

SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS AND THEIR VALUE BASES: THE ROLE OF IDEAS IN THE REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

ABDUL SHAKIL

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa Ethiopia

ABSTRACT

This paper will examine social revolutions whether they had social bases or not. It will also try to find out if the ideas played revolutionary role in the transformation of society or not. This paper will try to consider Roy's point of view and then evaluate the same. Manabendra Nath Roy (1887-1954), an Indian philosopher, great revolutionary and a radical humanist argued that ideas have their own role in the new history of philosophy.

KEYWORDS: Social Revolutions, Value Bases, Moral and Cultural Values, Role of Ideas, Revolutionary Transformation of Society, Roy, Marx Etc

INTRODUCTION

M. N. Roy observes that the communist revolutions in Russia, China, and elsewhere were preceded by an ideological movement were generated by Marx, Engels and Lenin. However, his ideology did not arise from the proletariat. Neither Marx nor Engels and Lenin came from the working class. Their ideas were derived from previous thinkers and from the economic situation of their time. The difference was that they excluded moral and cultural values from their ideology. As a result, the ideology of communism emerged as a purely economic system. It had no cultural counterpart. The communist revolutions, therefore, did not have a value-base (Roy, 1999, p. 83).

According to Roy, ideas have effective role in revolutionary transformation of society. The socialist values are a super-structure that are based on a socialist economy. They cannot emerge before a socialist revolution takes place and a socialist economy is created. According to Marxian theory, cultural values appropriate to a post-revolutionary society that will succeed and that cannot precede the socio-economic revolution. The driving force of a revolution will not be the cultural value of the future society.

What then is the driving force of a revolution according to Marxism? The driving force is the development of the means of production. Capitalist accumulation leads to more and better capitalist goods and this development of means of production increases the productivity of labor. This power in society, however, remains restricted. It remains the same because of worker's wages. These are kept at the subsistence level. A contradiction then arises between the force of production and capitalist property.

Roy argues that Marxism does not visualize any value system that is suitable to the success of a socialist economy. These are created prior to the proletarian revolution. Marxism does not deal with socialist values at all. According to Marxian theory of super-structure, such values will emerge after and not before a successful socialist revolution. However, Roy asks whether a socialist society can ever be established unless, as pre-condition, a substantial section of the people

have come to cherish the new values. These values are necessary for the successful functioning of socialist economy (Tarkunde, 1992, p. 180).

Furthermore, Roy insists that Marxism is not a philosophy but a theory of revolution. It gained support finally to become the ideology of a world movement. Marx proposed to make a science of socialism. Hegelian dialectics was useful for this purpose. As a philosophy, Marxism was a branch of the Hegelian system. As a theory of revolution, it drew upon the doctrines and experiences of the 'bourgeois' French Revolution. The most important part of Marxism is its economic analysis. In that respect, its fundamental principles were taken over from the British political economists. Marx characterized them as ideologists of capitalism. So Marxism, according to Roy, contradicts itself in its doctrine that ideologies are created by the economic necessities of particular classes with the object of promoting and defending their respective interests (ibid, pp. 80-81).

Marx called his forerunners "utopian romanticists." Nevertheless, Roy says, Marx himself advocated the most extravagant form of romanticism. It had brought the great revolution to grief. Romanticism, as represented by its emphasis on human action, makes Marxism a revolutionary doctrine. However, at the same time, romanticism contradicts philosophical principle that as inherited from Hegel. It was rationalism.

Roy says that Dialectics is a rationalist notion; dialectical materialism, therefore, is a rationalist notion and a rationalist philosophy. On the other hand, the appeal to violence, being an echo of the last phase of the Great Revolution, is a romantic extravagance. The two aspects of Marxism thus stand in the relation of thesis and antithesis. The synthesis is the statement that "by changing the world, man changes himself." In other words, man's ability to change the world, to expedite revolution through evolution, and the moral right to do so, result from the fact that man is a part of nature, which is a ceaseless process of change, a dialectic process, in the Hegelian language. But the world is greater than the greatest of men; and will always be so. Therefore, man's ability to change it is limited by the axiom that the whole is greater than its part (Roy, 1989, p. 399)

Roy, therefore, suggests that the revolutionary should not be excessive. He should not aspire to make miracles. His philosophy of life should be a synthesis of rationalism and romanticism. The Marxian gives too much emphasis on revolutionary action and that takes him on the side of irrationalism. At the same time, Marxian theory of revolution is cynical, according to Roy. It is so because its basic dogma is that human beings are never motivated by moral impulses. It rejects the belief that human nature by itself is sufficient cause for the endless progress of humankind. Moreover, it declared that revolutionary action by determined minorities was the decisive factor of history.

Roy again argues that the Marxian interpretation of the history and theory of revolution create the cult of superman. It is the revolutionary part of the proletariat organized in the party. Therefore, it opens the perspective of dictatorship as the alternative to democracy.

Roy assumes that the labor theory of value logically led to the theory of surplus value. The British theoretical Communists expounded it. They were followers of the classical political economist Ricardo. Philosophically, they all professed radical liberalism. It was the ideology of bourgeoisie. Therefore, the fundamental principles of Marxist economics were worked out before Marx. It was in the form of social and philosophical atmosphere of "bourgeois liberalism." Thus, according to Roy, the entire heritage of Marxism contradicts Marxist historiography (ibid, p 399).

The theory that production of surplus value is the specific feature of capitalism represents exploitation of the

working class. It is the fundamental fallacy not only of Marxist economics but also of the entire philosophy of revolution. Roy argues that the producer is not receiving the full value of his labor. It is not a peculiarity of the capitalist system. Therefore, what is called surplus value in Marxist economic language is the surplus produced under capitalism.

Roy calls Marx as an extraordinary student of economic history. He could not dispute the necessity and progressive social significance of surplus production. Economically, a demand for the abolition of surplus value will be impractical and suicidal. Roy says that the social surplus will disappear if production of surplus value is ever stopped. And with disappearance of progress, society will stagnate and eventually break down.

Marx held that under capitalist production surplus value represented exploitation of labor, because, it is appropriated by one class. Roy demanded that the class appropriation of social surplus should stop. Expropriation of the expropriators was the condition for the end of exploitation of man-by-man. Marx demanded the establishment of socialism based on the expectation that the proletariat would expropriate the expropriator. It means the social surplus will be appropriated by the new ruling class—the proletariat.

Roy states that if production of surplus value represents exploitation of labor, labor is exploited also under socialism. And it should be admitted that under the socialist economy of Russia labor is even more exploited because in this system the strategy was to produce larger surplus value to be accumulated into the capital. Roy thus concludes that Capitalism and Communism both cannot guarantee that labor would not be exploited. Therefore, socialism is nothing better than state capitalism. Lenin logically deduced its pragmatic practice of reconstruction from the theoretical presuppositions of Marxism as he interpreted them. It has unfolded itself according to the dogmas of orthodox neo-Marxism of Lenin and Stalin (ibid, pp. 412-13).

Roy insists that the inspiration for a new philosophy of revolution should be drawn from humanism and moral radicalism. Because, humanist principle of individualism realized the possibility of a secular rationalism and a rationalist ethics. They applied to the study of man and society the principles and methods of the physical sciences. The application of moral values is necessary for replacing the corrupt systems. Revolution must bring out a new order of democratic freedom. The moral order will result from a rationally organized society. Because man is essentially a rational being and so he is moral. Rationality and morality of man go together. Morality emanates from the rational desire for harmonious and beneficial social relations.

Roy insists on a reorganization of society that begins from the individual units of society. He develops his philosophy of revolution based on entire stock of human heritage. He then elaborates the theory and formulates the principles of the practical economic reconstruction. Roy differentiates his radical philosophy from Marxian concepts of nation or class. Its concern is man. It conceives freedom as freedom of the individual, not of any particular class. Therefore, Roy also calls it new humanism.

According to Roy, for creating a new world of freedom, revolution must go beyond the economic re-organization of society. Freedom does not follow from the capture of political power in the name of the oppressed and exploited class. It also does not follow from the abolition of private property in the means of product (ibid, p. 14).

Roy argues that the method and programme of social revolution must be based on the basic principle of social progress. A social renaissance is only possible by determined efforts to educate the people about the principles of freedom and rational co-operation. Furthermore, Roy states that social revolution requires increasing number of men of the new

renaissance. Revolution will be based on the principles of freedom, reason, and social harmony. It will mean elimination of every form of monopoly and stake in the regulation of social life (Roy, 1947, pp. 23-6).

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