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Q4(c)

Manabendra Nath Roy's political thought highlighted the humanistic aspects of Marxism. Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · PSIR GS 1 · 15 marks · Political Ideologies

Political Ideologies: Liberalism, Socialism, Marxism, Fascism, Gandhism and Feminism.

Core demand of the question

- Locate M. N. Roy in the Marxist tradition (15 marks)
- **Show the humanistic turn:** person, ethics, and critique of mechanical materialism
- Discuss **Radical Humanism** in relation to party, state, and Indian politics
- Keep the answer on Roy, not a general essay on **Marx**

Revision summary

Roy began as an international communist organiser and a critic of colonial capitalism in Marxist terms.

His later **Radical Humanism** treated reason and the sovereign individual as the test of any revolutionary politics.

He recovered **Marx's** humanistic concern with alienation against mechanical materialism and against a permanent party-state.

The political programme was radical democracy and planned reconstruction that does not administer away individuality.

- **The statement is true:** Roy highlighted humanistic Marxism by using it to judge, and finally to leave, orthodox communist practice.

Introduction

Manabendra Nath Roy began as a founder of communist organisation in Mexico and India and as a delegate who debated Lenin on the colonial question. His later thought, named **Radical Humanism** or New Humanism, argued that Marxism's truth was its humanist core: the free person as the end of politics. The statement that his political thought highlighted the humanistic aspects of Marxism is accurate and needs to be specified.

Body

From communism to the person

Roy's early work accepted historical materialism, anti-imperialism, and organised class struggle. Experience of Comintern discipline, the failure of mechanical forecasts, and the record of the Soviet state pushed him to ask what had been lost. In **Reason, Romanticism and Revolution** and in the Radical Humanist movement after the 1940s, he treated reason and the sovereign individual as the measure of any party or plan.

Humanistic Marxism, for Roy, meant recovering **Marx's** concern with alienation and species-being rather than a closed dialectics of matter. Ethics is not a bourgeois luxury. A revolution that produces a new Leviathan has failed. This is close to later Western Marxism's humanist wing and distant from **Lenin's** smash-and-wield state as a permanent form.

Political consequences

Roy rejected both colonial liberalism that left the person formally free and hungry, and a vanguard that claimed to incarnate history. He wanted a radical democracy of local organised publics, scientific education, and economic reconstruction that does not swallow individuality. That last clause answers **Gandhi's** fear of the modern state, without accepting **Gandhi's** civilisational rejection of industry. It also answers **Nehru's** planning state: plans need a humanist criterion, not only growth.

Critics said Roy underestimated class organisation and caste, which **Ambedkar** placed at the centre. Others said **Radical Humanism** became a small intellectual current. The theoretical contribution remains. Roy read Marxism as a project of human emancipation and judged communist practice by whether the person was enlarged or administered.

Discussion

To discuss the statement is to agree that Roy highlighted Marxism's humanistic aspects, and to add that he did so by breaking with orthodox party Marxism. The humanism is not a soft extra. It is a test of power, hegemony, and the state. In that sense Roy belongs with the question on Marxism as a theory of action: action is required, but not action that erases the actor.

Flow diagram

Marx humanist core N Roy -> Early communism
Marx humanist core N Roy -> Radical Humanism
Radical Humanism -> Sovereign person
Radical Humanism -> Critique of party-state
Marx humanist core -> Radical Humanism

Conclusion

M. N. Roy's thought took Marxism's emancipatory aim and made the free, reasoning person its criterion. **Radical Humanism** criticised mechanical materialism, Comintern tutelage, and a state that outlives its justification. The discussion therefore affirms the given statement and locates Roy as a humanist critic inside, and then beyond, orthodox Marxism.

Facts & figures

Colonial debate

Roy's supplementary colonial theses at the Comintern disputed Lenin on the role of nationalist bourgeoisies in Asia.

Radical Humanism

Roy's post-1940s movement placed the free individual, reason, and ethics above party infallibility.

Reason, Romanticism and Revolution

Roy's major later work traces the humanist strand of modern thought and judges revolution by that standard.

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