MARXISM AND BEYOND IN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT: J. P. NARAYAN AND M. N. ROY'S CONCEPTS OF RADICAL DEMOCRACY

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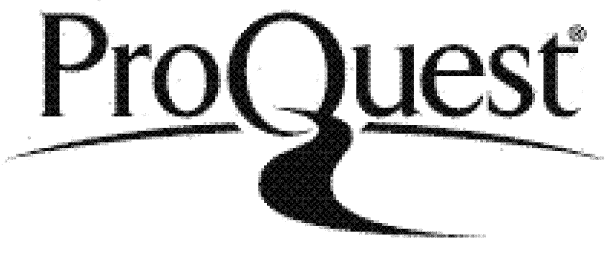

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Abstract

This project aims at a re-interpretation of the work of two Indian political thinkers and activists – M. N. Roy (1887-1954) and J. P. Narayan (1902-1979). In light of their early affiliation with and later rejection of communism, Marxism and nationalism, they have often been reduced to representing an idealistic anti-Marxist strand of the Indian left of the immediate pre-independence and post-independence era. However, their case for radical democracy can and should be revised. Not only does their work run parallel to some important trends within the history of the European left and thus contributes to the history of left thinking in the early to mid 20th century, it may also have a lasting impact. In particular, the ideas they developed present a viable alternative to the descent of the Indian left into a one-sided politics of caste and provide a timely argument for a left-liberal discourse politics. The terms of their arguments have both transcended the confines of the nationalist cause of Indian intellectuals and anticipated the calls for grass roots activism that is now all too familiar to us. The first part of the thesis deals with the backdrop to their ideas of radical democracy, discussing liberty and freedom as the focal points in their arguments against orthodox Marxism. In the second part, two key aspects of their thinking on radical democracy are examined. One is the idea of radicalism as "going back to the roots" of politics in spatial terms, i.e. Roy and Narayan's preoccupation with local democracy and its role in empowering citizens. The other is the relationship between a radical democratic politics and the transformation of human nature. Despite some important differences between the Gandhian Narayan and the radical humanist Roy, the similarities found in both their mode of reasoning and their political thought on the centrality and functions of radical democracy require a re-interpretation of their ideas for rethinking freedom and democracy in India as elsewhere in an age of diversity. Vacillating between conventional Marxist positions and indications of their transcendence, the concept of radical democracy exemplifies an inherent intellectual pluralism that is capable of bringing about a pragmatic consensus on the practical question of the best form of government.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I

Crises are fertile grounds for political thinking in any culture in history. It is easy to understand why – difficult situations require explanations as well as creative guidelines. Crises can also be understood as particular cases of change. While changes need not carry an element of crisis, crises certainly require change. In other words, change as transition can take place smoothly, whereas the term crisis denotes a situation of dilemma and urgency. Hence, it is not surprising that in focusing our attention on India the topic is pregnant with the implications of both change and crisis – the change from the colonial Raj to the world's largest democracy and the crises that have accompanied the process of building a post-colonial polity. It is in this context that the work of M. N. Roy and J: P. Narayan remains relevant as many issues which they brought to the fore are yet to be resolved or, in more modest terms, are subject to controversy.

We would like to draw attention to three major issues that had formed an integral part of the process of de-colonisation, and particularly of Indian politics in the first half of the 20th century. Nationalism, development and democracy, juxtaposed against imperialism, exploitation, and domination, were the main watchwords of newly independent states of the previous century. These themes have of course been looked at in great depth and from various angles over time, and which of these aspects is to be problematised has quite naturally preoccupied various schools of political science and political theorists. In these three watchwords we discern those questions that had to be answered in normative terms – what should constitute India's self-perception, how should India proceed to build on her identity, and which political form should this endeavour take? In other words, the parameters of discourse were the nation, its socio-economic development, and the democratic legitimacy of its polity and policies. These themes were interlinked in many ways: nationalism is the basis of political independence, which is a prerequisite to political self-determination of its citizens. Nationalism also underlines the unity to the venture of the rule of the Indian people that is set to map out a self-determined route to socio-economic progress.

What we are interested in here is the issue of India's democracy and how it is to be understood, i.e. what hopes and expectations have been placed in it and how successful, if at all, has this venture been. One way of understanding which hopes and aspirations are embedded in the politics of newly independent states is to look at their perceived problems and failures. While these are often posed *in retro*, they do serve to deliver an insight into what the ideal case was conceived as. What are the crises then that have become part of India's political existence? For some, the unity of the Indian state itself is seen to be at stake. The problem of separatism and the costs of resolving it have various sources. Major tensions arose out of the clashes between centrist movements and federalist movements until the late 1980s, denoting the issue of control and power. The later nature of disharmony was seen as the result of ideological and class antagonisms, i.e. the failure of significant particularities to be represented in the nation-building and development process. [1] The rise of alternative ideologies such as *Hindutva*, or the challenges posed by hitherto underprivileged castes and social classes are the most remarkable elements of this set of problems. This fragmenting approach is also part of the rise of culturalism and communalism as bywords of Indian politics.

Related to this is the problem of persistent inegalitarianism that is the hallmark of 'a multinational, agrarian society with a rigid and hierarchical social structure.'[2] Consequently, as has been pointed out, politics in India is also characterised by the criminalisation of politics for the purpose of maintaining the status quo.[3] Social hierarchy and crime have furthermore in many ways fostered the emergence of strong self-interested authority, often to the detriment of a stable and effective party system.[4] However, for some, the playing out of party politics on the state level itself has been the cause of the failure of social reform at the grass-roots level. This can well be depicted as the failure of mass participation to be entrenched as a constant rather than as an Schumpeterian scenario of the exercise of power for a day, i.e. on election days.[5]

This very brief outline also serves to explain why far more positive commentary has been reserved for just one of its federal states, namely Kerala. Kerala's success story vis-à-vis India's failures has enormous significance given that 'a democracy with the political goals of self-reliance, national sovereignty, political independence and a hard and sustained

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[1] Jha, *In the Eye of the Cyclone. The Crisis in Indian Democracy.*
[2] Atul Kohli, 'Interpreting India's Democracy: a State-Society Framework.' In: Kohli, *India's Democracy. An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations*, p.3.
[3] Chakrabarty, *Whither India's Democracy?* , p.3.
[4] Chakrabarty, *Whither India's Democracy?* , pp.7-8.
[5] Chakrabarty, *Whither India's Democracy?* , p.1. Also see Sinha, *Indian Democracy: Exclusion and Communication.*

commitment to its poor and its minority communities is an aspiration that is being widely revived.'[6] While the list of discontents regarding the state of India is extensive, there is one fundamental underlying theme at the core of India's self-perception, i.e. her place in the global community as the world's largest democracy. In other words, the perceived failures of India's democratic system indicate that the benchmark for analysis and evaluation is a *democratic* system that consolidates national unity, political self-determination and material development.[7]

In order to understand why political discourse in India has centred around democracy and in what terms, we will look at some aspects of political theories in India that have been fundamental in providing the normative guidelines for India's aspirations to being the world's largest democracy, thus setting the terms of discourse. Subsequently, we will try and provide an account of the failure of that discourse itself to offer solutions to the dilemma of democracy, national unity and economic development. What we argue is that this triad often limited rather than enhanced the possibilities opened by India's democratic pathways. A discursive vacuum for issues that have been notably overlooked was thereby opened, especially those that dealt with particularities and conflict rather than with universalities and harmony. The political theories of M. N. Roy and J. P. Narayan however were remarkable attempts to re-conceptualise the problems of exploitation, domination and self-determination by bringing the idea of the individual and the idea of radical democracy together. The attempt to forge out alternative ways of viewing India's independence was by examining the concept of 'freedom', as Roy and Narayan termed their main preoccupation. Very pertinently, they argued that formal notions of democracy and nationalism did not generate 'freedom' for the individual. To be sure, freedom demands democracy as well as the idea of self-determination, yet the inverse relationship may yield oppression rather than liberation through the emphasis put on unity, collectivism and higher-order status. Hence, the 'freedom of the individual' is to take priority, rather than the promise of 'freedom' through collective self-determination alone. This brings us to the point of this project, which is to re-interpret the ideas of Roy and Narayan on radical democracy as a timely answer to contemporary problems of individual participation in the democratic process, rather than consigning them to the dustbin of baseless utopianism and irrelevant idealism.

Despite the paucity of systematic political theorising in India, at least some aspects of Indian theories on politics and society help to situate J. P. Narayan and M. N. Roy's political thought

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[6] Raghuram, *Kerala's Democratic Decentralisation: History in the Making*, p.2105.
[7] Jha, *In the Eye of the Cyclone. The Crisis in Indian Democracy.* Kohli, *India's Democracy. An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations.*

as well as their departure from dominant streams of theorising. It is possible to regard Indian political thought as broadly consisting of three eras: the long era of traditional thought, the eclectic colonial experience that mingled British and Indian traditions, and post-colonial experience of modernity that strengthened the idioms of nationalism, democracy and development. [8]

Indian traditional thought is, like any other mode of thinking, subject to varying interpretations. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern some core aspects without entering into the realm of normative debate. One of the key features of traditional Indian thought is its philosophical and religious eclecticism, a result of the amalgam of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Islamic notions, to name the main but not conclusive streams of thought that together make up 'Indian' thought. In attempting to construct India's philosophical unity, nationalists for the most part relied on traditional Hindu thought, rather than on Buddhist and Jain concepts. Not only was it more difficult to deploy Buddhist and Jain philosophy as political ideas, but also Hinduism's core texts were deemed as having binding value for the majority of India's population. [9] Moreover, its internal diversity helped to acknowledge the plurality of its manifestations as a religion, as a philosophical system, and as a cultural form. Within its complex cosmologies, conditioned by the close connection between philosophy, religion and politics, Hindu Indian thought is characterised by the notion of the holism of reality, lending rise to systems of universal and eternal truths. Related to this idea of perpetuality is that of cyclicality, especially in history. For some, at the social level this can be termed integral holism, which means the irreducibility and timelessness of relationships between the individual, community, and the political order.[10] Especially within the majoritarian Hindu

[8] Satish Saberwal, 'Democratic Political Structures.' In: Sathyamurthy, *Social Change and Political Discourse in India*, p.176.

[9] Refer to Pollock, *Ramayana and Political Imagination in India.* The continued vibrancy of traditional modes of thinking has so far been provided by the medium of poems, songs, plays in the vernacular. Revealed wisdom or *shruti* in the texts of the Vedas (between 1300 and 900BC) is of especial importance regarding moral codes and norms of social hierarchy as well as notions of 'Indian' philosophies of ontology and epistemology. Of further significance is remembered wisdom or *smriti* in the epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana as well as in the *Purana, Dharmashastras* and *Dharmasutras.* Among these, the text on sacred law attributed to the sage Manu (*Manusmriti*) is of immense importance. Matching in influence is finally the text of the Bhagavad Gita, wherein we find several concepts deployed by Gandhi in his political and populist struggle for India's independence, e.g. the philosophy of positive action, or the rejection of the primacy of fate in favour of the potency of human agency. The text also famously explains the idea of non-attached action, i.e. the lack of interest in the outcome of one's labours, but perceiving labour to be an integral part of one's own *dharma* (right behaviour or moral law).

[10] Mehta, *Foundations of Indian Political Thought: An Interpretation. From Manu to the Present Day*, p.268.

tradition, these ordered relationships took the form of social hierarchy and were best expressed by the seemingly strictly ordered caste system.[11]

Hence, political thinking in Hindu India mainly discussed the relationship between *dharma* (the set of normative rules which holds a society together, in particular duties) and *danda* (the tools of enforcing the discipline needed to preserve dharma, at least outwardly).[12] At the same time, these factors of constraint were tempered by the pluralism inherent even in Hindu Indian thought as well as the localised application of laws in India's agrarian and autarchic communities.[13] The effects of social fragmentation became a moot point during colonialism, underlining the search for a unitary identity of some kind in order for resistance to the British to be legitimised. The lack of systematic thought in practice was therefore to be compensated by positing universal codes of conduct. As such, concepts such as *sanatana dharma*, or eternal law, especially as proposed by Gandhi, were conceptualised as absolute codes that could transcend the peculiarities of the relative and specific *dharmas*. The universalisation of moral codes, interpreted as the common denominator of most religions, undoubtedly served as a crucial instrument in both imagining and creating India's identity as a unitary entity, which was one of the biggest breaks with the pre-modern. Political thinking was able to gain a foothold in India, as a result of the embracing of liberal and utilitarian theories, along with the concepts of nation-state, nationalism, state sovereignty, and self-determination by social reformers and political thinkers in India's Renaissance era of the mid to late 19th century.[14]

The responses to modern concepts brought in via British liberalism and utilitarianism varied widely, but all were effectively generated within the context of the politics of colonialism and the politics of independence. Pertaining to the problematic of colonialism, Bhikhu Parekh distinguishes between four attitudes - traditionalism (holding that British rule is inconsequential to the Hindu way of life), modernism (maintaining the superiority of the modern by using the language of interventionist statism, democracy, secularism, centralisation), critical modernism (entailing a search for indigenous resources for the purpose of modernisation)[15], as well as critical traditionalism (arguing for the critical self-renewal of Indian culture given that cultures as organic wholes make meaningful exchange impossible).[16]

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[11] Milner, *Hindu Eschatology and the Indian Caste System: An Example of Structural Reversal*, pp.303-304.
[12] Bhikhu Parekh, Some Reflections on the Hindu Tradition of Political Thought.' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.17.
[13] Parekh in: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.31.
[14] Majumdar, *History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda (1821-84)*.
[15] Ram Mohun Roy, Gopal Krishna Gokhale
[16] For instance, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo. See Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform. An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, pp.57-58.

Thomas Pantham's trio of responses to the modern in form of Western thought seems to support Parekh's typology – imitative responses by liberals and Marxists, rejection by traditionalists and synthesis by Gandhians.[17] However, we argue that this typology can be extended by a fourth response that captures the notion of parallel intellectual movements. The response entailed rejection and synthesis, but for the most part constituted searches for historical and political alternatives while touching on mutual reference points that are inevitable in the age of Empire, or the geographical expansion of the modern condition.

The most striking reference point is unsurprisingly that of the concept of the nation-state as an expression of unity, the transcending of narrow particularism, of toleration and also of equality within the wider political community. In part this had to do with the influence of Hegel, Schelling, Fichte and Herder and the way their writings impressed the concepts of Nationalstaat, Volk, self-determination and protectionism upon Indian intellectuals.[18] In this sense, the idea of the nation-state was seen to transcend the effects of British liberal and utilitarian ideas that, paradoxically, addressed socio-political fragmentation more than cohesion. The concept of unity present in traditional Hindu ideas on community and obligations to it meant that the concept of national unity was welcomed by especially traditionalist nationalists as a sign of the revival of authentic Hindu thought, albeit within a larger *nationalist* polity.

Whereas a widespread reaction to British liberalism coupled with colonialism had been to revert to the 'superior internal sphere' of "Indian culture" (i.e. the family, the clan, music, literature and other fine arts)[19], the reception of German nationalism as well as philosophical Idealism made it possible for a well-founded interest in the political sphere to develop, for instance through political Neo-Hinduism. This marked the beginnings of the radical struggle against colonialism. Attempts to merely institute social and educational reforms, a hallmark of India's Renaissance, were considered worthless in the sight of the enslaved nation. Likened to a mother or a goddess in bondage, the fulfilment of one's highest duty lay in liberating her. Effectively, this is how the personal *dharma* of many political activists was perceived in the light of these 'revelations' as to the true nature of the Indian nation. At the same time, the foundations of the faith placed in democratic populist movements were laid.

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[17] Pantham, 'Introduction: For the Study of Modern Indian Political Thought.' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.14.
[18] Mehta, *Foundations of Indian Political Thought: An Interpretation. From Manu to the Present Day*, p.159.
[19] Partha Chatterjee in Guha, *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995*, pp.245-252.

Nationalism in India during the first quarter of the twentieth century came in various facets, most of which consolidated the idea of national self-determination as political democracy. The economic development of the nation and the end of imperialist exploitation was a primary concern. Under Gandhi though, the notion of the necessary participation of the masses in the project of independence emerged. This idea gained immense weight in particular with Gandhi's popular method of peaceful resistance, also known as *satyagraha.* At the same time, India also saw a growth of a 'new' militant nationalism that demanded the passionate participation of the masses, even at the cost of sacrificing life.[20] Besides the hopes of self-determination, framed in Marxist and neo-Hindu terms, the discourse of a secular and liberal India gained in dominance. The commitment of India's liberal political leaders to democracy was framed in primarily institutional terms, which was preceded by the participation of the secular-nationalist Congress Party in legislative assemblies even prior to India's independence. Thus the discourse of constitutionalism and administrative efficacy dominated.[21] This was part of a conscious effort to modernise India, but also to neutralise her indigenous traditions such as caste by stressing the functionality of traditions that enable these to blend with the modern.[22] Finally, the meeting of Indian traditions and European traditions was accompanied by a primarily emotive discourse on identity and rights, which also continued into post-Independence developments that opened up the fora of politics and economics to the citizenship on an unprecedented scale. In all of these accounts trust was placed in a democratic political system as the best way of stabilising national unity as well as the best method of enabling development through mass mobilisation.

The assumption that democracy could be a universal panacea for a diversity of social ills has not held true though when seen in the light of significant moments of failure. India's democracy has consequently had its fair share of critics, mainly on the left, who have deplored that the link between India's democracy and historically entrenched bourgeois (or caste) interests has obstructed the development of politically and socio-economically underprivileged classes and castes. The failure of the idea of a successful triad of unity, democracy and equitable development has manifested itself in outward signs of unrest and conflict. The belief in unity and consensus, backed up by a centralised state did not ultimately override internal fissures within Indian society. However, pre-independence reform movements had lost their momentum in the meantime, and thus questions of disunity were

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[20] Buch, *The Development of Contemporary Indian Political Thought: Rise and Growth of Indian Militant Nationalism*, pp.198-199.
[21] Kohli, *India's Democracy. An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations*, p.9.
[22] Satish Saberwal, 'Democratic Political Structures.' In: Sathyamurthy, *Social Change and Political Discourse in India*, p.175. Another way of describing this trend in the 1950s and 1960s was to argue a case for 'modernity-in-tradition', done most incisively so by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph.

'discussed' in practical terms by the challenge to the ruling Congress Party posed by voters as well as by the political opposition. The power of both was subsequently attempted to be broken by Indira Gandhi's calling out of the Emergency from 1975-77.

Despite the challenging times of India's nascent democracy, which enabled and demanded an intimate association between a *vita active* and a *vita contemplativa*, systematic political thought dealing with India's problematics of independence - and not just of colonialism - remained seemingly impoverished, as pointed out by Bhikhu Parekh.[23] Calls for studies in this field have been made, expressing a desire to come to terms with the legacy of India's encounter with modernity in terms of state-building and democracy.[24] We wish to contribute in this thesis to the discussion of democracy by looking closely at its link with freedom, and argue that in at least two instances, i.e. in the works of M. N. Roy and Jayaprakash Narayan, Indian political thought was far from being impoverished and far from being isolated within a broader spectrum of intellectual history.

Roy and Narayan quite presciently situated the failure of democracy to realise individual freedom and enable openness to historical alternatives, implying the tyranny of the state, the tyranny of collectives based on religion, class and caste, and the tyranny of the concept of linear history. This meant that the possibilities offered by political independence and national self-determination failed to be translated into something richer, namely a non-reductionist idea of individual liberty as well as historical-social and individual change at an unprecedented level. Roy and Narayan, therefore, while making their cases against India's ills, both thought it necessary to go back to fundamentals and ask the most basic question about self-determination. Self-determination in the forms of nationalism, cultural conservatism and economic development failed to address the key question that is often not asked in the colonial context as it is held to be self-explanatory – what is freedom about and how is it to be realised?

Their answers depicted a productive tension in their thought that resulted in an operational solution of radical democracy. On the one hand, presupposing that democracy is to offer 'freedom' instead of tyranny, they posited liberty as the one of the foundations of democracy. More specifically, it was about liberty that rests on the standards of equality and the primacy of the individual. On the other hand, they noted that democracy could be enriched further by

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[23] Parekh, *The Poverty of Indian Political Theory.*
[24] Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India.* Dallmayr and Devy, *Between Tradition and Modernity. India's Search for Identity.* Appadorai, *Indian Political Thinking in the Twentieth Century, from Naoroji to Nehru: An Introductory Survey.* Mehta, *Foundations of Indian Political Thought: An Interpretation. From Manu to the Present Day.*

being sustained by the idea of self-expression and self-development that is rooted in ideas of scepticism and openness regarding ontology and history. The work of Roy especially points to the latter idea in a remarkable way. It is hoped that the following biographical sketch will be of some help in tracing the development of their thought.

II Biographical notes

M. N. Roy (1887-1954)

Born as Narendranath Bhattacharya to a Brahmin family in West Bengal, M. N. Roy's political activities led him far beyond West Bengal and India. The early 1900s saw Roy participating in nationalist revolutionary movements that also included acts of robbery in armed bands, or dacoity. From 1915 to 1916, Roy's movements outside India in search of procuring arms took him to Indonesia, Malaya, China and Japan. In 1916 Roy proceeded to the U.S.A., where he eventually changed his name and shed his various guises to become M. N. Roy. It was in the U.S.A. that Roy's nationalist interests were supplanted by socialist convictions. Roy was to play a key role in the Mexican Socialist Party Conference in 1918 and subsequently in the formation of the Mexican Communist Party in 1919 upon meeting Borodin. In the same year Roy was invited by Lenin to participate in the second Comintern Congress, at which the Roy-Lenin debates on colonial policy took place. The journey to Moscow was via Cuba, Spain and Germany, where Roy met various leading communists. The involvement with the Comintern triggered off several missions, *inter alia* the Tashkent mission, which resulted in the founding of the Communist party of India. Unsurprisingly, Roy's high profile in the Comintern as well as in disseminating publications on communism in India was responsible for implicating him in several conspiracy cases by the British in India. Leading a further mission to China in 1927, Roy met Mao and prepared a study on the comparison of communism in China and India. In 1929 Roy was expelled from the Comintern, for which there were a variety of reasons – notably the clashes with the leadership of CPSU. Upon returning to India in 1930 *incognito* Roy collaborated with the Indian National Congress, and worked alongside Jawaharlal Nehru in framing the fundamental rights resolution. The alleged betrayal by unnamed communists resulted in his arrest and imprisonment in 1931, but also attracted a lot of attention from outside India. Even Albert Einstein appealed to the British for Roy to be treated humanely. While continuing to be supportive of the Congress party after his release in 1936, in 1938 Roy joined the formation of the League of Radical Congress-men. As he believed that India was to unconditionally support the British in the Second World War, Roy eventually resigned from the Congress in 1940 due to his disagreement with Congress policies. In the same year, he founded the Radical Democratic Party, which was dissolved in 1948. Roy finally directed his energies

towards establishing the Renaissance Movement. His output in terms of political writings was unsurpassed by his peers, having written his main theoretical books in English and several articles in Spanish and Russian. In all of his intellectual and political, Roy enjoyed enormous support from his wives. His first marriage was to Evelyn Trent and lasted from 1917-1925. Trent was a Stanford University graduate, who also published articles under the name of Shanti Devi in Roy's journal *The Vanguard of Indian Independence.* He later married a German citizen, Ellen Roy, in 1937.

J.P. Narayan (1902-1979)

Jayaprakash Narayan was born in a border region of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and like Roy, was widely travelled until his return to high profile politics in India. Narayan's stays outside India were however primarily for educational purposes. In 1922 he left for the U.S.A, where he pursued postgraduate studies in sociology in Berkeley, Iowa and other universities. It is not inconceivable that the number of menial jobs that Narayan took on fostered his interest in socio-economic justice. The influence of Marx, of the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917, as well as the work of M. N. Roy served to underline Narayan's communist leanings. Upon his return to India in 1929 Narayan accepted an offer by Nehru to work for the Congress, which he felt was compatible with communist ideals. After being arrested for the first among many times, Narayan had the opportunity to meet socialists like Ram Manohar Lohia, Asoka Mehta, Minoo Masani, P. Dantwala and Achyut Patwardhan in jail. Upon his release in 1934, Narayan co-founded the Congress Socialist Party. Narayan's increasing affiliations with Gandhi's political and ethical ideals led him to re-evaluate the politics of his times, i.e. authoritarian socialism as practiced in the Soviet Union, the violent nature of India's partition as well as the formal institutionalism of India's national elections. Having lost the elections for the CSP to the Congress party in 1952, Narayan's attentions turned to the politics of trade unions. He declined Nehru's personal invitation to join the government, as Nehru could not assure that Narayan's 14-point plan to reform the Constitution, the administration and judicial system, to nationalise the banks, to redistribute land to the landless, to revive *Swadeshi*, would be implemented as soon as the CSP desired. In 1954 he 'dedicated' his life (*jeevan dan*) to the *Sarvodaya* movement, or the movement for the welfare of all. This entailed experimenting with grass roots politics and modern technologies at the rural level. Narayan furthermore was active at the fringes of extremist Naxalite groups in Bihar in attempting to wean these groups away from violent political tactics. In 1974 Narayan became active once more at the national level. Although it initially took the form of peaceful protests and rallies, Narayan was arrested in 1975 following the Emergency clampdown by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of the Congress party. Subsequently to his release, he was a key figure in the merging of several opposition parties to form the Janata Party. Regarding his personal

life, the role of his wife Prabhavati cannot be underestimated in bringing his ideas closer to Gandhi. Gandhi famously prevented Prabhavati from separating from Narayan in order to live at his ashram on a permanent basis.

III

Roy and Narayan were therefore important exceptions in the history of Indian political thought, who via their parallel trajectories from communism to democratic socialism and finally, to radical democracy, attempted to question the substance of the notion of self-determination. In doing so, they critiqued the concepts of nationalism, parliamentary democracy and semi-socialist development as inadequate answers to the problematic of freedom. They are inadequate because they constituted a new set of limitations instead of opportunities post colonialism. There were of course points of continuity with India's left: the dissatisfaction with the unquestioning acceptance of classical liberal ideas like laissez-faire on the one hand, and the rejection of classical Marxist materialist theory on the other. That Roy and Narayan's discontent with Indian post-colonial politics yielded a richer theoretical perspective on democracy was not always clear to their contemporaries. Edward Shils for instance contended that political philosophy and analysis in India had come to a standstill after Gandhi. Despite noting 'creative possibilities' in the work of J. P. Narayan, as well as of Asoka Mehta, Shils believed that their concern with parliamentary affairs and the *Bhoodan* movement, which was about land distribution to the landless, in a way deprived Indian political thought of innovative ideas.[25]

This view deflected from the actual impact of the movement of political radicalisation in both practice and thought, which was only partially represented but not encapsulated by land distribution movements as well as by growing expressions of political opposition to the dominant politics of the Congress party. In other words, the radicalism of agrarian politics, inherent in land redistribution and voluntary gifting away of land stood for a much larger project of radicalism as a timely critique, but also an unfortunately forgotten moment in the optimism of state-building in India.[26] Narayan and Roy's thought remains relevant in that they offer a different and possibly a more promising angle to discussing the future of India within

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[25] Shils, *The Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation*, p.23.

[26] J. P. Narayan's involvement in the politics of the state of Bihar is a case in point. Although the Bhoodan movement is not always viewed as a radical movement in that it reinforces rather than subverts traditional attitudes towards charity and its role in Hinduism's cosmology, we argue that while this may well be claimed with respect to the Bhoodan movement as inspired by the Gandhian Vinoba Bhave, Narayan's conception of Bhoodan differed in so far the desired 'change of heart' was to be brought about by actual changes in socio-economic circumstances. There is evidence in Bhave's ideas that the Gandhian notion of 'trusteeship' did not require such dramatic material changes as long as there was a paternalistic attitude of the rich towards the childlike poor. See Rolnick, *Charity, Trusteeship, and Social Change in India: A Study of a Political Ideology*, pp.352-353.

the world - beyond the confines of nationalist theory, and beyond the confines of development theory.

Firstly, by proposing to combine passionate mass political action with dispassionate political reasoning, Roy and Narayan have offered compelling accounts of how their radicalism is based on transcending the emotions of nationalism as well as the sterility and ossification of formal institutional structures. Secondly, while issues of minorities, majorities and religious self-determination raise the question of the nature of the postcolonial nation-state, Roy and Narayan posed the question of the nature of individual freedom and its relationship with the state. Their original approaches to the issue of freedom through Marxism was not new in the sense that the appeal of Marxism within colonial countries laid precisely in its distance from the basically particularist state/community and tradition/modernity dichotomies. [27] Yet, although Roy and Narayan were quintessentially rooted in the Marxist tradition, their self-professed break from Marxism was grounded in the rejection of Marxism's manifestation in India that eschewed a radical reordering of society both conceptually and in actual fact by converging with the more stale image of state secularism.[28] This in effect supports Gail Omvedt's point that 'traditional' socialism in India emanated out of the nationalist movement and can hence only be understood in terms of this connection.[29] Roy and Narayan ultimately desired to break this connection by historicizing nationalism as a vehicle of self-determination and moving on to emancipatory ideas that regard the individual as the primary subject of interest.

This line of argument notably differs from the approach of subaltern studies, although Roy and Narayan too, similarly to the studies after the 1980s combined a 'sharp criticism of orthodox Marxist practice and theory with the retention of a broad socialist and Marxian outlook.'[30] Their concern was not politics or history from 'below.' Subaltern studies emanated as perhaps a paradoxical intellectual movement against the elitism inherent in colonialism and in bourgeois-nationalism, by seeking out those sites of resistance against domination that were not immediately obvious from 'above.' Roy and Narayan, although arguing against domination, did not perceive elitism to be a problem of domination as such. A politics and history from below was to be created, not discovered. Resistance therefore is not to take place vis-à-vis elitist domination, but vis-à-vis modes of being that hinder the development of individual capability. Their differentiation between the radical and the populist is to be

[27] Nigam, *Marxism and the Postcolonial World. Footnotes to a Long March.*
[28] Nigam, *Marxism and the Postcolonial World. Footnotes to a Long March.*
[29] Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India.*
[30] Sumit Sarkar, 'The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies.' In: Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, p.300.

commended even from a contemporary perspective, as the failure of the 'radical-populist moods of the 1960s and 1970s' did much to valorise 'alternatives' in terms of community consciousness.[31] In terms of political alternatives, these movements do not seem to point into a discernibly constructive direction however, as critics within the new Subaltern Studies group point out as they tend to freeze structures of domination that are no longer visible by virtue of the shield of subaltern particularity.[32]

The context of their theories of radical democracy, which form the final stages of their respective political thinking, is thus characterised by the divergence from two dominant, but in effect elite-based intellectual movements. The differences are primarily conceived in terms of the divergence of their works from the institutional and ideological separation of the Indian socialists from the Indian communists, as well as from India's liberal elite. Roy and Narayan's preoccupations with the issues of liberty, freedom and the individual do raise the question of whether they are better portrayed as liberal thinkers. Those aspects of liberalism that spoke of individual equality and liberty were highly welcomed. The impact of liberal ideas collided with traditional concepts of society whereby prescribed social *in*equalities reflect the right order. Hence, despite Hinduism's claim to pluralism, autonomy is only enjoyed by social groups and not by individuals. Consequently, sources of conflict within society are not to be seen as the interests of groups but as the repudiation of *dharma* by errant individuals.[33]

Countering this notion, liberalism had introduced a positive status of the individual, an idea shared by Roy and Narayan. Yet this idea had not been radicalised enough for Roy and Narayan as it was always seen in conjunction with and as being inseparable from the construction of a nation state that posited its own unity vis-à-vis the colonial forces. The idea of nationalism as an ideology of unity and collective self-determination resulted in freezing the relationship between the individual and the state into one of dependence, i.e. whereby the supposedly free individual could not expect to realise his or her freedom without the existence of the free state. What this issue overlooks is the conflict between the demand regarding individual liberty and self-expression and the demands of a mass movement that stands for homogeneity and collective pressure. In other words, the classical Aristotelian argument about the polis being prior to the individual was reified without taking the full extent of the reciprocal relationship between these two into account. The one-sided priority accorded to the

[31] Sarkar in: Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial.*
[32] For a defence of this position, see Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies.*
[33] Parekh in: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, pp.27-31.

polis or the state *as such* was precisely what Roy and Narayan critiqued as having led to the 20th century phenomenon of state totalitarianism in Europe.

The significance of Roy and Narayan's writings lies furthermore in the context of the often acrimoniously played out differences within the Indian left, i.e. between the socialist camp and the communist camp. Although of integral and indeed pivotal importance as reformist democratic socialists critiquing the revolutionary communists whose primary loyalty was to the dictates of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Roy and Narayan's contribution to the ideas of the Indian left is better understood in light of their own break from democratic socialism. This entailed the rejection of party politics, the rejection of parliamentary democracy, and the downplaying of the question of identity, whether of caste or class. As the concept of class, which was peculiar to industrially developed countries, was considered as being a weak factor in India's route to socialism, the interests of the underprivileged castes were brought to the forefront of political and economic development. Class and caste interests were consequently either used synonymously or as subgroups of the larger exploited section of the population.[34] This relationship is easily established when considering the idea of caste as essentially reflecting a division of "labour".[35]

For secular liberals, the identity politics of region, religion, language, ethnicity and caste was inimical to the growth and the unity of the Indian nation state.[36] Hence, charges that the Indian left, which came under the spell of Gandhism even before independence, and that the Indian neo-Gandhian right have converged in the politics of culture have weakened the credibility of both the arguments of the Indian left as well as its politics quite considerably.[37] The left's preoccupations with the politics of caste and the right's preoccupation with the politics of religion within the accepted parameters of nation state and market arrest the development of alternative, non-traditional ways of socio-economic progress, as some voices on the *critical* left repeatedly point out.[38]

The development of socialist thought in India is best traced back to the ideas of Rammanohar Lohia. His accessible and coherent critique of European Marxism and incorporation of Gandhism resulted in the evolution of 'Indian socialism', which was to be characterised by 'the assimilation of democracy, social ownership, civil disobedience and decentralisation...in

[34] In a more decisive move to de-link 'class' from 'historical progress' some believed that human history is a cycle of oscillations between the conservative forces of caste and its unleashed dynamics in form of class. Refer to Chandra, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, pp.101-102.
[35] Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nation and its Oucasts' In: Kaviraj, *Politics in India*, pp.95-96.
[36] Sinha, *Indian Democracy: Exclusion and Communication.*
[37] Banerjee, *Bengali Left: From Pink to Saffron?*
[38] For example, Desai, *Culturalism and the Contemporary Right: Indian Bourgeoisie and the Political Hindutva.* Also, Sinha, *Indian Democracy: Exclusion and Communication.*

addition to the fundamental aim of equality.'[39] Yet the problem with the socialist movement was, according to Lohia, its dependence on the state that primarily addressed the issues of the middle classes. The lack of democracy and decentralisation that seemed to account for the misery of the peasant and working classes as well as for the lower castes meant that socialists sympathetic to Lohia's position turned their attention to the caste problematic. The somewhat contradictory ideas of anti-casteism on the one hand and the idea of political leadership emanating from the 'downtrodden castes' on the other hand could not but be set against each other. In the long run, the arguments for the representation of the lower castes won, helped along by the dominance of Nehru's semi-socialist model of state-led social change.

But rather than having restricted themselves to making conventional demands for better distribution of economic goods and better representation of underprivileged minority groups, Roy and Narayan have provided a much stronger case for radical leftism than has the Indian left from the 1960s onwards.[40] Firstly, they do so by arguing that freedom entails more than freedom from exploitation and freedom as self-determination, and secondly, by linking this answer that speaks of a hope for the dissolution and transformation of identities to the hope for a politics of radical democracy that encompasses localised grass-roots action, dialogue and individual participation. The idea of radical democracy as empowerment and radical democracy as the means to the transformation of interests indicates that the demands made on this form of democracy are multifaceted and inherently in a state of tension between these two notions – one being substantive and concrete, the other being open and abstract.

Much of this has not been dealt with adequately enough by commentators on Roy and Narayan, as can be seen in unduly biased representations and interpretations. A review of the rather meagre useful secondary literature on Roy and Narayan indicates that this may well be one of the reasons for their slide into oblivion.[41] This is in sharp contrast to the continued interest shown in Gandhi and resurrected interest in figures important to the early Hindutva ideology, such as Veer Savakar and M. S. Golwalkar. There are of course a number of biographical works, especially on J. P. Narayan. The problems appear to be a reluctance to go beyond the telling of their life stories, as much of the interest shown in Roy and Narayan has to do with an almost unqualified admiration for their personae. The vocabulary ranges from lauding their sincerity, honesty, their spurning of political power, and even their political

[39] Arumugam, *Socialist Thought in India: The Contribution of Rammanohar Lohia*, p.143.
[40] For an exposition of the failure of liberalism in light of the pursuit of identity politics on both the left and right in India see Guha, *The Absent Liberal*. Also see Ali, *Evolution of Public Sphere in India*.
[41] A view not shared by Meghnad Desai, who believes that especially Narayan's work deserves closer scrutiny.

failure – as failure is the antidote to success, which only leads to complacency in thought and action.[42]

Unsurprisingly, the biased reception has not done much to constructively deal with their thought, despite their places in the *Readings in Indian Politics* as utopian thinkers, whose notions of the ideal state of India were set side by side with Gandhi's vision of the *Kingdom of Rama* and Vinoba Bhave's *Kingdom of Benevolence Through Dana.*[43] The ideal states of Roy and Narayan were seen as ruled by primarily the principles of morality and reason; hence much of the literature has focused on these two aspects of their thought and the way they relate to the crises in the Indian polity as universal panaceas.[44] By correlating these ideas to the perception of their respective paths of dissent from Marxism's descent into immorality and irrationality, Roy and Narayan's intellectual routes were generally traced from nationalism, communism, and democratic socialism to Roy's *Radical* or *New Humanism* and Narayan's *Total Revolution.* While less favourable ways of looking at their work is to point to their writings as being riddled with internal contradictions and finally, as lacking the voice of authenticity[45], the move away from Marxism on the basis of reclaiming the voice of reason and morality has almost always met with approval.

This project on the other hand attempts to revise the extent of Roy and Narayan's dissent from Marxism. It tries to ground the notion of radical democracy in a continuation of Marxian thought, in the critique of Marxism and in the desire to move beyond the perceived confines of the ideology in so far it relates to the ideals of democracy as the means for furthering individual liberty and self-expression. The aim of revising the notion of democracy is the qualification of democracy as a system of non-domination, non-exploitation and as the political source of historical, social and individual openness. Accordingly, the notion of

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[42] See Kumar, *The Essential J P. The Philosophy and Prison Diary of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.3. Undisguised admiration for the life and political work of J. P. Narayan is also to be seen in the secondary literature that tries to deal with his work more analytically, e.g. Bhattacharjea, *Jayaprakash Narayan. A Political Biography.* Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution.* Narain Lal, *Jayaprakash. Rebel Extraordinary.* Laudatios for M.N. Roy are less obvious, possibly on grounds of Roy's death decades before the first serious crises in the governance of independent India were visible, and also possibly on Roy's less compromising stance on Gandhism. However, V.M. Tarkunde, who edited Roy's work in 1947 to make his writings more accessible to the general public, did so in view of Roy's unique personality and profound thinking. The only recent addition to a *commentary* on Roy's work is by Reeta Sinha in 1991, but this too was done in a spirit of admiration for the person of the thinker Roy rather than exclusively for his ideas.

[43] Murty, *Readings in Indian History, Politics and Philosophy*, pp.195-198.

[44] For a critical assessment of the over-emphasis of reason in Roy, see Khan, *M. N. Roy: Reason and Revolution in Politics.*

[45] These are more complex and therefore more useful ways of examining the ideas of Roy and Narayan though. Refer to Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Heteronomous Radicalism of M. N. Roy' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, pp.209-235. Also, Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan.*

radical democracy is not only linked to the idea of liberal leftism but also points to an attempted move beyond Marxism that anticipates some elements of what is now termed *post* Marxism. Which is why the question of internal contradictions should not be simply laid aside but reviewed from a position that sees in Roy and Narayan's writings the reflections of a changing world. That this should lead to paradoxical statements and even positions is by no means novel in the history of political philosophy, especially given the contradictory nature of Enlightenment thought that gave birth to a variety of often synchronic visions: *Sturm und Drang*, Romanticism, Rationalism. Hence it would be futile to seek to find a unitary voice of the Indian ex-left. The impossibility of this search is not a tragedy but rather, Roy and Narayan's sometimes tantalising vacillations pose a challenge that has yet to be met.

IV

Roy and Narayan's projects of turning Marxism into radicalism in order to accommodate the developments of the 20th century have to be distinguished from other radical movements in India. Traditional Indian radicalism comprises two diagonally opposed groups. One group is commonly known as the Derozio School of Radicals (between 1833-1876), some of whom were Europe-inspired modernists and eschewed the 'Indian' ways of life.[46] The second group of Radicals were Indian nationalists and independence fighters who were mainly influenced by anarchist thought that was seen to connect best to modern Indian concepts of politics and power, the main idea being to institute a government-free social order.[47]

Although *prima facies* Roy and Narayan would seem to fit the second mould quite well, there were some fundamental differences. In contrast to the latter school of radicalism, Roy and Narayan did not assume a superior sphere of the social over the hegemonic sphere of government. Their call for radical politics was effectively based on a new understanding of a change of the world as it is, but not as one that was caught in the tension of the modern state and its counterpart - the traditional society. It is the *themes* and *problematics* of social and political thought that we encounter in Roy and Narayan's heteronomous thinking, which ultimately form the basis for drawing some parallels between their ideas and ideas conceived within the European left. This simply means that we do not compare them to individual thinkers as singular focal points but rather with some general schools of thought and shared notions. Some parallels may seem more striking than others,[48] but to foreclose the discussion

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[46] Roy, *Main Currents of Political Thinking in India*, p.38.
[47] Dennis Dalton, 'The Ideology of Sarvodaya: Concepts of Politics and Power in Indian Political Thought.' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.277. Dalton refers to the influence of William Godwin, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Kropotkin.
[48] Here in particular reference to the conception of society, we are thinking of possible parallels with the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, given Castoriadis' image of society as a 'site of thoughtful doing',

by narrowing down the boundaries of comparison may only serve to uphold a false impression of Roy and Narayan's political ideas as having developed against a background of fixed terms of discussion. This was far from being the case and if anything, only obscures the vacillations in their thought that signified both discontent with old theories as well as reactions to a changing world.

Roy and Narayan's radicalism derived its impetus from several notions of radicalism as going back to the roots, or *radix*. The significance of radical thought lies in that as a genre of thought it attempts to be an answer to the various ills of mass societies of the 20th century, i.e. in delving past the impregnable monolithic structure of mass societies and centralised states. Mass society is sustained by what many consider the noble lies of contemporary democratic societies. According to Murray Bookchin, radicalism today is based on a counterattack to two prevalent myths – the reality of democracy and the belief in the end of capitalist exploitation with the end of private employment.[49] In this sense, radicalism as 'root' carries the meaning of anti-utopianism, or that which seeks to get at the root of problems through building the realm of the possible out of the conditions that exist.[50] However, to achieve the possible, the given has to be wholly deconstructed so as to provide a starting point for meaningful social reconstruction. It is thus mainly from a conservative perspective that critical-radical left thinking is considered as being utopian, confrontational and elitist.[51]

Two concepts became integral parts of 20th century left radicalism: self-determination and unity of purpose. In terms of actual influence, the futility of radicalism or the fact that 20th century radicalism has failed to deliver its promises has not only been an argument levelled against left radicalism by its opponents but has also come from *within* the radical camp who perceive of radicalism as false high-mindedness to the detriment of political pragmatism that is concerned with achieving concrete results. According to this version, radicalism should therefore be less an attitude than a political position of extremism that is to be favoured when attempts at reform fail.[52] But radicalism is not necessarily a position of extremism, as Roy

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largely free of necessity and open to autonomous action by its members. Refer to Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, pp.369-373. And, Castoriadis, *Recommencing the Revolution: From Socialism to the Autonomous Society*, pp.328-330 .Indeed, some key notions set out by Castoriadis, such as the impossibility of total reconciliation between a society and the laws it gives itself – a theme taken up by Roy – could serve as a constant reference point. However, there are differences and not only that, to perceive Roy as a pre-Castoriadian and Narayan as a contemporary would result in deflecting from their own, independent contribution to the world of ideas and thought.

[49] Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism, and the Future of the Left.*

[50] Sciabarra, *Marx, Hayek, and Utopia.*

[51] Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action. The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970*, p.265. Linked to this critique is the charge of 'blueprinting' of alternative worlds by elites engaged in futile utopianism. See Higgins, *Reflections on Radicalism*, p.17.

[52] Neumann, *What's Left? Radical Politics and the Radical Psyche*, p.171.

and Narayan have argued. The alleged failure of radicalism goes back to its genesis within Enlightenment thinking, i.e. in Rousseauian strivings to reconcile the often paradoxical leanings towards philosophical libertarianism and social egalitarianism. While the left has to seek to constructively deal with these two issue, its resolution cannot however lie in engaging in a rebellion against promising concepts that are rooted in the traditions of the Enlightenment: participatory democracy, public deliberation and social justice.[53]

While Roy and Narayan did not discount self-determination and unity of purpose, their ideas show that this tension was to be offset by viewing unity as the universal drive for individual self-determination. A favoured understanding of this problem took the form of the idea of 'socialism from below.'[54] This is a classical claim of Marxism and entails the obliteration of the traditional difference between ruler and the ruled.[55] But as this was often construed in the Marxian tradition of positing the dictatorship of the working class, parts of the critical left in Europe voiced their scepticism regarding the end of exploitative political structures. This point in particular situates Roy and Narayan's radical thought. Much like the theorists of the critical left, Roy and Narayan did not dispute the continued relevance of universal goals such as liberty and equality, yet their radicalism was steeped in a fear of patterns or of prescribed courses of action in order to effectively deal with the problem of domination. In this sense, radicalism was a response to both real situations in socio-political terms, but also to certain worldviews. The idea of political dominance concurred with the idea of domination through ontological and epistemological certainties, framed as the dualist mode of thinking, and of the continued dominance of pre-modern holistic traditions based on faith.[56] Marxism was considered guilty on all of these accounts. As Marx's appeal was seen to lie in confronting domination, the radicalism espoused by Roy and Narayan was directed towards a post-colonial and post-imperialist order that required some Marxian approaches but not Marxist approaches to the socio-economic and political problems of the day.

The new Indian radicalism of Roy and Narayan fed on the idea that radicalism was born out of moments of crisis. In the modern world, Marxism was one key moment of radicalism, but the apparent failure of communism to defeat imperialism and fascism called for a renewed orientation towards a renewed brand of radicalism.[57] The nature of the crises of the 20th

[53] Also see Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right. The Future of Radical Politics*, pp.11-20.
[54] Draper, *Socialism from Below*.
[55] Lucio Colletti, 'Marxism – Science or Revolution?' In: Colletti, *From Rousseau to Lenin: Studies in Ideology and Society*, p.222. Colletti's point was made primarily to re-establish Lenin as a radical thinker, especially when contrasted with Kautsky's more cautious approach that favoured retaining the shell of the state as such.
[56] Joravsky, *The Mechanical Spirit. The Stalinist Marriage of Pavlov to Marx*, p.460.
[57] Ray, *Radicalism*, pp.72-73.

century were considered cultural – that is, as a philosophy of life - rather than purely socio-economic. These therefore could not be resolved by socialist measures of redistribution of wealth or the empowerment of the proletariat, which rested on knowledge of the nature of problems and knowledge pertaining to solutions. Rather, the cultural crisis plausibly demanded new approaches to problems.

For Roy and Narayan however, unlike the critical theory school in Europe, which was preoccupied with the relationship between culture, capitalism and domination, the philosophy of *individual* life took on a greater importance as the building block of a new radical agenda. In part this can be linked to an older form of radicalism, namely that of German radicalism of the 1860s, which was based on physiological radicalism but did not really impact political radicalism, especially in the Soviet Union, until the 1930s.[58] The agenda of Narayan and Roy connected with this in so far their radical thought was primarily concerned with the realisation of the freedom of the individual. Although premised on the self-determination of society vis-à-vis the state as well as on social justice, their primary focus was on the actual capability of individuals to forge their own world from their own base upwards. As such, Narayan and Roy were concerned that the self-definition and self-realisation of individuals did not occur via oppressive social structures, which they regarded as the state, nation, class, and caste. It was on this premise that Roy and, to a lesser extent, Narayan, pursued a radical agenda of grass roots liberal-democratic politics based in an individualistic, creativist approach to the world.

Their notion of radicalism was thus not based on any kind of naturalism but falls between a Marxist concept of social and individual development based on patterns set by structures of property relations and class relations that are to be subverted and a post Marxist image of change, i.e. as contingent transformation. Roy and Narayan's thought, if it were to be situated, does not easily fit into any straightforward taxonomies of left thinking. Situated between traditional Marxist thought and intimations of missing ontological, epistemological and historical certainties, their political radicalism in the form of radical democracy resembles *post*-Marxist notions that now occupy much of Western left thought. By this we mean the political ideas of critical Marxists who feel unable to sidestep the issue of the changing world that questions hitherto cherished characteristics of modernity. That these tensions reflect the state of the contemporary (post-colonial) world rather than waiting to be resolved is not an entirely implausible argument.[59] As such, the approach that Roy and Narayan used was not a

[58] Joravsky, *The Mechanical Spirit. The Stalinist Marriage of Pavlov to Marx*, p.460.
[59] *Inter alia*: Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*. Kramer, *Modern/Postmodern. Off the Beaten Track of Antimodernism*. Agger, *A Critical Theory of Public Life: Knowledge, Discourse, and Politics in an Age of Decline*.

simple negation of sources of problems contributing to the tension – such as ideology, oppressive social structures – but the working through of their implications. [60]

The fact that Roy and Narayan displayed awareness of a changing nature of the social world has not been adequately, if at all, discussed in the literature on these two thinkers and activists. Roy and Narayan's work has thus been contextualised mainly within the politics of Indian nation-state building. The thrust of interpretation has therefore been on the reasons for rejecting Marxism as the basis of the newly independent Indian state. However, given their personal histories as internationalist communists, Roy and Narayan's work was an expression of an interest in the political situation of India as well a reflection of changes within a wider setting, connecting in particular to the conditions in Europe. Their work thus occupied a unique place in the history of political ideas in India in that it reflects the attempt to set out political positions that transcended the seemingly more pressing issues of the day – the project of a modern, democratically legitimised nation state.

These positions were informed, albeit with some major differences within them, by the emergence of new intellectual and social conditions that touched not only Europe but also 'countries of European descent.'[61] Although the above reference was not made with regard to colonial countries, it seems but natural that by extension this point should be made with reference to countries that were under European domination. Against the background of modernity's deep divisions in views and manifestations, [62] its *geographical* expansion entails a constant process of reinterpretation under the circumstances of the development of 'multiple global trends and mutual reference points.'[63] This leads quite inevitably to the idea of spatial politics that is in part de-linked from temporality, i.e. politics reflecting linear progress over time. *Post*-Marxism, although in line with Marxism's normative claims and some of its theoretical premises, therefore sees history not in diachronic but in synchronic terms. Further to that, the notions of provisionality, cultural polyvalence, and of alternatives take over concepts of certainty and totality. [64]

These negations of stability, centredness and wholeness cannot but have deeply affected the left, and yet it seems clear that a hallmark of European modernity is that it has always been a

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[60] Cf. Agger, *A Critical Theory of Public Life: Knowledge, Discourse, and Politics in an Age of Decline*, p.198.
[61] Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, p.187.
[62] Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity*, p.207.
[63] Also refer to Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Perspective*, p.130.
[64] Cf. Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem. On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture*, p.108.

fragmented project since its inception. For some of the left there has been an affirmative reaction to the notion of an incomplete world in that it is considered to be an integral part of the dialectical process – permanent self-questioning and the permanent process of 'self-inflation and self-deflation.'[65] Indeed, Marxism as a modern project inherently combines these opposing views of the world.[66] The question of 'what is to be done' in light of historical and social uncertainty is therefore not easily dismissed. It is this uncertainty that renders *anti-*Marxism as unsubstantiated in Roy and Narayan as their notions of radicalism attempt to transcend rather than negate, which denotes intimations of *post* Marxism.

Post Marxism is a broad and indefinite set of answers to the questions raised by disillusioned and reconstructivist Marxists. For those who reject Marxism in its entirety, Stuart Sim proposes the term post *Marxism*. But for others, and here we argue that Roy and Narayan are tentatively among them, *post* Marxism is *at times* an appropriate approach to understanding their particular take on the problems of their time. According to Sim, *post* Marxism hopes to infuse the Marxist project of emancipation and socio-economic justice with new life, borne out of a critical acceptance that the world that we inhabit has changed in some vital respects.[67] According to both sympathetic critics and opponents, Marxism has major shortcomings that had led to its decline into an ideology unsuitable to the mindset after World War II. The fears included the notions of totalitarianism and of a totalising unity of purpose.[68] Furthermore, Marxism was viewed with scepticism regarding its tendencies to eschatology,[69] to scientism and objectivism, [70] to indifference to the Subjective and to political and social authoritarianism.[71]

In countering these aspects of Marxism, the alternative posed by certain forms of *post* Marxism have tried to set out a more proactive political agenda that set out by Critical

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[65] Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem. On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture*, p.164.
[66] In relation to the *Grundrisse*, see Nigam, *Marxism and the Postcolonial World. Footnotes to a Long March.*
[67] Sim, *Post-Marxism. An Intellectual History*, p.1.
[68] See for example Rosa Luxemburg's call 'To the Proletarians of All Countries' for one people, one law (that of equality) and one goal (that of prosperity and progress). In: Luxemburg, *Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg*, p.355.
[69] This term however lends itself to confusion, as there is a difference between Marxist teleology (necessity unfolding itself in history) and Marxist eschatology (an end of history, the process of which is not in the present but will be unfolded in the future). Roy and Narayan attempt an anti-teleological position by stressing possibility over necessity. Roy in fact argues that causality is not necessity. Causality establishes links; the necessity of establishing these is questioned, not the fact that there is a necessary relationship between cause and effect.
[70] Agger, *Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: Their Sociological Relevance*, p.107.
[71] Aronson, *After Marxism*, p.91.

Theory.[72] The self is seen as embedded within the issue of 'identity' but retains an aspiration towards autonomy; knowledge is mediated by neither simplistic empiricism nor culturally constructed views of science but by self-critical contextual realism[73]; no fixed end is claimed and no final norm but some principles are held to be universally applicable in order for society to function, such as toleration[74]; the fragmentation of the social sphere means that the demise of working class politics is accepted but newer strategies of political action are more inclusive and take popular and parastatal movements into account[75]; a loss of faith in history is counterbalanced by a stronger belief in micropolitics of the present that derive their urgency from past instances of subjugation. Aronson summarises the parameters of a new radical project as the rejection of historical certainty, the politics of identity as well as politics of social structures and power, the open character of theories and explanations, the multiplicity of sites of human oppression as well as the sites of change, and pluralism of social movements that are coalitions of groups and forces. [76]

In its most promising expressions *post* Marxism aspires towards renewing an interest in political thought and action that steers a course between naïve certainty and cynical pessimism. In doing so, its manifestations – as we see in the case of Roy and Narayan – are valuable cases of social and political criticism without capitulation. While contemporary sociological, epistemological, and political theories that rest on claims to indeterminacy and multiplicities often run the danger of remaining descriptive, radicalism may well provide the normative antidote to apathy on the practical side. For some critics, this may seem a renewal of a universalist project through a commitment to Enlightenment ideals, and not a 'genuine effort' to grasp the novel conditions in which the world finds itself.[77] Yet, the polarisation of the traditional and the modern, or the old and the new, may not actually be a useful tool with which to analyse the issue of politics in the 20th century as well as its solutions. It is rather the tensions that are played out between these that are of interest as they serve to open ideas and alternatives rather than containing them.[78] The interplay we see in Roy and Narayan between liberty and creative freedom, between empowerment and the idea of transformation, rather than subversion, open up possibilities that are real and not just utopian. In other words,

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[72] Gorman, *Neo-Marxism. The Meanings of Modern Radicalism*, pp.260-266.
[73] Meera Nanda, 'Against the social de(con)struction of science: cautionary tales from the third world.' In: Wood and Foster, *In Defence of History. Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, p.77.
[74] Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'What is the Postmodern Agenda?' In: Wood and Foster, *In Defence of History. Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, p.12.
[75] Richard Levins, 'Beyond Democracy: the Politics of Empowerment.' In: Callari, et al., *Marxism in the Postmodern Age. Confronting the New World Order*, pp.213-214.
[76] Aronson, *After Marxism*, p.179.
[77] Gray, *Endgames. Questions in Late Modern Political Thought*, p.x.
[78] See for example Rocco, *Between Modernity and Postmodernity: Reading Dialectic of Enlightenment against the Grain.*

political possibility – upon which much of radical thought rests – is given better tools in that oppressive structures may be transformed according to need, time and place rather than being the object of total overthrow, which will necessarily remain utopian and incomplete.

V

In light of Marxism's far-reaching influence, especially in countries that experienced political oppression just as much as economic oppression, it would be fallacious to believe that the Western concepts of radicalism in an age of post Marxism are unique and non replicable. We aim to extend the discussion of new left radicalism by including the writings of M. N. Roy and J. P. Narayan, who we believe not only anticipated some of the above preoccupations of *post* Marxism in the Indian context, but have also formulated some interesting ideas on the role of political *and* individual radicalism in a newly independent country quite early on in the 20th century. Two aspects have informed their thought on the changing nature of the modern world quite remarkably. One is the experience of totalitarianism and the other is a shift in the perception of science. For our purposes the former aspect will dominate this project but only against an implicit understanding of the importance of the latter in underlining the concept of uncertainty.

Using Shib Narayan Ray's *Radicalism*, we see reflections of the formative ideas of Narayan and especially of Roy. Ray argued that scientific and moral knowledge about science and moral principles comprises unique-individual knowledge as well as shared knowledge. The mediation between the two can only happen through the act of communication. The state of knowledge in the 20th century, understood as process, does away with the difference between the subjective and the objective, as well as extends it with the notion of inter-subjectivity.[79] This means that there are multiple probabilities of development, and not just unidirectional cause and effect relations. Pure empiricism as well as Idealism thus gives way to an anti-mechanistic view of radical thought that fosters the creative role of knowledge. Ray argues furthermore that the rationalism involved in creatively instrumentalising knowledge is actually the search for 'harmony among distincts rather than homogenisation.'[80] The desire for harmony over homogeneity has its roots in the 'twin primary values of individual freedom and social progress.' As solipsistic individuals acting alone are powerless to effect any form of change in society – which is really what the role of creativity is - radicalism has to be a concerted movement of individuals concerned with procuring a political base for the expression of their freedom and individuality.[81]

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[79] Ray, *Radicalism*, pp.74-78.
[80] Ray, *Radicalism*, p.78.
[81] Ray, *Radicalism*, p.100.

In the privileging of politics over economics, the emphasising of local politics, in positing the impossibility of representation of individuals by others, in encouraging the prospect of possibility rather than certainty, the writings of Roy and Narayan should therefore be revised as a genre of Indian radical thought that not only addressed issues of the mid 20th century but also have implications for contemporary politics. Through their writings on radicalism as well as through their political activism, Roy and Narayan took issue with the question of empowerment thrown up by many who disbelieve the political potency of radical politics in an age of fragmentation and heterogeneous values. The ethos of anti-politicisation as an indication of an increasing unwillingness to accept a public sphere, coupled with a sense of localism has led to a *false* sense of empowerment, according to some.[82] For others, empowerment as self-determination simply does not exist. Against this view, Roy and Narayan assumed that individuals' natural inclination to search for a space to develop their creativity - which takes place at the local/individual level - is the driving force for collective self-determination, and not vice versa. Consequently, radical democracy will remain a perennially favoured political option.

The revision of their work will take the following form: Chapter 2 will deal with the historical background and the trajectories of their thought from communism to radicalism. In Chapter 3 we focus on their notion of the centrality of liberty as a fundamental challenge to the dangers of totalitarianism and nationalism. Further to that, their emancipatory ideals will be examined in Chapter 4. Finally, in Chapter 5 we look at their respective concepts of radical democracy. From the perspective in *retro*, we see Roy and Narayan's radical democracy as a neglected but plausible and possible answer to India's crisis of governability that set in with the centralisation of political power, the politicisation and essentialisation of social cleavages through the workings of an interventionist state, the dissolution of traditional hierarchies into power conflicts played out among weakened institutions.[83] Yet their appeal does not only lie in their arguments *contra* the state but also *contra* society's grip over individuals. From our current perspective therefore, we see Roy and Narayan as having provided a compelling statement of critique that addresses the interests of the ever-changing human capable of transcending the narrow interests of a pre-political self as well as those that are seen to define the embedded self but often end in imposing terribly limiting boundaries of caste, culture and community.

[82] Boggs, *The Great Retreat: Decline of the Public Sphere in Late Twentieth-Century America*, p.774.
[83] See Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent. India's Growing Crisis of Governability*, pp.388-394.

Chapter 2

From Communism to Democratic Socialism

In order to understand the political ideals of Jayaprakash Narayan's *Total Revolution* and M. N. Roy's *Radical Humanism* it is necessary to go back to the story of their respective intellectual journeys, which are at once similar in the train of thought and in their broader concerns yet diverge in their motivations and considerations. Driven by a sense of discontent with the prevailing state of mind, Narayan and Roy sought to answer the question of what the politics of the 20th century should look like by trying to combine a sense of standing at the crossroads of history – the end of an Empire – with a sense of continuation that acknowledges perennial concerns of human beings. Which is why to read Narayan and Roy is to read about a political possibility for India as much as it is to read two peculiar appropriations of classical Indian thought, classical Greek thought, Renaissance Humanism, Liberalism, Utopian/Reformist Socialism, Marxism, Anarchism, Gandhism, as well as a politicised reception of early 20th century breakthroughs in the natural sciences, foremost being the realm of physics. The sheer diversity of these ideas has in fact led to a generally weak effort to make sense of their political thinking not only to the detriment of extracting some interesting ideas in themselves. It has also discouraged the probing of the space left beyond their concepts of Total Revolution and Radical Humanism for a more fruitful discussion of whither Marxism in India?

The simplified versions of Narayan and Roy are not without merit and indeed, given decisive parallels in their self-perceptions, to go through a chronological reading of their thought does make it easier to traverse ignored grounds in their meeting point of what we have termed the *Sarvodaya*[1] genre of Indian social and political thought - post-Marxist radicalism. In most of the literature available on Narayan and Roy we find that their intellectual trajectories are demarcated by three distinct phases: Marxism/Communism, Democratic Socialism, Total Revolution/Radical Humanism. In this chapter we deal with the former two phases of their respective thinking, and will expand on the final stage in the rest of the project as we believe that their final stages are misread the most. At the same time, we accept this demarcation only

[1] Literally meaning 'the rise or welfare of all'. The first modern use of this term is attributed to Gandhi, who used it to paraphrase one of the teachings in John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The earliest use can be traced back 2000 years to a Jain scripture by Acharya Samantabhadra. See Das Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.76.

partially. On the one hand the phases should be taken as fluid rather than strict separations, given the continuity of certain themes of both discontent and ideals. On the other hand, the linear separation, which interprets their meeting concepts of Total Revolution and Radical Humanism as a fundamental rejection of their Marxist-Communist roots, is in our opinion fallacious. The standard tripartite reading of their political thought is however not entirely unfounded. It is partly upheld by the writings of Narayan and Roy, but also by the changing focus of their political activism.

Intellectual journeys made in the former half of the 20th century often and perhaps necessarily entail grounding in political action rather than a pure *vita contemplativa.* Anti-colonial struggles, two world wars, and the emergence of the Soviet Union as a viable communist alternative to the liberal ideals imported from Britain, have been challenging and also paradoxical in many ways for intellectuals living under a colonial regime. At the same time, the question of not only *what to do* was thrown up, but also of *why to do it.* These questions reflect both hope for a better future but also the disillusionment brought about by the often unreflected violence of nationalist and communist movements in the name of the nation and liberation from imperialist oppression. Faced with these questions, Narayan and Roy embarked on their quests, trying to resolve truth, tradition, and necessity in their radical solutions. It is not that they were alone in their struggle to come to terms with these questions. Their intellectual journeys were often paralleled by other thinkers and activists who unfortunately have not left us with a great deal of coherent material to work with.[2] Roy and Narayan were ultimately the most prolific of radical socialist writer-activists, while it has to be qualified even further in that Roy is generally considered to be the intellectually more agile and forceful of the two.

Both Narayan and Roy were spelling out their ideas in an era of nationalist fervour, which actually had eclipsed the importance of both liberal as well as left *and* right radical thought. For our purposes, it is the fate of Marxism in India that is of primary interest. Marxism had reached India only in the early 20th century, with a first reference to Marx being made as late as 1903.[3] The main impact of Marxist ideas set in, unsurprisingly, after the Russian Revolution in 1917, resulting in the formation of various scattered communist and socialist parties across colonial India. A unified Communist Party did eventually come into existence in 1925, only to be replaced in influence on pre-independence politics in India by the

[2] A rather interesting, but sparse set of ideas that matches the pattern of Marxism/Communism to democratic socialism, and beyond, may be gleaned from the writings of Acharya Narendra Deva, Ram Manohar Lohia, Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan, J.B.Kriplalani, to name the most prominent of this group of Indian socialists of the inter-war period and the beginnings of India's status as an independent nation-state.
[3] Rao, *Indian Socialism. Retrospect and Prospect*, p.85.

formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934.[4] The models of *Marxism* that were in currency were two-fold. One built on a so-called true exegesis of Marxist thought (effectively the early Marx and the Marx of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, whereas the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* were not accessible), whereas the second model revolved around debates on Leninist ideology. Marxists in India, as did Narayan and Roy, invariably oscillated between the two, the resulting tensions of which can be seen to have led Indian Marxist thought in the direction of revolution over reform. The influence of Lenin's development of Marxism in colonial countries is accounted for on grounds of its pragmatic appeal, i.e. the idea that the full development of industrial capitalism is not a necessary condition for socialism to succeed, the notion of democratic centralism, the political solution of the vanguard party that mobilises the proletariat and other classes. As can be seen in the writings of Narayan and Roy, this debate eventually refocused on anarchism, engendered by the emergence of Gandhian thought. Initially however, Marxism in India was formulated closely in accordance with the goals of nationalism, and therefore with anti-colonial tactics. Marxism became a mine of political *strategies* of revolutionary change of government, rather than being a formal theory of inevitable historical development and a normative account of socio-political aspirations.

Hence, we have to approach Roy and Narayan's writings with not only a theoretical, but also historical background in mind, i.e. the context of nation building and the formation of democratic structures, such as the party system and the state bureaucracy. It is not hard to see that these tasks do demand the institutionalisation of, in India's case, democratic politics as a strategy, more so than inquiries into the foundations, legitimacy and weaknesses of the underlying political concepts. Yet, the proliferation of two concepts did in fact make the task of the left to gain a foothold in India somewhat easier. One was the notion of universalism, and as Schwarz notes, 'nationalist thought...often saw itself as participating in a global process of enlightenment at the end of which all cultures would share in a common civilization.'[5] The claim made by Marxism to understand history as an objective process, dependent on specific human relations, enabled the positive reception of Marxist thought, albeit via nationalist concerns. The second conceptual tool that the Marxists in India were able to avail themselves of was the notion of equality seen against the Indian nation's aspiration to transcend colonial relations of power and hierarchy. It was clear therefore that the problems of India's internal structures of socio-economic inequalities would have to be addressed in a similar vein.

[4] This may have to do with the fact that is was not the case of the Soviet Union that provided Indian communists with a blueprint for socio-political change, but rather China, which was perceived as a better model for agrarian revolt.

The aspect of equality was commonly associated with the aims of leftist politics – the redistribution of wealth, opportunities and political power. The reaction of Indian Marxists to Gandhism as a specifically Indian mode of thinking also expressed the way equality was viewed. The sense of derogation experienced through colonialism was countered by the argument that ancient Indian ethical and metaphysical doctrines did indeed uphold the claim to equality as sameness.[6] Accordingly, equality was perceived to have absolute truth-value in the received traditions of ancient Indian thought. The rediscovery of equality in traditional modes of thinking thus served to eventually reconcile Marxists with traditionalists, who problematised capitalism as perpetuating social inequalities, which contradicted eternal laws of mankind and the divine.

The difference to modern concepts is clear enough. Not only are social inequalities that counter rather than endorse an organically structured polity seen to be a hallmark of a troubled modernity, but so is the perceived right to private property. Influential interpretations of ancient Vedic thought on the question of individual rights argue two lines: one is that the only right an individual bears is to give, but not to ask or appropriate. The second line of argument is to see God in wealth and possession, which turns individuals into trustees, rather than possessors. [7] We find this view formulated not only in India but also in many other cultures. The Western traditions of thought provide access to this idea through the 13th century Franciscan-Dominican poverty debates on *dominium*, *possessio*, *usus* and *ususfructus*.[8] The resolution of this debate in the victory of the Dominicans meant that through the influence of Lockean thought, Western Marxism was deeply entrenched in notions of ownership – of the self and of labour – and is perhaps best understood through the negation of the content of this right, namely alienation.

The history of the Indian left however shows an enduring tension between interpretations of ownership as a form of autonomous determination and as a form of trusteeship that carries the connotations of the preservation of a harmonious order. In both cases it is coercive political power that is seen to thwart equality and enjoyment of material benefits. This is in part reflected in the ideas of Roy, a methodological individualist, and Narayan, who like many of the Indian non-communist left turned to Gandhism for intellectual guidance. Yet Roy and

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[5] Schwarz, *Writing Cultural History in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, p.76.

[6] As we are not dealing with the phenomenon of colonialism in this project, we refrain from expanding on the paradoxes of reaction to it. The Subaltern Studies School is however a useful source of conceptual tools that address this issue.

[7] Malhotra, *Social and Political Orientations of Neo-Vedantism: A Study of the Social Philosophy of Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal, Tagore, Gandhi, Vinoba, and Radhakrishnan*, pp.140-144.

Narayan do meet eventually in an effort to extend its original appeal of subverting known forms of hierarchy and power. We shall turn our focus to Jayaprakash Narayan first.

2.1 The discontent of J. P. Narayan

2.1.1 Stage One - Marxism and the obstacle of economic injustice

Even a cursory reading of the works of Roy and Narayan reveals a phenomenon that was explored in Bernard Yack's *The Longing for Total Revolution*, in which Yack tries to identify and account for a particular state of mind, a form of social discontent shared by Rousseau, Schiller, Marx, Hegel and Nietzsche. Yack's agenda is to ultimately interpret these rather different approaches to modernity through the 'use of philosophical concepts as the context of identifying and explaining a shared uneasiness about the modern world'.[9] While Yack's approach leaves a lot of room for critique, it also highlights Roy and Narayan's eclecticism of the sources of their ideas as well as their use of historical concepts that they perceived as universal and not as having been reassessed in the language of domination, hegemony or post-colonial reason.[10] Furthermore, reading both Roy and Narayan through Yack is useful in assessing the significant transformations of their ideas, beginning with communism. While the focus on Total Revolution and Radical Humanism has generally led to a reading of Narayan and Roy as mainly idealist thinker-activists, Yack quite rightly asserts that 'most studies of revolutionary, utopian, Messianic discontent have misconstrued the role of new concepts in generating social discontent, because the focus was seen to be on the way these concepts define alternatives to present social limitations rather than on the way they shape our understanding of those limitations.'[11] An exploration into the *alternatives* offered by a particular ideal is not as rewarding as defining what Yack terms the *obstacles* to the ideal, obstacles that make possible this specific *longing*.[12] It is from this vantage point that we

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[8] For an excellent and detailed overview of this debate, see Brett, *Liberty, Right, and Nature: Individual Rights in Later Scholastic Thought.*

[9] Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophic Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche*, p.xii. This particular approach is in turn to be interpreted as an example of a revival of grand theories in which contexts demarcated by language and meaning take on a secondary role, in favour of contexts constructed by theories that build on the historical continuity of universal philosophical concepts.

[10] This stance is in contrast to the position taken up by Marxist theorists of the Subaltern Studies group. Studies on reason in particular have been brought to the foreground by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

[11] Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophic Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche*, p.xiii.

[12] Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophic Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche*, pp.3-5. The following notion of longing was taken by Yack from Kant's *Anthropolog: From A Pragmatic Point of View, p.155*, defining longing as 'the empty wish to

should begin to explore the writings of Roy and Narayan, not merely as an account of their three-stage development, but as an account of the way general interests move to a concrete concern with freedom, its meaning for the left, and its prospects in the real world. This approach allows us to understand their *own* perceptions of the context they were writing within, rather than superimposing our own notions of the relevant historical and intellectual context. It is their attempt to reconcile the ideal of freedom with the real foundations of human behaviour given the obstacles they perceived to this reconciliation that must inform our reading of Roy's and Narayan's intellectual trajectories.

Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979) began his quest of socio-political solutions to the problems of his day as a dedicated Marxist, a member of one of the earliest generations in India to follow the ideas of Marxist socialism. His search for answers to the problems he perceived in terms of the struggle for independence, as well as for socio-economic justice was rooted very deeply in his peculiar understanding of Marxism. In this early phase he perceived the main obstacles to the realisation of a good life - for the masses – to be the lack of political independence as well as the brute force of socio-economic exploitation. The initial and most formative influence of Marxism on Narayan was certainly his seven-year stay in the U.S.A. from 1922 to 1929.[13] The contradictory impressions of capitalism, democracy, racism and collective 'socialist' action had a profound bearing on the framing of his own brand of Marxist ideology. His writings during 1929-1939 testify to his popular, rather than scholarly Marxist approach in order to disseminate among the Indian masses the lessons he thought he had understood from what was Soviet-inspired Marxism.[14] However, it was to be based on what was a very ubiquitous and standard approach to Marxism in pre-independence India – it was based on 'scientific theories' and more importantly, was to be distinguished from 'Gandhian celebrations of a self-sufficient village society'.[15] The vocabulary centred around 'exploitation through private property, hence 'nationalisation'; furthermore it stressed the role of the 'proletariat as the vanguard class' and ignored the role of India's largest group of labourers, i.e. the peasantry. Also, much of the debate focused on organisational themes like

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overcome the time between the desire and the acquisition of the desired object.' An empty wish is generally 'directed towards objects for whose production the subject himself feels incapable'. Desire can be seen to focus on a desired object, while longing induces uneasiness in us, as there is an awareness of a present incapacity to acquire the desired object. It would therefore seem from Roy's and Narayan's writings that they are really writing about their *desires* in their initial stages, and only in the last stages of their writings can we discern a specified fixation with a state of freedom and a political solution, i.e. which is ultimately radical democracy.

[13] All biographical literature of Narayan is unanimous in its verdict of the highest importance to be accorded to this particular formative period of Narayan as a student at Wisconsin and Ohio. Refer for example to Bhattacharjea, *Jayaprakash Narayan. A Political Biography*, pp.34-44.

[14] Narayan himself uses the term 'Soviet Communism' in a letter to the members of the Praja Socialist Party on the occasion of his resignation in 1957. In: Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.141.

parties, union and the like that articulated a need for *national* proletarian unity, thereby ignoring the problematiques of caste, community and subaltern movements in general. [16] Modern Marxist historiography dealing with early socialist movements would seem justified in commenting on the inability of the nationalist elite to question so-called meta-narratives. This means that the Marxism of Jayaprakash Narayan in the 1930s too was guilty of accepting the premises of monolithic nationalism, coupled with a Marxist take on economic exploitation. This is a critique of not just Marxist-nationalist, but also liberal-nationalist and Hindu thought of pre-independence India that has emanated in various forms out of the Subaltern School, with its emphasis on a revisionist historiography that tries to offset elitist interpretation of history and politics by recognising the role of the masses, or the subaltern classes in their own, local struggles.[17] Nevertheless, this would be dismissing Narayan's Marxism too lightly as a mere part of an elitist nationalist project to be discarded with India's attaining of national independence. As we will demonstrate, his subsequent writings reflect a continuation of discontent with the concepts used by Indian Marxists and nationalists.

Narayan's intellectual ancestry in fact mirrors on a micro-level what the Congress Socialist Party was on a larger scale: a conglomerate of 'Fabian socialists, Marxists, Kautskyists, Stalinists, Leninists, Trotskyites, Rosa Luxembergites and even Gandhites and Vedantists.'[18] He studied the ideas of Mathew Arnold, Carlyle, J. S. Mill and William Morris in great depth[19], trying to reconcile his readings of Marx with that of other critics of nineteenth century capitalism. These diverse readings thus not only helped him formulate his own brand of Marxist thought, but they also opened him to the idea of viable alternatives to 'Soviet' Marxism, which we maintain was only possible given his persistent interest in the idea of individual liberty and virtue. Narayan initially grounded his standing as a Marxist primarily on the recognition of the capitalist economy as the main obstacle to an efficient, just and happy society, and on the adherence to the spirit of the French Revolution. Hence, Narayan's Marxism was bound up with Marx's method of social change - if necessary, violent revolution.[20]

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[15] Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, p.16.
[16] Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, pp.22-24. (On Peasant Resistance and Revolt)
[17] For a concise introduction to the agenda of the Subaltern School, see Pantham, *Political Theories and Social Reconstruction: A Critical Survey of the Literature on India*, pp.81-101.
[18] Das Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.28-29.
[19] Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, pp.54-55.
[20] International debates on the Marxist method of action generated a lot of controversy among Indian Marxists, faced with the dilemmata of multiple choices: anti-imperial nationalism through parliamentary support of the Indian Congress, anti-fascist support *for* the British Empire, communist supported revolutionary action against both the imperial power as well as the Indian 'comprador' bourgeoisie. Debates within Britain were undoubtedly of great influence on the Indian Left. For a brief introduction to these debates, see Coleman, *Reform and Revolution.*

In 1936 Narayan wrote that socialism is 'a system of social reconstruction...not a code of personal conduct; it is not something which you and I can practice.'[21] Here, Socialism is unambiguously seen to be a *method* with a definite goal, and not as a set of subjective behavioural rules. It follows that while the goals must be absolutely clear, the modus of achieving this goal need not. This is a stance that he is to distance himself from most decisively, but at this stage of his thought he does not equate the ends with the means. Narayan therefore proceeds to lay out the foundations of Socialism in the instrumentalist mode: the capturing of coercive power through the capturing of the state by the masses. In this he was very clear that the dictatorship of the proletariat would have to benefit the *dispossessed*, used in a very broad way. Empirically this is a highly contested field: who effectively are the under-classes or the dispossessed? For Narayan, it consisted of everybody who does not own property. He therefore, perhaps rather simplistically held that

> 'a party in power, i.e., in possession of the State, can always establish Socialism, provided it has either of two things: sufficient power of coercion to put down resistance or sufficient popular support to be able to deal with opposition. Both in the end mean the same thing. The coercive powers of a socialist State, if they exist at all, are bound to be derived from popular support- the "unpopular" support, that being the support of the classes of property, being thrown on the opposite side.'[22]

Narayan's argument about deriving legitimacy of coercion by means of popular support is precisely the one that he eventually uses to turn against the idea of sheer coercive power of a vanguard socialist party, and thereby paves the way for a vision of popular participation in form of radical democracy as the precondition for the construction of a socialist state. What is the role of the state, once its coercive powers have been legitimised? Its primary task, according to Narayan, is to tackle inequalities, or the 'unequal distribution of the good things of life', given the existence of 'poverty, hunger, filth, disease, ignorance for the many'.[23] Narayan's writings of his Marxist period are all written in a similar vein, sensitive to the key problems of the life of the 'masses' and sympathetic to a top-down statist approach in curing the maladies. The key obstacles to socio-economic justice were seen to be the unequal distribution of material and intangible goods, the capitalist mode of production, and a weak state with no powers of redistribution. The question of political participation however did not yet feature very much in Narayan's perceived solutions to the problem of the good life. While Narayan *was* aware of non-statist alternatives, e.g.. Gandhi's village economy, he actively rejected these as being unduly primitive, having little efficiency, low productivity and having

[21] 'The Foundation of Socialism.' In: Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.3.
[22] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.4.
[23] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.5.

no social basis. Furthermore, it would not be a society that could in any way form a state strong enough to withstand the 'rapacity of highly industrialised countries'.[24] Consequently, he favoured a statist approach, albeit contingent upon popular support. Narayan's approach essentially rested on the assumption that such a state cannot but enact the necessary measures to ensure that socio-economic justice for the 'masses' is achievable.

What are the state objectives and changes that Narayan believed to be the solution to India's social ills? According to Narayan, they were best outlined along Soviet Marxist lines, having been 'successfully' implemented in the Soviet Union. He drafts a 15-point programme as the remedy to the main problem of economic injustice: 1. Transfer of all power to the producing masses. 2. Development of the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the State. 3. Nationalization of key and principal industries..., Banks, Insurance and Public Utilities, with a view to the progressive socialization of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange. 4. State monopoly of foreign trade. 5. Organization of co-operatives for production, distribution and credit in the unsocialized sector of economic life. 6. Elimination of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation. 7. Redistribution of land to peasants. 8. Encouragement and promotion of co-operative and collective farming by the State. 9. Liquidation of debts owned by peasants and workers. 10. Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the State. 11. "To every one according to his needs and from every one according to his capacity" to be the basis ultimately of distribution and production of economic goods. 12. Adult franchise on a functional basis. 13. No support or discrimination between religions by the State and no recognition of any distinction based on caste and community. 14. No discrimination between the sexes by the State. 15. Repudiation of the so-called Public Debt of India.[25] These are conditions not merely to be met, but created through state power and popular will. The exercise of will to change the existing order, according to Narayan, is what creates a revolution and not vice versa, insofar it is the will to organise a collective and seize political power.[26] What Narayan effectively leaves open is the question of how this collective will is to be formulated and what the limits of its functioning are. This is a key question he will pick up later in trying to come to terms with what he considers to be despotic features of party politics *sans* the will of the masses.

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[24] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.13.
[25] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.16-17.
[26] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.36. Note: the exercise of the will to change existing economic structures is seen to be a step that can only follow after complete independence from British rule has been achieved. Narayan is confirming a stance taken by the Congress Socialist Party, which effectively conflates the national interest with the socialist agenda. This speaks of the hope that the socialist agenda has the capability of *subsuming* the national

Initially though, despite repeated references to the importance of political power for the masses as part of the historical learning process, beginning with Greek democracies and its inadequacies in being truly democratic or radical[27], Narayan concluded that the masses may only exercise this power *after* the socialist party has gained domination over the necessarily centralised and potentially socialist state. At the same time Narayan retained the consistent use of the term 'we' as an indication of his belief in a functioning 'social will' as the driving force of social reconstruction.[28] The objectives of the state are therefore to be fulfilled under the auspices of the collective will, represented by the nationalist-socialist party. In terms of the political reality of establishing a leadership that could effectively take control of the state structures, Narayan considered the initial stages of the socialist revolution to be led by the Congress Socialist Party and its intellectual *garde*.[29] Narayan hereby opened himself to a standard critique, namely that the 'masses' are more likely to be viewed as objects rather than agents in a socialist revolution. At this stage in Narayan's thinking, it highlights his unchallenged faith in political parties as the main instruments of transfers of political and economic power.

Derived mainly from the influence of Leninist ideology, this also means that Narayan discounted evolutionary or parliamentary socialism of the type favoured by German Social Democrats by pointing out that the historical necessity of communism can however only be realised through an intellectual *understanding* of history and human motivation, rather than hoping for social democratisation to take its *natural* course to communism. In this respect, the Indian left felt, as did all other major political forces in India, the need for organisation as a pre-condition of collective action in order to bring about a revolutionary situation borne by a common purpose and a common will. In this sense, Narayan's leadership-oriented Marxism was decidedly against the idea of a spontaneous revolution. However, he was not very clear in his writings as to whether he actually believed that the masses were indeed capable of formulating their own long-term interests and not just short-term immediate wants. This is both an interesting and possibly illuminating fact when set against the claim (made for instance by the Subaltern group) that Marxist-nationalists in India most certainly were unable at any stage to shed their origins in the wealthy and educated elite, or as recipients of

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interest by virtue of its scientific ideology. Its counterpart is seen to be the *comprador* liberals, whose bourgeois interests would *undermine* the national interest.

[27] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.17.

[28] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.19.

[29] The 'collective dimension' of the term intellectual has been undisputed for a long time. According to Sunil Khilnani, the origins of the collective identity and authority of intellectualism are to be found in France, beginning with the joint authorship of *Manifeste des intellectuels* of 1898. An overview of the more complex use of this term – individual and collective - may be gleaned from Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France*. pp.11-16.

reformist traditions that paid importance to parliamentary rather than revolutionary action .[30] While this was true for the *liberal* elite, the Marxist elite was in fact in a more comfortable position of reconciling vanguard leadership with the notion of social revolution. Narayan himself however reversed this position when he later held that a dominant leadership could only serve to foreclose the possibility of genuine political change for the masses.

In order to understand Narayan's later dissatisfaction with the Marxist-statist approach we have to look at Narayan's problems with institutional change and redistribution. Reductionism happens at two levels and is accordingly critiqued by Narayan: the reduction of social reconstruction to calculations of material redistribution and the reduction of the *fora* of change to the party and state. Regarding the first aspect, the fact that individuals desire a 'good life' is taken to mean the universal desire for a 'just, equitable and happy life.' Narayan's doubts as to whether the Marxist project can answer the quest for happiness through socio-economic justice and equitable relations implies that he believes that the desire for social happiness pre-supposes change of a different quality than mere institutional change could bring about. It is the question of happiness and whether it can be comprehensively linked to the '*Sein*' that troubled Narayan. Marxism, he later held, did not offer a solution to this question that transcended issues of material well-being. In other words, what Narayan discarded was the idea that revolution and institutional change would bring about a fundamental change from material contentment to individual happiness, which is close to the Aristotelian notion of *eudemonia* rather than a subjective state of mind. Narayan's focus on freedom and morality was not yet dealt with to the exclusion of other values that are part of this composite notion of happiness.

One of the most telling reasons for this shift in attitude is to be found in the increasingly captivating power of Gandhian rhetoric as well as growing interest in India's own history, thereby localising societal problems as particular rather than universal instances of obstacles to happiness. The *problématique* of capitalism was thus seen as a function of a general account of historical materialism only superficially. Nonetheless, India's own history of ideas and practices was looked at with a view not to discard Marxist theory *as such*, but to build on it and make it work for India's peculiar circumstances of a primarily agrarian, and partly

[30] Although the official power of Legislative Councils in India was limited until 1920, the impact it made on the formulation and dissemination of nationalist thought was substantial, albeit gradual. It was precisely the gradualist stance that came to be most connected with the idea of Parliament and representative councils. Eventually, it was seen to be one of the main causes for the rise of revolutionary socialist thought in India, based on the fact that it failed to satisfy the urgent demand of total independence as well as failing to satisfy the demand for representation of dissent. The despotic rule of the Indian Government ensured that elected Indians were co-operators, or, as the later left

feudal society. The choice was two-fold: by discarding overly generalising aspects of the theory and bringing the moment of revolution forward despite the absence of a proletarian class, or by trying to achieve the conditions to be met for a revolution to take place as described by Marx, i.e. through large-scale heavy industrialisation and the temporary fostering of the capitalist mode of production. Within this political and intellectual atmosphere of self-questioning, Narayan's post-Marxist phase had yet to come. It was preceded by a search for alternatives. The alternatives Narayan looked at more closely were Gandhian principles of social change as well as a critique of institutional Marxism as gleaned from *Das Kapital* and as he perceived being implemented in the Soviet Union. He rejected Gandhism from the view of a Western-trained Socialist and critiqued Marxism from the view of an Indian nationalist. This unsatisfactory theoretical position will prove to be a major force for Narayan's attempt to come to terms with both these approaches through the idea of Total Revolution.

In order to understand the extent of Narayan's shift away from orthodox Marxism, we will briefly look at the reasons for his disparagement of Gandhism during his Marxist stage. Narayan critiqued Gandhi on various grounds, as he believed that Gandhian methods were not a viable alternative to Marxist methods.[31] This was also posited as a defence of standard Marxist arguments, namely by rejecting the Gandhian version of an autochthonist socialism that rested on ideas such as the futility of class war, the complementary relationship between capital and labour, the wastefulness of revolution and the theory of trusteeship. Moreover, Narayan was convinced that Gandhi was not the first to propagate these ideas, but that these ideas had in fact emanated out of the West.[32] He therefore disagreed with Gandhi's social ideal of *Ramrajya* "that ensures the rights alike of the prince and the pauper". This state, modelled on the ideal society found in the Indian epic 'Ramayana' in which King Ram exemplifies the ideal ruler of an ideally organised kingdom, would not in fact even seek to eradicate economic injustices. Rather, in Gandhi's 'Ramrajya', economic inequalities would not only be tolerated, but even respected.

As such he also rejected the Gandhian notion of trusteeship that supposes the 'giving' of material goods, which are held in trust by industrialists and landowners alike, to be dependent on a 'change of heart' of the trustees. Because this notion relies on a faith in a continuity of this 'change of heart' through subsequent generations, there would be effectively no guarantee for the gradual change in property ownership, for example through the effective

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perceived them to be, collaborators with the British Raj. Refer to Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947*, pp.113-123.

[31] Das Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.35-38.

loss of inheritance rights of property or direct redistribution by the state. Narayan was therefore not at all convinced by Gandhi's thesis that western socialism was essentially based on human selfishness. Rather, Narayan defended a Marxist belief in man's potential as only being able to thrive in a beneficial socio-economic environment. Nature will always be embedded in society. Finally, he countered Gandhi's criticism of the destructiveness of modern technology by asserting that it is not machinery that destroys moral values, but that the underlying issue is one of ownership and the responsible use of technology. Here we can see very clearly how fascinated Narayan was with the technological by-products of modernity, as signs of human creativity and mastery over nature. Effectively, it was this fascination with the human factor, over and above considerations of institutional and structural change that came to define Narayan's intellectual trajectory and came to form the basis of his main discontent with the Marxist way to socialism.

2.1.2 Stage Two - Democratic Socialism and the obstacle of political elitism

> 'It is often said that India's conditions are peculiar; that India's traditions are different; that India is industrially a backward country; and that, therefore, Socialism has no applicability here. If by this it is meant that the basic principles of Socialism have no validity in India, it would be difficult to imagine a greater fallacy...The peculiarity of Indian conditions may influence and determine the manner and the stages in which the principles of Socialism may be applied here, but never alter those principles.' **(1936)**[33]

> 'It seems to me...that in view of all this confusion and rival claims, the socialist movement in India must evolve its own picture of socialism in the light of Marxist thought, of world history since Marx's death and of conditions in this country and our historical background. Marxism is a science of society and a scientific method of social change that includes social revolution. As such there can be no room for dogmatism or fundamentalism in Marxist thought...Science progresses by the positive elimination of untruth from human knowledge. If Marxism is a science, Marx would not have expounded ultimate truths, but only made approximations to them. Today with a vastly developed store of human knowledge and vastly greater experience and observation of capitalist society, we are in a position to make far nearer approximations to the truth than Marx is.' **(1946)**[34]

The continuity and rifts in Narayan's reading of Marx are exemplified in these two passages. Narayan wrote the latter passage in 1946, in what is considered to be his first phase of

[32] Das Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.35.
[33] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.15.

Democratic Socialism (between 1940-1947).[35] This phase is in some respects comparable to the rise of critical Marxism within the European left – arising out of the disillusionment with the failure of a groundbreaking revolution to materialise. Tensions in reading Marx have always been part of the leftist debates. Narayan was therefore neither terribly original nor terribly confused in rethinking Marx, but he had more than a theoretical debate in mind; the issues accompanying India's path to independence were of a highly practical nature and called for swift action. The dynamics of a Marxist reading of history seemed comparatively slow and more importantly, with full political independence within reach, the creation of a new state seemed to offer unique opportunities for nation building along alternative lines. Alternatives to the British liberal model, favoured by nationalist reformists, had emerged in India rapidly in the first half of the 20th century, and Narayan was very much part of this state of political and theoretical flux. What Narayan did was to really avoid an easy, dogmatic position, and instead sought to look beyond the obvious choices of Marxism and liberalism. In doing so he turned to the most influential and evidently potent alternative, namely Gandhism.

However, Narayan's shift towards a Gandhian mode of thinking was not merely gradual but took place quite agonisingly in the face of many doubts, given that it was less the sheer persuasiveness of Gandhism that caught the political imagination of Narayan, but that Gandhism provided a possible solution to the discontent that Narayan experienced with certain aspects of Marxism, or interpretations of Marx. The prior disagreements with Gandhism that were a function of Narayan's interpretation of Marxism were thus transmuted into disagreements with Marxism itself. Once the basis for disagreements with Gandhism had been weakened, arguments made by Gandhi gained substantially in persuasive force.

Yet Marxism was not fully discarded as Narayan ventured into a version of Gandhian-influenced Marxism he called democratic socialism. The issues raised by Narayan regarding the viability of Marxism were several – scepticism about the importance of 'class', questions regarding the morality of a possibly violent revolutionary struggle, rejection of a purely economist reading of Marx's account of history and by extension, raising the issue of *choices* that were actually available to the *agents* of a socialist revolution. In this sense, we disagree with the interpretation of Narayan as a non-dogmatic Marxist, who *experimented* with various social and ideological methods, thereby 'accepting, rejecting or combining them, *according to the exigencies of the situation.*'[36] Rather than being a reactive thinker, we contend that the

[34] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.16-17.
[35] Das Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.50.
[36] Das Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.43. Italics added.

attempt to formulate an alternative Marxism was a result of Narayan's continuous preoccupation with the subject of revolution, i.e. the role and political potency of revolutionary individuals. This preoccupation subsequently took the form of a dominant concern for the issue of freedom and its political resolution.

Narayan's thoughts on democratic socialism in the first phase however concentrated on a critique of institutional change. His interest in the *politics* of revolution led him to consider the aspect of democracy as a forum of mass participation more closely. While the lure of parliamentary democracy, replete with the underlying structures of party politics seemed to be solidly founded in both historical experience and theoretical grounding, Narayan's second phase of democratic socialism (1948-1956) shows that his interest began to lie more and more in the underlying values and assumptions of a parliamentary-representative form of democracy. In this phase, Narayan consolidated his position as a Gandhian socialist. These concerns were not unique to Narayan of course, and indeed, the history of the European left shows how interpretations of Marxism could actually diverge.[37] Following a commonly cited split between scientific Marxism and humanist Marxism, we read two versions of Marxism in Narayan – the early one, stressing that Marxism is a universal method of social change, based on scientific principles of historical materialism and the dialectics of socio-economic change. The later Narayan believed this to be overly reductionist and chose democratic socialism as what he held to be a middle ground between the certainty of the success of socialism afforded by ideology and the experiment of potentially open political practice. Narayan's humanist phase stressed that the truth-value of Marxism *qua* scientific method cannot be constant but subject to scientific revision according to the inherent scepticism of the scientific meta-method, contingent on specific historical circumstances and based on unvarying principles of humanism entailing socio-economic and political rights.[38]

Gandhian thought and Gandhi's famous experiments with truth offered an attractive solution towards transforming Marxism into an 'Indian' project, so much so that Narayan preferred the use of the term 'socialism' to cover a range of universal concerns for the future of humanity, which just as easily fitted the demands made by India's own historical conditions. His interest in the theme of *revolution* eventually led him to subordinate the question of the scientific basis of Marxism to the problem of the *application* of revolutionary principles, which are intrinsically linked with the question of historicist and humanist principles. Why this conjunction of historicism and humanism? Narayan was no cultural or even philosophical

[37] One of the most important examples being for instance Althusser and Balibar's *Reading Capital.*
[38] Narayan could be seen to be a forerunner of the heavily criticised 'Retreat of Lucio Colletti – Back to Kant?' See Novack, *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy*, pp.191-230.

relativist and retained a genuine belief in scientifically grounded socialism as a cure to society's economic and political maladies. Socialism, he believed, was of universal value since scientific precepts were deemed to be universally applicable. Hence, while the application of Marxist principles would ideally have to follow an understanding of culture-specific as well as historical circumstances so as not to fall into the trap of dogmatism, the denial of the relativist and particularist position has to be based on an appeal to a common standard, which for Narayan was the idea of humanism. This is a vital factor for the principles of Marxism to work at all. It was therefore the notion of the centrality of the agents of revolution over and above the method of necessary revolutionary change that led him to formulate the idea of democratic socialism: social change through popular participation and the expression of a common will through legitimate representation. The proper application of socialist principles, according to Narayan, could thus be induced by the Congress Socialist Party, but only within a pluralist and peaceful democracy in which institutional change resulting in a socialist society would be effected voluntarily and through the exercise of rationality.[39] Within this framework, Narayan had to resort to an understanding of socialism as being both method and goal – democratic means and the end of a just and happy society. It was precisely this equation of ends and means that made him far more sympathetic to Gandhism than was the case during his more orthodox Marxist phase.

What this means is that Marxism is critiqued for not providing comprehensive solutions to the obstacles to socialism, which are not only economic but also political. Access to political power was seen as being the prerequisite to access to equitable economic structures. For now, Narayan remained convinced of the need for a unitary voice in order to tackle these issues. Although Narayan was tantalisingly vague on the subject of class, caste, ethnicity, and other interest-defining identities, he was aware of political factionalism and based on the case of the CSP, believed the greatest threat to the formulation of the collective will to be permanent divisions. Narayan remarked that 'whether groups are ideological or personal, groupism or factionalism will never be allowed.' Even though democratic structures are in place to voice disagreement, 'permanent groupings or factionalism will never be permitted. If ever they are, the Party will become a loose conglomeration of groups fighting among themselves for power and position. Such a party can achieve nothing.'[40] What the Party is expected to achieve is to capture state power by democratic means such as elections, and ensure that the collective will is directed by the party in such a way so as to realise a "people's" democracy. As Narayan put it,

[39] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.46-48.
[40] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.69.

> 'While it is a part of the democratic method to capture parliament through elections and to form a government, the Socialist Party believes that a social revolution, even after the capture of power, would have to be carried out by the people themselves, aided and guided as they may be by the socialist State.'[41]

This position has a necessarily authoritarian element as the capitalised Party is given a prime role as the creator of a socialist political agenda. Furthermore, it denies the realities of social pluralism in India by not only setting out a unitary agenda but also a unitary voice. However, this reading should be modified. The primacy of the collective will and representative authority of the Party is not merely accorded for the sake of establishing consensual politics. At this stage and time of writing, the importance of the collective will, not being embedded in any obvious rationale or explicitly framed set of values, seems to be an instinctive reaction and based on the needs of the time, namely for a unified revolutionary front to be presented. Social and economic pluralism is thus to be countered with political unity in the first instance. The capacity for collective action - and this is of course a fundamental assumption of Marxism - can only be fulfilled if the political will remains not only focused on a specific political end but also is concentrated in its power of voice.

Thus politics becomes prior to economics and participation becomes prior to the implementation of socialist principles by means of a peaceful democratic revolution. Gandhi's influence in promoting the cause of non-violence is palpable in Narayan's notion of revolution in this phase of his political thinking. Drawing on Marx to counter Marxists who maintained that violent revolutions were imperative to founding a socialist society, he cited Marx's speech on tactics in 1872 at the First International in Den Hague, in which Marx conceded that the sheer variety of 'institutions, manner and customs' could also pave the way for peaceful revolutions.[42] Narayan therefore substituted the term 'peaceful revolutions' with 'popular democracy' in a very selective reading of Marx. Yet he was aware of the different connotations of the two terms, stating that

> '[o]rganisation, propaganda, agitation, struggle and constructive work may be summed up as the five different kinds of activities which we [the CSP] carry on today and which are all comprised in the term "democratic method". The object of all our activities is not merely to win elections, but to serve the people, to organise them to fight for and protect their rights and interests and ultimately to enable them through collective mass effort to establish a socialist State and create a socialist society.'[43]

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[41] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.75.
[42] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.70.
[43] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.76.

What Narayan explicitly condemned was the creation of a militant and violent mood towards the established order. This he believed to be the hallmark of the Indian Communist movement, which was destructive in that it effectively demoralised the revolutionary agents.[44] His negation of violence as part of revolutionary tactics was in part founded on Gandhi's apparent success in creating a viable non-violent opposition to the forces of colonialism, whereas it is equally clear that many radical nationalist movements in India did engage in bloodshed. That Narayan's perception of the overwhelming success of Gandhi is somewhat one-sided testifies to an increasing interest in normative questions of politics than in assessments of efficacy. Narayan's reasoning however is not entirely without basis. Morale, he believed, can only come about through an understanding and conviction of the aims of the struggle. The determination to subvert oppressive structures arising simply out of a temporary mood is simply not enough, and is certainly not a replacement for rational judgement.

None of this makes a sound case for reading Narayan as an anti-Marxist this far, or for having transcended Marxist thought. But he did not remain convinced of the opportunities for radical social change that a peaceful democratic method would offer. His doubts, also reinforced by Nehru's programme of nationalisation and socialisation, led him to reflect on the problems facing mass participation in a highly centralised state. A centralised state, he maintained, would disable the fair distribution of political authority. This is turn would have a detrimental effect on the fair representation of the peoples' interests. Nonetheless, Narayan wavers on the issue of economic policy making and hopes for a strong state that will 'occupy the strategic points in the economy.'[45] This is an optimistic view of the possibility of a disinterested state having a one-dimensional focus, a position that he will modify later.

> 'Socialism is not merely anti-capitalism, nor statism...The Party, therefore, felt that unless the goals of socialism were clearly defined and steadfastly adhered to, there was danger again of the revolution being betrayed. The aims of the socialist movement which needed to be emphasised were not mere overthrow of the capitalist order and establishment of a party dictatorship, but the creation of a society of free and equal peoples, a society based on certain values of human and social life, values which could never be sacrificed in the name of the theory or the Party line or expedience of any sort...If we are not fighting merely for power or the "dictatorship of the proletariat", but for certain values, if we are fighting against exploitation, injustice and tyranny of every kind, Democratic Socialism can alone be our goal.' (1950)[46]

[44] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.76.
[45] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.83.
[46] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.67-68.

As we see in the above, Narayan's focus shifted to the question of values that underlie the principles of socialism. The questions that Narayan took up from Gandhi were in effect what these values are and should be, how they inform the instruments of social change and what bearing would this have on the goals of a democratic socialist movement. The *peaceful* democratic method not only became an alternative, also envisioned by Marx, but an imperative. That this alternative could actively motivate the potential agents of a democratic revolution is underlined by Gandhi's strategies of building a mass base for the Congress Party in terms of both rhetorical pulling power as well as leading a life open to public scrutiny. With watchwords like simplicity, austerity and sacrifice, Gandhi's popularity and success in mobilising the poor, the illiterate as well as the non-propertied masses was undeniable.[47] The issues of morality and of the relationship between means and ends thus became the conceptual basis for Narayan's Gandhian version of socialism. That both Gandhism and socialism had to be re-interpreted somewhat was clear to Narayan, not in the least in view of Gandhi's outright rejection of Marxism. The problem of re-interpreting Gandhian thought into a socialist framework is outlined in the following and will also be dealt with in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. The concept of Total Revolution as propounded by Narayan would become incomprehensible without an understanding of his attempt to reconcile Gandhian and socialist modes of thought.

As previously noted, Narayan's growing sympathy with Gandhism was the result of a prolonged process of thought and critique. However, just as Narayan critiqued Gandhism from a Marxist perspective, he more or less reverses his position to argue against certain aspects of Marxism from a Gandhian perspective. What we contend in the following chapters though is that this critique is not to be overemphasised and read as a rejection of Marxism but as an attempt to expand on its original project in terms of the issue of morality and also revise the instruments of change in terms of a party dictatorship. With regard to Gandhi's input, Narayan followed Gandhi in arguing that the main precepts of socialism and Gandhism were not only compatible, but also as being constituted by similar ends, i.e. establishing a just social order.

What this effectively displays to the readers is that Narayan, despite his focus on the Indian case, did have a problem in accepting exceptionalism in political thinking, especially in normative thought. On the one hand there is a problem with Gandhism being merely added on to the socialist project, as we have seen in the above, but on the other hand Narayan's attempt at convergence may be taken as an undue appropriation of Gandhian thought, which was

[47] Rao, *Indian Socialism. Retrospect and Prospect*, p.86.

exceptional in the history of political thinking, in order to strengthen universalist claims about human nature and human desires. He may therefore be read as neither a Marxist socialist not a Gandhian, although we maintain that this has the positive effect of paving the way for Narayan's non-dogmatic and more interesting path beyond Marxism, one that resonates more convincingly in the 21st century than Gandhi's vision of the world.

Narayan in his later stage of thinking dealt with the issue of the differences between Gandhian and socialist thought by ignoring their respective axiomatic positions and metaphysics, and instead focusing mainly on consequentialist arguments. He initially re-interpreted Gandhi in the light of three aspects of 'true' socialism brought up by Gandhi, but hitherto ignored by 'scientific socialists at their own peril.'[48] In doing so, he tried to present more sophisticated arguments for the compatibility of the Gandhian and socialist projects than most Indian Marxists, who saw in Gandhi mainly a spokesman for the bourgeois social system.[49] Narayan on the other hand perceived Gandhi as being less a reactionary than a social revolutionary of an exceptionally original kind.[50] His three points on Gandhi's contributions to the perfection of the socialist project are firstly, the insistence on moral or ethical values; secondly, his contribution to peaceful revolutionary technology, known as civil disobedience and *satyagraha*; and finally, his insistence on economic and political decentralisation.

The issue of morality is linked primarily to a critique of Marxism's materialist premises and it's a-moral consequences.

> 'For many years I have worshipped at the shrine of the goddess – Dialectical Materialism – which to me seemed intellectually more satisfying than any other philosophy. But while the main quest of philosophy remains unsatisfied, it has become patent to me that materialism of any sort robs man of the means to become truly human. In a material civilization man has no rational incentive to be good. It may be that in the kingdom of dialectical materialism fear makes men conform and the Party takes the place of God. But when that God himself turns vicious, to be vicious becomes a universal code.' (1952)[51]

This is a direct reflection of Gandhi's critique of modernity's a-moralism, and is indeed used by Narayan to uphold a universalist take on Gandhian thought. For Gandhi, the main contradictions were not to be found between Europe and India, but rather between the ancient and the modern, Marxism being a prime product of the latter. Gandhi saw the bane of

[48] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.94.
[49] Refer to Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform. An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, pp.294-300.
[50] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.94.

modernity to be the dominance of materialist philosophies and a rejection of ancient traditions of spiritualism.[52] Narayan believed that this question was of fundamental importance to the socialist revolutionary agenda and like Gandhi, derived his critique of Marxism's seeming lack of an understanding of morality from positing a materialist philosophy against human nature, which can only be truly humanised through non-materialist or other extraneous sources of morality. This of course raises the old dilemma of the nature of the human being, which at this stage Narayan sees as being inherently good, but firmly based on an extra-human source of virtue.

Materialism, according to Narayan, thus cannot answer the question of what incentive man could possibly have to build a socialist system that demands enormous amounts of self-sacrifice, goodwill, and the recognition of economic and political injustice. In short, he sees a direct link between right thought that is directed towards a notion of the Good, and right action. As materialism does not lead to right thought or right action, socialism would not be achieved under its auspices. He therefore concluded that the 'Russian or Stalinist interpretation of socialist philosophy has reduced [its moral or ethical basis] to a crass Machiavellian code of conduct utterly devoid of any sense of right or wrong, good or evil.'[53] The notion that moral and ethical codes ought to govern political behaviour effectively forms one of Narayan's main reasons for experiencing a discontent with the Marxist outlook on politics. It is clear though that Narayan's non-materialist conception of the good is riddled with problems that only the most simplistic of metaphysics or a strong religious belief – which Narayan did not commit to – would answer satisfactorily. The equation of the focus on materialism with concurrent value-neutrality is a problematic one; it can be argued that non-materialism need not only entail positive or good values, but also negative ones. In other words, Narayan does not discuss non-material exploitation, for instance rooted in the belief in a hierarchically ordered 'good', as an equally potent form of exploitation. Yet the most striking aspect of these ideas is the simplistic use of materialism. Although well versed in the texts of Marx and Engels, Narayan's equation of Marxist materialism with so-called vulgar materialism or consumerism and the fulfilment of material desires, leads us to believe that his one-sided use of materialism was to suggest that Gandhism offered a quicker, and from the Indian perspective, a more obvious solution to the issue of morality that is however undoubtedly a part of the normative idea of socialism as a system of justice and happiness for all.

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[51] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.98.
[52] Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform. An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, pp.81-83.
[53] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.98.

The second aspect of Gandhism that stimulated Narayan was the novel concept of a revolution based on non-violent means. Narayan did not question the necessity of revolutionary change but, in a twist on Gandhi's notion of mass participation, hoped that revolution would be accommodated within democratic structures. While Narayan conceded that the term socialism may have different meanings for different people, the common denominator is achieving a society 'in which the material needs of every individual are satisfied and also in which the individual is a cultured and civilised being, is free and brave, kind and generous,' a goal which could never be reached in 'a society of well fed and clothed and housed brutes'. So any interpretation of Marxism that merely stresses material well-being and the elimination of exploitation cannot claim to be socialism in Marx's original understanding of the word. The use of violence testifies to 'brutish' and uncultured behaviour. As we shall see in Chapter 3, Narayan strengthens this claim by taking on board Gandhi's declaration that the means always equate the ends, rather than justifying the ends. Put simply, a revolution carried out by brutes would only result in a society quite far away from an ideal socialist society, and also far from Marx's own vision of a socialist community.

At this stage Narayan also moved closer to formulating his problems with the separation of humanist principles of socialism from its scientific ones. If science can solve parts of the puzzle of the realities of a less than ideal world, explaining the reasons for it and conniving rational and logical solutions, so must humanism come into the fray to ground this change in a recognition of the maladies in the first place, which is the work that 'longing' does. We see here on the one level an indication of Narayan's attempt to argue for a holistic conception of socialism but also for the totality of means that establish a socialist society. For Narayan, the grounding of the principles and the application of the principles form a totality, unlike the Althusserian idea of the uneven and asynchronous functioning of various levels of ideological activity, or activities that comprise the superstructure (law, arts, religion). As these activities move independently in terms of chronology and trajectory, these levels relate to the economic base only in the last instance, and also in the last instance to each other.[54] Narayan would disagree, based on his understanding of the social as a totality, as non-fragmented. This is the view of a holistic Marxist, and reflects not only the impact of Western nationalist universalism, imported through colonialism, but also an equally powerful impact of Indian traditions of holism, which cannot be explained away on any valid grounds, least of all through psychoanalysis or structural linguistics. The presumption made by Narayan is thus a denial of the power of ideology in obscuring the notion of synchronous interdependence of the political, social and economic factors leading up to a revolution. In other words, the

[54] Schwarz, *Writing Cultural History in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, pp.107-110.

agents of revolution are already accorded the ability to independently assess the scope of interdependence with universal objectivity and universal longing for a different society to be brought about, which brings Narayan closer to the liberal schools than the Marxist schools of thought.

But the universalist view that creates a common ground also causes tremendous uneasiness if the common ground is concentrated in a single source of political action, as Narayan's discussion of Gandhi's scepticism of state power exemplifies. The third aspect of Gandhi's influence on Narayan is viewing the power wielded by a centralised state as wholly counter-productive to radical socio-economic and political change. Gandhi's vision was one of decentralisation, both at the political as well as economic level. In Narayan's thought, the tension between centralisation and planning on the one hand and decentralisation and political autonomy for the masses on the other hand remains, but in his discussion of Total Revolution the emphasis shifts quite markedly towards overall decentralisation. Issues of elitism and authoritarianism flow readily from this conceptual problem.

Aware of the contradictions between planning and decentralisation of decision-making structures, Narayan tried to particularise India's Marxist route to development through the use of modern technology and pointed towards India's *labour*-intensive instead of *capital*-intensive mode of production. He argued that political decentralisation means neither a weak State not the absence of planned life.'[55] In fact, scientific methods could be put to use in studying the needs of a socialist society and evolving them to enable meaningful decentralisation to take place. While the theme of decentralisation is kept brief at this stage in this thinking, his later work on Total Revolution demonstrates the opposite, namely that decentralisation was held to be a core characteristic of Narayan's socialist society insofar it was the only option that enabled peoples' local empowerment. This introduction to the beginnings of the political thought of J. P. Narayan will hopefully have outlined the background to his thinking – much elaborated upon in the secondary literature on Narayan – and has also endeavoured to have set the tone for his later work on Total Revolution, which we argue can be re-interpreted in a more complex way than has been done so far. By shedding the layers of idealistic language we hope to show that Narayan's thought was not merely the work of Marxist illusionism and subsequent disillusionment but offered a serious expansion on the idea of Marxism and Marxist politics, contrary to the way they were received in India.

[55] Again, in a problematic premise, the weakness or strength of the state was to be judged by its success in implementing economic reforms and its overall benefits for a politically independent populace.

2.2 M. N. Roy – intellectual preoccupations

We now turn the intellectual clock backwards and look at the writings of Narayan's contemporary, M. N. Roy. Roy's intellectual history was in many ways similar to Narayan's and while the notions of Total Revolution and Radical Humanism diverge in some key respects, the similarity of their prescriptions for radical politics is quite remarkable, displaying that their respective ideas were not merely maverick takes on Marxism in India, but critical considerations of the notion of self-government as well as expressions of hope for a better world. Often the former aspect has been underestimated in its value *per se* and also in its value as the anticipation of the state of the world as it is taken for granted now, much after the time of Roy and Narayan's thinking.

2.2.1 From nationalism to communism

Roy's early phases of thinking are remarkably similar to that of Narayan's in some crucial respects, a point to consider while attempting to compare and contrast the respective positions that the two thinkers ultimately arrive at. It is of course possible to view these similarities as mere reflections of the fact that they engaged in political thinking within the same socio-historical context and in doing so, often incorporated implicit and explicit references to each other's ideas. What strikes as being more important than their parallel writing processes though is that both Roy and Narayan attempted to demonstrate that orthodox Marxism incorporated some noteworthy defects, which they tried to overcome in their revised assessments of Marxism in theory and in practice. This entailed, *inter alia*, that they both tried to make clear their distance from Marxism as nationalism in practice in mainly colonial or ex-colonial Asian countries. This again shows the preoccupation in their time with the spectre of nationalism on the one hand and the spectre of Marxist internationalism on the other hand. The overriding concern of both Narayan and Roy became interestingly enough not the oppression of discrete groups, be it the proletariat or colonised nations, but about oppression and its solution on the largest possible scale but also at the most basic level. In short, their concern became the freedom enjoyed by human beings as such. In the initial stages of their writings, the larger scale was still equated with the nation of India, but this was soon to be rejected as indeed being an oppressive ideology in its own terms. What then makes the writings of Narayan and Roy remarkable in their similarity is their rejection of what may be considered to be the natural antidote to nationalism – internationalism, albeit understood in

ideological terms. Together, their reasoning suffices to be able to re-interpret Roy's and Narayan's writings as the beginnings of post-Marxist theory in India.

The early years of Narendranath Bhattacharya, who later became M. N. Roy, were an age of intense nationalist-revolutionary activity against British rule. Inspired by the ideas of Vivekananda, who was immensely influential up until the end of World War I as a figurehead of the Hindu Renaissance, Roy was involved in underground activities very early on. [56] His politics present a common pattern followed by Bengali political workers of his generation, i.e. beginning with 'terrorist' activities in the name of national independence, then aligning one's sympathies with communism, and later moving on to political life in the official Congress Party.[57] Roy's main underground activities were carried out under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee, who can be seen as epitomising one of the key features of Bengali revolutionary activities, namely that of a *dada* (fraternal leader of a *dal*, or faction). The activities of these groups were intellectually fuelled by the works of Hindu revivalists like Ramakrishna and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, but also by sects like the Brahmo Samaj and cults devoted to the Motherland.[58] The overriding principle was a quest for power for the purpose of liberating India from the British rule, although the concrete activities of these groups often failed to indicate either an awareness of the need for concerted action or even an awareness of the nature of the goal that was sought after.[59] Roy's transition from nationalism towards communism took place not long after 1916, upon leaving India for Japan and then the United States. The nationalist phase of Roy is however quite significant in as much as Roy later came to vehemently reject two constitutive aspects of *dal* politics, namely that of authoritarian structures of leadership and following, as well as that of *guru-shishya* relations typifying religious traditions of learning based on discipline, devotion and submission.

From Roy's *Memoirs* we can glean some useful insights into his self-assessment of his nationalist phase, which he regarded as being romantic, idealistic and constricted. His work was simple in style and substance and offered a rationalisation of nationalism and anarchism,

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[56] Vivekananda is mostly famous for pinning his hopes for India's social reconstruction on her so-called 'spiritual genius'. While this entailed a rejection of the political in favour of the moral development of India's people, to be modelled on the medieval Hindu tradition of *bhakti* or self-effacing devotion, it also postulated the necessity for absolute freedom, especially from legal oppression that is to be found in positive law. Vivekananda's influence on India's nationalist movement cannot be stressed highly enough, hence there is an abundance of literature that explores his ideas in great depth. For a brief introduction, see Mehta, *Foundations of Indian Political Thought: An Interpretation. From Manu to the Present Day*, pp.166-174.

[57] An interesting narrative of this choice of paths, especially in the case of Roy can be found in Gordon, *Portrait of a Bengal Revolutionary*, pp.197-216.

[58] Gordon, *Portrait of a Bengal Revolutionary*, p.200. Also see Klostermaier, *Hindu Writings*, pp.120-147.

[59] Gordon, *Portrait of a Bengal Revolutionary*, p.205.

especially in the Indian context. In a famous letter to Woodrow Wilson he compared Indian revolutionaries to the American revolutionaries of the eighteenth century and in doing so, tried to justify the seeking of German assistance by certain, mainly militant, section of the Indian nationalists. But under the influence of communism, rather than viewing nationalist sentiments as a driving force towards national freedom, Roy increasingly considered nationalist ideals as serious obstacles towards a state's development and self-determination. We shall see how he combined this assessment with his rejection of communism as an empowering political force, following his disagreements with Lenin over prescriptions for the colonial policy to be followed by the communist movements in colonial states. The period between 1915 and 1933, however, testifies to his Communist allegiances, underscored by numerous pamphlets and writings.[60]

'Communism in Asia...is nationalism painted red.'[61]

Like so many other '*isms*', the distinctions and the relations between 'socialism', 'communism', 'nationalism', 'imperialism', 'colonialism' and their many variants are often difficult to conceptualise and to analyse. Nonetheless, the debates of the inter- and post-bellum periods were harsh and often dogmatic as the old '*isms*' of colonialism, imperialism (new concepts in themselves) were to be replaced with the new '*isms*' of alternative social orders. The crosscurrents were manifold and were also further complicated by the idea of internationalism, which meant that no longer was the social and political reconstruction of colonial countries seen by many intellectuals as their sole concern, but as a challenge that was to be met by global change. The most influential vehicle of this idea was undoubtedly an internationalist take on Marxism that was construed far more broadly than Marx, Engels or Lenin had ever done. One of the key concepts that took hold was autonomy, used in the language of nationalism, but also sustained by the link between nationalist and communist thought. The bottom line is not terribly complex: it is about colonial countries, or imagined nations, wanting political and economic self-determination. For many, this aspiration was voiced as a broad desire for freedom, which was accordingly interpreted in widely varying ways, depending on whether the primary vehicle of the idea was nationalist or communist ideology.

Although the determining factors for the actual choice of the 'ism' were many and complex, two prominent aspects have to be touched upon in order to understand the history of political thought of the interwar and post-war period in India. One major aspect was the trickle-down

[60] These were written mostly in Spanish while in Mexico where he became a co-founder of the Mexican Communist Party.
[61] Roy, *The Communist Problem in East Asia - an Asian View*, p.229.

of Marxist thought and more importantly, the reception of Soviet-Russian and Chinese communist movements. The second aspect to be considered was the outcome of the Second World War, with its traumatising experience of bellicose nationalism. While these two factors were kept separate by the Indian communist movements, the assessment of the nationalist-communist links became the domain of parts of the Indian left in an effort to carve out alternative paradigms of progress, neither of the nationalist nor of the communist or what was perceived to be orthodox Marxist variety. The growth of communism in India resulted mainly out of the interpretation of Soviet and Chinese politics and policies in the light of anti-imperialism. In the following we shall outline the issue of China's influence first of all, in order to understand the Indian communist position towards nationalist movements. This is done with regard to both Roy and Narayan's political thinking from the communist vantage point. Thus, it will not be an exhaustive discussion of the regionally split communist movements in India, but will attempt to examine a particular position that eventually led to a stance against both communism and nationalism as plausible expressions of political independence and of freedom.

In a comparative advantage over Narayan, Roy was able to experience instances of *Realpolitik* in the China of the 1920s. This was enabled by Roy's mission to China in his capacity as a member of the Presidium and the Political Secretariat of the ECCI[62] and the Agrarian Commission as well as Joint Secretary of the Comintern's Chinese Commission. Roy's mission effectively was to implement the proposals of the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI, held in November and December 1926.[63] The details of the Communist debacle in China post-1927 are well recorded, but our main interest here is the overall effect it had on Roy as manifested in his position towards nationalism and communism in India. As a delegate from a colonised country, Roy was well aware of the two aims that were to be the focus of action for the communist movement in China, i.e. to achieve a revolution on the socio-economic front and a revolution on the anti-imperialist front. However, with the decision of the ECCI to prioritise the latter movement as an 'inseparable part of the international revolution', the almost exclusive focus on the strategies of anti-imperialism was quite soon after found by Roy to have considerably weakened the forces of the communist revolution as

[62] Executive Committee of the Communist International

[63] Haithcox, *Nationalism and Communism in India: The Impact of the 1927 Comintern Failure in China*, pp.459-473. This, as do most interpretations of Roy's activities in China, relies on 'Theses on the Situation in China by the Seventh Extraordinary Plenum of the Executive Committee of The Communist International, November 22-December 16, 1926.' In: North and Eudin, *M. N. Roy's Mission to China: The Communist-Kuomintang Split of 1927.*

a grass-roots mass movement on *all* social levels. [64] As far as the immediate goals of the Comintern were concerned, Roy actively took part in formulating these.

The problems that subsequently arose for Roy concerned the methods of achieving these goals. The goals of freedom and self-determination were officially viewed as ripples that would spread from regional to national to international movements. As such, nationalist movements were welcomed as an integral part of preparing nations for the wider revolutions on a larger scale. Freedom was therefore seen as attainable on different scales, in almost quantifiable terms. The great divide within the Comintern therefore took place not over the question of whether to support national revolutions, but over the question of the favoured methods of revolution. This was first and foremost discussed in the context of forging alliances with national movements based on their social structure. Following an anti-communist *coup d'état* by Chiang Kai-shek against his communist allies, the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI voted in favour of combining a strategy of preserving alliances with *prima facie* left-oriented nationalist groups[65] as well as pursuing more radical agrarian programmes.

In the wake of various twists and turns of the CCP to accommodate the national interest and the interests of the oppressed classes, especially in the agrarian sector, Roy became vehemently opposed to alliances formed on the basis of national interest that self-evidently, i.e. according to Marxist categories of social classes, would not result in a liberation of the masses from exploitation by the elites of the national movement itself. [66] For Roy, the key to a successful mass revolution lay in the opposition of the communist movement to the non-reformist alliances such as the feudal and comprador elements. Only those elements of society that were judged to be potentially reformist could be engaged with to simultaneously overcome imperialist forces as well as to radicalise national policies. Again, it is worth noting that nationalism in Roy's terms did not merely mean political and economic independence of the nation as long as the national elite remained the primary beneficiary of this freedom. Roy's concern with nationalism at this stage was less the idea of national independence itself than his doubts about the ability of bourgeois-nationalist movements to accommodate the interests of the wider society. This did not mean that his trust in the distinctions *within* different kinds of bourgeois liberation movements was eroded, i.e. in that some were considered as being truly revolutionary and some as merely reformist. Roy had formulated

[64] Haithcox, *Nationalism and Communism in India: The Impact of the 1927 Comintern Failure in China*, pp.459-460.
[65] In this case it meant befriending the Left Kuomintang.
[66] While the proletariat was considered to be obviously revolutionary in its character, the characterisation of the non-proletarian classes was far more difficult. These are feudal remnants and

this position as early as 1920 at the Second Comintern Congress, and upon his return to India from China found this position to be vindicated by the failure of the CCP to grasp widespread political power, having led astray into an alliance with primarily the military.

Roy's development as a communist was hence heavily influenced by his experience in China, but this did not lead him to revise his position on the overall utility of nationalist movements that promised a certain revolutionary potential there and then. As such, he conceived of a three-class party, composed of the proletariat, the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie.[67] Although this was initially envisioned as an alternative to the Indian National Congress, the most organised of nationalist movements, Roy conceded during the late 1920s that a link with the Indian National Congress was indeed possible. This was due to the INC's increasing sympathy towards radical socio-economic reforms, advocated in the main by Jawaharlal Nehru. Interestingly, following the collapse of a broad national-revolutionary alliance in China, the Comintern under Stalin rejected Roy's argument for an agreement to cooperate with the Indian bourgeois-national movement, led by the INC, which in the meantime had called for full political independence. The ECCI evolved a draft programme for the Sixth World Congress, which effectively advised against a joint workers and peasants party under the banner of the INC. In short, by invoking the danger of petty-bourgeois conservatism, multi-class nationalist parties were now considered to be counter-revolutionary and a barrier between the underprivileged masses and their true representatives - the communist movements.

However, the case of India proved to be an exception as testified by the proceedings of the Sixth World Congress, in which the CPI was urged to retain temporary coalitions with national-bourgeois movements. This position was upturned in its entirety by Stalin in 1929 at the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI and led to the CPI severing all links with any nationalist movements.[68] The isolationist turn of the CPI was one of the most decisive factors responsible for the severing of links between the Marxist socialist parties and the communist movement, by which we mean a plurality of regional movements, all of which accepted the binding nature of the Comintern rulings. Roy too was influenced by this move that resulted in a crushing loss of popularity for the communist movement in India. While accepting that not all nationalist forces were revolutionary in character, Roy believed that without a broad base in

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militarists, compradors, national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, according to intra-Comintern debates on revolutionary tactics.

[67] Haithcox, *Nationalism and Communism in India: The Impact of the 1927 Comintern Failure in China*, p.466.

[68] Haithcox, *Nationalism and Communism in India: The Impact of the 1927 Comintern Failure in China*, p.472.

society, revolutionary politics were doomed to fail. The keenness with which Roy sensed the loss of grass roots radicalism within the communist camp can be glimpsed in Roy's often bitter rhetoric *contra* Gandhi, who was able to command the support of the masses, but which was from Roy's perspective due to the 'religious backwardness' of the masses than an understanding of their potential role as the agents of an Indian Enlightenment – and beyond.

Far more than in Narayan's case, Roy's critical preoccupation with the ideologies of communism and nationalism is extant in the form of his famous debates with Lenin at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. Not only did they affect his policy and position on China as described above, but more importantly, for the purpose of understanding his theory of Radical Humanism, the debate engendered responses by Roy to questions that went beyond the immediate tactical desirability of supporting nationalist movements in Asia. This proved to have had a sizeable impact on Roy's thinking on the potential for conflict *and* collaboration between ideologies and the implications of these for democracy, popular participation and the concept of freedom. The extension of Marxism by Lenin in particular became important to the Indian communist and socialist movements, not in the least because of Lenin's focus on imperialism. Hence Roy, like Lenin, derived his political thought from a medley of ideological positions, encompassing a complexity of interrelationships that were far from stable – communism and nationalism, communism and democracy, nationalism and internationalism. What is clear though is that the ideology of communism in India, not always being accommodative of the other quite influential concepts, was weakened quite considerably in terms of both internal institutional disintegration and external political pressures, e.g. by the banning of communist parties, the refusal of political cooperation by democratically inclined Marxist socialist parties. The strengthening of the latter often resulted out of an internal critique within the communist ranks, as seen in the cases of Roy and Narayan who evolved their political thinking out of their wavering belief in communism. The unquestioning acceptance of the dictates of the CPSU as well as the inability of the communist movement to resolve the conflicts between its Marxist heritage, the demands of nationalism and the liberal challenge of pluralist democracy constituted the main problems that stood in the way of a politically viable communist programme in India, thus paving the way for the augmenting of Narayan and Roy's discontent with orthodox ideology and their search for alternative solutions.

We therefore take issue with the contention put forward by Sanjay Seth to the effect that the inadequate theorisation of nationhood and nationalism was actually 'frequently pointed out by non-Marxists' and only 'in more recent times have Marxists been at the forefront in pointing

out to this lacunae or limitation.'[69] While this certainly holds true for the majority of communists up until the early 1970s, it seems all the more remarkable that Roy as a communist did conduct an influential debate with Lenin precisely over this question. The only caveat to this contention would be the theorisation of the nation as an existing empirical object that has to be taken into account *necessarily* by modern Marxist theories. What Roy did was to provide a brief normative account of nationalism that questioned the very legitimacy of nation-states when predicated on a vacuous image of a unitary entity. In doing so, Roy deserves to be mentioned as one of the earliest Marxist polemicists to have critiqued the idea of nationalism in relation to especially Lenin's widely accepted position on Marxism and nationalism.

We propose to outline the Roy-Lenin in two different ways.[70] One is the context of the debate, which is an important extension and reformulation of Marx's theory of socialist revolution, colonialism and nationalism, furthered by Lenin's own modifications and innovations within the theory of imperialism. The second reading of the debate regards those specific ideas that were engendered by the debate, which were crucial to Roy as factors that led him to turn his back on communism in Asia as 'nationalism painted red'. While the Roy-Lenin debate is an important datum in the annals of the communist movements of Asia in its own right, in the case of Roy's thinking it was a crucial catalyst for the development of some of his ingrained, but not yet fully developed ideas on radicalism in socialist movements, ideas that were to later exceed the limits of organised socialist movements to encompass a far broader understanding of social revolutions.[71]

Marx's own theory of the role of less developed countries, effectively colonial countries, was ambiguous, but certainly ascribed very little importance to the non-capitalist East as an active subject of a socialist revolution prior to its industrial development through the West.[72]

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[69] Seth points out in particular to the writings of Nicos Poulantzas and Tom Nairn. Refer to Seth, *Lenin's Reformulation of Marxism: The Colonial Question as a National Question*, p.99.

[70] We would like to confine the readings of the Roy-Lenin debate to a theoretical interpretation rather than viewing it as part of a *Realpolitik* scenario of a clash of interests between the Soviet state and non-Soviet communist revolutionaries. For an account of the latter, see Shinn Jr., *The 'National Democratic State': A Communist Program for Less-Developed Areas*, p.379.

[71] Here we agree with Sudipta Kaviraj, who throws up the possibility that 'underlying the obvious divide between his communist and humanist phases there was perhaps a substratum of philosophic continuity', even in the light of 'this peculiar combination of political radicalism and philosophical heteronomy.' Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Heteronomous Radicalism of M. N. Roy.' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.213.

[72] Seth, *Lenin's Reformulation of Marxism: The Colonial Question as a National Question*, p.103. Also, Ernest Gellner in: O'Leary, *The Asiatic Mode of Production. Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History*, pp.x-xi. And, O'Leary, *The Asiatic Mode of Production. Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History*, p.331. Brendan O'Leary notes that while there

Following a simplistic notion of a passive East (or India), Marx believed that it was indeed only the presence of the British that was the chief contributor to the break-up of the defining structures of 'Asiatic' society: the village community as the as the basic social unit of Asian society, the despotism of a centralised irrigation-providing and surplus-appropriating government, the absence of classes and the historical continuity of these features of 'Asiatic' life.[73] The route to communism was therefore dependent on these features being overcome.

As such, Marx concluded that although the East did not have the necessary contradictory forces to stage their own revolution from within, the collapse of these structures through the impact of colonialism could ultimately pave the way for revolutionary conditions to flower in Asia too. This was of course conditional on the dissolution of the peculiarities of the East, or in other words, upon the universalisation of the conditions under which socialism would succeed the capitalist mode of production. These observations made by Marx, if valid, would have basically foreclosed the emergence of the indigenous forces of socialism and nationalism in colonial countries that displayed a tendency to valorise their difference to the West. Even in the case that the path of West was to be emulated by the East, Marx's impressions of the East did not foresee the consequences of imperialism in colonial countries on the relations between the developed countries in terms of *dependence* of the latter upon the former. It was Lenin whose writings on Marxism and colonialism led to a more sophisticated focus on the concrete issues of nationalism and socialism in colonial and semi-colonial countries.[74]

Lenin's earliest formulations on the phenomenon of imperialism and its implications for colonial countries are to be found in his monograph '*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*' (1916), which also provided the basis for the resolutions of the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920 pertaining towards Soviet state policy and non-Soviet communist policies. That Roy's input proved to have influenced Leninist formulations substantially has been examined in great detail, but shall not be the focus of the issue at hand.[75] Lenin, more so

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certainly is ambiguity in Marx and Engels' writings about India, they believed in a 'distinctive Asiatic social order, mode of production or social formation.'

[73] Seth, *Lenin's Reformulation of Marxism: The Colonial Question as a National Question*, pp.101-102.

[74] The key differences have been Marx's focus on nationalism as a question of strategy, not theory, pertaining to the development of the bourgeois-capitalist state, whereas Lenin took issue with nationalism from the viewpoint of its role in socialist revolutions. For a critique of Marx and Engels' concepts of nationalism, see Petrus, *Marx and Engels on the National Question*, pp.823-824. More recent discussions too have argued that the concept of nationalism in Marx was, although weak and often inconsistent, stringently instrumental, especially post 1849. Refer to Avineri, *Marxism and Nationalism*.

[75] For a summary of the main writings that deal with Roy's contribution to the theorising of the national and communist question at the Second Comintern, refer to Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation*, pp.93-95.

than Marx, was responsible for a striking development of Marxism in the 20th century, namely its rapid spread in colonial and semi-colonial countries. One of the results of his re-theorising of Marxian strategy was the remarkable shift of perception from Marx's image of Asia that was passive, objectified and of anecdotal importance to an impression of Asia that was far more subjectively active and of fundamental importance to the development of international capitalism. This was also the beginning of a spate of Marxist and non-Marxist writings on the subject of imperialism and its close connection to the future of colonial countries.[76] This was the first time that Marxists, and non-Marxists, began to accord political events and socio-economic movements in colonial countries a status of high importance. As Seth points out, Lenin's analysis in particular claims that colonies 'were not the only object of competition, but the crucial importance of colonies to monopoly finance capital meant that they were a *key* object' to the capitalist West.[77] This meant that the East became an integral part of world capitalism, rather than being a sideshow of West-centred capitalism.

In political terms, Lenin's call for the right of nations to self-determination to be extended to the countries of the East followed the logic of the above perception. The West, according to Lenin, had already settled the issue in 'its own Orient' as a necessary rung of the ladder towards the highest stage of capitalism. [78] Hence the structural link between East and West was seen by Lenin as not merely a circumstantial event, but as part of a great chain of world revolutions, albeit one that ran unevenly across historical time. Thus, supporting the unity of the working classes across nations did not mean a repudiation of nationalist movements, but the recognition of nationalism as a potent and legitimate opposition of the so-called oppressed nations to their oppressors. Not recognising the right of the East to self-determination would correspond to actively supporting the imperialism of the West. The consequences for communist movements outside of the Soviet state were clear for Lenin. In effect, these movements were obliged to support bourgeois-democratic national movements as part of a struggle against imperialism.[79] In other words, although Lenin conceded that these movements were not necessarily socialist in character, their victory would deal a decisive blow to the forces of imperialism and open up the prospect for the constructive working out of the contradictions between the bourgeois nationalists and the economically underprivileged yet politically free classes.

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[76] The standard texts of this era are J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), a non-Marxist approach; furthermore R. Hilferding's *Finance Capital* (1905/1910), Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913), Nikolai Bukharin's *Imperialism and World Economy* (1911/1917), and Karl Kautsky's various articles and letters in *Neue Zeit.*

[77] Seth, *Lenin's Reformulation of Marxism: The Colonial Question as a National Question*, p.115. Italics added.

[78] This was in reference to the revolutionary movements in Russia, Persia, Turkey and the Balkans.

In the preceding section we outlined a cursory description of the context of the Roy-Lenin debates on communist strategy, but hope to have given an indication of the problems at hand for the Indian communist movement. This was the problem of compatibility between the short-lived demands of the Leninist camp at the Comintern that the communist movements support nationalist movements, and the issue of working class unity. Rosa Luxemburg had already voiced her concerns by claiming that the call for self-determination of nations undermined the unity of the working classes by pointing to the effects of nationalist wars that pitted the proletariat of one country against that of another country. Roy took on board both arguments and consequently straddled a position between that of Lenin and Luxemburg in his appeal *contra* Lenin for the communist parties to support bourgeois-democratic movements only conditionally. The condition of support was that the respective nationalist movements display characteristics of a potentially revolutionary movement, a stance he also held on to in the case of China.[80] Although Lenin did not believe that nationalist movements in Asia could be socialist movements, he failed to ascribe nationalism of the East a concrete political character except that of anti-imperialism. Roy's position was, however, that it would be counterproductive to simply lend support to any 'bourgeois-democratic' liberation movement and argued that the Comintern should only support those movements that were reliably revolutionary and were able to organise the interests of the broad masses. [81]

This point was duly taken up by Lenin, whose theses were modified to counsel the Comintern to provide the necessary backing to 'revolutionary movements of liberation', rather 'bourgeois-democratic liberation movements.'[82] We note that at this stage of his political thinking, Roy himself fails to see that communist movements *per se* were not undifferentiated movements either. In other words, despite his commendable attempt to mediate between both Lenin's optimism and Luxemburg's guarded pessimism regarding the role of a temporary nationalist-communist alliance, Roy nonetheless generalised the character of communist movements as much as he set up a simplistic typology of the character of 'bourgeois-democratic' movements. A difference was made between those that were reformist and therefore potentially reactionary, and those that were potentially revolutionary.[83] His later thinking however departs significantly from this position in the light of the phenomenon of European fascism, which rendered this typology untenable.

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[79] By way of a clarification, Lenin did not believe that bourgeois-democratic movements could actually be socialist movements.

[80] The question of whether Roy was indeed expelled from the Comintern in 1929 because of this strict position on the conditions of support and its apparent failure in China was a pertinent one but is not discussed here.

[81] Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation*, p.94.

[82] Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation*, p.95.

[83] Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation*, p.94.

Roy's position on the revolutionary communism was of course dependent on his understanding of the nature of communism as an ideal of a radical, i.e. grass roots based, and universal movement against exploitation. Hence, it was clear that Lenin's initial argument in favour of supporting *any* nationalist anti-imperialist movement would not have been able to satisfy Roy's own notion of the uncompromising role of communism as an ideology of revolution unlike the nationalist ideology, which was to a large extent based on reinstating indigenous political power. His criticism of Lenin showed unease with a severing of the requirements of radicalism and universalism in the context of nationalism. Although national movements could potentially be radical, it was not clear that they would be universal in the broadest meaning of the term. Put differently, any mass movement such as popular nationalism[84] might seem to be based on the participation of the masses but need not necessarily have the interests of the exploited and underprivileged classes at heart, i.e. those interests that are the basis for global or universal progress in history.

Here Roy's position reflected a standard Indian communist view against national exceptionalism and a concern for revolutionary movements that manifested the universal, in terms of the truths of historical materialism. This stance explains Roy's acclamation of three factors that were discussed at the Comintern meeting seeking to determine the time frame of a successful transfer of revolutionary powers from 'above' to 'below'. These were the 'class structure, the stage of development of the nationalist movement, and the relative strength of the bourgeois and proletarian forces' of a given country.[85] Roy's preoccupation with radicalism has been seen to contribute to his *over*-optimism concerning the strength and spontaneity of the Indian proletariat. This was quite opposed to Lenin's own assessment of the Indian situation, as Lenin did not believe in the spontaneous development of class-consciousness. This point, as well as their differences over the role of Gandhi as a revolutionary,[86] has been seen by critics as a great error of judgement that was to cost Roy his standing as a communist of both international and national calibre, who was ousted from the Comintern in 1929 by Stalin.[87] In a version more sympathetic to Roy, it has been argued that it was in fact Roy's proclivity for independent thought that not only led to his expulsion but also to his path away from the official doctrines of communism under the Soviet vanguard state.[88]

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[84] See Benedict Anderson's differentiation between popular and official nationalisms in Anderson, *Asian Nationalism?* , pp.31-42.
[85] Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation*, pp.96-97.
[86] There is of course a major difference between correctly reading sociological data and normatively assessing the roles of charismatic personalities. The latter is always more open to more acrimonious contest than is the former.
[87] Haithcox, *The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation.*
[88] V. M. Tarkunde, 'Introduction' to Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.xiv.

2.2.2 The rejection of communism and nationalism

Given Roy's overall contribution to the Indian left, as well as the gist of his subsequent work, our reading of Roy cannot be unduly critical. Roy's greater interest and therefore greater consequences for his political thinking was his preoccupation with the issue of radicalism. While we do accept the case for misinterpretation of important sociological data regarding the popular appeal of Gandhi and the implausibility of a spontaneous grass roots revolution, we do not believe that this mistake and the downslide of his career as a spokesperson of Asian communism actually led Roy to become an embittered enemy of communism as he saw it being shaped under Lenin and subsequently Stalin. It seems that Roy turned his back on communism as a result of his failure to locate radicalism within the communist ideology. As such, Roy the communist appears to be a communist in transition from the very outset of his quest for his social and political ideal. In 1952 Roy went on to restate some of his arguments against Lenin on the issue of nationalism, pointing out that one of Lenin's biggest mistake was to denounce 'imperialism as the devil of the drama of the twentieth century', which 'compelled Socialists as well as liberals to patronise colonial nationalism.'

> '(D)uring the period between the two world wars, nationalism in Europe developed into fascism. A distinction was, therefore, made between nationalism in Europe and in the colonial countries-the latter being regarded as a progressive democratic movement - with the analogy that originally nationalism in Europe had played a similar role...As a matter of fact, from the very beginning colonial nationalism was not progressive but revivalist; its hypothetical character was deduced from the fact that it was anti-imperialist. Another highly objectionable result of the same fact was simply ignored: among the vast bulk of the colonial peoples, anti-imperialism was hatred for the white man; on part of the nationalist middle class, it meant rejection of everything that the white man represented, namely, modern civilisation, a rationalist view of life, and democratic culture. To have equated anti-imperialist nationalism with the spirit of progress and the urge for democratic freedom was obviously wrong.'[89]

In shifting his emphasis from imperialism to nationalism, Roy argued that the unreflected celebration of the latter equally served to undermine the basis for humanity's progress and the cause of democracy. Democracy for Roy was similar to Narayan's conception of democratic socialism, i.e. a political system that ensures political participation and that lends legitimacy to the aims of socialism that are conceived of in terms of socio-economic equality. The question raised here is on what grounds did Roy denounce nationalism, which after all was one of the modern world's most accepted ideologies of self-determination? Roy's criticism

[89] Roy, *Democracy and Nationalism in Asia*, p.145.

had to do with the liberal-utilitarian equation of democracy with numerical democracy on the one hand, leading to a British 'timidity' in India while granting the important powers of legislation, albeit limited ones, to a strong revivalist section of nationalists who were assured of a broad base of support. On the other hand, the 'authoritarian tradition of Oriental culture' meant that 'the defeat of liberalism prejudiced the chances of democracy.' The outcome, according to Roy, was that a majoritarian notion of democracy, when accompanied by 'religious, culturally revivalist outlook', was a politics of demagogy rather than a politics of 'revolt against tradition, of self-confidence and self-reliance.'[90]

Hence nationalism and communism were brought together as the focal points of Roy's critique. There are in effect two ways in which Roy made the connection, but both share the net result of destroying Roy's ideal of democracy. Firstly, communism and nationalism were able to co-exist in many parts of the world because communism was guilty of ignoring the perils of a 'backward' looking or traditionalist nationalism. While this may not necessarily hamper popular participation, Roy's second definition of radicalism as the transformation of interests would certainly be undermined. Secondly, nationalism and communism shared structures of authoritarianism, particularly evident in the way leadership was perceived vis-à-vis the role of the masses. In this case, while interests may certainly be transformed at least superficially - and as we shall see, Roy himself did not believe in the process of democratisation without the catalytic function of a responsible leadership – the issue of popular participation was swept aside by the non-inclusion of the *populus*. Apart from posing a threat to the idea of democracy as self-determination, both nationalism and communism were fertile grounds on which the phenomenon of fascism flourished.[91]

The experience of the Second World War meant that Roy felt his ideas vindicated in the most obvious of ways. He thereby condemned nationalism and communism as being the two 'psychoses' of the world, 'the major nationalist psychosis as well as the minor Communist psychosis'.[92] The difference between the two psychoses is that while Roy dealt with nationalism as an ideology and not as political practice, the reverse was true for his comments on communism, which he believed was the misguided and dogmatic practice of the actual highly critical but also *self*-critical philosophy of Marxism.[93] This explains Roy's continued interest in Marxian thought that was coeval with the development of his notion of democracy that was neither parliamentary democracy (as it was too dependent on the idea of

[90] Roy, *Democracy and Nationalism in Asia*, pp.141-146.
[91] Sinha, *Political Ideas of M. N. Roy*, pp.28-31.
[92] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.38.
[93] Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.43-44. Also see Philip Spratt's 'Foreword' to Roy, *New Orientation*, p.xxvi.

representation to be a meaningful locus of self-determination) nor social democracy (as it was too dependent on the idea of a strong state and leadership), but radical democracy that offered participation and transformation of the world as we know it. As such, while communism and nationalism were ruled out on grounds of not being able to fulfil these functions of a radicalised democracy, an ongoing engagement with the idea of Marxism is very much part of Roy's political thinking that sought to transcend the boundaries that had been set by both orthodox and traditionalist ideologies. Roy's concerns about nationalism's authoritarian leanings seem vindicated in the context of national destructions since the end of the 1980s. A more valuable insight is however that mere destruction does not causally effect genuine change within cultures and structures of sub-nationalisms and other groups. The issue of authoritarianism and the question of alternatives therefore remains a pertinent one.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has dealt exclusively with the pre-radical ideas of Roy and Narayan. We have seen how new forms of discontent arose out of defining and attempting to surmount the obstacles to old form of discontent. Hence, from a concern with revolutions leading to socio-economic justice to revolutions bringing about national self-determination, Roy and Narayan ultimately became concerned with a revolutionary programme of another kind, i.e. that would address the problems of socio-economic justice as well as of self-determination, but would avoid the dangers lurking in the old models, i.e. the subjugation of the individual by the state and society as well as the stagnation of possibilities for change in the human condition. At this point we note that Roy and Narayan, in dissociating themselves from the reformist-liberal camp, equally distanced themselves from the Leninist notion of revolution as the organised seizure of power in order for the proletariat to achieve control over the means of collective violence, i.e. the state.[94] Rather, their concept of revolution follows a far more fluid notion of the momentum gained in dissolving old structures of power and its instruments through the education of the masses in ways that establish viable alternatives to the structures of both a capitalist and social-democratic state.[95]

We argue that both Roy and Narayan's writings reflect a tension between several ideas that have been addressed here and ideas expressed in their stages of radicalism, making this

[94] Adamson, *Beyond "Reform or Revolution": Notes on Political Education in Gramsci, Habermas and Arendt*, p.430.

[95] Roy and Narayan's originality within the field of Indian political thought should not be overlooked, comparable to the differing but far more influential contributions of Gramsci, Habermas and Arendt, who did much to transcend the old left dichotomy of revolution and reform.

chapter a necessary backdrop towards understanding their thought. The tensions are on the one hand played out between the assumptions made regarding the human good and a concern for keeping this sphere open to debate and criticism. They are also played out between a continuation of some fundamental notions of Marxism and, based on the idea that an unexamined Marxism is not worth keeping, an anticipation of issues that were to inform the development of Marxism much later than during their era of writing and thinking. Bringing the chapter pre-emptively to a full circle, we find this tension indeed personified in the histories of Roy and Narayan. From activists to politicians, in the end they withdrew from the 'official' side of politics – only briefly sojourned again by Narayan – and embarked on a mission of pedagogy and the attempt to effect change on a very local level. Their prerogative to be active as part of an intellectual leadership thus remained intact. While this certainly queries their sincerity regarding the extent of their radicalism as individual self-determination, as anti-authoritarianism and as the practice of constant critique, their ideas on radical democracy are not to be disbanded, but rather examined more closely as we do in the following section of the thesis.

Chapter 3

Against the State: The Importance of Negative Liberty

'We not only want to create a new world; we want to know what kind of a world we are going to create. We must know what freedom is before we can be qualified as the architects of a free world.'[1]

For both Roy and Narayan, the theme of 'freedom' was central to their political thought. In this chapter, we would like to look at the way that the question of freedom is raised, but also try to sift through some obscurities related to this question, as we believe that the standard readings of their writings on freedom has been so far attempted in a very one-dimensional way. To be sure, Roy and Narayan's consistent use of the very broad term 'freedom' is quite conducive to an undifferentiated reading. It is easier to interpret freedom, which encompasses the ideas of negative as well as positive liberty, in the latter sense as it simply covers the widest range of perspectives. However, we feel that it is not possible to work out a comprehensive interpretation of Roy and Narayan's ideas by either conflating the two notions or focusing solely on one of them. Our critique of a one-dimensional interpretation is thus levelled at reading into Roy and Narayan a predominantly positive notion of freedom, thereby marking out the categories of utopian, moralistic and perfectionist for the purposes of categorising their work. Either of the two contradictory ways of reading them leads to this conclusion – regarding them as essentially orthodox Marxists, looking towards a utopia of human emancipation in a stateless, internally reconciled society, or as basically representing the potent but inaccurate 19th century orientalist conceptions of the moral victory of the spiritual East versus the materialist West.[2] What remains at worst forgotten, and at best undifferentiated, is the equally fundamental notion of freedom as negative liberty, which we would like to bring up in this chapter. For the sake of simplicity that is given through shared common understandings, we rely on the difference made by Isaiah Berlin between negative and positive liberty.[3]

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[1] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.19.

[2] Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.194-195. According to Gandhi, Marxism undoubtedly belonged to the latter category, leading to the Indian non-communist left, and sympathetic to Gandhism, to revise their self-perception as Marxists. Consequently, the use of the term 'socialism' became popular and denoted the conjoining of Marxism's normative agenda and its realisation through 'Indian' methods of social revolution – the non-violent upliftment of the underprivileged sections of society, i.e. mainly based on caste.

[3] Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*.

Before we explore what Roy and Narayan believed freedom to be, we would like to entertain some doubts about these more common notions mentioned in the above and present a very different argument. We believe that on the one hand they did remain embedded in a standard Marxist discourse, which however we see as encompassing a variety of arguments and is in fact multi-levelled as a result. That Roy and Narayan rejected Marxism on ground of it being inimical to freedom is therefore a conclusion too hastily drawn, as we attempt to demonstrate in this chapter. On the other hand, as we will see in their conception of positive freedom, they also effectively retreated from Marxism, although not always with full intentionality or deliberation.

In this chapter we would like to fill a lacuna that is apparent in the secondary literature on Roy and Narayan by devoting our attentions to the highly underestimated element of negative liberty in their notion of freedom. We will see how they rejected orthodox Marxism or the practice of Marxism in the former Soviet Union to draw upon liberal traditions to counter the threat they felt Soviet style totalitarianism posed to individual liberty. In doing so, we argue that Roy and Narayan were in actual fact making a case for liberty similar to critical and *post*-Marxism in Europe. The focus on negative liberty was not merely an attempt to liberalise Marxism, but to effectively expand and improve the existing ideology in order to not only return to some key elements of its intellectual roots, such as liberty, but to also create a workable paradigm for a future beyond totalitarianism. The notion of totalitarianism that informed Roy and Narayan's critique was in the main the dominance of the institutions of the state and parties. The effect of this domination was the restriction of individual thought and action through punitive intervention as well as the homogenisation of ideas.

In line with this Millean version of interference, brought to an extreme in the 20th century, we note two core themes that have characterised much of the literature on critical and post-Marxism in the West, and which we find in the writings of Roy and Narayan in the context of Indian Marxism. The first theme is the revitalisation of the liberal tradition within the democratic left, in particular of the critical left that expressed the need for Marxism to be reconciled with democracy, against those arguments that undermined the possibility of this ever happening either intellectually or historically.[4] Yet Roy and Narayan, despite their certainty that Marxism or socialism is an incomplete ideology in the absence of democracy, remained curiously unsure on the issue of freedom and Marxism and overly influenced by the realities of the Stalin's regime. As activists with a concern for the future of a newly independent India, this unidimensionality of analysis in terms of observing and comparing

[4] For example, Femia, *Marxism and Democracy*.

political societies seems but natural. As intellectuals however, this seems a big lacuna in their writings, especially given their acceptance of the existence of a plurality of Marxisms. In this sense, their claim to regenerate a Marxian liberal tradition by rejecting orthodox Marxism is not a unique claim. But even the intention of creating a new body of thought post-Marx does not render them anti-Marxist or post-*Marxist.*[5]

The focus on negative liberty as freedom from interference leads to a standard liberal rights-based, minimal state approach, whereas the approach set out by a notion of positive freedom engenders a more thick or substantive idea of the polity and of political agents. In spite of the broad contradictions between them, we find both approaches represented in Western debates within critical/post-Marxism and interestingly, they are reflected in Roy and Narayan's writings as intertwined conceptions of freedom. Here we look at Roy and Narayan's critical/post-Marxist thought from the perspective of their concern for the liberal aspects of Marxism that would enable a radical democratic way of life to be realised, unhindered by illegitimate sources of power and control. This idea is premised on the *state* being separate from society as well as the individual. The concept of a superimposed state is thus both an extension of the experience of the British Raj, i.e. *sans* popular legitimacy, and the Marxist idea of the state as an instrument of power, which lies in the hands of the dominant classes of society.

Roy and Narayan's concepts of the state waver in similar ways between the two, but differ in their proposals regarding the future of the institution of the state. On an inter-textual level we find that Roy's rejection of the Marxist dogma of a stateless society led him to argue for a minimal state. The issue of the minimal state thus brought the issue of liberty to the forefront as an instrumental concept. By contrast, Narayan's vision of a stateless society stressed that liberty was a concept that was antagonistic towards the state as such. Yet both deployed the notions of liberty in these two ways, with varying degrees of emphasis. On the one hand it was indeed used in a standard Marxist way of instrumentality, i.e. as an issue of temporary importance for as long as the dominant state remains the most decisive reality of the world. On the other hand, there was also an element of a liberal foundational concern for this issue, thereby ensuring its a-temporality and universality.

This relates to the comparison with Western Marxist traditions in two ways. They can be seen to have shared the instrumental version of liberty with Marxism by perceiving limits in scope and capacity of the modern state. However, there is a valid comparison to be made to

[5] Cf. Narayan, *Politics in India*, pp.216-226.

contemporary strands of post-Marxism, notably to those that pursue the ideal of a radical democratic politics, wherein there is a reluctance to specify when it is that the liberal notion of rights will cease to matter as the foundation of a good social order. While Western post-Marxists, given their pluralist tendencies, see the liberal state as an agent of mediation between competing group interests and as a regulator of formal frameworks to ensure fairness and justice, Roy and Narayan based their defence of liberty on their perception of a general threat to freedom by diverse manifestations of totalitarianism. Here, they distanced themselves too from the Indian mainstream socialist camp, which framed the question of liberty and the rights to liberty as primarily a relationship between a (centralist) state and society.[6]

In the preceding chapters we have looked a range of ideas by J. P. Narayan and M. N. Roy that critiqued communism, or the practice of orthodox Marxism, as well as democratic socialism. In the course of the discussions of their intellectual histories we concluded that their initial discontent was directed towards institutional obstacles to a good life, characterised by socio-economic and political equality. They later shifted their focus to a conceptual discontent when they turned to, or rather continued their quest for a good social order based on 'freedom', which was seen to be the driving force of social progress and as the main condition for individual happiness. In other words, the dynamic qualities attributed to freedom became a primary concern over and above the more stable qualities of socio-economic and political equality. The latter could only be achieved under the condition of freedom. The institutionalism associated with ensuring equality however also features the aspects of stability and continuity. Hence, the conservatism embedded in a state of institutional stability would stand in the way of meaningful long-term change and short-term dynamism. Roy and Narayan therefore concluded that simply shifting the balance of political power and instituting economic redistribution schemes would result in the perpetuation of an essentially stable class and caste hierarchy.[7]

Marxism did not seem to provide an answer to this problem as it lacked a strong conception of freedom that could pave the way to alternative social structures in order to replace existing ones. The mere anticipation of a state of freedom as a distant end was a major problem within Marxism for Roy and Narayan. As a result, what they believed to be witnessing was the

[6] However, in the context of the 'rolling back of democracy' in India after independence was attained, this to our mind depicts less an ideological and more a pragmatic take on the problem on part of the left. Patnaik outlines the dilemma of the Indian situation in which the introduction of democratic institutions preceded the consolidation of the bourgeois state, unlike the experience of more advanced capitalist countries. This meant that for the ruling classes to establish their dominance, it was imperative to 'roll back democracy.' Refer to Patnaik, *Democracy as a Site for Class-Struggle*, pp.1006-1007.

degeneration of an initially promising alternative world of liberal-socialist values into a world ruled by the 'law of the jungle' where the stronger rule over the weaker, or those without the freedom to resist.[8] This interpretation of Marxism is not quite accurate though, and is grounded in a correlation of Marxist theory with its practice in name. As such, much of Roy and Narayan's critique is based on an assessment of the threats to liberty by illiberal states like the Soviet Union.

We can identify three clusters of problems that Roy and Narayan profess to resolve in order to achieve a state of so-called 'total freedom'. The idea of total freedom, as follows from the above, is for freedom as a concept of dynamic change to perennially remain the primary concern of society. Total freedom is best characterised by its component parts –freedom from material wants, political and economic autonomy, liberty, individual creativity, and individual capability to make moral judgements. This composite concept evolved over time in Roy and Narayan's thinking, also in relation to the dynamics of colonialism in India.

In the first instance, in their Marxist and nationalist phases Roy and Narayan were concerned with freedom from want. In addition to their evident empathy for India's poor and their indignation against all forms of injustice, we would like to view this concern from a second angle raised by Sanjay Seth. Seth argues, in the context of what he calls a moderate nationalism, that poverty was an obsessive theme for nationalists but contrary to what one might associate with this obsession, it was not as much about the actual poor but about the eradication of poverty as the manifestation of economic underdevelopment.[9] Although we do not focus on Roy and Narayan's take on issue of political economy, this point deserves to be mentioned insofar as the concept of radical democracy in both thinkers often sits uncomfortably with the notion of 'planned' agro-industrial development, even if it is at the local level.

Secondly, freedom was increasingly seen as self-government. This entailed the demands for the right to vote, a cause furthered in pre-independence India especially by the INC. What it also entailed was the idea of negative liberty, which was in the main the acceptance of the hegemony of bourgeois capitalism.[10] In the case of India, the political stakes were higher for a form of feudal economy, free from British domination. The politics of democratisation followed this notion, as did the extension of civil liberties. This is to say that the demand for

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[7] Sinha, *Political Ideas of M. N. Roy*, pp.23-24.
[8] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, p.454.
[9] Seth, *Rewriting Histories of Nationalism: The Politics of "Moderate Nationalism" in India, 1870-1905*, p.104.
[10] Foner, *The Meaning of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, p.446.

liberty from the colonial state was extended to a demand to be from the state as such. For much of the left though, this 'twilight zone' of political self-government and economic dependency, as Foner put it, was not enough. Neither was the freedom of every individual assured nor was the scale of freedom broad enough, i.e. the concept of liberty and the politics of democratisation was not enough to ensure full-scale emancipation and autonomy for all. Finally, freedom was viewed as creativity – in science, arts, and in exercising the political imagination. The inclusion of every citizen in this particular concept of freedom thus necessitated the politics of radicalisation.

The evolution of these ideas in Roy and Narayan's writings did not mean that one concept of freedom was rejected over the other. Rather, they were incorporated into one another, even though the idea of positive freedom was crucial to their political theory. However, the demands made by these different concepts did clash, not only in theory but also in practice. In this sense, the 'victory' of left-*liberalism*, rather than liberal-leftism, is not merely an academic concept but is highlighted in India's constitutional framework and her self-perception as Asia's largest democracy. In Roy and Narayan too, the fall-out of their conceptual evolution was an inherent pluralism in their notion of radical democracy. The result is the meeting of two functions and two modes of emancipation: empowerment and transformation; representative democracy and direct democracy.

For Roy and Narayan, standing in the way of total freedom are numerous obstacles, of which the political obstacles are of main interest to us. Firstly, total freedom is threatened by *excessive control* of the individual by various collectives, such as state institutions, nation, and class. The second obstacle is the lack of comprehension, or *knowledge* of human nature and of the physical world, which brings about the freedom to effect a qualitative change of both, but especially of human nature. This brings us to the aspect of the *primacy of the individual.*[11] This chapter will deal with the issue of control and with the notion of the prized individual as the legitimate owner of a range of rights that enable her to be free from any form of domination. However, some clarification is in order here. We want to establish that the theme of negative liberty in Roy and Narayan most certainly does not predominantly revert back to a liberal take on natural or pre-political rights. The concept of liberty in Roy and Narayan is not merely used to justify individuals' fundamental rights not to be dominated, but also takes on a very instrumentalist character of being the *means* to the end of 'total freedom.' This is to be interpreted in the light of one of Gandhi's most influential contributions to political thinking in India – the equation of means and ends.

[11] Sinha, *Political Ideas of M. N. Roy*, pp.36-40.

Although it has been rightly pointed out that the term 'means and ends' and the correlating question of whether the ends justify the means confuse more than enlighten,[12] the notion of equating the means with an end was not merely an abstract exercise in political thinking along Socratic lines, but was deeply rooted in India's experience of colonial subjugation. What was especially relevant to the Indian case was the impact the 'Enlightened' colonialist claims to progress had on India's politically active intellectual class. It became ever less clear to them how the notion of progress as an end could be reconciled with the means of domination and exploitation of a country such as India.[13] The underlying perspective was that claims such as these were informed by bigger pictures of ideal social orders. Consequently, there was a pervasive suspicion of dominant ideologies as the basis for social change and social order. Instead, ideologies were often mixed and matched and became rather fuzzy constructs.[14] For one, this called into question the possibility of dominance given the multiplicity of sources of guidelines for social change. Secondly, this brought into consideration the idea of an eclectic range of end – progress, preservation of tradition, or development, suitable to India's complex experience of the interplay between the politics of domination and the learning curve of self-assertion. In other words, the experience seemed to prove congruence between ideological totality and the hegemonic control exercised as a result of the former. To break out of control thus meant to destruct totality in its various guises. With it, the notion of 'means' that served a single goal became questionable, as the justification for deploying certain means in the name of a unitary goal was no longer sustainable.

Similar problems of control, hegemony and totality had in fact been critiqued by Western Marxists, albeit in different terms. The critique was primarily formulated as a discontent with the *failure* of the grand Marxist project to materialise in its concrete totality. This holds true in particular for the Leninist version of Marxism, as Mccormick and Kelly have pointed out. The legitimacy of Leninist thought was based on substantive promises and hence, it was the failure of these specific promises to materialise that proved to be a concrete challenge to Leninism.[15] As such, different components of the ideology and particular aspects of its implementation in the Soviet Union were scrutinised carefully and were subjected to the question of how they aided or hampered the realisation of the process of the development of capitalism into socialism. One very important part of the critique was directed towards the predominance of the ideals of egalitarianism and of social harmony/conformity that were

[12] Steven Lukes, 'Marxism and Dirty Hands.' In: Paul, *Marxism and Liberalism*, p.207.
[13] Pantham, *Thinking with Mahatma Gandhi: Beyond Liberal Democracy*, pp.167-168.
[14] Dallmayr and Devy in: Dallmayr and Devy, *Between Tradition and Modernity. India's Search for Identity*, pp.15-35.
[15] Mccormick and Kelly, *The Limits of Anti-Liberalism*, pp.814-815.

implemented to the detriment of the individual in the context of the experience of the power exercised in the name of the collective, the Party and the state.

The contradictions to the Marxist utopia of a stateless, classless and free society could not be easily overlooked. This in turn meant that the ideology of Marxism as a system of thought had to be given a great deal of critical consideration with respect to its capacity for internal change. The considerations resulted in broadly speaking two approaches. Firstly, given that particular instances of deviations from an irreducible ideal could not always be seen in isolation and were therefore connected to other instances of deviation, an analysis of this kind led to a refutation of the Marxist project in its totality, i.e. post-*Marxism*. The sense in which it is used in this case covers a very wide ideological spectrum of thought – from a *rejection* of Marxism in practice, despite an acknowledgement of the value of its overall aims, to a critique of the impossibility of any kind of systematic thought that aspires towards total explanations and total solutions. Secondly, we can distinguish the former approach from a revisionist one that critiqued what were considered as being aberrations of the original project with a view to *revitalising* its essence as a fruitful project, i.e. critical and *post*-Marxism.[16]

Subsequently, the history of the Western critical left became increasingly dominated by attempts to retrieve the liberal-democratic strand of Marxism that was seemingly lost in the excesses of orthodox praxis. This led to some vital theorising on the relationship between liberal-democracy and Marxism, ranging from ideas that declared the relationship as non-existent, to those that perceived Marxism to be the only viable point of departure for a free and democratic order. The attempts at reconciling the two have of course caused some of the rifts between critical and post-*Marxism*. In the former case, Marxism is generally held to be perfectible and pains are taken to revitalise what are taken to be core components of the ideology. By contrast, the latter stands for the argument that Marxism's identity would be betrayed should the ideology be revised to add components that are in fact alien to its essential structure. At the same time post-*Marxism's* anti-essentialism means that Marxism as an independent system of thought is regarded as obsolete and an object of critical historiography rather than as a subject of revitalisation. Hence, in most arguments there is a fundamental moment of criticism of the relationship between liberalism and Marxism that is either phrased as a paradox of Marxism[17] or couched in terms of bringing neglected or misrepresented aspects of Marxism to the fore.[18]

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[16] For a useful differentiation of the two strands, we follow Sim, *Post-Marxism. An Intellectual History.*
[17] Joseph Cropsey, 'On the mutual compatibility of democracy and Marxian socialism.' In: Paul, *Marxism and Liberalism*, pp.4-18.
[18] Bobbio, *Which Socialism? Marxism, Socialism and Democracy.*

The attempts to retrieve Marxism's essential core, its misrepresented aspects, to revitalise and re-interpret it are exercises that have long histories and indeed, it would be a mistake to exclude pre- and post-colonial left thought in a non-Western context. To do so would entail severing some vital parts in the intellectual tradition of Marxism and thus amount to a rather incomplete picture of its evolution as an ideology with claims to universal applicability. As we have seen, Roy and Narayan most certainly can be placed in the category of those theorists who argue that Marxism and liberal-democratic values are compatible. We shall concentrate on two aspects of their efforts to argue for a liberal Marxism, some of which is much in line with parts of the Western critical Marxist tradition, but also differs from it in some vital respects. The differences are notable insofar they can be explained to a certain extent as a particularly *Indian* approach to political thought that, as pointed out, became increasingly wary of grand theories.

3.1 The totalitarian threat to liberty

The concern for liberty, which formed the basis of the thrust of Roy and Narayan's arguments against orthodox Marxism - which they equate with the politics of Lenin and Stalin - is indicative of a more general challenge that was brought against the political manifestation of Marxism.[19] It contested the Marxism's emancipatory capacity as an objective explanation *and* normative account of history in which society necessarily resolves its contradictions that stem from exploitative structures in the economic sphere, and therefore in the social and political realm.[20] So much characterises the basis of the critical thinking that is common to both Indian Marxism as well as Western Marxism. The difference between the two becomes more obvious when we look at the beginnings of the critique of Marxism in the West that took issue with the failure of Marxism to deliver its historical promise of overcoming capitalism.[21] The critique was really engendered by a preoccupation with time and space. In other words, the questions raised by early 20th century Marxists were about the *conditions* of revolution: about the right time and place for a revolution to take place. Critical questions were also directed at the *success* of the communist revolution in creating a genuinely post-capitalist and post-imperialist society.

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[19] Although there is much disagreement regarding this issue, it cannot but be recognised that the theme of Marxism and authoritarianism was fuelled quite markedly by the influence of Lenin, especially in light of his 'State and Revolution.' Cf. Polan, *Lenin and the End of Politics*.
[20] Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe. The Radical Democratic Imagery*, pp.46-49.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Roy and Narayan's anti-imperialist and internationalist positions initially *did* lead them to apply standard Marxist theories of social revolutions and their conditions to the case of India. But the peculiarities of the Indian nationalist response to the Second World War ultimately prompted Roy and Narayan, amongst most socialists, to look more closely at the *effects* of political ideologies on societies and their individual members.[22] The mostly negative effects were seen to be a result of the deviations, present in most ideologies, from their professed commitment to found a good social order. For Roy and Narayan, 'total freedom' was the foundation a good society against which all deviations were to be measured. The main question was finely summarised by Roy, *vide* quotation on page 1. What is freedom really about? How fundamental is it to our conception of a good life? How foundational is it with respect to diverse projects of emancipation like Marxism, nationalism etc.? If it is the effect of totalitarianism is antithetical to freedom, should the drive to preserve freedom not transcend the dictates of ideologies, which lend themselves to totalitarian worldviews and solutions?

It therefore comes as no surprise that the danger of a totalitarian world order was not only perceived as result of flaws inherent in particular ideologies but also of the degeneration in the modes of thought and action of initially worthwhile projects. The threat to freedom posed by a totalitarian world order occupies a substantial section of Roy and Narayan's work and forms an important part of the background of their radicalism. The political and intellectual sources of a totalitarian world order were many, according to them: colonialism, nationalism, fascism, and very importantly, Marxism. Roy and Narayan's interest was directed towards mainly Marxism for several reasons - because of their self-understanding as disillusioned Marxists, and because of their faith in a revival of Marxian thought as part of the solution to the predicament of the world in the early to mid 20th century. While they held that freedom was indeed the central tenet of Marx's ideas, they believed that its implementation on the legal-political plane was lacking.[23] Given Marx's rejection of classical liberalism's formal conception of liberty, this comes as no surprise. But for Roy and Narayan, a Marxism bereft of its liberal roots, loses a fair amount of validity as a philosophy of freedom. They

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[21] For an *ex post* interpretation, see *inter alia*: Aronson, *After Marxism*, Callari, et al., *Marxism in the Postmodern Age. Confronting the New World Order*, Wood and Foster, *In Defence of History. Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda.*

[22] This also helps explain Roy's position *contra* that of the Indian National Congress, which made India's support for the Allies dependent on India being granted an autonomous National Government. Roy held that this condition effectively meant an opposition to the forces of anti-fascism, should the condition not be accepted by the colonial powers. He effectively accused the INC of underestimating the importance of an anti-fascist united front, regardless of each country's particular circumstances in international politics. Roy, *New Orientation*, pp. i - x.

[23] Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia*, pp.11-12.

effectively add on the formal aspect of liberty in two ways. One is the Marxist instrumental way of viewing liberty and the other is the foundational way of establishing a perennial value of negative liberty. This is precisely where they felt they were able to revive Marx's original idea of the primacy of liberty, but which had been totally sidelined by subsequent interpreters of his thought.

A similar faith was not placed in nationalistic aspirations towards freedom. However, Roy and Narayan differed in their assessment of the freedom movement in India and its bourgeois agents. While Roy established that the bourgeoisie was primarily reactionary and prone to fascist tendencies,[24] Narayan accepted that some form of socialist-nationalist collaboration would result in a beneficial solution for India as a whole.[25] It is however not in our agenda to analyse their respective roles in the widely documented debate between pre-independence India's communist, socialist as well as bourgeois-nationalist movements, nor is it to examine this debate in any detail. What we are concerned with is to show that both Roy and Narayan's conclusions led them to argue that ideologies are best judged not by their internally defined standards of success, but by their overall effects.[26]

Hence, fascism, colonialism and imperialism were seen to be linked, not only in institutional terms of their symbiosis, but in terms of their totalitarian impact, which is characterised by coercion, lack of choice, parochialism and forced homogeneity. Totalitarianism, in all its manifestations, therefore epitomised interference with human beings' desire for liberty to an unprecedented extent, having an impact on not only the economic and political spheres, but also at the level of culture. For Roy though, the nationalist freedom movement too had to be scrutinised with regard to its role in furthering totalitarianism. Seen in the above light, the independence movement in India, purportedly struggling against the British domination, was guilty of the same slide into a totalitarian mode of thought and action. This crisis continued, according to Roy, even after formal independence was attained in India. Roy called it the Nationalist Psychosis, and argued that as an 'experience of political adolescence', 'Nationalism cannot be reconciled with a truer expression of freedom, i.e. Radicalism. A conscious nationalist will reject Radicalism, and be an honest counter-revolutionary, a conscious Fascist.'[27]

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[24] Roy, *New Orientation*, pp. 30-34.
[25] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp. xiv-xvi.
[26] 'Success' is more amenable to a value-free assessment, whereas 'effect' takes the normative components of ideologies into account far more. This means that while fascism could claim some measure of success, its effects cannot but be called into question.
[27] Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.28-29.

What Roy argued was an important point and is no doubt of great contemporary relevance. While the year 1945 marked the end of one form of totalitarianism for some, i.e. fascism, for others speak of a 'short twentieth century' that lasted until 1989. The previous century was thus characterised by the conflict between constitutional government, liberal-democracy, and the principles of civil society on the one hand and the experience of dictatorship on the other hand.[28] The obsession with totalitarianism displayed by Roy and Narayan seems not only justified, but also leads on to a further question of whether 1989 is indeed the year that the world turned its back on totalitarianism. For Roy, in trying to judge totalitarianism it would be fallacious to establish an 'a priori notion about (the) enemy' as [for instance] fascism 'is not a platonic idea', but a particular socio-political manifestation, very much determined by cultural peculiarities.[29] Does the collapse of the communist bloc then mean that the short twentieth century of dictatorship had reached its end? Rather, Roy pointed to the dangers of blindness towards the general problem of totalitarianism both ignoring its universally negative effects and by correlating its presence to cultural similarities, ideological unity, and historical synchronism.[30]

For Roy and Narayan, writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, the alternative to fascism was communism, which ultimately fared no better in their estimation of its effects. It was with great trepidation and a great deal of disappointment that Roy and Narayan looked towards the politics of the Soviet Union. For Roy and Narayan, the first principle of a good social order was conceived as freedom of the individual. Roy's belief was that 'revolutionary philosophies which hold that freedom is conditional upon the individual's sacrificing himself on the altar of a collective ego, be that the State or the Nation or a Class, have debased politics, and thrown the world in the present crisis.'[31] While this was a clear rejection of Marxism's vital principle of class struggle, there was yet much in Roy's writings that reflects a Marxist commitment to freedom.

Similarly, Narayan maintained that the greatest threat to his ideal of socialism as an economic and political democracy was the prospect of 'totalitarian communism', admitting that no successful framework for developing a socialist society had been created so far. The Soviet

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[28] Kocka, *The Short Twentieth Century from a European Perspective*, p.472. Standard Cold War interpretations of course oversimplified the term dictatorship by equating fascism and communism.
[29] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.118.
[30] To therefore maintain that totalitarianism after World War Two existed primarily between 1917 and 1989 in the Marxist system of the East Bloc of Europe is overly simplistic and reflects neither the complexity of the historical and social realities, nor does it indicate ways of assessing the presence of and dealing with totalitarianism in the future. This is of course not a position taken by Kocka, but merely a critique of the idea of a short twentieth century having come to an end.

model of a one-party dictatorship and bureaucratic state was found to be unacceptable as it was clearly a non-democratic, elitist state whose chief interest was the consolidation of political power, rather than the overall material and moral development of the human being. Narayan however conceded that despite the misinterpreted and misguided nature of the transitional period of socialism, 'one of the mainsprings of socialist thought was a search for freedom and the fullest possible opportunity for individuals in the society for the utmost possible self-development.'[32] In a vehement attack on Lenin's methods of state control, Narayan argued that the revolution in Russia was in fact a miscarriage of a socialist revolution. To his mind, 'people's instinct is always in favour of freedom and democracy and it is never natural for them deliberately to subject themselves to a dictatorship.'[33] The fact that the Leninist conception of dictatorship was ostensibly a temporary one, instituted for the purpose of furthering the revolutionary cause, did not allay Narayan's fear of control over the individual, which informed the concept of Total Revolution to a large extent and can be followed throughout his writings: from critical Marxism to democratic socialism to partyless direct democracy.[34] Control and dictatorship, even under the auspices of administering socio-economic justice through revolutionary methods, curtailed man's *natural instinct* to be free.

Soviet style Marxism was therefore criticised for subverting the first principle of freedom by firstly prioritising principles other than freedom (such as a socialist economy, the principle of class solidarity), and by secondly doing so using authoritarian means. To follow this route of an orthodox version of Marxism was to fall into a Communist Psychosis, *vide* Roy.[35] Hence, for Roy and Narayan, the threat of totalitarianism necessitated a revival of negative liberty as a fundamental dimension to the notion of freedom. Countering standard Marxist theories that consider the concept of liberty as being a remnant of liberal political discourse, the revivalist response was also, and quite fundamentally for Marxist-socialist movements, an inevitable reaction to the authoritarianism that seemed inherent in an eschatological and scientific

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[31] Roy, *New Orientation* p.27. Also see Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.83-85. Furthermore, Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.132-133.

[32] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.127. Also see pp.126-141.. This misinterpretation is not to be laid at the feet of Marx and Engels, who were 'mostly concerned with analysing the capitalist society and finding out the dynamic of that society which would help the socialists to create out of capitalism a socialist society.' Narayan, *Ideological Problems of Socialism*, p.6.

[33] Narayan, *The Evolution Towards Sarvodaya*, p.14.

[34] Lenin's objections to an evolutionary movement of history towards communism were to an extent shared by Narayan, but the latter considered revolution as a totality of economic, political and social movements. Lenin understood revolution more as the only political strategy that responded the most effectively to exploitation, contrary to the reformist and more accommodating ideas of evolutionary Marxism, as for instance propagated by Bernstein. Refer to May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, pp.19-22.

[35] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.38.

Marxism.[36] In this context, the role of the state and the role of individualism acquired a renewed salience in Marxist critique. This is not to say that the resurgence of the language of individual rights and freedom from state totalitarianism was a uniform movement. While much of European critical Marxist critique often falls back on classical liberal notions of freedom and rights, Roy and Narayan can be distinguished from this line of thinking through their conceptions of freedom that cannot be narrowed down solely to a foundation of pre-political individual rights. Their ideas, although expressed in far simpler terms, in fact are better compared to thinker-activists like Raya Dunayesvskaya's expressions of freedom as development and not merely as the condition of autonomy.[37]

3.2 Liberty vs. the state and the collective

The domination of politics in the first half of the twentieth century by the aggressive pursuit of states' national interests effectively led to their characterisation as the main instruments of coercion and violence. Two world wars as well as the alliance of interests with an internationally active capitalist class bolstered the fundamentally negative image of the state[38] For Marxists in colonial countries, this notion acquired a particular salience when faced with the prospect of the creation of a 'free' nation state, i.e. to what extent is it possible to be free from state domination, especially in light of the collaboration between imperialism and nationalist bourgeois interests. In the Indian context of the post-independence era, the question of the state became a crucial one following the 'rolling back' of popular participation at the same time that parliamentary democracy, synonymous with bourgeois democracy, was established as the defining feature of the Indian polity.[39] This led to a fear of state totalitarianism insofar the source of dictatorship was perceived as being a centralist bureaucracy, a stance that was reinforced by the example of the Soviet state. Yet the position taken by the Indian left was remarkably ambiguous on this point. On the other hand, socialists in India decried state control yet at the same time accepted that the state could be an instrument of social change. As Sauvik Chakraverti comments, 'Indian socialism is better called statism.'[40] The state was thus accorded a moral-perfectionist role, leaving little room

[36] Aronson, *After Marxism*, p.91.
[37] Dunayevskaya, *The Power of Negativity. Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx.*
[38] For example, Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital.* Also, Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development.*
[39] Patnaik, *Democracy as a Site for Class-Struggle.*
[40] See Chakraverti, *Antidote: Essays against the Socialist Indian State.*

for ideas on the importance of negative liberty.[41] It was also accorded a planning role for achieving socio-economic equality.[42] Roy and Narayan though rejected this watering down of the role of the state and continued to view it as the prime perpetrator of injustice and violence.

Over time Marxist interpretations of the state have developed markedly from simple instrumentalist explanations of the state being an instrument of class domination to more nuanced views about its autonomy in relation to both society and dominant classes.[43] In Roy and Narayan's writings on the state, we find little evidence for a view of the state as purely an instrument of domination. Both credit the state with possessing a great deal of autonomy vis-à-vis society as well as its dominant classes, albeit providing different reasons and by extension, different solutions to the problem of the relationship between the state and freedom. In Narayan's case, state autonomy is perceived as state totalitarianism in that the state's functions are defined by its intrinsic interest to control territory and people. The only possible solution is therefore the total elimination of the state, invoking Marxism's ideal of a stateless society. Roy on the other hand conceived of the functions of the state to vary, according to its role in society and relative strength within society. According to Roy, the strength of a society relative to the state does not merely lie in the coercive power of the state, but also in society's own psychological constitution, which he described as being either strong/individualist or weak/collectivist. A state will therefore have dominant tendencies within a weak society, but can also be reduced to an administrative instrument when its political role is taken over by strong society, or when state and society are congruent.

Roy and Narayan can well be charged with over-simplifying the role of the state as well as its capacities to act autonomously. Despite the lack of a well-defined theory of the state in both cases, we maintain that Roy's depiction of the totalitarian threat to freedom posed by the state displays in some respects a far deeper understanding of its complexities than does Narayan's account. Roy's undeniably derogatory language of 'psychoses' in fact cloaks a concept of dictatorship not unlike Hannah Arendt's observations that much of the power wielded by a totalitarian system stems from its ability to gain the active participation of society. In other words, the organisational dimension of totalitarianism far outstrips the formal institutions of the state, which is *Narayan's* sole focus of critique. What follows is an outline of Narayan and Roy's call to revitalise the antithesis of totalitarianism, which is liberalism. Their work on

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[41] Sampurnanand, *Indian Socialism*. Lohia, *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*. Gadre and Gadre, *Indian Way to Socialism*. Rai Chowdhuri, *Leftist Movements in India, 1917-1947*. For a contemporary assessment, refer to Datta, *Beyond Socialism*.

[42] Arumugam, *Socialist Thought in India: The Contribution of Rammanohar Lohia*, Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India, 1919-47*.

liberal politics should therefore be interpreted not as an attempt to repudiate the Marxist project as a project of emancipation, but to exorcise State and Party dominance from its orthodox interpretations.

Narayan's ideas derived from a long tradition within socialist thought that strongly critiqued state socialism on account of it being inimical to freedom. One of the greatest influences on Marxists in India has been the European anarchist tradition, e.g. Owen, Kroptkin, and Bakunin.[44] As such, Narayan's belief in Marxism was predicated upon the connection of socialist ideals with Gandhism's anarchist and moral thought. In this respect, this position is of course not unique to Narayan, but is representative of self-consciously Gandhian inspired socialism. This type of socialism was seen as being very different from the Marxism of the Second International that was characterised as being Western-dominated and highly elitist.[45] The affinity between Gandhism and European anarchism rested on a highly negative assessment of *state* socialism and the shared concerns about the disempowered individual. Gandhi's concept of the state as an inherently violent entity was based on the state's soullessness. He concluded thereby that it was fundamentally unable to foster civic and personal virtue. Furthermore, the state lacks a connection with the 'masses', which is displayed in modern legislation – i.e. impersonal law making and also the attempt to organise the state on scientific rather than moral lines. For Gandhi, this meant that citizens were effectively emasculated and homogenised.[46]

Following the Gandhian brand of anarchism, what compelled socialists like Narayan was the idea of libertarian socialism that defined freedom as self-rule, as equality and as the absence of exploitation.[47] Hence, the 'rule of man by man', both economically and politically, was considered as being slavery.[48] As the state epitmosed the rule of man by man, state socialism was deemed by anarchists as far too reformist a concept within liberal politics. Even a socialist state, when in power, becomes amenable to exercising illegitimate forms of control

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[43] For an overview, see Barrow, *Critical Theories of the State: Marxist, Neo-Marxist, Post-Marxist*, pp.13-146.

[44] Dennis Dalton, 'The Ideology of Sarvodaya', in: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.277. Dalton traces this particular influence on Indian socialism back to the 19th century, and is to be found in especially Vivekananda's work. Nota bene: the term 'Western' anarchists, as used by Indian socialists, covers both western European as well as Russian thinkers.

[45] One of the most influential representatives of anarchist thought within Indian socialism has been Narendra Deva, far more than Narayan was. See for example Deva and Meherally, *Socialism and the National Revolution.*

[46] Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination*, pp.110-113. One could of course counter that a highly normative concept of the state can equally lead to an effect of homogenisation. This argument goes back to highly critical accounts of Plato's notion of the ideal polity.

[47] 'Anarchism' (Greek *ana-arche*, without-rule, was first used to describe the ideas of the libertarian socialists during the First International. Also see Martin, *Towards a Free Society*, p.59.

over individuals, who however best govern their own affairs at the grass-roots level.[49] For Narayan therefore, the danger of dictatorship emanating from state socialism was all too plain, as underlined by the Russian experiment with socialism. In this case, the ideals of socialism were established at the cost of democracy, i.e. by the restriction of 'fundamental rights' such as the 'freedoms of speech, expression, association and movement.' Narayan was severely critical of this dissociation of democracy and socialism and repeatedly claimed in his writings that this would end 'not in democratic socialism but in dictatorial communism.'[50]

In an equal denunciation of state power exerted by parliamentary democracies, he argued that the problems of control and repression were inherent in any political system that was naturally distant from the 'masses'. [51] The distance refers to both legitimacy and accountability of the political elites that quasi constituted the state. This concern is felt throughout his writings and reflects a fear that a formal democratic set-up may just as well end in the subjugation of the voting masses and the individual to the whims of the state (elites). Clearly Narayan omitted to address the pertinet question of the differences between political elites, political leadership, incumbents of government, and the nature of the state as such. But what we would like to note here is that Narayan did not compare one or the other political system as being more free *per se*; what he was keen to show is that neither system delivered his desired outcome of *socialism* as a free and equal system. Whether political elites are imposed on the population or are elected by them makes no difference as both societies essentially qualify as dictatorships. In so far, the Gandhian-anarchist critique that Narayan took on board applied to both alternatives that he considered significant.

Nonetheless, as a result of his experience of the weakening of the populist underpinnings of democracy in India, even under a formal-constitutional parliamentary system, Narayan's anarchist leanings were tempered by pragmatic judgements about the reality of state power. It became obvious to him that the 1970s would not usher in the era of a stateless society, which

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[48] Owen, *Anarchism Versus Socialism*, p.7.

[49] The diversity of literature left by anarchist thinkers is sizeable, but themes like the problem of state control and its negative impact on the individual encounter us continuously. For examples of anarchist literature that clearly state this problem, refer to Bakunin and Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchism*, Bakunin and Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, Kropotkin, *The Coming Revival of Socialism*, Kropotkin, *Socialism and Politics*, Owen, *Anarchism Versus Socialism*, Owen, *Anarchy Versus Socialism*. According to anarchist thought, grass-roots politics is possible because of man's natural goodness, which in practice is thwarted only by external control, especially by the state.

[50] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.37.

[51] Volumes 2 and 3 of his edited writings are of especial interest: Narayan, *India and Her Problems*, Narayan, *Politics in India*. It is not to be forgotten either that Narayan was jailed for some time in 1974/1975 during the Congress rule of Indira Gandhi. Hence, his *Prison Diary* is a very insightful commentary into his preoccupation with the weaknesses displayed by India's parliamentary

meant that he chose to align himself with the liberal-democratic system rather than with Soviet-style state socialism. In doing so, Narayan sought to at least weaken the extent of state interference by applying standard liberal arguments against state control, i.e. by using the language of individual and collective rights. However, this is not to say that his notion of rights corresponded to a liberal construction of rights as pre-political constants. Rather, rights were conceptualised as useful instruments or means that related directly to the end of total freedom. Hence, political liberty was considered as a complementary element of the socialist project, given the equation of means and ends. This will be dealt with in section 3.4. For now, it suffices to say that Narayan's view of a good social and political order included all the commonly known elements of a liberal democracy: 'full individual and civil liberty, cultural and religious freedom...equal rights for every citizen, no discrimination.'[52]

For Narayan, the concept of negative liberty was bolstered primarily in terms of political and civil liberties. Freedom from the state entailed the following elements of a liberal democracy: 'i) no one-party rule, (ii) full freedom for expression of opinion and to form voluntary organisations for political purposes. The trade union, the local communities, the cooperatives and other such corporate bodies of the working people might have their own newspapers and broadcasting systems and conduct their own schools and educational institutions, (iii) trade unions should not be limbs of the state and subservient to it, but exercising a check over the government of the day.' [53] In effect, this concern for the practical aspects of a liberal democracy was justified by arguing that both Marx and Lenin were aware that there would be 'no real socialism without the enlargement of our liberty and freedom, without complete democracy, hence socialism is incomplete without political liberty.'[54] The point made here is therefore not very different from arguments made in Marxist discourse, wherein liberty often refers to "bourgeois" liberty, which is necessary for the working classes to become free.

Roy made a similar point in contending that the revival of the democratic roots of Marxism involved something more fundamental than a return to parliamentarism. His 'a call for return to the tradition of Liberalism', was a reaction to 'the theory and practice of dictatorship.' Indeed, Roy felt that Marx's original ideas very naturally generated this about-turn towards liberalism, as 'Marxism is the outcome of Liberalism' and as such 'antithetical to any dictatorship.'[55] Roy consequently dismissed 'yet another *dogma of Marxism*, that the State is

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democracy, one that he considers to be corrupt and deeply anti-democratic in practice. See Kumar, *The Essential J P. The Philosophy and Prison Diary of Jayaprakash Narayan.*

[52] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.53-54.

[53] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.57-64.

[54] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.102-103.

[55] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.92.

an engine of coercion.'[56] It was not the state as such, but its abuse as an instrument of domination that separated the political system of communism from the original Marxist ideal. This abuse was possible due to liberalism's failure on two fronts. Roy believed that the failure of parliamentarism to become the fundamental institution of state control as well as the failure of the individualist doctrine of economic *laissez faire* ultimately eroded the faith in humanist-individualism. The result was the strengthening of collectivist ideologies that ostensibly contested the coercive powers of the state but effectively instrumentalised the same.[57] In the case of the Soviet Union, far from being a corrective to state power, the communist political elite used the state to further their aims and thereby became guilty of a dictatorial, rather than a legitimate and responsive rule. Roy thus believed to have recognised a threat to liberty that did not actually emanate directly from the state, which he termed the 'collective ego'. This echoes not only Arendt's critique of the *social* as well as political structures that constitute totalitarianism, but also resonates a post-Nazi attitude towards the problem of personal dictatorships that tried to explain the phenomenon by using 'objective' or behavioural psychology to draw a link between politics and public expressions of neurosis. Essentially, this was an attempt to forge a connection between the problem of authority in dictators and its effects on the collective, the antidote to which could only be the leadership by independent philosophers.[58]

Roy defined freedom as the right of individuals 'to choose how best each can unfold his or her creativeness and thus make the greatest contribution to common welfare and social progress.' While this seems to be a reiteration of T. H. Green's and others' classic definition of positive freedom, given Roy's notions of the primacy of the individual and his right to be free from state, religious or other forms of collective interference, it is clear that the concept of liberty is a central component of Roy's definition of freedom. The realisation of positive freedom therefore presupposes a citizenship that is conscious of their rights to be 'free from the influence of vested interests and also from the vagaries of the collective ego so very susceptible to demagogic appeals.' Thus, through their appropriation of a very broadly constructed notion of political and social liberty, citizens will become not only 'conscious of their sovereign right' but also enable them to exercise these rights.[59] Hence, Roy perceived Marxism as the fuller ideal of a good life to rest upon liberalism. Historically, liberalism emanated out the Renaissance, which signified the 'revolt of man' and the breakdown of the

[56] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.101. Italics added. This should make clear that Roy, as does Narayan, was keen to revive *Marx's* ideas rather than seek a source of regeneration within the existing dogma of Marxism after Marx.
[57] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.19-20.
[58] For a perspective from within Indian political thinking, refer to Schiff, *Politics and Psychosis*.
[59] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.167.

conventional structures of control through religious domination.[60] History's second watershed was humanist Marxism, according to Roy, but it had to be transcended because of its anti-liberal interpretation by communist movements. In the final step, Roy did not hesitate to put forward his own notion of the Humanist Way as the third watershed, a revival of the Marxian spirit beyond Marxism's theories and practice. Despite the finality of the language used, the Humanist Way however is *not* to be confused with an 'end of history' argument.

> 'The positive elements of Marxism, freed from its fallacies and clarified in the light of greater scientific knowledge, are consistent with a more comprehensive philosophy which can be called Integral or Radical Humanism: a philosophy which combines mechanistic cosmology, materialist metaphysics, secular rationalism, and rationalist ethics, to satisfy man's urge for freedom and quest for truth, and also to guide his future action in pursuit of the same ideals. Clearly visualised, the Marxian way blends into the Humanist way.'[61]

This blending has been accompanied in Roy's writings by a combination of the concepts of negative as well as positive liberty. However, we find vastly differing interpretations of his concept of freedom, which generally do not acknowledge the balance between the two that Roy attempted to depict. Reeta Sinha maintains that Roy's notion of freedom as the unfettering of all constraints only means that individuals are free to make substantive moral choices, i.e. 'the choice of duty.'[62] Yet the same argument has been used by others to propose a purely negative reading of Roy's concept of liberty, deploring that he offers very little by way of a positive idea of freedom.[63]

Sinha's argument, although one-sided, is tempting to commentators embedded in the ideas of the Hindu Renaissance in India, which propounded India's superior spiritual values over the materialist values of the (colonial) West. This position compares to the notion, which is only partly religious, that freedom is a moral state. The slavery of sin[64] is therefore to be preferred to civil and political slavery. This is not what Roy meant by freedom insofar his advocacy of

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[60] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.43, p.65.
[61] This was written in reference to the change of name of the magazine Roy edited from '*The Marxian Way*' to '*The Humanist Way.*' See Roy, 'The Humanist Way' In: *The Humanist Way*, Vol. IV, No. 1, 1949-1950. See Pal, *Selections from the Marxian Way and the Humanist Way. A Magazine Edited by M.N. Roy*, pp.268-269.
[62] Sinha, *Political Ideas of M. N. Roy*, pp.42-43.
[63] Khan, *M. N. Roy: Reason and Revolution in Politics*, p.417.
[64] Slavery to sin also denotes the lack of self-control, especially in the ancient Greek usage. See e.g. Foner, *The Meaning of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*, p.438. Foner remarks that this particular meaning of slavery is unfamiliar to us in the contemporary world. This proposition is not only debatable, but certainly does not hold true for much of the non-Western world, India being a very good example. The idea of self-government as ruling over the desires of the self was not unique to Gandhi, a key figure of a spiritualist attitude within politics, although the dissemination of this idea as a political force against colonial rule was.

moral 'principles' – easily interpreted as a deontological ethics – depended on the quest for the materialist basis of these principles and the mode of knowledge that leads us to understanding them as well as developing them. Civil and political slavery do not provide the conditions for developing these moral skills, as Roy knew from his experience of British rule. Yet, while Khan's case is more convincing, what we argue here is that neither view provides a conclusive argument about Roy's position. A fairer reading of Roy would be to incorporate both aspects of freedom – negative and positive liberty - albeit by qualifying his views on them. Hence the language of rights used by Roy is not to be viewed as a standard liberal argument. Roy does not argue for natural rights to civil liberties, which can be defended adequately through institutional mechanisms of checks and balances. Rather, the biological instinct to be free from control develops into a moral sense of rights – that it is right to be free.[65] Here we see a thick notion of rights, grounded in an ever-developing sense of morality. However, we cannot simply set aside the element of classical liberal concerns for liberty in Roy's thought. Roy's conception of liberty in conjunction with his conception of morality did not have a timeless and universal character, as we shall see in the following chapter. Yet, neither was it divorced from a *perennial* concern for freedom from oppression.

To summarise briefly, although there is some indication for a standard socialist conception of freedom as freedom from economic exploitation in Roy and Narayan's writings,[66] we have not discussed this particular aspect as their main concern for freedom stems decidedly from a libertarian socialist angle. We therefore emphasise their agenda of reviving the notion of political liberty within the Marxist tradition. Unlike some critics who associate Marxism's problematic relationship with freedom with the oppressive mode of a planned economy,[67] Roy and Narayan's thinking was decidedly more in line with contemporary propositions of strengthening *political and individual* liberty within Marxism. The debate following Mouffe and Laclau's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* has been remarkably effective in establishing this position.[68]

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[65] Roy points in particular to the failure of parliamentary democracy to prevent the overthrow of civil rights, as seen in the case of Hitler's democratic rise to power. See Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.161-162.
[66] Freedom from economic exploitation has of course anarchist roots too; see Kropotkin, *The Coming Revival of Socialism*. This tradition was continued notably by Fabianism, e.g. Laski, *Socialism and Freedom*. For examples in the primary sources, refer to Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.155-167. Furthermore, see Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.195-201, pp.216-223. Roy and Narayan should however be read in the light of Justin Schwartz's argument that freedom from exploitation according to Marx was about freedom as a good and not simply as the eradication of injustice, which carried the connotation of distribution. Refer to Schwartz, *What's Wrong with Exploitation?* , pp. 158-159.
[67] E.g. Citron, *The Manifesto of Freedom*.
[68] Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe. The Radical Democratic Imagery*, pp.6-41.

For our purposes it will be more important to conceptualise their thinking in relationship to Western critical and post-Marxism given the shared *general* interest in the issue of Marxism and freedom. Indeed, in Roy and Narayan this question took precedence over the *specific* interest in the political legitimacy of the Indian state and the project of nation building. Put differently, the concern of the Indian left for liberty in terms of rights and their institutionalisation within a system of parliamentary democracy to a large extent reflected the concern for the legitimacy of government in the newly independent Indian state. The notion of liberty in this context was framed not as a general-philosophical one but as a historical-political one. Post-independence Indian socialist thought notably correlated the issue of liberty with that of a free state, or a state free from external domination. The question of domination of course raised the question of the relationship between freedom and authenticity, thereby in part explaining the readiness by the Indian socialist movement to incorporate Gandhian ideas that purportedly complemented Marxism seamlessly.

As we see in K. M. Panikkar's *The State and the Citizen*, written in the context of India's colonial and post-colonial experience, although India's citizens shared a history of revolt against the state, for the purpose of nation-building the clamour for freedom from the state had to be transformed into an insight into the necessity of social obedience.[69] This insight could be accorded, Panikkar claimed optimistically, on the grounds that authentic self-rule dispenses with the idea of interference. Rather than paradoxically seeking liberty from political self-rule, society should in fact turn to the notion of positive freedom. In a twist of Gandhi's use of the term self-rule as *swaraj*, also the rule over the self,[70] the majority of Indian socialists echoed this conservative tone. Alternatively, the sense of self-determination was to be based less on the aspect of political autonomy and more on personal autonomy. Thus, the idea of active determination was supplanted by the idea of active subjugation to those principles that determine right thought and action. The overriding sentiment was that if a unifying nationalism was the reason cited for the disappearance of political conflict, the emphasis put on the moral-philosophical grounds of the unity of the Indian people stimulated consensus.[71]

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[69] Panikkar, *The State and the Citizen*, pp.2-10.

[70] Indira Rothermund, 'Gandhi's Satyagraha nad Hindu Thought.' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, pp.305-306`.

[71] For affirmations of this stance, see e.g. Gadre and Gadre, *Indian Way to Socialism*. Rai Chowdhuri, *Leftist Movements in India, 1917-1947*. For a critical commentary, refer to Joshi, *Marxism and Social Revolution in India and Other Essays*. Joshi also argues that the political interests of Marxists and socialists in India preceded the intellectual development of these ideologies, leading to very narrow conceptions of political issues, such as liberty.

The pivotal role of nationalism remained constant even after independence, especially in the context of the politics of development. Marxists and left-liberals alike sought to modernise society, with which nationalism was generally associated. Most accounts of nationalism, whether of the nationalist, left-liberal, or Marxist varieties, do not however pay enough importance to the particularly weak relationship between the modernising forces of nationalism and the majority of India's population.[72] Indeed, it was the gap between the liberal educated elites and the bulk of the 'backward' population that lent credibility to the ideas of social obedience on the part of the majority in deference to the knowledge of good governance and good laws displayed by the elites. This view effectively fostered the argument for a strong state that demonstrated its capacity to promote development as well as too accommodate a diverse range of interests.[73] That the gap between elites and citiznes was not bridged but was fostered is what left-liberal as well as Marxist accounts of nationalism had in common. Yet what Seth problematises in current theoretical approaches, was problematised by Roy and Narayan even in the midst of the political climate that supported this form of 'moderate nationalism.' In their case, despite their general perspective in favour of modernisation that requires the catalytic input of elites (see Chapter 5), nationalism stood for the selfish interest in political and economic power of the few that effectively instrumentalised the unreflected support of the many. Hence, they refuted that nationalism provided either a desirable ideological background to modernisation nor the necessary elites, i.e. who were disinterested and did not presume 'the nation included people unfitted for political rights', so that only educated elites represented them.

Given this highly emotive context of nationalism and freedom, or self-rule, in post-colonial India, it is all the more remarkable that Narayan and Roy felt that the restrictive notion of freedom as seen above would hinder rather than help the process of modernisation. Hence they believed that the aspect of negative liberty could only be neglected at the peril of subjecting the individual to the dominance of a collective, be it the state or an imagined community. Their approach to the problem of freedom can therefore be interpreted as a far more introspective, although not entirely academic approach. The argument was that self-rule could not dispense with liberty as a universal good, and was recognised as being such in Marxian thought. Seen in this light, we hold that Roy and Narayan's ideas on freedom in some vital ways parallel similar conceptions developed within Western Marxism, notably within *post*-Marxism. The political thought of liberal post-Marxists did not of course emanate out of an independent critique or even negation of Marxism's doctrines. 'Doctrinal dissent

[72] Seth, *Rewriting Histories of Nationalism: The Politics of "Moderate Nationalism" in India, 1870-1905*, p.107.
[73] Atul Kohli, 'Crisis of Governability' In: Kaviraj, *Politics in India.*

and interest in hybridisation', as Stuart Sim calls it, were well established within the classical Marxist tradition before the Laclau-Mouffe debate took off in the 1980s.[74] One of the major points of contention that defined points of dissent very explicitly was the very issue of freedom and the fear of totalitarianism.

In light of the practice of socialism as well as considerations of Marxism's theoretical foundations the following idea was formulated: even if the diminishing of freedom (freedom from interference by the state, party, dictatorship of the proletariat) is a grave problem affecting Marxism, freedom still has to be valued as a concrete rather than as an abstract good, as in fact it is the very basis for Marxism's normative pull. Although this point as such does not say very much about the status of *liberty* within Marxism, liberty becomes of greater importance with the acceptance of pluralism, not only of a pluralism of values that coexist alongside Marxism but also of pluralism within Marxism. This effects either a concession that some interests such as the interest of being free from interference precede political society or that interference with pluralist leanings suppresses the forces of supposition and opposition. According to Marxian thought, the latter is necessary for the dialectical process to lead to a state of emancipation that is meaningfully constructed, rather than conventionally agreed upon. The former view, which is a standard liberal argument for individual rights to liberty, holds truer for Roy and Narayan, but only in a qualified sense. They therefore remain situated in a Marxist understanding of negative freedom despite their professed distance from Marxism on account of its relation to totalitarianism and lack of liberty. As such, we argue that with regard to the issue of liberty they belong to the general tradition of heterodoxy informed by a desire to reconcile liberty and Marxism.

The attention given to the question of liberty is an integral part of the critical Marxist tradition, which is why we claim that Roy and Narayan were perhaps too hasty in formally distancing themselves from Marxism. What we are not examining is the truth content of Marxism's relation to liberty. We are simply claiming that this question was a highly important one for the purpose of Marxism's internal critique. It was furthermore a key factor that accounted for the resilience of Marxist thought in light of the commonplace critique of Marxism's abject failure to promote or protect the liberty of the citizens of the socialist bloc. The examples of critique and attempts at revision are many: Rosa Luxemburg's famous call for freedom of speech, the early Lucács' dissent from the predominant notion of party-and-class solidarity, the *socialisme ou barbarie* group's concern with autonomy as the precondition for a successful revolution, Marcuse's notions of liberation, Rudolf Bahro's concern for

[74] Sim, *Post-Marxism. An Intellectual History*, p.68.

emancipation from the party, the more sceptical Frankfurt School's critique of Marxism's problem with control, and of course more recently, Habermas's optimistic writings on liberty and the life world .

However, despite all intentions to argue for Marxism's necessary relationship with liberty, the concept of liberty did not actually succeed in subordinating the belief in a revolutionary class struggle to an interest in the question of individual rights. Yet for Roy and Narayan liberty, or the freedom from interference, was a fundamental part of political life and was effectively based on two notions – the primacy of the individual and the equation of means and ends. Rather than moving to the liberal end of the political spectrum however, Roy and Narayan remained closer to Marxist notions of liberty by continuing to deploy a contingent concept of rights. What follows is a conception of the prized individual and her rights that is different from standard interpretations of liberalism. This means that for Roy and Narayan, the equation of means and ends was crucial to their ideas on liberty on two grounds: firstly, as they were not able to draw on a liberal explanation of rights and secondly, as they had no trust in the orthodox Marxist road to the end of freedom.

3.3 The prized individual

This section will deal primarily with the status of the individual and compare the standard liberal notion with Roy and Narayan's naturalistic-materialist conception of human nature. We argue that confirming *primacy* to the individual, as Roy and Narayan did, is not the same as acceding *priority* to the individual, as liberals do. Roy and Narayan effectively argued that individual rights, e.g. to liberty, are constructed rather than existing ontologically. In other words, both Roy and Narayan accentuate the holistic nature of the world, but simultaneously accord primacy to the individual. For Roy, freedom is partly defined by the removal of constraints to the development of the individual. This enables the individual to become a sovereign self-determined individual from the original status of a dependent biological being. In effect, the reason given for the primacy of the individual is based on an account of the individual's relation to freedom. For the time being we shall ignore the language of positive freedom present in the following extract by highlighting the relevant section.

> '*The quest for freedom can be referred back to man's struggle for existence. It accounts for the triumph of man over nature in course of his efforts to satisfy his biological needs. It provides the basis for his constant search for knowledge, which enables him to be progressively free from the tyranny of natural phenomena, physical and social environments. The quest for freedom, therefore, is a continuation of the biological struggle for existence.* In modern society, an individual to be free must not only be able to enjoy economic sufficiency

> and security, but also live in a psychological atmosphere, free of cultural regimentation, helpful to the development of his intellectual and other human potentialities. Progressive attainment of freedom in this wide sense by the individuals composing society should provide the criterion for judging the merits of social organisation. Guided by the dictum of ancient wisdom that man is the measure of everything, the philosophy of the future should proclaim that the merit of any pattern of social organisation or political institution is to be judged by the actual measure of freedom it affords to the individual.'[75]

Two implications for reading Roy are made clear - the centrality of the individual and the importance of liberty, which are to be read against the background of Roy's fear of totalitarianism. His materialist-holistic approach to human nature meant that the pre-eminence given to individuals had to be derived from a source other than an extraneous source granting priority[76] or an internal epistemic source within individuals that grants them a status of hierarchical difference from the surrounding world.[77] To make either point is to claim that individuals are conceived as innately *a priori*. What Roy did was to base the primacy of the individual as a biological being in the individual's capacity and insight into the necessity to break free from all manner of constraints.[78] Roy's evolutionary model of freedom was therefore predicated on the individual's success rather than on the success of the species. Positing a Hobbesian pre-social state of nature is of course susceptible to the similar critique that this notion is axiomatic rather than logical and could certainly be considered a weakness in Roy's thought. This is to say that it is not quite clear why the drive for freedom is inherently individualistic rather than social.

Roy therefore postulated that it is not the masses, but man who is the maker of history. According to him, freedom cannot exist in a collective locus, such as 'the State or the Nation or a Class'. Roy rejected this notion thoroughly and held rather ambitiously that he wanted to 'revive the old philosophy of freedom to purify politics...and contribute to the solution of the crisis.' What does this revival then consist of? Roy maintained that his was neither a new theory nor a new solution to the problem. His claim was that his brand of political thought was a pertinent, and for the 20th century significant extension of an ancient line of thought that was concerned with the freedom of the individual. He thus claimed of his 'new philosophy' that 'its basic principle is that man is the measure of all things. We judge the merit of any social order by the freedom it gives to it individual members...As a matter of fact it is a very

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[75] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, pp.471-472. Also refer to Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.98.

[76] Contract theorists like Locke built heavily on the idea of individual self-ownership given by God. This idea has its origins in much of the medieval debates on ownership and the self, propounded for instance by John of Paris, to whom Locke directly refers.

[77] In a broad sense, this refers to not only the capacity of reason in order to ascertain one's position in the world, but also to feelings and desires relating to oneself.

[78] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.146-149.

old philosophy. All prophets of human freedom, in all ages, were inspired by this philosophy which places man in the centre of the world.'[79]

Roy made it amply clear that the freedom of society is a function of individual freedom and *not vice versa* as only 'that society which gives the greatest measure of freedom to the individual, is the freest society.'[80] Roy's apprehensions were directed towards a notion of collective freedom, which was closely linked to rejection of the notions of collective or group interest. Group interests therefore cannot be recognised through responsibility, as seen below. The social for Roy is therefore a static and non-responsive entity. This paved the way, in his theory on radical democracy, for a rejection of a conception of a *volonté général* in favour of a theory of a *volonté de tous*. Politics would thus be rid of the problem of the collective ego, which tends to define itself not only through inclusion but also through the exclusion of other groups.[81] On a wider scale we can see Roy's dislike of setting boundaries around a common interest extend into a deep antipathy towards nationalism. In short, any form of group movement, even independence movements, is seen to presuppose a collective mentality, or a collective ego. But for Roy, the actual problem is not that groups form but the reason for which they form, i.e. whether to secure liberty for the group or for the individual. Society/community/the collective are therefore significant only insofar they contribute to individual freedom or restrict it.

> 'I conceive conscience as awareness of social responsibility. The sense of social responsibility does not necessarily run counter to individual freedom. On the contrary, it can easily be shown how it results from the urge for freedom. The struggle for existence, in the form of that urge in human beings, led to the foundation of society. Unless the relation was deliberately distorted, means should not defeat the end. Founded with the purpose of enabling its constituents to pursue the urge for freedom more successfully, society should not be an instrument for the suppression of freedom.'[82]

Roy thus wanted to ground the concept of individual liberty in the concrete circumstances of the biological evolution of the individual. The concept of freedom is neither conventional nor ideational, but natural. Freedom is therefore neither a metaphysical category nor is it a

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[79] Roy, 'The Two Psychoses' In: M. N. Roy, 1946, *New Orientation*, p. 27.
[80] Roy, 'Lessons of Contemporary History' In: M. N. Roy, 1946, *New Orientation*, p. 103.
[81] The problem of inclusionary vs. exclusionary practices as part of pluralist democratic politics is not a new problem in political theory. It extends into the present century, presenting some important implications for theorists working on issues such as multiculturalism. See Tanesini, *In Search of Community: Mouffe, Wittgenstein and Cavell.*
[82] Roy, 'Materialism and Orthodox Marxism' In: M.N.Roy, 1947, *Beyond Communism*, p. 46.

construct, but reflects the sheer necessity of survival in the first instance.[83] By extension, individual liberty does not exist as a right *per se* but has to be constructed out of the struggle for freedom. As the nature of the struggle for freedom changes, so will the nature of the rights that are invoked in order to protect individual liberty.

For Roy, rights are essential insofar they preserve the instrumental nature of society, rather than representing a comprehensive set of *a priori* interests of individuals, which are deemed inviolable and self-legitimising. Liberty involves the struggle to emancipate oneself from obstructing forces that hinder individuals' potentials for living the creative life. This drive is instinctive and rooted in human nature. However, these instincts can only be utilised through the idea and the practice of rights. Rights are thus instruments of this struggle through time and are as such subject to deep changes in content, scope and use. While the focus on the individual as the prime subject of evolutionary progress seems a liberal notion, Roy's concept of rights shows that he still retains key Marxist elements in his thinking, raising the pertinent question as to the accuracy of his self-assessment as having turned his back on all but Marx's original principles and intentions. While the concern for freedom is undoubtedly a classical Marxian position, Marxism too had retained an interest in the question of liberty. However, Roy does not dwell on the subject of rights very much and as such, his arguments have not been highlighted in the secondary literature on his writings at all. We consider this to be a mistake, not merely as this challenges Roy's political self-perception, but also because it conceals one of his more convincing challenges to the liberal state.

Roy's interest in the issue of rights was raised by the question of the source of rights in relation to the ownership of rights. For Roy, the former can be used to wrest the *de facto* ownership of rights from individuals who, being the primary focus of Roy's political theory, are thereby deprived of their capability for self-government and also of their capability to resist interference. Roy argued that the question of source or origin of rights is a meaningless issue for the individual. The focus should be on the 'ownership' of rights, which is however never an abstract undertaking, but is rather accorded by the exercise of rights.[84] Hence, the right to be free from interference can never be accorded by formal means such as constitutional guarantees or social contracts. If rights are not exercised, they cannot be accorded to individuals and therefore cannot be formalised as inviolable principles. This is to

[83] Roy then maintains that this is merely the negative sense of freedom, which can become only freedom in the wider sense when 'the struggle for existence takes place with purposiveness. See Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.30.

protect the abuse of rights by primarily the 'National State', which by conflating questions of ownership and source merely transforms rights into rhetoric. More importantly, when the rhetoric of rights is upheld by state power, establishing the practice of exercising rights becomes impossible. Liberty, or the sphere of resistance, is thus fundamentally undermined. Even in liberal-democratic states, liberty is a problem as these states ostensibly derive their sovereignty and therefore their power from the sovereignty of the citizens.[85] We hope that this will serve to deepen an understanding of the background to Roy's call for radical democracy also as a method of empowerment. In this sense, radical democracy is not only an instrument of realising the creative life, or realising positive freedom, but is also a practice of the right to be free from state interference.

Narayan's concept of the prized individual resembled Roy's idea very closely on a superficial level. However, while Roy consistently stressed the primacy of the individual from a biological-evolutionary perspective, Narayan's holistic attitude towards the state of the world was tempered while ascertaining the individual's position within the world. The special status that was conferred upon individuals was not directly attributable to individuals' place in nature, as Roy had argued. Rather, it rested on the relationship between individuals and the social world. Narayan's ideas were gleaned from the anarchist critique of socialism that conceived of state power as being intrinsically antithetical to individual freedom. Anarchist thought traditionally emphasised the primacy of the individual, hence Narayan's interpretation of anarchist individualism meant that despite his calls for guided social change in the direction of egalitarianism, the freedom of the individual remains paramount and is not to be compromised by other considerations. As individuals are to be guided solely by their own voluntary actions, what this means is that the only legitimate restraints on individual freedom are natural social laws, but not constraints posed by individual or collective wills that subjugate the individual to artificial states of domination. In effect, this notion quite fundamentally informed the actual influence of anarchism on socialist thought in India.[86] Voluntary and therefore free actions of the individual, informed by a belief in the goodness of man, were to be the basis of post-colonial politics.

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[84] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.95-96. It seems that Roy tried to differentiate the concept of 'right' as a legalistic notion that is bound up with the idea of the state from the concept of 'rights' that have a naturalistic notion and are defined contra the state.

[85] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism* p.96. Roy is particularly keen to distinguish the language of 'deriving rights' as a state-centred activity, from the language of 'delegating rights' as a people or individual-centred activity. The delegation of rights is supposed to retain the element of practice whereas the derivation of rights tends to be a purely theoretical and self-serving exercise in legitimising state power.

[86] Eric Hobsbawm contends, on the other hand, that the appeal of anarchism in Western thought is less intellectual than emotive. The use of anarchism is therefore most likely to be practical, not theoretical,

Despite sharing the Marxist ideal of egalitarian, non-institutionalised governance, Narayan believed to have gone beyond Marx and become a Gandhian socialist for two reasons. Firstly, Marxism was guilty of failing to recognise the value of morality in politics. One of the biggest problems in the construction of a socialist state, he argued, was the lack of socialist ethics. This was due to the neglect of the moral dimension in Marxist theory on the one hand, and the weakness of human nature on the other hand, an argument reminiscent of Augustine's Divided Will. [87] Narayan believed that socialists should therefore neglect neither the individual (as had happened in Soviet Russia) nor the environment (as the Buddhist way of life proclaims), but that 'both must be changed so that within the right social environment the individual functions as a disciplined human being able to subjugate his own ambitions and desires to the social good.'[88] In what sense can this be called an individualistic position and why is negative liberty of importance to Narayan?

Although sympathetic to the egalitarian outcome of the anarchist self-ownership thesis that rejects inequality as being antithetical to freedom, Narayan retained a discontent with this argument. This can only be understood in light of his theory that the outcome of a *Total Revolution* has to go beyond mere political and socio-economic change. Not trusting human nature as it is to *naturally* know its *summum bonum*, Narayan did not believe that natural self-organisation will lead to his ideal of socialism as 'a form of society in which the material needs of every individual are satisfied and also in which the individual is a cultured and civilised being, is free and brave, kind and generous.'[89] Nor could a strong self-interested state be trusted to prioritise the development of the individual, as the aim was not to create socialist institutions but 'socialist man.'[90] The following chapter on positive freedom will enable us to explore this idea in greater detail. The purpose of this chapter is in part to establish the priority accorded to the individual over and above institutional development and economic reorganisation and thus re-interpret Narayan's notion of freedom. In light of similar considerations made in the wake of internal debates and critique in the Western Marxist tradition, we hold that far from having distanced himself from Marxism, Narayan in fact retained some key individualistic elements of a Marxian conception of freedom, rather than having wholly discarded Marxism in favour of a Gandhian-influenced idea of the priority of the individual.

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and mainly as an ideal that can give rise to sporadic political spontaneity. Hobsbawm, *Marxism and Anarchism: Are They Compatible?* .

[87] Speech delivered at the Asian Socialist Conference at Rangoon on January 6, 1953. In: Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.152-153.

[88] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.153.

[89] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.96.

[90] Narayan, *Politics in India*, p.268.

The difference between Gandhian social-individualism and Marxist collectivism had been widely emphasised even within the Indian Marxist tradition and Narayan posed no exception.[91] The communist model in particular 'presents a distorted picture of human and social development. It strikes at the very root of man, by denying the primacy of his spirit and by deliberately suppressing it. By glorifying power and authority, as represented by the party and the state, and by making everyone and everything subservient to them, it makes society a vast prison house for the human spirit.' Opposing this rather bleak picture of the world was Gandhi, who placed man and 'his material, mental and moral well-being and growth' at the centre of society.[92] For Gandhi, the meaning of liberty as non-interference was tied up to a far thicker notion, i.e. liberty is 'to obey our own will rather than that of others.'[93] This idea has been stressed by many commentators to demonstrate the cultural as well as the perfectionist perspective of Gandhism. Narayan's ideas too resound with these notions, some of which seem rather contradictory. On the one hand the liberty enjoyed by individuals is of paramount importance and takes precedence over considerations of economic redistribution, and over common aims held by a community or of collective interests. On the other hand, similarly to Roy, Narayan seems to have held an evolutionary perspective of rights and freedom. Commentators, such as Dennis Dalton, defend the *liberal* Narayan against those who wish to see in his writings a rationalisation of political dictatorship, and claims that for Narayan, individual freedom was of extreme importance.[94]

While Dalton has a point, we would like to modify his argument somewhat. It is true that Narayan upheld the idea of individualism and individual liberty as a partly self-explanatory concept, but it is equally clear that for Narayan the presence of a strong coercive state, even a liberal-democratic state, *necessitates* the concept of liberty. The idea of liberty as a necessary good is thus strengthened, even as Narayan's long-term vision of a stateless society means that negative liberty has in effect a limited function. In other words, it is of perennial importance as an instrument of empowerment vis-à-vis diverse manifestations of totalitarianism but remains of limited value as a measure of protection against the state. The specific historical background to Narayan's concern for a foundational interpretation of

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[91] Mukherjee, *Gandhian Thought, Marxist Interpretation*, pp.46-47.
[92] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.211.
[93] Gandhi, *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi. Non-Violent Resistance and Social Transformation*, p.223.
[94] Dennis Dalton, 'The Ideology of Sarvodaya: concepts of politics and power in Indian political thought' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, pp.293-294. Also see Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.137-138, pp.149-150. A vital part of his argument is though that the value placed on the individual is not to be confused with an acknowledgment of individuals' self-interest. Indeed, Narayan blames the modern state, or the true Leviathan, to be at the heart of the problem that has transformed Enlightenment's emancipated individual into 'the alienated, anxiety-filled, morally insecure, lonely individual.' See Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.191.

liberty is to be found in a letter to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in which he exhorted her to give up the course of abrogating fundamental rights, even in a situation of political emergency, and to make sure that changes in government, accompanied by varying degrees of commitment to liberty, did not actually affect the fundamental right of citizens to be free from a dictatorship.[95] Narayan's concerns were formulated in the impending shadows of the state of Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi from 1975 to 1977. Although the state of Emergency had wide-reaching implications for society in India, its most significant political implications can be summarised as the self-extension of Parliament's term and the jailing of opposition leaders while constitutional changes were under way.

Within the framework of a democratic system, Narayan held that political rights such as the right to resist state authority and the right to elect state authority were 'priceless civic rights', which establish every individual as a sovereign in his own right.[96] At the same time, it cannot be disputed that for Narayan, liberty had a primarily instrumental character, rather than a foundational one. First of all, Narayan made clear in the same passage that liberal-democracy was not the only possible answer to totalitarianism or even to the reconciliation of the individual and the social. He wrote that India's experience of democracy had to rather be of an experimental nature. Secondly, in establishing the primacy of the individual in terms of inviolable rights Narayan believed that these rights be used as stepping stones towards the creation of a socialist new man. In other words, socialism 'cannot be achieved by state power...(because) a system of laws cannot lead to a system of genuine socialism, of social reconstruction.'[97] So the presence of rights in society say very little about the nature of society, Narayan correctly surmised. This observation also links to his argument that rights based on individual self-interest do not lead to positive social change.[98] Our concern here however is to understand the meaning of negative liberty for Narayan. As an instrument of controlling state power it was crucial, and in view of Narayan's belief that state power can be overcome in favour of a superior system of radical democracy, it was contingent.

[95] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, pp.40-42. There is an abundance of literature on India's brush with dictatorship after independence. For a few first-hand accounts, see Nayar, *The Judgement: Inside Story of the Emergency in India.* Henderson, *Experiment with Untruth: India under Emergency.*
[96] Narayan, *Politics in India*, pp.251-253.
[97] Narayan, *Politics in India*, p.268.

3.4. Liberty as a means

Roy and Narayan had both approached the issue of freedom by postulating the primacy of the individual over other considerations, but also by recognising liberty as being an instrumental rather than a purely foundational concept. The historical background of totalitarianism explains their reasons for instituting the idea of liberty as a fundamental protection against the outrages committed by the state (freedom from state-perpetrated violence), as well as the means of formalising radical democracy (freedom from any form of government apart from self-government). Despite the overtones of critical Marxism that this position has, one of the reasons for emphasising the instrumental nature of liberty and rights is however *not* connected to a Marxist conception of liberty and rights as contingent and to be dialectically resolved in history. Where they do differ from orthodox as well as critical accounts of Marxism is their notion equating means and ends. This idea took shape within their empirically determined critique of Marxism's acceptance of illiberal means of social change, and specifically for Narayan, within his increasing support of the Gandhian notion of harmonisation of means and ends.

Essentially, what we would like to stress here is that they were mistaken in claiming a unique status as post-*Marxists* by prioritising the notion of freedom above that of revolution. Firstly, the notion of instrumental liberty is one that is central to Marxist thought. However, they certainly go beyond the Marxism of their time in revising this notion. An indication of their attempts to differentiate themselves from both Marxism and its instrumental concept of liberty as well as classical liberalism and its foundational concept of liberty is to use both notions. By seeking to situate liberty's foundational value in the equation of means and ends they end up not as liberals nor as Marxists, but as thinkers who have tried to transcend the given paradigms of instrumentality and foundationalism by viewing both as the flipsides of the same coin. Hence, to expand on interpretations of Roy and Narayan, especially Dalton's work on Narayan, we maintain that the equation of means and end actually serves to underline the equivalence, though not priority, of negative liberty in relation to positive freedom. Against Marxism they argued that means were made subservient to the end of the communist state, but *contra* liberal positions, negative liberty is not accorded a value purely of its own. It will always be seen as a category in conjunction with positive freedom.

Disturbingly for many, in Narayan's writings we are confronted with an overtly moral tone that attempts to show why means and ends cannot and should not be separated. Marxism in

[98] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.171.

practice has proven to be a failure, according to Narayan, whereas dialectical materialism does not prove the necessity or even desirability of moral actions.[99] According to Narayan, 'Russian or Stalinist interpretation of socialist philosophy has reduced it to crass machiavellian code of conduct utterly devoid of any sense of right and wrong, good or evil. The end justifies the means and when the end is power...there is no limits to the depth to which the means will sink to secure the objective.'[100] This is to say that the single-minded pursuit of certain ends lead to the neglect of the issue of means, often to the effect that morally undesirable means are chosen. Yet what Narayan did not critique, as opposed to Roy, is that even the implementation of a 'good' aim, which is for instance not power but a just society, could lead to the picking of means that are not necessarily 'good' either. In fact, Narayan's conclusions would actually lead us to believe that were the ends morally desirable, the means to those ends would be desirable too.

This is of course not what Narayan intended to argue. He was in effect arguing two points, one being the danger of justification. The problem of immoral means arises when there is an attempt to justify them, rather than arriving at the appropriate means using moral intuition. Secondly, if means are not justified but are integral to the goal, a good end (such as the Marxist ideal of a good society) will not have to be discarded on grounds of the means that are so to say externally chosen. This argument is, in Narayan's case, heavily dependent on his hopes that ends will generally be formulated as moral ends, leading to means being formulated on equally moral grounds.[101] Criticising Russia's 'derailed train of progress' towards socialism, Narayan held that the crucial point of departure from socialism was the Soviet Union's increasing preoccupation with 'narrow national patriotism' because only when 'we are clear about our ideals...we will consider what instruments will take us to this goal.'[102]

The later Gandhian Narayan shifted the emphasis of this relationship to put the onus on means *as* ends, thereby refusing to draw a blueprint for future society.[103] What remains of this integral relationship between means and ends is the surety that the goal will resemble the means. To what extent, cannot be predicted. Indeed, far from becoming utopian, Narayan

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[99] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.97-98. Note that the interfering qualities of the state, when coercive, are considered as being immoral. By inversion, respecting the right to liberty is a moral act.
[100] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.147.
[101] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.95-99. Also see Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.135. Here, Narayan uses an organiscist argument, citing a Hindi proverb that one cannot expect to plant a thorn tree and reap mangoes. In other words, for a successful relationship between ends and means to come about, ends grow out of means naturally, rather than means being applied to bring about unconnected ends.
[102] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.138.
[103] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.214.

displays pragmatism in focusing on the means that are in fact more easily controlled than the vague notion of ends. This is to say that the focus on ends alone make the search for appropriate means difficult. On the other hand, a focus on good instruments of social change, such as non-violence, or egalitarianism, makes it reasonable to assume a good outcome. It is through this relationship that we have to view Narayan's focus on liberty as a means to the end of freedom. Thus, the historical and contingent factor of liberty as an instrument of politics is intertwined with a liberal foundationalism, which is however an *expected* rather than axiomatic category.

Roy's own concerns about means and ends go back to a criticism of the idealism that underlies the disjuncture of the two. His concept of the equation of means and ends differed from Narayan's concept in that he offered less a normative account, and more an explanatory account, which at times is however confusingly obscured by the use of normative language as well. He wrote in one of many passages on means and ends that

> 'The revolutionary philosophers of our time have discarded Idealism. But curiously enough, they are the worst idealists. The ideal society, according to them, is a distinct thing; the new social order of equality and justice belongs to a more or less remote future determined by a variety of factors and forces. They themselves can only be instruments; and through the instrumentality of these prophets of the new ideal, first, a preliminary new order should be created; then, that political order will impose certain structural changes in society by dictatorial means all in the name of the ultimate ideal. As this process necessarily leads to the obstruction of the development of the human personality, and hence of human freedom, of the freedom of action and even the freedom of thought, it defeats its own ends and can never lead to freedom. There is a contradiction between means and ends. We are now living the means...(but) the means become interminable, and bad means are justified by the dictum that ends justify means. Consequently, by pursuing the ideal of a good society with dubious means which perpetuate themselves, we end by creating a bad society.'[104]

Roy tried to sustain this argument by basing his 'new humanist' version of materialist philosophy on determinism, and not teleology. Roy's concept of monist materialism led him to argue that there is always a relation of causality to be observed in the material world, which applies equally to the realm of ideas, as ideas qua bio-chemical processes in fact originate out of the law-governed universe. Hence, from Roy's interpretation of means as causes it follows that means cannot ever be divorced from their intended and unintended consequences as they

[104] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.151.

are obedient to natural laws of cause and effect.[105] Thus, there is no third factor or invisible hand in bridging the gap between the means and the end. In other words, as Roy said, there is no difference between means and ends. A better way of putting it would be that there is no difference in the *status* of the two, but that there is a difference in the functions they fulfil. Negative liberty is very much an answer to the question of the limits to freedom and the source of the limits, whereas the question of positive freedom is directed towards the direction of individual and/or social development. Given that Roy considered the limitless and unconstrained development of the latter to be the proper direction of social development, the latter is of equal importance in ensuring that there is indeed no interference to be feared from any source in society. While Roy's position here sounds completely utopian, it has to be modified by reading it in the context of his thoughts on human development. The emphasis placed on the individual's relationship with the physical world means that the individual develops over time, in accordance with the state of knowledge at his disposal. These are acceptable limits and enable development. Unacceptable limits and hence to be done away with in full are the limits imposed by the unquestioning acceptance of scientific and normative propositions as the permanent status quo.

A good example is the issue of rights, which are means rather than ends. As we have seen, rights are constructed rather than discovered and serve a function of utility instead of being a higher-order concept. For instance, for both Roy and Narayan, private property rights do not fall under the category of fundamental rights to realise one's potential. So the rights to private property bestowed upon individuals by the state are not legitimate means as the desired end of property is to function as a social institution, or a shared good.[106] While political liberty is a fundamental right that serves the end of self-government, which is an innate desire in every human being, economic liberty is not a fundamental right. It is a shared good and it is also subject to historically contingent ideals of e.g. efficiency, fairness and the like. Given that the existence and development of these ideas depend on the concrete state of knowledge at a certain time and place, there are acceptable limits to property rights. Self-government and freedom from interference though are limited only in the forms of realisation over time but never in terms of content. The link to Marxism in this case seems to be unbroken yet again.

What is clear though is that both Roy and Narayan, with the aid of the means-end equation, tried to distance themselves from especially Marxism's 'dirty hands.'[107] Lukes refers to 'dirty

[105] Fourth thesis of the Principles of Radical Democracy. In: Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.211. Also, Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.92-94.
[106] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, pp.36-37.
[107] Steven Lukes, 'Marxism and Dirty Hands' In: Paul, *Marxism and Liberalism*, p.204.

hands' as the inextricable link between Marxism and its hand in social and political injustices, in the violation of rights, and its 'resort to impermissible means in the present.'[108] Especially the latter phrase underlines the instrumental, rather than foundational, nature of liberty. At the same time, Roy and Narayan argued that the link between instruments and ends is close enough for both to be equally significant. The outcome of state totalitarianism due to Marxism's avoidance of this issue was enough to substantiate the importance of this equation. This issue was furthermore key to the differentiation of Indian Marxists from the Indian communist movement for which a social revolution could only be successful with the use of violence. By contrast, Roy and Narayan argued for the use of the peaceful means of strengthening the idea and practice of liberty in order to be a legitimate instrument against the state.[109]

Whereas Narayan mostly argued this from a moral vantage point and followed Gandhian precepts of universal morality, Roy attempted to depict the actual ontological impossibility of a rift between the two.[110] As such, although framed in what Lukes criticises as an unhelpful and confusing expression of 'means' and 'ends', their answer was aimed at removing the issue of commensurability from this question. In this sense they both departed from Marxian concepts of means and ends: Narayan did so because he hoped to show that from the point of view of universal morality, means and ends are inseparable. Roy argued that it is ontologically impossible to separate the two, giving almost greater credence to the means that determine the outcome rather than to the end. Especially in the case of utopian thinking, the focus on 'ends' has no obvious connection to the means except for serving as a justification for the implementation of certain means.

Concluding remarks

'Freedom is the supreme value, from which all human values are derived.'[111]

We can now say what Roy and Narayan's concept of liberty entailed and what it did not. In effect it entailed a two-dimensional notion of liberty – a foundational dimension that postulated liberty and corresponding fundamental rights as given, as well as an instrumental dinension of liberty that took into account changes in the meaning of liberty over time, which

[108] Steven Lukes, 'Marxism and Dirty Hands' In: Paul, *Marxism and Liberalism*, p.212.
[109] See Singh, *Communist and Socialist Movement in India: A Critical Account.*
[110] Roy, *Materialism. An Outline of the History of Scientific Thought*, pp.233-242.
[111] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.11.

were dependent on social and historical circumstances. These dual concerns were borne out of a deep fear of 20th century state totalitarianism on the one hand, and an evolutionary reading of history on the other hand. Hence, we can comfortably assert that Roy and Narayan touched on some vital elements that characterise critical Marxism's ideas – the concern for individual liberty and the often ambiguous take on rights. What liberty did *not* entail was a deepening of the democratic methods of *class* struggle against the class rule of the state. Nor did it entail an unqualified acceptance of post-modern notions of difference and pluralism. Roy and Narayan's intentions were to make a strong case for individual liberty as a guarantee of non-interference by mainly the state. Given that the radical democratic strand of Western post-Marxism have accepted the notion of the state as a possible mediator within a pluralist society, where there is no single solution to the good life, Roy and Narayan's ideas in this respect had retained much of a Marxist sub-tone, but with a difference. What we are left with is a curious mix of a Marxist diachronic outlook on liberty as means and a notion of a synchronic objective or fundamental notion. Hence we agree with David Selbourne that at the very least, their approaches to the problems of their time and our time are better seen as multileveled rather than contradictory, speaking volumes of the challenges facing Indian Marxism post independence.[112] In their approach to the question of liberty, we see just how much Roy and Narayan retained Marxist categories of thought but also how they sought to go beyond both Marxism's instrumentalism and liberalism's foundationalism.

[112] David Selbourne, 'A Political Morality Re-examined' In: Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.193.

Chapter 4

The Ideals of Emancipation

From the language of liberty we now turn our attention to the language of norms and guidelines embedded in Roy and Narayan's concepts of freedom. Joseph Cropsey writes that while the *condition* of socialist man is freedom from coercion, the *animus* is not freedom but some state of the soul that correlates to a peculiar and peculiar kind of freedom. By this Cropsey means the freedom of human beings to live with 'others' in society with the consciousness that there is no conflict between them. The category of freedom enjoyed by socialist man is therefore not a self-interested, atomised kind of freedom but a fraternal kind of freedom of sociality.[1] In arguing that it is for this reason that democracy (requiring the former type of freedom) and Marxian socialism (requiring the latter type) are incompatible, Cropsey is wrong to say that the role of liberty in Marxian socialism can be reduced to that of a condition, only granting a positive conception of freedom the meaning-conferring status of animus. As we have seen in the previous chapter, for Marxian socialists such as Roy and Narayan, liberty or freedom from coercion is more than just a condition. Its significance is not only equivalent to that of a positive conception of freedom, being the means to an end, but is also based on a fundamentally liberal notion of the primacy of individuals.

Yet Cropsey is also right in making a crucial distinction between the animus of liberal freedom that is based on self-preservation and the animus of a Marxist conception of freedom that goes far beyond that and is instead based on carving out the moral and political choices for individuals embedded in uncompromising nature and exploitative structures of social life. The Marxist idea of freedom offers something far more expansive than a statement of individual liberty. However, the notion of the animus of socialist free man as 'a species of affectionate sociality' can be criticised for a one-sided view that posits the individual against the social group. Thus, for Narayan fraternal sociality is as natural as self-interest, whereas for Roy sociality is an artificial condition created to enhance the capacity for the self to be free.[2] In especially this case, Roy's conception of society can be compared to Unger's notion of the radical artificiality of society and its functions. To view positive freedom as a humanitarian ideal relating to the fraternal and paternal perceptions of human nature and negative liberty as

[1] Joseph Cropsey, 'Compatibility of Democracy and Marxian socialism' In: Paul, *Marxism and Liberalism*, pp.13-14.
[2] Unger, *False Necessity. Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy.*

an ideal relating to competitive selves is to undermine the importance that positive freedom is supposed to have *for* the self. As such, the problem is not rightly framed as individuality against sociality but should be framed around the respective meanings and political implications of liberty and positive freedom.

Roy and Narayan did not believe that the principle of liberty and the political implications of self-government resolved the quest for total freedom, i.e. the freedom of human beings from constraints both social and natural, but also as the driving force of historical and social developments. Their writings speak volumes of their desires, longings and hopes for the creation of a good society. In our opinion though, commentators have placed far too much emphasis on their notions of a 'good' society and too little on their confidence in the aspects of possibility and creativity that radical politics enables. We hope to rectify this within this project by focusing more on the latter and wish to show that there are in fact two sides to their concepts of positive freedom. Thus, Roy and Narayan stand between Marxism and post-Marxism, a position that involves some vacillation, some paradoxes, and for their readers, some confusion.

We argue that on the one hand they remained embedded in a Marxist conception of freedom as the realm of self-realisation under the condition of mutual recognition of subjectivity.[3] On the other hand they tried to distance themselves from this conception by questioning its inevitability. Not merely in terms of teleology, as is often cited, but in terms of its positive content, raising the post-Marxist spectres of indeterminacy and fluidity of history, society and the individual. It is true that it would be fallacious to ascribe a comprehensively positive content to Marx's notion of freedom, but there are indeed some important givens in his thought – the making of history after capitalism, the idea of a new society free from structures of exploitation and the notion of the free individual.

For Roy and Narayan, possibility is deeply enmeshed with creativity and works in two ways. Creativity involves the setting out of the possible by searching for new modes of organisation, norms, and human nature itself. Thus, creativity is the positive statement about the possibility of innovation regarding the character of society, historical processes as well as regarding its own nature. For Roy and Narayan, growing insights into the natural sciences as well as the discovery and appropriation of moral behaviour constituted the two most important factors that express individual possibility and acts of creativity. However it also involves a traditional

[3] Snart, *Mill and Marx: Individual Liberty and the Roads to Freedom*, p.158.

reiteration of human control of their place and role in history and society.[4] In this sense, there is both an elevation of the individual's possibilities with regard to not only its external and internal environment as well as an insight into the individual's or a society's limits in terms of choice.[5] The uncovering of possibilities and the acts of creativity are thereby caught between a hope of *exploring* the unbound and unknown nature of the world, including the human world, and the hope in the possibility of *judging* what is good and right among a limited number of options and in line with what is known about human nature.

To be sure, much of the one-sided interpretation of Roy and Narayan as the moral voices of an originally humanist Marxism that degenerated into a determinist, non-ethical ideology stems from their expositions of the ideas of Total Revolution and of Radical Humanism. This reading of Roy and Narayan using their own language is accurate to some degree – it claims a historical possibility of the creation of a new kind of liberal and enlightened world society. This perfectionist model of politics requires the members of the good society to possess both knowledge and virtue based on universal reason. Nonetheless, to read Roy and Narayan solely in this light and to limit the understanding of their self-professed rejection of Marxism to a conservative moralistic view of society would fail to do them justice and quite importantly, would fail to track some of the possibilities that were open to the Indian Left after Independence. A more detailed account of their ideas of course extends the scope for criticising these as inconsistent and somewhat confused. This we choose to reject as Roy and Narayan's ideas reflected less paradoxical turns than a growing sensitivity to shifts in the interpretations of the nature of the world *as it is*, raising pertinent question of how it *should and could be*. Thus, in a departure from Marxism's promise of a reconciliation of individual and society and the highest degree of freedom that this could offer to the individual, we find that Roy and Narayan also seemed sceptical of the possibility of such an end of history. Indeed, their concept of an experiential-experimental politics of radical democracy brought with it a degree of openness to the historical process that can well be seen to undermine the faith in its natural progress. What this means is that a good society cannot be conclusively and comprehensively defined anymore but remains of an unknown quality. Knowledge and virtue

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[4] Also see Tinder, *Political Thinking. The Perennial Questions*, pp.208-211. Tinder argues that orthodox Marxism leaves very little room for human control of history, but qualifies his argument by stating that 'sophisticated Marxists', including Marx, avoided using the factor of economic determinism as an invariable law.

[5] This is important for the purpose of differentiating 'post'-modern terms of indeterminacy and fluidity. The former really touches the aspect of openness of outcome and of possibility. This means that the question of creativity can be posed as the concentration of efforts to control and shape possible and desirable outcomes. Fluidity on the other hand, means that situations and essences are in a state of flux, thereby rendering a concentration of power over situations and essences impossible and the aspect of control out of the question. In this respect, fluidity can be as impotent a concept as that of over-determinism, a charge commonly levelled against orthodox Marxism.

become factors of experience and experiment, thereby shifting the goalposts for a 'good' society quite fundamentally.

The tension in their work is thus laid out by firstly, acknowledging that through reason we would be able to construct a good society, and secondly, by the belief in the open-endedness of freedom. As mentioned, it is clear that Roy and Narayan had contributed in part to a one-dimensional interpretation of their work by shying away from the disturbing prospect of moral and political relativism through a moral language, albeit as a corrective and not as a basis for politics. Thus, a return to some form of universalism does take place, but to a qualified one, and one that looks more like cosmopolitan ideals of ever-expanding realms of moral awareness.[6] While the problem of expanding awareness and mediation is now seen as an integral part of solving the darker problems of globalisation, such as fundamentalism, strivings for hegemony, economic inequalities, for Roy and Narayan this was also a way to 'achieve the world.' While pure introspection that focuses on subjectivity carries the danger of becoming unrelated to the wider world, under the conditions of pluralism, Roy and Narayan believed that a moral component had to be added through dialogue and a common *search* for moral truths as much as for scientific truths.

4. 1 The idea of freedom in Total Revolution

> 'Freedom, with the passing of the years, has transcended the mere freedom of my country and embraced freedom of man everywhere and from every sort of trammel – above all, it meant freedom of the human personality, freedom of the mind, freedom of the spirit. This freedom has become a passion of life and I shall not see it compromised for bread, for power, for security, for prosperity, for the glory of the State or for anything else.'[7]

Narayan's commitment to freedom is a pervasive theme in his writings and is best expressed in his idea of Total Revolution, which he tried to systematically formulate in 1976/77, after the upheavals of India's Emergency Movement. Given the wide ramifications of the Emergency that transcended the political, it comes as no surprise that Narayan's counter-attack consisted of the concept of a 'total' revolution. As such, Narayan was able to make the perfectionist argument that his emancipatory ideal was not only about a political ideal, but also about the moral, economic, intellectual and societal future of India.

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[6] This notion ties in quite well with the now familiar criticisms of the some of the consequences of a global world. Cf. Dallmayr, *Achieving Our World. Toward a Global and Plural Democracy.*

[7] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.ix.

> 'The total revolution, which is to be brought about by peaceful means, will embrace all aspects of individual and social life...The economy and polity will have to go through a revolutionary change. In short, society as a whole or in the totality of all its social relations, institutions and processes will have to undergo a change. Change can be for better or worse. I am obviously speaking of the change that will improve the quality of life and make man more human.'[8]

This ideal has of course been formulated numerous times in the history of political thought and is therefore not an original idea – it is the increasing self-government of individuals as morally competent members of society.[9] Freedom is therefore the sphere of self-determined moral actions that designate the 'humanisation' of individuals. Because the implications of this ideal seem clear, the biggest hurdle in forging a clearer understanding of Narayan is overcoming the temptation to read him solely as a traditional moralist. On the other hand, a Rousseauian interpretation of Narayan is rather limited in that it cannot be extricated from the connotations of a general will that carry the seeds of anti-individualism within it. As we will see, this is what accounts for a crucial difference between Narayan's vision and that of a Rousseauian social order.

Narayan explained that a total revolution is a combination of seven main revolutions, which in turn may be subdivided into more or less revolutions.[10] The main revolutions he sees as necessary for the thriving of a democratic polity are social, economic, spiritual, cultural, ideological or intellectual, and educational.[11] The actual number or what these sub revolutions entail need not concern us here. Rather, we are concerned with the idea that a revolution can only be expressed as a totality and that the success of a revolution will depend on the simultaneous success of all sub revolutions. The failure of the cultural revolution, for instance, would logically compromise the 'total' experience of a social revolution. In effect, neither can sub revolutions be discrete events, nor the Total Revolution. So the maxim that the whole is greater than its parts does not hold true for Narayan.

More to the point, what Narayan's Total Revolution offers is the state of total freedom, which is a condition that applies to all spheres of life, hence the emphasis on total revolution. Political freedom without freedom from economic exploitation would thereby be rendered impossible, as would any other discrepancy. Only then can one conceive of why Narayan

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[8] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.183.
[9] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.48, pp.193-196.
[10] Economic revolutions can be subdivided into industrial, agricultural, technological revolutions. This is merely one example that Narayan names to keep his scheme more flexible, but also more concrete.
[11] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.192.

posited the Total Revolution as a genuine alternative to the oppressive systems of parliamentary democracy and Stalinist-type communism. Both these systems initiated social change, and indeed stemmed from progressive movements. Yet given their stress on narrower aspects of politics where the sub spheres of human activity were not *equally* valued, Narayan did not believe that his vision of a truly socialist society could be realised through either model. Consequently, he voiced his scepticism of creating geographical pockets of socialism, a strategy pursued by the Chinese Communist Party.[12] Nor did he believe that pockets of socialism could be created in institutions such as industries, schools and others. This, however, is to be differentiated from his arguments for microcosmical local politics and is more a reflection of his concerns that socialism is often instituted in a top-down manner, and only within certain structures.

It is therefore important that we distinguish Narayan's notion of total revolution as a *totalising experience* from the more obvious interpretation of total revolution as a historical promise. The latter notion seems to support the orthodox Marxist notion of an end of the history of antagonism, but we hold that its Marxist foundations are actually weakened. Firstly, by the rejection of the promise of freedom grounded in a radical change of the base of society, and only later in its superstructure. Considering all spheres of human activity to be of equal significance, Narayan held that there is no difference between the base and a superstructure. Secondly, his emphasis was placed more on experience and experiment rather than relying on a narrative of dialectical struggle and an ultimately successful revolution. However, following our two-dimensional way of reading Narayan, we do see the vacillations of a reflective Marxist – entertaining hopes for a definite end of social and other conflict in a state of total freedom, but also expressing doubt about this very aim.

4.2 The idea of freedom in Radical Humanism

Roy too considered freedom as the *leitmotif* of his political theorising and his political activism, being the primary value to which all other values were subordinated. According to Roy, freedom is the maximum scope for choice available to individuals.[13] This is however not conceptualised solely as the choice one has between given goods or variables, but is better expressed as 'will'. Beyond negative liberty, which is the struggle for existence and emancipation from the forces of both nature and society, Roy committed himself to the idea that the reason for this struggle lies in the individual's potential for unlimited development –

[12] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.73.
[13] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.78.

'to be better, more developed, more articulate human beings.'[14] But human (near) perfection is not an end in itself, rather, the Promethean content of Roy's conception of freedom lies in the conscious effort of individuals to make history and mould society according to their own ideas. Freedom is the central category that enables an understanding of the concepts of history, civilisation and development. Hence, choice *qua* will to engage in recreating history and society is not just about the maximisation of personal autonomy. For Roy, choice was also linked to a thicker conception of freedom insofar he adhered to the idea of the universality of some values, foremost being the value of creativity. It is clear then that what defines 'history', 'civilisation' and 'development' is not merely a question of subjective preference but is also dependent on meaning given to these terms, i.e. as reflections of individual will put to appropriate use.

The freedom accorded by choice in Roy is thus three-fold: it is a condition of liberty (as seen in the previous chapter), it is a state of affairs (relating to a 'free' society wherein the value of freedom is recognised, as are other values associated with the Enlightenment, such as reason and rational morality), and finally, it is an open process of creativity. The dynamics of these three concepts are what often render his accounts of freedom seemingly contradictory, but once they are separated conceptually, Roy's arguments for 'choice' become far more accessible.

Roy's concept of freedom is best encapsulated in his emancipatory ideal of Radical Humanism, formulated as '22 Theses on Radical Democracy' in 1946. Unlike Narayan, who equated socialism with the realm of freedom, Roy perceived socialism or communism as means to help achieve a state of freedom, but that were in the end to be rejected on grounds of growing experience regarding the feasibility of socialism and the prospect of better alternatives.[15] Roy's ideal of freedom as a state of affairs resounds with notions deriving from the European Enlightenment – freedom as the possibility of the autonomous creation of a society of reasonable and cooperative individuals.[16] Indeed, Roy claimed that Radical Humanism was not his brainchild but that it was a much needed modern Renaissance, the old Renaissance having failed in its promise to emancipate the individual in having turned towards collectivist sentiments of liberation as substitutes for the old power of religion. While Roy especially attacked the concept of the nationalistic state, he also maintained that the imagination and the creation of various forms of societies – individualistic, communitarian,

[14] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.98-99.
[15] Thesis 8: Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p. 107.
[16] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.110.

mercantilist, capitalist, socialist – merely served to enslave the actual subject of freedom, namely the individual.[17]

Reeta Sinha argues that despite the well-known claims reminiscent of traditional humanism, Roy's humanism is somewhat different in that it is borne out of a specific historical context, i.e. out of the large-scale efforts at social engineering through the attempted implementation of democratic, socialist and communist philosophies.[18] Roy claimed that his intention was to 'rectify' politics by adding to the modern scientific dimension an understanding of morality as the basis for politics. The basis of individual sovereignty was the capacity for autonomous moral behaviour, which was being undermined by a blind faith in institutional and collectivist solutions. Instead of upholding individual sovereignty, as they were designed to do, they effectively weakened it, as these institutional solutions became ends in their own right rather than the means to enhance individual autonomy. Against parliamentary democracy, as well as against dictatorship, neither of which offered a useful measure of freedom to the individual, Roy proposed his 'third alternative' – the philosophy of Radicalism. Similarly to Narayan's conception of Total Revolution, Roy presented his concept as both a better guide to freedom but also as a holistic experiment to the extent that his system was seen to be indeterminately useful as a *framework* for ordering society, but that by definition left the *content* open to debate and experience.[19] Here we see the tension inherent in Roy's concept of freedom again – between a definitive idea of the value of freedom as an end and the indefinite idea of the work freedom does in producing new structures that constitute society, new ideas that constitute the state of knowledge and new developments that mould history.

In other words, any constructed system of thought or any constructed society, will and should be malleable to individuals' wills and desires. Roy based this idea heavily on biological materialism and argued that barring the individual, no other entity that can be reduced to the individual has any claim to ontological independence, let alone priority. Therefore, 'the central idea...is that political philosophy must start from the basic idea, that the individual is prior to society, and that freedom can be enjoyed only by individuals. A political philosophy which cannot guarantee individual freedom, or cannot think of freedom in that sense, is bound to be misleading.'[20] In talking about the freedom, Roy first of all referred to the struggle of man to conquer nature. Roy thereby tried to locate freedom in the difference between 'mechanical adaptations' for the purpose of mere survival and 'purposive efforts for the

[17] Sinha, *Political Ideas of M. N. Roy*, p.64.
[18] Sinha, *Political Ideas of M. N. Roy*, p.65.
[19] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.76.
[20] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.88.

conquest of nature.'[21] Here we re-encounter the spirit of modern man, 'the assertive, disengaged self, generating distance from the background (tradition, embodiment) and foreground (external nature, other subjects) in the name of accelerating mastery of them.'[22]

This may seem an odd position to take for a monist materialist who firmly held that man himself is an evolutionary product of nature. But we should view this through Roy's scientific inclination and holistic vision of freedom, which entails *shaping* social and political structures by *conquering* them through revolution. Roy does not state anywhere that conquest is the subjugation of either physical or social forces to the will of man. Instead he offers a vision of conquest as the reshaping of society and the use of natural laws in full consciousness of the integral nature of the world, i.e. by 'embracing the totality of existence, nature, life and society.'[23]

While the expression 'conquest' is a complex and loaded term, often denoting relationships of domination, in Roy we find it to be used only in conjunction with self-realisation that frees man, a natural being, from natural constraints as well as from 'superhuman powers' and 'metaphysical sanctions.'[24] Freedom is thereby manifested in the development of the individual from a dependent biological species to a sovereign self-determinant individual. The purpose of conquest on the one hand is the outcome of enhancing the individual's sovereignty. On the other hand, it is also the act of conquering that is important to Roy as a reflection of individual will and ability. Therefore, for all of Roy's accentuation on the holistic nature of the world, he accords primacy to the individual. As such, the holistic nature of the world is formally given through the general recognition of interdependence but can only be fleshed out in its specific contents through individual effort.

Thus far, neither Roy nor Narayan's ideals of freedom yield innovative ideas or particularly subversive ideas or even workable ideas. Where our interest lies however is how they review Marxism as a compelling ideology of freedom and subsequently offer alternative solutions for a different kind of political system. Here, we look at how they expected to realise their ideas of freedom as creativity by going beyond one of the most persuasive ideologies of the time that seemed superior to either a totalitarian or a *laissez-faire* liberal order. Interestingly, what freedom does in Roy and Narayan's work is to not only open up the possibility of transcending the old, but is self-reflectively applied to those ideas that enable the same. This

[21] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, p.482.
[22] White, *Weak Ontology and Liberal Political Reflection*, p.503.
[23] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, p.488.
[24] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, p.489.

holds true especially for Roy and thus makes him the more challenging, though lesser known, thinker. We now turn to their notions of Marxism: as the foundational spirit, as an ideology to be rejected and as an ideology to be fruitfully transcended, i.e. as the instrument of change that can only function when it is turned into a new form of viewing and organising society.

4.3 Marxism revisited?

Although both Roy and Narayan professed to have rejected Marxism as a viable ideology of individual and social emancipation, the grounds on which they did so were complex, and so, their rejection was not as complete and absolute as seems to be in their own writings as well as in the interpretations of their commentators. Roy laid bare his debt to Marxism in acknowledging that despite his differences with Marxist philosophy, he considered Marxist politics to be the 'ideal', by which he meant the politics of revolution or social change.[25] Dissatisfied with the negative political effects of Marxist orthodoxy, Roy looked back towards Marx, not Marx-ism, as one of the key moments in the history of freedom that had emanated out of the philosophies of classical humanism and liberalism.[26] Marx's main contribution, according to Roy, was his exhortation in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach to 'remake the world', which Roy interpreted as an attempt of rational-ethical individuals to strive for an ever greater measure of freedom.[27] At the same time, Marxism was recognised by Roy not so much as a static foundational principle of emancipation, but as a principle of freedom that, in emanating out of history, had to be a dynamic one. The relationship to Marxism was thus more than an acknowledgement of genealogy. Unfortunately, the aspect of practicing Marx's idea of freedom that takes place by the new subverting the old, and thus to be applied to the ideology itself, has not been emphasised enough with regard to Roy. As such, for the purposes of constructing a political agenda of revolution, Marx's ideas are indeed a unique point of departure, according to Roy.[28] Note, departure means going towards a destination as much as it means the turning away, and it also implies a method of departure.

Unlike Roy, who viewed history as the creation of universally rational and ethical individuals, Narayan's sense of the realism of geographical context, which contrasted with his normative ideal of moral universalism, led him to look to Marx in a solely functional way. That is, just as Roy viewed Marx as a proactive voice of revolution rather than the objective and distanced

[25] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.25.
[26] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.43.
[27] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.64.
[28] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.25-26.

interpreter of revolutions, Narayan believed that Marx's emancipatory ideal, which he equated with his own notion of socialism, constituted a worthy *cause* that *perfected* the striving of the Indian people for freedom. However, Marxism, as 'a surer and quicker road to freedom through the science of revolution' did not encapsulate the specific realities of the situation of colonial and of newly independent states, e.g. the demographics, the reinventing of the cultural background, the nationalistic demand for unity rather than antagonism. Hence, Marx's claims to freedom were to be used as a normative ideal and as such as a more abstract point of departure. The actual science of revolution had to be of a more experimental nature, given the peculiarities of the different contexts it was to be applied to.

In the sense that Roy and Narayan laid claim to be continuing the work of emancipation in the spirit of Marx, Marxism was indeed the most decisive site of departure for their ideals. This point is significant when reviewing their case for the rejection of Marxism as false orthodoxy of subsequent Marxist theorists. Referring to the Socialist Party in India, which he ultimately left, only to rejoin politics in the late 1970s, Narayan wrote that while its roots are Indian, 'it was also shaped by international socialist thought and the experience of socialist reconstruction in Europe.'[29] This element of internationalism is a less acknowledged factor in reading Roy and Narayan, but it has led to an over-emphasis on the cultural-geographical reasons for their rejection of Marxism rather than a search for signs of a system immanent critique. As a result, some important aspects of their post-Marxism, which effectively constitute the more interesting part of their work and which they share with European critical and ex-Marxists, remain obscured.

What follows is the question as to why they both chose to reject Marxism as an ideology of freedom, given their commitment to Marx's original contribution to the cause of human emancipation. Furthermore, why did they believe that a system immanent critique was not worth pursuing, seemingly choosing instead to reject Marxism in favour of 'alternatives'? What we are not examining is the accuracy or validity of Roy and Narayan's respective takes on Marxism. Rather, what we wish to examine is the way they view and use Marxism. In the wake of theories of 'clashes of civilisations' and of often antagonistic meetings between Orient and Occident, we believe that their arguments carried some weight, which could be of interest to the current thinking on the left. Not only because their thought involved a constructive notion of a dynamic Marxism, but also because of the foresight they displayed in terms of anticipating at least the *idea* of movements - of those with new but forceful political voices – which is generally associated with the fallout of critical thinking in general.

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[29] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.66.

We find two very broad responses to Marxism's emancipatory ideal by Roy and Narayan. On the one hand we find the language of the search for alternatives through rejection of Marxism, implying that it had outlived its use as a force for social change. On the other hand, Roy and Narayan did preserve their Marxist roots by claiming to apply its essential spirit to a future that would be borne out of, but not characterised by the ideology itself. Marxism was not to be a static body of thought, but one that typified the spirit of inquiry, revolution and even reform. It is this view of Marxism, eschewing ideas of completeness and finality, which provided a fertile ground for alternative solutions to realising a free society. Hence the rejection of Marxism should also be seen as the beginnings of Roy and Narayan's notions of the development of Marx's ideas beyond Marxism.

A substantial part of the modern scientific spirit is reflected in its empirical methodology. Both Roy and Narayan argued that many of the socio-economic and political circumstances under which Marx formulated his theories no longer held true. This relates to the growing power of states,[30] the relative strength of democratic forces as opposed to the forces of capitalism/imperialism,[31] and the growing strength of a politically emancipated middle class as opposed to the weakness of the proletarian class.[32] In making these assertions, Roy and Narayan clearly had taken on an internationalist view of the world rather then merely one informed by the specific case of India's socio-political changes. Marxism has therefore not run its course as an *alien* system but as a spatially *universal* ideological system that has encountered different forms of reality across time. In short, Marx's worldview differed quite substantially from the way Roy, Narayan and others viewed it. However, the dissonance does not matter. The Marxism of the age of capitalism without democracy, of the age of industrialisation and the age of single answers to universal and perennial questions was over. In a new age its principles of scientific inquiry and social pioneering could be well applicable to create a new world. Hence what we see in Roy and Narayan is an expression of faith in Marxism as an *open* system of thought, 'capable of enriching itself continuously with the lessons of new experience.'[33] Can this be read as a call for pragmatic politics? Roy and Narayan however reject the notion of political pragmatism, 'which is another name for political practice without any principle, that is opportunism.'[34]

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[30] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.35.
[31] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.49-51.
[32] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.46, pp.146-147. Also, Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.27-29, p.42.
[33] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.64.
[34] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.64.

The fear of politics without principles carries dominant overtones in their writings and is indeed one of the main reasons for subsequent interpreters of Roy and Narayan to read them as anti-Marxists, rather than post-Marxists. Of course, this issue is central to their accounts of the reasons for rejecting Marxism. While the first response regarding the changing of conditions had effected a positive outlook on Marxism in general, Roy and Narayan also looked at which *type* of Marxism was to be rejected and why? Narayan argued that Marxism was in fact a plurality of Marxisms and as such, there were a multiplicity of paths to socialism.[35] While Roy did not make a similar case explicitly, focusing instead on Marxism's inherent openness, both converged in the issue of the dangers of so-called orthodox Marxism. It is thus from the pervasiveness of the case against what they termed orthodox Marxism that Roy and Narayan did not attempt a rehabilitation of Marx's original ideal of human emancipation through the means of a system immanent critique, opting instead for a closure on Marxism as an ideology that lacked the moral principles associated with humanism and individualism.

The tension between the spirit of Marxism, its undesirable political and moral manifestations, and its role in the regeneration of future societies led to a search for alternatives that promised to realise the ideal of human emancipation and creativity in a better way. For Narayan the alternative was Gandhian socialism, whereas for Roy, whose criticism of Gandhi never failed to feature in his diatribes against India's fascist-nationalist menace,[36] the alternative lay in his version of radical humanism.

4.4 Narayan's objections to Marxism

Within the history of Indian Marxism, it is hard to underestimate the influence of Gandhi on its evolution and on the self-perception of Indian Marxist-socialists.[37] Indeed, The reception of Gandhian ideas triggered the shift from using the term 'Marxist' to a preference for the term 'socialist' that broadly denoted the retention of the Marxist vision for a post-capitalist society as the departure point for one's politics, but coupled with Gandhi's political and

[35] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.40-41, p.71.

[36] A good example of Roy's arguments *contra* the nationalist-spiritualist claim to India's unique trajectory in world history can be found in Roy, *Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary: India's Message*, pp.62-113. Roy believed this claim to be a core failing of Gandhism.

[37] For historical reviews and commentaries on the importance of Gandhism on Indian socialism, see Ghose, *Socialism, Democracy, and Nationalism in India.* Nanda, *Socialism in India.* Shah, *Marxism. Gandhism. Stalinism.* Rao, *Indian Socialism. Retrospect and Prospect.* Rai Chowdhuri, *Leftist Movements in India, 1917-1947.* Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India, 1919-47.* Lohia, *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism.* Datta, *Beyond Socialism.*

philosophical ideas. On the most basic level, Indian Marxists voiced their dissatisfaction with Marxism's perceived a-morality, or indifference to questions relating to moral concerns.[38] The consensus was that indifference more often than not spawned im-morality, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Given the political success of Gandhi's peaceful and purportedly moral means of *satyagraha* and its ability to unite the masses in a common political cause, it seemed but a natural conclusion that Marxism's success too would eventually have to rest on the foundations of virtue and self-discipline displayed by the masses. To this, Gandhi was an answer, but importantly, an authentically *Indian* answer to India's particular problems.[39] In other words, the person, the message and the authenticity of both seemed to exacerbate the problem of Marxism as an empty ideology in the context of India.

Furthermore, on the institutional or party political level, India's proponents of Gandhian Marxism regrouped as 'true socialists' in an effort to distance the movement from the Indian *communist* movement. It was firstly argued that the communist party was too Western-oriented. In many polemical accounts the party was perceived as a puppet of the Soviet CP and therefore lacked the legitimacy to speak for the Indian socialist cause. Secondly, its leadership was seen as being dictatorial because communism was generally equated with the politics of Lenin that sought to control events via a vanguard party.[40] Hence, there was a fear of the totalitarian effects that an elite party with a strong leadership could have on India's nationalist base - because of the communist party's condoning of violent methods of revolution, its internationalist bias and its links with a strong Soviet state. For Indian socialists however, the abstract notion of a world revolution could only be formulated as the less abstract task of building a socialist nation state.

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[38] This is not to say that the moral language of 'should' and 'ought' is not used, but that it is used in a purely instrumental sense for the satisfaction of preferences. Cf. Fishkin, *Beyond Subjective Morality: Ethical Reasoning and Political Philosophy*, pp.43-45.

[39] Gandhi's pervasive influence is often attributed to his folklorist interpretations of popular themes in Hindu thought, in itself a vastly diverse body of literature, thought and religious attitudes. To draw the lines from traditional Hindu thought to Gandhi's reworking of them is beyond the scope of this project. For some overviews, see Brown, *The Content of Cultural Continuity in India*, pp.430-432. On the sacred quality of truth, Nandy, *The Culture of Indian Politics: A Stock Taking*, pp.65-66. on monism in politics as creating a balance among disharmonies, Nandy, *The Culture of Indian Politics: A Stock Taking*, pp.67-68. on the centrality of *dharma* or duty, Nandy, *The Culture of Indian Politics: A Stock Taking*, pp.70-72. on the suppression of desires, Nandy, *The Culture of Indian Politics: A Stock Taking*, pp.72-74. on the diversification and plurality of ethical systems.

[40] Singh, *Communist and Socialist Movement in India: A Critical Account*. Bhasin, *Socialism in India*. Limaye and Fernandes, *Socialist - Communist Interaction in India*. Sampurnanand, *Indian Socialism*. Incidentally, the reception of Marxism as communism in India was rooted in the Second International, with M. N. Roy being a major player in transmitting its proceedings to Marxist movements in India.

Narayan claimed that for this purpose, Gandhism was a far better option than Marxism as it developed under Lenin. Indeed, it is vital that we view Narayan's perception of Marxism as a version, albeit being internally plural, of Marxian thought. For Narayan, Marxism gained pre-eminence in different ways: in his biography, as an ideology promoting social justice and harmony, and in this case, as the basis of a formal party system that controlled the politics of the powerful and influential Soviet state. The identification of the Leninist Marxism with the Soviet state and in turn, the identification of the state with Marxism as one of the dominating ideologies of the time is crucial to understanding Narayan's reasons for rejecting Marxism. The blurring of the distinction between Marxian thought and orthodox Marxism is common and Narayan too was guilty of not always explicitly differentiating the different usages found in his writings. Through the inconsistencies we actually see two different solutions to the question of Marxism as an instrument of realising socialism's emancipatory ideals – rejection as well as transcending the terms of its ideology by perfecting it with Gandhism.

> 'The old Socialist Party had started under a strong influence of Leninist Marxism. But it had slowly travelled towards Gandhism. It did so when it gave up its faith in dictatorship (even as a transitional phase) when it asserted that socialism could not exist without democracy; when it came to believe that decentralisation of economic and political power was essential for democracy; when it decided that good ends could not be achieved through evil means; when it accepted, at least in words, satyagraha as a revolutionary weapon.'[41]

Using a Gandhian framework of social criticism, Narayan, like many socialists, came to the conclusion that Marxism's core aspects were indeed inimical to freedom. Firstly, Marxism's critique of capitalism seemed flawed in that the critique incorporated the idea of capitalism and the attendant political system of bourgeois representative democracy being an inevitable stage in history and a dialectical truth. Consequently, the rejection of this notion meant rejecting Marxism's idea that contradictions, e.g. between material benefits and exploitation, had to be pushed to the extreme in order for social change to take place. Freedom for Gandhi did not mean the satiation of material desires but the freedom *from* material desires. Like Gandhi, Narayan viewed capitalist modernisation as a regressive and wholly unnecessary stage, to which alternatives *could* be found. Given India's predominantly agricultural economy, it seemed natural to look towards the village system as the foundation for a use economy rather than an exchange economy. The self-sustaining village system furthermore offered the alternative of grass roots politics to the system of a parliamentary democracy, for

[41] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.159.

many a specifically bourgeois form of self-rule.[42] For Gandhi, the non-antagonistic relations inherent in grass-roots politics enabled the agents of social change allowed them to be properly free.

Consequently, for Indian socialists like Narayan a vital change of ideology involved the marginalisation of the urbanised proletariat as the main agent of social change in favour of an agricultural base of political agency. Given India's demographics, this effectively translated into a concern for the greater role of the 'masses'. Their role was to be decisive without being extremist, compared to the role of the revolutionary proletariat. This opened another apparent contradiction between Gandhism and Marxism, namely in the relation between the 'is' and the 'ought'. Although both Marxists and Gandhians rejected what we term 'greedy individualism' that is associated with capitalism, Marxism tries to resolve this problem in history through positing a dialectics of science and revolutionary praxis, or the 'is' and the 'ought'. Gandhi on the other hand maintained that the 'ought' determines the 'is', or that the 'is' is fashioned by the practice of 'ought'. The neglect of the 'ought' that Gandhians saw in Marxism as a scientific philosophy of social change led them to argue that Marxism can at its best be only a-moral, if not im-moral. This leads to the justification of violent revolutions, the upshot being a form of dictatorship and therefore a loss of freedom. In short, Gandhism, being more in line with India's popular cultural and philosophical tendencies, seemed to offer a far more acceptable solution to four major aspects of Marxism. These were Marxist scienticism, its inherent a-moralism leading to potentially violent revolutionary methods, and a limited base of revolutionary agents.

Hence Gandhism was seen by the Indian left as a credible alternative to Marxism, which was perceived as a limiting ideology and one with aspirations to dominance not unlike the experience of imperialist colonialism. Critically, this take on Gandhian thought reflects Radhika Desai's argument that Gandhian thought has solely particularist outcomes, disabling genuine dialogue between so-called East and West, tradition and modernity.[43] Sadly, as noted by Desai, while scrutinising the Indian case one is dealing with 'a nation particularly disfavoured with national exceptionalism in scholarship both within and outside it.' Desai takes note of this in her study on neo-Gandhism in particular, which was a peculiar form of the Indian brand of socialism in the *inter-bellum* and *post-bellum* period. The main focus of

[42] Madan Handa, 'The Elements of a Gandhian Social Theory.' In: Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.37-38.
[43] Desai, *Culturalism and the Contemporary Right: Indian Bourgeoisie and the Political Hindutva*, p.699.

her attack is the construction of Gandhian thought as being totally independent of the influences of the Enlightenment, and hence, she contends,

> '[T] he neo-Gandhians can now drape this fig-leaf of the irrelevance of the enlightenment and of 'western' discourse in general to their intellectual efforts over the vast fleshy bulk of their derivations from anti-enlightenment postmodernism and post-structuralism as well as their eclectic and convenient departures from them. Posing as 'authentically Indian', inaccessible to, and therefore unaccountable to 'outsiders' – it uses ineffability as product differentiating (secret) patent. It allows the neo-Gandhians to assert themselves internationally without having to prove themselves in genuine intellectual engagement.'

It was not however Narayan's primary intention to use the Gandhian framework to argue for either Marxism's non-applicability to the Indian case or for Gandhism's particularity. For that, his trust in the universality and ultimate confluence of good ends, to which both Gandhism and Marxism related, was too deep. Where Narayan failed though, was to apply his observation of the pluralism within Marxism to Gandhism. In this sense, his appropriation of Gandhism seems somewhat contrived and prejudiced. This of course could also have to do with Narayan's belief that the violent and elitist aspects of communism could not be reconciled with the problems of nation building as grass-roots socio-political change. It also undermined India's seemingly triumphal weapon of possessing the moral high ground over the immoral methods of colonial and imperial power. Hence, Narayan's view of social revolution took the form of a *moral* critique, with the specifics of nationalist politics becoming tangential to his project of moral reconstruction that was to take on a universal application. The problem that Narayan encountered, like most Marxists after Gandhi, was the issue of Marxism's apparent lending itself to a violent interpretation of its revolutionary methods in that it seemed to lack a firm moral basis as a guideline for differentiating between legitimate or illegitimate actions.

The ideal of socialism as an *extension* of Marxian thought therefore seemed to provide a better category of blending 'Gandhism' with 'revolution' than orthodox Marxism, interpreted as a Soviet-communist concept, did. As such, Narayan's concept of Total Revolution characterises what he held to be his actual objective throughout his intellectual meanderings from Marxism to democratic socialism to Gandhian *sarvodaya* to partyless democracy, which 'is the same as that of socialism or communism – a society free from exploitation, a classless society, a stateless society.'[44] This is clearly an expression of the trust in Marxism and Gandhism's *ultimate* compatibility, to be found in the *ends* of both ideologies. What this means for the reader is to undertake a careful scrutiny of the lenses through which Narayan

[44] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.96, written in 1974.

viewed Marxism – as the supporting ideology of a totalitarian state or as the origins of socialism.

> 'It is true that philosophically Gandhianism has a non-secular and religious or supernatural foundation, whereas socialist philosophy is wholly secular and natural or material. But translated in terms of the practices of life, the values are not different: social and economic equality (casteless and classless society); freedom from exploitation; fullest possible freedom and opportunity for self-development; dignity of the human personality; cooperation; society's responsibility for the well-being of each and the responsibility of each towards society.'[45]

Narayan's shift to Gandhism is of course open to interpretation and as such to controversy. His self-assessment, shared by his commentators, of having overcome Marxism's most negative facets as an ideology by conjoining the ideal of socialism with Gandhism contains some doubts as to its plausibility. Gandhi had rejected Marxism as a materialist philosophy and held it as being unable to provide a positive basis for social change.[46] But for Narayan, socialism as a Marxist ideal was fully compatible and even congruent with Gandhism. Furthermore, Narayan's expansion of the socialist ideal through Gandhism ultimately differed from the majority of the left in India, especially from those of the Praja Socialist Party, of which Narayan was a founding member. The reason for this break, and for making Narayan the more interesting socialist, is the different interpretations of Gandhi's importance to the socialist project. While Narayan perceived Gandhi's influence to lie specifically in his idea of freedom as change and as development, most sections of the non-communist Left constructed Gandhian socialism out of his ethics that sustained the idea of trusteeship and class collaboration, rather than of class antagonism.[47]

Narayan stressed that the Gandhian ideals of a 'non-violent, non-exploitative, cooperative society' coincided with his own vision of a 'classless, casteless society'.[48] By arguing for a radical change of society that did not involve class or caste politics he sidestepped the issues

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[45] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.147.
[46] Gandhi, *Towards Non-Violent Socialism*. Also, Madan Handa, 'The Elements of a Gandhian Social Theory.' In: Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.36-37. Handa argues that Gandhi's point of departure was anti-colonialism rather than the search for a socialist alternative which was the concern of many Gandhians, also of Narayan.
[47] This generalisation of the Left is only meant to depict Narayan's particular contribution to socialist thought in India, and not as a differentiated argument for the interpretation of Gandhi across the entire political spectrum. Other important Gandhian socialists have contributed in different ways, especially Ram Manohar Lohia, who for instance used Gandhian thought to extend a socialist argument on political economy to international relations, i.e. that has a bearing on the relative equality of nations. Refer to Arumugam, *Socialist Thought in India: The Contribution of Rammanohar Lohia.*
[48] See Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.144.

of tensions between class collaboration and class antagonism.[49] The questionable proposition was that class antagonism as a method of resolving contradictions was less convincing than Gandhi's ideal of destroying class distinctions by 'cutting across them.' For Narayan, the logic that the dictatorship of the proletarian class would end in a classless society was far from plausible. This interpretation of 'dictatorship' meant that the term was used literally, rather than as encompassing 'trusteeship' of the interests of the masses. The Indian left involved in party politics however remained wary of political radicalism and adjusted their ideal of trusteeship to the parliamentary democratic system. The democratically elected state was thus seen to be a legitimate vehicle of the *Sarvodaya* ideal: welfare for all under the condition of consensual politics, leading several modern commentators to maintain that 'Indian socialism is better called statism.'[50] What was not considered was Gandhi and Narayan's concerns for changing the very nature of the masses. For Gandhi, this was possible through responsible trusteeship that entailed a change of heart, i.e. under the condition of moral introspection. For Narayan, it was the idea of radical politics, also under the condition of moral introspection, which would lead to a different nature of both individuals and of society.

What we find is that Narayan's turn towards Gandhism is not a sufficient reason for him to be categorised as an Indian example of ex- or anti-Marxist. Not only because of the integrationist tendencies present in Narayan's own thinking but also because there are indications that make it more useful to interpret Narayan as a *critical* Marxist. The reasons for his self-professed post-*Marxism* are to be found in a different angle of approach to his political thought. None of the following points offered by Narayan as a justification of his rejection of Marxism can be linked to solely Gandhi's influence or to an expressive interest in India's road to socialism. Narayan, in looking at the local, always tried to situate the problems within a larger picture, and while this does resound of Gandhi's attitude of openness to some extent, his concrete concerns are to be situated in a distinctly critical Marxist approach.

Narayan's notion of the core of Marxism was its basis in 'dialectical or historical materialism.[51] However, the development of old ideological formulations had been arrested, especially by the manifestation of socialism in the European East Bloc. As noted before, this was important to Narayan, who maintained that socialism was mainly its practice and to a lesser degree, its theory. Thus, the history of the Soviet Union had been distorted rather than having been interpreted further in accordance with Marxian precepts. As the emancipatory

[49] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.121.
[50] Chakraverti, *Antidote: Essays against the Socialist Indian State*, p.98.
[51] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.101.

ideal of Marx had failed to materialise in the Soviet Union, freedom was compromised by power struggles that characterised the nature of socialism's first testing ground. Narayan picked on five issues that he thought were indicative of the distorted development of Marx's ideas, or of Marxism after Marx. Firstly, he noted a singular failure to deal with value systems and their implications for political and revolutionary action. In other words, Marxism is based on a-moralism, which is not means indifference to moral issues, but also moral relativism. Narayan was 'afraid that the commonly accepted philosophy of Marxism, a philosophy accepted by socialists, including Stalinists, is based on a-moralism, a philosophy that does not take into account the question of good or evil, a philosophy that regards this question as relative and relative to such an extent that these considerations can be completely disregarded, if the immediate purpose were to be served in that manner.'[52]

Secondly, Narayan cited the example of the Yugoslavia's attempts in the late 1940s, early 1950s to de-institutionalise the rule of the communist party by converting it into the League of Communists, without however taking into consideration the benefits of a multi-party system for democracy, which Narayan considered as being the political cornerstone of a socialist order. He therefore argued against a system that assumes rather than creates social coherence.[53] Although a party-less democracy was the preferred option, a multi-party system came second best insofar it directly opposed a one-party system, even if it came in the guise of a league. What is more, the problem of centralisation is extended into the economic sphere, whereby Narayan criticised a fundamental deviation from Marx's idea of changing the relations of production at the base. The example set by the Soviet Union on the contrary displayed the dangers of exploitation of the working classes through collectivisation and bureaucratisation, made possible by the tight grip of the state-party symbiosis over society.[54] As such, the fourth point *contra* Marxism was its reluctance to open up to alternative historical possibilities, such as democratic new social movements. For this, he used the example of India's localised land reform movements (*bhoodan*, *gramdan*) to show that not only can social revolutions take place peacefully and voluntarily, but that the road to socialism via capitalism is not a necessary one.[55] More so than his other arguments against Marxism, this strengthens the case for Narayan's insights into a world order beyond the monolithic systems of Soviet style Marxism and capitalism. In this connection, Narayan remained sceptical of Marxism's ability to overcome traditional centre-periphery relations, even within the socialist bloc, and therefore challenged its feasibility in paving the way to a

[52] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.102.
[53] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.104-108.
[54] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.109-112.
[55] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.113-117.

truly international 'world socialist movement' that was defined by equal rather than hierarchical relations.[56]

4.5 Roy's objections to Marxism

'Radicalism is not revolutionary Nationalism, nor is it slightly heretical Communism. It is a distinctive philosophy.'[57]

Roy was very anxious to move on from Marxism linked to both nationalism and communism towards a different philosophy of emancipation. Especially the political practice of self-professed communists and its split from Marxist political philosophy indicated orthodox Marxism's incompatibility with his concept of freedom.[58] Unlike Narayan's greater level of acceptance of political pragmatism, Roy's belief was that a dissociation of practice from theory only served to betray Marx's own ideals of emancipation. The project of emancipation therefore had to consist in a measure of realism in understanding historical situations as well as in a measure of knowledge guided political practice that changes the course of history.[59] Let us keep in mind his concept of freedom as possibility enabled by intellectual *and* moral knowledge. With regard to Marxism's failings to realise freedom through Marxist political practice, Roy attributed this to orthodox Marxism having become a religion rather than a science.[60] In part, this was due to Marxism having divorced from its philosophical basis, which consequently ossified into a creed of belief. The disappearance of Marxism as a living, context-defined philosophy effectively arrested the search for new ideas and therefore its development as a guide towards an ever greater measure of freedom for individuals.[61]

In revising the notion of revolution, Roy perceived Marxism's overemphasis on the class character of ideas as unduly restrictive as well as having outlived its explanatory role given the growing strength of the middle class and its progressive potential based on its role in the realm of enlightened education.[62] In part bowing down to the conditions dictated by the historical situation, Roy held that the sheer force of counter-revolution meant that revolutions as a method of seizing power through insurrection were simply outdated.[63] The communist

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[56] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.117-118.
[57] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.24.
[58] Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.17-20.
[59] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.43.
[60] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.44.
[61] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.78.
[62] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.47, p.78.
[63] Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.35-37, p.104, p.146.

conception of revolutionary practice was hence more a declaration of blind faith rather than an empirically sound assessment of the given historical situation. This blindness would have the opposite effect of freedom, namely the enslavement to a technique of social change that was no longer a sure path to liberation.

The leap from Marxism as an ideology of reason to becoming a modern religion was obvious insofar the idea that its constitutive components are subject to permanent amendments had been undermined. Affecting most notions that originally marked the ideology as a method of emancipation, the issue of morality too had simply been ignored rather than incorporated as a *natural*, but not logical component of a monist-materialist philosophy. For Roy, morality stems directly out of the background of materialism, and the failure to understand and explore the realm of the perfectly accessible foundations of morality meant that individuals were deprived from a fundamental part of total freedom. For Roy, morality was however not merely a part of individual completeness but a capacity to act morally and autonomously.

Betraying its philosophy of materialism, Roy saw in Marxism the shadow of a Providential Will, resulting out of orthodox Marxism's mistaken conflation of materialist determinism with teleology.[64] With the overtly teleological leanings come the weakening of the concept of individual will. Finally, all of the above failings have severe implications for Marxism's claim to value and prioritise freedom. As freedom is, according to Roy, solely measured against the benchmark of the autonomy enjoyed by individuals, Marxism has proven to be a great threat to individualism, and hence to the project of freedom. Just as teleology undermines the development of individual freedom, so do orthodox Marxism's metaphysical leanings. In this respect, Marxism's chief failing has been to join the bandwagon of collectivist approaches to the issue of social change, i.e. it took on board the artificial and imagined concepts of State-Nation-Class.[65]

The above seems a questionable proposition in light of the respective roles of state, nation and class in the context of colonial and post-colonial liberation struggles. Imperialism was incontestably challenged by the very same concepts. The empirical evidence is clear, yet we believe that Roy had a point. On the normative level, state, nation and class were instrumental in countering the very forces that begot them in the first place, i.e. diverse motives but with an underlying consciousness of the power of the collective. However, such notions stand as

[64] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.113. Also, Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.44, p.65, p.113.
[65] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.66. Roy, *New Orientation*, p.27. To this list we can add India's Gandhian Left who for the most part accepted the category of *caste* in their politics, if not in their official ideology.

much for division as for unity, thereby perpetuating structures of dominance. Furthermore, violence is generally never far from relationships of domination and leads to two conclusions. One is that the claims of statehood, nationhood and class will be futile with regard to emancipation. Secondly, the collective consciousness is fed by the instrumentalisation of individual wills for the purpose of realising goals that fail to serve the interest of individuals. A Rousseauian take on this issue would go against this reading and for good reasons. Yet, it would be equally difficult to deny that in history, those bodies that seemed designed to embody the wills and interests of individuals were elevated to entities of such status that they became ends on their own, possessing singular powers to hinder rather than enhance personal autonomy. The loss and the crushing of the voices of disagreement cannot be denied either.

Beyond finding ourselves in general agreement with Roy's assessment, Roy's concerns regarding Marxism reveal the lens through which he viewed Marxism from an Indian perspective. To be sure, his language contains typically one-sided views on religion, culture and sociability that reflect Enlightenment sensibilities. The modern and thus the individual, the reasonable is elevated, while the supposed irrationalities of religion stand for regression. In critiquing Roy, we may critique the premises of the Enlightenment, but this perhaps only bypasses what led to his various analogies between the dangers of Indian spirituality and the dangers of Marxist collectivism. The idea that essentially Hindu ways of perceiving the world could exacerbate Marxism's tendency to obliterate the aspect of individualism and thus pose a problem for a constructive development of Marxism in India should be taken more seriously.

While the antinomies of individualism and collectivism, or communitarianism, have taken on the form of worn-out clichés in the Indian context, to deny these altogether is more problematic than over-stressing them, as Roy does. Although there is no scope here for a detailed discussion of these notions in Indian philosophical and political thought, the bias towards a collectivist political as well as popular imagery is evident. It was most certainly evident in the immediate post-colonial decades wherein the consolidation of socio-political unity was crucial for the nation's external as well as internal legitimacy.[66] Hence, it was about reaffirming unity in time by, for example, stressing the importance and the resilience of the tradition of a collectivist social organisation in India.[67] The question of spatial unity for a modern nation state too was essential and was popularly sustained by images of personification (Mother India), and of paternity (e.g., deeming Gandhi to be the Father of the

[66] Ray, *India: After Independence*, p.137. Writing from a historian's perspective, Ray similarly felt that Indian intellectuals were in the grip of a volatile mix of 'Hindu nationalism, hagiographic devotion, regional vanity, and communist dogmatism.' (p. 141)
[67] Brown, *The Premises of Indian Political Thought.* Also, Singh, *The Sources of Contemporary Political Thought in India - a Reappraisal.*

Nation). Added on to the predominantly rural organisation of India, to its religious traditions, and to the centrality of family, kin and caste, it is not surprising that proponents of individualism such as Roy felt that the challenge to their ideas was palpable and that any indication of Marxism as enhancing this way of viewing the world spelt the end of Marxism as a viable alternative to existing ideas.

Given Roy and Narayan's professed discontent with Marxism and especially with orthodox Marxism's lack of potential to pave the way to revolutionary social change in the direction of ever greater possibilities of individual and social freedom, why should the case for Roy and Narayan's rejection of Marxism not be simply closed? We believe that it is worth pursuing the issue somewhat further for the purpose of clarification and of establishing the relevance of their ideas. We would like to clarify their position on radical democracy via their ideas on Marxism and its impact on the project of emancipation. To do so we partly set out a comparison within the context of the European history of Marxism. What this achieves is that we find Roy and Narayan to be far less anti-Marxist than commonly perceived. Indeed, various aspects of their critique of Marxism are better compared to issues taken up by critical Marxism, especially in Europe. However, their stances of rejection also incorporate the idea of transcending Marxism, thus leading to tensions in their work that are not easily explained away. The attempt to transcend Marxism meant that they tried to occupy not the golden middle ground, but a very uneasy middle ground between the dominance of ideology and the beginnings of a "post"-ideology world. In other words, their ideas of freedom entailed a very strong conception of the construction of alternative worlds that was meant to bridge the gap between old certainties and the unwanted new grounds of pessimism, uncertainty and over-contextualisation. Pitting radically constructivist thought against the partly unifying and partly fragmenting forces of nationalism and communalism, their ideas of subjective freedom were provocatively innovative when viewed against the backdrop of India's project of nation-building and were also challenging when viewed in the context of establishing and legitimising centralised governance.

Despite expressing their fundamental criticism of Marxism, we argue that Roy and Narayan's writings reflected less a wish to dissociate from Marxism but more a desire to continue a search for alternatives in a world that would have been alien to Marx and Marxists alike. Narayan believed to have been able to do this by looking towards a model of socialism that was compatible with Gandhi's positive contributions to political thinking. Roy was more ambivalent and voiced his concerns in somewhat contradictory ways. On the one hand he was keen to voice his concerns about Marxism and freedom not as a rejection of its emancipatory ideal but as a rejection of Marx's betrayal by the orthodox camp. In this case, Roy was more

open to the idea of 'revising' or 'enlarging' Marxism.[68] Yet, his stronger claim was based on Marxism's roots in scientific thought and practice, and so, a better way of approaching Marxism would be not to revise it but transcend the ideology altogether. As a scientific method, the concept of fixity is rejected in favour of a philosophy of inquiry, critique and progression. In Roy's mind in this case philosophy meant the outcome of a chain of thought, which in itself is a natural process of the new subverting the old. Philosophy is thus using the old and transcending the old at the same time. It is not the search for timeless truths, but the timeless search for truths. Hence Marxism, in espousing the process of (r)evolutionary change, has no option but to annihilate itself as a philosophy of its time if it is indeed to remain a key moment in the chain of constructive thought predicated on the demise of its foundations and existence.[69]

Interestingly enough, even though Narayan and Roy evidently hoped to strike new grounds with their versions of political thought after Marxism, their ideas resonate with similar arguments and critiques of Marxism not found in the political thinking of their contemporaries in India, but in the European Marxist tradition. Our exploration will lead us to certain elements of both post-*Marxism* and *post*-Marxism, and by extension to the tensions between the two. We shall highlight four aspects of their ideas: teleology, morality, individualism and local politics.

4.6 Departing from the certainty of history

In 1946 Narayan wrote that 'no intelligent person today will doubt that the next stage in the evolution of human society is socialism.[70] Here, it is clear that Narayan spoke of the idea of a necessary evolution of history towards socialism, and also that this evolution rests on the premise of modernisation and progress, from a lower to a higher state of affairs. Similarly to Western Marxists however, he later critiqued the conception of a will-independent development towards socialism and subsequently communism. The concept of socialism as a teleological certainty has long been the bane of critical Marxists. The critique has been directed on the one hand towards the impossibility of certainty in history, and on the other hand towards the totalitarian implications of a not necessarily proletarian dictatorship forcing such an evolution upon the hapless masses through inevitable revolutions. Andrzej Walicki traces this idea of necessitarian freedom from Marx to Gorbachov, grounded in 'classical

[68] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.43.
[69] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.110.
[70] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.55.

Marxism' or the Marxism of the Second International.'[71] Walicki, in addition to tracing totalitarian tendencies in the concepts of freedom developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, also focuses on the hugely influential 'necessitarian' Marxisms of Karl Kautsky, Georgii Plekhanov, and Rosa Luxemburg. While there are some fundamental differences between these three 'necessitarians', there is also a common recognition of necessity, or of the promise of communism.[72] In other words, there is no choice in history as to the advent and the success of communism. The scientific nature of the Marxist reading of history had put an end to that line of questioning. The dominant trend of the Second International can be thus identified as 'scientific objectivism', which led to the rise of the critical questioning of "Marxism and freedom."

Interpreting freedom as Marx's primary but not formalised goal, it comes as no surprise that for Roy and Narayan, Marxism's dilemma was the interplay between two notions of freedom - freedom as the conscious and independent pursuit of a voluntarily chosen end and freedom as a scientific development.[73] The first notion appealed to Roy and Narayan the most, whereby they rejected the belief in the objective course of history in favour of a subjective course of history.[74] In fact, as one commentator on Indian socialism notes, Marxism in India coexisted with a sharp reaction against Stalinist distortions of Marxism, and could only do so by underplaying Marxism's scientific rigour.[75] This generalised reading of Indian Marxism's stance towards scienticism in relation to teleology is not wholly accurate however. It fails in Narayan and Roy's cases, in that they argued not against Marxism's scienticism as upholding a teleological view of the world, but rather against orthodox Marxism's increasingly metaphysical status to the detriment of its scientific roots that have to be explored and experimented rather than control the level to which the subjective desires accede to objective necessities.

Whereas Narayan tried to extricate his position from a teleological reading by shifting his position on freedom from one of evolution to one of an idealistic cause, Roy's argument against Marxist teleology remained ambiguous. This had to do with his notions of the origins

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[71] Valicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia*, p.208.
[72] Valicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia*, pp.210-252.
[73] For a similar interpretation, also see Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia*, p.5.
[74] The Hegelian slant is not only obvious, but in Roy's case, quite intentional. Basing his arguments on theidentity of being and consciousness, Roy held that Marxism in fact had not turned Hegelianism on its lead. To rid Marxism of Hegelianism would amount to a submission of vulgar mechanistic materialism to the workings of a *deus ex machina*, which paralleled the idea of objective necessity being external to subjective thought. Refer to Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, pp.376-381.
[75] Joshi, *Marxism and Social Revolution in India and Other Essays*, p.3.

of individuals' drive towards freedom and against that, Roy's distaste for any kind of predetermined regimentation of the development of individuals and society. Roy based his concept of freedom on the concrete circumstances of biological, but not on social evolution. The drive towards freedom was in the first instance borne out of the sheer necessity of survival. According to Roy, the 'human' category of freedom is given when instinctive behaviour becomes purposive. This seemingly empty concept contains within it the core of Roy's ambivalent attitude to freedom. Purposiveness was on the one hand bound to the idea of progress, which consists of the significance of the 'succession of events in time' for freedom. It also however is to be understood as being the human capacity to act upon free will, which Roy conflates with 'choice'.[76]

The *evolutionary* progress of individuals' quest for freedom can be traced back to Roy's concept of history as a narrative of individuals' desires to master nature and to realise the potential for their personal development. The precondition for this enterprise was the presence of human reason, which again Roy tried to situate in a biological-materialist background. Using the powers of reason, individuals were able to make history, which 'is the record of man's struggle for freedom.'[77] Given the universality of the laws of nature, it seems logical, according to Roy, that history based on the instrumentalisation of natural reason would follow a natural and necessary course. On the other hand, Roy tried to sustain his anti-teleological position by contesting Marx's proposition that 'Sein bestimmt das Bewußtsein', or the relation between being and consciousness. Roy's Hegelian leanings led him to make the point of coexistence of being and thought, so that the evolution of history was conceived as dependent on evolution of ideas in equal measure.

The contention that whilst all that exists is natural and of materialist origin, but that the forms these existing entities have are not necessarily tangible brought Roy dangerously close to the Idealist grounds, a position he explicitly wished to avoid. Hence, his argument against Marxism was not its materialist premises but that it rejected the *autonomous* existence of ideas, which were part of the natural world of bio-chemical reactions.[78] This meant that ideas were treated as discrete entities, having an independent existence from concrete social and political histories of specific times and places. In this sense, Roy underplayed the element of the social context that characterises Marxist thought. It spells both logical weakness as well as reductionism, and has contributed much to the ambiguities found in his writings. But what we are interested in is not the attacking of the absence of flawless logic, but are rather looking for

[76] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.30.
[77] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, pp.2-4.
[78] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.36-39.

arresting ideas that have some basis and thus plausibly offer alternative modes of thinking. In part, we find this in Roy's positing of autonomy against dependence. Emphasising the autonomy of ideas is an insight into the importance of imagination in politics that structures of determination cannot sustain. Indeed, Marxism does have a problem with the concept of political imagination, drawing its conclusions as it does retrospectively. As we have seen, it has not dealt with technological advance that goes beyond the age of industrialisation very well. To excuse the lack of foresight is to demean a serious philosophy but to criticise the lack of imagination is, as we can see in Roy, a serious act of challenge in the expectation of a response.

The imagining of alternatives to the world we live in is not enough of course, and so Roy leaned heavily on reason as a universal instrument of realising freedom by shaping external nature and our own nature. The Indian model did not however provide for the prioritisation of reason in the same way that the European model did. For Roy, the failure of the ancient *Carvaka* empirico-materialist philosophy in India meant that her popular culture of religion and perceptions of historical circularity were the greatest setback to the project of emancipation. This view was of course not unique to Roy. The Bengal Renaissance was for instance founded on the belief that one of the most dire consequences of colonialism was the loss of the possibility of an indigenous Enlightenment. If freedom is already invested with a meaning and a purpose and is not merely 'a system of conditions, which makes that purpose of enabling each man to be himself and at his best effectively possible', then surely Roy can be read as mainstream Marxist regarding his position on freedom?[79]

Perhaps the term of a 'blueprint' is somewhat misleading though, and in fact, this reflects not the desire to imitate historical processes but to establish an acceptable principle of thought and action.[80] In the first instance, reason would be a cause – of dominance, hegemony and other problematic concepts – whereas in the second instance reason would be a guiding principle of the realisation of freedom – without making a substantive statement on what it would entail in a particular place and at a particular time. In other words, For Roy, the concept of reason had to be a) explored over time and b) used instrumentally in the quest for freedom. As a category of dominance, Roy would have rejected the use of a certain stream of reason. Hence, parallel to the conception of a course of history towards freedom, Roy consistently maintained an anti-teleological stance, as he equated the notion of teleology with

[79] Quotation taken from Laski, *Socialism and Freedom*, p.8.
[80] See Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution.* This book should be read in its entirety as an indication of Roy's notion of where history had been made through individual effort, opposition and subversion, rather than simply being allowed to happen through forces outside the control of the individual.

a pre-deterministic view of history, and thus serves only to absolve individuals of all responsibility for their future. This relates to Roy's idea of freedom as the choice or political will for action.

From the previous case made it seems that choice is pre-determined by reason, which is why there is a uni-dimensional history of the search for freedom. Yet Roy's position is that despite the natural *origins* of reason[81] and subsequently, of the drive to freedom, the choices that individuals make do not follow naturally. They are instead autonomously determined by individuals who are very much conscious of their own influence on the course of history and the nature of society that they live in. For this idea to work, Roy held that individuals should not only be free from economic constraints but 'also live in a psychological atmosphere, free from cultural regimentation, helpful to the development of the intellectual and other human potentialities.'[82] The concept of teleology, in denying the full extent of individuals' potential for self-determination is therefore eschewed in favour of a deterministic, but not pre-deterministic idea of the relationship between will and end.

The paradoxical situation of the pressure on the individual to be free and creative through the use of reason is not one that is unique to Roy and can of course be subject to extensive criticism. The point we wish to make though is a simpler one, namely that Roy did not wholly succeed in transcending Marxism but rather remained trapped in the Marxian predicament of resolving the dichotomies between science and revolution as well as between necessity and self-determination. Yet, when faced with a choice, Roy came down on the side of individual autonomy, as it is the very reason for the existence of the drive towards freedom. It would therefore be tragic but not inconceivable for individuals to shape history in the opposite direction, i.e. towards regimentation and slavery to supernatural sources of control of history. The history of Europe's descent into totalitarianism showed this, and according to Roy, the promise of freedom in post-independence India was on shaky grounds. The rise of the dominant forces of Nation-State-Class Roy contributed in exceptional ways to the loss of the status of individual sovereignty.

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[81] Roy believed that for reason not to be turned into yet another metaphysical category, and therefore attain the position of an unchallenged fixity, there has to be a search for the material content of reason, as reason is a category inherent in physical nature. It is thus both tangible as well as changeable. Refer to Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.44. Roy's argument reminds us in some respects of contemporary criticism of the hegemony of 'reason', albeit used in a search for pluralism of comparable categories, rather than in a search for the nature of reason. Roy did indeed argue for a supreme status of reason, but reading him fairly means that this concept cannot be interpreted as postulating the natural dominance of reason in all affairs.

[82] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, p.471.

In itself Roy and Narayan's rejection of teleology and their reasons for doing so do not constitute a rejection of Marxism. The internal debate within Marxism was far from uniform. Some conflated the idea of teleology, inevitability and necessity, arguing for instance that while the collapse of capitalism is inevitable, the victory of socialism is a necessity that is will-dependent.[83] Others did not see this distinction as being a plausible one, and feared that history would be divested of meaning if in fact man had no choice even at the level of capitalist development. Even as early as in the 1960s and 1970s, some moderation in the position of orthodox Marxism within the Soviet Union was noticeable. It is open to debate whether this was really the result of rejecting the Plekhanovite understanding of the relation between necessity and freedom, which was not entirely fairly attributed to Marxism-Leninism. The iron necessities of determinism, be it universal, historical, related to freedom, the will and responsibility, softened in favour of a stronger notion of the individual's freedom to choose from a plurality of ends as well as the means to realising the end.[84]

Yet what does distinguish Roy and Narayan from the critical stream of Marxism was their distancing from a faith in history as a narrative of the victory of emancipation over enslavement. There are reasons for this. The juxtaposition of both colonialism and post-colonialism alongside the menace of totalitarianism showed that there was no guiding line through history but that humanity stood at crossroads. As the choice of path could not be foretold, faith had to be commuted into a hope in this course of events, but one that depended far more on subjective efforts to realise this goal than on the presence of objective conditions of conflict and antagonism that had to be transcended. The issue of individual autonomy being a force more powerful than sets of conditions forming objective necessity, be it natural or social, is what separates them from not only Marxists,[85] but also critical Marxists who sought to reconcile the two.[86] In all of these cases, there is still an element of trust in a resolution of conflict and the process of 'Aufhebung.' For Roy and Narayan, what Marxism

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[83] For example, Eduard Bernstein' s critique of the distinction rests upon the idea that genuine necessity does not require its conscious acceptance. Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia*, pp. 212-214.

[84] O'Rourke, *The Problem of Freedom in Marxist Thought*, pp.182-187. The literary output within the East Bloc is an alternative and perhaps more interesting testimony to the rising pressures on individual rather than social performance of the 1960s and early 1970s.

[85] Although Roy's biological materialism comes very close to that of Sebastiano Timpanaro, Roy's concept entails the autonomy of entities (individuals, ideas) that emerge from a biological background, unlike Timpanaro's notion of at least some remnant of human passivity. Timpanaro's position on biological materialism is not representative of the entirety of the Marxist tradition, but the idea of a passive moment can be held to be a more common concept. See George Novack, 'Timpanaro's Defense of Materialism.' In: Novack, *Polemics in Marxist Philosophy*, pp.177-278.

[86] In this case one may cite Norman Geras, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Barry Hindess for a contemporary view. The idea that social development could be guided is however part of a longer tradition in Marxism, notably stemming from Lenin. Refer to Aspaturian, *The Contemporary Doctrine of the Soviet State and Its Philosophical Foundations*, p.1036.

lacked was sufficient appreciation of political will and so it was the indeterminacy of active politics that took over from a politics of reaction to economic conditions.

In Narayan's case, the acceptance of pluralism as one of the permanent features of the world-as-it-is means that Total Revolution is not only as a revolution with a hoped for end solution to political and social conflict, but also as an insight into the actual permanence of revolution as a process. Roy made even stronger claims, deriding the notion that history can ever come to an end. While this may be criticised as an inadequate understanding of Marx's concept of history, the point to be taken is that for Roy history, based on the conflict between individual freedom and its opponents, will not be resolved in time. The difference is again between hope for a world without conflict and the recognition that development is in fact dependent on conflict.

The ideas presented above strike a chord with contemporary voices of critical, but also post-Marxism. The writings of Laclau and Mouffe are a good guide to debates on pluralism and the impossibility of an end of history. What we see in Roy and Narayan can therefore be perceived as a step forward rather than back to an image of the world that will run its course anyway, based on the predominance of reason, of class conflict, universal spirit and the like. What Roy and Narayan voiced was not a *faith* in a grand narrative and its unfolding, but a *hope* in the possibility of a good social order as well as an expectation of recurring struggle and conflict. In a way, they anticipated the questions that arise out of notions of fluidity and the impermanence of projects, articulated by Laclau and Mouffe. As some have argued, 'the more open Laclau and Mouffe make the social sound, the less clear it is what gives their anti-capitalist stance any moral authority.'[87] Thus, Roy and Narayan did not base their theories of social revolution in the unerring development of reason (Roy), nor of virtue (Narayan), but sought to use these concepts as logical correctives to the problems of the day – the dangers of totalitarianism and its impact on the quest for positive freedom. In this sense they had gone beyond traditional orthodox Marxism and also looked towards a less pessimistic view of the world and its future. They had rejected determinism, and the authority that is implicit in a determined course of events and were sceptical of a natural *telos* of a socialist-communist order. Hence, we can claim to speak of a notable shift in their language from belief, which entails some form of acknowledgement of truth, to cause, which has a normative as well as a pragmatic element. The presence of tensions in their thought that are not unknown within Marxist discourse mean that Marxism was not really rejected. This would be a weak point to make were it not for the presence of an early and remarkable insight into a world of

[87] Sim, *Post-Marxism: A Reader*, p.29.

crossroads, for which guiding maps cannot not be discovered but have to be created. Crossroads are an indication of freedom, but without a desire for what possibly lies along these ways, we would forever stand waiting.

4.7 The "New Man"

In a critique of the contemporary philosopher Roy Bhaskar, who draws 'broadly socialist conclusions from the workings of open totalities', Stuart Sim objects that there is no self-evident reason in itself 'why an open totality should lead to a socialist-libertarian society. It is one thing to demonstrate that totalities are open, another thing entirely to prove that a particular form of political practice necessarily follows from this realisation – or that the population at large is open to persuasion on this matter.'[88] A similar charge could be levelled against Roy and Narayan by questioning what would make the population at large accept that reason and virtue can serve as correctives to an otherwise indeterminate future. The question is pertinent in as much both Roy and Narayan turned from a teleological view of history to one that was characterised by a high degree of subjectivity.

Stressing subjectivity is a hallmark of critical Marxist thought, in order to counter what seemed to be orthodox Marxism's chief failing in social theory, i.e. the neglect of the subjective factor in social phenomena.[89] Indeed, much like Roy's argument, Marxism is seen as the most recent synthesis of the Western tradition whereby the free and social individual is to be realised. However, in many debates the antithetical qualities of freedom and sociality marked out an exaggerated sense of the primacy of the social rather than the individualistic.[90] The conception of the revolutionary individual was thus framed against a controversial background of the perennial questions of human nature and human character as well as of man, history and individuals. When we talk about the freedom that enables human nature to change, Marx referred to the change in historically situated individuals through the interplay of human action and historical circumstances. Human nature on the other hand, *qua* material reality, remains stable.[91] Change in natural individuals is thus both an outcome of nature and of socio-historical settings. The issue of a 'socialist new man' was therefore not answered by

[88] Sim, *Post-Marxism. An Intellectual History*, p.160.
[89] Piccone, *Gramsci's Marxism: Beyond Lenin and Togliatti*, p.493. In Gramscian thought, for instance, the Marxist method was considered 'fundamentally informal and subjective.'
[90] Rickert, *The Fromm-Marcuse Debate Revisited*, p.352.
[91] Smart, *Mill and Marx: Individual Liberty and the Roads to Freedom*, pp.86-87.

Marx and Engels, as they did not presume to elucidate the state of the new post-capitalist world in great detail either.[92]

The openness of essence did not of course preclude a discussion on the nature of man. The question of 'man as maker' and 'man as product' is depicted in the third and sixth theses on Feuerbach respectively, and the apparent tension has done much to lend rise to supporting one view *or* the other. It is not our intention to develop a more complex Marxian argument based on the recognition that to make such a choice is to be unjustifiably simplistic. What matters is that in the history of ideas, this supposed dichotomy was indeed an issue. Marx had assumed a position *contra* Hegelian dialectical ontology that conceived of a supra-human subject as well as *contra* Feuerbach's anthropology. In the sixth thesis on Feuerbach, Marx posited that human essence is the ensemble of social relations. This had undoubtedly important consequences for Soviet style orthodox Marxism under Lenin, which established a strong relational position of the individual. Put differently, the social indeed was considered prior to the individual, at least politically. To single out orthodox Marxist positions in the Soviet Union may seem random and ill considered. Yet, in the context of Indian political thought, the Soviet example was a reference point for Marxism par excellence.

The strong counter-reaction to Soviet orthodoxy by the Indian left did have an interesting by-product, namely the separate but parallel attempt vis-à-vis European critical Marxism to press the case for the greater autonomy of the individual. The differences within Marxism, and within Soviet Marxism, were often obliterated in the fear of totalitarianism and in the desire to find a 'new' way of making history. As such, although held by their critics to be deeply anti-individualistic, the orthodox position held by Soviet Marxists differed in its facets of interpretation.[93] There are indications that especially the 1960s and 1970s Soviet Marxist orthodoxy saw a shift in the status of the individual. The correction of the strong relational position meant that greater autonomy was credited to the individual by arguing that the essence of the individual also contained a core that was untouched by social relations and historical circumstances. Man is not just the product of society; he is its substantial basis. New Soviet man is a creature of expanding needs and interests, guided by unifying ideas that override immediate interests and private goals.[94] This was in turn upheld by Marx's idea that

[92] Smart, *Mill and Marx: Individual Liberty and the Roads to Freedom*, p.85.
[93] The works of philosophical anthropologists such as V. P. Volgin, P. N. Fedoseev, V. P. Tugarinov and L. M. Arxangelskij have been used to back up the notion of Soviet Marxism, as opposed to the classics, i.e. Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Refer to O'Rourke, *The Problem of Freedom in Marxist Thought*, pp.81-114.
[94] Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology*, p.138.

socialist man will be one who will have overcome all antagonisms between the private and the social.[95]

Nonetheless, the stress laid on the *social* aspect of freedom is what accounted for much of the powerful criticism of Marxist social theory. In this criticism, Marxism has lost out in terms of the balance between a society's historical dynamic and its subjects to the effect that the 'social' as 'class' as well as 'class consciousness' attains a metaphysical value.[96] Hence, as Charles Taylor points out, Marxism's twin aspirations to radical autonomy and expressive unity 'are claimed not on behalf of the individual but of the "species being" (*Gattungswesen*) of man.'[97] This not only upsets the balance between society and individual but also lapses into the problem of essentialism, be it of class or of human nature itself. Roy and Narayan did not have a problem with Marxism's aspirations, nor did they reject the idea of social harmony, i.e. some form of fraternal solidarity between individuals and their social world. Their accounts differ to the extent that for them the social certainly does not dominate over the individual, and in the case of Roy, is not even accorded an equal status. In this sense, they narrowed the gap between their ideas and Marx's theses at the same time that they rejected Marxism's propositions. More importantly, they rejected Marxist politics that was predicated on the collective rather than on the individual.

It is worth noting at this point that Roy and Narayan's use of the terms 'men' and 'Man' was gender-neutral and in effect referred to individuals of either gender, who were treated as equals. Women as well as men were considered as being *individuals* possessing the same capabilities as well as the same desire for 'freedom.' For many Indian liberals too, gender difference was not perceived as being one of quality or capacity as can be seen in the constitutional guarantee of full citizenship rights, including electoral rights. These were granted to Indian women even before the female population of some European countries were able to claim these rights. In the context of India's society, it is of course questionable whether Roy and Narayan's perspective on the *de facto* condition of women and their limited access to certain forms of liberty and emancipation was at all realistic. As the answer would be in the negative, it should suffice to understand that their notions of men and Man were history and culture specific only in terms of the vocabulary, but not in terms of the implications.

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[95] Koren, *Marx and the Authentic Man*, pp.111-115.
[96] Connerton, *The Collective Historical Subject: Reflections on Lukacs' History and Class Consciousness*, pp.186-177.
[97] Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, p.71.

Narayan stated that 'the construction of a socialist society is fundamentally the construction of a new type of human being.'[98] Two concepts of a new man come to mind, i.e. the Marxian notion of the change of human nature along with social changes and the Soviet model of the socialist new man. Although his position converged with the former regarding the search for a qualitatively new kind of human being that is in relative harmony with the rest of society, Narayan did not conceive of an *a priori* nature of man that would make this possible. While his concept of the individual was certainly that of an embedded and social individual, he was at the same time keen to propose the idea of a 'new man' that differed from both the traditional Hindu concept of reconciled man as well as from Marxist individualism. His vulgar materialist interpretation of Marxism was effectively an extension of the Gandhian critique of 'Western individualism' – a commonplace association of individualism with egocentrism, selfishness and narrowness of perspective. Hence, while (Soviet) Marxist 'new man' was conceived out of a dynamics of modernisation and the satiation of material desires, as we have seen above, Narayan held that socialist new man should be characterised by the diminishing of desires for material progress.

The argument rests on Narayan's conviction that dualism is a false belief, as modern science shows. In particular, the dualism between mind and matter is questioned and indeed overturned. Although the defence of this point is somewhat weak in Narayan's writings, and although he did refer to universal values and codes of conduct that are independent of the materialist base of human nature, Narayan tried to argue that a voluntary diminishing of desires would have an automatic impact on the material constitution of individuals, and vice versa. In other words, mind and body are intertwined, and if one is pandered and the other neglected, this will have an unfortunate effect. In theory this applies to any of the two elements. Narayan chooses to stress the non-material aspect of human nature however and argues that the diminishing of material wants would leave the spirit to develop, pointing to a win-lose argument. This means that although Narayan attempted to establish a tight link between mind and matter, he was not able to offer a clear argument for his actual belief, namely that modern science has proven an ontological unity between mind and matter.

On the other hand, Narayan was not content either with what he believed to be the traditional (Hindu) Indian concept of unfree, *karma*-bound self that strives for mere personal salvation.[99] Instead, he looked towards a new version of individualism, within which the individual was sufficiently spiritualistic to strive for the 'the good' of man, but was also sufficiently materialistic to strive to be political man. Hence he was seeking to bridge the gap between the

[98] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.170.
[99] Narain Lal, *Jayaprakash. Rebel Extraordinary*, p.14.

abstract, non-embedded 'man' of Indian thought and the self-motivated 'individual' of Western traditions. These are of course very broad generalisations, used by Narayan to present his alternative vision. Narayan's new man is highly individualistic, but not egotistic, by which he means highly aware of one's subjectivity and the power it gives in influencing the nature of the own self as well as that of society.

This individual is at the same time situated in concrete socio-historical circumstances that determine in what way the individual is socialised. A very significant part of socialisation is moral training. Narayan held that human nature is perennially weak and as such has to be subject to continuous education and training.[100] The emphasis on education and training serves to highlight the tensions in Narayan's notion of the individual quite visibly. The act of education within a concrete socio-historical setting reflects the idea of man as a product of his times, and his education. At the same time, Narayan's view of education as an antidote to 'weakness' challenges the idea of malleability and is committed to education as a medium of fostering individual autonomy through increasing self-awareness and self-education. Hence, positing the 'totality' of a new man is both an ambiguous as well as precarious venture. On the one hand we see a hope for a new generation of socialist new human beings, but on the other hand, the process seems doomed to eternal repetition, as there can be no closure on the question of the reconciliation between concrete individuals and society.

To restate the difference, we are primarily interested in Marxist new man because there is a social moment of consciousness, independent of the autonomy of individuals and dependent on the relations of production and its influence on the conditioning of consciousness. Therefore, the need for individuals to subjectively exercise their moral capacities is not considered as being a constitutive aspect of the new man. Hence the input of Marxist new man – if viewed as part of a process rather than as an end – is vital at the level of social activism rather than at a personal moralistic level. This is in line with Narayan's idea that individuals are formed partly by nature and partly by society, but for him the dominant relationship is that of the new individuals forming their new society.[101] The interaction between the two is not deterministically mediated by a consciousness emanating out of economic relations and its superstructure, but will be open with regard to the variable and thus highly contextual. In short, Narayan's concept of the new man was an attempt at a median between the relative strength of the individual and between the common good, applicable to human beings in general. Following Gandhi's ideas, which were deeply sceptical of utilitarian arguments, he believed that *sarvodaya*, or the welfare of all, was

[100] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.62.
[101] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.98-99.

compelling not because of its altruistic tenor but because of its emphasis on the 'all'. By this Narayan meant that the welfare and thus freedom of each individual was paramount and could not be compromised by a sacrifice of some individuals' freedom to sustain a greater good for humanity as a species.[102]

Roy's case for the priority of the concrete individual was less reconciliationist than Narayan's case could eventually be. The actions of individuals alone in effect determine the structure of society. This is a fundamental part of radical thought that espouses the idea of constructivism, as we can see in the works of Unger. For Roy, freedom requires strong self-awareness of individuals as the creators of history. This does not mean that man is placed in history as part of a larger scheme. Indeed, Roy's message was that the individual is an *a priori* category and therefore, it is not the consciousness of being involved in a history of man that is important, but the consciousness of the self as having a firm control over historical processes. History is therefore about the meaningful shaping of the social world over time, which is done by 'men and not the masses.' This is not to say that Roy denigrated the role of the masses as groups of individuals. Rather, his point was that the actions of masses often rely on a collective sense of being, which is not only fallacious but is a threat to freedom. Individuals absolved of personal responsibility become responsive rather than purposive. For this reason, Roy discarded the concept of class insofar class-consciousness was self-reflective only to the extent that the collective *entity* was significant. This obviated the self-awareness of its constitutive *members*. However, only with this capacity at hand could man as individual hope to reshape society into a 'tolerable world' and use nature to his advantage. In this sense, Roy's liberalism departs from those types of liberalisms that stress autonomy and self-fulfilment on the very personal level of a life span. Thus, freedom is not about having choices concerned with picking and choosing valuable ways of life, but about the aspect of self-consciousness or the awareness of the self as the provider of meaning to history.

This is a tall order indeed and indicative of Roy's radicalism, which was reductionist to the effect that a generic argument for humanism is only provided through Roy's stringent individualism. The humanisation of 'man' is only possible through freedom, which enables

[102] This critique does not, of course, apply to self-sacrifice under informed conditions and given that the act of self-sacrifice would be constitutive of an individual's expression of a desire for freedom. In part, Narayan's rhetoric about the costs of providing for the welfare of all is to be read in the context of nation building. In this sense, Narayan tried to provide a bridge between the demanding aspect of traditional rhetoric of nationalism and the aspect of autonomous decision-making by individuals. Hence, the tension in his writings on the new man are to be interpreted as the tensions between a commitment to unity and generality as well as a parallel, and often dominant commitment to individualism. This is a very Rousseauian dilemma, found in Narayan, but not resolved by him. Yet, we see a *difference* to the Rousseauian Marxist tradition in so far Narayan's deepest concerns remain individual morality rather than the general good.

individuality to develop. Otherwise, 'man' as a species being remains indistinguishable from the rest of nature. In this sense, materialism was not only the basis of Roy's ontological worldview but formed the core of his normative thinking that perceived materialism as wholly antithetical to traditional Indian concepts of spiritual human nature[103] as well as to Marxism's aberrations into the metaphysical. Despite Roy's rejection of Indian, and specifically Hindu thought, he did see a link between his notion of materialism and ancient Indian materialism, called the *Carvaka* school of thought. The latter can be traced within diverse scripts of the Vedic period between 2500 BC and 600 BC, in some of the dialogues of the Buddhist and Jain period between 600 BC and 200 AD, as well as in the reconstruction of the lost main work, the *Brhaspati Sutra* of 600 BC via commentaries and discussions. Also termed *Lokayata* philosophy, it holds that sensory perception is the only authority with regard to knowledge.

Roy's leanings on *Lokayata* philosophy, although referred to in the secondary literature,[104] have not been taken seriously enough with respect to the effects of its translation. *Loka* for one means world, and therefore refers to a this-worldly philosophy. However it can also be derived from l*ok*, meaning person, and thereby refers to a person-centred philosophy. Generally, the aspect of this-worldliness has been given predominance by most commentators of *Carvaka*, but for Roy the significance of this-worldliness lay mainly in its consequences for individual freedom, i.e. that individuals are not enslaved to the promise of an imaginary world of the past or future. For Roy, the disappearance of materialist thought in Hindu India as a result of the restrictive social laws of the Indo-Aryan culture in the 4th century AD was final.[105] The focus thus shifted to the European Renaissance, which signified the victory of the concept of the differentiated individual over the uniform, conformist member of a group and the blind professor of faith. To be sure, Roy presented a starkly generalised notion of Eastern spiritualism versus Western materialism, reminiscent of the terms of political discourse in pre-independence Hindu revivalism, but what we are interested in is what bearing this had on his notion of a new man.

In line with historical development and given modernity's stress on scepticism and the impossibility of simply discovering truth, Roy's concept of 'new man' is never complete. While this aspect of permanent development is very much in line with Marxist thinking on the

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[103] Roy, *Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary: India's Message*, pp.110-145. For summaries of *Carvaka* ideas, see Radhakrishnan/Moore (eds), 1957, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, p.227 onwards. Also, Sharma, 1987, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, p. 41 onwards.

[104] Mehta, *Foundations of Indian Political Thought: An Interpretation. From Manu to the Present Day*, p.238.

[105] Roy, *Materialism. An Outline of the History of Scientific Thought*, pp.111-112.

human being, Roy's concept humanism painted an intriguing picture of man as a profoundly humble being.[106] One of Roy's most charming as well as informative pieces on this issue are to be found in his *Memoirs of a Cat.* In contrast to Narayan's position, the thrust of this piece is to make the anti-spiritualist position clear, which according to Roy, had led to weakening of individualism. Hence, humility is more than accepting a certain uniformity within nature; it is a challenge for individuals to put to use their individual brains rather than relying on extraneous sources of power and control. This is to be read against the background of Roy's materialism; firstly, as a reminder that there is no *a priori* status accorded to humanity and secondly, that the privileged position of individuals to shape history and nature does not stem from an extraneous non-materialist source, such as God. To conceive of either would give rise to an unjustified arrogance of *mankind,* and obscure the onus placed on *individual* effort to shape the world.

The primacy accorded to the individual did not therefore entail the primacy of Marx's *Gattungswesen,* replete with a special place in nature. Man's special role is the shaping of history and of nature, but this is only achieved by individuals in search of freedom. Consequently, the social has no importance in Roy's thought, barring society's use as a means to individuals' 'self-expression, which is another name for freedom'. Furthermore, society's usefulness is neither perennial nor unconditional.[107] The instrumentalisation of individuals' sociability is striking in Roy's writings and can be used to demonstrate his distance from Marxism.[108] What is missing from this account though is the idea of mutual acts of recognition, which communitarians like Narayan would find problematic. It would not be problem to embark on a detailed critique of Roy, yet our perspective is that Roy's background in Indian political thought after the failure of *Lokayata* philosophy severely undermined the idea of the individual. The 'new' individual, in order to be new, had to be distanced from precisely those aspects of social life that are likely to render the quest for self-expression impotent, i.e. by framing the parameters of self-expression as continuity and a certain measure of homogeneity.

Yet the elevation of the individual does not turn Roy or Narayan into anti- or ex-Marxists. Rather, their notions echo those of critical Marxists and in some respects anticipate those of post-Marxists. Arguments that favour subjectivity over reliance on structures are familiar to Marxist theories and the Soviet example shows just how much they had also pervaded

[106] Refer to Ray, *Selected Works of M. N. Roy*, p.464.
[107] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.101.
[108] Churchich, *Marxism and Morality: A Critical Examination of Marxist Ethics*, p.227. Churchich refers to Marx's 'German Ideology' in which he explicitly rejects the egoistic individualism of Holbach, Helvetius and Bentham, for whom society is not an end but merely a means.

orthodox theories. But more contemporary concerns were touched upon as well, e.g. the dissociation of the individual from considerations of class as well as the idea of cumulative development regarding the creation of a new man, doing away with both dialectics and a simplistic version of linear development.

Certainly, more sophisticated arguments have been made that try to bridge the gap between Kantian transcendental subjectivity and the power of structuralist theory. The (circular) connection is made by viewing subjects as primary but as being both constituted by history, socio-political structures etc., as well as constituting the same.[109] Marx did that as well. In their writings, Roy and Narayan displayed sensitivity to constitutive factors, by taking into account India's socio-economic particularities that affect self-expression and the fact that structures change across time. They also displayed sensitivity to constituting factors by arguing that these structures can be changed or overcome, for instance the inhibitions posed by caste. The concern for individuals' control over their world though arose specifically out of the background of totalitarianism that characterised much of the first half of the twentieth century. Their analysis shows that it was not so much the problem of victimisation as the problem of acquiescence that was feared. Roy's ideas in particular remind us of concepts like the 'fear of freedom', as Erich Fromm put it, whereby structures that negate freedom are actually perceived as implying security and belonging.[110] The question is then how to reconcile the longing for structure with the desire for freedom?

Hence, Roy and Narayan, even while starting to get caught up in the beginnings of the doubts about the modern project – the turn away from teleology, the stress on sceptical inquiry in science, the rejection of Kantian notions of man – felt that it was not enough to engage in retrospective critique. Instead, they also combined their critique with a corrective in a hope for a reconstructivist politics. In our mind, the literature on Narayan and Roy has indeed set out the main ideas of their critique and correctly pointed out the arguments for rational and moral action as the means of correcting politics. Yet this corrective has been seen as mainly a reaction to corrupt political practice in India, Europe, and the Soviet Union. What we argue though is that their thoughts on morality are only partly a reaction to a-moral and im-moral practice. It is also a corrective to the openness that is visible in 20th century modern society

[109] Isaac, *On the Subject of Political Theory*, pp.640-642. Isaac applies this argument to the more satisfactory account given by theorists such as Charles Taylor and Anthony Giddens as a response to the less convincing propositions of subjectivity put forward by Kantians on the one hand and Foucaultians on the other hand, i.e. to the dichotomy between a universal human essence and the creation of humans as products of discourse and power.

[110] Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom*, p.10. Fromm's arguments differ from Roy and Narayan's given his principal interest in establishing the dynamics of human nature in psychological or intra-personal terms, seen as a counter-view to the adaptation of human nature to external cultural patterns.

that as a reaction to the spirit of totalitarianism. When freedom seems endangered, the tendency is to look for signs that delegitimise and destabilise compulsion. Roy in particular pointed to the link between 'the quicksand of transcendentalism and the pitfalls of relativity'[111], resulting in 'the choice between a modern barbarism promising material well-being and security in a socially regimented and spiritually enslaved life, or a relapse into mediaeval obscurantism in search of an illusory safety in the backwaters of faith.'[112] However, the threats to freedom are not overcome by complete openness. Creative action requires some positive moments of thought and it is in this context that we can better comprehend their take on morality.

4.8 The morality of revolution and individual morality: the means to a reconstructive politics

Whereas Soviet Marxism was a good case of an attempt at reconciliation between freedom and necessity, as well as between the social and the individual, Roy and Narayan shifted the focus of their critique somewhat. The tensions between necessity and freedom remained, albeit in another form, insofar the emphasis on scientific necessity was replaced with an emphasis on the moral necessity of a total or socialist revolution, which was done by appealing to the universal standards of virtue and reason. Marxism in practice has proven to be a failure when judged against standards of morality, according to Narayan, whereas the theory of dialectical materialism did not prove the necessity or even desirability of moral actions.[113] So why is morality important to Narayan and Roy? The secondary literature on Roy and Narayan has focused almost exclusively on their hopes of purifying politics for the sake of a moral order, which is an end in itself. This then raises the question of why not write moralistic tracts that outline their ideas on how a good moral order should be constituted? As a genre, this is neither unknown nor uninfluential. Yet, to read Roy and Narayan as moralisers who happen to choose the political as an example for their points on moral order is unduly simplistic and overlooks what they both indicated as their primary concern, namely the value of freedom.

Hence, what is needed for the emancipatory ideal of Total Revolution to be realised is the fostering of an *interest* in freedom and the moral content that it entails. [114] Necessity read

[111] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, p.456.
[112] Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, p.450.
[113] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.97-98.
[114] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.138.

through the notion of interest is different from necessity as a teleological category. As we have seen in the previous chapter in the section on means and ends, Narayan and Roy believed that freedom from all compulsions would always be linked to the standpoint of a-moralism and ultimately result in im-moralism. As morality in terms of political means is closely connected to the politics of power and control, freedom is effectively compromised. Hence, from Roy and Narayan's point of view, an interest in morality actually enables freedom and vice versa. Two ideas are intertwined in Narayan's, but particularly in Roy's notions of morality and its link with freedom, played out on two levels of application. One is that freedom *per se* is a fixed moral concept in its own right, upheld by fixed norms derived from the principle of non-violence. The second idea we come across is that alongside the freedom to make history and change human nature, morality as an ethical code of conduct too is changeable. In their critiques of Marxism, Roy and Narayan maintained that the methods of revolution violated the principle of freedom and morality. In attempting to transcend this limitation they focused on the individual as a vehicle of change in moral norms as well as being the sole agent of effecting a common code of ethical conduct.

In either usage the morality they are advocating, be it through the language of virtue (Narayan) or reason (Roy), is indeed about rules of creative action, but is eidetic rather than deontic.[115] This means that instead of *limiting* possibilities of action, morality is eidetic in that it *constitutes* rule-bound action. If the absence of rules leads to its excess in terms of power politics, the world therefore needs rules that on the one hand curb these excesses as well as constitute the notion of creativity that is respectful and accepting of interdependence. Freedom is otherwise an empty concept at the least and able to swing towards repression at its worst.

Revolutions are generally characterised by relations of domination. The loss of freedom associated with domination not only signifies that the moral principle of freedom is violated, but is also followed by a loss of a moral basis in its chosen political means. Even Marxist revolutions therefore lack in ground to be authoritative voices for meaningful change as the overt reliance on structures of power to condition change only brings forth the lack of individual empowerment. The debate within Marxism as to whether it indeed comprises a moral stance or whether it actually is an ideology of a-moralism and even anti-moralism is not

[115] For an exposition of the difference between deontic and eidetic rules, see Amadeo G. Conte, 'Dimensions of Nomic Freedom.' In: Carter and Ricciardi, *Freedom, Power, and Political Morality*, pp.62-72. Here, nomic freedom refers to rule-relative possibility. The example given is of dams as deontic rules, i.e. insofar they render the free flow impossible, and riverbanks as eidetic rules in that they constitute the river itself and are inseparable from the idea of a river.

likely to be resolved, even in contemporary discussions.[116] It is argued that the anti-moralism that is seen as inherent in Marxism is however not so much a statement of the redundant status of morality as it is a description of the dialectical method of the revolutionary process. Thus, means and ends are dialectically interrelated within a single process of revolution.[117] Roy and Narayan, in eschewing dialectics and choosing to equate means and ends, argued against the above view.[118]

What this serves to show though, is that the Roy and Narayan's position regarding morality and Marxism was a rather one-sided view, based mainly on the methods of control that were deployed mainly within the East Bloc in Europe as well as the tactics of terror used by the Indian communist party. What they did not look for was a moral position within Marxism as a real existing ideology, having its roots in Marx's moral critique of capitalism. The im-moral consequences of Marxism's a-moral stance were explained primarily in empirical terms, i.e. cases of violence and cases of the loss of civil liberties. The seeming loss of freedom as an intransient moral principle thus refuted the notion of opposition as a method of the moral development of an ideology. Furthermore, as Steven Lukes points out, Marxism's long-range consequentialism and perfectionist theory built on the explanatory power of the macro-level of the social and the historical.[119] The urgency of rebuilding India's society thus could not be satisfied, neither by a long-term vision nor by the situating of the vision within a collective. Rather, social change at the micro-level of the individual had to be contemplated.

The point made in favour of an individual-level morality ties in with a concern that in effect goes beyond the criticism of Marxism. Narayan and Roy were also concerned with more general changes in the state of the world. Roy especially deprecated the scepticist, relativist and existentialist interpretations of individual and social life, leading to a widespread lethargic outlook. That a lack of focus, combined with a sense of the pervasive structure of power relations, can lead to a lack of meaning in politics is a point that has been made with great intensity by various proponents of the contemporary Critical movement.[120] A major issue for

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[116] Nielsen, *Marxism and the Moral Point of View: Morality, Ideology, and Historical Materialism.* Nielsen examines the defence of the notion that a moral critique was inherent in Marx as put forward by G.A.Cohen, Gary Young, Jon Elster against those who see in Marxism an inherently anti-moralistic stance, such as Allen Wood, Andrew Collier, Richard Miller, Anthony Skillen et al. In his own defence of Marxist morality, Nielsen claims that much of the focus of 'moral Marxism' has been on justice. See for example Peffer, *Marxism, Morality, and Social Justice.* Nielsen proposes to enlarge this position by establishing that historical materialism does allow for a contextualisation of moral principles, even if they are not eternal principles. Roy's position is comparable with Nielsen's argument.

[117] Churchich, *Marxism and Morality: A Critical Examination of Marxist Ethics*, p.247.

[118] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.64, p.70.

[119] Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, pp.142-147.

[120] In this case, we mean the work of Jürgen Habermas, Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Nancy Fraser, and Peter Dews.

Roy and Narayan was also the question of power, although posed in normative terms, whereas the Critical school was also concerned with its explanatory content and its implications for politics.[121] Yet, the challenge of upholding ethical principles in the face of the impossibility of grand level theories and the possibly debilitating effect of post-modern theories can be met, according to Todd May. May wishes to rescue 'poststructuralism', or that line of thought which has been charged the most with an inability to commit to fundamental *principles* of political action, from the criticism of pointlessness. We are here not so much interested in May's case for poststructuralism's inherent moral standpoint as drawing some parallels between this contemporary project and that of Roy and Narayan, enabling us to understand the importance of Roy and Narayan's less represented moral positions for their political radicalism. It is important for two reasons. One is its direct bearing on India's chance at constructing a strong radical movement, and the second is its impressive foresight within not only India's political landscape but also within a more global drift in seeing the world in a different manner.

The problem we have in a traditional reading of Roy and Narayan is that they are cast in the image of proponents of 'virtuous' politics, i.e. where universal principles of morality are abided by. Their position was more complex though and also display differences in their respective concepts of morality. Narayan's overt commitment to values and principles did make a case for a project of foundational virtue vs. corrupt political practice, despite his overt commitment to the principle of individual freedom. Roy on the other hand argued that morality, as a direct function of reason, is dependent on the state of knowledge at a particular time. Hence, his argument against Marxism is better phrased as an attack on Marxism's failure to stress reason over dogma, rather than a critique of its moral vacuum as a separate category altogether. For Roy, morality is therefore not defined as a substantive common good, but is a common code of behaviour, i.e. following the *modus operandi* of rational and sceptical thought. Moral judgement is therefore about action that emanates out of a natural functioning of reason based on the autonomy of ideas as well as material facts.

Roy's argument ties in well with a general spirit of optimism present in the first half of the 20th century regarding science and scientific reasoning. Rather than standing for the technology of collating and explaining data, science was considered as being a method of inquiry encompassing both the given and the possible. Whereas the former position rightly points to the impossibility of scientifically discovering morality as natural human behaviour,

[121] May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, pp.122-123.

rather than as an outcome of a set of conditions,[122] the latter position argues for a correction not through the divorce of science, reason and morality but through the acceptance of their interdependence. On the one hand human relationships are indeed structured in the light of a corpus of knowledge that science provides. On the other hand, science must also lead to moral judgements that are in line with its underlying method of independent and open-ended inquiry. The immorality of deception and of the instrumentalisation of human beings cannot be addressed for instance in a world where scientific judgement does not take place through reason, but where scientific data is appropriated by the interests if industrial corporations, business-managed foundations, government and the like.[123] Morality becomes relegated to being a non-rational part of contemporary society. In other words, the separation of explanation and judgement comes at the price of independent quest for answers, the (known) means of which is reason.

Roy's ideas seem fruitful given the tenor of contemporary debates on politics and ethics that increasingly stress the factors of contingence, of context, and of practice. Through these ideas we see that there are bridges to be built between forms of transcendental universalism and insular communitarianism.[124] There seems to be no doubt that especially Western thought has been dominated by the tension between a rule-based morality (to answer) and an individualistic creative morality (to question).[125] Similarly, Roy and to a lesser degree, Narayan were less convinced of a natural end or a natural good towards which we are inclined, a position that is not represented in the secondary literature. Rather, their standpoint on morality was not to view it as *doxa*, nor to argue for a pluralist perspective, but to accept an 'articulate moral framework only provisionally, as an approximate fit to our underlying sensibilities, while we embark on a quest.'[126] Narayan as well as Roy's language of their individual 'quest' and 'search' for freedom are one of the most important and explicit indications of their position that opens the idea of morality in freedom rather than closes it.

We can now see how Roy and Narayan's prescriptions for India's polity after independence are able to parallel each other even when coming from rather disparate positions on morality

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[122] Schwartz, *The Battle for Human Nature: Science, Morality, and Modern Life.*
[123] Simpson, *The Scientist -Technician or Moralist?* , p.96.
[124] Rasmussen, *Universalism Vs. Communitarianism. Contemporary Debates in Ethics.*
[125] Stephanie A. Nelson, 'Full Circle: From Plato to Plato.' In: Thompson, *Instilling Ethics*, pp.215-219. Post-Nietzschean psychology of the individual has however come up with bioscience that answers questions of morality for the individual while the rule of modern politics (deliberative democracy, multiculturalism etc.) is to question. The tension between judgement and uniform code remains. Likewise, for Roy and Narayan, moral sensibilities in individuals are likely to be uniform, but to flesh these out, a system of radical politics is to be instated so that the freedom of the individual retains priority over and above similarities of moral compulsions.
[126] We have borrowed this differentiation from Calhoun, *Morality, Identity, and Historical Explanation: Charles Taylor on the Sources of the Self*, pp.239-240.

and its origins. Furthermore, the political consequences they proposed were not so far removed from arguments for radical democracy that come from a variety of contemporary positions. Some seek to situate the moral concerns we must address in order to lead an examined life in networks of relationships that critically bring together the hitherto individually dominant concepts of science, state and market.[127] Roy and Narayan's thoughts are also reflected in pragmatic positions that defend individuals' abilities to justify principles and to make judgements despite the abandonment of certainty.[128] In the context of the history of the Indian left, we find that their view on morality as a necessary corrective should be accorded a lot of thought as a form of agonising over the future of Marxism as a moral voice.[129]

What we actually see here - and this indeed is a consequence of their primary commitment to freedom as individual autonomy and liberty - is an approach to the issue of morality that takes radicalism as its basis and therefore cannot be seen as an approach to morality that in itself answers the question of political and other choices. This to our mind explains the vagueness with which Roy and Narayan argued for values in politics as opposed to the far more articulate notion of how radical politics enable the formulation of these values within specific contexts of time and space, without however being perceived as strictly culture-specific. Therefore, rather than merely enjoining citizens to adhere to concrete moral ideals, Roy and Narayan were concerned with the conditions of moral behaviour. One aspect, and one that we see in May's presentation of the demands of the post-modern world, is the impossibility as well as undesirability of representation of individuals by others.[130] In other words, it is the interest that individuals have in moral codes of conduct that will enable them to be free. The second aspect to the issue of morality and freedom is the appreciation of what Narayan called pluralism, and what Roy perceived as being the counterbalance to an incapacitating uniformity. Freedom as self-expression would thereby only be possible under the condition of common codes of ethical conduct and as such, morality as the basis of meaningful communication has to be at the heart of a functioning radical democracy. The idea of freedom as a moral concept and the idea of morality as the condition for political freedom are inextricably intertwined.

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[127] Busch, *The Eclipse of Morality: Science, State, and Market.*
[128] Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation.*
[129] In reconstructing the morality of Marxian thought, Kitching points to the process of explanation-justification-responsibility that took place prior to the writing of the *Kapital*, and which should not be discarded at this stage either. See Gavin Kitching, 'Marxism and Reflexivity.' In: Kitching and Pleasants, *Wittgenstein and Marxism: Knowledge, Morality and Politics*, pp.245-246.
[130] Cf. May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, pp.131-132.

Concluding remarks

After having reviewed Roy and Narayan's approach to freedom in the way that we have, the following chapter will shed more light as to the consequences of this revision. In rejecting interpretations that speaking simply of the 'good ideals' that they seek to reinstate in politics, we will be able to understand their call for radical democracy somewhat better. We view them not as anti-Marxists but as having been at the beginnings of a possibly interesting, now arrested movement within the Indian left that could have engaged in a fruitful dialogue with its counterparts across the globe. Given their familiarity with Marxism, there is no evidence that Indian socialists necessarily had to reject the ideology in its multifaceted entirety. For the most part of Indian socialist circles however, this turn seemed to have a practical reasoning behind it, most certainly found in the particularist project of nation building. So rather than being an intellectual enterprise of wrestling with its internal tensions, the development away from Marxism seems to have had to do more with the cause of establishing an alternative political identity to the 'West', i.e. neither bourgeois-liberal, nor Soviet Marxist. But the meeting of East and West is irreversible and so the links once established by colonialism are difficult to wish away. In this sense, Narayan and Roy appear to be Marxist realists, which is reflected in their concern for universality, which, as neither were transcendentalists, took the form of finding commonalities between the own particular position and the world around it. Not only did this apply to the sharing of normative ideals, but also to developments in socio-material world. As such, it is unfortunate that the transitional elements of their thought and those elements that anticipated certain tendencies of what we have now come to describe as post-Marxism have been more or less ignored and thus undermined.

To a great extent, their internal dialogues can be situated within a common – Western and non-Western - background of the tension between an understanding of freedom as a sphere of openness, of creativity, of quest, and an understanding of the salience of the Marx's project of emancipation as necessarily a project of concrete aspirations, such as equality and justice. On the one hand this is voiced by Narayan's argument for a permanent revolution as well as by Roy's disbelief in a final solution to humanity's problems.[131] On the other hand, Roy and

[131] For example, Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.187. Intertwined with the question of Marxism's teleological character is the debate on whether the revolution is permanent or perpetual. Koren for example argues that the concept of revolution in Marxism is one of permanent motion, Koren, *Marx and the Authentic Man*, p.116. The difference however between a more traditional Marxist conception of permanence and one that is used in the context of a post-modern world is that the latter perceives impermanence on a horizontal plane, i.e. across society, whereas the former is related to impermanence on a vertical level of time, i.e. a necessary feature of the dialectical method. Roy and Narayan are more comfortably situated in a Marxist understanding of the permanence of revolution but at the same time are aware that horizontal fluidities may not be erased by anything but a radical approach.

Narayan remained true to Marxist sensibilities because of their reluctance to abandon in full the issue of totality, totalising revolution, as well as immutable substantive moral codes. However, beyond the substantive language, all that is signified by totality is interdependence and all that morality is related to is the aspect of violence in politics. Hence, the solutions they looked for were not in effect perfectionist solutions that would resolve the issue of conflict permanently but were about the way political life is conducted by individuals.

The themes of this tension are not new to the history of Marxism and post-Marxisms in Europe. Indeed, as Christopher Rocco argues, polarising the worlds of modernity and post-modernity has not been productive in that distinctions, which should be retained, have turned into 'systematised hierarchies.'[132]Using Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as an in-between, Rocco examines the oppositions between modernity and post-modernity as a positive method of dealing with the issues of modernity's search for solutions and post-modernity's scepticism of consensus by looking at the two poles as both preconditions as well as limits to each other.[133] Crucially, the modern project provides the impetus for the political language of 'a vision of a free and just society that genealogical critique necessarily ignores...Without the ideals of justice, democracy and the good life it might not be possible to understand (and resist) the injustice, evil, and oppression they generate.'[134] Of this, Roy and Narayan seemed to have been aware, as well as of the futility of countering problems with the same conceptual tools that generated these problems in the first place. For Roy in particular, Marxism's internal workings were connected to feelings of guilt, homogenisation and a belief in totality that denied individuality.[135] As such, the tool of Marxism was seen as both a watershed of emancipation, and at the same time as having brought about the problems of an oppressed life, which it was supposed to liberate humanity from.

Roy and Narayan's emancipatory ideals were two-fold in accepting the openness of the historical, the individual and the moral and in setting out more substantive aspirations. The simplified distinctions between a Kantian type of individualism as a base for equality and the Romantic notion of individualism as a base for self-fulfilment are both present in their

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[132] Rocco, *Between Modernity and Postmodernity: Reading Dialectic of Enlightenment against the Grain*, p.91.

[133] Rocco posits four oppositional pairs: critical reconstruction as opposed to a genealogical critique of reason; Enlightenment's emancipatory potential against its disciplinary consequences; total theory against local theory and practice; democratic consensus as opposed to democratic normalisation. Rocco, *Between Modernity and Postmodernity: Reading Dialectic of Enlightenment against the Grain*, p.73.

[134] Rocco, *Between Modernity and Postmodernity: Reading Dialectic of Enlightenment against the Grain*, p.90.

[135] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.15. The identical critical language is used to argue the case for Horkheimer and Adorno's 'middle ground.' Cf. Rocco, *Between Modernity and Postmodernity: Reading Dialectic of Enlightenment against the Grain*, pp.80-84.

notions. Consequently, the ideal of self-expression functions both as an ideal of perpetual development as well as of responsible self-realisation. To this effect, freedom is at the core of the dichotomy we find in Roy and Narayan's writings. As a value, it enables the pursuit of the concept of the open, and as a state of being or as a condition, it enables the aspiration to self-realisation. Although Roy's leanings towards the Romantic ideal were far more pronounced, the tense relationship between individualism for the sake of political equality and individualism for the sake of personal development were found in both thinkers. It is in this light that we turn our attention to Roy and Narayan's ideal of political freedom, which purportedly answers the question of how social life is to be organised to encompass the ideals of liberty and of self-expression. For them, radical democracy provided this answer as the tool of empowerment as well as of emancipation through transformation and realisation.

Chapter 5

On Radical Democracy

Thus far we have reassessed Roy and Narayan's respective concepts of liberty and self-expression, which form the background to their criticism of Marxism as well as being the driving force of their reconceptualisation of politics. Subsumed by both as 'freedom', this idea was granted the status of the single most important concern of individuals and society. Yet for both, Marxism clearly did not address the fundamental issue of freedom adequately, neither as a theoretical concept nor in practice. As a supposedly universalist ideology that was based on the idea of emancipation, Marxism was taken very seriously in the context of colonial India. The promise of freedom was however not fulfilled in what was to be the most influential site of realising Marxist theory, i.e. the political system of the Soviet Union. The search for the appropriate political system that both embodied and enabled the ideals of 'freedom' had to be redirected. While the ideal itself is neither novel nor extraordinary, it seems remarkable that the historical, political, and social circumstances of India on the verge of political independence did not lead Roy or Narayan to argue for a democratic nation state as the answer to their problems. Although they arrived at the solution from different angles, the concept of radical democracy became the point of confluence for Roy and Narayan's political thinking. Reflecting critical thinking, striving to preserve certain ideals, and attempting to set out an innovative political system for post-colonial India, their concepts of radical democracy are multilayered, often ambiguous, yet highly interesting in the current political climate in both East and West that has acknowledged the failure of dualisms: ideologically, morally, epistemologically and other.

The search for successful models on which to base a new polity is an almost self-explanatory notion, particularly given the strength of growing interdependencies that were perversely fostered by common modern experiences of nationalism, colonialism, imperialism and fascism, culminating in two world wars. Situating India within the world resulted in the ability to critique failures outside of India, but to also use the same as explanations for failures within Indian politics. Conversely, the point of interdependence also meant being able to outline a different yet plausible approach to the problem of politics that could be new and exemplary at the same time. Roy and Narayan considered the failures apparent in known political systems in different ways, which of course was also due to Roy's keener interest in the idea of reason, which he believed was connected most intimately with especially the history of Europe. The Soviet Union and the axial powers of Europe stood for two facets of a desirable political system, yet that had to be complemented by the other in order for a fuller image of a good polity to emerge out of the Second World War.

For Roy, the breakdown of social democracy in Europe and the rise of a communist-nationalist alliance in the Soviet Union led to the reshaping of ideological conflict. No longer was the conflict between communism and fascism or communism and social democracy but between 'dictatorial communism and a resurgent idea of democracy.'[1] This new process of polarisation, as Roy perceived it to be, would not have been a problem were it not 'frustrated by the selfishness of nationalism.' Roy's ideal scenario of a post-World War II Anglo-Soviet axis that would see the democratisation of the Soviet Union and the socialisation of Western Europe was thwarted, which did not bode well for India's political trajectory given her proximity to the British Empire. In our reading of Roy, we posit that the acceptance of the impossibility of the fulfilment of the 'thesis' – 'not hope or expectation' - of détente and reconciliation of interests as well as the impossibility of the realisation of political and other freedoms through grand yet frustrated ideologies[2] redirected his search for a democratic order to its roots. In other words, rather than the manifestation of democracy through world *orders*, the impetus for its resurgence was to come from those who are directly affected by political decision-making, i.e. individuals and local groups.

Narayan arrived at a similar conclusion, coming from a narrower focus on India, Russia and China. The promise of a good political order in all three countries was defeated on grounds of poor governance and the pursuit of the politics of dominance for its own sake. India's failure to achieve freedom for its citizens was in great part due to the failure of the land reform movement. Perceiving its causes in the emergence of a strong state that reflected the interests of the landed few, Narayan believed this to have been vindicated by the cases of the Soviet Union and China. Here he discerned not just examples of state violence, accompanied by the lack of political and civil liberties, at several levels in the Soviet Union and in China. More seriously, as experiments in a 'socialist' word order, these countries were highly influential with regard to the political trends of the South Asian left. Two serious problems undermining a democratic order were the unchecked episodes of purges and trials of dissenting voices in the Soviet Union as well as a "people's democratic dictatorship" in China.[3]

The apparent failure of communist political systems to convince its supporters in India of its desirability, not merely success, and the failure of social democracy in Europe led Narayan to argue for re-evaluating the methods that might lead to democracy becoming a success. As problematic as the assumption was that India's political landscape was a *tabula rasa* from the time of independence, Narayan did dare to look beyond the examples of the two most influential alternatives to the European political orders of national-socialism and social democracy in order to arrive at the conclusion that

[1] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.83.
[2] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.82.
[3] Narayan, *The Evolution Towards Sarvodaya*, pp.12-13. Here Narayan referred to the conflict between the supporters of Chiang Kai-Shek and those of Mao.

only radical change would be fruitful in bringing about democracy and that there was enough evidence to garner support for this claim. For him, radical democracy was the answer to not only India's quest for an independent, alternative political system but also to India's citizens' quest for autonomy. The latter claim effectively formed the basis for both Roy and Narayan's trust that direct, participatory and system-changing democracy was the best way of organising politics.

The conditions of the early to mid-twentieth century seemed ideal for a plea for radical change. Shifts in the paradigms regarding the state of the world overlapped each other in different domains quite remarkably. The idea of non-duality, inferred rather than understood from the developments in the physical sciences, spilled over into the social sciences. Thus, in quite an interesting way, the stress laid on 'enlightened', reason-led scientific training of the educated classes within the British Empire effected notions that fundamentally and reasonably overturned ideas that involved either two parties engaged in relationships of dominance and reaction. The various references to non-duality made by Roy and Narayan need to be spelled out more clearly in terms of their political implications. What we are not concerned with here is the accuracy of their extrapolations of advances made in understanding and categorising physical phenomena.

Most importantly, the notion of non-duality was made with reference to the concept of the person – no longer a composite of universal mind and particular matter. Rather, the inseparability of physical body and personal mind translated into an intimate connection of person and will. As such, the belief in natural or even in the ability to guide socio-political developments from the conception of an idea until its realisation was eroded. Even in the case of Roy, who lays great stress on the idea of reason, we see that reason is primarily connected to personal will. While its physical basis is to be found in universal nature, its manifestation in the social sphere can only take place as the result of individual effort. Applying the same principle to the politics of nationalism, the rejection of dominance of one actor over the other also applied to the dominance of an independent state within an international system of states over a dependent populace, who were represented by spokespeople like legislators and professional politicians.

The critique of Marxism by Roy and Narayan therefore focused firstly on its theory that seemingly legitimised a dictatorship of the proletariat. Secondly, its practice too was deemed regressive insofar it involved the taking over the traditional functions of a religious ecclesia by a political party that presumed to speak for each individual. The task that was at hand was therefore to organise a political system such that respected civil liberties on the assumption that there is a universal argument against domination, that enabled the realisation of political and personal freedom and the development of self-expression of individuals on the assumption that there is a universal argument for the benefits of such freedom, and that symbolised an understanding of the non-representation of individuals. Radical

democracy offered a comprehensive solution to the state of the world in the mid-twentieth century. It is in effect a blend of these demands - the marginalizing of the state, implying the liberal nature of democracy; the fostering of radically individualistic elements in democracy, implying the self-expressive and transformative nature of democracy; and the situating of political decision-making in the local and personal sphere, implying the discursive and direct nature of democracy.

The enormity of these demands is compounded by the de facto *evolution* of the idea of 'freedom' that was to be captured in its entirety within the notion of radical democracy. The often competing notions of freedom are freedom from want, freedom to self-government, freedom as the driving force of social change. While these concepts can be addressed in accordance with historical phases that coincide with Roy and Narayan's intellectual development from pre-independence to post-colonial concerns, radical democracy is posited as the single answer to all of these claims. The very idea of radical democracy, as simple as Roy and Narayan make it sound, is in fact a rather complex one and entails two components. Firstly, it purports to empower the 'masses' vis-à-vis political elites, be they colonial or nationalist. Secondly, it aims at transcending of historical categories of nature and history by emphasising the individualistic and creative aspect of political life. The latter point is however particularly Roy's project and can be viewed as the more radical of concepts.

The radical democratic politics of Roy and Narayan treads the path between realising freedom through a conventional interpretation of empowerment and, perhaps paradoxically, the institutional resolution of 'permanent' revolution, or permanent change, where it no longer makes sense to use essentialist categories of either human nature or society. The thesis claims that while the ideas of permanent change and of individual freedom is a core component of Marxian thought, there are aspects in Roy and Narayan's political ideas that testify to an attempt to move beyond these ideas in keeping with the concerns of totalitarianism and development in the sciences. Together, these entail the rejection of representation, the discarding of duality and therefore of dialectics, the necessary stress put on imagination as the basis for socio-political change. Although treading the path towards what is now deemed *post*-Marxist thought in a tentative way and displaying ambiguities and tensions in their thought, we argue that Roy and Narayan's ideas deserve greater attention than has been accorded so far. In theoretical terms, they provide a basis for comparative studies in Marxism in the East and the West. In practical terms, the air of futility that pervades Indian politics in its meanderings between a failed secularism, a confrontational communalism and a resignation to the economic logic of neo-liberalism could be lifted through greater stress on rediscovering the meaning of freedom in terms of autonomy and free will. This means that all substantive issues become political and contested rather than providing the basis for political decision-making. This includes the ideas of secularism, the idea of tradition and community as well as the idea of global neo-liberalism.

Not only does the work of Roy and Narayan underline the innovative aspects of left thinking in India but due to the foresight they displayed in part, their ideas should properly have a place within a broad spectrum of radical democratic thought as a concept that has captured the political imagination of part of the European and Anglo-American left. Especially in the last decades of the past century there has been a remarkable revival of the radical political thought, set up to be either a convincing alternative to existing political systems or to perfect current models of democracy, namely such that are complementary theories of liberal democracy.[4] All of these, regardless of their differences, express hope about the emancipatory aspect of political radicalism that can be expressed in a variety of ways. Both aspects are found simultaneously in Roy and Narayan, leading to the speculation of whether there is indeed a case for radical democracy as a political system that can be expected to function in different ways at the same time. The search for alternatives over time on the other hand often obstructs constructive dialogue between competing interests, resulting the much-deplored trends of de-politicisation or of confrontation. The outcomes are less than ideal – the proliferation of violence, the deferral to eschatological history, and the resigned withdrawal from the political as the sphere of the public. None of these states of being offer a positive contribution to the social and political world if left unnoticed.

By way of a counter-trend, based partly on the acknowledgement that the world since Marx has indeed changed and partly on an interest in offering a normatively desirable alternative political system, several ideas of radical democracy have been formulated in contemporary debates within the left. The terms vary and so do of course the underlying substantive issues, e.g. of radical democracy, deliberative democracy, discursive democracy. There is on the other hand some common element that characterises these theories as being concerned with committing to an expansive notion of democracy that is informed by a critical take on Marxism and its links to deep-structure theories, its teleological premises, its impersonal and objective character, its essentialist underpinning as well as its amoral manifestation. While these criticisms have not always been voiced in unison and in similar ways, on an even more fundamental level of criticism we detect a serious concern with the issue of freedom relating to history, society and the individual. Hence, an expansive notion of democracy is proposed as the political realisation of what is taken to be Marxism's underlying preoccupation with the end of oppression. This is voiced in two ways, the one being theories of empowerment and the second being more ambitious theories of social transformation.

In the former case radical democracy is viewed as an extension of liberal-democratic theory, which is perhaps best exemplified by the discussions generated by Chantal Mouffe.[5] Mouffe argues that radical

[4] Participatory democracy and its roots: see the work of Mills, Goodman, William, Kaufman. In: Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action. The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970.*
[5] Mouffe, *Dimensions of Radical Democracy.*

democracy is in fact a deepening and the perfecting of liberal-democracy. To this end, the notion of citizenship is strengthened, deploying the institutions associated with social pluralism, such as a vibrant civil society. These themes that are indeed not apparently about revolutionary radical democracy are primarily found in conceptions of democracy that take interests as given, such as in utilitarian approaches, in elitist, pluralist and consensualist schools.[6]

Narayan is a softer radical in his tendency to put forward naturalistic-organicist arguments for radical democracy, and is thus closer to the empowerment tradition of post-Marxism that takes very seriously republican ideals of the body politic.[7] Roy is a stronger radical in his argument for the possibility of innovative choices and action. Relating to the more far-reaching projects of social transformation, theories such as Unger's help to situate especially Roy's political thought. Herein we find Unger's argument that society is primarily artificial and therefore far more malleable to imaginative and creative change than acknowledged so far. This comes closer to concepts of democracy that aim at the transformation of people's preferences, e.g. theories of popular sovereignty, of perfectionism and dialogism. Jon Elster tries to situate these theories within a history of political ideas and maintains that while the idea that democracy revolves around the transformation rather than aggregation of interests is one of the major positions in contemporary democratic theory, it is a theory of revival rather than of innovation.[8] Although there is no unbridgeable conflict, this position is also grounded in a critique of the liberal school of thought. The latter's reliance on questions of rights and *a priori* interests are considered restrictive for the purposes of political debate, barring discussions of substantive moral issues for instance.[9]

It is however easier to identify similar concerns rather than similar considerations as the basis of this brief comparison. Not only do the differences between Roy and Narayan's work and similarly termed projects in Western critical Marxism indicate that in stages of transitional thought focal points do vary along with varying areas of tension, but that there are also more pragmatically explained differences in historical experiences. What they share is a concern regarding a totalitarian political order, a vision of the end of economic, political and social oppression, as well as an insight into the necessity of radical politics as a means to attain a fuller meaning of democracy. The differences lie mainly in terms of questions of the state, questions of legitimacy, and questions of procedure.[10] Regarding the first issue, David Held notes that one of the key weaknesses of orthodox Marxist thought was its latter

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[6] Nino, *The Constitution of Deliberative Democracy*, pp.70-92.
[7] See Quentin Skinner, 'On Justice, the Common Good, and the Priority of Liberty. In: Mouffe, *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, pp.217-224.
[8] Elster, *Deliberative Democracy.*
[9] Refer to the writings of contemporary theorists on democracy who address this issue, e.g. Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations.* Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Macedo and Gutmann, *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement.*
[10] For contemporary preoccupations in the field of studies on democracy refer to Trend, *Radical Democracy.*

and exclusive focus on the role of the Party as an instrument of revolution, thereby reducing the question of state power to a secondary position.[11] Narayan and Roy too clearly felt that the issue of state power deserved to be addressed. Their perspective though was coloured by the fear of a strong, centralised state. As such, the state was a core consideration with regard to the possibility and success of a radical democratic political system. The state was a problem but not one that could be supplanted by the concept of revolution. Far from it, for a revolution to be successful it had to be defined as a force that primarily defied the centrifugal forces of state power.

A second point of contrast is to be found with regard to some New Left theories of democracy that for the most part presuppose the state as an adequate vehicle of democracy and an adequate guarantor of liberty and equality in the public sphere, i.e. in sustaining a democratic civil society. However, rather than examining the substantive issues that are to be resolved, contemporary accounts of democracy as acts of deliberation as well as free and equal access to deliberation focus on the view of democracy as a valuable procedure in itself.[12] Here, Roy and Narayan's considerations tie in with Held's criticism that the New Left has simplified democratic processes to the extent that the process *per se* prevails over all other considerations, i.e. that collective decision-making has become the primary social objective to be achieved.[13] Without a sense of a deep relationship between form and content, it is difficult to see the merits of a radical democratic order. Only when one believes, as Narayan and Roy did, that the value of radical democracy also lies in its capacity to enable a reassessment of issues rather than their mere expression is it possible to acknowledge their contribution to the field of Indian political thought.

We are therefore trying to re-read Roy and Narayan in a far more differentiated way and in doing so, hope to spell out the more positive aspects of their political thought, which could benefit a more detailed examination of the history of Marxist thought as well as provide a mode of critique of the Indian left that remains embedded in either ideological warfare or in acts of collaboration with dominant ideological forces.[14] We believe that Roy and Narayan's political thinking has been marginalized to the detriment of bringing to the fore some remarkable aspects of their work. Firstly, the refusal to counteract concepts of external domination such as colonialism with concepts of internal domination such as nationalism; secondly, the refusal to entertain identity politics that has become the bane of the left; thirdly, arguing for a cooperative rather than consensual model of radical democracy.

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[11] Held, *Political Theory and the Modern State: Essays on State, Power and Democracy*, p.50.
[12] See Bohman and Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics.*
[13] Held, *Political Theory and the Modern State: Essays on State, Power and Democracy*, p.179.
[14] Especially the grudgingly pragmatic acceptance of the latter serves to weaken the position of India's left parties that are being increasingly 'saffronised.' Cf. Banerjee, *Bengali Left: From Pink to Saffron?* .

Their contributions to radical democratic thought are thus to be viewed on different levels. While they are a very interesting study within Indian post-colonial left thought, on a more general level we find exemplary tensions between radical democracy as a particular mode of politics and what is hoped to be achieved through it. We find tension to be the result of viewing radical democracy as a mode of empowerment on the one hand, which appeals to the contemporary liberal left, and on the other hand, radical democracy as a mode of fundamental change in interests. Neither can do without the other without becoming redundant in contemporary society. Empowerment without a view to transformation becomes a case of projecting the personal into the public sphere rather than being political and innovative. On the flipside, radical change has to be sustained as an enterprise that is 'free and equal' in its conditions for all. Indeed, in Roy and Narayan we detect quite traditional notions of liberal-democratic Marxism, but we can also discern elements of thought that indicate a transition towards political theories that see political problems as being 'less about human nature than about the links between ethics and power.[15]

5.1 Adversarial conditions of empowerment: state and political parties

5.1.1 Power and the state

Reflections on Roy and Narayan's concept of radical democracy as empowerment have to be preceded by some observations on Roy and Narayan's ideas on power. Dennis Dalton includes Narayan and Roy in a cohesive school of Indian thought on politics and power that started with Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th century, and in the 20th century incorporated the ideas of Aurobindo Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave.[16] This school, Dalton contends, is remarkably similar to the Western anarchist school of thought.[17] Although based on a sweeping generalisation of anarchist thought in Europe, Dalton's purpose is to expose the radical individualistic elements inherent in Indian political thinking. The premise here is that power and politics should be secondary considerations in relation to the position of morality and spirituality. Given that the former stands for constraint whereas the latter stands for individual capacity and capability, political power is

[15] Wallach, *The Platonic Political Art. A Study of Critical Reason and Democracy*, p.411.
[16] Dennis Dalton, 'The Ideology of *Sarvodaya*: Concepts of Politics and Power in Indian Political Thought.' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.275.
[17] Part of Dalton's argument is of course meant to generalise certain streams of thought, while differentiating them from one another. He identifies three traditions of thought dealing with power and politics: the Greek model of a broad and all encompassing definition of politics that comprises a very strong use of power, albeit exercised wisely; secondly, a modern definition of power that stresses the private, the social and is concerned with dividing the powers held by the state in order for it to be checked; finally, an anarchist model that was developed in the 19th century, which upheld the primacy of the individual and a rejection of the state in order to

a totally inadequate instrument of change as it actively contaminates spirituality and poses limits on individual freedom. As such, power has come to have a very negative connotation in Indian thought.[18] This mainly moralistic notion is borne by the majority of Indian thinkers, and notably so by Narayan.

Clearly, the idea that moral authority and political power have been in line with each other in history and thus have reinforced each other is missing from this account. The answer to this analytical gap does not lie in the ignorance of this relationship but in a very selective notion of authority as stemming from a centralised source. The Church in European history is therefore a potent power-wielding institution. Hinduism on the other hand does not possess the concept of ecclesiastical authority, which is equated with power or the ability to coerce. Spiritual authority did not carry the same weight insofar its dictates were purportedly a matter to be recognised and voluntarily practiced by individuals. While the scope for critique of this position is immense, we restrict our attention to the notion of power as the domain of the secular ecclesia, or state, which has no intrinsic interest in the good of individuals' souls.

More importantly, it tells us in what way power is conceived of, namely as a constraint on individual capability that comprises the aspect of liberty and the ability to self-realisation and self-development. It is possibly a platitude to note that the word 'power' is used in a variety of ways. The two main uses are however most aptly described by the Latin terms of *potestas*, meaning legal competence, ability, authority and/or opportunity, as well as *potentia*, meaning influence, political/diplomatic power, might.[19] Using this distinction, the primary definition of power within the above mentioned Indian tradition is that of *potentia*, which carries a mainly negative connotation, i.e. coercion, dependency, violence. Roy and Narayan conceived of power as being a centralising force exercised primarily by the state, implying the idea of power as an instrument of force. As such, power can be divided, diluted and eliminated altogether. There are of course multiple sources of power, e.g. economic, military, political, but this is not to be confused with the question of locus, i.e. the site from where is power primarily wielded. Hence modern Western political thought has always concerned with the aspect of concentration of power and the need for checks and balances. For Narayan, the main problem with power was that it was a tool most effectively used by the centralised state and could thus not be checked. Likewise, Roy decried the evils of power when exercised centrally. However, he differentiated between power that can be abused without check because it rests in a single dominant source and power that is diffused within society, as is encapsulated by the difference between *potentia* and *potestas*. Roy defined power as 'the ability to do things. As such, power will always have a place

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rid political authority from society completely. See Dalton in Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, pp.276-278.

[18] Dalton in Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, pp.279-280.

in human society. But the usefulness of power is eclipsed by abuses when it is concentrated to such an extent that the community as a whole becomes totally powerless.'[20]

Therefore, while both Roy and Narayan were concerned with the aspect of concentration of power, Narayan's use of the term indicated a generally negative connotation. Roy's negation of power though only applies to coercive capability that limits liberty and self-expression of individuals. Hence, the positive connotation of power as capability is restricted to individuals and so any other site of power is immoral and corrupt.[21] This also serves to show us to what degree Narayan's anarchist leanings are to be differentiated from Roy's more left liberalism. As Lummis maintains, whereas anarchism seeks to abolish power at the same time that it liberates people, radical democracy of the left liberal type does not abolish power. It is the people that gain power and this power is the actual expression of their freedom. This is where the normative *ideal* differs.[22]

If we searched for a common ground though, we can see that the broadest common denominator lies in a similar *explanation* of political power that falls squarely within a tradition of elite models of social domination. Roy and Narayan had already distanced themselves from an orthodox Marxist position that focuses mainly on the conflict between social classes based on the wielding of primarily economic power by those who are able to expropriate surplus. The elite models that Roy and Narayan were closer to place far greater importance on political cleavages in society. The conflict over power is thus carried out between a ruling minority and a majority or 'the masses.' In this model, political power is a source of economic power, rather than being its handmaiden.[23] Nonetheless, Roy and Narayan were far more concerned with finding solutions to the problem of political power that is epitomised by the state than with a close scrutiny of its genesis and explanations for its distribution.

The cost of this shortcut is a somewhat inadequate critique of power if it is indeed to be located in 'the masses', especially in Narayan's case. How is it that power, when exercised by the masses - arguably used to denote a collective rather than a sum of individuals - seems to lose its quality as a tool of constraint? Here, Roy and Narayan use the concept of power lightly and could be charged with a potent criticism of empowerment theories, which argues that the decentralisation of power is too

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[19] Many thanks to Steven Lukes for his invaluable comments regarding this difference, which has to be made explicit in order to avoid the misplaced use of these distinct terms.
[20] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.181. As we shall see, Roy's definition of community is not an organically constituted one, but posits that communities or societies are nothing more than the sum of its individual members.
[21] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.81-84.
[22] Lummis, *Radical Democracy*, p.27.
[23] Etzioni-Halevy, *Political Manipulation and Administrative Power. A Comparative Study*, p.3. Etzioni-Halevy's analysis concentrates mainly on elite studies in the tradition of Mosca, Pareto and Michels.

easily viewed as an all-purpose panacea.[24] As Roy or Narayan did not perceive power as being an intangible, irreducible, diffuse phenomenon, their normative tenets therefore remained conservatively anarchist, concerned with the abusive nature of centralised political power.

However, there are two aspects to this point, which commentators on Roy and Narayan have tended to conflate. Most argue that the politics of *decentralisation* proposed by Roy and Narayan were meant to emancipate the 'masses'. What we contend is that although the issues of power and *em*powerment *qua* self-government are often voiced in tandem, Roy and Narayan separated the two logically and indeed gave pre-eminence to the question of empowerment over and above emancipation from the state. While the outcome of empowerment as self-realisation was aspired to by the Indian left in general, it also concurred with the acceptance and aspired use of the power structures inherent in the state. It was precisely the independence of the claim to emancipation from the claim to power that set Roy and Narayan apart from left thinking and left strategy in India, and also makes them so much more interesting in terms of articulating aims and methods of empowerment.

Narayan defined democracy as 'not merely a question of political rights and people's part in government. Particularly since the First World War, democracy has come to mean more and more social and economic justice, equal opportunity, industrial democracy. The old distinction between political and economic democracy has been given up and the two concepts merged into one to mean full democracy.'[25] In his 1961 paper "Swaraj for the People", Narayan rejected the theory of parliamentary democracy as practiced in the West, as the underlying party system 'emasculates' the people.[26] People are empowered when they are able to achieve the universal goods of 'equality, freedom, brotherhood and peace' out of their own efforts, self-discipline, understanding and action. Narayan therefore argued in favour of a stateless and partyless democracy that would not rely on a party-to-state-to-masses system to deliver these goods but that would enable a direct realisation of these goals by empowering the population to control their own affairs. This was understood to be the actual aim of decentralised democracy, and was also posited as an alternative to a move by the Indian government in the late 1950s to rework Gandhi's scheme of *Panchayati Raj* that sought to set up *panchayats* or village councils as *de facto* decision-making bodies.[27] The 1950s were the decade of experimentation in planning, e.g. as seen in the Community Development pilot projects. This led to the democratic decentralisation acts of 1958-1960 and dealt with the organisation of development planning in rural communities.

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[24] Weissberg, *The Politics of Empowerment*, p.6.
[25] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.198.
[26] Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, p.86.
[27] *Panchayats* are broadly understood to have the functions of arbitration and conflict resolution within village communities. According to Art. 40 of the Indian Constitution as per 1950, decision-making involved self-government, including taking necessary steps towards social justice.

Narayan however with great foresight viewed these centrally planned interventions as actually enhancing governmental control. What were Narayan's underlying assumptions that informed his criticism? Narayan held that the presence of the centralised state threatened the shared values that were a necessary component of local self-government. In this sense, both commitments to liberty and self-expression were challenged through the constitutional embedding of village councils, i.e. as these came into the jurisdiction of the state. Not only does this reflect anarchist leanings but also a particular understanding of India's historical experiences of decentralisation, especially in the ancient period. There is agreement on the widespread informational impact of the ancient style of government that consisted of a powerful centre (the *chakravarti* or ruler) that focused on external challenges and a relatively autonomous periphery that was penetrated only weakly by the centre in terms of administration.[28] On the level of assessment, Narayan was fully in line with post-colonial Indian left-leaning historiography that held there was a 'careful balancing of over-all authoritarianism with local autonomy,...an own system and subsystem of rights and duties.' In sum, this particular constellation led to overall social tolerance and harmony.[29] This is a contestable proposition, but was important for Narayan insofar it underlined his idea that social harmony as a result of autonomy was not only logical but was possible as seen in history.

Following the historical example of autonomy, Narayan was deeply apprehensive of the motivations of the state in so far it lends itself to being taken over by the interests of those who control its positions of power and functions, thus benefiting only its incumbents in government.[30] Even a parliamentary system of democracy would not be a solution, as it would result equally in the lessening of the liberties and freedom of society and the individual. 'The issue therefore is not between democracy, socialism, fascism, communism, etc. but between the present monistic state and a state in which powers are shared by other organisations of society.'[31] Again, this serves to highlight one of the similarities that define critical Marxist thought, as there is no compelling evidence to show that Narayan or Roy were familiar with similar ideas in Western Marxism. Moreover, it seems that while the centrality of the Weberian critique of the state may have been a contingent factor in the development of this idea in the European case, it was not perhaps wholly necessary as the Indian case shows. The comparison with similar conclusions reached at in non-Western critical Marxism serves to

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[28] Kulke and Rothermund, *History of India*, p.7.
[29] Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History. Some Interpretations*, pp.36-37.
[30] Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, p.92.
[31] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.192. Cf. Horkheimer's theory of the authoritarian state, which was seen as 'one of the first attempts to suggest that the three major state regimes that dominated in Europe were variants of a common model. The fascist state, the totalitarian socialist regime and the remaining liberal democratic states differed only in their position along a broadly similar line of development. All three state forms seem to have many features in common: the manipulation of the masses, the demise of genuine democratic processes, the expansion of bureaucratic power, the technologisation of social life and culture, the aggressive extension of the prerogatives of the state.' See Polan, *Lenin and the End of Politics*, p.99. Polan refers to Horkheimer's 1940

underline the point that the post-war left shared similar concerns despite breaking these down into dissimilar considerations.

Narayan's demand was therefore for a democracy that would function without a state – a Marxist demand. The idea of democracy as 'a matter of mental attitude, a way of life, a cultural value' was to supersede the democratic state 'which is established by the available people and which can be changed by their will.'[32] As a political way of life, the rule of the people is defined by self-government and is accompanied by a rolling-back of the centralist state. Narayan was greatly indebted to Gandhi for the formulation of his ideas on democracy, as we can see in his essay on 'Gandhi and the Politics of Decentralisation.'[33] But what does decentralisation really mean? It could mean emancipation from the state by devolving power to lower-level institutions that serve to fulfil the functions of a centralised state better and in a more democratic way. According to Narayan's conception, it can also mean the growth of non-governmental democratic institutions in parallel with the state, but that are fully independent of it. Hence, despite some minimal dependency on the state for a modicum of liberty that enables the creation of decision-making centres outside its control, the concept of decentralisation aims towards complete independence of decision-making bodies from the state. Concomitantly, it spells the demise of the state itself. Thus the lack of interference by the state is not an adequate condition of democracy, for that presupposes some form of an acknowledgement of rights and obligations between a state and society. In denying state-society relations any form of shared order, the state in being a post-societal institution is seen as incorporating alien interests and values, and hence has to be dispensed with.

Contrary to this view, modern conceptions of empowerment in post-colonial societies are often formulated very differently. They do not argue 'against the state' as locus of power, but prioritise the idea of development, perceiving it as part of the state's intrinsic interest. Especially, but not only the post-colonial neo-liberal political wing favour the idea of development over democratisation.[34] Here, empowerment is seen as an alternative developmental approach, in which the state actually enables the inclusion of disempowered sections of society to be included in the political and economic process. Empowerment is thus not an alternative to the state but a complementary movement that in a dialectical process also transforms the state as well as the actual distribution of power within it. The issue thereby became related to the 'objects' of development, i.e. identifiable groups that were seen to be either the motors of development, or its hindrances. The relation of these groups with the

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article on 'The authoritarian state' that was to set the tone for much of the pessimistic estimation of liberal democracy.

[32] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.194.

[33] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.209-226.

[34] See for example Chenoy, *Towards a New Politics: Agenda for a Third Force*. Also, Friedmann, *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development.*

developmental state is therefore crucial. In contrast, Roy and Narayan's empowerment model focused far less on group power than on individual empowerment, which is primarily an amalgam of personal competence and psychological feeling.[35] This position is supported by critiques of the empowerment through decentralisation idea, prominent in the 1960s, perceiving some confusion between community development and the demise of power politics. Indeed, there were good grounds for the concern directed towards the 'Machiavellian' forms of power politics inherent within the specific system of the *Panchayati Raj*.[36] In Roy and Narayan, we find that they pre-empted the discussion by displaying a concern for power politics that surpassed their concern for community development.

According to Roy and Narayan, decentralisation effectively meant the creation of multiple sources of power that empowers individuals and emancipates society from the state. It is therefore used in a dual sense. First of all, it was to denote the devolution of state power to lower levels of decision-making. Secondly, it was a term that meant autonomous action at the grass-roots level. The key difference is that in the former power is actually shared, whereas in the latter power is created at the lower levels of society and therefore has a potentially more threatening and confrontational aspect to its emergence from the perspective of the state. For Narayan, in line with Gandhi's conception of 'people's power,' empowerment is a process whereby power is acquired *in practice* through self-management.[37] This suggests to us that Narayan too believed that emancipation as dissolution of the bond between 'the people' and the state has less to do with the role of the state in sharing power and enabling decentralisation to take place than about power at the grass-roots level being created through independent action.[38] Narayan held that Gandhi's vision of a stateless society coincided with socialist goals, but 'on that account proceeds more consistently by making the social process as little dependent on the state as possible.'[39] Here again, this is a reference to a reading of Indian history that alludes to the coexistence of a centralised state with a largely self-contained - and moral - society at the grass roots level. While we do not agree with this reading insofar the actual impact of ancient Indian centralised states is a contested area of interpretation, its impact as a role model for Indian nationalists with socialist leanings was undoubtedly great.

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[35] According to Weissberg's definition, empowerment is also the redistribution of hegemony as well as the acquisition of ascendancy, or that the once subjugated advance to a commanding position. These factors are notably missing from Roy and Narayan's accounts. Weissberg, *The Politics of Empowerment*, p.6.

[36] Narain, *Politics and Panchayati Raj*, p.338.

[37] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.219. The observation that for Narayan, empowerment preceded decentralisation was also made by Fred Blum, 'Self-Realization and the Social Order', but was not sufficiently problematised with regard to possible consequences for state-society relations. See Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.69. This separation was in fact a significant improvement on mainstream Gandhian-socialist theories that conceived of decentralisation as being inevitable, drawing on pre-Independence Gandhian thought. The concept itself was therefore not questioned with regard to viability, desirability or efficacy. Refer to Ghoshal, *Democractic Decentralisation in India. An Essay in Sarvodaya Approach.*

[38] Note that most of the secondary literature on Narayan stresses the aspect of decentralisation as emancipation from the state. We have argued, however, that decentralisation is used in a two senses.

Empowerment is therefore a process that actually precedes emancipation from the state. In a limited sense Narayan used it to describe the taking over of certain functions of the state, e.g. development, redistribution, while acknowledging the parallel existence of the state. In a fuller sense, emancipation was to be the complete taking over of all known responsibilities of the state. We detect a certain naïveté here in Narayan's belief that only state power displays coercive capabilities and that people's empowerment dispenses with the aspects of domination. The power of the empowered is suddenly transformed into a benign and fair instrument of socio-economic change. Accordingly, radical democracy was the only political system that would enable the realisation of this non-coercive method of change.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, Roy's views differed from Narayan's insofar as his was really a classical contractarian view. While he believed that individuals and society were prior to the state, Roy referred to the dangers of a stateless society, which would amount to being 'governed by the rule of the jungle.'[40] In other words, the state is a necessary cohesive force in society, but a force that has to be qualified by its uses and limited in view of the possibility of its abuses. The cohesive force of the state is a given fact on account of it being the political organisation of society that is characterised by increasing complexity.[41] But Roy went further than the classical contractualists by not limiting his arguments to the separation of powers to ensure that the functions of the state with regard to society and its claim to legitimacy are not impeded by totalitarian politics. In this version of the state, government exists as an independent and impartial institution to protect people's natural rights to life, liberty and property. Roy's notion of the state differed in two important respects. Firstly, in the ideal case of a 'decentralised democracy', the state is not independent but is 'coterminous with society' and in the final instance with the individual[42]. Secondly, while the state coordinates public administration, its function is not to protect interests that are formed *a priori* to society. Rather, the functions of the state develop alongside of and even *after* the working out of *a posteriori* interests that are formulated through radical politics. This is generally viewed as an important insight of contemporary thinking in for instance communicative democracy.

The problem of democratic political practice therefore is not the existence of the state *per se*, but of states that have the sole monopoly over political and economic power in a society.[43] Without this concentration of power, the state would continue to exist, not as a decision-making but as a decision-implementing body, i.e. as one of the sites of managing the consequences of decisions already taken

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[39] Narayan, *Politics in India*, p.232.
[40] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.182.
[41] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.61, p.74.
[42] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.61.
[43] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.52.

by 'local republics'.[44] Given the necessity of a 'co-ordinating factor' in societies, Roy discounted anarchist and Marxist ideas that refer to the withering away of the state.[45] This, he argued, was a misunderstanding of Marx and an aberration of his ideas by orthodox Marxists. The reason for this misconception was however Marx's own logic, which he had not thought through properly by equating the state with the instrument of power of the dominant class. However, Roy thought that Marx was right insofar the state as an institution 'over and above society' would 'cease to be an instrument of coercion, and *as such* it would wither away. Being coincident with society, there will also be no trusteeship.'[46] Even so, a state that is identical with society would still be necessary in order for society to be organised politically.[47]

So while the question of the state was relegated to one of public *administration*, the question of *politics* became primarily a question of democracy, or the actual practice of individual freedom and popular sovereignty.[48] Roy's main concern therefore was not the ways and means by which power was to be shared with the state and wrested from it, but rather, how to realise the ideal of democracy in its literal meaning. Politics at the grass-roots level is not be equated with the process of voting, and therefore the parliamentary system is not only a deeply flawed democratic system, but it also renders people powerless.[49] However, given that Roy maintained that the state is a necessary institution in modern societies, his argument for empowerment was based more strongly on the notion of multiple loci of political power. The idea of empowerment is thus neither to wait for the state to relinquish most of its power, nor to achieve socio-economic change through active partisanship. Rather, empowerment can and has to take place as a separate process of creating local democracies, which would be up to the initiative of highly motivated individuals. The process of empowerment itself would be a gradual one, growing out of networks of local democracies, until the state is indeed coterminous with society.[50]

What we would like to establish here is that for Roy and Narayan, the state was not to be *directly* "smashed." Although they differed in their notions of the state, both thinkers argued for empowerment or self-government as being prior to emancipation or freedom from the state. Roy's argument seems more convincing in light of his more realistic treatment of the state as an existing factor, although his ideal case of the state as a mechanism of pure administration that has no function of independent responsibility is one that is not only hard to follow but also difficult to be sympathetic

[44] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.77.
[45] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.95.
[46] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.81. Also see Sinha, *Political Ideas of M. N. Roy*, pp.98-99.
[47] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.86.
[48] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.50.
[49] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.59.

to. Narayan's writings display far more impatience with the very concept of the state. It also makes it problematic to accept his version of empowerment, given his belief that a state applies excessive power at all times and in any circumstances. Nonetheless, radical democracy in both cases is plausibly justified in terms of the repressive capabilities arising out of a politically interested state, threatening the fundamental cornerstone of the liberal-left, namely that of individual liberty.

Here a question to be asked is how valuable the concept of empowerment is. In Narayan's case, if his version of the coercive and violent nature of the state were correct, why would the state not defend its domain of centralised power? In order to resolve this problem, Narayan proposed a model of direct and radical democracy that would be extremely powerful in its effects, so much so that the state would gradually lose its grip over society instead of having to be overthrown by societal forces. This of course reveals to us the extent of the influence of the Marxian theory of the withering away of the state, albeit used without orthodox Marxism's necessitarian slant on this process. Furthermore, it shows the extent to which Narayan differed from Western anarchist thinkers who had an interest in acting *against* the state instead of acting locally to empower 'the people'. In the context of Gandhi's influence regarding India's value systems of non-violence, Narayan's thought 'articulates the essential values of modern India's ideological tradition with exceptional clarity and directness', as Dalton claims, and so 'an exposition of his theory may be used as a summation of that tradition.'[51] At the same time, we argue that his political ideas bring to light some of the *tensions* inherent in this tradition that blurs this clarity somewhat.

Following Gandhi, the ideal type of society is seen to be a non-statal polity that puts into practice the notion of people's sovereignty in a radical way, i.e. people are empowered, autonomous, independent and courageous.[52] At the same time Gandhi recognised that the state could also act as a moral agent in terms of promoting socio-economic equality, and also by being a custodian of traditional values.[53] This certainly clashed to a degree with the core assumption that the state is a naturally dominant creature and as such, to be *always* viewed with distrust. The assumption is that two levels of power are recognised, which are exercised at two different levels. The dichotomies are between the central and the local, and the methods of violence and persuasion respectively. It is further assumed that in general the exercise of power *qua* authority through persuasion is not viable for a centralised state.

[5050] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.60-63, p.95. Also refer to Roy, *New Orientation*, p.133., in which Roy speaks of building a democratic state within a State.

[51] Dennis Dalton, 'The Ideology of *Sarvodaya*: Concepts of Politics and Power in Indian Political Thought.' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.289.

[52] Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination*, p.113.

[53] Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination*, pp.118-120. We maintain, however, *contra* Parekh, that the state for Gandhi and Narayan could in certain cases be *utilised* to act as a moral agent by morally excellent incumbents. This is not the same as saying that the state in itself has an underlying agenda of

Even if certain arms of the state, such as the bureaucracy, were not violent *per se* there would however be a case for complicity with properly coercive arms, such as the military, the police. As centralisation depends on the maintenance of this interdependence by definition, ultimately the force exercised by the core will be the decisive factor.

Reading Narayan, we see that the consequences for radical democracy as an instrument of empowerment are equally fraught with tensions. Empowerment as a parallel process of decision-making can mean either the bypassing of the centralised state by using Gandhi's famous method of non-cooperation, or the acceptance of a state that does not exercise centralised authority but exists for the purpose of intervening in matters that cannot be resolved by persuasion alone. How those functions are to be carried out in the absence of authority is neither answered satisfactorily by Gandhi nor by Narayan. Roy's notion of empowerment vis-à-vis the state too is not entirely clear. For Roy, the notion of the state is one of neutrality and as a site of pure managerial skills. The state cannot and ought not to have any input into a society's moral fabric. Yet for states to be neutral and yet effective is a very tall order. Roy makes this demand dependent on the self-perception of a self-limiting state. The self-perception rests on the grass-roots input, which in turn determines its functions and powers. As Roy perceived of power being diffused horizontally in a democracy, rather than vertically, the functioning of higher-order institutions such as the state would actually be impossible or inefficient at the very least. The realism of this image of the state is therefore highly questionable.

These tensions clearly have an impact on the categorisation of Narayan and Roy as anti-Marxists. They in fact remained well within Marxian thought in assuming the primacy of state power, thereby positing the unitary essence of power. Also, as we shall see in their writings on political parties, power as capability is seen to be appropriated from a well-defined source, like the state. Political decision-making capabilities, normally associated with state power, are thereby transferred to the citizens of the state. A more refined reading shows however that this does not fully explain the idea of political participation and decision-making in the presence of state power. This idea of power thus sits side by side with the notion that power is dispersed within society and is situated in multiple, territorially organised loci. Hence it would be fallacious to read Roy and Narayan as either traditional Marxists, concerned with taking over the powers of the state, or as essentially liberals, concerned with limiting the powers of the state.

To attribute a re-interpretation of the notion of power to Roy and Narayan would be too much, yet for the theory of emancipation to be a success, Roy and Narayan implicitly depended on a more complex understanding of power than seems to be the case at first sight, and this complexity is not without

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morality. Also refer to Doctor, *Western Influence on Sarvodayan Philosophy*, pp.370-374. and Mehta, *Gandhi,*

problems. What they effectively argued is it not only possible but also necessary for power to be generated from more than one source and for it to exist in multiple sites. The sites are not those outside of the state such as parties, clans, caste, etc. Rather, it is about territorial sites of citizenship, i.e. free and equal participation, which overrides the above ways of participation. The idea is that political interest follows from its basis, namely from its existence in the very real circumstances of not just social but geographical being. Situating the self through territory indeed requires a great deal of effort insofar social roles cease to become the guidelines for interests and agendas.

Seen in this light, we are able to understand better as to why Roy and Narayan stressed the importance of the motivational factors of self-expression and creativity, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Liberty is therefore not only a condition of empowerment but also a natural effect of the process. This also explains why Roy and Narayan believed that the masses would ultimately be less concerned with the means and ways the state can be induced to share power with the masses rather than with the more accessible instruments of self-government. The primary aim was thus to realise the promise of individual liberty and well-being, whereas the secondary aim was to indirectly force the state to roll back and withdraw from its role as the centre of violence and oppression.

5.1.2 Party-and-power politics

Roy and Narayan stood firmly entrenched in a line of thought that eschewed *any* notion of single sources of authority. Hence, while the centralised state was seen to be the primary site of coercive power, its corrupting influence invariably touched institutions that depended on the state for their existence, such as state bureaucracy, but also political parties and interest groups.[54] Both Roy and Narayan focused intensively on the role of political parties. Similarly to the arguments regarding the state, the treatment of the question of political parties can be differentiated into an ideal-type resolution, and a morally acceptable but more pragmatic solution. This means, just as a stateless society is the *ideal* and a morally self-aware state is the *idealised* pragmatic solution, a political system of radical democracy that does not need political parties is the ideal-type, but a grudging acceptance of a minimal state would make it necessary for parties to exist, albeit predicated on parties changing their self-understanding as sites of political power to instruments of moral education and persuasion.

Tolstoy and Ruskin.

[54] Dalton in: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India*, p.291. India's history of colonialism, political oppression and economic structures of semi-feudalism meant that 'civil society' was hardly a useful concept in political reality or theory.

The issue of political parties was salient insofar Roy and Narayan were also embedded in a specifically Indian discourse on constitutionalism that was highly eclectic and made much room for conflicting interpretations of the role of political parties in a parliamentary democracy. British traditions of constitutionalism were mixed up 'with one where a written constitution seeks to supply binding norms and substantive goals for political conduct. It further confuses a continental Rousseauistic idea of the will of the people, or the collective will, with the decisions of a parliamentary majority, rather than identify the collective will with the idea of the state.'[55] Likewise, Roy and Narayan's concerns were very much focused on institutions that purported to represent the will of India's citizens. However, both effectively negated the terms of this discourse by admitting neither the idea of the state nor a parliamentary democracy to be the embodiment of the collective will.

For Narayan, the collective will can only be formed locally and through direct participation instead of representation. Roy's position was more radical in that he dismissed the notion of the collective will altogether as a sign of man's weakness and as a political expression of totalitarianism. The site of empowerment was clearly separated from its obvious institutional forms in liberal democracies, political parties and civil society, which Roy and Narayan saw as intrinsically operating under the same logic of domination as the state. Hence, rather than entrenching liberal ideas of self-government through the proliferation of democratic institutions, *vide* Mouffe and Laclau, Roy and Narayan sought to radicalise the arenas of the political by locating it in the personal and local. It was a highly ambitious claim to make in the absence of the capacities of a state to ensure equal access to citizenship rights and in view of the difficult task of the political reorganisation of India's newly independent citizenship.

> 'The task in India is essentially to make democratic citizens out of a people steeped in traditional perspectives; to make participants out of parochials; to introduce a potent measure of equality in a society noted for rigid social hierarchy; and to close the cultural gap between elites and masses, a gap which has persisted for centuries.'[56]

The above quote displays a typically modernist outlook on India's political future after independence and while Roy and Narayan would have agreed with Field in terms of its general content, they would have parted ways at Field's argument that 'partisanship may make an important contribution to the attainment of these ends or...to the institutionalization of democracy in such a setting.' Robert Dahl

[55] R. Sudarshan, 'The Political Consequences of Constitutional Discourse.' In: Sathyamurthy, *Social Change and Political Discourse in India*, p.70. For a general account of the importance of the constitutional debate in India as the main site of political discourse of the Indian state also see Sathyamurthy, *Social Change and Political Discourse in India*, pp.19-26.

held similar views as Field on the link between political parties and democracy. In an article on 'Marxism and Free Parties', Dahl maintained that Marx and Engels severely misjudged the importance of political parties and democracy. This, he believed, has to do with Marxism's 'harmony ideal' that persisted paradoxically with the notion of dialectics.[57] As representatives of interests and factions, parties would therefore cease to be of importance once the capitalist world order was replaced by the communist order. In other words, the disappearance of political conflict will be marked by the disappearance of those institutions that represent conflict between classes.[58] This narrow reading of the issue of parties in temptingly simple, but in the case of Roy and Narayan it can be refuted as there is no indication in their writings that the harmony principle is to be equated with the disappearance of conflict.[59] Social harmony and political conflict are not necessarily oppositional terms, hence Roy and Narayan did not argue for a simple convergence of interests but for social harmony through cooperation.

Drawing on their experiences as politically active founding members of political parties, they judged the party system as inadequate, unethical and fostering selfish behaviour. In other words, their critique was also about parties' undesirable manifestations in political life. It did not deliver the goods it promised in terms of clear ideologies, fair and moral election proceedings, as well as disinterested public service.[60] The problem was partly attributed to the system of constitutional democracy, which depends on political parties, but without taking into account the consequences of unscrupulous intra-party and inter-party competition.[61] Furthermore, within the context of radical democracy the defects of a party system were considered to be structural and therefore inherent rather than accidental. The idea was that political parties, through their functions of mediation between state and citizen and representation of interests, undermine the primary principle of democracy, namely individual sovereignty.

For Narayan, the two cases that supported his point about the self-serving motivations underlying the workings of party systems were firstly 'bureaucratic elitism' in the Soviet Union and secondly, the problems of corruption, violence and misgovernment encountered in India's democratic system.[62] According to him, these problems were grave signs of disunity among parties and caused to a great

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[56] Field, *Consolidating Democracy. Politicization and Partisanship in India*, pp.62-63.
[57] Dahl, *Marxism and Free Parties*, pp.794-799.
[58] Dahl, *Marxism and Free Parties*, p.797.
[59] As we shall see, harmony is linked to the principle of cooperation, rather than the ideal state of complete convergence of interests.
[60] Narayan, *India and Her Problems*, pp.60-62., Narayan, *Politics in India*, p.117., Narayan, *Total Revolution*, pp.21-31.
[61] Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, pp.86-87.
[62] See David Selbourne, 'A Political Morality Re-examined' in: Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.187-188.

extent by party competition in a political environment characterised by weak public opinion, an overly large number of parties and factionalism within parties.[63] Narayan did not stand alone in deploring the phenomenon of party sectarianism and the unwillingness to arrive at compromises in India's new democracy, which was seen to have undermined governmental stability. Interestingly enough, an observation made as early as 1956 holds that one reason 'for such splintering is the absence of a basic consensus on the nature of the state.'[64] Dissent is explained by a number of factors: communalism, anti-secularism as well as a wholesale rejection of the democratic parliamentary framework by communist and Marxist parties. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity on both the objectives of the state and those of the political parties themselves. According to Narayan, this confusion subsequently led to a lacuna of power, which was in danger of being filled by a one-party system.[65] The lack of stability that is inherent in a one-party system in a very fragmented political society in turn leads to the dangers of reaction or conservatism as well as of totalitarianism. Hence, neither a multi-party nor a one-party system seemed to provide a solution to the challenge of democratisation.

Apart from his disillusionment with the experience of actual parties, Narayan's negation of party politics was also brought about under the influence of Gandhi's ideas.[66] This phase in his thinking, known the phase of *sarvodaya* and communitarian, partyless democracy lasted from the late 1950s until the late 1960s. The realisation of *sarvodaya*, or the welfare of all, depends on the self-discipline of all and a sincere commitment to the goals of socialism. As such its appeal lay in being a desirable alterative to the struggles for political power in intra-party and inter-party rivalries. *Sarvodaya's* grounding in personal values like love and equality, its insistence on ethical means, on the respect for manual labour as well as its general appeal to freedom from violence made this concept an ideal solution to the problems of parliamentary democracy. Not only did Gandhi's arguments reinforce Narayan's scepticism regarding the moral basis of political parties, they also served to convince him of the impossibility of reconciling party politics with the politics of social reconstruction. According to this view, political institutions are counter-productive because they operate only within their own logic of self-preservation, instead of being enmeshed in 'organically self-determining, self-developing communal life, in which occupations, professions and functions are integrated with the community.'[67]

This may seem to be a vindication of the notion of the 'harmony principle' but the emphasis on integration is not a rejection of conflict. According to Gandhi, difference of opinions is a natural state of affairs, but when conflict resolution is taken to the public and impersonal sphere, rather than

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[63] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.205-206.
[64] Weiner, *Struggle against Power: Notes on Indian Political Behavior*, p.393.
[65] Narayan, *Politics in India*, p.155. This is a reference to the dominance of the Congress Party under Indira Gandhi's leadership.
[66] Das-Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.75-76.
[67] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.205.

attempting to resolve controversies in the private and personal sphere, so-called 'mental gulfs' are created. The emergence of political parties is one of the consequences of these mental gulfs that need to be bridged.[68] What Gandhi does not believe in, as we can see, is that political parties may be an effective way of systematically addressing issues that concern many. Dissent is hence never seen as a possible bundle of interests, but more as single-issue problems. In itself, this position is not to be discarded as utopian, as there are good grounds for criticism of one-party or two-party systems that base their legitimacy on the ability to bring together a variety of issues under a single institutional and representational umbrella. Not only is the etymological meaning of party as in fact a part and not the whole perverted but the demands of structural unity in light of substantive dissent often takes on a tyrannical aspect.

Although this view would have benefited greatly from further elaboration and development, it implicitly had a profound effect on how social pluralism and its potential for conflict was considered. Narayan was not oblivious to the problems of the clash of value systems or discrete group interests such as caste and class but rather than viewing the main role of radical democratic politics as the resolution of conflict, it was the transformation of interests that was deemed crucial. It is often held that 'for more reasons than one, the leaders of Indian political thought and national movement were unwilling to raise the questions of the numerous differences which existed between man and man and between group and group in this country.'[69] According to this view, the 'fundamental unity of India' was taken for granted. Hence, caste differences and differences of language, race and religion were only superficial and were not addressed beyond Gandhi's notable involvement with the issue of untouchability. Narayan however challenged the legitimacy of the claim of even nationalist parties, such as the Congress, resulting out his perception that political parties stood for fundamentally flawed methods of conflict resolution.

It seems plausible that the focus on the particular issue of nationalism was a historically contingent response to colonialism. This though does not exonerate the idea of nationalist parties from criticism, as Narayan has shown. Unity can have the aspect of sublimation of diversity. The issue of class is a useful example as well as being a pertinent point, especially in light of Narayan and Roy's links with Marxism. The dismissal of class as the organisational expression of the proletariat had two main reasons. On the one hand the strength of class in a post-colonial, agrarian society is a questionable

[68] Gandhi, *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi. Non-Violent Resistance and Social Transformation*, p.275.
[69] Roy, *Main Currents of Political Thinking in India*, p.45.

proposition.[70] This position was not refuted by either Roy or Narayan. On the other hand, there is also a case for the effect of nationalism as inhibiting the development of class-consciousness as a potent political force.[71] Although implying the concept of unity in his concept of Total Revolution, Narayan's search for an integrated politics yields a different answer as it refuses dominance by a single dimension, even of class. Although this is not quite the position taken by Western post-Marxists, it does pave the way for the idea that preference cannot be granted to one particular affiliation among others but that there has to be equality of importance insofar the demands made by the politics for the nation, not nationalistic politics, are about co-orientation and transformation of interests. This idea of course continues to affect the ideologies of both nationalism and Marxism. In other words, the humanistic unity offered by nationalism and the promise of social justice offered by Marxism is to be treated differently from the fixation with class and with the nation as an entity that is more than just a geographical expression of a political order.

The primary focus of Gandhian thought was however not on the types of issues to be tackled but the method of approaching them, and hence *sarvodaya* was effectively the negation of partisanship that aimed the acquisition and exercise of political power. In a letter of resignation written in 1957 to the members of the Praja Socialist Party, Narayan wrote that

> 'I decided to withdraw from party-and-power politics not because of disgust or sense of any personal frustration, but because it became clear to me that politics could not deliver the goods, the goods being the same old goals of equality, freedom, brotherhood, peace.
> But was there an alternative to politics? Could society be changed and reconstructed in any other manner than through the agency of the State? Politics is but a science of the State.
> But there was an alternative. Mahatma Gandhi had placed it before us.'[72]

The definition of politics we see here is extremely specific in categorising politics, or party politics, as intrinsically linked to the concept of the state. Hence, party politics is essentially about power politics, or *rajniti.* This reading of party politics as one of the most negative components of a parliamentary democracy was not a novel interpretation by any means. Indeed, the sentiment of contempt for the political process via political parties was informed by a widespread antipathy for the notion of power. As such, the instruments of its use - political parties and the state were generally viewed upon with

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[70] Analyses of the self-consciousness and rights-consciousness of the Indian working class tended to argue that a proletarian outlook effectively failed to develop. Despite strong indications for a heightened pace of industrialisation, of efficacy, and of professionalism, arguments generally converged on the persistence of inherited agricultural traditions that were sceptical of the notion of rights, as well as on the continued links of the working classes with their rural roots as a result of seasonal migration. Refer to e.g. Malhotra, *Indian Labour Movement. A Survey*, p.17. Also, Mukherjee, *The Indian Working Class*, p.6. For a rejection of the above notion, see Morris, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labor Force in India.*

[71] Rosenberg, *Perceptual Obstacles to Class Consciousness*, pp.24-26.

much distrust and suspicion, not only by the population at large but also by party leadership of parties as well as by party members themselves.[73] Yet while the question of the origins of this distrust and self-doubt is a highly interesting one, it would be beyond the scope of this paper to pursue the issue.[74]

According to Narayan, the Gandhian alternative to party politics was the politics of *sarvodaya*, used in conjunction with *lokniti*, or people's politics. The highly personal tone of *sarvodaya* means that political involvement becomes a process of persuasion and conversion rather than of selection and election of representatives. Aside from the spiritual take on social change, Narayan held that self-government was to be actually practiced through programmes of self-help. The key question here is of course with which agency and upon which authority were these programmes to be instituted. Would this not in effect be yet another form of domination of the so-called masses by those who had the knowledge, insight, but primarily the financial and logistical technology of self-help programmes? In the section on leadership we shall pick on one of the key weaknesses of Narayan's thought, i.e. that although party politics is to be replaced by spontaneous self-management, his political theory does not trust in *lokniti* entirely.[75] However, the idea of *sarvodaya* did separate Narayan from the mainstream Indian left, which still believed in the inevitability of acquiring for political power through the instruments of parties and of the state. This was based on the assumption that power is never voluntarily dispensed. The Indian left was quite clear on the issue that even though the aims of communism and Narayan's vision of a stateless democracy coincided, the question of a real change could only come about *posterior* to structural changes in the way power is distributed within society as well as *posterior* to a change of the incumbents of state power.[76]

Narayan modified his views somewhat in light of the continued existence of the state and the failure of the *sarvodaya* project to take firm hold across India. He was in two minds – torn between his

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[72] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.156.

[73] Weiner, *Struggle against Power: Notes on Indian Political Behavior*, p.394. The exception to this Indian rule was the Indian Communist Party that followed a strictly Westernised *modus operandi* in politics by accepting the *realpolitik* of state power.

[74] Apart from historical reasons, like the experience of not just economic but political imperialism, there are of course cultural and religious arguments for this striking animosity towards the question of power. Often they cannot be separated from one another. Attempts at comprehensive explanations invariably point out that one experience is used to explain and deal with the other. For instance, opposition to the colonial state was often only possible by recourse to one's authentic traditions that embraced notions of withdrawal and inward-looking moments of empowerment vis-à-vis the reality of political domination in the public sphere. For a brief introduction to the thematic of power, parties and the Hindu tradition, see e.g. Weiner, *Struggle against Power: Notes on Indian Political Behavior.*, Brown, *The Content of Cultural Continuity in India.*, Rudolph, *The New Courage: An Essay on Gandhi's Psychology.*, Bharati, *The Hindu Renaissance and Its Apologetic Patterns.*

[75] The problem of political violence at the level of 'the people' was not an unknown factor in the nascent Indian democracy, and was considered as being a serious problem for the process of democratisation by many, e.g. see Bayley, *The Pedagogy of Democracy: Coercive Public Protest in India*, pp.664-666. While Narayan at times recognized the dangers of political violence, he blamed political leaders for its outbreak among the population. This does mean that he trusted the masses, but believed they could be exonerated because of the failure of political leaders to contain their discontents. Refer to Narayan, *Politics in India*, pp.236-238.

conviction that dabbling with state power through party politics had no real effect in terms of change in the socio-moral fabric of society, and a position of compromise that allowed him to accept that there was scope for the input of political parties in promoting socio-economic justice. Furthermore, parties were instruments of pressure on the state to ensure the protection of basic rights of political participation.[77] The state of Emergency, declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, convinced Narayan that the politics of empowerment could not be fully realised without the democratic state's commitment to protect civil liberties. This in turn meant that party politics, if pursued in the right moral spirit, was not completely redundant in an era in which the state was still a factor to contend with.

The inefficacy of the *sarvodaya* movement in accomplishing the goals of socio-political and economic change through a non-violent revolution of attitudes was an important factor in Narayan's revision of his position.[78] Part of the problem seemed to be in the interpretation of the definition of politics as affairs of the State, as we have seen above. A consequence of this reading was that it became unclear, also to the *sarvodaya* leadership under Vinoba Bhave, whether the chief duty of a *sarvodaya* worker was to be a citizen fighting for freedom as well as negative liberties, or whether is was to be to conduct campaigns of land redistribution through persuasion and through living exemplary spiritualist lives.[79] Narayan spoke up decisively in favour of those who engaged themselves politically, and once again, the question of politics as purely a science of the state was raised. As such, party politics was consistent within a democracy given an understanding of the moral imperatives of non-violence, justice etc. Ultimately though, political parties had to be clear about the impermanence of their existence in light of the superior vision of a stateless democracy.

The compromise that hopes for the eventual withering away of the state and of parties is subject to similar tensions in Marxism. These result of out a complicated interplay between the vanguard party and the state as well as the self-perception of the vanguard as having to create the conditions for a shift of power to the grass roots level. By ignoring other *fora* of political action vis-à-vis the state, such as civil society, Narayan's thought has the potential of being highly elitist, thereby rendering his concept of radical democracy somewhat incomplete. As the ideal case of local self-government in the absence of the state was not a socio-historical option in India after independence, Narayan reconceptualised political parties as shields between the masses and the state, and as the public face of

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[76] See Das-Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.79-80.
[77] Narayan, *Politics in India*, p.278.
[78] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, pp.190-191.
[79] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.189. This is very much in tune with his beliefs that socialism would not be achieved by only political or social action. Socialism, being a way of life, rather than a political system, demands a comprehensive outlook on any form of human action. See Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, pp.194-195. Hence, Narayan's seven revolutions are merely an expansion of categories of possible spheres of action than a newly developed idea.

virtuous political action. By sidelining the aspect of representation, Narayan's thought seems but a version of Lenin's vanguard party, much maligned by the Indian socialist left.

Yet the idea of virtuous political action redeems Narayan's idea of radical democracy insofar radical democracy enables not merely a deepening of democracy and its foundations such as freedom and equality, but also a radical transformation of interests. While this may seem reminiscent of a traditional Marxist view of politics and its future, it certainly does not reflect orthodox Marxist positions on the time-line of radicalising democracy. Rather than pinning his ideas on the dialectical process of transition, Narayan argued that *parallel* processes of social change and political change were possible. The hope that Narayan placed in political parties as a possible good was that parties are able to act primarily in the interests of the citizens, despite being structurally bound to the state, and reform citizens' views so as to create the political climate that is necessary for a partyless and stateless democracy to come about. On a critical note, the overall effect of this model is that Narayan's claims seem rather unconvincing if parties do indeed matter.[80] However, we feel that his idea that representation is not necessary merits some thought, especially in view of the deep links between parties and a powerful central state.

While Roy concurred with Narayan's conception of the ills of the party system, he ruled out *any* possibility that parties could be beneficial to the workings of a democratic polity. This claim was based on his analysis that the system of parliamentary democracy had collapsed throughout the world.[81] In contrast to Narayan's position he did not single out the Soviet Union's collapse into a bureaucratic party dictatorship[82] but argued that all political parties were inherently anti-democratic. The argument was rather directed towards their role within the parliamentary system of democracy. Although parties emanated out of a formal system of democracy in which the state was supposed to reflect the will of the people, political parties actually function according to the own logic, which is to stay in power.[83] As a result, not only is the link between voter and government broken, but also the link between candidate and constituency. Roy held that 'once the popular vote brings a man to the parliament, his responsibility is not to the people who vote for him, but to the party machinery which has ensured his election by supplying the money and the brass-band.'[84]

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[80] As parties are actually the sites of political action, their absence or limitation would not result in empowerment but in mere discussion or at the most, in administrative action. See Vieg, *The Mirage of "Partyless" Democracy*, pp.43-44.
[81] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.209.
[82] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.168.
[83] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.53.
[84] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.53. The 'brass-band' is in reference to Roy's caricature of the electoral process as the benumbing of the masses, who 'are driven like cattle to the polling stations', with 'music, brass-bands, flags and shouting.'

Furthermore, 'party politics leads to concentration of power and hence carries in it the germs of the destruction of democracy.'[85] It seems reasonable to argue that some level of power is necessary in order for political programmes to be put into practice. Roy however claimed that this fallacious notion resulted in damaging the morale of democratic countries. Even though power as a means to achieve certain goals is necessary, its abuse seems inevitable when it becomes an end, as is the case for political parties.[86] Roy's case is similar to Marx's idea of the circularity of capital accumulation, which becomes problematic, as 'power is never voluntarily abdicated.'[87] The following extract may shed some light on Roy's logic.

> 'Once it is assumed that nothing can be done for the good of the society without political power, the evils of the party system necessarily follow. The control of government being the precondition for doing anything, everything must be done to gain power. The means become the end, and the end is forgotten. It is remembered only to advance the questionable doctrine that justifies the means.'[88]

The larger picture though shows us Roy's Rousseauian leanings in embedding the problem of political parties in the context of individual autonomy and representation. Parties are formed for the purpose of elections, whereby the people elect a government. 'Now, the practice of democracy shows that between two elections the sovereign people is nowhere in the picture and has absolutely no possibility of controlling those who are ruling the country on behalf of them; and consequently delegation of power, for all practical purposes, has become surrender of power.'[89] Not only that, but the final instance of sovereignty – the individual – too has vanished as a result. Party politics therefore is a direct contradiction to the self-definition of individuals. According to Roy, 'the practice of delegation of power is a negation of Democracy, because it can never establish government of the people and by the people.' He went on to say that it can, 'under the best of circumstances, only establish government for the people, which, again in the best of cases, may be a benevolent dictatorship, but not Democracy.'[90] The practice of representation of interests and delegation of power effectively threatens the 'potential intelligence and creativity of all men', as well as the 'sovereignty of the people.'[91] Based on this argument, there is no space for even Narayan's weak pragmatism in Roy.

The weakness of both Roy and Narayan's ideas on political parties arguably lies in their simplistic notions of the role of parties. This is linked to the concepts of the state power and political parties' inherent relationship to both. The roles of political parties in modern democracies are of course

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[85] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.63.
[86] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.69-71.
[87] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.76.
[88] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.70-71.
[89] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.52.
[90] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*,p.55.

multifaceted: as mediators, facilitators of agendas, instruments of representation of interests, providers of the legislative and executive powers. Roy and Narayan's simplistic arguments though do not appear to be a result of ignorance, but of wilful prioritising the problems of representative democracy and its bearings on the concept of individual sovereignty. This aspect of their analysis of parties is also to be viewed as a stepping-stone away from Marxism's reliance on the expression of class interests through parties, or as in the case of the Soviet Union, through the Party. Not only does class not capture the actual positions of individuals within a society, but its manifestation as party politics rather than class politics means that the interests of class would be merely subjugated to the interests of the party *qua* organisation and not expression. The key to this argument lies in Roy and Narayan's notions of power as domination, and so the main argument centres around the search for political organisation that does not rely on the acquisition and exercise of power.

5.2 Radical democracy, or a 'politics without power'

'The Socialists do not have to wait till the capture of power. To be able to create a force in the society which can transform it, power or not power, is the test of socialist action.'[92]

The attempt to rework Marxism by focusing on power and its political rather than purely economic nature, on the practices of the ruling classes and on the limitations of the notion of the working class in the absence of hegemony is by no means new.[93] The idea of a politics without 'power' reminds in the main of Gramsci's contribution to Marxist thought in Europe. Despite the obvious similarities, it is also Gramcian ideas that serve to underline the distance that Roy and Narayan sought between their own modes of thinking and Marxist modes. The new approach to power that is widely attributed to Gramsci was possibly surpassed by a new approach in Indian (*post*) Marxism, as Roy and Narayan have shown. It was not the insight that power is exercised at all levels of society rather than residing in its base but the idea that the relationship between power and the end of exploitation can be transformed into capability and the impossibility of exploitation that sets the tone for the differences that follow. Quite fundamentally, class, integral state and civil society[94] were discredited by Roy and Narayan who sought to transform society with means other than power and other than reliance on institutions that have no intrinsic interest in a commitment to the individual in society.

As we have seen, the very presence of institutions that mediate the relationship between individuals, society and centres of decision-making were seen to severely curtail the capabilities of individuals to

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[91] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.63.
[92] Narayan, *Politics in India*, p.164.
[93] Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci' In: Mouffe, *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, pp.179-184.

participate in politics in a meaningful way. The alternative proposed by both Roy and Narayan, was radical democracy, which we have interpreted as the self-governance of rational and moral individuals through dialogue, cooperation and direct management of public affairs. Interestingly, both arrived at this conclusion based on differences in the way they perceived the participants or the agents of democracy and their relationship with society were perceived. Through the lens of these differences we can see to what extent the concept of radical democracy caters to differing needs and premises, in itself leading to uncertainty as to the outcome of such a political system. For a world lacking in certainties, Roy and Narayan's approaches that differ in spirit, yet are similar in politics, show that radical democracy may well be a good basis of compromise that does not offer closure on questions or total solutions, but uses an image of the same for engendering constructive and pragmatic politics. In other words, we imagine the politics of radical democracy to be a point of consensus, rather than letting differences in premises hinder the establishing of a political system of seeks to delegate problem-solving and decision-making to the lowest common denominator. This of course entails the acceptance of the familiar argument that a political system that is directed *towards* the welfare of all its individuals is ultimately different from a system of self-management of society *by* individuals.

One of the suppositions present in Field's comments (see pg. 20) is that the subjects or agents of a democracy have to fit the demands of democracy, while both Roy and Narayan conversely have argued that it is the practice of radical democracy, outside of any form of partisanship that is generally expressed in institutional terms, which transforms the citizens. To be sure, the transformation into democratic citizens is necessary but is not an exhaustive requirement. Roy and Narayan's aspirations were different in intent from those who wished to see the 'development' of the citizenry from one unable to participate in the highly valued idiom of democracy to one that is able to cope with its demands. Historically, there have been many examples for this particular discrimination – the Greek ideal of the rule of 'free men' had important consequences for the political history of Western Europe. Traditionally, women had been excluded from the domain of democratic citizenship, while in contemporary debates questions are raised as to the compatibility of religious belief and political competence.[95] Roy and Narayan made no such claim. While democracy in itself is a good insofar it encompasses the concept of self-rule and independence, it is also an instrument that enables the realisation of self-expression and creativity, which are the hallmarks of self-government. Democracy in this view is therefore not a higher-ground position to which the populace has to aim towards, but is better understood as a method of self-government that is already available to any person.

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[94] John A. Davis, 'Antonio Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution' In: Davis, *Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution*, pp.9-11.

[95] Although Islam has been the focal point for this type of questioning in recent decades, similar points are made from time to time in the case of Catholic ultramontanism.

Roy and Narayan's case for radical democracy anticipated some important tenets in modern Western theories of radical democracy, such as deliberative democracy. In the latter we find arguments for democracy to be a more inclusive and sensitive process. This means that democracy should not merely be about formal procedures that guarantee neutrality towards all citizens, but also a method of debating substantive issues. The perspectives shift from an emphasis on neutrality to an emphasis on notions of difference and identity. Roy and Narayan similarly argued for radical democracy not only as a neutral and procedural forum, nor as a forum where thick notions of identity find their outlet, but where identity and interests are articulated and also substantially altered. In the following we would like to outline Roy and Narayan's conception of political agency that sustains their argument for empowerment, which is not the same argument that is implied in the case for radical democracy as an instrument of transformation. However, even with the empowerment model of radical democracy, we see that whereas for Roy it is a means of radicalising individualist liberalism, for Narayan it is about the expression of the will of communities.

5.2.1 Agents of radical democracy: individuals and communities

In Roy's writings we see a clear argument for radical democracy as the only means by which the original ideal of liberalism can be realised, such as represents the natural desire of human beings to be free from all constraints and to express their creativity. Fundamentally, democracy is about the political organisation of *individuals* as no other level of self-expression is an adequate forum of democracy. Hence both society and state are distant from the individual, although in different ways. As we have seen, in rejecting the concept of representation, Roy claimed the impossibility of mediation between individuals' interests and the powers that represent them on the one hand (parties, associations) and the powers that implement them on the other hand (the state).[96]

The take on the relationship between society and the individual was similarly to an extent informed by the idea that individuals' interests cannot be mediated by society. Roy's 'radical humanism' seems remarkable Marxian in this respect.[97] However, while orthodox Marxism derives some very important

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[96] Cf. Cole, *Social Theory*. Following Cole, the tension in democratic theory is not between direct and representative democracy, but in finding the right balance between functional representation and territorial representation (role as consumers, producers, members of communities, and families as against role as citizen). The former concept is far weaker in both Roy and Narayan's thought as this model already assumes certain discrete categories that classify individuals within certain contexts. It is precisely the rejection of contextual thinking that sets Roy and Narayan apart from more recent work in democratic theory based on strengthening the claims of civil society. The lack of a public-private distinction leading to a unitary view of the individual does not per se make a strong case for non-representation. It is the fluid view of what individuals could potentially be that provides the case for non-representation, as representation would only serve to import meaning into roles that in fact not only are but also ought to be in states of transition.

[97] In the context of debates on the works of the early Marx and the mature Marx that are seen to form a continuity of the humanist theme see i.a. Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophic Sources of Social*

ideas about the individual and society from the legacy of the Enlightenment period,[98] Roy did not embed his individual in the same way. For the major thinkers of the Enlightenment as well as for Marx, sociality is highly natural. The individual, as a species being, can only be human within a social context. Hence the social is natural, rather than conventional. In Roy on the other hand, we see a differentiated take on the issue. The sphere of the natural is given as Roy conceived of the human species being subject to the natural law of freedom, the realisation of which is in the realm of potentiality. Humans are not by nature free or equal or even individualistic in the social realm. These are qualities of human beings that have to be earned, using reason in order to struggle for total freedom Hence the terms 'backward' and 'progressive' are freely used in his works to denote that not all conditions of humanness are the same simply by virtue of being human. It is the rational following of the laws of human nature – the laws that also dictate the search for freedom and truth - that culminates paradoxically in individuation.

On a second level, in order to follow the natural law of freedom, Roy posited the creation of society as an artefact depicting individual ingenuity. Indeed, as 'man is the archetype of society...the potentiality if evolving the entire social pattern is inherent in every human being.'[99] There are some noteworthy parallels in this position to that of Unger, who argues that projects of empowerment are unnecessarily restricted, based on the 'premise of limited social possibilities that seem to either reflect deeply rooted consensus or a logic of social development.'[100] Unger denies the premise of scientific social relations, which Marxism's inflexible deep-structure theory rests upon but at the same time claims that radical democracy, by salvaging Marxism's 'self-critical anti-naturalistic conception of society, is fruitful for the purpose of re-imagining and constructing social worlds.'[101]

Roy summarised his own position most succinctly in the first of his 19 Theses of New Humanism – Radical Democracy.

> 'Man is the archetype of society. Co-operative social relationships contribute to developing individual potentialities. But the development of the individual is the measure of social progress. *Collectivity presupposes the existence of individuals.* Except as the sum total of freedom and well-being, actually enjoyed by individuals, social liberation and progress are imaginary ideals, which are never attained. Well-being, if it is actual, is enjoyed by individuals. It is wrong to ascribe a collective ego to any form

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Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche, pp.251-309. Roy noted that it is not to be forgotten that Marx himself was a humanist as he had declared man to be at the root of mankind. This had unfortunately been forgotten by his followers. See Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.43.

[98] Berry, *The Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp.23-48.

[99] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.94.

[100] Unger, *False Necessity. Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*, pp.8-10.

[101] Unger, *False Necessity. Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*, pp.172-176.

of human community (viz., nation, class, etc.), as that practice means sacrifice of the individual; collective well-being is a function of the well-being of individuals.'[102]

We can hereby confirm that Roy maintained that the individual is prior to society. The individual is referred to as a rational human being who becomes an individual with attaining more and more freedom, i.e. liberty and self-expression. The individual on the one hand should be 'free from the tyranny of natural phenomena, and physical and social environments; and on the other hand he should be free to unfold his potential, though 'not as cogs in the wheels of a mechanised social system.'[103] Moreover, Roy warned against any abstracting of the individual as a mere part of collectivity. He writes that collective life in the end 'is conditional upon *man's* consciousness of the existence of others, and his consciousness is the result of his being.' Here, 'being' is not social being but is the state of rationalist-materialist being. It is therefore not about the relative position of the individual in specific socio-economic circumstances of exploitation or domination, but the level of thought and action that is purely an individual enterprise. Roy's ideas in particular are striking as they bring him closer to ideas of contemporary liberals and radicals who 'fail to see the social preconditions of individuality in the abolition of domination by others.'[104]

Hence, because the individual is prior to society, collective effort is seen to be the 'means to the end of man's self-expression, which is another name for freedom.'[105] The ideal of *social progress* therefore is meaningless as it merely signifies the progress of individuals. The notion of functional associations describes Roy's position better than his own use of the term collective. It seems that two aspects were of concern to Roy. One is the 20th century fear of homogeneous mass society, which is mirrored in his distaste for communities based on common interest. Secondly, although Roy ascribed to epistemological universalism, i.e. reason, ontological universalism disturbed him deeply. Thus sociality is to be a state of affairs in the world without possessing its own ontology. The latter is significant in so far independent existence, as being *for oneself*, requires recognition as well as responsibility from individuals. That these quite plausibly interfere with individuals' desires to be free from constraints other than posed by associated individuals is really a libertarian position.[106] This also means that Roy, in abstaining from ascribing ego to the collective, was a methodological individualist, using the term and its meaning as coined by Joseph Schumpeter. Roy can be read as both a methodological individualist as well as a political individualist who believed in individual freedom as a value in itself, and not merely as a means to a desirable social order. Jon Elster, *inter alia*, argues

[102] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.105. Italics added. Here, Roy means that individuals construct collective life, rather than find themselves in social situations. This version of contractarianism was not shared by Marx though, who was far closer to Locke's notion of sociality than Rousseau's.
[103] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.105-106.
[104] Alan Gilbert, 'Democracy and Individuality' In: Paul, *Marxism and Liberalism.*
[105] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.101.

that methodological individualism is not a refutation of Marx who was a transitional figure in the social science, i.e. who shifted from holistic and teleological elements to individualist explanations.[107] We find a very similar notion in Roy's comments on Marx's individualistic humanism.

Indeed, Roy's concept of the scope of methodological individualism was akin to views on Marx that interpret him as an ethical individualist, i.e. taking 'the metaethical view that ethical theories should be stated exclusively in terms of concepts defined at the level of the individual, whether these be concepts of individual welfare, individual rights, or individual autonomy. Ethical individualism excludes from consideration ethical theories which invoke supra-individual or non-individual concepts as rock-bottom moral notions.'[108] Consequently, Marx's greatest contributions to social science are best understood as his normative critiques of alienation and exploitation of men, not of Man. Roy's own notions were in complete accordance with this reading of Marx, but were clearly at odds with alternative interpretations of Marx's humanism within the broad spectrum of Marxist thought.[109] In reading Roy, we thus see tenets of *post*-Marxism that, according to Stuart Sim, not only looks to the future of Marxism beyond its ideological encasement *qua* scientific Marxism, but also seeks to ground it by evoking Marx's original sentiments.

For Narayan, methodological individualism would have constituted a weak claim for radical democracy and would have been characterised as debilitating atomism. While similarly according primacy to the welfare of the individual over and above the welfare of society,[110] Narayan diverged from Roy's concept of political man in some important respects due to his metaphysical assumption of non-dualism. Unlike Roy's position of monist materialism, Narayan perceived an intimate and inseparable link between man's material and spiritual nature. As spirituality is also expressed through moral codes that are to be found in a society, Narayan's concept of society therefore entailed more than being an aggregate of individuals.

> '(M)an is a socio-organic being: he is partly the product of nature and partly that of society. What man is by nature cannot be said with certainty. Indeed, the very concepts of good and bad are supernatural or super-organic. There is nothing good or bad in nature. Human nature, apart from the instincts of self

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[106] Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, p.10.
[107] Gilbert too attempts to strengthen Marx's theory of social individuality as a theory of the self. Also refer to Sensat, *Methodological Individualism and Marxism*. For an account of Marx and Engels' methodological individualist radicalism compared to Marx*ist* and liberal theories see Tucker, *Marxism and Individualism*.
[108] Elster, p.203
[109] This relates to especially Marxist theories of scientific holism, e.g. Heller, *Alltag Und Geschichte: Zur Sozialistischen Gesellschaftslehre*, pp.65-85., Schaff, *Marxism and the Human Individual*, pp.188-195.
[110] The time period of both Roy and Narayan's work was characterised by a general concern for a remedy to a totalitarian world order, matched by a general focus on the role of the individual in politics, as well as the danger posed to it. See e.g. Sen, *The Decadence of the "Individual" in Modern Political Theory*.

and race preservation, is most likely of a neutral character which acquires moral tones in accordance with social conditioning.'[111]

Individuality is defined by difference in aptitudes,[112] but despite differences in natural aptitudes, man's potential for becoming a moral being remains the same for all. The process of self-realisation is inherently bound up in the realisation of the individual of being part of a greater whole, which is defined by a socio-historically determined common unifying spirit. Yet sometimes set against and sometimes set alongside given social conditions is the substantive notion of the 'good' spirit. It follows that the individual has to find that spirit through society and indeed, it is only through *struggle* in a society towards finding the common good that the self can be realised. According to Chandra Agarwal, Narayan believed that 'humans are motivated, along with self-interest and fear, by their innate urge for fulfilment through social action and interaction.'[113] Interaction within a society is also about becoming morally good by experience, inasmuch as the respective roles of the individual and that of society were complementary. In this view, we see a balance between nature and culture, i.e. individuals' natures have the potential for self-expression and self-development but this can only be realised through sociality.

This line of thought is thus very much concerned with 'the unity of existence', not diversity. The one aspect that differentiates men from animals is their urge to not only use their innate reasoning powers, but to also to search for the divine soul in themselves.[114] Because this divine soul is unity, the good that emanates from the divine soul is the same for everybody. It is only when this unity is realised by sufficient individuals, does political action, such as Total Revolution, have any meaning. It is then this specific self-perception that enables individuals to alter their mental states in supplanting their quest for purely material desires with their quest for moral and intellectual truth. Narayan absolutely differentiates human beings from animal beings, for which he sees evidence in two capabilities of the human mind. One is the sense of a moral conscience and the other is empathy with other life forms.[115] The moral conscience, being part of the 'divine' is as such bound to the laws of the divine. It is this moral conscience that enables individuals to recognize the persuasive truth of a Gandhian-humanist version of an ideal society, or an Indian version of fraternité- liberté -égalité- (in this order).

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[111] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.99.
[112] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.205.
[113] Chandra Agarwal, The Political Theory of 'Total Revolution'. In: Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.24. Also, Raj, *A Man-Centred Philosophy: Reflections on J P's Concept of Man*, pp.74-78.
[114] Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, p.123.
[115] Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, p.125.

While we disagree with this overwhelmingly spiritualist reading of unity as the divine, given its religious connotations[116] Narayan did believe that the realisation of individual potentiality rested on some form of understanding society as a community or *Gemeinschaft,* to use Tönnies' differentiation from *Gesellschaft.* Is Narayan's individual then a mere cog in the revolutionary machinery as feared by W. H. Morris-Jones in his article on '*Politics and Society in India*'?[117] Dennis Dalton negates the fear of the oppressed individual by insisting that

> 'despite J.P.'s stress on mass participation and the organic community, there is no language anywhere in his writings...that compares with Rousseau's description of the supremacy of the general will...On the contrary, the writings of those in the Indian ideological tradition are replete with statements like Vivekananda's that 'any system which seeks to destroy individuality is in the long run disastrous, or Gandhi's that 'no society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom'.'[118]

Moreover, we can see also trace the influence of Gandhi's thought on individualism and communitarianism, conceived as Marxist collectivism, in Narayan.[119] Collectivism in form of *mass society* was criticised by both Roy and Narayan. Mass society implies standardisation instead of moral and intellectual growth of individuals and is therefore not the same as territorially-bound sociality of either community or association. Both Roy and Narayan ultimately concurred with the Platonic view that society is man writ large.[120] The main difference is that the role of the individual, which effectively determines the locus of political action and for social revolutions. In Roy's radically constructed society it is local republics, which we rephrase as associations in order to differentiate these from Narayan's concept of individuals' states of natural sociability in the form of communities.

5.2.2 The locus of radical democracy: territorial communities and local republics

In the context of India's budding democracy, much has been said in trying to characterise the nature between individuals and society, which naturally affects the way democracy is conceptualised. In Roy and Narayan we see contrasting views that represent the polarised views of society as primarily individualist on the one hand and primarily communitarian on the other hand. This polarisation has

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[116] Any notion of the 'discovery' of divine laws would directly contradict Narayan's concern for individual development and societal development through political action, especially through radical democracy. Furthermore, it contradicts the Gandhian premise that truth cannot be discovered in isolation, something that does not apply to divine laws, unless one stands in a Thomistic inductive tradition. In the context of Indian political thought, however, 'spiritualist' renderings of politics are generally part of the deductive tradition Mediation may take place between knowledge and the knower, but it is not required.

[117] Dennis Dalton, 'The Ideology of Sarvodaya' In: Pantham and Deutsch, *Political Thought in Modern India,* pp.292-295.

[118] Dalton, p.295

[119] For example, Mall, *Die Herausforderung: Essays Zu Mahatma Gandhi,* pp.60-63.

[120] A similar point is made in Fred Blum's article 'Self-Realization and the Social Order.' In: Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan,* p.70.

often been discussed in the literature dealing with modernity and tradition, leading to what some critics see as an artificial opposition 'between community as the relic of pre-modern tradition and large, universalist and impersonal political identities as the hallmark of modernity.'[121] Roy and Narayan's use of the terms differed from both Western liberal thought that views community with suspicion as well as Eastern thought that sanctifies this concept.[122] At first glance, their concepts of community, although the central locus of radical democracy, seem vague and rather disparate. Following deeper inspection however, we hold that their notions of community in fact concurred in denoting face-to-face sites of socio-political interaction. This aspect of radical democracy covers both the idea of association and of community - it makes sure that associations do not become impersonal *fora* and does not trust in grand communities of interest. The rather thin use of the terms society/community is useful, as it not only emphasises the element of pragmatic, territorial cooperation that characterises radical democracy, but also emphasises the idea of mutability of so-called communities. The second consideration is important for the purposes of the first as claims to authenticity, identity and related concepts often serve to jeopardise the more convincing argument for radical democracy as cooperation.[123]

The community as the locus of the practice of self-management was defined as a site of decision-making and social action. Narayan referred to community in two ways - functional communities, based on occupations, as well as territorial or localised communities. For the purpose of justifying radical democracy, both Roy and Narayan were primarily concerned with the territorial communities. In India, the manifestation of functional communities has long-standing roots in the caste system. According to Narayan, the reason for its degeneration into a hierarchical and oppressive system lay in its ultimate dissociation from the territorial community, making social integration impossible. Moreover, functional communities in modernity display a dichotomy of rural and urban divides, i.e. he sees modern functional communities as being defined by their methods of production.[124] Ideally, however, this distinction would be eroded, and society would instead be characterised by the interaction of circles of agro-industrial communities, to one day include the 'World Community.'[125]

Roy too used the term community in a very broad way, meaning sites of face-to-face interaction of individuals in the neighbourhood, village or township. It excluded, or did not take very seriously the

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[121] Chatterjee, *Community in the East*, p.278.
[122] See Partha Chatterjee, p.278
[123] See Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*. Such claims to power through authenticity certainly challenge this view, yet we would still contend that radical democracy also has to take on the mantle of pragmaticism in order for it to be taken seriously. The consideration of cooperation seems to be superior to the considerations of identity politics that are always subject to change and therefore to constant revision. Again, it is hard to imagine revision without a commitment to cooperation in the first instance.
[124] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.211.
[125] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.213.

definition of community that is defined by culture, language, or religion, and which can therefore cross boundaries to the exclusion of smaller territorial localities. In other words, the dependence of communities of the first kind on a defining idea implies the danger of according the community with an independent ontology and thus with claims to priority in the political sphere. Of course, to accept Roy's argument is to accept that there is no value in the social except for the individual who creates the social world rather than being embedded within it.

Hence, although Roy uses the language of 'local republics' to characterise communities that are sites of grass roots political action, the weight of interpretation is to rest on the term 'local.' The notion of republicanism on the other hand is used loosely to denote the idea of self-rule as defined by freedom from domination, even when there is no direct coercion.[126] The connection is not in fact a straightforward one, and is only to be understood in view of Roy's idea of the state as an administrative apparatus as well as his idea that there can be no overarching institution that can guarantee the absence of domination except the associations of the individuals concerned. The focus on the local is to make the process of cooperation transparent and inter-personal, and not in any way to render the site of political action as socially homogeneous as possible. Roy's local republicanism thus endorses neither populism nor the concept of a trustor-trustee relationship between state and individuals, as Pettit envisages. Rather, it is a challenging mix of libertarian elements that gain left-liberal qualities only when organised territorially.

In surmising as to why Roy and Narayan's working concepts of communities were so broad and why they restricted its use for radical democracy to the territorial, we contend that a large part of his argument for radical democracy centred on its transformative capacity. This makes the notion of the permanence of traditionally, functionally defined communities redundant. Secondly, a perhaps less obvious but reasonable argument is that Narayan and Roy attempted to distance themselves from familiar notions of communities in India. Based on class and caste hierarchies, these embodied strong notions of pre-given authority of a small section of society over the less privileged. What followed from this notion for their critique of Marxism was that they concomitantly distanced themselves from the Marxist concept of class as a minority community of interest that sought to establish dominance over the non-proletarian section of society.

The rejection of class-based politics as a viable means of social change has been shared by many within the left. Recent arguments centring on community/society and individual are often embedded in the discourse of citizenship, rights and justice, directing us over and over again to the concept of

[126] Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government.*

civil society.[127] The problem of civil society persistently confounds contemporary political thought that seeks to plausibly square radical and traditional socialist visions. Daniel Schechter for instance argues for the construction of a *socialist* civil society as a non-authoritarian alternative to capitalism. Theoretically, such a society would be informed by Marx's critique of state-civil society separation but would depart from Marxism by denying that the state and civil society could be re-unified in an organic totality; a socialist civil society could function alongside a centralised and substantially democratic state. Schechter sees this as a call for radical ideas, which however needs to be placed in a context of state-society relations. This tallies especially with Roy's visions of sites of power alongside the state, which however fails to answer the question of private power within civil society that remains unchecked in the absence of the state. In Narayan's case, the danger posed to society by the continued existence of the state would remain, and Schechter's account would therefore tie in only with his pragmatic but not ideal solution to the problem of empowerment.

In Roy and Narayan's arguments we do find some similarity with a particular interpretation of civil society as a sphere of political equality, which was taken for granted in this model of empowerment.[128] At the same time, this is one of the most obvious ways in which Roy and Narayan can be set apart from contemporary radical democratic theories that accord the state with an independent status in order for the demands of freedom and equality to be realised, based on the assumption that the politicisation of civil society is always incomplete.[129] Empowerment or self-government as understood by Roy and Narayan therefore differs in some vital respects from a notion of empowerment as power sharing. While the rejection of power sharing solutions may seem unrealistic to many on the political left, the intellectual legacy of Roy and Narayan with regard to the question of the individual in politics can be felt even in contemporary writings on themes like '*quo vadis*, fifty years of Indian democracy?' In various editorials of the liberal *Economic and Political Weekly of India* we find calls for simplifying the way state performance is to be measured, for example. Here, strong cases are put forward in favour of the notion of *individual* benefit, as opposed to more sectarian claims upon the state.[130] But again, this is asking the question of the state, rather than looking at the possibilities of individual input, as Roy and Narayan aimed to do.

Given that Roy and Narayan's thinking differed substantially from those who espouse a higher level of participation and empowerment through the concept of civil society, their work is a timely reminder of the point that Partha Chatterjee makes in his article on 'Community in the East', namely that the state-society dichotomy is outdated. As such '(the) politics of democratisation must therefore

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[127] Menon, *State, Gender, Community. Citizenship in Contemporary India.*
[128] Mahajan, *Civil Society and Its Avatars*, p.1188.
[129] The former position is one that sets the state apart from society at large, whereas the latter position espouses a 'right-based Hegelian argument', according to Mahajan.
[130] Commentary by SK, *Commentary: Fifty Years of Indian State. Suggestions for Its Revitalisation,* p.1509.

be carried out not in the classical transactions between state and civil society but in the much less well-defined, legally ambiguous, contextually and strategically demarcated terrain of political society.'[131] This opens the political arena for a worldview that is not constrained by dichotomies that result in endless debates of self-definition and other-definition. Rather, as Roy and Narayan have indicated, political action can be a highly individualistic, though not solipsistic enterprise. This is to be understood in the light of trying to reclaim Marxism's humanist heritage that is conceived not on the basis of objective, universalist abstractions but on a 'historical-materialist conception of reality that founds...on the organic relationship each individual has with other individuals and with nature.'[132]

However, in comparing Roy and Narayan, we find some slight differences in emphasis. Narayan argued that the underlying organic unity of the world and individual should in fact temper rampant individualism. This should therefore inform the moral choices that individuals make and also make communities sensitive to the needs of individuals. Roy took the material unity of the world, of which the individual is an integral part, for granted, but did not argue for individuals to consciously choose to act for the good of society, as the latter is nothing but the sum of individuals. In rejecting organicism at an aggregate level, Roy rejected societies' autonomous ontology, and indeed, perceived organic theories of communities to be an invention to subjugate the majority.[133]

This is not an insignificant point in terms of comparing this position with the focus on pluralism and diversity in contemporary political thought on empowerment. Roy and Narayan's thought is striking in this context, for having based their political ideas primarily on the individual, the mutability of the same will affect the mutability of the social world. Thus, the issue of empowerment cannot stop with 'groups' being granted rights and recognition. The consequences are, as can be seen in India today, not the obliteration of difference (which also relates to status), but an affirmation of differences that are considered useful in eliciting special terms of existence, material gains and protected status from the state. For Marxists, this scenario is challenging as class becomes subsumed under the umbrella of society's pluralism.

In having rejected class on grounds of domination, Roy and Narayan did not have to deal with this aspect of equating the locus of democracy with the direction of its interest. This is to say that by being a political agent within a particular group, it follows that the interest of this group is the primary reference point. This is not the work radical democracy is supposed to do, in either Roy or Narayan's notions of self-government. For one, the aspect of mutability is not considered sufficiently. Secondly,

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[131] Chatterjee, *Community in the East*, p.282.
[132] Baratta, *The Individual and the World: From Marx to Gramsci to Said*, p.2.
[133] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism* p.84.

the concept of territorial community implies that the locus of participatory democracy is primarily a geographically situated framework that enables the agents of democracy to organise themselves politically and choose the means of organisation freely. Imputing a substantive notion of locus such as particularist affiliations would by definition constrain the available choices. Marxists have had to contend with the idea that class is a restrictive category as human beings have other roles as well, but seem unable to offer an alternative to what logically follows – every other 'community' will be subject to constraining ways of existence, if only in order to sustain the same.

Roy and Narayan's concept of community opens far more possibilities of pragmatic action. Even so, Roy's position seems stronger in being far more consistent with regard to the constructive possibilities that are inherent solely in individuals. Narayan's leanings toward the organic and moral community render the possibilities he perceives less open and somewhat more restricted. In relating their uncritical localism to India's problems of communal conflicts, local government corruption and simple accessibility of some backward castes to the *fora* of local politics, there seems to be a stark discrepancy between their thought and actual socio-political conditions. Yet while it may be argued that Roy and Narayan's conceptions of the conditions of local politics ignored some genuine problems, their ideas in effect rested on the potency of individual will to create the rights conditions. The next section will deal with the ways in which Roy and Narayan believe radical democratic politics can be realised by individuals within territorial communities.

5.2.3 Modus of radical democracy: social action and dialogue

Of course, to make the point that individuals are the primary political actors in a radical democratic polity is not enough, and hence Narayan and Roy did have something to say about the way political life is to be organised and under what conditions. The concepts of dialogue, deliberation and social action are underlined in their thinking but also have to be extracted from their writings as they are sometimes merely implied, and sometimes assumed. The above concepts are crucial to their thought in so far they enable knowledge acquisition through practical reasoning on the one hand and integrating pluralist social structures on the other hand. While these aspects seem reminiscent of Aristotelian notions of politics, their relatively contemporary application by Roy and Narayan deserves further exploration.

In Narayan we see two elements of radical democracy: the grounding of politics in theoretical elements of dialogue and deliberation, and the practical effort of engaging in social action. For Narayan, politics is about grass roots practice and not merely the consideration of the formal structures and norms that regulate political life. The latter cannot be reproduced adequately within

society, if their grounding remains theoretical and top-down in reality.[134] In other words, politics is about production[135] – the production of justice, equitable economic relations and political equality. A society that is able to produce these fundamentals is ultimately the only one in which the ideals of liberty, autonomy, and moral excellence may be realised, if only as a permanent process of Total Revolution. As the foundations of this ideal order were the Gandhian injunctions of truth and non-violence, there is a strong link between Narayan's vision of the ideal order and his conversion to the *sarvodaya* philosophy. Hence, the political order of radical democracy, focused on individual acts of production and its implications for the good of all, is one in which everybody is empowered to make decisions that regulate all possible spheres of life as well as implement these.[136]

Direct political action was taken to mean social work in especially rural areas to implement land reforms.[137] Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and Narayan effectively politicised the generally empty concept of land redistribution in post-colonial India. The initial concept was one of *bhoodan* (distribution of land to the landless), which later became *gramdan* (communisation of land). This land-centred concern was later expanded by Narayan to incorporate 'communities of work' that were concerned with a wider range of issues such as unemployment, corruption, pricing systems and so on. Furthermore, in his concept of Total Revolution, Narayan also viewed direct action as negative *satyagraha*, which meant political action in 'struggle committees' that were engaged politically outside the party system, but within the electoral system.[138]

The aims of the struggle committees were two-fold and reflected Narayan's changing position on the immediate viability of his notion of a partyless and stateless democracy, analogous to the viability of a classless and casteless society. On the one hand he contended that short-term direct democracy was to

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[134] Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.24-25.

[135] Blum notes that this concept of production is linked to 'productiveness', rather than 'productivity which excludes human values.' See Blum in Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.73.

[136] This explains Narayan's unease with the notion of the welfare state, as it leaves no room for personal initiative and the will to work. Hence, social virtues such as compassion and a concern for the common good cannot be developed adequately. Refer to Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, p.101.

[137] See Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.167-169. Also refer to Geoffrey Ostergaard, 'The Ambiguous Strategy of JP's Last Phase' in Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.159-162. The 'last phase' is generally known as the phase of 'total revolution', between 1974 and 1979.

[138] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.116. The distinction between positive and negative *satyagraha* was made by Vinoba Bhave in order to distinguish positive *satyagraha* as being non-violent assistance in right thinking from negative *satyagraha* as being non-violent resistance to evil. India's independence, he believed, made the negative form redundant, as opposed to Narayan who was very much concerned with continued state domination that endangered fundamental liberties of the citizens. Without these liberties, the more positive forms of social change would nót be possible. See Ostergaard in Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.158. Bhave's position was not uncommon within especially European socialism, in which there was a 'proclivity for socialists to download at least some of the problems of capitalist domination on the question of nationalism.' Refer to Joll, *The Second International. 1889-1914*, pp.108-127.

be concerned with issues of rights and liberties[139] and hence these struggle committees had a role in participating in the electoral system of a parliamentary democracy. On the other hand, they also had to be dedicated to integrated social change in education, culture and economic structures in order to achieve a real sense of direct democracy.[140] Here we see very clearly Narayan's ambiguities regarding the democratic system, depending on the short-term or the long-term perspective. This raises the general question of roles that democratic institutions have to take on, and whether single instances of democratic institutions can cope with multiple functions over time. We criticise that the democratic politics of election cannot necessarily be complemented by a parallel world of democratic 'politics' that tries to encompass and change social structures radically, given the different types of demands that each of these political actions have.

However, in order to understand Narayan's position better, we will look at the notion of reasoned self-management, of which dialogue is the constitutive part. This brings us forward to more recent literature on radical-deliberative democracy, and we maintain that not only did Narayan display remarkable foresight with regard to the future of democratic politics, but also that his ideas rested on the element of intra-personal deliberation that has largely become tangential compared to the method of *elenchus* that seems to dominate the concept of deliberation. Dryzek for instance notes that he prefers the use of the term discursive democracy in order to differentiate it from deliberative democracy, as one of the connotations of deliberative is also that of introspection, or reasoning without communicating.[141] While one may argue that the Indian experience of colonialism lends itself specifically to the notion of liberating introspection, which was part of the project of the Hindu Renaissance, discourse as inter-personal communication seems counter-intuitive if it is not complemented by intra-personal deliberation. The use of the latter in political thought has of course been overshadowed by the social essence of political life. Yet its exclusion, we believe, leads to a less than satisfactory process of discourse, leading to irreconcilable positions of difference.

In Narayan's terms, the moral and rational deliberation of interests would not only effect social change but also political change, even within an electoral system. The weakness of this idea, as compelling as it seems, is that it hinges on the innate rationality of citizens and their ability to make the right decisions that not only serve to ensure socio-economic justice but also a better moral environment. How are these decisions made? They are made in a deliberative-discursive manner that has truth-seeking and subsequent conversion as its core. Conversion rests on three levels, which are hierarchically ordered. Beginning with the most desirable, they are conversion through persuasion of

[139] Narayan specified 'an independent judiciary, watchful legislature, a free press, a balanced party system, vigilant and effective public opinion, a free academic community, powerful trade unions and other associations of different sectors of society.' See Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.122.
[140] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, pp.197-200.

the intellect and reason, conversion through a 'change of heart' (to use Gandhi's term) or emotive conversion, and finally conversion through indirect persuasion resulting from changing public opinion.[142]

The dialogic nature of the process of conversion demands that it rests on an underlying understanding of mutual values. For Narayan, non-violence is the essential principle of dialogue, following Gandhi's idea that truth is not only constituted as an intuitive moral conviction, but that is also only partial.[143] Partial truth means that an infallible certainty of reality does not exist and hence the only access to a semblance of truth is to be had through discussions and experiences with other individuals possessing a different view of the world.[144] Arguing that worldviews will always be partial does not mean that there is no truth that exists external to individuals. Rather, it states the inability of humans to grasp totalities, making Gandhi decidedly non-Platonic and more Aristotelian in epistemological outlook. What we have to concede is that this is dissimilar to contemporary notions of difference, wherein subjective outlooks are respected for value that difference inherently accorded with. Yet given the appeal of the rhetoric and the appeal to the sensibilities of traditional Indian thought that favours holism, there is no reason why this Gandhian idea could not be a practical meeting ground that gives credence to positions of scepticism as well positions that are hopeful of truths being discovered. In short, it offers a good starting point for dialogue, with the principle of non-violence being a safety net for a cooperative politics when consensus fails.

Accordingly, despite differences in positions, inter-personal interaction is not to take the form of embittered conflict of interest, but of a struggle based on the fundamental principle of non-violence and incorporating the practice of voluntary self-restraint.[145] Consensus, which requires some form of common understanding, is only one option among others, especially cooperation. The value system underlying consensus politics has significant political implications, as it requires a universal understanding of morality and reason. This is premised on the influential notions present in Gandhian thought, namely the rejection of democratic majoritarianism that builds on the utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number.[146]

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[141] Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations.*
[142] Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, pp.127-128.
[143] The reverse of dialogue is monologue, which allows for the unilateral use of violence in a way that dialogue by definition does not. See Ramana-Murti, *Buber's Dialogue and Gandhi's Satyagraha*, p.608.
[144] Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform. An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, p.173.
[145] Voluntary self-restraint has one meaning as self-sacrifice, the significance of which can be seen in the concept of consensus politics. In a second connotation, it is effectively the only way a struggle for material goods and their distribution can be resolved.
[146] This is a reference in particular to Gandhi's 1909 *Hind Swaraj* in which he outlines his criticism of parliamentary democracy. In addition to emancipation, Gandhi sees equality being compromised by majoritarianism. Also see Pandey, *Democractic Ideal State and the Hind Swaraj*, pp.41-45. The denial of a collective while accommodating a universal consensus has been criticised as an inconsistency. See Doctor, *A*

However, the consensus ideal is but one factor that aims to achieve a workable solution to the problem of partial truth. The second factor is that of cooperation which is based on the Gandhian notion of self-sacrifice and self-control. Although the concept of sacrifice is a complex and historically contingent one, the idea of self-sacrifice undoubtedly clashes with contemporary liberal notions of autonomy, and thus adds little value to a more general discussion on how to deal with the problem of socio-economic reorganisation. Self-control on the other hand is a concept that can be reinterpreted as a process linked to the notion of accepting personal responsibility for decisions. In a situation of cooperation, responsibility is an important factor, if cooperation is not to degenerate into relationships that entail coercive power. As such, Narayan's thought displays ideas that deserve to be revived within the left. While the politics of consensus implies some form of domination, which sits uncomfortably with contemporary ideas that endorse pluralism and difference, cooperation is a far more useful device. The idea of self-government on its own demands consensus in order for it not to become an instrument of oppression, as Rousseau has shown. However, in view of its limited realism and potential for conversion through force, self-government can be construed as voluntary cooperation under the conditions of self-control. In this view, the limitations of subjectivity and subjective will are acknowledged but its effects are mitigated inasmuch it affects every individual and relies on non-violent principles of political organisation.

Although emphasising the value of consensus politics in a country fractured by dissent at both the elite and popular level, in no way did Narayan deny the importance of dissent: 'While normally consensus makes for stability and continuity, and dissent for change and development, there are circumstances...in which progress becomes impossible without consensus.'[147] This is to say that dissent is in fact a normal state of affairs, which has to be disrupted only in very specific circumstances, i.e. when progressive development is halted, and in the presence of shortsighted competitive strife between political parties. Indeed, Narayan deplored the fact that political parties were no longer committed to differing ideological positions, and instead engaged in selfish, unprincipled infighting.[148] This left room for political dictatorship in the deceptive form of 'democratic centralism.' Narayan outlined the implications for both democracy and socialism in the following, referring specifically to the politics of India's nationalist Congress party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. The reference is also directed in equal measure to the notion of political leadership as espoused by the Communist party.

Critique of J P's Polity, p.265.Against that, we maintain that the collective will denotes the embodiment of a consensus, whereas consensus (in the manner of truth-*seeking*) is always a *process* that has a particular outcome at a particular point time but is subject to change. Hence, cooperation, as describing this process, is a more useful term.

[147] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.207.

[148] Narayan, *India and Her Problems*, pp.59-62.

'In regard to the first, the consequence is that dissent is no longer valued or welcomed. It needs to be emphasized here that dissent – in other words, freedom of thought – is not just an intellectual luxury, as our communist friends would like to make out, but a necessary catalytic agent to which society owes its progress, its revolutions, its technological and scientific advances. Without dissent society must become stagnant and moribund...In regard to socialism, the consequence of the drive towards "democratic centralism", or personal leadership, at the cost of a healthy democratic socialist party, is that more and more economic power, in addition to the political power that it already enjoys, is passing into the affluent class of the so-called "committed" bureaucratic elite, of which the "politbureau" is naturally the Prime Minister's secretariat.'[149]

According to Johan Galtung, Narayan owed at least some of his ideas to the influence of Gandhi's theory of conflict that has two remarkable elements. One is the (Christian) distinction between conflict and its manifestations, or the distinction between the human subjects and the problems they deal with as subject matters. The second element, which is a reinterpretation of conflict from a negative but necessary state of the world to a more positive view, considers indifference between actors to be a bigger problem than conflict. Since conflict is viewed by Gandhi as being a *bond* between subjects, it is 'treated as a raw material, to be moulded into harmonious social relations.'[150] Galtung assumes that Gandhi was a structuralist, or that he saw conflict built into structures rather than persons, given the premise that underlying individuals' immediate internal structures are structures of human ties.[151] Hence, conflict resolution requires the prior recognition of these primary, organic structures for it to be successful.

As we have already depicted, rather than situating grass roots political action within a naturally organic order, Roy focused on the inventive aspect of political life. Consequently, the idea of self-management in Roy involves social action not in the context of sacrifice and self-control but is to take place as the interaction with other individuals in the knowledge that society has been created as a forum for the maximisation of freedom. Social responsibilities thus are not obligatory or natural, but are voluntarily discharged given that the preservation of society is crucial to the interests of individuals. Roy's individualist position can be interpreted as an attempt to sell the idea of social duties to basically self-interested individuals. However, according to Roy, radical democracy is about the re-organisation of social life to the extent that 'it gives freedom a moral-intellectual as well as social content.' The congruence between man and society means that if the structure of the individual can be replicated as social structures, it follows that individual capability, such as freedom, can be replicated but not generated at an aggregate level.

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[149] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, pp.4-5.
[150] Johan Galtung, 'A Gandhian Theory of Conflict' In: Selbourne, *In Theory and in Practice. Essays on the Politics of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.97.
[151] Galtung, pp.97-98.

Roy's notion of local republics comprised small groups called People's Committees that are reflexively structured to replicate the idea of the state that is composed of these committees.[152] In particular, it is about the replication of sovereignty in decision-making, as rights are never owned naturally, but are established by their exercise.[153] Decision-making, in this view, is in accordance with the method of cooperation and furthermore, by constitutionalising the basis of these processes as far as these reflect the workings of reason. Roy condemned especially communist and ultra-left parties as being 'tyrannised by words.'[154]Cooperation and constitutionalism have been considered antithetical to revolutionary politics, but Roy maintained that without these elements radical democracy would be impossible to sustain. This implies, first of all, that conflict is produced by superficial distinctions between individuals that obscure universal powers of reasoning. Secondly, that individuals share the agenda of reorganising society on the basis of equality and creativity, and finally that the individualistic-creative aspect of political life does not lead to unbridgeable conflict between individuals. The possible circularity of the argument can only be circumvented however by effecting a transformation of purely self-interested individuals into de-classed, disinterested, and indeed new types of individuals, as we shall explicate in section 5.7.

The latter arguments put Roy's considerations for decision-making under the auspices of reason into perspective. The concept of reason certainly carries substantive connotations, hence to be sympathetic to Roy's position is to also be sympathetic to reason, albeit in its usage as an instrument that tries to make sense of experience and that aims to develop and change knowledge systems. Roy's wedding of radical democracy to reason means to challenge a self-complacent attitude towards given political realities. One way that reason is deployed is through discussion, which takes stock of changing situations in order to change political, and other, practice. Reason thereby not only enables theoretical suppositions to be made, but that they are also tested against experience.[155] Reason provides the instrument for challenge, whereas radical democracy enables each individual to develop this capacity for not only gaining experience but to also deploy it with the aim of changing the world – in political, social, technological and other ways. The political system of democracy of course overrides all other considerations as the most consistent means of realising this aim, as well as embodying the principle of individual empowerment and creativity.

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[152] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.95.
[153] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.96. A notable exception is the right to property. This idea is also shared by Narayan, who viewed property as a social institution (see Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.36, p.40. The idea of establishing rights through exercising them has of course significant implications for understanding the transformative role of radical democracy. Non-natural rights can thereby be established *a posteriori*.
[154] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.127.
[155] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.46.

In spite of the differences in Roy and Narayan's conceptions of how radical democracy as empowerment works, we find insights in both that establishes the prescience of their thinking within Indian political theory. Their ideas, framed in the context of post-colonial India, connect in a constructive way to contemporary debates on the meaning of democracy among the left in Europe and in parts of the Anglo-American world. Democracy in modern times is 'the unfinished project of modernity', according to Habermas. A major challenge to it is justification in epistemic contexts. Instead, democracy is about 'the expression of desire rather than knowledge, with the will rather than reason.'[156] For Habermas democracy no longer rests on epistemology as a foundational discipline, but as a normative theory of social learning. This is to reject the ideas of natural progress and its correlation with scientific advance. Shorn of the Enlightenment moral and epistemic commitments, democracy takes one of two forms: it becomes either a way of aggregating individual preferences or is reduced to a mere legal procedure.[157]

Prima facies this does not seem a good point of comparison with what seem strictly foundational justifications for radical democracy, i.e., reason and morality. However, a more differentiated reading of Roy and Narayan, as well as a more balanced reading, suggest some parallels with Habermasian considerations. Especially Roy, like Habermas does, believed in the significance of the West in that theories based on reason 'permit many developmental pathways to higher stages of social learning.' This pushes forward the idea of the centrality of politics as the 'self-conscious institutionalisation of practical discourse.'[158] Discourse is not only a matter of experience and learning, but also of the institutions of bourgeois democracy. For Roy and Narayan too, politics became everything in so far as it enabled not only the realisation of personal autonomy, but also the practice of acquiring, generating and incorporating socially conditioned knowledge. Thus, parliamentary democracy is not only a problem in terms of the question of representation, but also in terms of its capacity for 'discussion' and the scope of the challenges these discussions pose.

Quite importantly, discourse or discussion based on reason, to use Roy's term, constitutes political relevance as the link between social practice and radical democracy as an extension of struggle or revolution. This takes place on two fronts – on the one hand discussion based on reason serves to identify social ills, which are subsumed under the controversial term of social backwardness. Identifying fundamental problems of the 20th century relates to the capitalist mode of production as well as the state and its role in perpetuating structures of exploitation that are manifest in economic,

[156] James F. Bohman, 'Participating in Enlightenment: Habermas' Cognitivist Interpretation of Democracy.' In: Dascal and Gruengard, *Knowledge and Politics*, p.264.
[157] Bohman, p.266
[158] Bohman, p.274

social and political inequalities.[159] This is making the Habermasian point that the discursive-persuasive politics assumes some fundamental values to be at the core of its method, else a general identification of what constitute social ills would not be likely. On the other hand, the identification of social ills leads to the setting of the terms of discourse that in turn enables cooperation without domination. Hence, the notion of discussion based on reason allows for politics to be both democratic and revolutionary.[160] The democratic element of discourse in fact generates the conditions for radical social change that is not subject to the criticism of being imposed upon some individuals by those who are simply in control of those conditions that allow for agenda-setting as well as decision-making. This problem has of course confounded Marxism, but Roy and Narayan sought a political method that eschewed domination, even if based on plausible assumptions. The notion of reason is thus not one of overriding importance, but one that underlines individual capacity for identifying problems as well as individual capacity to resolve these through cooperation.

Roy and Narayan's work also points to the criticism of pure practical discourse. In their work we see the return to the Aristotlelian concept of action or *praxis* as also consisting of contemplation or *theoria.*[161] The secularisation of praxis has meant to great extent using the art of practical reasoning, or *phronensis*, as the most appropriate form of knowledge and thus is confined to only the intersubjective level of discourse. However, Roy and Narayan did not restrict themselves to the search for the conditions of intersubjective dialogue through reason alone. This criticism is levelled quite often at for instance Habermas and is based on the concern that the rule of reason dominates over the rule of the people. Furthermore, neither did they consider influential traditions within Hindu thought that seek solutions to the *vita activa* in what Singh calls '*gnosis* or the knowledge of 'Who I Am.'[162]

What they attempted was a fusion of the former two modes of knowledge – practical reasoning and scientific knowledge - that have a bearing on political action, defined as social action and dialogue. The term 'knowledge' is better expressed as scientific knowledge and in fact indicates not only 'who I

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[159] Gupta, *J. P. : From Marxism to Total Revolution*, pp.132-136. Roy is particularly concerned with what he terms 'backwardness', a result of the deep commitment of India's masses to issues of religion and spirituality. This has an overpowering effect on the perpetuation of social and economic inequalities. Also see Pantham, *Political Theories and Social Reconstruction: A Critical Survey of the Literature on India*, p.327.

[160] Refer to Amritananda Das in Das-Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.118-119. Das argues that democracy and revolution are contradictory aims. The latter has a totalist approach to social change, assumes a dominant set of values, the replacement of an old order by a radically new one, as well as the dominance of a minority over society. In contrast, democracy has a necessarily piecemeal and incremental approach to social change, involves compromise between different sets of values, also compromises between conservatism and radicalism as well as creating majority rule through collaboration of many minorities.

[161] Raghuveer Singh, 'Traditional Wisdom and Modern Science as Paradigms of Political Discourse.' In: Parekh and Pantham, *Political Discourse. Explorations in Indian and Western Political Thought*, pp.228-237. To be sure, the Frankfurt school critique of the dominance of *techne* that aimed to replace it with *phronensis* was an improvement on the narrow scope of the former, but even the latter ultimately remains narrow and incomplete in scope. Refer to Blaug, *Democracy, Real and Ideal*, pp.24-26.

[162] Raghuveer Singh, p. 237.

am' but also indicates the potential for changing the very being of human nature. Reason as such is an empty concept, as it on the one hand provides the basis for scientific reason as well as the basis for practical intersubjective communication that is in part based on the *status quo* of the latter on the other hand. As such, the dominance of reason as a political instrument of power is not a potent critique in either Narayan or in Roy's case. Within this account, Roy's position emerges as the stronger one. Especially given his notion of inductive morality, this attempted synthesis between the practical and the contemplative has a bearing on the issue of the ethical as well. We see parallels with projects of deliberation in political liberalism that critically take into account the separation of ethical questions from that of 'reasonable' questions, leading to the irrelevance of political debate altogether.[163]

However, we argue that Roy's notions are actually an improvement on the call for a simple de-secularisation of dialogue.[164] It is claimed that dialogue as the form of modern political debate entails the political participation of individuals of equal worth in public through argumentation. As a result, there is a weakening of the distinctions between public and private as well as the political and the philosophical. Therefore, deliberative democracy demands that we debate not only facts but also values.[165] The political ceases to be a discrete part of participation; rather, all forms of life are simultaneously affected. Roy's notions differed though from contemporary accounts that emphasise the private value systems as being of fundamental importance regarding issues of identity formation and exercise of autonomy. For Roy, as we have outlined in Chapter 4, value systems were always in a state of flux. While individuals acted on them, their importance lay as signifiers of stages in a process of human emancipation rather than as ends in themselves. It is therefore not primarily the tool of reason that establishes the common basis for dialogue, but the underlying sense of impermanence that comes with the use of reason. Hence, the ethical does not lead to stalemates in communication, nor does the reasonable foreclose the outcome of discussion.

The notion of reason and the potential for change that reason fosters has implications for the idea of differences within a society. In terms of the challenge of inclusion of individuals into the democratic process, Roy and Narayan's arguments focused on the idea of hierarchical differences. First of all, the notion of reason that was part of their projects of humanism belied the idea of natural hierarchy. Secondly, the trust in radical change through reason also meant that differences were not merely to be levelled but to be transformed at the level of both the dominating and the dominated sections of society. As such, Narayan mentioned the importance of religious minorities and weaker sections of society standing up for their rights, but these measures of resistance and organisation were not

[163] Wallach, *The Platonic Political Art. A Study of Critical Reason and Democracy*, p.406.
[164] Raghuveer Singh, p.237.
[165] Remer, *Political Oratory and Conversation. Cicero Versus Deliberative Democracy*, p.49.

accorded much weight.[166] Rights were not supposed to be specific but inclusive. For Roy, real difference existed in the division of society into elites and non-elites.[167] Unlike in orthodox Marxism, class relations were relegated to a status on par with other differences within society, such as gender, caste, community etc. At the same time, the relative weakness of the idea of differences, even though fact of India's plural society is taken for granted as an important given, means that both Roy and Narayan seemed to overlook what newer left writings consider as being the significance of pluralism in view of the failed factor of class, namely its role 'in support of freedom, and of equality, and of solidarity.'[168] This image is however one of hope rather than of omission.

Ultimately, the value of Roy and Narayan's conceptions lies in providing an alternative to both a traditional Marxist view of strict divisions within society and a view of a pluralist society that can potentially unite in actions of solidarity, tolerance and respect. Their view benefits from both less optimism about the potentiality of abstract solidarity as well as from a notion of society that is not constrained by power struggles between concrete identities like class, caste or other types of imagined communities. In aiming to transcend the latter into qualitatively different agents of democracy, their case is therefore quite different from instrumentalist, anti-essentialist arguments about difference, such as caste and class, which focus on the mutability of these social categories. Here, caste and class are seen to be useful instruments of identity formation as well as of the creation of sites of social capital, i.e. these are building blocks of a 'plural and multicultural nation.'[169] In contrast to this view, caste and class for Roy and Narayan are mutable categories but only in so far they are to be dispensed with via radical democratic politics that refutes the need for social groups to interact with the purpose of interest representation.

We have thus far seen an argument for radical political action defined on social action and dialogue at the level of the individual, especially in Roy's case. The basis of this model of radical democracy has been interpreted as a strong claim for universal reason and morality and therefore of a clear notion of the good life. The empowerment of naturally reasonable and ethical people should therefore lead to the realisation of the good life for all. However, we claim that this seemingly substantive concept of radical democracy is better interpreted as a transitional political theory, internally as well as externally. Internally, as it embodies the idea that societies should be in transition. This of course is a Marxist position to take. In external terms though, within the history of political thinking, their ideas vacillate so as to indicate the notion that radical democracy also stands for a type of polity most suited

[166] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, pp.202-204.
[167] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.137-139. Also see Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.105-106.
[168] Walzer, *Pluralism and Social Democracy*, p.51.
[169] Subrata K. Mitra, 'Caste, democracy and the politics of community formation in India.' In: Searle-Chatterjee and Sharma, *Contextualising Caste*, pp.49-71.

to societies where certainties are done away with, where the idea of representation is no longer accepted and where the very notion of what human nature means is debatable.

Two ways of thinking support this idea we present. We see notions that take into account the difference between the 'is' and the 'ought', which stands for a world of certainties wherein the question is how to realise the 'ought.' Radical democracy as empowerment is one way of realising ideal states. However, there is also the impact of the difference between the 'is' and 'the what could be' in terms of possibility, which is most explicitly to be found in Roy. While this is not a rejection of the Marxian position, it is certainly a challenge to the dominant variation of orthodox Marxism. An indication of the fact that these varying positions are indeed part of Narayan and Roy's political thought is the tension between these two modes of thinking. In order to explicate this point, we argue that their take on the issue of leadership will expose even more of the wavering between the limits of the 'ought' in radical democracy and the possibilities it offers. The limits are the standards by which radical democracy is to be measured as well as the leadership that offers these to the 'empowered'.

5.3 Empowerment and transformation

5.3.1 Empowerment and its limits: leadership and the masses

'(P)olitics, at least under a democracy, must know the limits which it may not cross.'[170]

Transitions, even transitions to participatory democracy – have generally been managed, which is legitimised by the idea that some form of common interest engenders political action. Trust in grass roots spontaneity is not a common position at all. As such, in Roy and Narayan's political thought, we see that the issue of leadership is inherent in the idea of radical democracy. The terms of the debate on politics and leadership have been threatened especially by the legacy of Marxism in a vital way. In the post-modern world Marxist thought has been associated with concepts of authority, domination, and power that seem to perpetuate totalitarian ideas and has subsequently led to authority being equated with authoritarianism. Stuart Sim notes that

> '(p)ostmodernist commentators are...prone to conflate authority and authoritarianism, and the criticism is worth registering. The point could also be made, however, that it is one of the great virtues of post-modern thought to demonstrate just how large an element of the latter there so often is in the former – or, for that matter, to at least raise the prospect that the former, however unwittingly, may in practice entail the latter (Stalinism, for example).'[171]

[170] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.13.
[171] Sim, *Post-Marxism. An Intellectual History*, pp.35-36.

Nowhere is the evidence for the transformation of authority into authoritarianism clearer than in the Engelsian reading of freedom as necessity.

> 'Classical Marxist hegemony, therefore, represents a concerted attempt to rewrite contingency as a mere aspect of historical necessity. Increasingly, this exercise takes on an authoritarian character, as the Communist Party comes to conceive of itself as the guardian of that necessity, with the duty of implementing it on behalf of the proletariat'[172]

The implication of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, brought to its peak by Lenin in his 'State and Revolution', was for critics such as Laclau and Mouffe that a 'classist' mentality continues to reassert itself through the various social democratic parties of Western Europe, even in the aftermath of the First World War. As such, they believe the failure of classism to disintegrate as 'yet another missed opportunity to construct a radical democratic politics out of a highly promising social situation.'[173]

However, the critique of classist authoritarianism has tended to overshadow attempts to rectify this failure. Daniel Schechter for instance argues that the overly general assumption, namely that revolutionary socialism is covered by 'Marxism-Leninism' (as he terms it), has led to the neglect in interest in traditions of radical socialist theory and practice. These radical traditions are in marked opposition to socialist dictatorships by rejecting the centrally planned economy and the subordination of social life to the control of a vanguard party. To Schechter's account of those branches of this tradition that critique centralism in both political power and economic power, we can also add Roy and Narayan.

Yet the problem of dictatorship has also involved critiquing the role of the led, and not only of the leaders. This brings to mind the case for the inherently conservative nature of the proletariat.[174] An attempt to overcome this failure can be highlighted by the proposed role of the intelligentsia in Western Europe, especially in the 1960s. The dual dangers of authority and social conservatism meant that far more trust was put into a union of the proletariat with the *déclassé* intelligentsia, e.g. by Marcuse. Its success is predicated on the notion of *engage,* which brings us to the political thought of Roy and Narayan, who opposed the political *dictatorship* of the proletariat and sought to replace it with the *leadership* of intellectuals who demonstrate both intellectual and moral excellence.[175] Firstly,

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[172] Cf. Sim regarding the Laclau-Mouffe critique of Marxist hegemony. Sim, *Post-Marxism. An Intellectual History*, p.16..

[173] Sim, *Post-Marxism. An Intellectual History*, p.17.

[174] As was pointed out in pp.23-24, social conservatism in the Indian context was linked to the dominance of tradtitional, agrarian communities that did not easily embrace the idea of social mobility as a factor of interests.

[175] Here we use the term intellectuals to mean both the academicians (*degagé* thinkers), as well those belonging to the so-called intelligentsia (*engagé* thinkers).

leadership is seen to be an indispensable instrument of enabling the empowerment of the so-called masses in the first place through the educative process. This in effect provides the model for the development of intellectual and moral excellence of individuals. In this sense the development of leadership qualities is prior to the political institution of radical democracy. While being partly the result of spontaneous development, it also harks back to the idea of heroic individualism in Marxist thought. Secondly, the leadership has a function of agenda setting within the democratic structures, i.e. to politicise the ideas of socio-economic and political justice, equality, and rights. Finally, the leadership is to shield the masses from the negative consequences of state authoritarianism by accepting responsibility for decisions.[176]

This particular perception is linked to the pragmatic school of democracy, wherein authority is differentiated from authoritarianism. Roy and Narayan's positions were not unique in so far the inter-bellum and post-bellum period in the West was also characterised by a liberal call for strong leadership in the face of state authoritarianism on the one hand, and an apathetic yet impressionable populace on the other hand.[177] The conditions for this type of leadership were generally recounted as strength of will, a strong moral grounding, as well as a universalising outlook in the face of social divisions. Quite crucially, this was accompanied by a call for prioritising education as a key condition of radical democracy, especially when addressing the dangers of totalitarianism. A very important point that was stressed all throughout was the issue of education as a premise for a functioning democracy. We can observe this call for education very often when the dangers of totalitarianism were addressed, as the lack of education is perceived to absolve the masses from any form of conscious support for totalitarian systems.

As education was not only about knowledge but also about method, and particularly scientific method, the educative process was seen to incorporate both contemplation or realisation of facts and values as well practical reason or the ability to change the same. The ability of a scientific outlook to encourage doubt and foster scepticism with regard to authority was recognised by British policy makers in colonial India.[178] As such, traditional attachments were fostered over emphatically modern notions of learning, the hope being that the authority perceived as residing within traditional Hindu intellectual leadership would stave off claims to independent intellectual and political activity. In this view, scientific outlook - rather than scientific technology - that rejects imitation and intuition was seen as the chief factor of practical autonomy.[179]

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[176] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, pp.134-135.
[177] *Inter alia*, Barnard, *Dilemmas of Leadership in the Democratic Process*. Wells, *Democratic Leadership in Politics*. Maud, *Leadership and Democracy*.
[178] Chaudhuri, *The Intellectual in India*, pp.3-9.
[179] Chaudhuri, *The Intellectual in India*, pp.50-52.

In contemporary debates, the theme of authority is far less prominent as there is a 'consensus that authority involves neither coercion nor rational deliberation but, rather, a justifiable surrender of judgement by subjects to those who rule on their behalf.'[180] Authority is therefore perceived as being inherently opposed to democracy. Mark Warren repudiates this view and proposes an approach that makes authority vital on grounds of the complexity of issues, the specialisation of discourses, the desirability of accountability in decision-making as well as on ground of the 'crisis of authority' in actual politics that has served to close the gap between authority and authoritarianism.[181] However, even though Roy and Narayan too considered authority as being a necessary element of revolutionary politics, their notion of authority was based on a limited function, i.e. of engendering change, and also on a limitation in its scope, i.e. when the masses can claim authority for themselves and are actually empowered.

Hence Narayan sees as one of the fundamental tasks of leadership to educate people about 'the fundamentals of democracy and their relevance to their life' as well as to 'organise them in appropriate organs of struggle' for their rights.[182] Leadership is to be provided by social workers who have the self-appointed mandate to bring about changes in attitudes and capabilities of the masses through constructive action, which will then subsequently serve as models for changes to be brought about by mass political action.[183] In this way, reflection precedes political action, but only up to a certain point, i.e. when reflective political action itself brings about changes in attitudes. To be sure, here we detect a Platonic idea of leadership that is able to order public life, as leadership is not only political, but also moral. Narayan in particular wrote about the 'educated elite' and students who should be entrusted to 'take non-partisan and constructive action and give a lead to the people and help create a climate of public opinion which could be a deterrent to unethical conduct.'[184] In the ideal case leadership combines experience and enthusiasm. Hence, supreme faith is placed in education, which in being 'a sincere desire for knowledge and skills' is the prerequisite of people's empowerment.[185]

In comparing Narayan with Roy, there are two points that stand out. Firstly, Narayan's focus is directed far more towards the questions of the 'ought' in society, which can purportedly be resolved

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[180] Warren, *Deliberative Democracy and Authority*, p.46.
[181] Warren, *Deliberative Democracy and Authority*, pp.46-47.
[182] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.179. The organisation of leadership was to take place in form of committees: *Jan Sangharsha Samitis* (people's struggle committees) and *Chhatra Sangharsha Samitis* (youth struggle committees).
[183] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.195.
[184] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.11, pp.44-45. Narayan's appeal to the youth is generally directed at their proximity to the politics of education, without which Narayan sees the democratic process as being sterile. The argument of sterility effectively makes the point that education is about creating the new, and not only about completing the old (forms of knowledge, for instance).
[185] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.103.

by 'good' leadership. Secondly, his concept of leadership relies quite heavily on collective forms of authority. In other words, it is about the social group of intellectual and moral elites that are to direct the masses, even if temporarily. This aspect, which is in effect consistent with his focus on communities as important levels of grass roots politics, open up his arguments far more to the charge of the possibility of dictatorship than Roy's arguments. Despite Roy's claims that the leading class of post-colonial India is to be the middle class, his position on leadership is in many ways more in line with the idea of heroic individualism. His arguments are thus stronger with regard to the issue of non-representation and the critique of dictatorship. We can start making sense of the meaning of leadership in Roy when we reflect on his statement that it is not the masses that make history but individual men and their visions. Roy's description of social conditions in India include 'economic exploitation, social slavery, cultural backwardness and spiritual degradation.'[186] The only way of escaping this state of affairs is through 'Enlightenment and rationalism, not as academic virtues but as guiding principles of politics.[187]

Then again, leadership is not about the party leadership of the proletariat.[188] Roy argued that a 'monolithic party of the proletariat can have no social basis. The ideology, programme and demands of any particular class cannot rally the whole people. At the same time, a vast majority of the people can be mobilised with a humanist appeal.'[189] The problem of leadership in Western democracies was that they only offered 'a threadbare institutionalism', whereas the problem with leadership under Russian Communism was that it held out a utopia of freedom while pursuing a project of totalitarianism and spiritual regimentation.[190] We have already noted Roy's concerns with the idea of the collective as a source of slavery. True leadership in a modern democratic society is therefore not about domination of an enlightened collective over the masses but about the skills that individuals display in order to lead the masses out of the condition of collectivism.[191] Effective leadership therefore counters the collectivism of modern mass society as well as the paternalism inherent in leadership based on class and party.

Leadership is therefore to be provided by the middle class, which was another word for an educated class possessing a humanist approach. Roy held that the 'intelligence, integrity, moral excellence, wisdom, should be the test of leadership.' It was not a top-down approach but an 'integrated, all-

[186] Roy, *New Orientation* p.2.
[187] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.6.
[188] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.105.
[189] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.132.
[190] Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.155-156.
[191] We note a similar concern in various writings in the post-Second World War period that speak of the dangers of the fear of freedom that is coupled with ineffective leadership. See for example Gouldner, *Studies in Leadership: Leadership and Democratic Action.* However, the concern for the qualities to be found in an

pervading leadership' that Roy espoused.[192] One of the preconditions for this type of leadership is that it has to establish itself without the use of power, but only by moral and intellectual excellence. Quite importantly, in the humanist vein, Roy demanded that this is the result of individual effort. How would this type of leadership be engendered? Roy placed his hopes on an intelligent public who were able to intuitively recognise 'good' leadership. The emergence of individual public figures against a backdrop of homogenous collectivism would make it easier for such leadership to be elected, rather than selected. This is not to make the point that the educators must be educated by the masses, rather, that the masses recognise authority when it is tuned to their interests. This is to be supported in turn by the leadership, whose duties are also to free society of corrupting influences of vested interests through economic reforms and to make society intelligent through the educational process.[193]

In order to justify his ideal of leadership, Roy went back to a version of the Platonic tradition and claimed that public affairs are best left in charge of 'spiritually free individuals who represent none but their own conscience.'[194] Put differently, leadership requires detachment from particular interests that might constitute pressures, thereby obscuring the workings of reason within *individual thought.* It is worth reiterating here that the individual conscience is not to be confused with the knowledge of what is best for all. What is not suggested therefore is a rule by Pareto's "intellectual elite", which is a class in itself and can thus be defined as what Roy pejoratively termed a 'collective ego.'[195] Roy used the term 'declassed' individuals, which denotes non-situatedness. As situatedness is linked to specific interests and thus to an interest in power, Marxism deviated from the proper notion of declassment by vesting the proletariat with political power. Hence, the working class would not be in a position to become a disinterested dictatorship that speaks for not only itself.[196] The primary function of the declassed leadership would be to educate the masses. While this suspiciously sounds like a mere continuation of Plato's ideas, it differs radically in that education is seen as something that potentially everybody may benefit from, and also in that education is not about mimetic knowledge but about methodological knowledge. In other words, it is about teaching the methods that enable the search for truth. Or, it is 'to make people conscious of what is their unconscious urge.'[197]

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effective leadership is by no means a novel position of the twentieth century, as seen in Graubard and Holton, *Excellence and Leadership in a Democracy.*

[192] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.139.

[193] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.168.

[194] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.166.

[195] Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.166-167.

[196] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.50-51.

[197] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.75. The only aspect of education that rests on a memory is when 'people are taught to remember precisely their critical faculties which governments naturally fear, and apply them for the administration of their community.' See Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.59. Various authors who are concerned with the loss of 'public voice' argue that 'method' is still a salient feature of democracy. In the age of communication technology, citizens should be educated in the use of media skills in order to be reflective and particpatory. For a recent discussion of empowerment strategies through education see Salvador and Sias, *The Public Voice in a Democracy at Risk.*

This comes close to Marx's dual take on the dilemma of leadership vis-à-vis the proletariat. Adamson distinguishes between Marx's 'therapeutic image' and 'directive image' of the educators. While the former facilitates a new praxis, the latter actively educates as well as joins the proletariat in its struggles towards self-consciousness.[198] The balance between these two images in not always clear. This is not a novel position to be in, for as Pels reminds us, traditionally 'intellectuals have often been identified, and have identified themselves, as 'displaced persons', distanced and dissident *vis-à-vis* the broader society and its centres of political and economic decision making...In so far as they have sought broader political commitments, however, intellectuals have also traditionally been seduced to dissimulate and escape this precarious condition of estrangement.'[199] However, we note that this feature has been markedly overlooked in the secondary literature on Roy and Narayan. Although we are not primarily concerned with the role of intellectuals in this paper, it is a point worth noting as it leads us to a more multi-layered understanding of radical democracy, as conceptualised by Roy and Narayan. Authority, which post-modern thinkers have such a problem with, may have well obscured the meaning of radical democracy as not only being about empowerment but about transformation, without which freedom remains within circumspect boundaries.

Bruce Miroff points to a form of leadership, termed dissenting leadership, that comes very close to the models proposed by Roy and Narayan. Dissenting leadership seeks democracy for the followers rather than office for themselves. It is also one of the most challenging forms of leadership in that its leadership is considered both teacher and model.[200] The overriding feature of dissenting leadership is its function as a counter-force to the prevailing order of power in society and it therefore functions as a voice of the powerless. Hence, Miroff argues that dissenting leadership is the best form of leadership that is able to recover a radical democratic thrust. Parallels are thus to be also found in Roy and Narayan's approaches to political leadership as a process. One aspect of the argument is that in order to be empowered, individuals have to display standards of rationality and morality. The very notions of consensus within dissent, of dialogue, and of social action, imply the *existence* of standards over which the leadership guards and at the most, brings to the fore. This paternalistic imagery is at the same time offset by the second aspect of leadership, namely its role in intellectual and moral avant-gardism that enables the transformation of individuals. The link between these two rather different functions is provided by the ideas of science as well as of political democratisation, which enables active participation in the scientific educative process. In other words, there is substantive,

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[198] Adamson, *Beyond "Reform or Revolution": Notes on Political Education in Gramsci, Habermas and Arendt*, p.435.

[199] Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger. Studies in Spokespersonship*, pp.ix-x.

[200] Miroff, *Icons of Democracy: American Leaders as Heroes, Aristocrats, Dissenters, and Democrats*, pp.348-357. Sibnarayan Ray points to three functions of intellectual elites that have a direct bearing on Roy and Narayan's dissent: the pursuit of knowledge and truth, the formulating of 'symbolic systems of values, codes, norms, regulative principles', and the criticism of existing structures as well as visualising alternatives. Refer to Ray, *A New Renaissance and Allied Essays*, p.3.

secular guidance in positing science as the primary point of departure, but the guidance is temporary in so far as the mindset that is disseminated through science and the concomitant search for new ideas in all walks of life is opened to the hitherto unenlightened general public.

The primacy of science rests on two aspects. One is an understanding of science as a specific method, whereas the second is the trust in scientific insights that the application of these methods yields. Hence, science functions as a method of seeking 'partial truths', and as insights into human as well as external nature. Furthermore, science offers an understanding of the relationship between the two. The argument that scientific reasoning is a universal good and thus paves the way for political democratisation is a common one. At the same time, this idea of the Enlightenment already carries within it the seeds of permanent impermanence that looks beyond establishing possibilities, and also towards enabling possibilities. For Roy in particular, this was the appeal of science as opposed to beliefs and religious sentiment as unifying factors. To be sure, Roy's optimism itself may seem 'backward' and naïve when confronted with the idea that science is not a value-free zone, i.e. especially when faced with its application in the political realm.[201] Science for Roy, as well as for Narayan, equals freedom from constraints and the possibility of new modes of existence for human beings. The contemporary relevance of this view cannot be overestimated in view of the pace of new insights and technology that seem to pave the way for a post-human future.[202] This is an interesting area of study, but in this context it is sufficient to note that Roy and Narayan's conceptions of science ignored the Marxist perspective that the scientific conditioning of human nature and of social relations is already conditioned by capital and class structures.[203] We see here how the Marxist outlook had transmuted into what seems the outlook of technicians and believers in an invisible hand. However, Roy in particular, in situating science as the nexus of social relationships, argued that it is through science that social relationships are determined.[204] We can extrapolate from this that moral relationships, which in turn mediate between science and its applications in the social sphere, follow naturally and can surmount the negative effects of capital.

Contemporary writings on deliberative democracy in this sense have yet to acknowledge in full the sphere of the substantive in politics, given that the methods by which society and individuals are transformed are accorded an overarching status. That is, the practice of dialogue, of toleration and mutual respect are prioritised. The questions of agency and of substance recede, but only until the limits of dialogue and deliberation are reluctantly admitted, namely the unwillingness and / or the incompetence of actors to participate in these processes. Sibnarayan Ray, writing in the Indian

[201] The recent example of the findings of the Indian Archaeological Commission regarding the mosque-temple structures in Ayodhya underlines this point quite well.
[202] Rikowski, *Alien Life: Marx and the Future of the Human.*
[203] Rikowski, *Alien Life: Marx and the Future of the Human*, p.142.
[204] See for instance, Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.148.

context, concedes that one of the greatest weaknesses of utopian thought, or thinking in alternatives, of the decentralist variety is the break between leadership and the followers. Ray notes that while alternative or utopian thought are held in great esteem, its practice is not.[205] This brings to mind both Roy and Narayan's valid points regarding the centrality of the educative process in radical democracy, not as the imposition of substantive knowledge but as the acquisition of the option of exercising choice in ideas and interests.

Roy and Narayan, we believe, did have a valid case for leadership that can at least attempt to draw individuals into the process of radical democracy through the methods of persuasion and through the process of education based on science. However, this intention is thwarted quite significantly given the structural barriers to participation *within* society. This is a problematic assumption to make, especially in the case of India. According to Ashish Nandy, a special characteristic of Indian authoritarianism is the principle of hierarchy. 'Authority in India was traditionally not so much a concentrated source of power and coercion, open to competition, pressures, and threats of dislodgement. It was a passive, apolitical, ascribed role, which could not be contested from anyone within the system.'[206] This is linked to a common understanding of authority as a 'marriage' or 'assimilation' of spiritual leadership and temporal power, the latter being based on the former. This Indian theory of the two swords has survived well into the modern times and is a fundamental and influential part of Gandhian thought.[207]

This makes the notion of using education to firstly, deconstruct political and moral authority, and secondly, create an alternative base of equality and universality through the notion of scientific reasoning, quite ambitious. Radical democracy, depending fundamentally on the notion of equality of voice and participation, entails contesting all forms of hierarchy. Although here Ashish Nandy tries to account for a uniquely Indian style of authoritarianism by embedding it in traditional forms of hierarchy, non-traditional forms of hierarchy too would have to be continuously challenged in order to achieve meaningful empowerment for all individuals. This is a problem of 'integrated domination', whereby domination is reproduced at all levels of society.[208] As such, traditional forms of domination have an impact on perpetuating modern forms of domination. A common case made against India's communist leadership is based on the fear that it actually furthers the traditional authoritarian

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[205] Ray, *A New Renaissance and Allied Essays*, pp.105-107. Ray's claims are based on a study of the thought and influence of Tagore, Gandhi and M. N. Roy.

[206] Nandy, *The Culture of Indian Politics: A Stock Taking*, p.70.

[207] Coomaraswamy, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*, pp.1-37. Also see Gupta, *Leadership in Indian Democracy*, p.255. However, as much as Narayan uses the concept of self-control, a fundamental concept in Indian thought that has its roots in an abstract moral order (*dharma*), Narayan's own concept of leadership is based on authority that is something other than the bond between 'spiritual authority and temporal power'. It is about leadership grounded in experience.

approach by 'its emphasis upon leadership of "the whole people" and "duty" as against an emphasis on group interest and individual rights.'[209]

Can this challenge the case put forth by Narayan and Roy? Their proposals involved dislodging traditional functions of authority, and at the same time establishing the authoritative power of virtuous behaviour as well as of scientific and moral knowledge. It is argued that traditional functions of authority are the symbolic representation of power, the legitimation of power, and the display of decision-making power.[210] Yet, coming from a different angle we claim that the limits set by authoritative power not only refer to the limits of individuals' interpretative and expressive freedom. Authority, especially when used in a revolutionary context, also serves to limit the idea of continuity. This is especially liberating when the continuation of political praxis displays a continuation of excessive control. Hence, the subversive moment has to be initiated by intelligent discerning and challenging of control, thereby creating authority within a specific context, rather than discovering of perennial authority, e.g. of the type exercised by Plato's philosopher-kings. Thus we see that their notion of leadership made a case for constant revaluation of the connection between ethical-rational problems and politics as well as between ethics and domination. Education as self-assessment can be distinguished from the education that seeks to permeate society with certain norms and values.[211] The objective of temporary leadership is to articulate alternative visions of good societies. As radical democratic politics allows for greater opportunities for deliberation and self-examination than any other form of politics, Roy and Narayan's notions of leadership therefore seem to link the ideal of democracy more closely to its practice.

Politics has multiple functions in terms of human nature, and the idea of leadership touches on these very directly – on what it entails and on its paradoxes. We see that human nature with its innate characteristics of self-expression and self-organisation is to be *reflected* in the empowerment model of radical democracy. Moreover the potential for moral and intellectual competence that is inherent in human nature is to be realised. However, beyond the innate capacities of human beings to act morally and rationally, there is the capacity for qualitative change of human nature itself to take place. Hence, politics, in order to be truly radical, has to transcend the mere reflection or the perfection of human nature and look to its potential for transformation. In the following section we shall make a few observations on this most ambitious, but also most appealing aspect of radical democracy. It is a traditional outlook in so far it can be read as a secular quest for what underlies most religious

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[208] Joel S. Migdal, 'The state in society: an approach to struggles for domination' In: Migdal, et al., *State Power and Social Forces*, p.9.
[209] Gupta, *Leadership in Indian Democracy*, p.255.
[210] Gerth and Mills, *Person Und Gesellschaft*, pp.281-282. Especially local leadership would be prone to excessive use of their power, as intimidation is more likely at the lower levels. See Rao, *Democractic Decentralisation and the Quest for Leadership*, pp.324-325.

promises to enable a 'change of heart' or a change of human nature. Yet as the idea of scientific and socio-political possibility, it is very much a modern idea, and incorporates the very paradox of the relationship between the modern and the *post*-modern. Although interpreted as modernity's driving force, its quest for certainty leads to avenues that threaten to overcome its very premises. By this we mean the ability in human nature to go beyond known boundaries that include its own being in physical and intellectual terms.

5.3.2 Radical democracy and transformation

In this section we look at the second part of the interplay between certainty and possibility, substance and method, empowerment and transformation. Transformation is a multifaceted term, but it mainly has a dynamic quality. Transformation can mean that individuals become experts, or that they become moral and rational agents. However, it also means that individuals are in a state of change that has no clear and absolute indication of the outcome. While their transformation thesis is perhaps not sustainable without controversial re-interpretation, we claim that Roy and Narayan's insights, namely that radical politics is primarily about the working out of interests and values through politics and not just the realisation of pre-politically formed interests, deserve greater attention than has been accorded so far.

The link between participatory democracy and transformation has been touched upon in various ways. Indeed, the political tradition of the European Enlightenment has been criticised as being built on a theory of democratic participation that is 'an objective mechanism, which can produce a knowledge, a value and a law as epistemological, axiological, and prescriptivist dimensions of political legitimacy.'[212] We therefore would disagree with a reading of their work as being based on a straightforward account of *a priori* moral values.[213] This reading imputes unjustifiable conservatism to Narayan and especially Roy's thought, and deflects from their revolutionary approach to politics. Their approach towards individuals' interests also differed from a liberal approach that considers the genesis of individual interests as prior to the state. Roy and Narayan, on the other hand, did not see interests as stable and given. We can see in their writings on the form and limits of radical democracy how the issue at hand is not the preservation of pre-politically formed interests, but the very formation and transformation of these interests through the medium of politics. Radical democracy in this sense

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[211] Rao, *Indian Socialism. Retrospect and Prospect*, pp.147-163.

[212] In simple terms, this means that standards of reference can shift according to the nature and the agents of political participation. The alternative is to view participation as outcome-oriented or that already refers to a unified cosmological order as its ideal. This reference to what is known as *dharma* is India is definitely not what Roy and Narayan have in mind. See Davutoglu, *Alternative Paradigms. The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory*, p.198.

is therefore less about the rejection of representation on grounds of innate capability than on grounds of radical – to the roots – changes of human nature on grounds of intimate connections with decision-forming and decision-making processes at a local level.

Despite the commitment to intra-individual deliberation, transformation does not denote the withdrawal from the external world, which is both natural and social. It is effectively using the public sphere to attain a very private change of ethos, or a change of heart. Conversely, this has implications for the public sphere, as a change of heart in the private sphere would fundamentally change the nature of the former. Thus far, the argument is neither novel nor dramatic. Yet it is an interesting argument to make in the context of post-colonial India in so far the backdrop to the freedom to self-expression and self-development is not seen as comprehensively framed by the idea of national sovereignty vis-à-vis colonial power, nor by the idea of the freedom to participate in an electoral process, nor by the even stronger notion of self-government. All of these are variations on the theme of freedom as opposed to more or less potent forms of coercion. For Roy and Narayan though, politics was to enable a far richer understanding of what comes beyond domination.

Roy and Narayan's arguments however display a tension in terms of the effects of radical democracy as a transformative process. In both we find a weak notion of transformation that plays on the connection between education and political competence, and reminds of Marx's vision of communism. Transformation means making every individual an expert. Endorsing this view implies rejecting that type of deliberative democracy that stands for political pragmatics and sees democracy as being bound to a division of intelligent labour, or of expertise.[214] This notion is far better related to the concept of empowerment. On the other side we also see that there is an indication of an even stronger notion of transformation in their writings that is worth noting. In comparing Roy and Narayan though, it is clear that Roy's radicalism as an outcome of radical democracy is far more pronounced than Narayan's.

Again, the influence of Gandhi was to set the tone for Narayan's brand of radicalism, based on Gandhi's thoughts on democracy and the state. Primarily concerned with the effects of violence, Gandhi claimed that the state represented violence in a concentrated and organised form. While violence in individuals can be changed to non-violence, on account of individuals possessing souls, the violence inherent in the soulless nature of a state cannot be transformed.[215] Even though

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[213] For example, as claimed by Das-Gupta, *The Social and Political Theory of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.136.
[214] Bohman, *Democracy as Inquiry, Inquiry as Democratic: Pragmatism, Social Science, and the Cognitive Division of Labor.*
[215] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.213.

centralised power is viewed as an antithesis to autonomy,[216] empowerment also carries the connotation of having power over oneself in the meaning of self-purification, self-realization.[217] Political decision-making has to therefore rest with those for whom a change of heart is in fact a realistic possibility. The limitations of the state in the context of change and development are clear in that 'change cannot be effected by mere command, by law or by money.'[218] Change can rather only be effected by a change in the attitudes and persuasions of the people, which is one of the functions of radical democracy.

Narayan furthermore considered radical democracy as being the continuation of political and moral autonomy over time.[219] The end of a good moral order was a value in itself, and hence Narayan claimed that the 'suppression of democracy signifies moral degradation of the people.'[220] Radical democracy on the other hand signified meaningful moral reconstruction. Its practice in small communities makes it a nursery for values.[221] As such it is crucial for social integration, given that the transformation of values takes place through their practice in society. Social integration makes for 'meaningful, understandable, controllable relationships', none of which Narayan believed were realisable in any other political system.[222]

In Narayan's case, radical democracy provides for a cathartic moment, i.e. it enables virtue through politics, as virtue is the effect of self-consciously realising the trans-personal self.[223] This argument, which reflects the limits of transformation, should not however deflect from Narayan's concern for the transformation of the individual. While the individual is organically connected to society, the objective of radical democracy is self-directed in its core. The pyramid structure of radical democracy would not only 'give the people a stake in democracy', but it would also give them 'the *sensation of Swaraj*', which denotes self-determination as well as determination over the self.[224] What this implies is that there is scope for autonomous determination and transformation of interests. Two types of domination are thereby excluded in this model of transformative democracy – the internal domination of pre-political, individual, *a priori* interests as well as external domination linked to specific identities, such as class and caste.

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[216] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*.
[217] Galtung, p.100
[218] Narayan, *India and Her Problems*, p.63.
[219] Narayan, *Total Revolution*, p.182.
[220] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.181.
[221] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.189.
[222] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.209.
[223] Galtung, pp.101-102
[224] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, p.244. Italics added.

Compared to Narayan's overriding concern for the transformation of subjects as an argument for individual responsibility, Roy's ideas were more far-reaching, as he was not bound by a concept of change that was to be harmonised with an organic notion of human nature, society and external nature. The very artificiality that Roy attributed to the idea of society translates into the idea of creativity and construction of the new. However, with regard to the idea of transformation in individuals, Roy remained subject to the tensions that are part of the meta-transformation of left thinking from modern ideas about reason and morality and more recent ideas of permanent conflict and uncertainty. Hence, transformation for Roy comprised both directional change, i.e. progress in the conventional sense of one superior state following the preceding states,[225] as well as open-ended change that resulted out of experiment and experience.

The universalist educative and persuasive content of the former through the political mode of radical democracy is best expressed by Roy's comments that if 'we (the educated class) can appreciate high ideas, there are others who can also do so.'[226] In his theses on New Humanism he argued that the 'Radical Democratic State will be the school for the political and civic education of the citizen.'[227] Purposeful transformation occurs initially from the pre-human level of life to the human level and is the process that makes the individual's struggle for existence successful. According to this image, the transformation of human life and of its key attributes like reason and moral capacity occurs in the process of realising freedom from nature and from collectivist pressure. Radical democracy is the most potent instrument of transformation as it has the most widespread effects on the maximum number of individuals in a society.

One of its effects is thus the creation of a free society and as Roy holds that society exists solely to promote the utilisation of individual freedom, a free society is the best society for any individual.[228] This is because 'the first purpose of any social organisation is to guarantee every member the prerequisites of physical existence, which covers the economic aspect of society. Thereafter, everybody being biologically endowed with a mind, the ability to acquire knowledge, this capacity has to be cultivated. The process of this cultivation leads to organised cultural and educational activities. This is the second purpose of a social order.'[229] Roy claimed that it has 'become axiomatic that environment shapes men. But a Humanist will prove that men can also shape their environments.'[230] On the one hand, this view is neither novel nor does it seem very interesting.

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[225] Roy, *New Orientation*, pp.18-19.
[226] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.134, also pp.37-38.
[227] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, pp.111-112.
[228] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.33-34.
[229] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.36.
[230] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.127.

However, it takes on a much richer meaning when extended to mean that new – political – experience yields new philosophical principles.[231]

To ensure that there is indeed scope for new political experience, radical democracy stands for a 'cooperative commonwealth'[232] that enables individuals to organise society creatively. This basically ignores the thick premises that consensus politics demands and that representative democracy rests upon in order to ensure legitimacy. The connection between principles, which also have normative implications, and ongoing experience is not as smooth as may seem. Although couched in critical terms, Roy acknowledged that 'we do not live integrally. We live in moments after moments. There is no connection between the moments of our existence.'[233] Although radical democracy could act as a medium for restitution of connection, Roy's increasing concern for the consequences of social and individual fragmentation through deep epistemological scepticism draws attention to his thought as being situated in a stage of transition between critical Marxism and forms of *post*-Marxism. The former does not quite accept the fragmented existence of individuals, whereas the latter accepts it as a fact. Roy conceded to the existence of fragmentation without giving up on a critical response to it. Hence the idea of transformation is used to be not merely critical, but also constructive. Nor is it a response that was blind to the maladies of modernity in terms of its over-emphasis on certainties and acceptance of 'scientific' principles that relied on questionable methods.

In other words, radical democracy enables transformation as a response to the search for alternatives by using the rationalist background of universal reason and morality in conjunction with actual fragmentation of experience to develop new social orders over time. As social and political orders are based on experience, resulting out of the search for moral and scientific truths, social orders will see continuous change. Believing to have interpreted Marx correctly, rather than relying on Marxist notions, Roy maintained that there can be no knowledge of 'final and absolute truths. Regarding experience as the only source of knowledge and truth it is bound to adjust itself continuously to unforeseen events and changing circumstances.'[234]

In the context of postmodernism and democracy, Patrick McKinlay observes that the Habermasian notion of consensus relies on the modernistic and unrealistic *premise* of universal pragmatics.[235] While Roy did not exhibit similar sophistication in his arguments, he displayed awareness of discussions on experience and its fragmented nature, and of the claims of scepticism and suspension of judgement. The solution was however not to merely infuse democracy with a dose of

[231] Roy and Spratt, *Beyond Communism*, p.24.
[232] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, p.126.
[233] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.41.
[234] Roy, *New Orientation*, p.43.

reason and virtue, but went further than that. The hope was that through the experience of local and direct democratic politics, what is termed 'universalist pragmatics' would be brought about. Accepting the importance of immediate experience therefore means that Roy's political solution was not about totality. Rather, he accepted partial solutions that however had a widespread or 'total' effect on most aspects of the polity.

The core value of immediate experience is logically linked to the concept of the individual. Roy's political thought thus rests fundamentally on the Enlightenment values of humanism. Yet the concept of human nature itself does and must change. The capacity of radical democracy to enable experience and knowledge serves to unveil the mystery behind the source of man's sovereignty and creativity. Roy maintained that it is man's capacity of knowledge, embedded in a materialist conception of the world, which lends him the power to shape his external environment as well as himself.[236] The substantive notion of reason present in Roy's thought is, to be sure, founded on the Enlightenment traditions of scientific reasoning, emphasis on rationality, inviolability of human rights that are posited pre-politically. Yet the fact that the issues of substantive ideas and of method are so tightly intertwined (the former leading to the latter) makes it hard to judge Roy as a mere postscript to the influence of the Western Enlightenment, or of the humanist critical branch of Marxism. This aspect goes hand in hand with a philosophy of indeterminacy and of change. Roy's insistence on thick notions of morality and reason in fact seem more like catalysts for setting individuals on paths that they define autonomously and in doing so, keep changing along with the agents. Individuals are expected less to conform to ideals than use them to alter the way they think and act. On the one hand this reflects Roy's position in a transitory stage of political thinking that falls between clear-cut ideologies and certainties and between post-ideological openness and scepticism. On the other, it also reflects the tension between these two poles in a way that is becoming increasingly important in the 21st century.

Concluding remarks

Critiques of Roy and Narayan have focused on utopianism, logical inconsistency and oblivion to social reality.[237] Roy and Narayan's thought has often been termed utopian, mainly on grounds of plausibility and applicability. Although their respective cases for radical democracy on grounds of the

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[235] McKinlay, *Postmodernism and Democracy: Learning from Lyotard and Lefort*, p.483.
[236] Roy, *Politics, Power and Parties*, pp.11-12.
[237] For a concise, yet comprehensive criticism of Narayan refer to Doctor, *A Critique of J P's Polity*. Yet their commentators do not mention that participatory democracy is often accused of undervaluing citizens' desire for privacy and the wish not to politicise every part of their lives. In our opinion, this is not an unimportant observation.

impossibility of representation and the end of power struggles has been deemed implausible, their thought has in the main tended to be measured against political reality in India. The Nehruvian 'socialist' era of the 1960s undoubtedly gave the impetus for a decisive shift towards centralism in politics. So far, the left – comprising the communist left as well as Gandhian socialists – has so far not been able to present radical alternatives. The concentration of power in certain sections of India's left, e.g. the CPI of West Bengal, depicts just how much power can actually be exercised at a federal level, yet has little effect in empowering individuals at a local level. The politics of elections are perhaps the most persuasive arguments regarding the persistence of the core-periphery / elite-mass imagery in left political ideas and action. Looking for parallels to the history of Western Marxism is useful, despite the fundamental differences at the level of sophistication in argumentation, but also in the consequences of geographical separation in terms of the specific socio-political framework that was being criticised. While the history of Western Marxism is to a large extent rooted in industrialisation and still deals with the problems associated with predominantly industrial societies, the left in India has operated in chiefly rural societies. In the case of India's left, syntheses were thus attempted, which cannot fail to provoke frustration as 'middle ways' often do.[238]

Furthermore, the historical context within which the left is based cannot be easily generalised as 'scientific politics.' While Roy was far more accepting of the West as a model of social change, although not as a universal trajectory, Narayan located the norms for political action in the particularities of the Indian case. We can of course question the artificiality of construing radical democracy based on a notion of historical village communities.[239] In so far its value as an alternative to the over-generalised precepts of Marxism is concerned, Narayan's argument suffers from undue idealisation of the past. In lending itself to the concept of historical cyclicity, this idealisation facilitates the rejection of Marxism's political success regarding democracy on the one hand. On the other hand, it also lends itself to interpreting Narayan's thought as inchoate and questions the very idea of Narayan's Marxist background. On the flipside, Roy too denounced the backwardness of India's traditions of collectivism and religiosity with much left unanswered and unsubstantiated. Yet to focus on rhetorical points, which are different from consistently framed arguments, would be to overlook some important insights that characterise both sets of writings.

In this chapter we have sought to not highlight their shortcomings in presenting a coherent theory of radical democracy, but to offer a reading of their work that is based on an understanding of ambiguities and tensions. As such, their discussions of radical democracy were multifaceted and thus more open to interpretation than has been assumed so far. Rational and moral actors determine the

[238] Narayan, *Search for an Ideology*, p.318. For instance, Gandhi's model of the village was not merely a rural agriculture-dependent entity but an agro-*industrial* unit.
[239] Prasad, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy. Selected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp.184-187.

political system of radical democracy that in turn transforms these agents. Subsequently, the demands placed on the system are diffuse and equally multifaceted. In other words, radical democracy has to realise individuals' desire for empowerment, give credence to the theory of non-representation as well as enable the transformation of external as well as human nature. This in turn is supported by our interpretation of Roy and Narayan as political thinkers of a transitional period of critical Marxism, i.e. when Marxism turned into radicalism. As such, they displayed concern with issues that are often associated with *post*-Marxism as well as displaying trends and contradictions that are too associated with it. However, we find that they deserve to be taken seriously as political thinkers not only because they anticipated certain questions and ideas within the Left movement as such, but because their position within political thought in India was quite unique. To be sure, some of their ideas, especially Roy's, are still significant. The ideological cages of the Indian left often render it unable to constructively address noteworthy issues of new social movements or local empowerment, i.e. when the agents of social change are neither peasants nor workers.

Roy and Narayan's contribution is to be located in their influence on reinventing left thought during the left *of centre* era of the 50s to 60s.[240] Freedom as creative spirit – to change history, society and human nature - requires an adequate vehicle for it to be realised. Both Roy and Narayan, in dealing with their respective ideas on freedom, had ultimately agreed on a common political solution, that of radical democracy. Although Nehruvian centralism prevailed in the end, their writings partly serve to explain why in the late 1960s to 1970s a shift occurred towards a more unusual or radical form of democracy, centred on agrarian communities. Their work can thus be read as the under-researched intellectual background to the much better researched *Realpolitik* of the times.

Is socio-political reality a good starting point for debating and/or rejecting Roy and Narayan's thinking? Selbourne for instance argues that in the absence of a mass movement of class opposition to the existing social and economic dispensation, radical energies have to be redirected from compensatory utopian fancies to the defence of civil liberties and democratic institutions. He proposes an anti-utopian argument, claiming that total self-government is a perennial goal, but also perennially doomed to disappointment. Selbourne deplores the loss of radicalism within the Left in Britain that can be explained by the widespread idea of socialism-as-gradual-social-progress, rather than the even more utopian socialism-as-working-class-seizure-and-command-of-the-means-of-production.[241] The present utopia of participation, proffered by the old left, new left and newer left, is doomed to collapse as all have failed to recognise the rejection of socialist intention by the majority of the working class. Hence the spirit of a renewed political activity cannot reasonably be looked for in the ranks of the

[240] Torres, *The Ideological Component of Indian Development.*
[241] Selbourne, *Against Socialist Illusion. A Radical Argument*, p.7.

labour movement, especially the case where expectations of renewal takes the rejection of the capitalist or market system as its basic premise.[242]

In view of these factors that are either not present or are non-realisable, Selbourne argues for a reorientation towards human rights rather than a utopian dream of total self-determination. With the concept of the state being nowhere near extinction this idea seems balanced and the correct response to both left and right totalitarianism. Yet Roy and Narayan's work opens up an alternative perspective that should not be discounted. Firstly, not only on grounds of the contentious basis of 'human' rights, but also on grounds of the compelling idea that only active and radical self-determination gives individuals the required interest levels to notice when negative liberty is at risk.[243] Secondly, given that the rejection of the categories of class and capital is not based on inefficacy but on relative importance as categories to be transformed, radical democracy does not have to operate from a sense of technical failure. Rather, it could emanate from a sense of construction and local vision, a project that new social movements generally endorse.

According to Donald Miller, the fragmentation of the sites of thought and sites of action in the West has had dire consequences.[244] He disagrees with both utopian and pragmatic solutions that have been offered, i.e. Feyerabend's belief in a final wisdom of people that can be unfolded in an expansive concept of democracy as well as with Rorty's severe but unworkable distinction between private self-creator and public liberal. These, he believes, lead to the loss of freedom as the dichotomies necessarily cancel each other out in power games and hence we are faced with a threat of totalitarianism. Similarly, Roy and Narayan are closer to the ideas of deliberative democrats who argue that radicalism is about reflection before action, about the permanence of irresolution, giving neither privacy nor politics complete primacy.[245] Especially in Roy's and partly in Narayan's concept of radical democracy we see intimations of the above ideas, namely of non-dualism, reflection and impermanence. At the same time these coexist in a tense relationship with the desire for the tangible, though contested idea of progress that will affect all free political agents.

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[242] Selbourne, *Against Socialist Illusion. A Radical Argument*, pp.200-210.
[243] There is more than enough evidence to be found in support of this claim, e.g. general apathy towards 'terrorist laws' in Europe, which deeply infringe on the notion of civil liberties with regard to the state.
[244] Miller, *The Reason of Metaphor. A Study in Politics*, pp.225-253.

Conclusion: domination, voice, development and more

This thesis has attempted to reassess Roy and Narayan's work on freedom and democracy in terms of the *process* underlying some of the more promising aspects of Marxist-socialist thought in India. As a process of thought, their writings were at times very clear on the aims of their political goals and sometimes less so. However, it is within this process and its vagaries that Narayan's, and especially Roy's, ideas are able to connect to contemporary concerns of the politics of the left. Combining the aims of a Marxian-socialist, a liberal, a democratic and a radical order is a difficult task but these ideas are precisely what continue to preoccupy an increasingly important space in political theory.[1]

Going from the particular to the more general, Roy and Narayan's approaches to the problem of a Marxian-inspired democracy seem more pertinent than ever. On a superficial level one may argue that their aims of socio-economic justice to be realised at a local level have been taken up in the context of new social movements that are generally framed by a Marxist outlook.[2] The context of many of India's post-independence problems was set by the convergence of socialist and nationalist high caste elitist movements reflected the neglect of the importance of subaltern issues as well as issues of gender difference.[3] This was also reflected in the constitutional discourse of a newly independent India that in part searched for a democratic politics that was 'based on the rejection of community (whether religious, ethnic, sexual, linguistic) in favour of an image of the Indian state as the god above all gods, made up of the individuals qua citizens who are represented by the state.'[4] Moreover, the perception of Indian unity that was embodied by the centralised state was bolstered by the programmatic of India's economic development agenda within a world capitalist system, which was shared with relatively small difference in degree between pan-nationalist Congress, communist and democratic socialist policy concepts. The notion of development according to this system involved heavy industrialisation, planning and a large-scale public sector.

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[1] Dallmayr, *Achieving Our World. Toward a Global and Plural Democracy.*

[2] New social movements that emanated in the 1980s are defined by a rejection of class-based politics in favour of issues aggravated by discovered alliances to caste, gender, religion and ethnicity. In the Indian case, new social movements also comprise women's movements, anticaste movements by lower castes, environmental movements and farmers' movements. See Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, p.xiii.

[3] Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, pp.17-18.

[4] Jha, *Rights Versus Representation.* This comment pertains to the discussions that took place in the fundamental rights subcommittee of the Constituent Assembly, April 1947.

The failure of these policies to genuinely uplift India's impoverished section of the population thus challenged Marxist self-perceptions so as to bring the problems facing those whose interests were not sufficiently represented. Yet Indian Marxism and Indian socialism's troublesome alliance with particularly the caste issue was and indeed, is undoubtedly a major stumbling block that prevents the formulation of appealing alternatives. the emergence of these issues as a matter of priority has only served to underline the essentialising of these differences en route to claiming a share of the spoils of a democratic and strong state, namely voice, recognition, rights, and socio-economic privileges. The state and collectives therefore remained the key players in both nationalist and Marxist-socialist politics.[5] As has been noted in recent years, the inability of the Indian state to *de facto* enable individual advancement has resulted in the individual and individual interest being one of the biggest losers within the Indian polity.[6] The challenge this poses to the very legitimacy of the Indian nation state cannot be overlooked. Not only is the concept of individual sovereignty the basis of a liberal state, but in the context of the struggle for independence, one of the most powerful sentiments was one of *swaraj*. *Swaraj* as national self-determination was deeply enmeshed with its *swaraj* as rule over the self. To enable the conditions for the latter to be met had to be a core consideration for the Indian state, which however mostly failed its citizens in this respect.

For Roy and Narayan, the focus on the individual was a central one. As contended in the thesis, Roy and Narayan engaged with Marxism in a critical way by pointing to Marxism's authoritarian tendencies that were fostered by Indian socialism's reliance on the state and its auxiliary institutions. Furthermore, certain collectives seeking dominance - such as class (for Narayan) or generic collectives bearing a collective ego (for Roy) - multiplied the tendency towards power-seeking strategies in force. The effect was devastating. Firstly, for the welfare of individuals whose diverse interests were ignored by the state, notably the interest in 'freedom' of the individual.[7] The relevance of this question is not merely one of perennial importance but has to be brought to the fore of politics in India today. A perhaps unremarkable action of the Supreme Court might bring to light the problem of the

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[5] As Arun Bose argues, the power of the world systems approach meant for the left a regard for the essential aspects of a universal movement towards a world that promised more justice and more equitable economic relations. In the short and medium terms this meant of course that the national state operating within a system of international relations remains central to all political considerations. Refer to Bose, *India's Social Crisis: An Essay on Capitalism, Socialism, Individualism and Indian Civilization.*

[6] S.K., *Commentary: Fifty Years of Indian State. Suggestions for Its Revitalisation.*

[7] Here we see an anticipation of the type of argument put forward by theorists interested in 'bundles' of diverse goods that individuals have intrinsic interest in. Among these, the notion of 'freedom' has been addressed as a central category, albeit in a far more differentiated manner so as to accommodate a variety of issues like capability and achievement, based on the concepts of well being as well as agency. See for example Cohen and Sen's arguments in Nussbaum and Sen, *The Quality of Life.*

paternalistic state vis-à-vis its citizens. Here we are referring to the directive of the Supreme Court of India in August 2003 to the centre to operationalise Art. 51 A of the Fundamental Duties. This was ostensibly to create a right balance between fundamental rights and fundamental duties of citizens, and demands that the Centre 'educate' its citizens towards their duties accordingly.[8] The lofty but vague phrasing of these duties has enabled the state to reinterpret these from time to time in various circumstances. The Article was invoked during India's Emergency period when fundamental freedoms were curtailed and it is hence interesting that the same article is in the (relative) spotlight again.

In relating this back to Roy and Narayan, it does not seem that the stress on harmony, equality, secularism, environmentalism, and scientific temper in Art. 51A would have disturbed them. Neither would the fact that political elites, even if from within the judiciary, propose that these be the guidelines for India's citizens. However, the problems that arise when elite-centeredness, state-centeredness and central state-centeredness converge would have certainly led them to reiterate their position on how political ideas are to be expressed. The response to the above - being a form of domination combined with a lack of voice on part of those towards whom these directives are issued – would be to argue for a democratic system that is based on an understanding of liberty to counter domination as well as on the importance of voice, i.e. of those not touched by the capabilities offered by proximity to political power such as parties, social classes that find employment in the state bureaucracy and so on. To argue that they were right to do so would be to not only restate a commonly shared perception of the merits of democracy, but also to acknowledge that this position is by no means a unique one.

The notions of the democratic element as being a mechanism of defence against the state has found outlet in diverse outpourings of criticism of India's centralised state. In contemporary society, it is clear though that the state is still needed. Ideally, it would be a liberal state, committed to effectively realising the statutes of the Constitution that offers equality and well-being to India's free citizens. To do so would also entail being responsive to a diversity of demands that emanate from various sources, be it from individuals, associations, religious, ethnic and linguistic communities for instance.[9] The disappearance of the state as such is therefore not a serious consideration for polities that are constitutionally based on the norms of equality and liberty, which complex societies are not able to realise on their own accord.

[8] The progress made in this form of civic education is to be monitored by the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution.
[9] Cf. Sudipta Kaviraj, 'In search of civil society' In: Kaviraj and Khilnani, *Civil Society. History and Possibilities*, p.318.

The reasons for this do not necessarily lie in the hierarchical ordering of such a society or in the lack of an understanding of equality and liberty. Problems of representation and recognition of diverse interests also have to do with ignorance of the claims of others, lack of understanding of these claims. The state is thus needed for different reasons.

Narayan's arguments against the state in light of the inability of a highly differentiated society to address both general and particular issues through political means are not entirely convincing. The much discussed weakening of the Indian state's capacity to govern has so far not resulted in the ability of India's plural society to be an acceptable substitute. Nor in fact have the mere creations of new federal states, such as Jharkand, resulted in alleviating poverty, or in developing industrial, agricultural, technological, and other infrastructure. Infighting among clans, castes, and other groups persist and sometimes has taken on unprecedented scales of conflict. Although not quite as easy to capture in that there is limited access to shared understandings of norms regulating intra-group developments, certain subsections of society as well as individuals continue to be marginalized and discriminated against. New social movements, however radical, do not always succeed in effectively considering the peripheries of these movements. Nor do they always pose pertinent questions of how the demands of these movements relate to other movements and not merely to centres of domination.

In this context, Roy's arguments in favour of retaining the state are far more acceptable. The question is whether a purely administrative and responsive state is the answer. However, unless territories within the state are conceived as being sociologically homogenous or incorporating one dominant group, the idea of a state that is responsive to demands of local associations is a promising one. The diversity of interests that one may reasonably expect to be found in any given territory would act in marginalizing particularist but dominant claims. Moreover, the focus on the local means that concrete circumstances can be addressed. The weakness that Roy's model shares with Narayan's is that liberal notions of equality and liberty are taken for granted. For those sceptical of the possibility of achieving the necessary level of shared normative ideals, in this case a disproportionate amount of trust is placed in the role of the educators and in the role of the democratic process. Yet to discount that line of thought would be to foreclose alternative avenues of thinking about society and the norms embodied in Art. 51A for instance. In directing the focus of the discussions on the adversarial relationship between civil society and the institutions of the state, the idea of intra-societal change is neglected. As such, the tug-of-war type of politics between state and society has outlived its attractions in many ways as contemporary theories of democracy serve to show.

In practical terms, democracy was to be a sign of decentralisation, the idea of which has regained some strength in contemporary Indian politics. Marxists and socialists in India are increasingly laying their expectations in pockets of communist or socialist civil society rather than in either synchronous revolutions or its complete absence.[10] Roy and Narayan too turned their attention to local politics, at times parastatal, extra-statal as well as anti-statal. Yet the more interesting point is that they base their arguments against a centralised state on changes within communities and within society itself. While Narayan appears somewhat ambivalent with regard to this question, Roy's search for local politics at an associational level indicate that the individual is to be as unencumbered as possible. This is not the same as rejecting immersion in certain traditions. Roy's search for roots of rationalism and materialist non-dualism in ancient Indian thought as well as Narayan's references to Indian traditions of grass-roots politics can be viewed critically regarding the accuracy of the statements. More importantly though, their searches show that there is a diverse range of critical ideas and that these are to be found in a diversity of traditions in India.

Left thinking in India today would benefit substantially from the idea that local politics can be based on exploring the potential of social criticism that is familiar, legitimate and effective at the same time. Considerations of caste, ethnicity and other categories that have supplanted the significance of class thus need not be the most desirable of alternatives. Indeed, as referring to nationalist-secular-unitarian roots and ideals of independent India is a futile enterprise in constructivism, and referring to relatively complete and stable horizons of many competing communities leads to high levels of conflict, the search for alternative frames of reference are commendable strategies. It is surely remarkable that their tentative but prescient approaches to this issue continue to be considered by those sympathetic to the concept of radicalising democracy. On the face of it, their approaches seem indo-centric as their discussions often dealt with the problematics of the Indian situation. However, they also used general problems associated with political systems such as parliamentary democracy and with authoritarian Marxism to make the case that the applicability of their ideas was not limited to the Indian case. This type of internal criticism is in effect a position that has been espoused by Sen and Nussbaum for instance, and stresses modes of thinking about a society's 'development' through internal criticism and cross-cultural references at the level of both culture and individual.[11] The way that Roy and Narayan approached the second aspect of radical democracy, namely its indeterminacy, shows that there are points of contact between East and West and that political thinking in India is of a richer hue than is widely assumed given the

[10] Bose, *India's Social Crisis: An Essay on Capitalism, Socialism, Individualism and Indian Civilization*, pp.132-136.
[11] Nussbaum and Sen, *Internal Criticism and Indian Rationalist Traditions.*

emphasis put on India's spiritual nature.[12] What the notion of openness also does, perhaps unwittingly, is to enable contact, inter-change and change to take place, thereby bringing about a confluence of substance and form.

The era of Roy and Narayan's political thinking was marked by quite diverse developments in politics, history and the sciences. In the social sciences these developments were helped along but also reacted to in changing ways of viewing the world. For many on the left, the fear of the vacuous nature of liberal democracy, alternatively termed parliamentary democracy, was inadequately challenged by Marxism's 20th century manifestation as faith or eschatology. 'Freedom' became a central category of thought of critical Marxism trying to reconnect to Marxian ideas and utilising those developments that seemed to underline the real possibility of non-determined, yet not empty 'freedom.' Critical theory in Europe, perceiving itself at the nexus of experience and thought, considered the tension between stress on human freedom and indeterminacy and the stress on the notion of teleology. The doubts about the core category of human nature led to a strong interest in 'philosophical anthropology' that sought to deal with the areas of meaning, significance, i.e. especially in the field of linguistics and discourse.[13]

Social, scientific and ideological changes did not of course pass India by. However, the experience of colonialism, followed by the attempt to construct a new political system based on socio-economic development, meant that the criticism of democracy and Marxism took on a different nuance. The persistence of widespread poverty and the failure of populist movements to retain the momentum of pre-independence struggles led to alternative routes of re-thinking development and Marxism's role in it. In part the idea of freedom took on the notion of political development, or the unfolding of latent capabilities to express interests and demands of the demos, conceptualised as a community by Narayan and as an aggregate by Roy. This captures the idea of voice, which is qualified by grounding it in an understanding that primarily desirable social and individual goods are underwritten by a democratic system. Human nature's capacities for displaying intellectual and moral qualities and for desiring to be free from domination are thereby taken for granted.

While the idea of direct democracy as the most effective system that eliminates domination and enables the exercise of voice, the concept of direct democracy as such does not explain the ambiguities and tensions that can be seen in Narayan's and especially Roy's writings. The concept of freedom was in fact not exhausted by the idea of democracy, but was expressed in

[12] Nussbaum and Sen, *Internal Criticism and Indian Rationalist Traditions*, pp.4-8.
[13] Dallmayr, *Beyond Dogma and Despair: Toward a Critical Theory of Politics*, pp.68-70.

part as expression of possibility. We argued that the rejection of what was considered Marxism's authoritarianism, the endorsement of the rapid expansion of the interdependence of the world on an ostensibly equal footing, the search for a concept of freedom that surpasses the mere liberty, as well as the attempt to assimilate insights of 20th century natural sciences in order to destabilise – not destroy - the notion of the ontologically and epistemologically grounded individual are what constitute Narayan's, but mainly Roy's contributions to left thinking in India.

The idea of individual 'freedom' thus acquires complexity and openness that is very much the focus of current modes of thinking, i.e. for instance in the aspects of localism and pluralism that is inherent in the idea of protean individualism.[14] Popular democracy at the local level was seemingly the answer but it was clearly grounded in an understanding of freedom, which entailed a demanding sense of the self. It has a substantive aspect in Roy and Narayan who seek a moral notion of politics and the expression of interests such as participation, protection of liberties and exercise of judgement. Narayan's political thought though leaned far more than Roy's towards a positive assessment of the merits of radical democracy in this sense. Hence while Narayan's concept of radical democracy revolved around popular movements at the grass-roots level or structural level, Roy's concept rested on individualistic action, or grass-roots politics at the agency level.

For both though, radical democracy is the answer for creative individuals while at the same time enabling creativity at all levels and particularly at the political level. In Roy there is deeper sense of the openness that characterises human nature. For him, moral identity and interests are not discovered nor is the result of radical democracy a community of virtuous citizens.[15] The key factor is the will to reason and to be creative, which Roy grounds in science as well as in appropriating a scientific or sceptical outlook on life. The underlying tone in Roy seems to be that science will discover for us just how free we are to be protean individuals. Ultimately, for both Roy and Narayan, and this applies to most thinkers who are taken by the idea of radical democracy, the underlying assumption was indeed that there is an overpowering sense of longing for the elusive promise of 'freedom' as well as the will to realise it through politics. Not only substantive ideas of human ontology but the very idea of transience and indeterminacy demand a strong sense of will and capability in order for political and other action to take place at all. The problems accompanying political philosophy in terms of the search for the First Cause in the Aristotelian tradition thus are not

[14] See for example, Dallmayr, *Achieving Our World. Toward a Global and Plural Democracy*, p.55.
[15] Warren, *What Should We Expect from More Democracy?: Radically Democratic Responses to Politics*, p.243.

just questions of faith or science. We need the openness to fill, and we need the substantive to enable the open. Thus, both views are found in Roy and Narayan, albeit in varying degrees. To fill the gap between demand of creative self and reality of apathetic selves we need the image of the protean self to move us.

The concept of the protean individual as for instance valorised by Dallmayr is an idealised one, as Mark Warren argues. Its appeal is limited in that it holds true only in an ideal world that is not riddled with contradictions and conflicts. The arguments for democracy as empty spaces signifying seats of power rather than the embodiment of it on the other hand mean that political identity is very difficult to establish.[16] In our understanding of radical democracy, both aspects exist in different ways, i.e. the more promising side of radical democracy that claims to promote harmony and understanding, as well as the difficulties inherent in the concept of indeterminate outcomes. Narayan's and especially Roy's concepts of radical democracy point in many ways to its complexity, in terms of both the demands it places on agents and on the organisation of political structures as well as in terms of the way it is and has been perceived.

What is striking is the element of will that is associated with their notions of democracy. Not only is it about the will to make political choices, but also about the will to envisage alternative social and political worlds. It is not only important as an anthropological constant but adds to the notion of the state. The idea of political will situates the state as a construct; it grounds its constitutional foundations in a concept that is stronger than desire, good will, or questionable natural law premises; it renders the relationship between the state and society more respectful. For this to happen, the notion of responsibility has considerable value. Will, combined with a sense of responsibility for one's actions and towards one's immediate environment, can absolve the state of the unenviable status as modern tyrant. There is no single convincing answer as to how will and responsibility are created or how they exist. Varying levels of explanatory strength are found in arguments relating to culture, nature, nurture, and genetic makeup. However, the concepts of will and responsibility do not exist in a vacuum nor are they always best expressed in oppositional terms, i.e. towards the state or political parties. Radical democracy as local and plural sites of direct participation does enable will and responsibility to unfold, even in indeterminate ways.

Seen in this light, Roy and Narayan's political thought is by no means a complete account that offers an exhaustive solution to India's current political problems. The weakness of their

[16] Warren, *What Should We Expect from More Democracy?: Radically Democratic Responses to Politics*, p.250.

political ideas in concrete terms seem clear to those who consider them utopians, i.e. the rudimentary accounts of the role of the state and perhaps unwarranted hope placed in the persuasive force of moral and intellectual elites. But the discrepancy between thought and reality in itself is not enough to discredit their ideas. Where they serve very well to mediate between a complex and often frustrating reality and seemingly idealist thought is their approach. While Total Revolution and Radical Humanism are easily cast aside on account of the impossible hopes that are embedded within these notions, the challenges made by such politics should be taken up. Virulent nationalism requires a perspective of pluralism, embittered communalisms require a perspective of communication, and even the complacent tones of new social movements require reflection. From our perspective, Total Revolution and especially Radical Humanism lend themselves well to pragmatic political programmes that involve some experiments, some thought, some visions and the welcome idea of individual responsibility.

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