist India.

But although his valiant efforts in South Africa had not achieved any just or enduring solution of the Indian problem in that country, his personal gain from that bitter experience was considerable. South Africa transformed him from a diffident and inconspicuous youngman to a charismatic personality whose integrity and inner strength inspired not a few and commanded from them unquestioning devotion and discipline. After the cold and lonely night at Pietermaritzburg station which he later claimed to be the 'most creative experience' of his life, it took him about ten years (1894-1904) to prepare himself for the leadership-role which was to be his for the rest of his life. Not only did he remould himself, but he also got his self-image persuasively portrayed by his first biographer, Rev. Joseph J. Duke, who focussed on the religious-ethical dimension of his politics and presented him as a patriot-saint. *M.K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa* was published in London

in October 1909 with an introduction by Lord Ampthill. He had already discovered his very special method of organized non-violent resistance to unjust laws and institutions – *Satyagraha* – and formed his *welt-anschauung* which he then boldly formulated as some kind of a manifesto, at first in Gujarati – *Hind Swaraj* – and subsequently in English, *Indian Home Rule* (March 1910). He sent copies of both his authorised biography and his manifesto to Tolstoy who gave his authoritative imprimatur by declaring Gandhi's experiments in South Africa to be of global significance. South Africa also made Gandhi an adept in both conducting a militant political movement involving many people and terms of imprisonment and in negotiating settlement with powers that be.

With all these acquisitions Gandhi arrived in India, and although at that time his name was hardly known even to the politically minded public, within five years he was in overall command of the nationalist movement and the Congress organisation. He had advanced step by step – establishing his *ashram*, making limited experiments in *satyagraha*, winning from the poet Rabindranath the epithet the *Mahatma*, assuming editorship of two weeklies *Navajivan* and *Young India* which enabled him regularly to propagate his views, getting published the first Indian editions of both *Hind Swaraj* and the



**Prof. Sibnarayan Ray**

Doke biography, calling a nation-wide *hartal* which led to several outbreaks of mob violence, proposing non-cooperation at the All-India Khilafat Conference, then assuring the Khilafatists that the majority of the Hindus supported them, and finally by defeating his rivals and opponents at the Calcutta and the Nagpur sessions of the Congress and persuading that organization to commit itself to his programme of non-cooperation, boycott, charkha and swadeshi, on the assurance that it would bring India swaraj within a year. He revised the Congress constitution and reorganized it in such a way that what until then was a political platform of mainly moderate minded elite groups was transformed into a populist mass movement of which he was supreme leader. To the masses he was not only the Mahatma but also an *avtar* or incarnation of God who would not only get rid of the British but also establish *Ramarajya* on earth. From this point onwards for nearly a quarter of a century Gandhi occupied the centre stage of Indian polity.

However, even during this period he was not without critics nor was his authority altogether unchallenged. I have elsewhere examined at some length the vital points of disagreement between Tagore and Gandhi, but although Tagore publicly differed from Gandhi on many major issues, their personal regard for each other did not suffer any decline. On the other hand, three of the most persistent critics of Gandhi - Jinnah, Ambedkar and Roy – not only rejected his method of *satyagraha* and the utopian vision of *Hind Swaraj*, but took a highly skeptical view of his widely publicized ‘saintly’ personality. Of the three, M.A. Jinnah, originally a liberal-secularist proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity, reacted so violently to Gandhi’s mixture of religion and politics, that he eventually employed that explosive mixture himself to mobilize his own community, re-emerged from self-chosen exile to become the supreme leader of the

Muslim community in the Indian subcontinent, and became the founder of Pakistan. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar fought Gandhi tooth and nail over the issue of caste and untouchability. In the end, shortly after Gandhi’s death, he saw the legitimacy of his demands fully recognised in the Constitution of free India, which was drafted in the main, ironically enough, by Ambedkar himself. The most radical and through-going critic of both Gandhi and Gandhism was, however, M.N. Roy who had neither Jinnah’s nor Ambedkar’s political success, and it is to him and his critique that I intend to devote the rest of this paper.

## II

Born eighteen years after Gandhi, Roy was the son of a Brahmin head-teacher of Sanskrit at a school in the neighbourhood of Calcutta. At birth he was named Narendra Nath Bhattacharya, but later he had to assume a string of aliases to escape detection and arrest by the police. M.N. Roy was the name he adopted at Stanford in 1916 and that is the one by which he is known. Between the two, Gandhi and Roy, would exemplify many of the contrasts which comprise India – the former a modh bania Vaishnava from the back waters of a princely state of Kathiawar, Gujarat, married at the age of thirteen, sent to England to qualify at the bar after passing the matriculation examination; the latter, a brahmin Sakta exposed from his early boyhood to the strong intellectual-cultural crosscurrents and political turmoil in Bengal, especially in the metropolis of Calcutta, expelled from school at the age of eighteen for organising an antipartition meeting, inducted shortly thereafter into a secret revolutionary nationalist organisation which had been formed in 1902 and of which the ideological leadership would be assumed by the Cambridge-educated Aurobindo Ghosh. Though Gandhi wrote and published a good deal in Gujarati, English and Hindi, he was not by temperament an intellectual, or a

systematic thinker, or a theorist. Roy, with the Brahmin tradition behind him and rich inheritance of the Bengal cultural renaissance of the 19th century, developed into an outstanding intellectual and theorist and wrote and published his ideas in several modern European languages (Spanish, German, French, Russian and, of course, English) but not in Bengali or Hindi.

Between 1908 and 1915 Roy was one of the principal organisers of the revolutionary nationalist movement in Bengal. With his associates he planned an armed insurrection in India during the war. To negotiate military assistance from Germany he went to Batavia in 1915, and from there to the Phillipines, Japan, Korea, China & the United States till he finally landed in Mexico in 1917. The insurrectionary plan proved to be abortive, but Roy imbibed Marxism in Mexico, learnt Spanish, wrote and published four books in that Language, became one of the leaders of the Socialist Party, founded *El Partido Comunista de Mexico* (1919), and was invited by Lenin to Moscow to take part in the Second Congress of the newly founded Communist International (1920). Although at the Second Congress Roy differed with Lenin on the National and Colonial Question (more about that later), he rose very rapidly in the International's hierarchy on account of his exceptional intellectual eminence and organisational ability. His work *India in Transition* (1922, translated in several European languages) came to be acknowledged as a Marxist classic and was followed by a succession of books, pamphlets, manifestoes. In 1920 he founded the émigré Communist Party of India at Tashkent, and from 1922 to 1928 edited a political journal, published at first as *The Vanguard of Indian Independence*, then as *The Advance-Guard* and finally as *The Masses of India*. Although his books and journal were banned in India by the government, they reached clandestinely to not a few people, and by 1922 he succeeded in forming five small

communist groups in Bengal, Bombay, Madras, U.P. and the Punjab. In December, 1925 the Communist Party of India was formally founded at a conference in Kanpur.

By 1926 Roy had been elected as a full member of the Executive Committee and Presidium of the Comintern, its Secretariat and Orgbureau, Chairman of the Eastern Commission and member-secretary of the Chinese Commission, and he had offices and staff at Moscow, Berlin, Paris, Zurich & Amsterdam. At the end of the Seventh Plenum of ECCI, he was sent to China as head of the Comintern delegation there. Due to ambiguities in the Comintern's directives and confusions and conflicts within the Communist leadership in China, counter-revolutionary forces succeeded temporarily in crushing the communists. Roy returned to Moscow after seven months in China to be caught in the midst of the deadly power struggle among Lenin's bolshevik successors in the Soviet Union. In 1928 when at its Sixth Congress the Comintern adopted an extreme left policy, Roy disagreed with it, and after the publication of his critical view of the official line in the Opposition press, the unavoidable break came in 1929. Roy devoted the next year to completing his monumental work *Revolution and Konterrevolution in China* (Berlin 1930), returned to India clandestinely, and after seven months of incessant underground work for building a Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class, was caught and sentenced to twelve years' transportation which was reduced on appeal to six years' rigorous imprisonment. He was released in 1936, joined the Congress, tried to build an alternative leadership to Gandhi, then broke with the Congress in 1940 over the issue of support to the 'anti-fascist war', formed the Radical Democratic Party which was eventually dissolved in December 1948 after much careful consideration. During the last eight years of his life Roy formulated and developed, in collaboration with several younger colleagues

including the author of this paper, the philosophy of Radical or Scientific Humanism, the most detailed formulation of which may be found in his magnum opus, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution* published in two volumes (Calcutta 1952, 1955). In June 1952 he met with a serious accident in Mussoories, which resulted in cerebral thrombois and partial paralysis. He recovered briefly, and his *Memoirs* began to be serialised in his weekly journal, but after a third and final attack of cerebral thrombosis, death came ten minutes before midnight on 25 January 1954.

From 1920 till the Mahatmas assasination at the hand of a Hindu fanatic Roy had been a consistent critic of Gandhi and Gandhism. Even after his break with the Comintern he continued to remain a Marxist till the end of the war, when, totally disillusioned with the Soviet Union, he had to re-examine his theoretical postulates. The philosophy of Radical Humanism which developed out of his re-examination is still basically very different from Gandhi's worldview, but with the advantage of hindsight it is possible to discern several pregnant features which Radical Humanism shares with Gandhism. I shall come to this in the last section of this paper, but at no stage do I find any evidence that Roy was remotely influenced by Gandhi or was even aware of any possibility of a confluence of ideas in future. However, Gandhi's martyrdom did make him reconsider his view of Gandhi's personality, ideas and method. He now recognized that Gandhi's was 'essentially a moral, humanist, cosmopolitan appeal', that the 'implication of the doctrine of non-violence is the moral dictum that the end does not justify the means', that Gandhi 'sincerely wanted politics to be guided by moral considerations' and his 'endeavour to introduce morality into political practice was the positive core of Gandhism'. He thought that the only way to immortalize Gandhi's memory would be for his followers to practice 'the precept of

purifying politics with truth and non-violence'. Nevertheless, even when paying his homage, Roy did not forget to mention that the Mahatma himself allowed his humanist appeal to be 'heavily coloured by the narrow cult of nationalism', that he 'fell a victim to the very cult he preached', that 'he vaguely visualized a humanist idea, while still groping in the twilight of medievalism'. Roy was no longer a Marxist, but to the end his humanism continued to be uncompromisingly materialist, rationalist, atheist and libertarian. Despite significant points of similarity towards the end, any scenario of reconciliation between the Mahatma and the heretic would be altogether farfetched. Professor Dennis Dalton put much more meaning into Roy's homage to the martyred Mahatma than is warranted by available evidence.

### III

The year 1920 was a turning point in the life of both Gandhi and Roy. Gandhi formally launched non-rooperation on 1 August of that year. Roy reached Moscow in May having been invited personally by Lenin to take part in the Second Congress of the Communist International which opened on 19 July and continued till 7 August. In Mexico Roy had studied Marx and been initiated into the intricacies of dialectics by Michael Borodin, but his interpretation of Marxism was much more deeply influenced by the writings of Lenin's erstwhile menotor, George Plekhanov, than by Lenin. Moreover, during the months he spent in Berlin on his way from Mexico to Moscow he acquainted himself with the works of the recently assassinated great Marxist theorist Rosa Luxemburg, founder of the German Communist Party, and for many years a very severe and influential critic of Lenin, and he developed strong ties of personal friendship with some of her prominent colleagues and followers.

On arrival at Moscow Roy was given a draft

copy of Lenin's theses on the National and Colonial Question for his comments and observations. The theses were to be presented and adopted at the Second Congress. Roy, however, differed with Lenin's formulation on several major issues, and at Lenin's request, formulated his own Supplementary Theses. With some modifications both sets of theses were adopted by the Congress, but the differences were not really resolved, and they would continue to haunt the communist movement long after the death of both Lenin and Roy. On a later occasion Stalin explained Lenin's acceptance of Roy's supplementary theses with modifications on the ground that when Lenin formulated his own draft, he was very inadequately acquainted with the Asian situation. Stalin subsequently supported Roy's position at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern (1924) against Roy's principal opponent at the Congress, D.Z. Manuilski.

It was during his discussions with Lenin before the Second Congress that Roy gave what was probably his earliest critical assessment of Gandhi. The *hartal* of the previous year and subsequent developments had already brought Gandhi into prominence in Indian politics. Lenin saw in Gandhi a potential revolutionary who might lead the unsurge of post-war mass discontent in India against the British. Roy opposed this view by holding that while Gandhi might appear 'politically revolutionary' he was in fact a 'social reactionary' whose popularity rested on his 'religious and cultural revivalist appeal'. He drew upon the authority of Plekhanov who saw the Narodniks and the Social Revolutionaries in Russia in the same light as he saw Gandhi.

Roy's assessment of Gandhi at this time and the following years has to be placed in the context of his Marxist interpretation of Indian history, and in particular, his analysis of contemporary politico-economic and socio-cultural developments in India. The bourgeoisie in

Europe had at one time played a progressive role by overthrowing the ancient regime of feudalism and the Church and by bringing about a social revolution. In India the middle-classes grew under the patronage of the foreign rulers. On the one hand, they were still very much rooted in a tradition-bound feudal society and, on the other, they were largely a creation of colonial rule. They were frightened of the prospect of a far-reaching social revolution, and despite their growing politico-economic aspirations, were prone to reaching a compromise with the British if the terms proved favourable to their interests and ambition. The exigencies of the war had forced the British to promote a measure of industrial development in India, but what they planned was some kind of a partnership with the rising Indian bourgeoisie in which control would remain essentially in British hand. Within India popular unrest against both foreign and native exploitation was growing fast since the end of the war, and the situation had become potentially revolutionary. Sections of the Indian bourgeoisie might cooperate in the movement for political independence, but faced with the threat of a social revolution they would prefer to come to terms with the British.

To Roy Gandhi, on the one hand, was 'the embodiment of the primitive, blind, spontaneous spirit of revolt of the masses', and on the other, he was a cunning bania-politician who, with his reactionary ideology and stress on non-violence, was bent on restraining the revolutionary forces and promoting a compromise between the indigenous vested interests and the British. Gandhi in his view 'endeavours to utilise mass energy for the perpetuation or revival of the heritage of national culture which has been made untenable by the awakening of mass energy'. It is the paradox of Gandhi that while he rejects western civilization, under his leadership the nationalist movement would at best succeed in establishing a capitalist society with a pre-capitalist culture.

Gandhi, however, did not figure in the deliberations of the Second Comintern Congress. Roy's principal differences here with Lenin were on three points. According to him, (a) a revolution in Europe depended on the course of the revolution in Asia bringing about the break-up of the colonial empires: (b) in the colonies, especially India, there were two distinct movements, one bourgeois democratic limited to the middle-classes, which sought compromise with the existing order and tried to bring under its control the second movement which was that of the exploited and ignorant masses for whom political independence to be achieved and made meaningful required at the same time a social and economic revolution: and (c) the Comintern should support revolutionary mass movements and not the colonial middle-class movements. He pleaded for the Comintern's commitment to the principle of 'revolution from below'. Lenin rejected the first point, and after considerable discussion acknowledged in a qualified manner the validity of the second and third points, and as a concession to Roy substituted the term 'nationalist revolutionary' for the term 'bourgeois-democratic', Roy on his part admitted that 'the cooperation of the bourgeois nationalist revolutionary elements is useful' in the early stage, but the emphasis should be on the organisation of peasants and workers and on a programme which would telescope political independence with socio-economic revolution.

The position outlined by Roy at the Second Congress was elaborated and developed by him in his first major work as a Marxist theoretician, *India in Transition* (1922). This included a systematic critique of Gandhi and Gandhism. The work was followed by a succession of books written and published both while he occupied a peak position in the Comintern and after his break with it, - among them, *One year of non-cooperation* (1923), *Political Letters* (1924), *The Aftermath of Non-cooperation* (1926), *The Future of Indian Politics* (1926),

*Our Task in India* (1932), *Whither Congress* (1935), *Manifesto of the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class* (1935), *Fascism, its Philosophy, Professions and Practice* (1938), *Our Problems* (1938), *Letters to Mahatma* (1940), *Gandhism, Nationalism and Socialism* (1940), *Ideal of Indian Womanhood* (1941), *Freedom or Fascism* (1942), *Nationalism, An Antiquated Cult* (1943), *Nationalism, Democracy and Freedom* (1943), *Problems of Freedom* (1945), *India's Message* (1950) – in everyone of which Gandhi is a major target of his attack. Instead of going through these writings individually, I shall, for the purpose of this paper, highlight some of the main points of his criticism which became sharper and went deeper with the passage of years.

#### IV

We have already mentioned that Roy underlined some of the glaring self-contradictions of Gandhi. Gandhi, in his view, was a product and historic expression of the seething discontent of the Indian masses at the end of the first World War, and total non-cooperation, if whole-heartedly pursued, could have been the prelude to the much-needed revolution in India. But by imposing on it his dogma of non-violence Gandhi deliberately emasculated the revolutionary forces and reduced its leadership to impotence. All established orders, whether foreign or indigenous, rely on force and use it without hesitation when threatened with dislodgment. Whether violence is desirable or not, it is unavoidable in a revolutionary confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed. Gandhi provided the aspiring masses with the potent weapon of all-out non-cooperation, and then called off the movement the moment it went out of the bounds set by him. He did this repeatedly, which to Roy could not but be interpreted, at the best, as Gandhi's self-

deception, arising out of his self-contradiction, and at the worst, as cunning deception of the people who had accepted him as their messianic leader.

Again Gandhi professed to reject totally all elements of modern civilization – science and technology, factories and railways, medicines and hospitals, schools and colleges, parliaments and political parties – but at the same time he negotiated with the British imperialists to reach some compromise, and the net effect of his *swadeshi* movement was to strengthen the position of the Indian capitalists through boycott of foreign goods, and to prepare the Congress as a suitable instrument to which political power could be eventually transferred by negotiation. All this amounted to rejecting and accepting modern civilization at the same time. He preached the cult of poverty but relied heavily on his industrialist patrons to finance his various activities. He condemned untouchability but clung to *Varna* divisions or the caste system. A man of *bhakti*, he proclaimed the agnostic Jawaharlal Nehru as his successor; in this Roy saw a certain deviousness on the part of Gandhi who thereby seriously reduced the chances of an all alternative modern leadership emerging in Indian politics, and a lack of integrity and inner strength in Nehru's character, who with all his modernism clung to the Little Father or Bapu. Gandhi proclaimed the ideal of *sarvodaya* of the people, but in concrete terms he relied on the so-called trusteeship of the elite which would include benevolent landlords and millowners, and himself came to occupy for a quarter of a century the position virtually of the dictator of the Congress, who knew how effectively to suppress and eliminate any challenge to his absolute authority. It is not necessary to mention all the self-contradictions of Gandhi listed by Roy, but it should be clear that he gave little credence to the much publicized sainthood of the Father of the Nation.

Roy strongly objected to Gandhi's mixing of

politics with religion. The secular political temper which the moderate leaders before Gandhi had tried with some measure of success to develop in the Congress and which extremist leaders like Tilak and Aurobindo had threatened to subvert, was virtually overthrown by Gandhi when first he championed Khilafat, and then introduced into the Congress his whole range of traditional Hindu religious beliefs, rituals and practices, including *Ramdhun* and *Ramrajya*, prayer-meetings and fastings, cow-protection, *brahmacharya*, bhajans and recitals from the Gita. In Roy's view, Gandhi stimulated the growth of Hindu nationalism and, may be somewhat unwittingly, helped in the growth of Muslim revivalism by, on the one hand, alienating secularist Muslims like Jinnah and, on the other, encouraging Khilafatists and Muslim militants. By mixing religion and politics Gandhi became the Mahatma & *avatar* to the Hindu masses, steeped in ignorance and superstitions, and did incalculable harm to Indian polity.

While Roy saw in Gandhi's non-violent non-cooperation a strategy to immobilize revolutionary forces and help Indian vested interests in improving their position and bargaining power with the British, what he found most perverse in Gandhi was his persistent advocacy of a return to the past, his rejection of the achievements of modern civilization, his refusal to visualise a future where no one will be deprived of his or her right to the fullest enjoyment of the achievements of civilization. In his books and the critical essays published in his journal *Independent India* he exposed time and again the implications and practical consequences of Gandhi's rejection of science and technology, his distrust of reason, his asceticism and fear of sex and the senses, his cult of poverty, his panacea of the *charkha*, his refusal to see the basic conflict of interests between landlords and peasants, capitalists and workers, his total failure to grasp the far-reaching significance of the concept of

fundamental human rights. During Roy's six years of rigorous imprisonment in jail in the thirties while he was writing his Prison Notebooks (about 3000 closely handwritten foolscap sheets of paper), it became increasingly clear to him that Gandhism was, paradoxically, very close in its ideology to Fascism which was threatening the very basis of modern civilization. In a segment from the Prison Notebooks published after his release under the title *Fascism: Its Philosophy, Professions and Practice* (1938), he not only analysed the fearful phenomenon in Europe, but showed how many features of the Hindu tradition in general and Gandhism in particular bore strong similarities with the ideas of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Giovanni Gentile, and the adoption of those ideas by their followers in contemporary Italy and Germany. The rejection of reason and reliance on 'inner voice', the glorification of the mystic-morality of suffering, the doctrine of superman or the *avatar* of the *Gita*, the merging of the individual in a reified collectivity called the Nation, the metaphysical justification of inequality and the systematic effort to make the workers accept their exploiters as benevolent trustees, - all these indicated an affinity which was skillfully covered by the advocacy of non-violence which, in actual practice, was repeatedly shown to be ineffective. To Roy it came as no surprise that Gandhi would show almost total callousness to what happened to the Jews in Germany under Hitler. In 1938 while Hitler was planning total extermination of the Jewry in Germany, Gandhi publicly advised the Jews to choose self-immolation as satyagrahis. 'The calculated violence of Hitler', he wrote in his organ, 'may even result in a general massacre of the Jews ... But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hand of the tyrant'. The

same year Gandhi praised the Munich Pact as sound statesmanship, and advised the Czechs against an armed resistance to invasion by the Germans. In 1940 he praised the French surrender to the Nazi invaders as 'brave statesmanship'. 'French statesmen have shown rare courage in bowing to the inevitable and refusing to be party to senseless mutual slaughter'. A few days later, he appealed to the British (who were then fighting for survival) to lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity... Let them (Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini) take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings ... If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourself man, woman and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them.

Roy who knew what had happened to Germany and Italy under Fascist and Nazi dictatorships and who had no doubt that a Fascist victory in the war would mean a terrible setback to human freedom and progress throughout the world including India, publicly came out in support of Britain even though he had fought against the British for thirty-five years since 1905.

Roy traced the source of the affinity of Gandhism with Fascism to the fundamentally authoritarian nature of Gandhi's personality. In South Africa a diffident and inarticulate young barrister had transformed himself into a leader of people by developing an iron will which could not be deflected from its target. Like the *Yogis* of India he had given away sex and the pleasure of the senses and material possession to achieve the kind of power which would risk death rather than acknowledge defeat, and all is grist that comes to its mill. But the authoritarian personality is afraid of freedom and reason which it must avoid to maintain its self-image and hold over others. Even Nehru sensed this

when in his *Autobiography* he spoke of a ‘Kingliness’ in Gandhi ‘which compelled a willing obsequience from others. Consciously and deliberately meek and humble, yet he was full of power and authority, and he knew it, and at times he was imperious enough, issuing commands which had to be obeyed’. Following Erich Fromm’s study of Luther and Calvin, Roy diagnosed that the fascist traits in Gandhi’s personality and ideas were rooted in his ‘fear of freedom’.

Gandhi rarely engaged in public controversy with his critics (the only sustained debate over basic issues that he ever had was with Tagore). Once he had ensconced himself at the Mahatmic pinnacle of popular reverence and virtually absolute control of the Congress organisation, he presumably felt no need to refute criticism, although from time to time he would make strategic moves to outmanoeuvre potential political rivals. While Roy was his most persistent and radical critic for a quarter of a century, he was never a serious threat to Gandhi’s political dominance like C.R. Das or B.R. Ambedkar or M.A. Jinnah or Subhash Chandra Bose. Gandhi could afford not to recognize the seriousness of his criticism. In 1924, Gandhi wrote in his organ *Young India* a brief article on Bolshevism and Discipline, acknowledging that he “did not know the meaning of Bolshevism”, and followed this in the same issue with another article defending *charkha* against Roy’s attack on it in *Welfare* of May 1924. Subsequently he published in the same organ Roy’s fairly long reply to Gandhi’s piece on Bolshevism, along with a dismissive comment that Bolshevism, if correctly represented by Roy, ‘Is a poor thing’. At the Karachi Session of the Congress (March 1931), the draft of the Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme which, according to Intelligence Reports, was prepared and given to Nehru by Roy (who attended the Congress session clandestinely under the

assumed name Dr. Mahmood), was considerably modified and watered down at the instance of Gandhi and eventually adopted. The Congress also endorsed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which Roy strongly opposed. After his release from Jail Roy met Gandhi for the first time at Faizpur Congress (December 1936) where Roy’s proposal for transforming the Congress into a fighting organisation against the British was unequivocally rejected by Gandhi. At that Congress Roy refused to join Gandhi’s prayer meeting and was advised by him to eschew active politics. When Roy started his weekly *Independent India*, Gandhi replied to his request for a goodwill message with a postcard advising him “to render only mute service to the cause of freedom”. Later in November 1939 there was an exchange of correspondence between Gandhi and Roy over their differences on various issues. Gandhi emphasized that the Congress had now become ‘a non-violent army in war time... Its will is expressed by its general whoever he may be. Every unit has to tender him willing obedience in thought, word and deed’. Of course Gandhi did not have to spell out that he was himself the general whose will would brook no questioning. And so there could be no compromise. The rupture became complete when, after a great deal of hesitancy and tight-rope walking, Gandhi eventually launched the Quit India Movement in August 1942.

## V

The war brought about drastic changes all around. Not only were the Axis Powers crushed, but the British Empire was left too exhausted to maintain itself. Roy had anticipated this quite early and prepared and published a Draft Constitution and a People’s Plan for independent India. Meantime Jinnah had fully established himself as the Quaid-e-Azam of the Muslims of the subcontinent, and creation of Pakistan had been proclaimed as the goal of the Muslim League. The Congress leaders were

in a hurry to reach a settlement with the British that would ensure peaceful transfer of power, even at the cost of partition of the subcontinent. And Gandhi, now in his late seventies, found himself bereft of his command over his longtime followers and the Congress organization, and left with his personal God and ethic of *satyagraha*. He told Louis Fischer that he was 'a spent bullet'. He was opposed to Partition, he even proposed to the new viceroy Jinnah's name as the Prime Minister of an undivided India; he advised the Congress leaders to disband the organization, give up the struggle for power, and transform the Congress into an association of social servants. But neither Nehru, nor Patel, nor Rajendra Prasad, nor Kripalani found any of his proposals realistic or acceptable. The record of their conduct does not indicate that any of these trusted lieutenants of the Mahatma were ever really committed to the goal of the *Hind Swaraj* or to the absolute principle of *ahimsa*. With Mountbatten as Governor General they decided to be rulers of a truncated India. Gandhi's last years were his loneliest, but they were also his noblest. Alone he worked steadfastly for non-violence and truth in private life and public affairs, against powerful currents of aggressive chauvinism and cynical power-lust. He fasted and prayed and tried in vain to bring reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims, between the two newly formed rival states, India & Pakistan, to bring solace and courage and faith into the lives of the millions who had become victims of partition. And then he himself fell a victim to the fanaticism of a Hindu nationalist.

It was Gandhi's martyrdom and his moral *praxis* of the last lonely years, rescued from the ambiguities and manoeuvrings of power-politics of the previous quarter-century which made Roy re-examine his long-held poor estimate of Gandhi, and pay him public homage in unambiguous terms. But before that his own outlook (and, to an extent, personality as well)

had been changing under the impact of the war and his self-examination during the post-war years. I had the privilege to know and work with him closely during the last eight years of his life. Although there was a difference of thirty-three years between us, he accepted me not only as a colleague but also as a friend and had enough generosity and openness of spirit to welcome what contribution I was able to make to the development of new philosophy of radical humanism. During the early forties he had gradually become altogether disillusioned with the profession and practice of *bolshevism* and the record of the party dictatorship in the Soviet Union. I do not think he ever totally rejected all the major premises of Marxism, but he increasingly emphasised the worth of many ideas and ideals which in no way could be reconciled with orthodox Marxism. He still recognized the importance of the economic foundations of social organisation, but culture, which included knowledge, art, morality and various finer and distinctive pursuits and achievements of homo sapiens, was seen as having its intrinsic and abiding value and creative significance, and he rejected its Marxist characterisation as superstructure. The worth of any institution or organisation was to be measured in terms of how it helped and advanced the free development of the creative potentialities of every one of its members. Most significant, he now fully recognized the integral relation of ends to means, the urgent need for imbuing politics with morality, the utter unsuitability of political parties to the pursuit of human welfare and enlightenment, the pressing need for decentralization and devolution of power, the beauty and value and effectiveness of small units related to one another in voluntary cooperation. These realizations brought him closer to an appreciation of Gandhi, although I do not think he was ever really conscious of any kinship with the Mahatma.

During Roy's last years, on a number of major issues the differences between the two antagonists had significantly reduced. However, I do not think that between their total philosophical approaches there was any possibility of reconciliation. To the end Roy remained an unmitigated materialist (or 'physical realist', as he sometimes preferred to write), an uncompromising rationalist, a radical humanist who saw man not as a 'sinful creature' who may through abstinence, devotion and prayer win his god's blessing, but as the peak of the evolutionary process, maker of history, rich in potentialities, gifted at birth with the urge for freedom and the spirit of inquiry which through proper development and application produce civilization and bring about material and cultural progress. He saw no virtue in privation, poverty, fasting or the ascetic ideal, but believed that every human being should have the right and opportunity to pursue the fullest development of his or her personality. In a just and open society the basic physical and psychological requirements of every individual must be met, and at the same time people shall equip themselves to create ever new cultural resources which, unlike material resources, do not diminish by sharing. Roy thus belonged in spirit to the tradition of the humanism of the renaissance and saw in puritanism, devotionalism, distrust of reason and the senses, or obsession with *moksha* or the other world, nothing but serious impediments to the proper development of the individual and society.

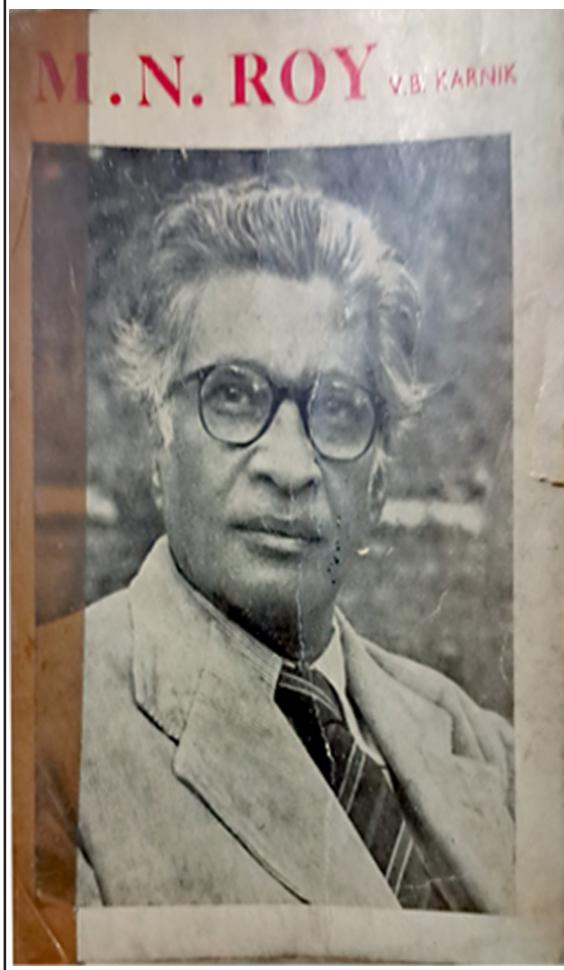
Nevertheless the issues on which they came closer to each other towards the last lonely years of their lives are not only significant for an understanding of the change in their respective situations, but are even more pointedly relevant to the national and global situation today. By obliterating almost totally from their consciousness and behaviour the integral relation of means and ends and the

principle of basing politics on morality, our power-elites in India have enmeshed themselves and the country during the last few decades in all-pervasive corruption and cynicism. The terrible concentration of power in the hands of the multi-nationals and superstates, the systematic efforts to cretinise the common people through the mass media, the misuse of resources on rocketry, weaponry and big projects, on proliferation of bureaucracy and middlemen, on production and consumption of luxury goods, to the neglect of meeting the basic needs of the majority of mankind (food, shelter, education, medical service, clothing etc.) – can only lead to global disaster. The process which has brought mankind to the brink of universal catastrophe requires urgently to be reversed. It strikes me that both in Gandhi and Roy there are insights and pointers which are likely to be helpful in confronting our fearful contemporary situation. Both Gandhi and Roy put their accent on a radical reconstruction of society in which some of the main guiding principles were decentralization and devolution of power, promotion of small and viable units and institutions of grassroots democracy, politics guided by morality, economy based on voluntary cooperation and directed to meeting the basic needs of the people, technology fully oriented to human welfare, and culture which would be creative, open and various while at the same time drawing upon the positive common past achievements and heritage of mankind. Caught in the crisis of our age, we may yet find much succour and useful guidance from the voices of both who have currently been sidelined by our power-hungry politicians, unscrupulous finance magnates and obtrusive mass-media.

**Paper read at an international seminar on Gandhi and Gandhism held at Max Mueller Bhawan, Calcutta, 1998.**

From the book **Ripeness is all** 

*In the December 2023 issue of the R.H, under the title 'The Manuscript of Roy's Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science (page 30), it was said that M.N. Roy was released from prison in Vishakhapatnam. However, the following articles in the biography written by V.B. Karnik states that he was released from Dehra Dun jail on the morning of 20 November 1936 with many more details. The latter seems to be more authentic.*



#### IX IN AND OUT OF CONGRESS

Roy was released from the Dehra Dun jail on the morning of 20 November 1936 after an imprisonment lasting five years and four months. He was received at the jail gate by a couple of Congress leaders, but a demonstration was avoided because of the weak condition of his health.

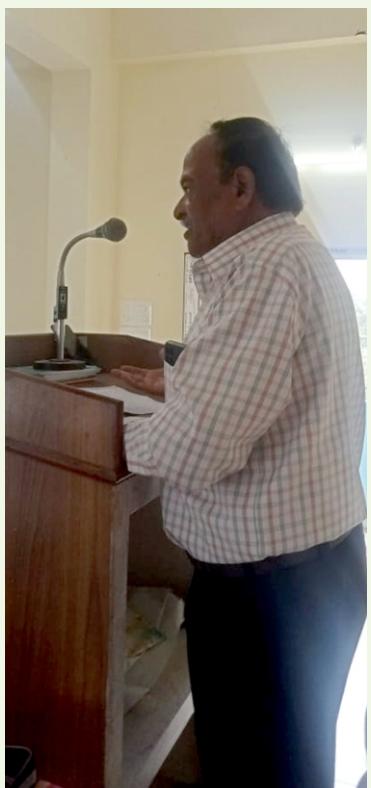
After release, Roy was taken to the residence of Khurshid Lal, Chairman of the Municipality, and prominent Congress leader. He received there Nehru's message inviting him to Bareilly to attend the Provincial Political Conference and thereafter to Allahabad to stay at his place for rest and recuperation. Some of Roy's associates from various parts of the country had also collected there to meet him and welcome him back in their midst. He was very happy to meet them.

The representatives of the press were eager to meet Roy and know from him his immediate plan and programme. On their insistence he issued a short statement which was to the following effect : "On the completion of six long years of imprisonment, I am glad to address a few words to the people of India. My message to these fellow-victims of imperialism is : Rally in millions under the flag of the National Congress as a determined army fighting for democratic freedom. To attain this much desired goal, we not only require a clear vision of it, but a definite plan of action. I shall endeavour for the creation of those essential conditions for freedom. I find it appropriate to add that socialism or communism—which means the same thing—is not the issue of the day. Real socialists or communists must realise that, if they wish to play a part in the struggle for freedom of the Indian masses, National Independence is the immediate objective. All the

**Note: THE PATH OF GANDHI** will continue in the nextt issue...



**Delegates at the Radical Humanist Centre, Inkollu, Andhra Pradesh on 17 December 2023  
For celebrating the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of Radical Humanist Movement (1948-2023)**



**Mahi Pal Singh**



**Addressing the audience  
Sheoraj Singh**



**Dr. Veeranna Gumma**

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**Two stalwarts of Hindi poetry, Mahadevi Verma and Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', sitting in the front row (right)**

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