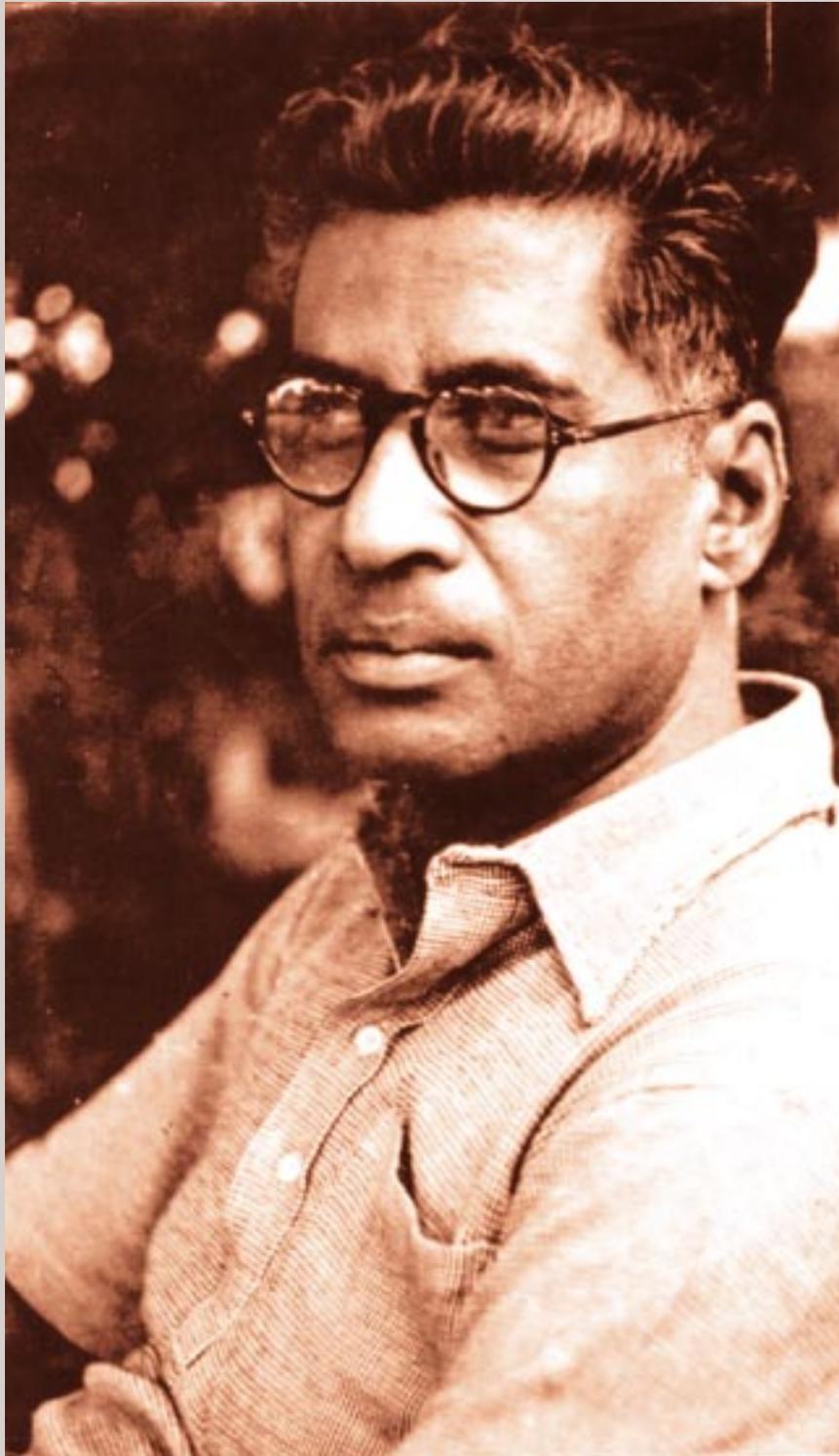


# M.N. ROY



- *a photo album*

## MANAVENDRA NATH ROY

1887-1954

*A friend of Humanity, A lover of Freedom*

M.N. Roy cannot be compared with any leader in the world. He was unique. Without formal academic degrees, he rose to the impressive heights.

M.N. Roy was born on 21st March, 1887. His original name was Narendranath Bhattacharya.

During M.N. Roy's childhood, India was under British rule as a poor nation, but a strong nationalist sentiment was predominant. Colonial India missed renaissance, enlightenment, industrial and scientific revolutions.

In the last days of the 19th Century Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi went to South Africa where he fought against racial discrimination and for the rights of ethnic Indians. Swami Vivekananda, the Indian seer, turned from aggressive skeptic to be the disciple of Ramakrishna Parama-hansa. Vivekananda toured the United States of America, after speaking about the concepts of Hinduism at a Parliament of religions in Chicago. His aggressive nationalism inspired many leaders in India to

*M.N. Roy Says*

### **Man**

Man is essentially a rational being.  
His nature is not to believe,  
but to question, to acquire and to know.

fight against the British rule. The famous novel of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee “Bhavani Mandir” was published and it provoked several leaders.

Aurobindo Ghosh who later became a seer, returned to India after withdrawing from civil service examinations in England. He started a national school to train students.

In 1898, Naren’s parents moved to another village Kodalia. Naren studied in Harinabhi Anglo-Sanskrit school, between 1899-1905. By that time Naren was influenced by national fervour. The British Government took the wholly unpopular decision to divide Bengal. Naren opposed the partition of Bengal and was expelled from School for doing so. Naren developed contact with the local revolutionary groups.

A turning point in the life of Naren came in 1905 with the death of his father, Dinabandhu Bhattacharya. In 1906, Naren joined Bengal National College (founded by Aurobindo) after passing the entrance test and studied in Bengal Technical Institute for two years.

**1907:** Naren was very active in revolutionary terrorist group activities against the British rule. He participated in the robbery of a Railway station (Chingripota village in Bengal in 1907 December).

*M.N. Roy Says*

### **Happiness**

No amount of welfare and prosperity  
can bring happiness unless they are  
enjoyed in freedom.

**1908:** Naren was arrested but the authorities could not establish enough evidence and hence he was released. Naren lost his mother Basant Kumari in 1908. Naren became very active in the local revolutionary movements under the inspiration of Aurobindo. Naren could complete only school education and never entered any College.

**1909:** Naren indulged in a dacoity at Netra. He was arrested in January 1910 but again released due to lack of evidence.

**1911-14:** Naren was very active under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee. The Bengali revolutionaries attempted to contact the Germans for help against the Britishers.

Naren went to Batavia under the pseudo name of Charles A.Martin in April 1915. He returned in June that year, only to go back to Batavia for acquiring arms, ammunition and money from the Germans. But in September 1915 Jatin Mukherjee was shot dead by the British police. That was a shocking news to Naren who was determined not to return to India until he achieved his aim.

From September 1915, to May next, Naren wandered in Asian countries, desperate to get help from several leaders including Sun Yat Sen. The Germans advised him to come to Germany for help. Thus the adventurous journey of Indian

*M.N.Roy Says*

**Moral**

The desire to be moral is inherent in man,  
and it is so because this desire results from  
man's innate rationality.

revolutionary commenced abroad. Naren posed as a catholic priest from Pondicherry, the French colony in India. He grew a beard and carried a Bible in his hands. He also acquired a false passport and travelled from Japan to USA in a ship. That was a hazardous journey. By the time he landed in the port of San Francisco in USA (1916 June) the local press published news about him. Naren did not wait any longer in San Francisco. He rushed to the Stanford University campus. He met Dhan Gopal Mukherjee, the Indian student in the university. He had introductory letters with him. Dhan Gopal was a writer from Bengal. On the suggestion of Dhan Gopal, Naren adopted a new name, and thus Manavendra Nath Roy (M.N.Roy) emerged in 1916 in USA.

During the First World War M.N.Roy was in America while Gandhi returned to India from South Africa. That was how Roy missed the nationalist movement in India, but gained international reputation as a communist and a rationalist. M.N. Roy met Evelyn Trent, a Stanford University graduate who fell in love with him. Despite the bitter opposition from her family, Evelyn married M. N.Roy in New York in 1917. Roy started to see the cosmopolitan life and Bohemian culture in New York. He met Lajpat Rai, the lion of Punjab, who was in exile from India. Lajpat Rai helped Roy in New York. He liked Roy's sincerity and devotion to the cause of Indian freedom.

*M.N. Roy Says*

### **Ideas**

Ideation is a physiological process. Once ideas are formed in the mind of man, they exist by themselves, governed by their own laws.

The British police were after Roy in USA too. He was arrested in 1917 but again released after a warning. Both Evelyn and M.N. Roy travelled to Mexico to escape the British police in USA. Till then M.N. Roy was a nationalist. Gradually he was changing. While in Mexico, Roy saw the socialist trends. Surprisingly he received the promised help from Germany during his Mexican days. That helped him to lead a comfortable life and made him work for the cause of India and for the promotion of his socialist ideas. Borodin, a Communist from Russia came to Mexico. He was in desperate state with bankruptcy, having lost all his money. M.N. Roy hosted him and helped him. Borodin acquainted M.N. Roy with the theory and practice of communism.

M.N. Roy and Evelyn established the Communist Party of Mexico, the first such party outside Russia. Roy played an important role in Mexican politics and moved among higher power circles. He also contributed theoretical articles in Spanish. M.N. Roy was quick in learning languages. He mastered Spanish soon and contributed articles to *El Pueblo*, a daily from Mexico City. He came in contact with the President of Mexico, Carranza. They became friends. Roy had written for *El Herald de Mexico* which had English sections too. Then Roy started publishing pamphlets in Mexico on political matters. M.N. Roy addressed an open letter to the American President, Woodro Wilson. He

*M.N. Roy Says*

### **Brain**

The brain is the instrument of thought, and it is individually owned. It cannot be possessed collectively. Society is a creation of man. History is a record of human activity. Political institution is created by man. Yet these creations of man have reduced man to nothingness. There fore, a humanist revival, that is, restoration of man in his proper place of primacy and sovereignty, is the only way out.

did not forget his own country and had written articles and books on the cause of Indian Freedom. M.N. Roy organized the Socialist Party of Mexico and became its General Secretary.

From August, 25, 1919 to September 4, Roy organized the marathon session of the national congress of the Socialist Party of Mexico. This was converted into the first Communist Party outside Russia, which brought him to the attention of Lenin. M.N. Roy was invited to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. That was a big turning point in the life of M.N. Roy. The world witnessed great changes during the First World War. Russia saw the first revolution launched by the Bolshiveks in 1917 which saw the overthrow of the Czar and the capture of power by Lenin. The Russian Communist Party established contacts with revolutionaries throughout the world, and started setting up of the Communist Party outside Russia. M.N. Roy and Evelyn accepted the invitation of Lenin and travelled to Moscow via Cuba, Spain, Germany. M.N. Roy met several revolutionaries on his way to Moscow. He became a friend of Thalheimer in Germany and H.J. Sneevliet in Holland. Some Indian revolutionaries were already working in Germany at that time. Roy met them on his way in 1920 May. M.N. Roy reached Moscow. Great thinkers like Bertrand Russell visited the Soviet Union to see the achievements of the

*M.N. Roy Says*

**Progress**

Quest for freedom and search  
for truth constitute the basic urge  
of human progress.

communist world. When Roy met Lenin for the first time in Moscow it was a surprise for both. Lenin was under the impression that Roy was an elderly person but found a bubbling youth with an intellectual flash. Roy quickly made friendship with the top leaders of the Communist Party, including Trotsky, Stalin, Bukharin and met the famous writer Maxim Gorky. In the very first Congress, Roy submitted an alternative thesis on the national and colonial question. It was discussed and accepted by the Congress. Lenin saw the point in Roy's thesis and allowed for voting. Roy had his first victory.

M.N.Roy at once started working for the establishment of the Communist Party in India. He was elected Chairman of Central Asiatic Bureau of the Comintern. He along with Evelyn travelled to Tashkent with full load of arms and ammunition in a train. They established an Indian Military school in Tashkent and trained some Mujahirs who travelled from India.

On October 17, 1920, the first Communist Party of India was started in exile. M.N. Roy and Evelyn played a key role in setting up the Communist Party of India in Tashkent. They sent money, literature and advice to the Indian communists at a great risk. The British rulers in India scented the role of M.N. Roy and again started hunting for him. M.N.Roy established

*M.N.Roy Says*

### **Existence**

On the higher human level,  
the struggle for existence becomes  
a conscious struggle for freedom.

contacts with the top leaders of Indian National Congress too and addressed letters to Chitta Ranjan Das, the Congress president. Between 1921 and 1929 M.N. Roy had a meteoric rise in the International Communist movement. He played significant role in China and India. In 1921, M.N. Roy along with Joseph Stalin established Communist University of the Toilers of the East. Future Presidents and Prime Ministers of colonial countries underwent training in this Institute where Roy and Evelyn taught. Ho Chi Minh, later the supreme leader of Vietnam, studied in this school. Brushing aside all opposition from Indian revolutionaries in Russia and Germany, M.N. Roy firmly established his supremacy in the Communist movement. He proved his ability through his writings like “India in Transition” where in he analyzed the situation in the British India with utmost understanding and clear analysis. Roy started a fortnightly magazine from Berlin “The Vanguard of Indian Independence.” Evelyn Trent helped him in editorial work. Evelyn published her articles in the name of Shanti Devi.

British rulers in India proscribed the Journal. Roy started another magazine “The Advance Guard”. M.N. Roy was expelled from Berlin and France , while he was engaged in the communist activities. He tried to help the Indian communist movement from Europe. He had to move around constantly. While playing key role in the international communist movement, M.N. Roy

*M.N. Roy Says*

### **Holy**

The profession of the holy loafer prospers in an atmosphere of popular prejudice.

rose to the top positions and held many posts. He was in the Comintern Executive, Politburo, Presidium and Colonial Commission.

M.N. Roy edited another magazine “The Masses of India” and dispatched to India clandestinely. In 1925, M.N. Roy was separated from his wife Evelyn, who left permanently to USA. She died in 1970.

Conspiracy cases were booked against M.N. Roy in India by the British Police.

In 1927 M.N. Roy was asked to help the Communist Party in China. He went there along with Louise Geissler, a prominent communist from Switzerland. Roy met Mao Tse Tung, Chou-En-Lai, and other top leaders. Roy proposed agrarian revolution and creation of a revolutionary army. There were differences with Borodin, another leader from Russia. Stalin supported M.N. Roy. Kuomintang government in China hunted the communists and M.N. Roy had to escape via Gobi desert to Russia.

Leadership quarrels in Russia cropped up, and Roy was kept away from the mainstream. He fell sick and went to Germany for treatment. Roy wrote articles in Thalheimer’s journal which angered the Stalin group. Roy was expelled from the

*M.N. Roy Says*

### **Man**

Man is sovereign because he is the highest point in the process of cosmic evolution. If we forget man and subordinate him to man made-institutions and organisations, he shall never be able to create a better world. Every man has infinite abilities and potentialities.

Party. M.N. Roy decided to return to India after a long gap. He travelled under pseudo passport as Banerjee and arrived in India secretly in 1930. While in Moscow the only Indian leader who met Roy and appreciated his intellectual brilliance was Jawaharlal Nehru. (1927) M.N. Roy joined Nehru camp and worked secretly. The British police scented his presence after seeing the resolution of the Congress party at its Karachi session about fundamental rights. M.N. Roy was in that session along with Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi never liked M.N. Roy and his role in politics. Mahmood was the pseudo name of M.N. Roy in India. Soon the Indian communists revealed the presence of M.N. Roy. They followed the Stalinist propoganda line at that juncture. He was arrested and tried. In the beginning 12 years imprisonment was given to him. On appeal it was reduced to 6 years. The author of the theory of relativity, Albert Einstein, appealed to the British rulers for kind and humane treatment of M.N. Roy.

During jail days M N Roy had corresponded with the political leaders and the intellectuals. Ellen helped him in this aspect. M.N. Roy produced extensively political, philosophical and social criticism during his jail life. His monumental work "The Philosophical consequences of Modern Science" was an outstanding contribution. His letters from jail addressed to his second wife Ellen in Germany were appreciated as literary

*M.N. Roy Says*

**Progress**

Progress is not a matter of belief, but of  
experience. It is the process of becoming.  
Only absolute being precludes progress,  
because there is no motion.

masterpieces by persons like C.R. Reddi, the vice-chancellor of Andhra University, India. Some of his other writings from jail are "Heresies of the Twentieth Century," and "Materialism".

**1936 November 20:** After 6 years of imprisonment, M.N. Roy was released. Even in jail he played a historical role. M.N. Roy changed a lot in his ideas. His experience and understanding of Marxism and communism led him to critical thinking. 1937 March 10, M.N. Roy and Ellen got married. Since then Ellen became a great comrade to Roy in all aspects. Roy joined the Indian National Congress and played an important role. But he was unfit in national politics. M.N. Roy declared Nationalism as an antiquated cult in 1938. During the Second World War M.N. Roy understood the great danger of fascism and warned India against it. Communists failed to recognize this danger and made a temporary pact with Hitler. Roy opposed it. M.N. Roy supported the Britishers in war saying that after the war the Britishers would leave the country. His prediction came true. Yet Roy became unpopular with nationalists. M.N. Roy came out of the Congress Party and started his own party the Radical Democratic Party. For the first time in India, Roy gave new orientation to a political party with scientific politics. Later he recognized the defects in a party system and abandoned it. M.N. Roy toured throughout India, lectured and organized intellectuals for a

*M.N. Roy Says*

### **Cosmopolitan Commonwealth**

New Humanism is cosmopolitan. In cosmopolitan commonwealth the spiritually free men will not be limited by the boundaries of national States, capitalist, fascist, socialist, communist, or of any other kind, which will gradually disappear under the impact of the Renaissance of Man.

Renaissance movement, which India needed badly. He started journals like "*Independent India*", "*Marxian Way*", "*Humanist way*" and "*Radical Humanist*". Gradually M.N. Roy became critical of Marxism and communism. India got independence in 1947 and Roy's prediction came true. M.N. Roy with all his experience evolved humanist thought in India. Then he wrote extensively about scientific politics, need for the study of history in a scientific way, and gradually evolved the humanist movement.

In 1948 the Humanist theory was published as 22 theses. The International Humanist and Ethical Union formed in 1952 in Amsterdam, elected M.N. Roy as its vice Chairman (in absentia). By then Roy met with an accident which damaged his brain. M.N. Roy in his last days serialized his autobiography in the journal "Radical Humanist" but could only cover upto 1925. He also wrote a book titled "Reason, Romanticism and Revolution" which was appreciated by the eminent humanists like Erich Fromm. On 25th January, 1954 Roy died in Dehra Dun, India. Several of his writings were published after his death. Oxford book publishers brought out 4 volumes edited by Prof Sib Narayan Ray.

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*M.N. Roy Says*

### **Sovereignty of man**

New Humanism proclaims the sovereignty of man on the authority of modern science, which has dispelled all mystery about the essence of man. It maintains that a rational and moral society is possible because man, by nature, is rational and therefore can be moral, not under any compulsion, but voluntarily; that the sanction of morality is embedded in human nature.

## **M.N. ROY**

### **CHRONOLOGY**

1887, 21st March - Birth in India

1906 - Joins revolutionary movement in Bengal

1907 December - First dacoity, Chingripota Railway Station.

1910, April - Second dacoity, Netra

1910 - Arrest in Howrah Conspiracy Case

1911 to 1913 - Travels to organise revolutionary groups under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee

1915 February - Third Garden Reach dacoity

1915 April - Leaves for Batavia for help from the Germans

1915 June - Returns to India after arranging for arms

1915 - Death of Jatin Mukherjee - Roy was abroad

1915 August to 1916 June - Goes to Indonesia, Malaya, China and Japan seeking of arms for Indian revolution

1916 June - Leaves for the USA enroute to Berlin under the guise of a catholic priest - Martin

1916 June 14 - Lands in San Francisco

1916 June - proceeds to Stanford University; changes name to Manavendranath Roy

**End of Preview.**

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