
ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY OF DEVELOPMENT: LOHIA AND GANDHI

Manoj Sinha

Associate Professor Department of Political Science
RamLal Anand College (Eve.) University of Delhi

Abstract

Lohia was a disciple of Gandhi and drew inspiration from him. Though in a different way, Lohia stood for the realization for the same values, namely Truth, Justice, Freedom, Dignity, Equality, Brotherhood, One World and People, And Struggle based on Non-Violence. He firmly believed in Gandhian tenets but at the same time, he was a born rebel and iconoclast always ready to demolish what did not stand the test of the ideals, democratic norm and humans values. He was nurtured and trained by Schumacher, who was an ardent protagonist of intermediate technology and champion of indigenous technology suited to local resource endowment and available talent. Thus the rationale of Lohia's critique regarding strategy and technique of Indian planning and economic development can be analysed and evaluated in the backdrop of broader Gandhian economic framework.

Lohia can be safely categorized as a political thinker as well as activist who confronted all the problems of socio-economic and political system of the country, but was definitely not a professional economist. He delved deep into the problems and tried his best to offer solutions suited to Indian condition and conducive to the masses of people who were the focus of his attentions. Lohia was a firm supporter of the symbiotic relationship between man, society and nature which has been disturbed by modern technology, large-scale production and indiscriminate industrialization based on capital intensity and imported technology without considering the absorptive capacity of the economy and adaptability of the people.

It is prudent to remember that Gandhi's scheme of rural reconstruction was also based on the idea of building on the resources available within the community rather than through importation of ideas and logistics from outside. Mahatma Gandhi stood for dignity of labour and his concept of 'Bread-Labour' is especially relevant to the Indian condition. These ideas of both Lohia and Gandhi match with Gunnar Myrdal's view on the appropriateness of technology for the poor countries where he says that capital intrusive technology may fulfil the criterion of labour efficiency without meeting the basic problem of fuller utilization of surplus labour force in the economy. This paper will look at Lohia's alternative strategy of development from a Gandhian perspective, being more appropriate both in terms of capital resources and human values and ethical as well as political norms, which are essential for fullest development of human being.

Key words: Dignity, reconstruction, community

Introduction

Three distinct types of plans have so far been tried in different countries of the world. The first is the Fascist or the Nazi plan; but in this case the remedy is undeniably worse than the disease. In the Fascist plan the individual has been ruthlessly subordinated to the totalitarian control of the state. Democracy which is fundamentally based on respect for human personality has been sedulously suppressed to yield place to all powerful dictator. Man is

the measure of all things but instead of man, the state has been made the measuring-rod of all our principles.

The second type of planning has been tried in United States of America. In fact President Roosevelt's 'New Deal' has never been a plan in the proper sense of the word. It has been a series of expedients design to see capitalism safely through a bad time. It was a determined attempt to reconstruct the capitalist system by removing the more obvious causes of mal adjustment. The latest attempt in this direction is the well-known Beveridge

Plan. Its chief objective is full employment and a guarantee for every citizen of a National Minimum in all the contingencies of life by means of Employment Insurance, Disability Benefits, Old Age Pensions, Children Allowances and Medical Services. It was meant to level down the reach by taxing them and leveling up the poor by granting them various amenities of life out of the proceeds of such taxation. This kind of planning is a roundabout processes of first allowing the capitalists to exploit the poor and then throwing crumbs of financial help to the exploited by taxing the exploiters. The whole process is unnatural degrading and uneconomic.[1]

The third kind of planning is that of the Soviet Union. The Russian Plans attracted universal attention and admiration because they were founded on the principles different from Capitalism. All over the world, the Russian experiment was hailed as the saviour of the exploited humanity. The capitalist class was systematically eliminated and rooted out with an iron hand. There were mass murders, treasons trials and purges and the Communist Party reigned supreme as the dictator of the proletariat. Individual freedom has to be rigorously curtailed and circumscribed. Yet the Soviet experiment was recognized as a great landmark in the history of economic reconstruction, because it dethroned capitalism from high pedestal and planned economic life in terms of the masses.

The last one satisfies to a great extent, at least, the last principle of livelihood. But mere livelihood is not enough; there must be freedom and scope for the development of the individuals. The solution lies in simplicity, decentralization and cottage industrialism. A Gandhian Plan, therefore, seems to be a practical and imperative need of the movement because it presents to the perplexed and war-torn world an economic system based on peace, democracy and human values.[8]

Lohia's view on Development:

Lohia was born in Gandhi's India and educated in Marx's Germany. Lohia was a unique synthesis of the old and the new, of the East and the West and of the saint and the proletariat, awfully original, irresistibly alert and ruthlessly sharp. He was perhaps the most colourful political figure of modern India, who like Diogenes, was

the citizen of the world and like J.S. Mill, left his impact on almost all branches of liberal learning including sociology, history, philosophy, economics, politics and literature and was almost equally interested in the ethics, metaphysics and the poetry of art and agitation, man and matter, pranks and plans.

The strategy of economic development so far has rested on the assumption that rapid economic growth with an increasing national and per capita income would progressively generate employment opportunities and raise the levels of living and that the benefits of economic growth would percolate to the unemployed and the poor classes. The role of industrialization particularly that of capital intensive basic industries, was thought to be curtail in this industrialization force as supposed to absorbed the underutilized labour force languishing in agriculture and the loosely organized non-agricultural sectors, stimulate the economy and lift it odd out of stagnation by rising the productivity of the labour force and increasing national output and income, modern industries was expected to swell the volume of savings, finance further investments in industries and progressively sift the population from rural to urban areas, and from agriculture and house hold sectors to industries and service sectors. In this vision, industrial expansion, once started, was seen as the lynchpin of a progressive spiral leading the economic through a take-of stage to self-sustaining growth.[5]

This process of development had various consequences. centralized planning has meant a relationship of dependence between the centre and the states, on the one hand, and between states and the local authorities on the other. goals and targets are determined centrally and state plans are accommodated in the centrally conceived national plan. Such a pattern of determinations of national goals and targets has also meant the allocations of resources various sectors of the economy and various development projects in each sector are determined centrally.

As far Lohia's various ingredients of the new civilizations are concerned, the planning process in India has completely failed. he was ardent advocate of maximum attainable equality. he asserted that to fight for what is not attainable of achievable is adventurism and to

be satisfied with less than what is possibly attainable is rank opportunism .development process in India has widened in equality and disparity instead of reducing it to the minimum possible extend. This has been deliberately done in the name of faster rate of growth based on quantities measurement.[11]

Lohia visualized the economic inequality prevalent both within a nation and among nations. Distribution of power was enshrined in the constitution but that remained on the paper .what to talk of maximum distribution of power .centralization is the normal feature .devolution of power and resources from the centre to the states and lower unites has not been effected and consequent centralization of authority and power has eroded the credibility of the authority in the eyes of people sapping their initiative and incentive ,Sarkaria commission is the ample evidence which has been entrusted with the task to the study the situation and evolve the modalities to restructure Centre –State relationship

The realization on the part of Lohia that economic progress and total development of the third world countries could never be achieved emulating either the capitalist pattern of development or the communist pattern followed in the formal Soviet Union, made him think of an alternative path of development. In discussing the alternative strategy of development proposed by Lohia, first, that he was not a model builder in the technocratic sense of the term. Perhaps, he did not spell out the clear-cut alternative strategy in his books or articles or speeches, but the particles of alternative model were always there in his every writing or speech on his economic problems.[15]

Secondly, he was a politician and a social scientist. With the vision of a new world, he hoped and desired to play his own, not so significant, role in converting this world to the world of his own vision. He was not an isolationist technocrat. He knew it well that all problems, economic, social and political react upon each other and are interwoven. He knew that under the prevailing system there was a rift between the general aims and economic aims of the society. In his own words 'these were the general aims of the society: democracy,

truthfulness, good conduct, peace of the heart and of the world, and so forth, and a general state of culture'.

He even spelt out some of the ingredients of the new civilization, his ideal civilization. Those ingredients were based what he called 'an examination of driving forces of the existing civilization'. The first ingredient was maximum attainable equality; second, maximum distribution of power; third, social ownership; fourth, small-unit technology; fifth, a decent standard of living for all mankind in place of an increasing standard of living for mankind within national frontiers; sixth, a minimum privacy of individual life protected from all collective encroachment; and lastly world parliament government.

Gandhi on Western Civilization:

Gandhi upholds, namely Truth, Justice, Freedom, Dignity, Equality, Brotherhood, One World and Peace and Struggle based on Non-Violence. And yet Gandhi is a Mahatma, a man who stands primarily for the realization of truth as a value superior to any other; he was basically a man of religion, or God. He was a saint but the one who would raise politics to his own moral level so that thereby he realized truth as he perceived it. His truth was not an academic or ritualistic preoccupation. Such a service made him adopt the career of a politician, but of a politician who was out to create the politics of Truth-Force.

Gandhi's view of civilization gave rise to his criticism of Marxist socialism and communism. With regard to Bolshevism, he wrote in Young India in 1928 that "it not only does not preclude the use of force but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and maintaining the collective State ownership of the same". Gandhi, therefore, believed that India should not adopt Russian-type. According to Gillingham, Schumacher often said that Gandhi would be rated by history as not only a great religious and political leader but a great development economist. In fact Schumacher was one of the first level economists who understood Gandhi's philosophy and practices. Schumacher asserted that "it [the cultivation and expansion of needs] is also the antithesis of freedom and peace", and that "only by a reduction of needs can one promote a genuine reduction

in those tensions which are the ultimate causes of strife and war". These ideas echo Gandhi's reproof of greed. Indeed, Schumacher quoted Gandhi's words: "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not for every man's greed". Moreover, Schumacher's argument on intermediate technology reminds us of Gandhi's charkha and khadi, when he asserts that "We need methods and equipment which are cheap enough so that they are accessible to virtually everyone; suitable for small scale application; and compatible with man's need for creativity". This again stems from Gandhi's belief that "the poor of the world cannot be helped by mass production, only by production by the masses". Technology should go back "to the actual size of man".

Gandhi had observed the Western civilization from closed quarters. He had gone west for education, and had ample opportunity to observe life and its condition prevailing there. He condemned the attempt to justify the glaring differences between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper by saying that the latter needed more. The contrast between the rich and the poor was a painful site to him. The poor villagers were exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen. They produced food and still remain hungry. They produced milk but their children were deprived of it. Gandhi said that the rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in the society. If this knowledge were to penetrate and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.[14]

The rich according to Gandhi should not have a superfluous store of things which they do not need and which are therefore, neglected and wasted while millions are starved to death for want of substance. Gandhi agreed with Nehru that the real question was how to bring man's highest intellectual, economic, political and moral development, and that in this there should be an equal right and opportunity for all. There should be equality between the town-dwellers and villagers in the standard of food and drink, clothing and other living conditions. In order to realize this equality today people should be able to produce their own necessities of life. The unit of society, according to him, should be a village or a

manageable small group of people who would, in the ideal, be self sufficient as a unit and bound together in bounds of mutual cooperation and interdependence.

Gandhi rejected the contention that economic and social control under a planned economy would resolve the conflict and bring about the synthesis of the field, factory and the workshop. For practice the control has been exercised consistently to the disadvantage of the rural population. He also rejected the social prejudice against the peasant and refused to look at him as the foolish incurable reactionary of the socialist philosophy.

Development: A Comparative Perspective:

Lohia was primarily a political thinker and a socialist crusader and not so much of a Truth-seeker that Gandhi was. He did uphold Truth, Justice, Freedom and Equality but he held them as a socialist and a humanist. For Gandhi these ideals sprang from his faith in Truth or God, and therefore the realization of these required emphasis on the service of the suffering humanity. But Lohia did not have the religious orientation. The difference between Gandhi and Lohia, in this regard, is almost the same as the one between Hegel and Marx.

The comparison of Gandhi, J Krishnamurti and Lohia brings out the distinctiveness of Lohia's insight on time and how the imperative of political action can help resolve apparently irresolvable philosophic dilemmas. This insight also helps us resolve an interpretative dilemma in understanding the transition from the early Lohia of the 1930s to the mature Lohia of the 1950s. This philosophic insight arrived in the torture chamber is perhaps the epistemic breakthrough that allowed Lohia to free himself of the shackles of the academic mode of reasoning and shift to his well-known style of bold but fragmentary theorising. "Economics after Marx" is thus a text of transition: it is pregnant with the seeds of much of the ideas that were to figure prominently in his later thinking but its form still respects the constraints of academic conventions, which prevent him from articulating his ideas fully. It is no surprise, therefore, that Lohia chose not to complete the unfinished manuscript of Economics after Marx, for "this style of inquiry and expression.

Gandhi differentiated between mechanical efficiency and economic efficiency and came to the conclusion that mechanical efficiency may not be compatible with economic efficiency which is a measure of welfare and social utility. Similarly Lohia distinguished between maximum efficiency and total efficiency. The capitalist mode of production is made after maximum efficiency while ignoring the relevance of total efficiency which is based on the productive and gainful utilization of enormous manpower available in India. Like Gandhi he asserted that man should be the center of all economic activities. Potentiality of masses should not be sacrificed on the altar of capitalism based on the concept of maximum efficiency.

Announcement of the industrial policy divided the jurisdiction of operations of public and private sectors. It was also a fact that public sector was thought to be the rapid industrialization. Theoretically this may be justified but on grounds of feasibility or practical consideration this policy proved self-defeating. It failed to achieve its purpose also because it was adopted in hot haste to prove the progressive and socialist idea of the leaders. Lohia tried to bring about a distinction between the private and public sectors in respect of their basic foundation and motivating force. Gandhi opposed extension of the heavy machine technology vehemently. He did not want mankind to go back to primitive civilization but he favoured small unit machine as conducive to the goal of human social order.

Lohia rejects the productive technology of the west as unsuitable to the general aims for which socialism stands. Like Gandhi, he considered this technology inimical to the goals of general well-being, freedom and justice for all mankind, particularly for the people of the third world.

Conclusion:

This study shows that the first argument of Lohia that the twin origin of capitalism and imperialism and resultant underdevelopment of the two-third of the world was the result of the same historical process of the world capitalist development. Lohia was of the opinion that the communist and capitalist models of development are irrelevant and impossible in the context of the socio-

economic condition of the underdeveloped countries. While Gandhi criticized western civilization on moral terms, Lohia's critique of the same age was couched in psychological and sociological terms. Only when Lohia evolved a culture of outward activity and inward poise did he feel the joy of expressing his total personality. He visualized an order of life in which man is free from the sloth of poise and strife of activity. He aimed at a synthesis of activity with poise and freedom of man from both sloth and strife. Gandhi was a rebel sage, Lohia was a rebel socialist enriched by the wisdom of the sage and looking beyond the impasse of communalism.

Lohia fused several distinctions. The Marxist theory of history could be Eurocentric in many different ways: (a) it drew most of its principal material from European history; (b) it interpreted the experience of the rest of the world in the light of European experience; (c) it had the consequence of affirming the superiority of Europe; and (d) it was designed to maintain the supremacy of Europe. Lohia appears to collapse the first three into the fourth formulation. The same could be said about his formulation that "Communism is the latest weapon of Europe against Asia". He tended to be most polemical when discussing the communists or Nehru, his two main adversaries in politics. But he did distinguish Marx from his followers and had only positive things to say about Marx the thinker.

In retrospect, Lohia's forecasts turned out to be a mixed bag. He was exceptionally prescient in seeing the division of the world between capitalism and communism as artificial and temporary. At the same time, his bold forecast about the atom bomb or Gandhi prevailing on the world by the end of the 20th century proved unhelpful. Specifically, he overestimated the power of economic nationalism of the coloured people and the impact of the poverty of the colonies on the economies of West Europe, and underestimated the capacity of the US to manage post-war Europe, the ability of the European powers to cooperate with each other, and the space within capitalism to provide welfare to workers.

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