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Abstract

The article undertakes in-depth analysis of 'New Humanism' enunciated by M.N Roy. Roy envisions a socio- economic-political order free from exploitation, dogma, superstitions and discrimination, wherein every individual occupies the center stage in collective life. He is critical of speculative metaphysics as it seeks to postulate a 'transcendental' or 'supernatural' to explain the empirical realities. It is argued that since the empirical realities are explainable by laws of nature postulation of transcendental entities is redundant and unwarranted. He seeks to show the futility of Parliamentary democracy as it vests power with the elected minority whereas the real power should rest in the people at the grassroots through village committee. Man is rational at the core. 'Freedom' is a fundamental urge in man. The real freedom can be realized only when the rational acumen is not allowed to be overpowered by the non-rational factors. It is human will that determines the course of history. Politics and ethics must go hand in hand. Ethics has its origin in the rational core of man. But 'New Humanism' is humano-centric. Roy ignores the fact that human existence is dependent on the non-humans species i.e. flora, fauna and inanimate forces of nature as well. Therefore values should be such that they not only offer a shared forum for human beings to share and care for their fellowmen but also the flora and fauna. Hence, in order to usher in the new society what is the need of the hour is cultivation of holistic values, As is the perception of reality (worldview), so is the nature of values. Holistic values presuppose a Cosmo-centric ontology. There is the necessity of a holistic ethical paradigm which is possible only when people by and large, perceive interrelatedness and interdependence of things and beings and the underlying unity beneath apparent diversity.

Key words: Reason, Freedom, Dogma, Truth, Matter, Mind, Faith, Morality, Laissez faire, Democracy.

Introduction

The term 'New humanism' was coined by M.N. Roy to articulate an ideology as an alternative to Communism as well as formal Parliamentary democracy. He was a philosopher and social activist in one. His patriotic fervor and the consuming passion to liberate countrymen from economic and political slavery led to his intimate association with Communism. He had to go to different countries and function as a core cadre in the communist movements, followed by a period of disillusionment with the philosophy as well as the program of Communism. His exit from communist camp and subsequent imprisonment gave him the needed time to reflect upon the inadequacies of different systems of thought and philosophies and arrive at a pragmatic blueprint for social transformation. As a philosopher he drew the distinction between Philosophy as a rational exercise and Metaphysics which is predominantly speculative. The rational temper in man took the form of Metaphysics to postulate the 'non-empirical' in order to find explanation for the 'empirical'. According to him when the phenomenal or concrete realities of existence are explainable by laws of nature, postulation of a transcendental or non-empirical entity is uncalled for.

Speculative philosophy attempts to explain the concrete realities of the existence in the life by a hypothetical absolute. It is the way not to truth but to dream, not to knowledge but to illusion. An inquiry which denies the very existence of the object to be inquired, is bound to end in idle dreams and hopeless confusions.¹

He also goes on to distinguish between Philosophy and Religion He was against identifying philosophical venture with things that are transcendental and fictitious. Faith or belief in a transcendental state or supernatural entity is central to religious ways.

Faith in the supernatural does not permit the search for the causes of the natural phenomena in nature itself. Therefore rejection of orthodox religious ideas and theological dogmas is condition for philosophy.²

He sought to repudiate the assumption that the phenomenon called Nature is determined by the will of God,

Religion is bound to be liquidated by science because scientific knowledge enables mankind to answer questions confronted by which in its childhood it was compelled to assume supernatural forces or agencies.³

While trying to spell out the relation between Philosophy and Science he was confident that the cosmological and epistemological issues can be solved by scientific knowledge. The function of philosophy is to offer a holistic picture by coordinating the entire body of scientific knowledge. Thus, the mission of Philosophy is to offer a comprehensive theory about the nature and life at large. In this sense science can be said to be synthesizer of the findings in natural sciences.

The function of Philosophy is to coordinate the entire body of scientific knowledge into a comprehensive theory of Nature and Life.... Therefore, Philosophy is called the science of sciences.⁴

According to Roy, the urge for freedom and the search for truth are crucial to human progress down the ages. In the struggle for existence man tried to overcome the limiting influence of Nature. The food gatherers became the food producers. The struggle for existence reflects man urge to be free from the limitations of the environment and in the quest for 'freedom' lies the seed of scientific quest for truth. Thus the desire for 'freedom' and quest for 'truth' go hand in hand. Man who was at the mercy of Nature tried to conquer Nature through science and technology. When science is a search for truth, technology employs such knowledge to produce 'know how's' by which man strives for progressive freedom from the bindings of Nature .

Science is a search for truth and it is the result of man's quest of freedom. Therefore, we may say that search for truth is the corollary to the quest for freedom.⁵

The urge to be free finds its inevitable expression in the 'human will' which is the prerogative of human species. It has offered Man the advantage over other living counter parts. Roy was critical of the thesis of historical determinism according to which the ideas are formed or shaped by the realities of existence. According to him though the ideas germinate in social and natural conditions, they are autonomous and have the logic of their own. It is not only that facts and events give rise to ideas but it is also a fact that the ideas influence the process of social change or evolution. So, the thesis that ethics and cultural patterns are superstructures broad based on the economic sub-structure is inherently wrong. Roy construes 'mind' and 'matter' as two independent objective realities. Though 'mind' is a function of the material body it cannot be reduced to the other. To do so, is to commit absurdity.

'Mind' and 'Matter' can be reduced to a common denominator but as such, they are two objective realities. Any attempt to deny the objective reality to ideas, only vulgarizes Monism.⁶

It is the 'human will' that plays vital role in determining the course of history. Unlike Marxists he would contend that 'freedom' does not accrue from the capture of political power on the pretext of liberation of the exploited and abolition of private property. The state is born through the reorganization of the social power which eventually lies in the people. He would reject the idea that a state is a means class exploitation but is the result of the reorganization of people. He was emphatic that a dictatorship of the proletariat does not end exploitation but rather perpetuates hegemony of the state which is borne out by the sociological evidence. While being critical of the basic of Communism he directs his polemics against the formal Parliamentary democracy which involves delegation of power by the people to the minority who rule. In fact, in a democracy after electing as a representative the individuals are rendered powerless. He observed that the real power must be vested in the people and there must be always the ways and means to establish sovereignty of people. He was also critical of the principle *laissez faire* which virtually leads to exploitation of the majority by the intelligent minority. He opines that democracy in order to be effective, the real power must eventually rest in the individuals.

The thesis of *laissez faire* only provides the legal sanction to the exploitation of man by man. Concept of 'economic man' negativates the liberating doctrine of *Individualism*..... This vulgar concept must be replaced by the reality of instinctively rational being who is moral because he is rational.⁷

What is central to 'New humanism' is that politics without ethics degenerates into a set of practices where the 'freedom' of individual becomes a casualty. Politics and ethics must go hand in hand. To be moral is to be rational. Morality emanates from the rational core of man. He asserts that if the 'end' is moral then the 'means' must also be moral. Political institutions must be ethical. Otherwise they cannot address the good or wellbeing of the people. Moral order draws its sustainability from the strength of the people who are rationally awakened. Moral order will result from a rationally organized society because man is essentially rational and therefore, moral. Morality emanates from the rational core. He goes on to say that a harmonious society can be ushered in only when people are self-conscious and continue to be rational, rejecting anything which is irrational or dogmatic.

Morality must be referred back to man's innate rationality. Only then, man can be moral spontaneously and voluntarily. ...The innate rationality of man is the only guarantee of a harmonious order which will also be moral order because morality is a rational function⁸

As an alternative to parliament democracy Roy points the idea of an organized Democracy where the real power rests at the grassroots in people's committees.

The parliament should be the apex of a pyramidal structure of the state, reared on the base of organized democracy composed of a country wide network of people's committees⁹

This is possible only when the rationally awakened free individuals organize themselves to make the way for a Government which is people-centric The real social renaissance can be brought about when people are determined to educate themselves as well as their co-citizens about the necessity of rational exercise and assert their freedom against anything that restricts their freedom . This underlines the importance of creating awareness through proper education. He was critical of dogmas which appeal to the 'supernatural' or 'non-rational'. So the humanistic movement which he spearheaded was championed by the spirit of rationalism consisting of a non-compromising fight against destiny, blind faith and ignorance.

The radicals will combat ignorance fatalism,

blind faith and the sense of individual helplessness, which are the basis of authoritarianism. They will put all the social traditions and institutions to the test of humanistic outlook.¹⁰

He insisted that rational temper must be always kept alive so that the received views, fond beliefs and time honored dogmas are subject to the spirit of inquiry. What he insisted upon was re examination of views conceived as sacrosanct and absolute.

While enunciating 'New humanism' Roy assumed that 'reason' and 'experience' are the unailing guides for acquisition of knowledge. It is needless to say that 'reason' is the function of 'mind'. Since 'mind' has its native limitation the ambit of 'reason' has to have its boundary. If experience means 'sense experience' it also has its limitations. To suppose that the limit of 'reason' is the limit of what could be know in principle, is perhaps the greatest dogma of 'reason' about itself. The intuitionists claim that beyond the domain of phenomenal knowledge there is the realm of the 'non-categorical' which defies the reach of 'reason'. It can be known only when 'reason' makes way for 'faith' which is the objective mode of knowing the absolute. Philosophers at large, argue to show that 'reason' has its limit. Therefore it cannot be taken as the sole guide for a comprehensive understanding of 'truth'.

The concept of 'freedom' in the framework of New humanism also appears to be myopic. 'Freedom' is to be distinguished from 'licentiousness'. Freedom is a 'value concept'. When freedom is abused it takes one in the wrongful path. 'Freedom' which is the capacity or will to determine the course of events has to be directed at the desirable goal. In the individual as well as social plane 'Reason; stands a need of self-regulation. Here comes the role of 'values'. Values show the sense the sense of goal and thereby, the roadmap to reach the goal.

According to Roy, 'values' are humano-centric. He provides a framework which can liberate human beings from the bondage of inequality, poverty and exploitation. But he slurs over the fact that human beings are not the only creatures on the planet. Existence of human species is dependent on the existence and wellbeing of the non-humans i.e. flora and fauna. Even if we succeed in building an ethical paradigm for the humans, human existence on that account, cannot remain secured if human beings fail to extend their loving protection to the non-humans in their own interest. So, there is a need of a value-paradigm which brings not only human species but also the non-humans, even the so-called inanimate existents within its embrace. As is the perception of 'reality' (worldview), so is the nature of 'values' i.e. our perception of 'right' and 'wrong', 'ought' and 'ought-not'. A matter-centric ontology can not constitute the base for holistic values. Holistic values call for a comprehensive ontology which takes into account the fact that like humans, non-humans have also their intrinsic value in the state of nature. Even the inanimate forces of nature have also their rightful place in the cosmos. It points to the necessity of a Cosmo-centric metaphysics or ontology which can provide the bedrock for the cultivation of holistic values of '*live and let live*'. Besides, a comprehensive world view provides inspiration for the human beings not only to organize the human affairs which is supportive for human living but takes in to account the existence and well-being of the rest of the creation, such that in course of addressing the wellbeing of all, the wellbeing of human beings also get addressed.

Endnotes:

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3. *Ibid*, P-94.
4. *Ibid*, p- 31
5. Roy, M.N, *Beyond Communism*, New Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1981,P-88
6. *Ibid*, PP-32-33
7. *Principles of Radical democracy*,Thesis-13
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10. Roy. M.N, *New Humanism- A manifesto*, PP-76-77, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1981