

# RAM MANOHAR LOHIA ON 'NEW SOCIALISM'

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**Abstract:** *The Nationalist Movement in India originated as a result of the impact of British rule in India. The impact of the British rule on the socio-economic structure of the Indian society and the perceptions of the early Nationalists on this impact provided the political philosophy of the freedom struggle. Any economic and political ideology that developed in Modern India could be studied and analysed against this total background of the Nationalist movement. By the end of 1920s and the beginning of 1930s the rising left wing in the congress strongly maintained that political independence without economic independence would not eradicate the miseries and problems of the people. The present paper is an attempt to analyse the concept of new socialism advocated by Lohia. Lohia's contributions to socialist thought and action are manifold.*

**Keywords:** *Socialism, Communism, Democracy, India, Gandhism.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Ram Manohar Lohia occupied a distinctive place in the development of the socialist thought in India. He was the first socialist thinker in India who rejected to accept the Russian or western model of Socialism for India. Lohia showed great originality in his enunciation of socialism. Ram Manohar Lohia discarded both capitalism and communism because it is unsuitable to the socio-economic and political environment of Indian and other South-Asian countries. Lohia wanted to free the individual from ignorance, backwardness and other kinds of superstitions and prejudices. Lohia advocated "the principle of equal irrelevance of capitalism and communism in respect of the creation of a new human civilization." This 'new civilization' is titled by Lohia 'socialism.' He was a champion of freedom and equality, a veteran freedom fighter, great visionary thinker, founder of the Indian socialist movement, a practitioner of Gandhian techniques of resistance and an a proponent of the idea of a world government,

## 2. EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCES:

Dr. Rammanohar Lohia was born in 1910 at Akbarpur in U.P. His family was involved in freedom struggle. Lohia was greatly influenced by political leaders like Tilak, Gandhi, and Subhas Bose. Lohia wanted to combine Marxian and Gandhian ideas. As a student of philosophy, he developed rationality and was able to critically interpret the issues relating to society. Lohia joined the Congress Party. In 1934, he who had firm ideas about socialism joined the Congress Socialist Party, which was working within the ambits of the parent party. He was one of the founding figure of the Congress Socialist Party and the editor of 'Congress Socialist'.

## 3. LOHIA ON SOCIALISM AND NEW SOCIALISM:

Lohia was a firm socialist who firmly believed that socialism, if it were to lead the people to development and prosperity should be based on the Indian situation. He envisioned socialism as a 'new civilisation.' Lohia wanted to give firm foundation to the theory of socialism by framing a programme of action for the fulfilment of the final goal. His socialistic ideology developed in the association of Acharya Narendra Dev, Achyut Patwardhan, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Ashok Mehta and others. He did revolutionary work in the development of new policy in connection with the socio-economic advance of the people of our sub-continent. Lohia advocated the philosophy of socialism in to 'equality and prosperity'. Lohia pointed out that the interests of communism and conservatism are against socialism. Lohia's observation on socialism was pragmatic. It was different from the dogmatic and doctrinaires socialism expounded by the European socialists. According to Lohia, European socialism lacked a world outlook. Lohia advocated that Gandhism alone could provide the suitable base for socialism in India. He cited his original thesis of Socialism in the Panchamarhi Conference of Socialists in May 1952. The basic postulates of the new socialism were stated thus:

- Both Capitalism and Communism are based on centralized power which is not capable of bringing about a radical alteration in society.
- Both capitalism and communism believe in the same method and means of production. The single difference between them is that in capitalism some individuals or groups make profit and in communism even though

there is no individual profit system, a centralized power, class or party, monopolises the benefits. Society does not in reality enjoy economic, political and individual freedom.

- Both Communism and democracy are incapable of ushering in social transformation, people's liberty and culture. Therefore, both have to be discarded.
- Socialism does not believe in limited capitalism or mixed economy. It does not believe that this would ever pave the way for socialism.
- The objective of socialism is to establish a free and decentralized society by eliminating capitalism and centralized power from society.

Ram Manohar Lohia's socialism stands for socialization of the means of production. To Lohia, socialism stands for equality and prosperity. Lohia expressed in his 'Wheel of History' that human history is characterized by a fight between crystallized castes and loosely cohesive classes. To him, the conventional and ordered socialism was, therefore, "a dead doctrine and dying organization". Lohia had made an appeal for 'New Socialism'. He contributed in recommending a double approach to the creation of new society - economic development together with a systematic effort to change those social institutions, which are antithetical to modernity. Ram Manohar Lohia framed a six-point plan for this New Socialism.

- Maximum attainable equality, towards which nationalization of economy may be one essential step;
- A decent standard of living throughout the world, and not increasing standard of living within national frontiers;
- A world parliament and government "elected on adult franchise with beginning, towards a world government and world army;
- Collective and individual practice of civil disobedience so that the unarmed and helpless little man may acquire the habit to resist tyranny and exploitation civilly;
- Four-pillar state-, the village, the district, the province and the centre
- Evolution of a technology, which would be consistent with these aims and processes

#### 4. 'SAPTA KRANTI' OR SEVEN REVOLUTIONS:

Equality was a central point of the Lohia's concept of socialism. To him, "Socialism is a doctrine of equality. Unless, we are careful, it may degenerate into a doctrine of inequality. His concept of equality was unique. To him, equality did not mean the identity of treatment or identity of reward. He maintained that if there were no equality among the individuals and also among the nations, justice, human dignity, morality, brotherhood, freedom and universal welfare could not flourish in society. Lohia suggested 'seven-fold', revolution to fight against inequality and injustice.

- **Revolting for equality between man and woman**

According to Lohia, of all injustices, those arising out of the inequalities between men and women was perhaps the bedrock. Inequality between men and woman had so become part of human habit and nature that it seeped into everything else. Woman's participation in collective life was exceptionally limited. He wants his woman to be bright, intelligent, handsome and the rest in short, a very living person. So long as this grievous clash resided in the mind of man, a woman would not be allowed to acquire equal status in society. Giving her equal opportunity would not solve the problem of inequality between the sexes.

- **The abolition of inequalities based on colour**

The colour of the skin was no criterion of beauty or any other type of superiority. The tyranny of colour was among the great oppressions of the world which was built upon error according to Lohia. The fair-skinned people of Europe had dominated the world for three hundred years. They had possessed power and prosperity which the coloured people had not. The higher castes in India were generally a little fairer than the backward. Hence, the fair colour had captured people's imagination. An aesthetic revolution in the assessment of beauty and its relations to the colour of the skin would blow the air of freedom and inner peace over all the world almost as much as political or economic revolution.

- **Elimination of inequalities of birth and caste**

His to caste was revolutionary. He looked at the problems of socialism and democracy in terms of the abolition of castes as the most serious illness of Indian society. According to Lohia, caste was the biggest reality of Indian life. Those who condemned it were also victims of it. He supported Inter-caste marriages, were held only between groups within the high caste. Lohia held caste as the largest single cause for submission to foreign invasions. It was only when the bonds of caste had gone loose that India could defend and could not be subjugated. It was

necessary for the abolition of the caste system that the political leadership should come from among the ‘Sudras’, it should be broadminded, truly national and respected by all sections of the society. To him, caste was ossified class, and class was mobile caste. Lohia pleaded for continued awareness to check the toxin of casteism. Therefore, “not equal opportunity, but preferential opportunity can pull down the walls of these narrow coteries.

- **National freedom or ending of foreign influence**

According to Lohia, “people’s freedom has perhaps always been the grand passion of man. To overrun countries, to conquer people, to rule over them or at least to take tribute has been pastime of powerful armies in recorded history.” National freedom was on the way to become man’s irremovable property. The talk there was of national freedom in the political sense. People would not be allowed to exercise direct rule over another. Lohia felt that the world shall not be equal or peaceful unless all imperialisms were hunted out of their darkest lairs.

- **Economic equality through increase in production**

To Lohia, it was the revolution of the poor against rich, the little man against the big. In under developed countries the inequality existed in fabulous magnitude. Adequate scope for employment, reasonable wages, adequate leisure and other economic rights must be created in a society. Control over economic organization and its conscious directions in the interests of commonwealth were a basic requirement. The world had come to realize it and a procedural non-violent revolution was interpenetrating in the social and economic life of every country.

- **Protecting the privacy of individual life from all collective encroachments**

The individual had been steadily losing his sovereignty to organization. That is not to say that his importance or welfare had necessarily gone down. They had in fact been going up, more so in those areas where his sovereignty had been suffering. The individual’s welfare and happiness, education and health, also his leisure and much of his life and thought were subject to planning of various kinds. This planning was careful in lands of communism, but a growing element of organizational compulsion was present everywhere. As such “rights of privacy and freedom must be recognized in all those spheres, which are not directly connected with property.

- **Limitation on armaments.**

Weapons are always hated by good and righteous persons. The discovery of thermo-nuclear fission has given a new character to weapons. Now they can only destroy and could no longer bring victory or cause defeat. He had found civil disobedience as the weapon to fight against injustice and inequality. If even one-tenth of a people could become habitual and individual civil-resisters against native tyranny, they could be reasonably expected to act as a good deterrent against foreign invasion.

## **5. The Four-Pillar State and Socialism:**

“The four-pillar state”, was one of the important features of the Ram Manohar Lohia’s socialism. In order to achieve true socialism, he evolved the concept of four-pillar state. Four-pillar state was an arrangement when a constitution was framed on the basis of the four-pillar state, the village, the district, the province and the centre, being four pillars of equal majesty and dignity. The four-pillar state was both a legislative and an executive arrangement. It was a way of life and to all spheres of human activity, for instance, production, ownership, administration, planning, education and the like. The four pillar state provided a structure and a way. The community of a state was to be so organized and sovereign power so diffused that each little community in it lived the way of life that it chose.

According to Lohia, the state, therefore, was to be organized in such a manner that it could allow the widest opportunity for popular participation, “Sovereign power must not reside alone in centre and federating units. It must be broken up and diffused over smallest region where a group of men and women live.” The idea of such a state however, did not represent the idea of a self sufficient village but of the ‘intelligent and vital village.’ In the four-pillar state the armed forces of the state might be controlled by the centre, the armed police by the province but all other police might be brought under district and village control. While industries like the railways or iron and steel might be controlled by the Centre, the small unit textile industry of the future might be left to district and village ownership. While price fixing might be a central subject the structure of agriculture and the ratio of capital and labour in it might be left to the choice of the district and the village. A substantial part of state revenues should stay with the village and the district.

Economic decentralization, corresponding to political and administration decentralization, might be brought about through maximum utilization of small machines. The four-pillar state raised above the issues of regionalism and functionalism. It diffused power also within people’s organizations and corporations. Lohia stated that four-pillar state might indeed appear fanatic to many in view of the special conditions of the country, its illiteracy, its fears and superstitions and above all, its castes. Lohia believed that by giving power to small communities of men, democracy

of the first grade was possible. The four pillar state ensured effective and intelligent democracy to the common man. Lohia was not in favour of ownership of property by the state exclusively at the centre as it was disastrous both for bread and freedom. Part of property must be owned by the village and the province as much as by the centre and by co-operative.

Planning in Socialism was undertaken with a view to renovate the nation's economy and to invigorate the people and not with a view to appease classes of interests. Complete accountability, democratic controls, and publicly known rules of disbursement of all plan and governmental expenditure would remove corruption and inefficiency on the one hand, and stop the breeding of petty tyrants, sycophants, and flatterers on the other. Planning shall wherever possible encourage the small units of production and trade. Prices would be so regulated as to remove disparity between those of agriculture and of industry. "In particular, the great robbery which causes steep fall of agricultural prices around the harvest and steep rise later will be stopped."

The ideas and programs of Lohia's Socialism included democracy always. Democracy meant the inevitable accountability of administration to elected assembly. It also meant recognition and respect of the limited personality of an individual, party, government, and state – four categories, which together constituted the agencies of political action. The external working of a state was determined by the internal working of its political parties. In the sphere of foreign policy, Lohia advocated his thesis of building a third camp. This differed from non-alignment preached by Nehru, which was termed by Lohia as passive neutrality. Lohia's concept of the Third Camp did not merely mean 'independence of the two blocs' but a positive and 'creatively independent' programme of mutual assistance among the developing countries fighting for freedom, peace, and progress of the oppressed millions worldwide. Lohia stressed the need for a constructive approach to world problems. Lohia pleaded for the establishment of a world Parliament powerful enough to enforce peace and economic development. Lohia's world Parliament was to be elected on the basis of adult franchise. The World Parliament would represent the collective conscience of mankind. Lohia's World Parliament would confine itself to matters of war and peace, to the relevant aspects of armed forces and foreign policy and to a minimum of economic subjects necessary for the basic health of the world. With the background of such a World Parliament, national governments, shall no longer divide tyrannously the human race and democracy shall for the first time come into free play. His World Government should take from each country according to its capacity of capital resources and give to each according to its needs.

Lohia believed that real socialism laid in planning done with a view to reconstruct the nation's economy and to invigorate the people and not with a view to please classes of interests. His socialism also included economic reconstruction of India. He wanted to reconstruct the economy of India to remove poverty which was necessary to establish true Socialism. Lohia's reconstruction of economy consisted of following items:

- (a) Reclamation of waste land
- (b) Small unit-technology
- (c) Equal distribution of land
- (d) Food army
- (e) Abolition of land revenue
- (f) Emphasis on small and medium schemes of irrigation.
- (g) Restrictions of expenditure and consumptions.

Ram Manohar Lohia was in favour of small-unit technology to remove poverty. His concern for Socialism inspired him to advocate the small unit technology which was consistent with the demands of justice and equality and suited India in view of the peculiarities of India's problems. Therefore the solution consisted in "decentralized socialism with all its appropriate forms of small machines, cooperative labour, village government and so forth." Industrialization by means of the small-unit machine, according to Lohia, would have several advantages "Villages and towns of our country have abundant raw material of various kind. Lohia was of the view that large scale industry such as rail roads could be nationalized, the small-unit machines could be owned by state and village government as well as by producers and 'peasants cooperatives'. To strengthen socialism Lohia wanted renovation of wasteland. To solve the food-problem, Lohia wanted to break the land monopoly and distribute land to the actual tillers of the soil. In Lohia's scheme of equitable distribution of land, "Land will belong to tillers. Lohia also pleaded for the abolition of land revenue on profitless agriculture and uneconomic holdings. Lohia wanted to have uniform pattern of education that is a uniform pay-scale for all the teachers and uniform standard of books for all the students.

## **6. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS:**

Ram Manohar Lohia was a political philosopher having his unconquerable faith in indigenous and traditional institutions and ideas of India. Lohia stood for the establishment of a socialist society in India after independence. Various political ideologies influenced him. He persistently carried out the socialist movement in post-independent India. He thought that democracy and national freedom, together with the need for change, should constitute the goals of Indian socialism. He tried to accommodate and incorporate some of the most important contributions of Gandhi to

the theory and methodology of socialism. Lohia developed his own frame of reference and accepted only as much of Gandhism and marxism as fitted into his framework. It is stated, "Lohia was a Gandhian among revolutionaries and a revolutionary among Gandhians". He was also a believer in the ideological purity of his thoughts and did not hesitate to break away from his socialist colleagues like JP and others when he found them tilting towards Congress for certain extraneous considerations.

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