

Ram Manohar Lohia : An Indian Independence Movement Socialist Leader

Nitu Kumari, Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science,
Samastipur College, Samastipur

Raghuvir Kumar Ranjan, Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science,
Samastipur College, Samastipur

Abstract

During the period of the Indian Independence Movement, Ram Manohar Lohia was a prominent figure in politics and the socialist movement in India. He played a pivotal role in Indian social politics and the independence movement. He was heavily involved with the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), a left-leaning component of the Indian National Congress. He made anti-British remarks and opposed Indian involvement in the British cause during World War II, therefore the British had him arrested in 1939 and 1940. Ram Mohan Lohia was a founding member of the Congress Socialist Party. In 1936, he became All India Congress Committee Secretary for Foreign Affairs after being chosen by Jawaharlal Nehru. Jawaharlal Nehru appointed this official. Much of his career was spent combating inequality via the development of an Indian version of socialism. Lohia recognised five forms of inequality that must be combated at the same time: gender inequality, racial inequality, caste-based inequality, economic inequality, and the dominance of certain nations over others (colonialism). Economic disparity, according to Lohia, is akin to colonial rule. He argued that there were really five revolutions going on simultaneously to combat these five types of inequity. He then included the revolution for civil rights against unjust intrusions into private life and the revolution for nonviolence, for abandonment of weapons in favour of Satyagraha, to this list. The two uprisings have a same cause: the invasion of personal freedom without justification. To Lohia, these Sapta Kranti, or Seven Revolutions, were the pinnacle of socialist ideals.

Keywords: *Ram Manohar Lohia, Socialist Leader, Ideating Democracy, Posthumously*

Introduction

On March 23, 1910, in the city of Akbarpur in what is now the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, Ram Manohar Lohia entered the world. In 1912, when he was just two, his mother passed away. His father, a bachelor who never remarried, raised Hiralal alone. Both he and his father moved to Bombay, India in 1918 so that he may finish high school in the country of his father's birth. Soon after, in 1926, he enrolled in Vidyasagar College, part of the University of Calcutta, where he would eventually acquire a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1929. To demonstrate how little esteem he had for British philosophical thinking, Lohia opted to attend the German university Frederick William University (today's Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany) rather than a school in the United Kingdom. He began his doctoral studies in national economics in 1929 and finished his dissertation in 1933, by which time he had mastered German and was receiving financial compensation for his remarkable academic achievement. Lohia's doctoral dissertation examined Gandhi's socioeconomic theory in light of India's salt tax. At the tender age of 22 when he returned to India in 1932, Lohia plunged wholeheartedly into the liberation struggle in response to Gandhiji's call for Satyagraha, or Civil Disobedience. In jail, Lohia found company among other nationalists who shared his pessimistic outlook. Inmates at India's Nashik Road Jail are young individuals who intended to spread the movement to India's urban labour force and rural impoverished. Additionally, the Congress youth movement developed into the Congress Socialist Party, a separate political organisation.

Ideating Democracy

Democracy was more than simply a form of governance to Lohia. He sought to understand democracy's fundamental tenet—that people are the ultimate arbiters of their own fate and the source of all power—rather than merely its practical features. The only environment in which a person may experience holistic growth is one that is free, just, and equal. He feels that democracy is a powerful equaliser and provides a decentralised socioeconomic and political system. The tendency toward economic and political centralization, which leads to overpopulation and unequal growth,

alarmed him. "Decentralization is the single most important feature of democracy in the modern era," he asserts, "and its meaning must be fixed in terms of defined political power belonging to small direct democracy units, as well as in terms of economic arrangements and technology that would give the working man greater understanding of control over productive process." He was a staunch advocate of democracy, which empowers the populace via dialogue and debate, yet he detested Western liberal democracy for being "elitist." The foundation of democracy in the West was and continues to be individualism. It claims that unfettered growth of capitalism, mass production, and profit will all continue. As a consequence, the wealthy have increasing power while the rest of society is ignored, left behind, and negatively impacted on both the political and economic fronts. In the face of the great power of a corporate world, the neglected majority loses its political and economic independence and is turned into nothing more than a "cog" in a machine.

Functional Dynamics of Indian Democracy

India, under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who served as the nation's first prime minister, embraced the Western ministerial type of democracy based on a liberal capitalist ethos after winning independence. The paradigm that Lohia thought would function best for the affluent, educated, and tranquil Western culture. In a country like India, where there was pervasive poverty, unequal development, high rates of illiteracy, and a more evident caste separation, democracy had little value to the general populace. The existence of widespread inequality has made it difficult for the general public to make arrangements for their basic requirements, such as food, shelter, education, etc. Similar to this, widespread illiteracy inhibits individuals from using logic to tackle significant issues that have an impact on their everyday lives. When this occurs, the general public is less likely to carefully consider their best interests and is more likely to be persuaded by popular, populist, and transient political party propaganda like "Garibi Hatao" and "Achhe Din Aane Wale Hain" during election season. At the risk of disregarding the underprivileged and disadvantaged segments of society, wealthy businesses have a say in how policies are developed. Additionally, political democracy has been monopolised by businesses that finance elections. As a result, rather than speaking out for larger populations after winning an election, politicians speak in legislative assemblies and deliberative bodies on behalf of their parties and major corporations.

Qualification

- He earned a bachelor's degree in economics and politics in 1929 from the University of Calcutta and a doctorate from the University of Berlin in 1932.

Pre-Independence Role:

- He began taking an active role in the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), an Indian National Congress branch on the left, in 1934.
- He served time in jail in 1939 and 1940 for making anti-British remarks since he was a fierce opponent of Indian involvement on the side of Great Britain in World War II (1939-1945).
- Lohia and other CSP leaders, including Jaya Prakash Narayan, collected clandestine support for Mahatma Gandhi's 1942 Quit India movement, which sought to oust British rule in India. Between 1944 through 1946, he was sent behind bars once again for his resistance activities..

Post Independence Role:

- In 1948, Lohia and the other CSP members broke away from the Congress.
- A founding member of the Praja Socialist Party in 1952, he withdrew from the organisation in 1955 due to infighting.
- When he wasn't busy serving as chairman of the newly formed Socialist Party and editor of its periodical, Mankind, he was busy launching it in 1955.
- He was the party's leader in calling for changes including the end of caste and more individual rights.
- Lohia became well-known as a vocal opponent of government policy shortly after his 1963 election to the Lok Sabha.

Early Life

On March 23, 1910, Ram Manohar was born in Akbarpur, Uttar Pradesh, British India, to parents Hira Lal and Chanda. When he was a little child, his teaching mother passed away. Ram's nationalist father took him to several protest rallies and meetings to educate his son about India's liberation cause. His father, a fervent devotee of Mahatma Gandhi, orchestrated his meeting with the man who would change the trajectory of his life. Ram was so moved by Gandhi's character and ideas that he adopted many of Gandhi's tenets, which helped him thrive despite the

difficulties he encountered. At age 10, he showed his loyalty to Mahatma Gandhi and his potential as a strong freedom fighter by participating in the Satyagraha march. He met Jawaharlal Nehru, his future best friend and political ally, in 1921. However, there were numerous topics and political stances on which they had fundamentally different opinions. Lohia led a student demonstration against the all-white Simon Commission in 1928, when he was 18 years old. The Commission was looking into the prospect of awarding India dominion status without engaging Indians. Lohia continued his schooling despite this setback. His performance on the high school matriculation test encouraged him to continue his education, and he eventually earned a degree in intermediate studies from India's Banaras Hindu University. In 1929, he earned a BA from Calcutta University, and in 1932, he earned a PhD from Berlin University in Germany. His strong academic background allowed him to study in Germany on a full scholarship and learn the language quickly.

Ram Manohar Lohia Idealisms

The reason Ram Manohar Lohia favoured Hindi over English was because he felt it would help bridge the gap between India's educated and less-educated citizens. According to him, the use of English stifles creative thought and makes the ignorant feel like outsiders. As he saw it, speaking Hindi would bring people together and inspire ground-breaking innovations for the country. "Opportunities are limited for those who are cast in lower social classes. When resources are limited, potential is also confined. Chances decrease when limitations increase in one's capabilities. In societies dominated by caste, advancement is denied to everyone save the most privileged few ". Ram Manohar's thoughts on India's eternal caste structure are made clear in these quotes. He felt that the caste system stunted the development of new ideas in India. He advocated for the "Roti and Beti (bread and daughter)" scheme as a means to abolish the caste system. He thought that the only way to break down the caste system was to cook and dine together as a community and allow people of different castes to marry one other's daughters. Like-wise, he supported and distributed election tickets to candidates from lower castes in his United Socialist Party. To that end, he advocated for the creation of superior public institutions of education that would be accessible to all citizens regardless of socioeconomic status.

Indian Freedom Movement

He would be important to the liberation struggle even after his active service was over because of his youthful zeal and dedication. To protect and advance Indian nationalism outside India's borders, he founded the Association of European Indians during his time spent there. Not only that, but he also went to Geneva for a session of the League of Nations. Lohia was dissatisfied because India was being represented by the British Raj's buddy, the Maharaja of Bikaner. He voiced his objections from the stage and also sent several letters to editors of newspapers and magazines. Following this, Ram Manohar Lohia was celebrated as a national hero in India. Shortly after his return to India, he joined the Indian National Congress and began laying the basis for the 1934 founding of the Congress Socialist Party. To aid in the formation of India's foreign policy, Jawahar Lal Nehru made him the first secretary of the All India Congress Committee in 1936. Lohia was freed from jail on May 25, 1939, after being detained the day before for advocating a boycott of government institutions by the Indian people. He was detained once again in June 1940, however, for supposedly writing the essay "Satyagraha Now," and he was subjected to psychiatric questioning until his release in December 1941. Many prominent leaders, like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Maulana Azad, and Vallabhbhai Patel, were imprisoned during the Quit India Movement of 1942; nevertheless, Ram Manohar and other lesser-known people performed incredible effort to keep the idea of an independent India alive in the minds of the masses. Following that, Lohia's freedom of expression and assembly was curtailed by the Portuguese government, which led to his incarceration in Bombay and then in Goa. As India's independence became closer at the end of his life, he vehemently opposed any attempts to divide the nation. He was a devout disciple of Mahatma Gandhi who promoted nonviolence as a means of ending the massive bloodshed that had ravaged the country after partition. On the fifteenth of August, 1947, he and his guide were in Delhi, where the whole population of India had gathered to lament the repercussions of the division.

Timeline

1910: Born to Hira Lal and Chanda in Akbarpur, UP.

1921: Participated in Satyagraha March lead by Mahatma Gandhi.

1928: a student-led movement protesting the Simon Commission's racial bias.

1929: has finished his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Calcutta.

1932: He earned his doctorate from Berlin's university.

1934: construct the Congress Socialist Party's foundation. construct the Congress Socialist Party's foundation.

1936: elected to serve as the All India Congress Committee's first secretary.

1939: a suspect who is detained after making incendiary remarks calling for a boycott of governmental institutions.

1940: Arrested yet again for his article "Satyagraha Now".

1942: took part in the "Quit India" movement.

1944: He was arrested and tortured in a Lahore prison.

1947: joined other international leaders in New Delhi on August 15th.

1962: He shocked the world by suddenly requesting India to make a bomb in response to Chinese aggression.

1963: The "teen anna pandrah anna dispute" erupted over his booklet "25000 rupees in a day."

1967: Died at the age of 57 in New Delhi.

Posthumously

Ram Manohar Lohia's efforts to build a free and unified India were recognised and acknowledged, therefore his labour was not in vain. Several nobilities were given to him after his death. One of India's top legal schools, Dr. Rammanohar Lohiya National Law University, is named after him and is situated in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Also named in his honour is the Dr. Rammanohar Lohia Hospital in New Delhi. In Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, a new medical school called the Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences is presently taking graduate students. Additionally, Bangalore University has named its law school the Dr. Rammanohar Lohia College of Law in his honour. Additionally, in Panjim, Goa, he was awarded the name "18 June Road" in recognition of his 1946 struggle against colonial control.

Conclusion

Despite conforming to the neo-liberal capitalist globalisation mindset, the majority of Indians nevertheless hold onto illusions. The "Second Freedom," which would guarantee everyone's socio-economic and moral freedom through participatory democracy and release the vast bulk of the population from social injustice and economic shackle, is still a long way off. Ironically, there is a chance that business will seize control of the government. In a highly commoditized consumer world marked by overwhelming greed for money and power, systematic dismantling of safety nets for the poor, and dwindling space for dissent and peaceful resistance, a disproportionate population is growing increasingly disillusioned and hopeless about the efficacy of parliamentary democracy. According to this scenario, it would seem that Lohia's proposals for democratic decentralisation, the transfer of power to local governments, and the inclusion of the majority of the underprivileged as equal

partners in governance are the most viable and doable ones. Sagacity urges that local governments be promptly strengthened and that complete authority over the administration of all resources and village-related programmes be granted to panchayats. Amendments 73 and 74 to the Constitution, which support democratic decentralisation, shall be abided by in letter and spirit by all states. According to Lohia, in order to free democracy from the monopoly of the wealthy and powerful sector of society, power must be divided into as many pieces as there are villages and given up to the local community. There was no other way, in Lohia's opinion, to alter Indian society.

References

1. *Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, his Life and Philosophy*, by Indumati Kelkar. Published for Samajwadi Sahitya Sansthan, Delhi by Anamika Publishers & Distributors (2009) ISBN 978-81-7975-286-9
2. "Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia dead". *The Hindu*. 12 October 2017. ISSN 0971-751X.
3. *Makers of Modern India*, by Ramachandra Guha. Published by Penguin Viking (2010), ISBN 0674725964
4. R. Lohia, *The Conquest of violence*, Congress Socialist, 9 April 14 May, 28 May & 4 June 1938, Collected Works of Dr Rammanohar Lohia, vol. 8: 402–417. ISBN 9788179753798.
5. R. Lohia, *The Russian Trials*, Congress Socialist, 9 April & 7 May 1938, Collected Works of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, vol. 8: 395–401. ISBN 9788179753798.
6. Ram Manohar Lohia, *Foreign Policy*, Dwadesh Shrew Private Limited, Aligarh, 1963, P-479
7. Onkar Sharad (1972) *Lohia*. Lucknow, Prakashan Kendra. pp. 103f. □ The Times, 15 April 1946, p. 4.
8. V.R Mehta, *Foundation of Indian Political Thought: An Interpretation*, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1999, P-249
9. Ram Manohar Lohia, *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, Navhind, Hyderabad, 1963, p. 6.