

CHAPTER IV

Inevitable Resurgence of Humanism in Modern Times

"When man turned his back upon the past and yearned for new things, two ways lay open to him : he could either create new forms of life, art and thoughts, or revert to the models of antiquity. The latter course was chosen first. Accustomed as the mediaeval mind has been to authority and tradition, it was unable at once to strike out along new paths.

The intellectual reformers turned to classical antiquity for inspirations; the culture of Greece and Rome is revived or reborn (Renaissance) and humanity is rediscovered (Humanism)"¹.

From the above observation of Prof. Thilly it is found that the renaissance ushered in a new era. Many thinkers during the renaissance showed light in the human beings to

dispel the darkness of the past days. Here, I like to mention the name Compañella, an Italian thinker. He is the author of the city of the sun. To be acquainted with him I like to quote a few lines again from Prof. Thilly's book.

"In his city of the sun (civitas solis) Compañella offers a socialistic theory of the state that recalls Plato's Republic.

It is a state of enlightenment - a city of the sun - in which power is governed by knowledge; the principle of equality prevails in it, there being no class distinctions except those based on superiority of knowledge. Philosophers or priests are the rulers, and the City of the sun is a universal papal monarchy with religious unity, dominating the secular state. Education, which is to be universal and compulsory will be based on mathematics and natural science, and the pupils are to receive special training for their occupations. Compañella also recommends learning by play, open-air schools and instruction by means of object lessons"².

From the above it appears that Compañella speaks of human equality and he attaches importance on knowledge and education. This opens a new path before us. Gradually the effect of renaissance fell on the mind of the people and at times men thought of emancipation from shackles of external

authority. However, in the sequel we will show the resurgence of humanism in modern times.

The ideas implicit in Humanism, namely, liberty, equality, and fraternity of all human beings, emerged in full bloomed form and translated into reality by a striking social event at the fag end of the 17th century viz. the French Revolution.

The French Revolution negatively demolished once for all the divine right to rule of kings and aristocrats and positively it declared the formation of a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity of all humans and thereby did away with class distinctions. However, fruits of the French Revolution were short-lived. Those who gained most from these effects, namely, the emerging community of businessmen and industrialists were first to render them short-lived. Nevertheless, they were also wise enough to retain those areas of these benefits active and alive which led or was likely to lead to the amassing of wealth into the hands of successful captains of business and industry.

Scientific and technological researches were encouraged by them and fruits of these researches were pressed into means of production on a massive scale for producing immense number of goods which required new market for their sale and thus for amassing wealth anew. For this reason, acquiring

new colonies through war became inevitable and Govts. of all the European countries in which Plutocrats were the king-makers created colonial empires in different countries of Asia and Africa as well as in the newly discovered continent of America and Australia for obtaining raw materials in a tax-free way and selling finished goods at an enormous profit. Teachings of the Humanists were forgotten.

The subjugated people were not considered to be human beings and as such they did not deserve to be accorded liberty, to be treated as equals, and as brothers. They were taken to be in the same category as the domestic animals, and meant to be exploited.

All ideals preached by the leaders of Humanism were given up. And this state of affair persisted through out the 18th century and in the first two decades of 19th Century. In this connection, I like to quote from dictionary of Philosophy the following : "Humanism reached its zenith in the works of the 18th Century Enlighteners, who put forward the slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity and proclaimed men's right freely to develop their "natural essence"³.

In the interest of the dominating industrialists and business men unification of Germany and Unification of Italy were achieved in the 18th Century and need for new markets were keenly felt by the aforesaid classes in these countries

which ultimately in the main led to first world war in 1914. Meanwhile labourers and factory workers in these countries who were under the constant threat of retrenchment and unemployment through the application of technological innovations in the factories for reduction in the cost of production, were organising themselves and indulged in Trade-Union activities to resist and reduce the possibilities of retrenchment and unemployment. Thinkers who wanted to remould societies sided with these trade unions in the main and, in and through their writings people at large and workers in particular were made aware of the structure of society and of the elements which dominated these structures and caused their exploitation. They were also provided with scheme of action for amelioration of their sufferings as well as for restructuring the society through peaceful or through violent means. One of the effects of the First world War was weakening of the whole of the administrative machinery particularly in the independent but backward imperialists countries and these brought forth Russian Revolution in 1917 to a successful conclusion under the leadership of the then Bolshevik Party of Russia.

The shock of the first world war paved the path of rise of the Nazi Totalitarianism in Germany, Fascist Totalitarianism in Italy and in Spain and Bolshevik Totalitarianism in Russia. As the Bolshevik Totalitarianism under the

leadership of Lenin and Stalin declared itself to be committed to Marxism (as modified by Lenin) and preached Nationalisation of all means of productions and elimination of all political parties save the communist party, the big bourgeois class in other countries were united to destroy or at least to contain it. With this end in view they allowed the leaders of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italian and Spain to stop and eradicate the preachings of the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity of man as enunciated by the leaders of French liberation marking the end of Feudalism in Europe. In short attempts were made to put the clock back as a result of which the world was involved in the blood-bath of second world war. After the Second World War United Nations enunciated the declaration of human rights in 1948 which embodied the ideals of Humanism once again. The Second World War came to an end with the dropping of atom bombs on Herosima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945 causing unprecedented destruction and loss of human lives which generated an irresistable desire among the different Nations of the world for establishment peace on earth. Out of this desire came the formulation and Declaration of Human Rights.

Declaration of Human Rights presupposes that the state exists for the individual and not the other way about. Flowering of harmonious development of the personality of every individual in the State is and should be the aim of

the State. But experience shows that the administrative machinery of the State can at times conveniently forget this aim and allow the state apparatus to be used on the basis of class or creed or language causing immense sufferings and hardship to the minority who do not belong to the cult. Hence, there is necessity of acceptance of the declaration of the Human right by every member-state of United Nations for its adoption.

The treatment accorded to the citizens of a particular State before the Second World War was considered to be a matter of exclusive Sovereign preserve of that State. But Hitler's oppression of the Jews and non-Nazi citizens of Nazi Germany and Mussolini's oppression of non-fascists in fascist Italy opened the eyes of the people of the world to the moral worthlessness of this rule. Continuous terrorisation of the minorities in any state of the world is bound to have repercussions beyond its boundaries. Thus it is far from safe to leave this vital matter entirely to the discretion of the state.

It is this awareness which generated the movement for international protection for human rights and fundamental freedom, and the United Nations became the vanguard of this movement and its Universal Declaration of Human Rights is in the true sense of the term a new Magna Carta for mankind. Human civilization can survive only when men are free and

recognize the responsibility for the protection of freedom of every other individual and to bear the responsibility with a sense of brother-hood. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights desires to ensure the continuence of a tolerant, democratic and humanist civilization. Human rights can exist only when there is toleration; and wherever there is persecution, there can be no human right. A human being is a human being in the true sense of the term if and only if he is free, is equal to others and is accorded treatment as a member of human fraternity. Only thus the dignity and worth of human individual can be ensured. Humanism, thus is a recognition of the supreme value and worth of the human individual. No other condition or consideration can supersade it. Human being as an individual must be an end in itself, he must not even be used as a means for any other end. All other ends are only the means for the realization of all the potentialities of the human individual. They are simply the conditions for the full blooming of the personality of human individual. All these conditions have been rendered explicit in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Tremendous progress in science and technology have taken place since the end of the Second World War. New discoveries and inventions on the one hand enhanced human control over natural phenomena and thereby increased the scope of human comfort and leisure as well as new avenues of human

recreations. On the other hand, these very discoveries and inventions, created new weapons for mass scale destruction on human beings, instruments for inflicting very painful punishment in every effective way and on a mass scale on the recalcitrant and dissident individuals as well as to influence and mould the mental capacities of the individual in a very subtle but effective way to make them irrational opinionated and obedient in the way desired by the state administration. These discoveries and inventions thus can be used very effectively to arrest the growth and development of human individual and they constitute in the hands of the key position holders in the state administration the weapons against which the human individuals are helpless.

Modern state is vast apparatus. In it every individual citizen feels himself to be an insignificant spoke in a vast wheel. This saps his sense of value of himself, robs him of his capacity for creative works and reduces him to the status of a valueless non-entity. Psychologically in this situation he is virtually reduced to the level of domesticated beasts. The worth and dignity of human individuals have thus been taken away from each one of them. What Hitler and Mussolini wanted to achieve through persecution, the political power brokers of the modern state achieved through propaganda by the media given in their hand by these scientific discoveries.

That in why it is all the more urgent to revive the ideals for which Humanism stood during Renaissance.

The modern state is in reality administrative apparatus mainly and persons who are holding key positions in executive, judicial, Military administration of Govt. in a modern state put discoveries and inventions in the field of science and technology into such uses as would perpetuate their control at time dynastically, over the administrative machinery of the state in order to protect and perpetuate their interests. With this end in view the strategy of *suppresio veri* and *suggestio falsi* has been adopted on a mass scale. The scientific improvements of the media lend readily themselves available to such uses. Thus every Govt. in every state must have a department of audio-visual publicity for dissemination of information. And it goes without saying that the informations which are published or broadcast or telecast are duly tailored information from which anything that may jeopardise the interest of the key position holders is skillfully eliminated. On the other hand, Cooked-up informations are at times propagated through press, radio and Television for public consumption in the name of boosting morale of the citizens. Thus access to truth by the public is always at a discount.

Again for perpetuation of the hold of these administrators in the administrative machinery, it is necessary to

suppress the voice of every dissenting person by force, and to create a climate of opinion among the people to view such acts of violence for the suppression of dissenting voice as of no consequence. This objective is achieved by depicting these dissenting persons as enemies of the people who ought to be punished, and violent suppression of their voice is the punishment meted out to them. Thus violence is given a sort of moral justification as it were. And unless right of access to true informations be ensured, worth and dignity of the individual citizen can not be maintained. Thus once more the urgent necessity of abiding by the declaration of Human Rights by the member states becomes clear and evident.

Modern state is administrated more often than not through violence. And if it can be impressed upon the mind of the individual citizen that to protect against violence done to a person by such state agency as armed police or para-military forces or at time by Military forces is to invite performance of violence on the protestor himself, the citizen will gradually refrain from indulging into such acts of protest. Thus our sense of responsibility to prevent the perpetuation of violence on our innocent fellow citizens is rendered blunted by discouragement. And the citizen becomes morally deprived and his keen sense of the dignity of the individual is lost through fear.

The tactics indulged in as stated above by the modern state show very clearly the imperative need of the protection

of human right as envisaged by Humanism. Only a thorough implementation of the series of Human Rights as incorporated in the Universal Declaration by any agency such as United Nations is the only way to ensure the continuence in future of a human civilization upholding the worth and dignity of the individual. Here, it is not out of place to quote the following from Encyclopaedia of Social work in India :

"It was the political philosophy generated by the U.N. Charter, affirming the dignity of man and the futility of wars, that led to the proper formulation and enunciation of human rights. A legal obligation emerged, namely, the duty of every state "to treat all persons under its jurisdiction with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" (Article 6 of the N.N. charter).⁴

The above quotation clearly reveals that each individual should be equally treated irrespective of Caste, creed, sex, etc. In India it is also necessary to treat the individuals equally. Hinduism preached that all individuals of the world are kith and kin of a family. In modern times we find that Indian constitution has stated that all men are equal. The preamble of the Indian Constitution declares justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. The inclusion of these terms in the preamble expresses the outlook of India towards men or individuals. Indian Constitution admits social, economic and

political justice. Further, it points out that the individuals must have liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. Furthermore, it preaches the idea of equality of status among men. Finally, fraternity assures the dignity of individuals. Thus the preamble reflects the humanistic outlook. Articles 14 to 18 of the Indian Constitution ensure the right of equality before law. Again Article 19 to 21 guarantees to the citizens the right to freedom. Here, I like to quote M.N.Roy. To quote him : "..., the Radical Humanist Movement will reevaluate ancient values and creates the atmosphere of an intellectual resurgences preparatory to the creation, by self-reliant men, of a free, happy and harmonious social order"⁵.

M.N.Roy with a foresight anticipated the need for such an agency for the future of the mankind. During the fag end of the Second World War M.N.Roy was convinced that Constituence of the axis power such as Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Monarchical Japan would inevitably defeated by the allied powers. At the same time with rare foresight he anticipated the freedom of the Colonial Countries from the British and French yoke. To prevent the possibility of the people of this country being again Yoked by the brown or black Capitalists and big bourgeois of these countries, Roy felt the need of framing a programme for the reconstruction of the social, political and economical structure of these

colonies in such a way as to vest the real power in the hands of the people and not in the hands of the bourocrats and plutocrats. Unfortunately his clarian call in this regard went unheeded and as there was no complete break with the Colonial past in these countries the old tycoons of powers came back through backdoor and installed themselves in the key position of the administration. For example, in India after 15th August 1947 the steel frame of British administration viz., Indian Civil Service was kept in tact by the leaders of the parties to whom our erstwhile British masters handed over power to rule the country. As a result these I.C.S. administrators who previously served the Govt. to protect the interest of British Emperor of India were serving to protect the interest of big Indian Bourgeois as well as those of erstwhile British master and people remained exactly in those rung of the ladders where previously they were placed by the previous rules. A new Constitution of India was drawn and was put into operation with much fanfare and big bang. The maker of this Constitution were praised to high heavens. But it is evident that Constitution has been framed in a short sighted manner by its makers. Otherwise, the fact that this Constitution has needed amendment for moretimes than 40 with in its forty years' existence, is inexplicable. This will be evident if we compare the number of amendments Indian Constitution undergoes with those of U.S.A.

M.N.Roy envisaged all these possibilities and that is why he preached that Humanism of Radical type should be the be-all and end-all of the political ambition of India for its social, political and economical development. Development to be development in the real sense of the term must reach the lowest class of the people in India. And to achieve this India must eschew a partyless democracy. Neither party democracy as prevailed in other countries nor one party rule guided by the principle of democratic centralism as prevailed in U.S.S.R. and P.R.C. will not do. In India the vast mass of people are illiterate and to allow party politics to prevail here will inevitably bring unprincipled scramble for power and unprincipled crossing of floor in parliament. We witnessed all these things during 6th, 7th and 7th decade in India. M.N.Roy also thought that plan for development of the country should start from the grassroot and should not be imposed from above. In other words if development is to bring in a change in the quality of the life of the people, it must take into account what the people at the grassroot level think that they need and not what the elites sitting in the airconditioned room in New Delhi think that the people need. Today politicians are talking about starting plannings for development from grassroot level without acknowledging their indebtedness in this regard to M.N.Roy.

At the concluding stage of this chapter I like to quote M.N. Roy. "By merging man into the masses, politicians, and social engineers have created a monster which responds riotously only to appeals to passion - hatred, greed, lust for power. Man has been debased to the level of unthinking beast, to serve the purposes of power politics. Political parties need votes to come to power. It is easier to sway the people by appeals to their emotions and prejudices. Therefore, to keep the people backward has become the result of modern democratic politics. They say that power corrupts. But it is believed that power corrupts only the corrupt people. The incorruptible has never any chance to come to power. Therefore, democracy has everywhere degenerated into demagoguery. The other alternative of capturing power through violent revolution, and then imposing social change from above, has also not produced any better results"⁶.

Again to quote him :

"Political institutions were created by man yet these creations of man have reduced man to nothingness. The complete subordination of the creator to his creation is the core of the present crisis. Therefore, a humanist revival, that is, restoration of man in his proper place of primacy and sovereignty, is the only way out of the crisis"⁷.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A History of Philosophy, Frank Thilly, p.262.
2. Ibid., p.272.
3. Dictionary of philosophy, ed. by G-Frolov-p.178.
4. Quoted from Encyclopaedia of social work in India, Vol.II, p.98.
5. Politics, Power and Parties, M.N.Roy, p.113.
6. Reason, Romanticism and Revolution, M.N.Roy, p.468.
7. Ibid., pp.485-86.