International Journal of Applied Social Science
(An International Double Blind Peer Reviewed / Refereed Research Journal of Social Science)
Volume 10 (3 & 4), March & April (2023) : 236-241
Received : 20.02.2023; Revised : 06.03.2023; Accepted : 20.03.2023

RESEARCH ARTICLE
ISSN : 2394-1405 (Print)
DOI: 10.36537/IJASS/10.3&4/236-241

Alternative Socialism in the View of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia: Comparative Analysis of Gandhian and Marxist Socialism

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ABSTRACT

Through this paper, I would like to examine the views of Ram Manohar Lohia on 'socialism', how his thoughts contributes and contrast to the existing notion of socialism, also how he compares Gandhian socialism and socialism proposed by Marx. In order to have some understanding of notion of 'socialism' from different prospective, I will lead lucid and brief discussion of it. I will be brief about Marx's understanding of 'socialism' and Gandhian on the other hand. Then Lohia's views of understanding of it. There are various kinds of socialism exist such as Russian, Chinese, Marxist and so on. Lohia denied all forms of socialism by saying that these aren't suitable for the Indian Societal structure, economic circumstances and other cultural disparities existing in India. He tried to coin a new socialism for an alternative of other forms for India. Lohia innovated a new form of socialism by recasting the socialism in Indian context and achieved a different stand in history of ideas in 20th century which is still relevant in contemporary arena of knowledge. Whereas Marx's notion of socialism not yet all relevant for global south countries. Gandhian understanding of society also not suited for the contemporary circumstances, his understanding was spiritual and ethical in nature, also self-regulatory. Lohia provided a beautiful mixture of both ideas by adding his own empirical understanding and knowledge. This paper would be segregated into various sections and sub sections. Each section would be autonomous and coherent in nature.

Key Words : Lohia, Socialism, Gandhi, Spiritual

INTRODUCTION

Socialist means the system under which economic system is controlled and regulated by the government so as to ensure welfare and equal opportunity to the people in a society. The idea of socialism is first introduced by Karl Marx and Fredric Engels in their book, 'The Communist Manifesto'. The word socialism means 'all things to all men'. According to Samuelson, "Socialism refers to the government ownership of the means of production, planning by the government and income distribution". According to Samuelson, "Socialism refers to the government ownership of the means of production, planning by the government and income distribution".

In socialism, all means of production are owned by the community, *i.e.*, Government, and no individual can hold private property beyond certain limit. Therefore, it is government who utilises these resources in the interest of social welfare.

Under socialism, there is almost equality between rich and poor. There is no problem of class struggle. Under socialism, government fixes certain objectives. In order to achieve these objectives, government adopts economic planning. All types of decisions regarding the central problems of an economy are taken in the economic plans. There is a Central Planning Authority, who plans for the economy. Unlike capitalistic economy, there is no cut throat competition. It means lack of competition as state is the sole entrepreneur.

In socialism, government plays significant role in decision making. Thus, government has complete control over economic activities like distribution, exchange,

How to cite this Article: Kumar, N Kishore (2023). Alternative Socialism in the View of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia: Comparative Analysis of Gandhian and Marxist Socialism. *Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci.,* **10** (3&4) : 236-241.

consumption, investment and foreign trade etc. Under socialism "from each according to his ability to each according to his needs, is socialism."

The sole objective of socialism is the maximum social welfare of the society. It means that there is no scope of exploitation of labour class. Government keeps a close eye on the needs of the poor masses while formulating plans.

Socialism is acknowledged as the cherished goal of the Indian political system in its constitution. Socialism lays emphasis on the welfare of the people, it seeks to ensure economic and political equality to the people and tries to remove exploitation of one class by the others. However, despite aiming for the same goals, India adopted socialism which drew inspiration from Gandhi and Nehru rather than Marxian socialism. Whereas Gandhian socialism was based on satya, ahimsa, trusteeship and decentralisation and Nehru's socialism was a liberal and a type of Fabian socialism, Marxian socialism emphasised on class wars and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Indian socialism was not an ideological dogma, but a broad guide to the development and social change and accommodated a lot of other ideas, apart from core socialism, which were necessary for the development of India (Jadhav, 2010).

Gandhi was also opposed to Nehru's socialism, which placed an emphasis on large-scale production and was advocated by the Indian leader. Gandhi feared that further exploitation and urbanisation would result as a result of this vast production. It was Gandhi's emphasis on decentralisation that won him the admiration of Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, rather than industrialists, in the first place. According to Gandhi, in order for a genuine Swaraj to be achieved, it is not necessary for one class rule to be replaced by another. It is far more complicated than that. It is necessary to reinforce the settlements. He also thought that it is far simpler to reform an institution than it is to change a person. Gandhi had immense faith in institutions and their ability to operate, but he had even more faith in the perfectibility of the person than he did in organisations. Gandhi was adamant that Western socialism and communism were characterised by a strong feeling of self-centeredness. The capitalists and the landowners, he desired, should behave as trustees, preserving their money for the benefit of their villages, their employees, and their peasants. His thesis of trusteeship, according to which the economically strong people would voluntarily relinquish their power, was roundly ridiculed at the time. Some academics, such as M. N. Roy, have said that such a theory would only benefit the privileged few, and that the exploited could only gain their rights by violence and expropriation on their behalf. Gandhi, on the other hand, believed that violence could depose one or two bad rulers, two capitalists, but that such capitalists would always reappear. As a result, Gandhi believed that the only option was to reform mankind rather than to destroy them. Apart from that, Gandhi asserted that the rich could not develop riches without the collaboration of the poor and that, consequently, when the poor refuses to work with the wealthy, the wealthy will inevitably change their methods. Gandhi also provided his own definition of the term "socialism" in his speech. Rather, Gandhi believes that nationalisation of production, distribution, and exchange facilities refers to faith in God, truth, non-violence, and equality rather than nationalisation of the means of production, distribution, and trade. Consequently, in a nutshell, Gandhian socialism is founded on the concepts of non-possession and trusteeship. As a result, it was not an ideology of industrialization, planning, or state action, and as a result, it did not appeal to the intelligentsia. Furthermore, Gandhian socialism was primarily concerned with humanitarian issues. It looked for the poor and served more as a moral guide for personal behaviour than as a political or economic doctrine. It did not contemplate the seizure of the wealthy through violence or official intervention, as some have suggested (Yadav, 2010a).

While Gandhi admired communism for its ability to organise the masses, he was dissatisfied with the fact that it ultimately results in dictatorships being imposed upon them. The establishment of a society in which the instruments of production are simple and the average man can play them in the rural, according to Gandhi, is an alternative to communism. A society like this would have no concentration of economic power, and as a result, the state would wither away, and the Marxian dream would not be realised as a result. The ideas expressed by Gandhi were, on the other hand, strongly criticised by thinkers such as M. N. Roy, who expressed his regret that Gandhi taught his workers not to regard their employers as exploiters but rather to trust them as their elder brothers, and that landlords were pleased that Gandhi regarded them as trustees of the interests of the peasants. He criticised Gandhi for his reformism, which he described as "weak and watery." Gandhi was also

blamed for lacking a progressive economic world view that would have enabled him to provide a suitable leadership to the people. In a nutshell. Because of their doubts about Gandhi's economic and social ideology, communists opposed any activity carried out by Gandhi in their respective countries. In their refusal to endorse Gandhi's Quit India agitation, they demonstrated their anti-Indian sentiment. Despite their rejection of Gandhian philosophy, they continue to exist.

Gandhi was held in high respect by Communists as a great humanist and humanitarian. In one of his publications, E. M. S. Namboodiripad makes a comment on Gandhi's idealistic tendencies. For the Mahatma and his followers, moral values such as truth, nonviolence, renunciation of the pleasures of life, political ideals such as freedom, democracy, emancipation of women, and unity among all religious groups and communities were all inextricably intertwined with their lives and teachings, according to the Mahatma and his followers. Unfortunately, Gandhi considered the workers and peasants as brothers and partners of the oppressors, rather than as victims of the oppressors.

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was born at Akbarpur in U.P on March 23, 1910 and died on October 12, 1967. He received his higher education at the Benares Hindu University and in Calcutta. He obtained his Ph.D. degree in economics in 1932 from Berlin University. Upon his return to India in 1933 he joined the freedom movement at a young age. He was associated with the Congress Socialist Party in the Congress in 1934. With the formation of the P.S. in 1952, he was with it for a few years. Later on when the Samyukta Socialist Party came into existence, he joined it. He died in 1967.

Lohia was a great orator. He was also a prolific writer. Some of his important works were "Aspects of Socialist Policy" (1952), Marx, Gandhi and Socialism (1962), The Caste System (1964), Fragments of World Mind (1966), etc. Besides, he had wide interest in history, philosophy, literature and painting, etc., as well.

Socialism:

According to Lohia, socialism in India began with Gandhi's thought and action. He was greatly influenced by Gandhi's ideals, values and methods. He held Gandhi's "Satyagraha" and "non-co-operation" as original creation of 20th century. Lohia wanted the doctrine of socialism to be enriched by Gandhism. Socialism not only meant removal of poverty and inequality but also character-building and reform of the individual. It thus emphasizes upon spiritualism. But spiritualism alone is not socialism. Socialism implies a synthesis between spiritualism and materialism, social reform and individual reform. Lohia saw no opposition between the social and the individual, as the individual is both an end and a means.

Lohia was aware of the limitations of Gandhism. But he held Gandhism to be an open doctrine. He believed that a rationalistic application of Gandhian propositions will strengthen the cause of Indian socialism. He tried to integrate the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha and the socialist principle of class struggle. He also differentiated "Sarvodaya" from socialism. It as a distortion of socialism, as he did not contain the method of social change. He held Sarvodaya as the greatest fraud of the 20th century. He was also a critic of the Bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhave, as it did not prescribe and comprehensive formula to solve the land problem. Lohia also opposed communism. It was associated with perversions and distortions. Communism favoured violence, centralization, loss of human freedom. He agreed with Marxism in so far as it regarded class struggle as the dynamics of social change. But he disagreed with the aims and methods of communism and so considered it to be unsuitable for India.

Lohia was a critic of socialism as enunciated by Nehru. It started from around 1928. Nehru had considered that a sort of leftist nationalism was necessary for an effective struggle for independence. Till the death of Gandhi, Lohia hoped that there would be a socialist transformation of the Congress. But he was soon disillusioned. He, therefore, wanted to build a progressive and dynamic alternative which could bring about to build a progressive and dynamic alternative which could bring about a radical transformation in the country. Lohia held that the greatest flaw of Nehru's socialism lay in this fact. Its source of inspiration did not lie in the removal of poverty and inequality through social reform or socialization of wealth (Yadav 2010b).

Thus Lohia held that in post-independence India socialism was sponsored by the State and come to be identified with industrialization and modernization. Even if the new industries are being owned by the State, some people continue to get special privileges. In fact, it contains the evils of both capitalism and socialism. True socialization, implies socialization of wealth. Mere State takeover of industries did not imply this. He also emphasized upon the socio-cultural features of socialism. Hence although nationalization could usher in socialism

in the Soviet Union, India was burdened with evils emanating from differences in caste, creed, religion, language etc. So unless these barriers were removed, 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.

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. Bothcapitalism 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 (Kumar, 2010).

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 '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 (Jadhav, 2010).

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 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 (Kumar, 2010).

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 and quoted, 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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