

# Relevancy of Dr. Lohia Today

- *Mastram Kapoor*

An year ago when the worst economic crisis hit the world, some people started re-reading Das Kapital in the hope that Marx may suggest some ways to face this crisis. Some even invoked Lord Maynard Keynes. But the world is still reeling under the shock despite the massive bail-out at the cost of common man. The reaction of the capitalist world was that of a drowning man who catches at every straw that comes his way. The fact is that neither the present crisis has come due to neglect of Marx nor this can be solved by resurrecting him. Marx's analysis was based mainly on European conditions prevailing in the mid-nineteenth century. Not only his theory of capitalism was not applicable in the third world which did not have colonies to exploit their labour and resources, this also failed in Europe since the revolution did not take place in Germany, France or England, as he had thought, but in Russia.

At this juncture, when the intellectuals of the world are dismayed and baffled by the sudden collapse of the capitalist citadels, shortly after its triumph over its rival, communism, it would have been appropriate to remember Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, the maverick socialist and the heretic Gandhian, and should have referred to his famous essay 'Economics After Marx' in which he had presented a unique critique of Marx and his theory of capitalist development. The following lines from the beginning of this essay sums up Marx's limitations:

"Marxism is quite accurate in its findings on capital accumulations, correct from one angle on question of industrial crisis, of monopoly

and socialization of labour, but factually wrong in the spheres of accumulating poverty, causal class-struggle and the world revolution. Whence comes this conflict between its insight into production and the blind spots regarding circulation? It is not as if poverty and pauperism did not arise or that the centres of class struggle and world revolution could not be located; it is also not that Marx and his disciples were unaware of the relevant facts; it is this that Marxism was not strong enough to digest these facts and weave them into its general theory on capitalism."

Throughout this ninety-page essay, Lohia presented a deep and thought-provoking analysis of the Marxist theories and their profound effect on the world situation. This essay had remained unnoticed so far, among the world intellectuals, due to some mysterious reasons, although this was published in a book entitled 'Marx, Gandhi & Socialism', in the year 1963 and reprinted in 1978, by Rammanohar Lohia Samata Vidyalaya Nyas, Hyderabad. The main reason why it remained unnoticed, it seems, was the mesmerizing effect on the educated middle classes, of Jawaharlal Nehru, which compelled them to overlook or suppress whatever comes from his critic. This essay was written by Lohia when he was underground during 'Quit India' movement. It was inspired by the betrayal of the communists who had switched their loyalty from freedom struggle to the British imperialism. He could not complete it then, because he was arrested and put in solitary confinement in Lahore jail. After his release from the jail he was sucked in by the tumultuous developments in the new Indian state and he somehow completed and

updated it with footnotes before it was published. However, this remained unofficially proscribed.

The main fallacy of Marxism, in its analysis of capitalism, is describing capitalism and imperialism as two separate phenomena and imperialism as the final stage of capitalism whereas Lohia proved in his essay that the two flourished on each other's germs. The loot of imperialism promoted the capitalism and the greed of capitalism promoted imperialism. Lohia said at one place that capitalism development in the United States had needed an identical imperial dynamic, had made use of the same elements as Britain. "No less than 30 million European paupers came to United States during the century and settled in the factories on its lands. Each fresh batch of immigrants stood, at least for a generation, in a imperial-colonial relationship with the older inhabitants, until it got Americanized. That imperialism and capitalism have jointly developed in capitalist history is clearly established by the American case."

With regard to the capitalism's crisis, as we are witnessing today, Lohia is more relevant to the present world than Marx. This can be seen from the following passage quoted from his above-mentioned essay:

"Capitalist crisis are often sought to be understood in terms of the rise or fall in the rate of interest. As an outward appearance, it is incontestable that crisis is a period of very low out-turns on capital, that is almost negligible rates of interest, while boom is a period of high out-turns. It is also true that, after a period of abnormally low out-turns, a new invention for the production of goods used to bring a higher yield on capital. A new composition of capital and labour took place. But this is merely touching the surface of problem of crisis, or even of the rate of interest. Going deeper, we are offered

such explanations as that new inventions caused a fall in the costs of production, this gave higher profits to capitalists and thus restored equilibrium. This is yet not a full explanation. Each boom-making utilization of new inventions and the consequent fall in costs of production were possible only with the fresh markets of large overseas populations for trade as well as investments. It was this situation that restored capitalist equilibrium and profits, and the new restorations tended to be on lower levels of interest. With the possibility of such new restorations now blocked, capital is faced with the problem of a zero or a minus rate of interest. Capital is faced with its own extinction. This is the problem of general crisis of capitalism."

Why has this crisis struck today? It is because there are no more colonies to be exploited, no more resources to be looted, no end to human greed expressed in mad consumerism and no let up in pleasure killing. If the capitalist world wants to survive from this crisis, it must turn not to Marx but to Lohia and his mentor Gandhi who can prescribe the right medicine. For example, Lohia can tell them that human civilizations have declined and died like dinosaurs on account of their own weight, when they have pursued the goal of maximum efficiency in limited direction instead of total efficiency in all direction. Capitalism has been doing the same. It aims at maximum prosperity and comfort to a limited number of people and not total prosperity and comfort for all members of the society and hence produces bubbles and balloons which burst at one point or the other.

### **The Other Crises**

Dr. Lohia has something important to say on almost all the problems of civilization, capitalism, poverty, environment, violence and terrorism.

Regarding civilization, the situation we are facing today is nothing but civilizational crisis. According to Dr. Lohia, the present civilization which was born out of industrial revolution and is also known as modern or western civilization, was already a fast decaying civilization since the middle of last century and was likely to drag on for fifty years or so. In his article 'Round the World' written in 1951, he said:

“Let us once and for all realize that this is a civilization which is dead, although of course, even as a corpse it can still go on for another fifty years and lead the world into many battles and wars, may be other incidents of unhappiness and cruelty, but if a man realizes that it is dead and past; at least it has no relevance with future of the human race, then he can sit back and smile and also laugh.”

His main argument was that this civilization was heading towards maximum efficiency in one direction instead of total efficiency in all directions and had nearly reached the stage of disequilibrium like the one which caused the death of dinosaurs.

Western intellectuals are realizing this truth now, but they do not find enough courage to accept this truth. However, one scholar, Immanuel Wollerstein, has admitted this in his book 'End of the World As We Know it' published from University of Minnesota Press, USA. He says:

“Modern world system as a historical system, has entered into a terminal crisis and is unlikely to exist in fifty years. However, as its outcome is uncertain, we do not know whether the resulting system (or systems) will be better or worse than the one in which we are living”.....

He also advances the logic of disequilibrium saying:

“Historical systems like all systems, have finite lives. They have beginning, a long development and finally, as they are more far from equilibrium and reach a point bifurcation, a demise.”

Lohia expected new civilization to emerge out of combination of strife of the West and sloth of the East, both of which according to him, have nobler qualities of activity and poise. While speaking at Nashville, USA, during his first visit to America in 1951, he said: “When we combine these two, then will be the beginning of a new human civilization, a civilization in which poverty is abolished with a decent living standard, a civilization in which there is equality, both material and of the spirit. Thus will end one phase of history—the alternating rise and fall of groups and people, the regional and continental shifts in power and spirit”.

The shift of power and prosperity, continents' as well as peoples', has been the main feature of history of mankind. The rise of one nation or continent has been accompanied by the fall of others. This rise and fall of human civilizations cannot be explained in linear concept of history under which the nation at the peak should always remain at the peak and that at the bottom should always remain at the bottom. Lohia, therefore, rejects the linear concept of history followed by the western thinkers and recommends the cyclic concept which explains the rise and fall of civilizations and dreams of a civilization in which the rise of one nation or continent shall not cause the fall of others. Can this dream be realized?

Even those western intellectuals who are seeing the present crisis as civilizational crisis, are not sure as to what shape the new civilization will take. Many of them see some alternative in the World Social Forum movement which is at present amorphous and full of uncertainties.

Lohia, however, was convinced about the probability of the new civilization in which the dream of equality can be realized. He saw the present crisis as a result of conflict between creation and preservation. According to him, some areas of the world have created larger parts of the material and cultural goods of the world and want to preserve what they have created and on the other hand, the large part of the world which is not creating such goods, but is striving to create. Lohia's prescription for new civilization is that those who want to preserve what they have created, must help others to create, not by giving aid in the form of junk sale which is exploitation through the back door and corruption, but by inventing and giving them such small machine technology as they would need for their own development.

The problems of violence and terrorism too need some novel approach and Lohia can provide some hints. Election of Barack Obama as President of America has highlighted the success of non-violent struggle and civil disobedience which is the only alternative of culture of violence. It may be mentioned that Dr. Lohia not only introduced Gandhian civil disobedience in America but also trained volunteers like Rosa Parks, who waged a long non-violent struggle for civil and political rights of the Blacks there; that has culminated in the victory of Barack Obama.

Terrorism, which is a product of the culture of violence, needs, also to be tackled differently, abandoning the Bush style war on terrorism which only aggravated the problem. A beginning can be made by building friendship between India and Pakistan. The recent terrorist attack in Mumbai has brought this issue into focus and many good suggestions are coming from intellectuals of various fields. For example

Professor Mahmood Mamdani of Columbia University, New York, who was recently interviewed by The Hindu, has suggested to try some solution like the 'truth and reconciliation' experiment in South Africa as an alternative to violence for violence method or criminal justice, as human right activists suggest. He said that the seeds of terrorism were in partition and Kashmir and, therefore, something new should be tried to heal the old wounds. Another interview of a theatre personality, Madeeda Gouhar, in the same newspaper, has stressed the need to build a bridge of love between the two countries.

Dr. Lohia too considered partition as the basic cause of ceaseless hot and cold war between the two countries. To him Kashmir was the secondary cause. He suggested an alternative similar to truth and reconciliation. Since he always refused to accept the given alternatives like the Allies or the Axis during the world war or communism or capitalism in post-independence India, declaring equal irrelevance of both the alternatives, he proposed and worked for confederal arrangement between India and Pakistan by which he meant not undoing the partition but maintaining friendship despite it. He explained his suggestion in a statement issued on August 15, 1951, from San Francisco City, during his first visit to America. Following passages from this statement will clearly show how Lohia wanted to tackle the problem of Indo-Pak relations and Kashmir:

“The origin and continuance of Pakistan are grounded in the belief that Hindus and Muslims are two nations. If encouraged further this belief will suck all Asia into the festering poison of religious bigotry.....

“I should like to make a suggestion even at the risk of being called an appeaser.

Practically half of Kashmir is with Pakistan and the rest is with India. Pakistan and India should be encouraged to talk no more of Kashmir but to achieve a confederal solution, particularly in relation to minorities which are, after all, one people, and their common citizenship. Partition was a guilt. What has been done may, perhaps, be not undone, not at least by war. But the guilt must not grow.”

This solution is not only practical today, in view of the confederal arrangement already arrived at among ever-warring countries of Europe but also more desirable in view of the wishes of the people of both countries and need to tackle the terrorism in the style of ‘truth and reconciliation’. Moreover, this suggestion conforms to what Muslim League and Congress leaders had once accepted in the form of Cabinet Mission proposals, although they were later on rejected by both sides due to an impulsive statement of Jawaharlal Nehru. Even the initial Pakistan Resolution passed in 1940, demanded autonomous state under a confederal type union, which Jinnah described as ‘two nation who must share the governance of their common mother land’ in his letter of 9<sup>th</sup> January 1942 to the editor of ‘Time and Tide’ of London.

It is unfortunate that Lohia was misinterpreted or purposely distorted by intellectuals in both countries although he stuck to his views till his last breath. Intellectuals of India and Pakistan must at least join hands to promote this idea to protect and preserve the centuries old shared values and common way of life which is unique contribution to the world culture in co-existence of different ethnicities.

### **A New World Order**

The World Bank, I.M.F., GATT (now WTO), together with United Nations Organization and

its various wings were the creation of the victor nations of the second world war and hence they mostly served the interests of these victor nations. With veto power held by the five most powerful nations this world-order was like the caste system of India, where five nations were the Brahmins and all others were Shudras. In fact, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia did call it international caste-system and wanted to demolish it, substituting it with a new world-order comprising of a World Parliament elected on the basis of adult franchise, World Government to be run by all members of the world parliament on rotation basis without any veto power to any nation, and the World Development Authority to which every country will contribute a certain percentage of its GDP and draw according to its needs irrespective of its donation. To achieve this goal World Government Foundation Trust, was set up with one million dollar donation from a rich American lady Mrs. Anita McCormick Blaine. Many great persons were associated with this movement of World Government at that time, such as; Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russel, Bernard Shaw, Pearl Buck, Scott Buchanan, Henry Usborne, Cord Mayor and Lord Boyd Orrek. Socialist leader Rammanohar Lohia was an active member of this movement and he traveled many countries under the auspices of World Government Foundation to canvass support for this new world-order. This movement became for some time, a craze of the post-world war generations and hundreds and thousands of people declared themselves world citizens and many areas were ‘mondialised’ i.e. liberated themselves from national boundaries and affiliated themselves to the World Government. This was achieved either by a resolution in the municipality or through a plebiscite by all adult inhabitants.

The capitalism's crisis that has hit this present world, has once again drawn attention of the intellectuals towards this unrealized but much desired dream because the so called world order created by the victor nations after the world war has collapsed. Not only the Bretton Woods institutions have failed to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor and prevent the economic crisis, like the present one, the UNO too failed to ensure peace and security in the world.

In so far as the international economic order represented in the World Bank, IMF and WTO, is concerned, it is not likely to survive despite the massive doses of bailouts and pumping liquidity in banking and insurance sectors. The present crisis is due to the extreme inequality among the nations. The three fourth of the world is so poor that it has no purchasing power to buy the goods produced by the one fourth and one fourth of the world is overfed having no need to buy further. Hence there is no incentive for production and the world economy is being run on price and interest manipulation and gambling, which caused the present collapse. Unless the one fourth world is persuaded to produce goods which help the three fourth world in raising their productive capacity and thus fighting poverty; and supply them these goods either as aid or on a nominal price, this recession or depression will haunt the world. For this Dr. Lohia had suggested that small machines and tools which would increase the productive capacity of the third world might be produced and supplied together with international youth brigade's activities like participating in developmental work and training of the people of the third world. By small machines he meant less energy-consuming and easy to control machines like bullock-driven tractors, harvesters etc. a fairly long list of such machines, tools and other goods can be prepared

by experts of this field. This will also reduce world-pollution.

This attitude cannot be developed in rich countries unless the whole world is conceived as a single family in which the earning and non-earning members are equally treated in the matter of their minimum needs and the unity of the mankind is achieved through a World Parliament elected on the basis of the adult franchise, World Government run on rotation by member states without any veto power to some and an international development authority. In his article on world unity published in Mankind May, 1958 Dr. Lohia says: "World parliament is the only political way to achieve the unity of mankind. But it is not yet a realistic way. It is today only a profitable idea, a dream which is undoubtedly capable of yielding rich fruit for all mankind. Such dreams, however, take a long time to ripen into reality and never without patience and sufferings".

Of course, act of suffering is the precondition to realization of all dreams. The American Youth, Garry Davis set an example of this act of suffering when he tore down his passport and claimed to be a world citizen. This made him more popular in France than Winston Churchill but he had to undergo imprisonments several times. In addition to collapse of economic world order, the moral and political world order fostered by the victor nations after the world war in the form of UNO has also lost its efficacy as preserver of world peace and security. The international terrorism with which the humanity is afflicted today is in fact the creation of unequal power distribution among the members of the UNO and the lack of sound mechanism of international justice. Korea, Vietnam, Kosovo, Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan and also Abu Gharib and Guantanamo all remind us of worst example of failure of international system of security, peace

and justice. As regards the mechanism for international criminal justice, it has not even been properly functioning, since many powerful countries have refused to accept the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice due to which it has not been possible to prosecute criminals of war-crimes, genocides, pogroms etc. even the perpetrators of the inhuman torture under the Bush administration cannot be brought to justice in absence of the mechanism although Barack Obama has made public the CIA's torture manifesto which has scandalized the American people as well as the mankind in general.

Publication of the CIA's memorandum has been accompanied by pardons for possible violation by American citizens not only of the international convention against torture but of the CIA's own meticulous, if ghoulish, rule book. Since the USA does not recognize the jurisdiction of the International court of criminal Justice, these perpetrators of the crime will never be punished like those Indians who are responsible for 1984 and 2002 pogroms. Although there is considerable reluctance among the western intellectuals to strive for a new world order, instead of revising and repairing the present one, some intellectuals like Paul Kennedy, Immanuel Wollerstein etc are inclined to revive the old dream of a new world-order for which Dr. Lohia was eager and hopeful. Considering the possibility of reviving this idea, Dr. Lohia wrote in his aforementioned article: "The idea of a world government takes the existing situation very much for granted. It may in fact be raised on the edifice of the United Nations Organization. But the idea of World Parliament is revolutionary. It will have to alter in a considerable degree, not alone existing international arrangement but also those within the nation".

Explaining his concept of World Parliament, Dr. Lohia, wrote in 'Janata' weekly, of April 29, 1951:

"If a body of universal law and authority that can administer such a law, is to be formulated or established by mankind, I think there can be only one basis, the basis which nations have sought, and that is of adult franchise. The whole mankind should be treated as one whole, and each individual should have a vote. The adult population from all the countries should elect delegates to the World Parliament and the World Parliament should frame the universal body of law. There are difficulties here also. The World Parliament might arrive at decisions which were not acceptable to one or the other party. Some of those might even go to the extent of challenging the world authority. But have we not the previous examples of human history when we have passed through difficulties? All that we have to find is the basis of the world government to become universally acceptable. There is no other alternative".

Some problems which are likely to be faced in this attempt, have also been visualized by Dr. Lohia. One is of representation. It has been suggested that the number of delegates to be elected for world parliament by each country, may be on the basis of population but they may be given weightage in voting power in such a manner that each member country feel satisfied that its voice will not be ignored. There can also be region-wise grouping of nations and each group assigned equal voting power to maintain the regional balance.

In view of the civilizational crisis, mankind is facing today, a concerted effort in the direction of a world-order is the need of the day. Humanity will have to find out the proper means and methods to proceed towards this goal.