



# REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

VOLUME - 11 | ISSUE - 5 | FEBRUARY - 2022



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## RAMMANOHAR LOHIA AND JAIPRAKASH NARAYAN'S EXPERIMENT WITH INDIAN DEMOCRACY

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### ABSTRACT:

*When India got independence in 1947 after a long battle, there were hopes on one side and many apprehensions on the other. A large part of the western world felt that India would not be able to walk very far on the path of democracy. One reason for this was its extraordinary diversity, due to which it was said that there are many countries in this one country. The second reason was that a strong opposition, which is considered very important for a democratic political system, was missing here. During this time, there were some celebrities in the country who left the fascination of power and filled this shortcoming. These personalities challenged many decisions of*



*the then almighty Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Among them the names of Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan or JP are taken. The present paper tries to produce an analysis on Rammanohar Lohia and Jaiprakash Narayan's experiment with Indian democracy.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Indian democracy; Experiment; Socialist party; After Gandhi; Building leadership;*

### INTRODUCTION :

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and Jai Prakash Narayan have been prominent among the few people whose personality has had a profound effect on the politics and thought stream of independent India. The role of both has been very important in the last phase of India's freedom war. The incident of Jayaprakash's departure from Hazaribagh Jail served as a spark and due to this one incident, Jaiprakash's popularity increased a lot. Lohia's role in igniting the underground movements was extraordinary in terms of programme and idea. The idea of underground radio was realized by Dr. Lohia with the help of Usha Mehta and her colleagues/ Socialist leaders understood that Jawaharlal was more progressive and leftist than Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. He also believed that Nehru was more modern than Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bosh. This hypnosis of Lohia started breaking from 1942 itself and was completely broken by the day of Gandhiji's assassination. But Jayaprakash's fascination did not break till the end. Jayaprakash had deep love for Nehru, he could never get out of Nehru's circumambulation path. Lohia's self-examination is important from the point of view of evaluation of the socialist party.

Jai Prakash was filled with harmony. Like Lohia, he too did not have a lust for power, but he lacked clarity of thought. They were quickly influenced by the people around them. At the same time, Jai Prakash used to hesitate to give a clear opinion on any controversial question and stick to it. Whether it

is the matter of Subhash Chandra Bose contesting for the post of President again, or the question of differences after Tripuri Congress, whether it is the question of the stand adopted about the Communist Party, the problem of merger with the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party or the Congress Controversy of cooperation with Jai Prakash often adopted a loose policy, could not make his own opinion. Lohia used to be very angry with these methods. Jai Prakash was the General Secretary of the Dal. Flexibility, compromise is needed to run a large organization. Jai Prakash had told Lohia - after all, you have made me the General Secretary of the party, then the General Secretary should have the facility that he should speak at the end, after listening to everyone's opinion, after all, everyone has to be taken along. To some extent, Lohia believed Jai Prakash's words to be true.<sup>1</sup>

JP was using partyless democracy and 'Sarvodaya' since 1953 by retiring from active politics. In such a situation, it was Lohia who taught Indian democracy the lesson of what the opposition is and what it should do. With his efforts, he forced the Congress, which ruled the united states after independence, to drink water till 1967, just before his death. But to do so, he did not compromise on his core principles. The impact of Ram Manohar Lohia's creative politics and amazing leadership ability was so far-reaching that almost 20 years after his departure, many parties who believed in his principles started appearing on the screen of Indian democracy. His concept of 'social justice' has become the basic principle of politics today. It was the foresight of Ram Manohar Lohia that the share of all marginalized castes and classes is gradually increasing in all areas.

It is said that Lohia was a Nehruvian in the beginning and he became a Gandhian later. This means that initially he was more influenced by Nehru than Gandhi. Later, he became disillusioned with Nehru and his faith in Gandhi's principles and strategies grew. Congress leaders, especially the then Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru, were also aware of Ram Manohar Lohia's political activism in Germany during his higher education. Therefore, on his return to the country after doing his PhD in 1933, Nehru placed him in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Congress. For the next two years, he made a significant contribution in deciding the foreign policy of future India. That's why he is also called the first non-official foreign minister of India. After independence, the country adopted the policy of non-alignment, about which it is said that Lohia was instrumental in determining it.

Under the Congress model, one could become a member of any other organization while being a member of the Congress. Therefore, many Congress leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, influenced by socialist ideology, laid the foundation of 'Congress Samajwadi Party' in May 1934. Lohia had an important contribution in this. But Lohia's relations with Nehru started turning sour after 1939. The deterioration of relations started on the question of India's involvement in the Second World War. Lohia wanted that India should not engage in war to further weaken the weak position of the British. On the other hand, Nehru wanted the Indian Army to support the British in this great war.<sup>2</sup>

### **DECISIVE ROLE IN QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT**

When the Quit India Movement was launched on 9 August 1942, the British arrested Congress leaders all over the country. It seemed now this movement would fail. But socialist leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia within the Congress led the movement successfully for the next two years. As soon as the movement was announced, directions were given to the agitators from an underground radio station in Mumbai. No one else to do this was Lohia. By the time the British could find that radio station, Lohia had already gone to Calcutta. There he took out pamphlets and started leading the people. After that he reached Nepal with Jayaprakash Narayan. There these people started training the agitators in armed guerrilla fighting by forming 'Azad Squad'.

After evading the British for two years, JP and Lohia were captured in May 1944. Both of them were tried and were lodged in Lahore Jail. From here they were released only in April 1946. Lohia was tortured fiercely by the British in jail, due to which his health started deteriorating. Lohia has told in his book 'Guilt of Partition' that he and JP were special invitees in the meeting of June 2, 1947. The view of the meeting was as if Nehru and Patel had already decided everything. Nehru and Patel threatened to resign from all Congress posts after Mahatma Gandhi protested. Lohia writes that then Gandhi was left with no other option but to give tacit consent to the partition proposal and join the culprits of partition.<sup>3</sup>

## FORMATION OF SOCIALIST PARTY AND ROLE OF STRONG OPPOSITION

After Gandhi's death, the Congress model was abolished by Nehru in 1948. The socialist leaders of the Congress were given the option of merging the party with the Congress or leaving the Congress. Nehru proposed to make Lohia the general secretary of the Congress party. But he, along with other socialists, including JP, chose to leave the Congress. Even realizing that the image of Congress has been imprinted on the hearts and minds of the countrymen and it is not easy to remove it, especially when there is no established organization and no strong financial support. But Lohia and his comrades decided to become the voice of the opposition and elevate it in the interest of democracy. This resulted in the formation of the 'Socialist Party' in 1948. Then in 1952 the 'Praja Socialist Party' was formed by merging with JB Kriplani's 'Kisan Mazdoor Party'. However, due to differences, in 1955, Lohia decided to leave the PSP and revive the 'Socialist Party' again. When someone asked Lohia on this breakdown of socialist parties, he said in a sarcastic tone, 'There is uniformity between the parties of socialist ideology and the amoeba. Meaning, as soon as the party becomes strong and becomes big, it breaks like an amoeba and then becomes small like before.'<sup>4</sup>

## LOHIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO DEMOCRACY

Lohia and other socialists were defeated in the first general election. But this defeat was not because of the unpopularity of these leaders but because of their organization being weak and having less economic resources than the Congress. It will be said that after this defeat many socialist parties united to keep the strong Congress under control. At the same time, Lohia's principles were not being digested by other party leaders. Be that as it may, he wanted to remain in power in Kerala. On this point, Lohia decided to leave the PSP and revive the Socialist Party in 1955. After this, he roamed around and started joining the organizations of all the backward castes. In this connection, he met BR Ambedkar and started talking about the merger of his 'All India Backward Class Association' with the Socialist Party. The conversation was confirmed that Ambedkar died in December 1956. And his campaign to connect them with him remained incomplete. Nevertheless, his efforts to add other such organizations continued.<sup>5</sup>

The result of such efforts of Ram Manohar Lohia was that in 1967 the Congress party lost the elections in seven states and for the first time the opposition appeared in a position to give it a fight. After this election, Lohia decided that he would strengthen the opposition by bringing JP back into the mainstream. But he passed away in October. However, Ram Manohar Lohia's efforts paid off almost a decade later when Jayaprakash Narayan returned to the mainstream of politics in 1975. In the 1977 elections held after the Emergency, the unity of the opposition parties paid off and the ruling party at the Center had to face defeat for 25 years.

## AFTER GANDHI

Ram Manohar Lohia read Karl Marx and Engels a lot while living in Germany. But he found that the communist ideology is incomplete in the context of India. Lohia disagreed with Marxism's interpretation of the relationship between imperialism and capitalism. Rather, they believed him to be the opposite. Marxism believed that imperialism flourishes with the development of capitalism. Therefore, only by the end of capitalism will imperialism be destroyed. Lohia said that the matter is actually the reverse. It is imperialism that led to the development of capitalism. Therefore, in order to destroy capitalism, it is necessary that imperialism should be overthrown. He linked the rise of Britain to the exploitation of colonies like India and said that without liberating India, the roots of capitalism cannot be weakened. In this way, Lohia described the independence of colonies like India as the most important for the destruction of capitalism.<sup>6</sup>

Lohia gave a new interpretation of Marx's class theory in the context of India. According to him the society of India is not an industrial society. Caste has been the main reason for inequality in this society. The reason for exploitation here has been the caste system. Therefore the presence of 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian' classes here is not like the principles of Marxism. Ram Manohar Lohia believed that the upper castes of India should be treated as bourgeois and all the deprived classes,

including tribals, Dalits, other backward castes and even women of all communities, should be treated as proletariat. Lohia's interpretation of Marxism in the context of India and its consequences were revolutionary. Critics also believe that Lohia's unique explanation has contributed to the strengthening of regional parties along with socialist ideology in India since the sixties. It has not only strengthened caste identities, it has also increased the penetration of marginalized castes in politics.<sup>7</sup>

### **SAPTAKRANTI THEORY**

The Saptakranti principle is also considered to be a unique contribution of Ram Manohar Lohia towards eliminating all kinds of inequality. There were seven points in this theory. For example, apartheid should end, caste discrimination should end, there is no difference between men and women, nationalism should not be narrowed down, should be understood in a broad way, socialist economic model is the best, all countries should follow the path of disarmament and the way to fight discrimination is to be satyagraha.<sup>8</sup>

### **SUCCESSFUL IN BUILDING LEADERSHIP**

The effect of Lohia's efforts was that self-confidence developed in all the backward castes. He pushed the leaders of more or less all the backward castes. After his departure, the government of socialist ideology was formed in many states of North India. This gave unprecedented strength to social justice. An expert has said that barring Gandhi, the number of parties and leaders following Lohia is the highest in the history of the country.

Lohia was a man of contemplation. But he was not a zero revolution leader, he led all the mass movements with creative thinking. But creating an organization has a different skill. Lohia himself believed that he had neither such skill nor faith in such work. After 1955, Lohia tried to form the organization for two to three years but did not get success. Lohia wanted only minded leadership. Jai Prakash was a skilled organizer. Jai Prakash took over the responsibility of the organization since the inception of the Congress Socialist Party.<sup>9</sup>

After the defeat of the Samajwadi Party in the 1952 elections, Jai Prakash's mind started moving away from the party. In the mind of personal defeat of electoral defeat, he turned towards Bhoodan, towards Vinoba Bhave's ideology. He got entangled in spiritual experiments of fasting etc. In the meantime, Nehru wrote a letter to Jai Prakash and invited him to come to Delhi for co-operation, the conversation started. Lohia did not like these changes in Jai Prakash. In the Panch Marhi Conference 1952, Jai Prakash was criticized by the activists for not taking initiative on the front of the people's struggle. Jai Prakash did not have anger about the government of Jawahar Lal which later arose in his mind about the government of Indira. Therefore, in Nehru's time, the spark, which should have been the intensity to compete with the government, could not be generated. Lohia used to be sad that so many movements were launched by him, so many ideas were given, but he never got the credit for it. From 1957 onwards, Lohia continued to try that Jai Prakash should return to politics. Lohia's words and efforts did not have any effect on Jai Prakash at that time. Jai Prakash even said that he neither has faith in the process of shaking the country in this way, nor is he interested in such work. It was the misfortune of the socialist movement that due to differences between Jai Prakash-Lohia, the process of mutual cooperation broke down even though the personality and qualities of both were mutually complementary. It was a pity that there was no Gandhi to connect the bulls like Jai Prakash-Lohia to the vehicle of change in the socialist movement. The work which Lohia wanted Jai Prakash to do and which Jai Prakash refused to do during the lifetime of Ram Manohar Lohia, he did the same work after 1974. If Lohia's bus had run, he would have overturned the Congress plank in 1967 itself. By the time Jai Prakash took over this task, the socialist movement had become very weak as it disintegrated. His ability to give a new direction to the country's politics or to bring about a fundamental change in the economic-social structure of the country was exhausted. Lohia had a great quality of self-examination by becoming fearless. Lohia was even-sighted. Jai Prakash lacked even vision. They used to get influenced by rich and big people. There was a difference in their behaviour. Gandhi had influence on both Lohia and JP. Lohia's personality was captivating yet strong, the words were sharp. They didn't

care about emotion. Jai Prakash's nature was gentle, there was sweetness in personality. He was soft spoken, he did not annoy anyone quickly. Lohia had full faith in the democracy.<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Lohia wanted to make democracy prosperous in every way and Jai Prakash was a victim of unrealistic fantasies like national consensus, partyless democracy, partyless politics etc. There is no difference between Lohia's Sapta Kranti and Jai Prakash's Total Revolution. JP considered the Sapta Kranti to be a complete revolution. Lohia, a spokesperson for intense nationalism, was not a supporter of shrinking nationalism. The ideals of Lohia and Jai Prakash were of high level. The initiative taken by Jai Prakash regarding the questions of Nagaland, Kashmir, Bangladesh etc. is the best proof of his idealism. Lohia had a right-philosophical vision of his own and Jai Prakash's personality had a great public attraction.

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