

## **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia : An Icon of Democratic Socialism**

**Fauzia Tarannum**

Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Magadh University, Bodhgaya, Bihar, India

### **ABSTRACT**

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia (march 23, 1910-October 12, 1967) is considered as an aggressive propagandist of socialist thought. His speeches were severely critical vis-a-vis statistical. He played an important role during the freedom movement of the country. He made a significant contribution to the progress of the socialist movement of India since early thirties of the 20th century till his last breath.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In 1952, as the president of Congress Socialist Party. Lohia pleaded for a greater incorporation of Gandhian ideas in socialist thought. He advocated the significance of a decentralized economy based upon the resuscitation of cottage industries. In contrast to the communist fad for big machines, Lohia urged the importance of small machines which could utilize maximum labour power with even small capital investment. Several delegates in Panchmarhi Socialist Convention in May 1952, expressed dissatisfaction with this type of thought-orientation. In June 1953, Ashok Metha propounded his thesis of the political compulsions of a backward economy wherein he maintained that the ideology of the Congress was approximating that of socialists and hence he pleaded for greater co-operation between the Congress and the P.S.P. Ram Manohar Lohia, as a counterpoise to it, offered his equidistant theory. With his growing Gandhian leanings, Lohia felt that the socialists were almost equi-distant from the Communists and the Congress. He urged that the P.S.P should not irrevocably commit itself to allying with the Congress but should be ready to make electoral-adjustment with either according to the contingencies of the situation. In 1954, there was police firing in Travancore-Cochin upon agitators who demanded a linguistic state. Lohia, the then general secretary of the P.S.P, protested against it and went to the length of demanding the resignation of the Pattam Thanu Pillai Socialist Ministry there. In December 1955, the Socialist Party of India was founded and Lohia became its first Chairman.

Lohia had been an outspoken critic of India's foreign policy advocated by Nehru. He did not subscribe to the non-alignment philosophy of Nehru. He believed in having solid friends abroad.

Lohia had been a great advocate of Hindi. He believed in the quick replacement of English by Hindi as the official language of India. He pleaded that democracy in India cannot become a reality so long as public administration is carried on through the medium of English which is a sealed book to the major population of the country.

History, according to Lohia, moves in a cyclical inexorable way. This conception reminds one of the Aristotelian cyclic theory. Necessarily, this would imply the repudiation of the notion of straightline historical advance. In the course of cyclical movement, a country may attain to the heights of civilization and may go down to the nadir, to rise perhaps, again, Among the exponents of the cyclical theory of history, Lohia rates Sorokin higher than Spengler and Northrop.

Lohia accepted the theory of 'dialectical materialism' but attributes greater significance to consciousness than orthodox Marxim.<sup>2</sup> He advocates the creation of an intellectual tool that would combine spirit or general aim and matter of economic aims into autonomous relationship.<sup>3</sup>

He believed that in history there is a tug of war between crystallized castes and loosely cohesive classes. The internal oscillation between class and caste is a prime factor of historical dynamics. Castes represent conservative forces of stagnation, inertia and prescriptive right. Classes represent a dynamic force of social mobilization. According to Lohia all human history up-till this time has been an internal movement between castes and classes-castes loosen into classes and classes crystallize into castes.<sup>4</sup> Thus Lohia's concept of the struggle between classes and castes is only a popular form of Pareto's theory of the struggle between the landed interests of rentiers who represent residues of persistence of aggregates" and the monied interests who represent residues of combination.

Lohia believed in a four Pillar State.<sup>5</sup> In this Four Pillar state an attempt is made to synthesize the opposed concepts of centralization and decentralization. In this system. The village the mandal (the district), the province and the central government all retain importance and are integrated in a system of functional federalism. The cohesive bond is provided by the performance of functions The Four Pillar state implies the abolition of district magistracy which represents a notorious concentration of political power Furthermore, the district village and city panchayats are to take charge of policies as well as welfare functions.<sup>6</sup>

Lohia was an exponent of decentralized socialism. This implies small machine co-operative labour and village government, he prescribed the technology of the small unit machine as a remedy against capitalist concentration and mounting unemployment.

In a paper entitled "The Farmer in India" Lohia formulated a Thirteen Point Plan to end the rampant. Poverty in the country:

- Lowering of prices on the basis of parity between agricultural and industrial prices.
- Austerity and sacrifice to be shared by all so that no income or salary exceeds Rs. 1000 a month.
- Industrialisation with the help of small-unit machines, the invention and manufacture of which to be promoted by the state.
- Any factory running below capacity to be taken over by the state, and immediate nationalisation of basic industries.
- Anti-corruption commission in every state and at the centre with departments independent of the government.

- Land to the tiller and redivision of lands-12 acres minimum and 30 acres maximum. Correction of wrong entries in Patwaris registers.
- Cultivation of 1 crore acres of New land by a state-recruited food army.
- Decentralisation of administration and of economy so as to achieve the four-pillar state. Repeal of discriminatory laws including the criminal tribes act.
- Housing programmes and other economic activity to provide full employment.
- Establishment of polytechnic schools and people's high schools and centres for youth and women for cultural activities.
- Immediate adult franchise elections in unrepresented areas that is, merged states and unions.
- \* Pursuit of a positive policy of world peace through promoting full freedom and right for all nations : social and economic equality among a people and between nations. and a peace bloc which can dictate truce to warring power blocs. volunteer bands for agriculture. irrigation, road-making and the like. (Fragments of a World Mind pp. 79-80)

He was emphatic on the preservation of the democratic political freedoms and would like to safeguard a sphere of free speech and association and private life within which no government could make coercive penetration. He was a strong advocate of the Gandhian technique of individual and collective civil disobedience for the vindication of the dignity and rights of the common man. This has also psychological vision.

During post independence era he devoted himself to the realisation of a socialist society through the technique of civil disobedience. He felt that the Indian National Congress was dominated by capitalists, landlords, the bourgeoisie and other vested interests. The movement of independence according to him, could not be completed until the Gandhian dream of the rise to prosperity of the humble kisan became a reality. So Lohia tirelessly worked for the redemption of the suppressed sections of Indian society and preached rage and resistance against the oppressors. He was extremely critical in his denunciations of caste oppressions. His bitterness in the condemnation of caste arrogance. reminds us of Kabir and Vivekananda. As a technique for building socialism, Lohia wanted fraternization with the backward classes and the poor elements in the upper castes. India's political future was doomed without the uplift of the Shudras, Harijans and the tribal population. He felt that the building-up of socialism was the need of the hour. He was sore against the luxury and magnificence indulged in by some people and some groups to maintain the external paraphernalia of political power.<sup>11</sup>

Obviously enough, Lohia had some original ideas to contribute to Indian politics. It was he who was mainly responsible for formulating the philosophy as well as the tactics of the coalition government of non-Congress opposition parties. When he first came up with this idea in 1966, he was not taken seriously and was regarded as being deluded or as engaging in utopian speculations.

The general elections of 1967 and the subsequent political developments proved however, that Lohia could diagnose the political situation with a correctness and a precision which indicated the dynamic quality of his mind and the keenness of his intellectual intuition.

Another political idea of Lohia was that there should be a confederation of India and Pakistan. For him Pakistan was created because the ailing and old Indian leaders were anxious to assume political power. Furthermore Pakistan could be created because the British diplomacy wanted to drive a permanent wedge in the Indian subcontinent. Another fundamental basis of the Pakistan movement was the suspicion of the Muslims of Bihar and U.P. of being dominated by the Hindu majority. Lohia also felt that Mahatma Gandhi should not have yielded to the demand for Pakistan. But now that Pakistan had come into being the only way to solve the Indo-Pakistan dispute and tension was to have a confederation between the two countries.

Lohia offered some ingenious interpretations of ancient Indian history and culture. To him, Vashistha, and Parasurama were the symbols of caste orthodoxy, while Vyas Valmiki and Vishvamitra championed a more liberal and open social philosophy, Rama was the typification of moderation and restraint. Krishna was "a thief, a liar, a cheat, a killer." But he also symbolised the beauty of love and self-abnegation. Shiva on the other hand is the symbol of infinity. In modern times, Jawaharlal typified the tradition of Vashistha while Gandhi was in the tradition of Rama. Although these over-simplified analyses may not meet with the demands of accurate indological scholarship, it cannot be denied that they stick to the reader's mind because of their pungency.

Among his other associates Marxist influence had been the strongest on Narendra Deva and Jaya Prakash Narayan whereas Lohia was more influenced by the Gandhian ideology.

Ram Manohar Lohia had done vigorous thinking. He was not a mere socialist but has also in mind the development of individual personality through action and contemplation. He wanted the total expression of the entire being and nature of man and not the lop-sided maximization of any specific limited phase of his personality.) Today the wishes of Lohia are quite pertinent in modifying the present political scenario of the nation in order to justify the true spirit of government and curb the menace of poverty.

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