

Locating Lohia in Feminist Theory

JAYA SHRIVASTAVA

The general populace, academics, and feminists in India have been largely oblivious to Ram Manohar Lohia's liberating thoughts on Indian women. This article points out that their relevance has not diminished with the passage of time as the patriarchal domination of Indian women, enmeshed in a pernicious caste system riddled with class divisions, continues. Summarising Lohia's radical and insightful position on the subjugation of Indian women and the ways he suggests for their emancipation, this article makes an attempt to locate his thoughts in the variegated landscape of feminist theory.

Ram Manohar Lohia is a noted figure whose thoughts and ideas continue to have a powerful influence on sociopolitical life in India. Though widely known as a socialist, Krishna (1968: 1113) characterises him as "a romantic who casts himself in the role of a non-violent revolutionary". The importance of his thought emerges in the continued existence and influence of sociopolitical organisations, at least in some regions, claiming allegiance to his vision of reconstructing India on socialist lines. But his radical and insightful thoughts on the status of Indian women and the path he envisioned for their emancipation are not all that well known in the country's sociopolitical space. Indian academia has not paid much attention to his thoughts in general and those on the Indian women in particular, which are highly significant given the patriarchal domination of Indian women enmeshed in a pernicious caste system riddled with class divisions. The political formations claiming allegiance to his vision do not seem to reflect much of his radical and liberating thought in their practices. Feminist discourse has at large remained oblivious to Lohia's rich, insightful, and radical thoughts on the patriarchal domination of Indian women, which he felt was inextricably entangled with the caste system.

Keeping this in view, this article provides a synoptic view of Lohia's thoughts on the status of Indian women and the way to their emancipation. An attempt is made to locate his thoughts on Indian women on the broad canvas of feminist theory. Accordingly, the article first briefly touches on the major strands of feminist theory and then discusses Lohia's thoughts on Indian women and the path desired for their complete liberation from patriarchal domination of all sorts. In this connection, it is noted why he rejected both the liberal

modernist Nehruvian method and the Marxist approach, and advocated a historically and culturally rooted socialist path for the emancipation of Indian women. The article closes with some concluding remarks.

It may be noted here that writings on Lohia are meagre. His main writings and speeches have been published but are not easily available. Given this limitation, this article is largely based on his works such as *The Caste System*, *Wheel of History*, and *Saptkranti* (Seven Revolutions), and P S Satoskar's *Lohia on Hinduism*.

Feminist Theoretical Strands

There are different strands in feminist theory with their respective sets of assumptions about men and women, the causality of male domination over women, and the strategies and measures for women's emancipation. Liberal feminists view the inequality in opportunities between men and women as the main reason for gender inequality in society. They advocate a gradual introduction of measures, including welfarist preferential policies, for promoting equality between men and women in different domains, such as education, employment, voting rights, and so on. In contrast, radical feminists essentialise and also glorify the differences between men and women, considering the two biologically and emotionally different. They hold that patriarchy, which has different scales of values for men and women, and its social hierarchies are responsible for male domination of women. They are concerned with women's rights rather than gender equality. They reject the liberal premise and commitment to sameness between men and women. For them, the abolition of institutions representing patriarchy and women's complete autonomy from men is essential for ending male domination.

Socialist feminist theory (also called the dual system theory) considers two systems, capitalism and patriarchy, responsible for the subjugation of women and advocates abolishing them through peaceful means for achieving women's emancipation. But Marxist feminists hold that the capitalist

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system based on private property and profit maximisation is the main cause of women's subordination, marginalisation, and domination. Capitalism exploits the patriarchal structure, uses women as a source of cheap labour, and thus sustains and reinforces itself. It is argued that oppression of women is inextricably linked to the capitalist order as women are excluded from the public sphere and remain unpaid workers in the domestic sphere. Class-divided capitalist society perpetuates gender-based discriminations and inequalities. It is affirmed that women's emancipation will be possible only through a class struggle, which may involve violence, geared towards establishing a socialist/communist society. As a result of the struggle, patriarchal structures will be destroyed, along with the class-based society resting on the institution of private property. So, overthrowing of the existing inequalitarian capitalist system is considered essential for the establishment of a socialist/communist society where women will live, like men, an emancipated life.

Against this broad theoretical backdrop of the various frames of feminist theory, we now examine Lohia's thoughts on the condition of Indian women, the factors he found responsible for their domination by men in society, and the way to their emancipation from male domination.

Status of Indian Women

In his writings, Lohia delves into the structural, institutional, and cultural aspects of patriarchal domination of women, which have pervaded the socio-cultural, economic, and political life of the people in India. He recognises the prevalence of centuries-old patriarchal domination over women in the country. However, his perspective is not essentialist. He considers Indian women as a differentiated and heterogeneous category in social, economic, and cultural terms. We cannot, in his opinion, understand gender – that is, sex-based differential valuation, gender inequalities, and male domination – in isolation in the Indian context, but have to include the dimensions of caste, class, and such other social factors because they all intersect. Thus,

he adopts a perspective of intersectionality while reflecting on Indian women.

To begin with, Lohia notes that Indian women have not always been backward. He refers to the narratives of Gargi, Matireyee, Razia Sultana, Akka Mahadevi, Meera, and Rani Laxmibai, who in the past were examples of female excellence in the domains of knowledge, spiritual attainment, leadership, bravery, and creativity. Yet the status of women declined in course of time.

Lohia finds that all Indian women suffer from a set of common deprivations and exclusions. Structurally, Indian women suffer from deprivations in terms of their right to property, their lack of participation in decision-making, and various other discriminations in sociocultural terms. He notes how "her claim to a single standard with men in respect of marriage and property continues to be assailed" (Satoskar nd: 3). Societal and psychological differences and stereotyping of men and women are socially constructed. Women are commonly viewed as inferior to men. There exists inequality between the sexes, which is the root cause of all types of discrimination against women. Several social customs and taboos are discriminatory towards women, and cultural constraints are imposed on them through institutional mechanisms. These centuries-old customs reduce Indian women to a subordinate second sex.

The inseparability of caste and sex/gender in Lohia's conceptualisation is very important to women's issues in the Indian context. He affirms that the two segregations of caste and gender are primarily responsible for the decline of the spirit of India (1979: 1). He finds that Indian women suffer the most due to two structural formations – patriarchy or male domination, and the caste system. Indian women are doubly deprived, dominated, and marginalised as the caste system and patriarchy are closely interlinked. Norms of purity and pollution form the cultural basis of birth-based differential valuation of different caste groups and their hierarchy in the caste system, which also puts certain castes in the category of untouchables. Similarly women are seen as inferior to men by birth on the basis of their sex and are

even treated as untouchables during certain periods of their life, such as menstruation and after pregnancy. They are confined to the kitchen. They do not even have control over their bodies, and they do not have reproductive rights.

Lohia holds that the status of all Indian women has been bad as they are viewed as inferior to men and they have remained backward in social, economic, political, educational, and other attainments. But he does not consider Indian women as one homogeneous category. He emphasises the class factor because he finds that the condition of poorer/lower caste/class women, who form the large majority, is far worse in terms of material deprivations and the unavailability of even basic facilities. He specifically expresses his deep concern over the sufferings of women in villages. In an important piece on "Two Segregations of Caste and Sex", he states,

The problem of the majority of Indian women is the lack of water taps and latrines. The Indian woman is condemned to the drudgery of drawing water often muddy and from distant wells or ponds and carries it home every morning and evening. She must also save her modesty only by easing herself in the open fields either before sunrise or after sunset (1979: 59).

Further, he totally rejects the practice of arranged marriages, which affect all women in India. He sheds light on the flourishing marriage market in society and equates arranged marriage with the "cattle trade". He comments,

To arrange marriages on the sight of a photograph or in the nervous atmosphere of a cup of tea brought by a shrinking phantom is any day more ridiculous than the earlier marriages through the barber or the Brahmin. It is like buying a horse who is indeed brought before the buyer, but whose hoofs one may not touch nor closely examine the teeth (1979: 7).

He holds that if anything can be called a sin, the conditions related to an arranged marriage are sinful. Associated with arranged marriages is the practice of the bride's family giving a dowry to the groom's family, something he sharply condemns. Dowry causes suffering to even parents of moderate means. It demeans women in general. His pithy comment on the practice of dowry is, "A girl without a dowry is a person of no

consequence, like a cow without her calf" (1979: 6). He shares his experience. "Parents have told me with tear sodden eyes how their daughters are maltreated and sometimes put to death if there is difficulty in paying out the arranged dowry in full" (1979: 6).

The problem becomes more difficult and complicated if parents educate their daughters. The amount of dowry increases as parents obviously prefer to marry their educated daughter to an educated boy, who commands more money in the dowry market. So, keeping a girl uneducated/less educated, or keeping her backward, proves to be beneficial to parents. He states, "Just as there are agricultural situations in which a person earns more by leasing than by labouring, a less educated girl is superior to a better educated one, for her dowry is smaller" (1979: 6). He also opposes extravagant expenses at marriage ceremonies.

Another condition related to an arranged marriage is that the girl must be a virgin when she marries. A girl must remain celibate, irrespective of her age, protecting her virginity till her marriage is arranged. Or else her chances of being married are jeopardised. This is a highly oppressive norm, which applies to women, but not men, and it clearly reflects a discriminatory patriarchal double standard. In a way, it violates the principles of natural justice. Lohia observes, "Celibacy is generally a prison-house. Who has not met such imprisoned souls, whose virginity shackles them and who eagerly await a liberator?" (1979: 8).

Lohia well recognised that the problem of male domination over women is complex. He refrains from what he calls "the usual feminist passion of piling it on men" (1979: 8). He appreciates Shakuntala Srivastava for writing a series of articles on the position of Indian women, which held that "both men and women are guilty in varying measure" (1979: 5). He notes how women also become a party to sustaining gender-based discriminatory practices in India. It is evident that most Indian women follow or are made to follow and support patriarchal values, norms, and practices, such as arranged marriages and dowry. This happens because they are socialised that way

since childhood and are thus fixed in the structure of society, which is patriarchal. According to him, society is basically cruel towards women in India, and this turns some women into exceedingly cruel persons. He says, "It is annoying to see how married women behave and gossip about females, particularly if they are unmarried, who go about with different males. With such cruel minds, the segregation of man from women will not end" (1979: 7).

Further, in his schema of "seven revolutions", Lohia notes that gender inequality has so colonised the consciousness of women that most of them do not want equality, but are satisfied with ornaments and such things. This is like most poor people not demanding equality, but being satisfied with *bakhshis* (gifts) (Lohia nd: 17). Realising the complexity and significance of the gender conundrum, he makes equality between man and woman a very important constituent of the seven revolutions.

Another important complexity he points to is the attitude and behaviour of prosperous and sanskritised sudras (lower caste people) in the perpetuation of women's subordination. In "A Letter to a Sudra", he observes,

With a little prosperity, the Sudras are inclined to pick up the bad habits of the Dvijas. No sooner does a Sudra acquire a little wealth, than he tries to force his women behind the purdah. I have always maintained that the Sudra women, who work in the streets and the fields with uncovered faces, are far better than the Dvijas women, who keep themselves shut up in homes. The Sudra should give this matter serious thought. The case of Harijans is not so bad, but the backward castes who are not untouchables are gripped by such notions. The educated and well-to-do amongst the Sudras are often motivated by a sense of jealousy and the social atmosphere ... aggravates this feeling (1979: 19).

Rejection of Liberal Modernism and the Marxist Path

Lohia's position on the approach to emancipate Indian women differs from both the liberal modernist and the Marxist paths. He offers a thesis of the "equal irrelevance" of capitalism and communism "in respect of the creation of a new human civilisation" (1963: 486). His

rejection of the liberal modernist perspective on women is evident in his criticism of the approach and measures adopted by the then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru for uplifting the status of women. He calls Nehru a "modern Vashishtha" who neither understands nor bothers about the well-being of women belonging to the lower castes but cares only for upper caste women. In "Vashishthas and Valmikis", he observes,

His [Nehru's] concern is limited to the Sitas and Urmilas [upper-caste women]. Five thousand years have brought just one distinction. The Vashishtha of five thousand years ago ordained all possible restraints for Sita and wanted innocence to be proved each time by the ordeal of fire. The modern Vashishtha, however, wants to remove all the shackles that bind the Sitas, but so far as the Vasantis and Kushikas [lower-caste women] are concerned, their role continues as before to serve the desires and pleasures of Vashishtha. To them the doctrine of equality does not extend (1979: 59).

Lohia takes note of Nehru's liberal ideas and his behaviour towards women, but calls him a "fanatic Brahmin". In "Vashishthas and Valmikis", he says, "If one were to enter the root of this matter, symptoms of orthodoxy may be found" (1979: 58). Specifically, in the case of Nehru, he comments,

The liberal veneer is only superficial. The prime minister took some sort of a stand on the laws relating to marriage and property right of women. Apparently the stand was liberal and progressive. In reality however it was an expression of the Western tradition which is a few hundred years old now and is also called the tradition of modernity (1979: 58).

He adds, "This stand of the prime minister was in no way a big step in the direction of equality between man and woman" (1979: 58). The reason for this was,

These laws are not at all relevant for more than 80% of India's women. To the extent that the present social and economic system permits, they enjoy them even now. They have a meaning only for a few high caste women in Brahmin, Bania and Thakur homes. Again, the same group interests, the same hackneyed desire for modernisation. ... The act was good but incomplete and initiated by twice-born self-interest (1979: 58-59).

Lohia's approach also differs from the Marxist feminist position. In a speech

at the Backward Castes Federation Conference in Rae Bareilly in 1956, he said, "Socialism is a doctrine of equality". But he has serious apprehensions about it and cautions, "Unless we are careful, it may deteriorate into a doctrine of inequality" (1979: 26). His socialist thought differs from other socialists who are concerned with achieving only economic equality, which in their opinion will automatically yield social equality. In "A Letter to a Sudra", he says, "Many Socialists honestly but wrongly think that it is sufficient to strive for economic inequality and caste inequality will vanish of itself as a consequence" (1979: 20). Moreover, unlike Marxists who focus only on class, he holds both caste and class responsible for the oppression of the large mass of Indian people, including women. To end the oppressions, he does not think a class struggle alone is sufficient. He writes, "In a country cursed with the caste system, it is not possible to end feudal and capitalist inequalities through class struggle alone" (1979: 137).

Violence is considered inevitable in a proletarian revolution for establishing a socialist society, which will, it is believed, also be gender-just. Violence occurs because the ruling class does not give up privileges without a bitter class struggle that often turns violent. Lohia does emphasise the need for a struggle to reconstruct society, "Nothing new ever got born without a struggle" (1985: 85). But he is not in favour of a violent struggle. In his view, "Class struggle has been so foully distorted that error can be proved to lead to truth, murder to health, death of democracy to fullness of democracy" (1985: 73). The struggle "need not necessarily be violent and bloody ... The struggle must necessarily be civil and non-violent" (1985: 85). In place of violent struggle, he suggests civil disobedience as a "permanent attitude" and as the one and only weapon to "enable the individual to maintain his dignity in all circumstances" (1985: 86). He strongly holds that a socialist society can be and should be built through peaceful democratic means. His Socialist Party aimed at "destroying [both] caste and class through non-violent and peaceful

means of propaganda, organisation and struggle" (1979: 137).

Way to Women's Emancipation

Lohia suggests a distinct way to end existing gender-based inequality and to achieve equality between men and women in India, a path that has both long-term and short-term implications. In the long term, he stands for transforming India into a casteless, classless, and gender-just society. He makes man-woman equality the foremost goal in his scheme of "Seven Revolutions". And in his essay on Hinduism (Satoskar nd: 7), Lohia emphasises that caste must be "completely erased from the Hindu mind" and that a woman must be "treated as an equal being with man".

As a long-term strategy, he does not consider the liberal approach of affirmative preferential action enough for promoting gender equality. Moving beyond the liberal frame, he holds that a radical cultural and structural transformation is necessary for enhancing and equalising women's status with men in Indian society. He firmly holds that the liberal modernist approach of providing equal opportunities for men and women will not solve the problem of gender inequality. Special measures are needed to uplift the status of women. In *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, Lohia (1963) states, "Providing equal opportunity will not undo the problem of inequality between the sexes which has widened over centuries. The only way to bring the woman into equality with others is through conferment of preferential opportunity." He adds, "Women must be given equal rights with men. Really speaking they must even get more if equality is to be obtained" (1979: 58).

Commenting on the Indian scenario, he notes that the caste system has a 5,000-year history of selecting abilities. As a result, "Certain castes have become especially gifted", such as the Saraswat Brahmin in intellectual pursuits and the Marwari Bania in industry and finance. So, he considers it absurd to talk about competing with these castes unless others are given preferential opportunities and privileges. He affirms, "The narrowing selection of abilities must now

be broadened over the whole, and that can only be done if for two or three of four decades backward castes and groups are given preferential opportunities" (1979: 127). Further, at the Third National Conference of the Socialist Party (1959), it was declared, "Until the system of caste is totally destroyed, the reconstruction of India should have, instead of ability, preferential opportunity as its basis" (1979: 135). Lohia supports preferential treatment for all the marginalised. He clubs women with all other marginalised castes and groups, and suggests "Sudras, Harijans and Muslims and women must be placed in high positions even though they may not be fully deserving" (1963).

According to Kumar (2010: 67), Lohia identifies four areas in the lives of Indian women that needed immediate attention to "smash the abominable segregations of caste and sex". These include (a) slavery of the kitchen, and the lack of drinking water and toilets; (b) the hypocrisy involved in sex and marriage, including dowry, birth control, and motherhood; (c) the need for greater equality between men and women in education and property rights; and (d) preferential opportunities in the field of leadership, in politics, the armed forces, trade, and government jobs. He considers women's slavery to the kitchen an abomination.

Lohia advocates radical cultural changes to promote gender equality. The system of arranged marriages and dowry has to be rejected. He states, "The giving and taking of dowry must, of course, be penalised, but a change has to take place in the mind and its values" (1979: 7). He adds, "It is no responsibility of a parent to marry his or her daughter; the responsibility ends at providing a good education and good health" (1979: 7). He suggests a halt to extravagant shows at marriage ceremonies, and stands for full freedom for both boys and girls in choosing their life partners, which requires a normative shift. He states, "If a girl knocks around and elopes and mischances into illegitimacy, that is all part of the bargain to achieve normal relationships between man and woman and no stain at all" (1979: 7).

Moreover, the cultural norm requiring girls to protect virginity and remain

celibate till marriage has to be discarded. He says, "It is time that young men and women revolted against such puerilities," and opines, "They should ever remember that there are only two unpardonable crimes in the code of sexual conduct, rape and the telling of lies or breach of promise. There is also a third offence of causing pain or hurt to another, which they should avoid as far as possible" (1979: 8). Frontally opposing the mindset of blaming the victim in cases of rape, he points out that ancient Indian literature underlines the inherent purity of women. He affirms, "Rape under coercion which could not be fought successfully brings the woman no harm nor dirt, for ... she renews herself every month" (Satoskar nd: 7).

For overcoming caste and gender-based discrimination, he suggests inter-caste marriages and providing government jobs to such couples. He favours the right of women to divorce and remarry and their freedom to choose their life partners. Going beyond the institution of marriage, he supports unmarried motherhood and making birth control facilities available to all men and women irrespective of their marital status (cited in Kumar 2010: 67). So, he affirms the free expression of female sexuality and rejects the notion of one-sided chastity – a double standard entrenched in Indian culture.

Lohia stresses ending endogamy, which is an integral feature of the caste system. The caste system, including endogamy, prevents men and women from freely interacting across caste boundaries in an intimate manner. To enhance the freedom of both men and women, Lohia emphasises the need to break down caste barriers in personal relations between men and women belonging to different castes. In "A Letter to a Sudra", he remarks,

I have often felt that, unlike the Dvija women, the Sudra women have an immense aptitude and love for a free atmosphere and innocent pleasure. If the barriers of caste are broken or even loosened, many Dvija young men would be attracted to Sudra women, and bring happiness to themselves and the country. In a like manner, Sudra boys would also be able freely to enter the world of Dvija women. It is now essential that the Dvijas

and the Sudras must not only understand to define caste as comprising of those capable of producing children of one another, but grasp the definition instinctively. Sudras and Dvijas are capable of producing children of one another (1979: 20).

But Lohia did not expect the *dvija* (upper castes) would be in favour of abolishing caste, as is evident from tradition. In "Vashishthas and Valmiki's", he says, "The Vashishtha Dvijas ... will never like it [abolition of the caste system]. From mother-killer Parasuram to nation-killer Nehru stretches the Vashishtha tradition of fanatical justice" (1979: 56). Also, he did not believe upper caste men would sincerely work for the emancipation of lower caste women. The large majority of women suffer from not having basic amenities. However, he observes, "The modern Vashishtha probably does not know all this hell of water and lavatory. If he does he gives it no thought. Even if he thinks, he does so with the rings of his tobacco smoke" (1979: 59). Upper caste men are concerned with raising the status of upper caste women. As already mentioned, Lohia says that as far as lower caste women are concerned, their role continues as before to serve the desires and pleasures of the upper castes. Hence, the liberal doctrine of equality of opportunity does not help them. He affirms that it is only lower caste people who will uplift lower caste women. "A Valmiki would have thought of the other 80% women [lower-caste women] also. He would have applied himself to find a way to uplift them from their drudgery and privations" (1979: 59). Thus, Lohia believes in a strategy of self-empowerment for the lower castes, not sponsored empowerment in which the lower castes depend on the upper castes for uplifting the status of their women.

Concluding Observations

Lohia stands apart from all the feminist streams of thought in diagnosing the status of Indian women and in his vision for their emancipation. He rejects the liberal modernist approach, which is concerned with providing equal opportunity to both men and women and introducing legal, educational, and other

reforms to gradually reduce discrimination and restrictions against women. He holds that the liberal approach is not sufficient to emancipate women and promote gender equality in India, though it can gradually improve their status in society. He appreciates Nehru for his liberal policy approach towards Indian women, but calls him a "fanatic Brahmin" who wears a "superficial liberal façade" while symptoms of orthodoxy still prevail in Indian society.

Lohia also differs from radical feminist thinking, which treats the two sexes as antithetical to each other, rejects patriarchy, and suggests dissociation of women from men for their liberation while leaving the socio-economic structures of dominance intact. He is at variance with Marxist feminism in which the Indian reality of caste does not matter much and a focused struggle against patriarchy remains marginal. He also recognises a class struggle could take violent forms, breeding another kind of discrimination and domination in society.

It is not easy to fully equate Lohia's thoughts on Indian women with any particular strand of feminist theory and philosophy. Bondurant (1964: 324) describes him as an "irrepressible Indian socialist", but his thoughts on Indian women are not akin to socialist feminism. Lohia's larger vision is to establish an egalitarian socialist society that ensures full gender justice and eradicates gender blindness. His vision of socialism means not only a classless but also a casteless and gender-just society, implying the complete abolition of gender-based inequalities and discriminations. In Lohia's thought, there is a clear recognition and affirmation of the identity, autonomy, and dignity

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of women, and the need for their emancipation in terms of expression of free will and the fulfilment of all their needs and desires – social, physical, psychological, and emotional. In this sense, Lohia's thoughts signify anti-feudalism, anti-capitalism, and anti-patriarchy. On Indian women, he is holistic and intersectional, with a solid understanding of the Indian social setting, especially of the caste system and its nexus with patriarchy, in addition to the class factor. His thought transcends all fixed strands of feminist theory, but would certainly enrich a feminist understanding of the Indian setting.

We can say that Lohia is “a socialist feminist of the Indian variety” because he emphasises ending not only capitalism and patriarchy, but also the pernicious caste system for ensuring full gender justice. Socialism in general is about effecting a speedy reconstruction of society along egalitarian lines. Likewise, Lohia's vision of (Indian) socialism is not about small gradualist reformist changes, but about a complete transformation of Indian society – from a feudal-capitalist gender-unjust social order to a fully

egalitarian and gender-just social order. He is in favour of radical societal reconstruction – both structural and cultural – by virtue of which women will become equal to men in all respects.

In sum, it can be said that Lohia is grounded in Indian social reality in diagnosing the multifarious problems of Indian women and in his vision and strategy for their emancipation. He stands for full freedom for women. He advocates the need for putting an end to the moral/ethical double standards to do with men and women, and thus putting every individual morally and socially at peace with herself or himself and with society. He is far ahead of his time in his thoughts on Indian women. It is observed that the status of a section of women in India has improved after Independence as a result of the liberal modernist approach to uplift their status in a gradualist/reformist manner. But most women still remain oppressed, dominated, poor, and backward in the country. To respond to this, there is an urgent need for Indian feminist discourse to turn towards Lohia's vision for emancipation

of Indian women, which will free them from the bondage of patriarchy, caste, and class. This is a huge challenge not only for feminists and Lohiaite socialists, but also for all others who stand for realising liberty, equality, and fraternity in India not merely in a legal/formal sense, but in substantive terms in everyday life. The question is whether we are ready to take the plunge to reconstruct Indian society.

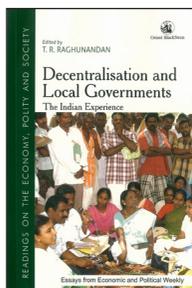
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Decentralisation and Local Governments

Edited by

T R RAGHUNANDAN



The idea of devolving power to local governments was part of the larger political debate during the Indian national movement. With strong advocates for it, like Gandhi, it resulted in constitutional changes and policy decisions in the decades following Independence, to make governance more accountable to and accessible for the common man.

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Pp xii + 432

ISBN 978-81-250-4883-1

2012

Rs 695

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