

The Technology Question in Lohia

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The creation of a mass-produced, mass-consumption lifestyle, which defines “economic development”, has always implied the loot, displacement, exploitation and murder of a periphery for the development of the centre. The intense social conflict produced by this resource-hungry, capital-intensive mode of development is visible in the militarisation of Bastar. But very few political thinkers have made these costs the centrepiece of their critique of capitalism. Rammanohar Lohia, like Mahatma Gandhi, was one who did so. Lohia’s understanding of the centre-periphery relationship in the capitalist world system led him to struggle with the question of appropriate technology, one that accorded priority to equality over productivity, and encouraged decentralised governance and autonomous, connected villages.

... the ghosts of hundreds of millions of colonial toilers are invisibly moving the machines in imperial factories.

– Rammanohar Lohia

In December 2009 I had the chance to visit Dantewada in the Bastar region of the state of Chhattisgarh. If Gujarat was the laboratory where an experiment in a Hindu *rashtra* was attempted by the Narendra Modi government in 2002, Bastar is the laboratory where an experiment in primitive accumulation is being conducted by the Indian state. Karl Marx defined primitive accumulation as that “idyllic moment of the rosy dawn” of industrial capitalism when the working population is forcibly dispossessed of the means of production and capital is concentrated in a few hands (Marx 1992). The creation of a mass-production, mass-consumption lifestyle, which all but defines “economic development”, has always implied the loot, displacement, exploitation and murder of a periphery for the development of the centre. The intense social conflict produced by this resource-hungry, capital-intensive mode of development is visible in the militarisation of Bastar. But very few political thinkers have made these costs the centrepiece of their critique of capitalism. Rammanohar Lohia, like Mahatma Gandhi, was one who did so. Lohia cautioned us in no uncertain terms.

In India, any attempt whether under communism or socialism or capitalism to achieve the modern civilisation, which the world has known for the past 300 years, must result in barren cruelty, *cruelty which knows no success* (Lohia 1963: 109, emphasis added).

On the one hand, Lohia was a Marxist who was against private property and believed in the necessity of a revolutionary change in the social relations of production. On the other hand, he was a Gandhian who believed in the necessity of fundamentally challenging the direction of development of the forces of production under capitalism. The forces of production had to be challenged because they were a product of the imperial-colonial division of labour. In this essay, I attempt to show how Lohia’s understanding of the centre-periphery relationship in the capitalist world-system led him to struggle with the question of appropriate technology. In doing so, I draw extensively on a long, though unfinished, essay that Lohia wrote in the period 1942-44, called “Economics after Marx”.¹

Neither Pro/Anti-Marx Nor Pro/Anti-Gandhi

Although the essay uses Marxist language and categories, it is clear that by 1942 Lohia had deeply imbibed the influence of Gandhi. The long, almost book-length, essay can be regarded as an early, if not the very first, attempt to bring together the two greatest critics of bourgeois civilisation into a productive dialogue with one another, by a person clearly steeped in both critical traditions.

I thank Yogendra Yadav and Sunil Sahasrabudhey for comments and suggestions. The responsibility for errors is of course mine.

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Lohia's theory of the relationship between imperialism and capitalism and the resulting implications for economic development outlined in "Economics after Marx" as well as later writings (such as "Gandhism and Socialism") deserve wider attention than they have received. Writing much before dependency theory and world-systems theory were born in the west, Lohia anticipated their essential insights.² While he was critical of Marx and later Marxists for analysing western European capitalism in isolation and according a secondary place to imperialism, Lohia was also clearly indebted to the Marxian tradition for concepts such as socially necessary labour, surplus value, and exploitation as well as for the radical critique of private property and for the emphasis on inequality rather than poverty (the latter being a bourgeois concern). At the same time, Gandhi's conviction that industrialism itself was an evil and that an industrial civilisation was not possible without violence and imperialism was deeply absorbed by Lohia. If at this point one is tempted to ask whether this makes Lohia a Marxist or a Gandhian, it is worth pointing out that he himself did not consider such labels helpful. Instead he insisted that he was a student of society and history, not bound by any preconceived "ism".

No man's thought should be made the centre of a political action; it should help but not control ... I believe it is silly to be a Gandhian or a Marxist and it is equally so to be anti-Gandhian or anti-Marxist (Lohia 1963: 1).

This critical and free-thinking attitude enabled Lohia to transcend Marxism's Eurocentrism while retaining its uncompromising critique of class and exploitation, and simultaneously remain close to Gandhi's critique of modern civilisation. Though his writing remains vulnerable to the charge of lack of depth, and many academic Marxists may find it lacking in rigour, his thought is fresh and breaks many moulds. Writing in the 1940s and 1950s in the shadow of both the international communist movement and the Gandhian independence movement, Lohia was anxious to carve out an ideological and political space for a type of Gandhi-inspired socialism that distinguished itself from communism (or Marxian socialism) in being less Eurocentric and more grounded in the historical reality of the colonies and in being non-violent, though militant. I have argued elsewhere that several of India's people's movements that rose to prominence in the 1990s, such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan and other smaller movements that came together under the National Alliance of People's Movements, show an affinity with Lohia's reinterpretation of Gandhi and Marx (Basole 2009).

Capitalism Needs Its Colonies

It is well understood in the Marxian tradition that a colony historically performed several important functions – it provided cheap resources (*jal*, jungle, *zamin* or water, forests and land), it provided an outlet for investment of capital (Lenin's definition of imperialism, see Lenin 1917/1963) and it provided a market for mass-produced goods. Further, imperial labour received a cut of the colonial surplus, allowing it a higher material standard of living. This last point shows us that there is a contradiction between imperial and colonial labour. Lohia made this the starting point of his analysis. At the outset, in "Economics after Marx" Lohia pointed out that Marx begins his analysis of capitalism with the

contradiction between use-value and value of labour power and the resulting production of surplus value. Lohia argued that it is a mistake to lump together imperial and colonial labour. Doing so hid the contradiction between the two. Making this distinction allows us to see that the vast difference in the socially necessary requirements (wages) of imperial and colonial labour is made possible by the super-exploitation of colonial labour. Lohia advanced the proposition that the differing socially necessary requirements of labour prevailing in these two settings were a result of politics and history, not geography or productivity of labour. Wages of colonial labour fell far below its productivity than the wages of imperial labour, making possible the greater extraction of surplus value. And finally, this super-exploitation was the basis for the development of capital-intensive technology. What appeared then as a difference of productivity was a result of accumulated labour of the periphery.

In the current produce of labour in west European factories appears the saved labour of many generations of colonials. Economists, including communists, are wrong in crediting this entire produce to imperial labour and in using pompous phrases about the higher productivity of labour in Europe as compared to Asia or Africa. Labour, on the whole, uses the same muscle power and skill everywhere, and what appears as the higher produce of imperial labour is directly due to the many generations of imperial-colonial division of labour in the world. One might almost say that *the ghosts of hundreds of millions of colonial toilers are invisibly moving the machines in imperial factories* (Lohia 1963: 24, emphasis added).

Lohia as well as more recent writers in the Lohiate tradition, who have spoken of India's "internal colonies", have argued that Europe's industrial development was only made possible by the availability of colonies and that heavy capitalisation in the manner of Europe was not possible without imperial exploitation. Taking the example of the railways, Lohia made the point rhetorically as follows.

...The problem is not whether railway development was a boon to India; the fact is that without British-ruled Indian railways the British railroad industry could hardly have gone beyond an infantile stage. Britain did not give railways to India; India gave Britain her railways and the engineering industry (Lohia 1963: 11).

A corollary of this view is that the non-availability of overseas colonies for late industrialisers such as India entails a process of internal colonisation. While most Marxists and other critics of capitalism have acknowledged the importance of colonies to the development of industry in the west, Lohia was an early and strident voice that made the centre-periphery conflict a crucial element of his story, on a par with class conflict with the centre or within the periphery.³

Lohia countered the criticism that colonies though important were not inevitable for the development of industrial capitalism in Europe by producing a historical argument. Imperialism was far from being the latest or highest stage of capitalism. What we see historically is a co-emergence of imperialism and capitalism from the very beginning. According to Lohia, capitalism was always and already a global system, in which different parts of the world were articulated in a definite relationship with each other. Since the asymmetric, imperial relationship between the colony and metropole was a defining feature of capitalism, the

dynamic of this economic system could not be understood by treating western Europe in isolation. It became a moot point whether this relationship was “truly necessary” for the development of capitalism.⁴

What are the implications of this view? If the development of capitalism, in particular of heavy industry-based, mass-consumption societies in western Europe and its offshoots (North America, Australia), which enabled them to conquer not only lands but also minds and hearts, was made possible by exploitation of colonial resources and colonial labour, this pattern of development cannot be reproduced in the erstwhile colonies except at an immense social cost. The bloody episodes in the recent history of India in Nandigram, Kalinganagar, Lalgarh, Niyamgiri, Bastar and many other places are evidence of this.

Technology and the Relations of Production

Today, in 2010, it has become commonplace for left radical thought to recognise the social and ecological externalities created by certain types of technology and there is increasing discomfort with the earlier language of “the development of the productive forces”. Eco-Marxist texts also abound (see, for example, Benton 1996; Foster 2000). But this was not so in the 1940s. Despite a rich socialist tradition of critical thinking on the question of technology, with Marx himself engaging the question deeply in the first volume of *Capital*, Marxists initially failed in producing an original political programme that challenged the direction of development of the forces of production under capitalism and assumed that the specific forms of technology and industry developed under capitalism could simply be inherited by the new socialist societies.

Lohia displayed originality in producing a critique of large-scale (capital-intensive) technology, more or less from within the Marxian tradition by producing a justification for small-scale technology based on his theory of imperial exploitation discussed above. Instead of uncritically celebrating the vast improvements in productivity achieved under capitalism, Lohia challenges us to think fundamentally about the type of economic development that is possible in the colonies, given the historical experience of colonialism. Even in his time it was clear to Lohia, as it was to Gandhi, that the tendency to view Europe as the leading edge of technical innovation, which was becoming widespread even in radical circles, would lead to unparalleled violence in this land. Lohia cautioned against this, not out of a nativism or cultural chauvanism, but for the reasons already outlined. Because, like Gandhi, Lohia viewed capitalist development from the point of view of those who paid the price of technical progress and got precious little in return for it (that is, the colonial toilers). In contradistinction to the Marxist position, rather than arguing that capitalism was once progressive but had now become reactionary, Lohia came to a remarkable conclusion.

... Capitalism brought great progress to the European part of mankind in the past but is on the point of ceasing to do so today. *To the rest of mankind, it never brought any progress* (Lohia 1963: 106, emphasis added).

This uncompromising stand is anti-modernist and reminiscent of Gandhi.⁵ It follows directly from Lohia’s analysis of capitalism

as an imperial world-system that is able to deliver on its promises to a few only by destroying the lives of many. However, modernists of a liberal as well as a Marxist persuasion find this difficult to accept since it calls into question the very possibility that industrial capitalism can take shape in the colonies. And if it cannot, what are the prospects then for socialism, which is supposed to build on the technical foundations provided by capitalism? Thus while there may be broad agreement among socialists of many types on the desirability of achieving equality in society, there is great resistance to the idea that industrialism and not capitalism may be the impediment to reaching that goal.⁶ Why is this so? Taking a leaf out of Lohia, one can advance the proposition that dazzled by the spectacle of modern science and technology and seduced by promises of plenty, Marxists have given short shrift to two of Marx’s fundamental insights – that history matters and that the forces of production are in a dialectical relationship with (that is, are both a cause and an effect of) the social relations of production.

Let us briefly take each in turn. As mentioned before, Lohia argued that the imperial history of capitalism resulted in imperial technology, which in turn provided the material equipment for continued imperial control. This is in evidence today when we observe the relationship of India’s urban elite and their state with the rest of the population. The belief that the evils of industrialism will disappear under socialism can be sustained only by not truly confronting the significance of the peculiar historical conditions under which industrialism took shape in Europe and the us for the development of technology today.

Coming to the second proposition, the original theoretician of the dialectical relationship between technology (“the machine”) and the social relations of production in the Marxian tradition is of course Marx himself.⁷ Harry Braverman’s influential work on technology and the labour process (1974) similarly takes a critical look at how the development of the forces of production under capitalism destroys the artisan and produces the worker, completing the separation between mental and manual work, which began in ancient times. Despite this, and despite many actual political struggles on the shop-floor where workers resisted the rule of the machine, the seduction of productivity often proved too powerful. Privileging productivity over equality resulted in cases such as the enthusiastic adoption of Taylorist production techniques, under the name of Stakhanovism, in early post-revolution Russia. That such anti-worker techniques were adopted in a workers’ state shows where productivity-fetishism can lead.

The Small-Unit Machine

To return to Lohia, his political programme now emerges from the foregoing analysis. Marxism formulated the task facing the proletariat as one of replacing capitalist relations of production with socialist ones, whereas for Lohia

a genuine socialism would have to think in terms of destroying *both the capitalist relations of production and the capitalist forces of production*, or at least vastly remodelling them (Lohia 1963: 110, emphasis added).

Thus the question of technology is not reducible to the question of production relations; both production relations and production

forces must be tackled separately. However questioning the “march of technical progress” immediately brings forth allegations of primitivism or technophobia. Lohia was aware that his position could be easily reduced in the way Gandhi’s was into a demand for a return to a simple life. So he hastened to add,

This problem of technics is not to be confused with the demand to return to a simple life with few wants ... It is as little to be taken for a denial of the machine or of mechanical and electrical power; it is not an advocacy of handicrafts ...

Instead,

... The basic problem is not to cut down the use of mechanical or electrical power but to make it available for production in the same small units in the manner it is today available for consumption in prosperous economies as light, ventilation, or heating... (Lohia 1963: 50).

Here was an attempt to create a space where questioning technology was not automatically equated with a desire for handicrafts. Rather, the demand was the opposite – not a renunciation of electrical power but a demand for its equal distribution (a radical demand even today, see below) such that the modern formula equating towns with industry and villages with agriculture could be challenged and the village reindustrialised.⁸ *Gramudiyog* or village industry then acquired a new meaning. It was not a synonym for artificially preserved handicraft traditions or production for niche markets. Rather it meant small-scale, decentralised, labour-intensive technology, which reduced and eventually eliminated the disparity in per capita availability of capital. The guiding value was not productivity but equality.

Lohia’s views on technology also followed from his views on poverty and inequality. If we take poverty or lack of resources to be the major problem, we are led to support technology that increases productivity. If instead we take inequality to be the central issue, as Lohia did, then increases in productivity take a back seat and the emphasis is transferred to technology that can be developed without immiseration and can be made available to all for use.⁹ A Marxist may counter that socialising the means of production achieves the goal of equality even with large-scale or capital-intensive technology. However Lohia cautioned that the development of such technology carried social and ecological costs whose externalisation could only be achieved in a class-ridden society. Though its continued use might result in a nominally equal distribution of property, it would also lead to a concentration of power in the hands of the experts.

Power and wealth can be so wholly unrelated that an economy with an enormously maldistributed power can dole out a comparatively well-distributed wealth. The heavy mechanisation of the Russian economy with its concentrated production is beyond the grasp of the common man in Russia. He has to depend on an elite for the management of this intricate mechanism... (Lohia 1963: 86).

Thus three principal concerns drove Lohia’s idea of the small-unit machine. One, that large-scale development of heavy industry entailed colonial exploitation; two, that a high capital/labour ratio implied high unemployment in a populous land like India; and three, that large-scale brought with it centralisation of command and a distancing between those who work and those who manage. The latter reinforced the division between knowledge work and manual work, which is another source of inequality in society.

I note in passing that the small-unit machine is one element of the economy of the autonomous village, a reinterpretation of the Gandhian village, which has widely been understood as a “self-sufficient” community. Lohia distinguished autonomy from self-sufficiency.

I have deliberately used the word “autonomous” rather than “independent”. The concept of self-sufficiency had better be eliminated.

The village must stay in close relationship with numerous other villages and also the world at large (Lohia 1963: 131-32).

The idea of the “self-sufficient village” has created much confusion by conjuring up images of isolated, inward-looking societies. On the other hand, the creation of autonomous, well-connected villages, which are centres of industrial activity and receive electricity on a par with the cities, is a viable political demand for our times. The Bharatiya Kisan Union in eastern Uttar Pradesh has recently initiated attempts to build a movement with the slogan “*Gaon aur sheher ki beech bijli kaa barabar kaa batwara ho*” (Let electricity be equally distributed between the town and the village).

However, Lohia also cautioned that the small-unit machine was not simply a synonym for decentralised or workshop-based production. Anticipating later developments in dispersed “sweatshop” production regimes, particularly pronounced in the era of globalisation, he clarified that production via the small-unit machine was not to be taken as

... an advocacy of simple spatial decentralisation, now becoming quite a fashionable idea, in which all that is done is to break up prevailing technics into their several processes and to specialise these in different factories over different areas.

Rather,

[Electric] power would be a kind of maid-of-all-work, and there would be corresponding small-unit machines to process, not one bit of an article, but to produce the whole article (Lohia 1963: 49-50).

Thus decentralised production should not imply a capital-imposed division of labour wherein artisans in small workshops produce a small piece of the final commodity while the entire supply chain is managed and controlled by capitalists from the outside.

But can everything be produced by small-unit machines? Are there areas where large-scale or capital-intensive technology is essential? What about the heavy industrial establishments required for manufacturing electricity or iron and steel and so on. As we might expect, Lohia does not offer hard and fast answers to such questions. Decentralised production is an ideal to strive for and no general solution can be offered. Only specific responses to specific challenges can exist. The requirement is that the goal of equality continues to guide every decision. This requires those who are educated in the universities to reorient themselves. Kishen Pattanayak has elaborated on this theme.

For Gandhi and for Lohia, the mode of industrialisation is a central and fundamental factor in carrying out civilisational change and this means making new inventions. Unfortunately, the culture of invention/research has changed completely. Now the invention of useful machines has become the provenance of the state or of big business. If those scientists who are not associated with industrial or state institutions make common cause with the visionaries and revolutionaries who are engaged in the task of civilisational change, only then can a

new science be created and only then can people-centred technology be invented. Otherwise only machines that fuel a consumerist culture will continue to be invented (Pattnayak 2000: 94, translated from Hindi).

When we no longer view society from the modernist perspective that sees only the development of a certain kind of technology as progress, we may be surprised at the wealth of knowledge that exists around us. For example, the Agaria tribes of Chhattisgarh have continued to produce high-quality steel in small clay furnaces at ambient temperatures. Despite an official ban on this production and despite great poverty, they still possess this knowledge (Sahasrabudhey 2001). It is not necessary to claim that these furnaces can supply the steel needs of the country. But it is necessary to reflect on what this example means to our discussion.

The Context for Today

The Soviet Union no longer informs our context, as it did Lohia's. Today we are said to be living in a "knowledge society". So it is worth pointing out that Lohia's position on technology can be reinterpreted in knowledge terms and it thus becomes politically relevant for our times. The "small-unit machine" and the call for economic decentralisation is also an appeal for reliance on people's knowledge instead of the knowledge of experts in the process of economic development.

In Lohia's time, there was still optimism in the air that development economics and modernisation theory could be used to transform colonised lands into industrial utopias in a matter of decades. However, this optimism (which neither Lohia nor Gandhi shared) dissipated in the face of the increasing and increasingly obvious political, social and ecological costs of development. Much writing and political activism has by now focused on the anti-democratic nature as well as the scientism and Eurocentrism of early development thinking.¹⁰ As "sustainable development" became the dominant paradigm and the ecological costs of modern technology became apparent, the search for alternatives drew attention to the fact that modern scientific knowledge is not the only type of knowledge relevant to the development process. Through the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s, academic as well as policymaking literature emerged centred on the idea that communities all over the world have a vast store of knowledge, variously called "traditional" or "indigenous" or "local" knowledge, that can be used in fostering their own development.¹¹

Lohia's small-unit machine, like Gandhi's "village industry" before it, symbolises not only dispersed production but also a dispersed knowledge-base (Basole 2010, forthcoming). However, as

should be clear from the discussion above, for Lohia, people's knowledge is not the same as "traditional knowledge". It means knowledge that is widely distributed in society rather than being locked up in universities. Knowledge found with the people changes continually to adapt to their changing circumstances, and it borrows from all available knowledge traditions. This reinterpretation is also consistent with Lohia's preference for decentralised governance and autonomous, connected villages.

However, despite his radical and novel position on technology, Lohia stopped short of completely challenging the cult of the "independent expert" in modern science. Speaking of the necessity to direct scientific research along the lines of the small machine, he noted,

Some persons may say at this stage: look at this politician trying to tell inventors, scientists, engineers and technicians what to do. I quite agree that no politician has the right or should ever have the right to tell a fundamental scientist about the line of his research (Lohia 1963: 108).

While Lohia's desire to grant independence to the scientist is of course commendable, it is equally true that scientists do not invent in a social vacuum. The social and political ideals of a time profoundly influence the atmosphere in which innovation takes place. Thus it is not really a question of "politicians telling scientists what to do", but rather of political activists working alongside experts of various trades to realise social ideals. Witness the fact that Gandhi, despite his more extreme stand on science, succeeded to a large extent in inspiring professionals of all kinds (including scientists) to work towards the ideal of an equal society. Can we, drawing upon both Gandhi and Lohia, make the claim that people's knowledge alone carries the potential of developing the type of technology that creates wealth and equality instead of creating poverty and inequality?

Further, can we reinterpret the people's movements over issues of *jal*, *jungle* and *zamin* in the Narmada Valley, in the forests of Chhattisgarh and the coast of Kerala as movements for the dignity and respect of people's knowledge (Sangvai 2007)? I started with the militarisation of Bastar where the Government of India, acting in the interests of capital, has all but declared war on its people. This is only the most extreme case of a larger phenomenon. If we pursue this model of development, we cannot remain an exception to the loot, displacement and dispossession which historically accompanies it. A contemporary radical politics, which calls for a society based on equality, can benefit tremendously from Lohia's thought, provided it reinterprets his position of appropriate technology in terms of a people's knowledge-based society.

NOTES

1 Here is how Lohia described the essay's genesis in a parenthetical note at the beginning. "During the Open Rebellion of 1942-43 against British Rule, when Socialists were in prison or being hunted, and Communists waged their 'People's War' in companionship with the foreign masters, the doctrine of Marxism appalled me with its wide range of contradictory applications. To recover its truth and demolish its untruth became my desire. Of four aspects planned, economics, politics, history and philosophy, I was halfway through the economic when the police got me" (Lohia 1963: 1).

However it remained incomplete because by the time he got out of prison, he said, "this style of inquiry and expression had ceased to interest me".

2 Dependency theory, developed initially in the context of Latin America, placed great emphasis on the unequal and exploitative relationship between the developed/industrialised centre (or metropole), that is, western Europe and North America, and the underdeveloped periphery (or satellite), that is, Latin America, later extended to parts of Asia and Africa. The key insight found in Gunder-Frank (1966) is that the historical experience of Europe and North America cannot be understood without paying attention to their

peripheries. Nor can poverty and underdevelopment in the colonies be seen as resulting from a lack of integration into the world economy, rather it is a consequence of that integration. Both these propositions form a critical basis of Lohia's arguments. Lohia, like the dependency and world systems theorists, insisted on looking at capitalism as a world-system and not a western European phenomenon, though of course there are differences in emphasis between these theorists and Lohia.

3 One again the resonance with the later dependency theorists is clear. However, a further question arises here as to what extent Lohia was influenced

by Rosa Luxemburg. Certainly Luxemburg makes a very similar point in the *Accumulation of Capital*. "The enormous expansion of the English cotton industry was thus founded on consumption by non-capitalist strata and countries. In England herself, this flourishing cotton industry called forth large-scale development in the production of industrial machinery, and further in the metal and coal industries and so on" (Luxemburg 2005: 51).

A second key meeting point between Luxemburg and Lohia as well as later Lohiates (for example, see Sunil 2007) is the ongoing importance of primitive accumulation to the very existence of capitalism. Luxemburg points out that "For Marx these processes [of primitive accumulation] are incidental, illustrating merely the genesis of capital, its first appearance in the world ... Yet as we have seen, capitalism in its full maturity also depends in all respects on non-capitalist strata and social organisations existing side by side with it" (Luxemburg 2005: 59).

Judging by Lohia's familiarity with the German language as well as the writings of Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Lenin and Trotsky, not to mention those of bourgeois economists such as Hicks, Keynes and the marginalists, it seems inevitable that he was familiar with Luxemburg's arguments. However he does not mention her by name in "Economics after Marx".

- 4 The question of whether capitalism needs "an outside" to sustain itself or whether expanded reproduction (which requires the realisation of all produced surplus value) can occur in a society consisting purely of capitalists and workers is a long-standing controversial question in the Marxian tradition. A full treatment of this topic is outside the scope of this essay. Suffice to say that Rosa Luxemburg proposed that capitalism cannot survive without a non-capitalist outside (the dialectical form of this proposition is that capitalism in expanding into non-capitalist social formations gradually destroys the basis of its own existence). Several generations of Marxists have refuted this "underconsumptionist" claim and instead focused on the declining rate of profit, which they claim creates a crisis in capitalism even without an inability to realise surplus value. An early critic of Luxemburg was Bukharin (1972). See Luxemburg (2005) and references therein for a summary of this dispute. Luxemburg herself, after some theoretical considerations, concludes, much in the manner of Lohia, that "whatever the theoretical aspects, the accumulation of capital, as an historical process, depends in every respect upon non-capitalist social strata and forms of social organisation" (p 60, emphasis added).
- 5 I should point out that Lohia himself may not have wanted to be described as being either pro- or anti-modernity. And indeed it is not my intention to label him one way or another. As with any complex and nuanced thinker, the labels hide at least as much as they reveal.
- 6 It is possible to get quite lost in the endless philosophical debate on the meaning of "equality". For our present purposes, suffice to say that we have in mind legal, political and economic/material equality. While the first two have in principle been achieved, the absence of the last makes formal universal suffrage or equality before the law partial at best. Ushering in material equality remains the great challenge of socialist politics. Lohia himself placed great importance on this. He noted in "The Meaning of Equality": "Emotional kinship with one's fellow men is impossible unless it is rooted in material equality" (Lohia 1963: 227). All talk of equality as a general concept without a concrete meaning that accompanies it is either hypocrisy or lethargy of the mind ... The Socialist movement in India has for instance fixed that the proportion of lowest and highest incomes should not vary beyond the range of 1 to 10. Without such a fixed ratio, all talk of generalised

equality would either be hypocrisy or mental laziness (ibid: 230).

- 7 See Chapter 15 of *Capital*, Vol 1. Marx notes that "In handicrafts and manufacture, the workman makes use of a tool, in the factory, the machine makes use of him. There the movements of the instrument of labour proceed from him, here it is the movements of the machine that he must follow". Further, "Every kind of capitalist production ... has this in common, that it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the workman" (Vol 1: 548).
- 8 Yogendra Yadav has pointed out to me that Jaya Prakash Narayan's "Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity" also argues forcefully in favour of this idea.
- 9 On productivity and equality, Lohia offered the following guideline. "Conservatives...accuse Socialists of wanting to level down. Actually however, there must be both levelling up and levelling down in any programme for equality...All those who talk of one part of the programme without the other are either reactionary, if they talk alone of levelling up, or insane, if they restrict themselves to levelling down" (Lohia 1963: 231).
- 10 For example, see Banuri 1990a and b, Bhattacharya and Basole 2009, Brohman 1995, Escobar 1994, Kanth 1997, Mehmet 1995, Nandy 1990.
- 11 Brokensha, Warren and Werner (1980) is an early collection attempting to demonstrate the relevance of "ethnoscience" to development. Warren, Slikkerveer and Brokensha (1995), Sillitoe, Bicker and Pottier (2002) and Sillitoe (2006) are more recent efforts along similar lines. To this can be added numerous scholarly papers and two recent World Bank publications, Finger and Shuler (2004) and World Bank (2004). The general form that these accounts take is an edited collection of case studies demonstrating the relevance of certain types of people's knowledge (medical, agronomical, ecological) to development objectives.

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