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# UNIT 26 RAMMANOHAR LOHIA

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## Structure

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Please note that in this unit there are two types of exercises at the end of every section. 'Check Your Progress Exercises' asks questions which you can answer on the basis of that section. Their answers have been given at the end of the unit. 'Do it Yourself' suggests some questions or tasks related to the section which you may take up for further exploration on your own. Please also notice that some questions in the text are in **bold letters** (like this). You should stop there, think of an answer to the question, and then read further.

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## 26.0 OBJECTIVES

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The unit deals with another Indian socialist thinker: Rammanohar Lohia. The main objective is to familiarise you with his thought. Therefore, after going through this unit you should be able to:

- outline his theory of history
- state his analysis of capitalism and communism
- list his goals and ideals for the future
- describe how he wanted to bring about change

In addition, you should be able to:

- connect all the aspects of his thought
- define his contribution to Indian socialist thinking
- critically examine his ideas

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## 26.1 THE MAN AND THE THINKER: AN INTRODUCTION

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Rammanohar Lohia was a prominent leader and perhaps the most original thinker of the socialist movement in India. But he is less known than most other thinkers that you have studied in this course. Perhaps many of you are reading his name for the first time. Let us begin with a brief introduction to his life and works.

### 26.1.1 Lohia's Life

Rammanohar Lohia was born in 1910 in a middle class merchant family at Akbarpur in Uttar Pradesh. Rammanohar came into contact with the national movement early in his life through the influence of his father. When he was 19, he went to Germany for higher studies and obtained Ph.D. in economics from the University of Berlin. There he also came into contact with the German socialist intellectuals and political workers.

On his return to India in 1933, Dr. Lohia got fully involved in the national movement led by the Congress. Within Congress he belonged to a socialist group, to which a

reference was made in the previous unit or Narendra Dev. **Can you recall the name of that party ?**

This was the Congress Socialist Party. Lohia and other leaders like Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Asok Mehta and Minoo Masani formed this party in 1934. It tried to radicalize the national movement by organizing workers and peasants. Lohia actively participated in the freedom struggle, played an important role in the underground Quit India Movement, and went to jail several times.

After independence, the Congress Socialist Party separated from the Congress. Socialist Party (Praja Socialist Party after 1952) now became a major opposition party in post-independence India. At this point Lohia emerged as its first rank leader. Lohia and his followers split from it to revive the Socialist Party in 1955. After 1964 it became Samyukta Socialist Party. Under Lohia's leadership his party adopted the policy of active opposition to the Congress government. It organized several protests and civil disobedience campaigns against various policies of the government. However the party had very little success in elections. Lohia himself succeeded in getting elected to the Lok Sabha only in 1963. Before the general elections of 1967, he tried to unite all the opposition parties against the Congress. This new strategy had some success. But Lohia did not live to build on it. He died in 1967.

### 26.1.2 Lohia as a Thinker

Lohia was a man of ideas. Although he wrote considerably, he never wrote any complete book. He once said that this was because he believed that truth can only be seen from an angle or aspect. The claim of completeness that a book usually makes is bound to distort the truth. Therefore his writings consisted of articles or sometimes a series of articles. Most of these were revised scripts of the lectures that he had delivered at various places. These essays were then compiled together in the form of books. The most important of such collections of Lohia's writings is *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism* (1963). Some of his other such books are *Wheel of History* (1955), *The Caste System* (1963) and *Interval During Politics* (1965). In these and other writings one finds in him a thinker with an unusually wide range. Apart from politics he took serious interest in issues related to culture, economy, religion and science and technology. He reflected not merely on the present but also on the distant past and future. In geographical terms his concern went much beyond India. Developments throughout the world attracted his attention. He took keen interest in the most trivial and concrete issues on the one hand, and the major and very abstract questions on the other.

Lohia's political thought was an ambitious attempt to answer such a large range of questions. What made this attempt ambitious was the fact that Lohia refused to accept any of the given ideologies in totality. He was influenced, for example, both by Marxism and Gandhism; but he also criticised both of these. His favourite method of arriving at any conclusion was to locate a conceptual opposition, a dichotomy, in the existing thought and then resolve it at a higher level. In this way he tried to synthesise or integrate several opposing ideas and influences. His thought does not, however, form a coherent system of thought in which all ideas are neatly related to one another. To take an example of a picture, Lohia's thought is more like a big, rough sketch than a small, finished painting. Since he did not work out the details, his system of thought had several gaps and guesswork.

You might ask: if Lohia's thought is like a rough sketch, then why should we study it? The answer is: because it is in some ways very original. This raises another question. **What does originality mean? Does it mean that whatever an original thinker says has never been said before?**

Certainly not. If that were the case there would be no original thinker. When we speak of originality in history of ideas, what we have in mind is the capacity to connect older ideas in a new manner. Take the example of Gandhi's technique of Satyagraha. The ideas of non-violence, truth and resistance against injustice were well known even before Gandhi. He combined these ideas for the first time and applied these to a new area of politics. This was his originality. It is in this sense that we speak of Lohia's originality. He could see new connections between older socialist ideas, question some of its assumptions on that basis and rearrange them in a new form of his own. Which were the socialist ideas that Lohia received? What were those assumptions of these ideas that he questioned? How did he rearrange and replace these ideas? Did he

succeed in this attempt? All these questions may have come to your mind. We shall take up these questions one by one in the following sections.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) List all the political parties which Lohia was a member of, in a chronological order.

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- 2) Mention two main characteristics of Lohia's thought.

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### Do It Yourself

- 1) Compare Lohia's achievements as a political leader and a political thinker.

Which of these are more impressive? You may come back to this question after completing the entire unit.

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## 26.2 INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

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Let us begin by asking you a question: **What was Lohia's intellectual Context?**

You must not have found this a difficult question to answer. Perhaps many of you took a hint from the very structure of this course. This unit on Lohia is a part of the block called 'Indian socialist thought'. This is Lohia's immediate intellectual context. If your answer to this question was that modern Indian political thought is Lohia's intellectual context, even then you were not wrong. This is the larger intellectual setting in which Lohia's ideas were situated. Like any other thinker, Lohia also received some central concerns and questions from his context. His thought was a response to these questions and concerns. Here we need not go into details of these elements of context. You are already familiar with these by now. We shall only remind you of one of its aspects which is necessary to understand Lohia.

Modern Indian political thought developed largely as a result of India's contact with Europe. Understanding and assessing the West has therefore been one of the central concerns of political thinkers in modern India. While all the nationalist thinkers were opposed to the colonial rule, most of them tended to see the West as an ideal towards which India must progress. This resulted into a tension that underlies the debate on the West in modern India. Indian socialist thought inherited this debate from the previous intellectual traditions. Socialism was originally a European theory in at least two Senses. It originated from Europe, and it was mainly about Europe. Later on it got transferred to many non-European societies including India. All the Indian socialist thinkers had to deal with this European element in their theory. Thus the question of the West in Indian political thought got translated into the Indian socialists thought as well. The general responses of the Indian socialists was to accept the original western theory, whether communism or democratic-socialism, in its given form. As a result most of them did not question the belief in the superiority of European civilization. The previous three units must have made you familiar with these themes.

Lohia's contribution to Indian socialist thought can be understood in this context. He was the first thinker in India to challenge the dependence of socialist theory on the West. His entire system of thought was an attempt to build a truly universal socialist theory which took into account the non-European world as well. Lohia's basic argument in this regard can be stated as follows. Socialism is a liberating and revolutionary ideology. However, due to various historical reasons it has till now centred around Europe. Orthodox marxism or communism illustrates this

dependence. Even those socialists who reject communism tend to mix some features of communism and capitalism, both of which are European products. That is why socialism has failed to perform a revolutionary role in the non-European world. There it becomes another tool for establishing European superiority. The way out of this situation is a new ideology or doctrine of socialism. Our task is to search for theoretical foundations of this new doctrine. It involves undertaking a fresh historical analysis, setting new goals and devising more appropriate strategies keeping the non-western experience in mind. This is the task that Lohia set for himself and tried to fulfil throughout his life.

Let us have a closer look at this three-fold task. Every political actor and thinker faces the following three questions:

- i) What is the existing situation? This involves a factual **analysis** of the present and, if necessary, the past and future tendencies.
- ii) What should a desirable order look like? This requires setting **goals** for the future.
- iii) How should we go from the present to the desirable? This depends on the first two answers and requires consideration of the method or **strategy** for bringing about the desired change.

These three tasks are not independent of one another. No analysis is merely factual. It is always influenced by considerations of good and bad. The goals are not simply ideals. They are limited by what is possible in a given situation. The method clearly depends on where we are and the kind of goals we set. The division presented above is only for the sake of simplicity in presentation of ideas. In the next three sections we shall discuss one by one how Lohia responded to the three questions mentioned above. You would remember that in all these respects, Lohia's task is to remove **Euro-centric** assumptions i.e. basic ideas centred around Europe, from the existing socialist theory and to build an alternative theory in its place.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

**Note:** 1) Use the space given below for your answer.  
2) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What distinguishes Lohia from all other socialist thinkers in modern India? State only the main point.

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- 2) Fill in the blanks:

Lohia's main criticism of the received socialist theory was that it depended on ..... The task, therefore, was to build a truly ..... socialist theory which took ..... experience into account. This involved searching for new ..... of what exists, new ..... for future and new ..... for change from the present to the desired future.

#### Do It Yourself

- 1) How did other thinkers, particularly other socialist thinkers, that you have studied in this course react to the West? Can you write a note on responses to the West in Indian political thought?
- 2) The threefold classification of tasks of political theory stated above can be used widely. Try to use it in the case of every political thinker that you study. Also think of your own answers to these questions for better comprehension of the rest of the unit.

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## 26.3 ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING ORDER

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Understanding a society is like drawing a map. A good map does not and should not record all the details. Similarly, analysing a society does not mean trying to describe all its innumerable events and their details. Like a map, a good analysis of society must select some significant facts and show their connections. This can be done in several ways. One of these is the method of historical analysis. According to this we

can recognise the significant facts and show their inter-connections only by observing the society over a period of time and by relating the present to the past. Since Lohia's analysis follows this method, let us have a closer look at it.

It is common for all of us to think that historical events have causes. But if someone asks you 'what is the moving force behind history as a whole?' you might find it an unusual question. The form of inquiry which raises and tries to answer such a question is called philosophy of history. Everyone who accepts historical method need not also accept philosophy of history. This form of inquiry was popular among the 19th century European thinkers like Hegel and Marx, and some historians in the first half of the 20th century like Toynbee and Spengler. The basic assumption of philosophy of history is that behind the disorderly appearance, events in history show the working of some fundamental ordering principle which should be discovered. For example, according to Marx's theory of history, history of mankind is the history of continuous progress in man's ability to produce and the corresponding changes in the way in which human beings organise their social life. He found the following sequence of fundamental social changes in history: primitive communism — slavery — feudalism — capitalism. His theory also indicates the next step in the progress of history: socialism.

### 26.3.1 Lohia's Theory of History

A critique of Marx's theory of history is the starting point of Lohia's own theory of history as stated in his book **Wheel of History**. His main criticism against Marx's theory was that it projects a reading of European history as the history of mankind. As an alternative to it, he developed his own version of philosophy of history. According to his theory there are two main principles which explain the movement of history. The first principle relates to the struggle among various societies for supremacy in terms of power and prosperity. According to Lohia, in this respect history moves like a cycle, i.e., no society can stay at the top for ever. Throughout history the centre of power and prosperity has shifted from one region of the world to another. The second principle is about the internal social organisation of any society. In every society there is a constant shift between two kinds of social divisions: one permits social mobility, the other does not. The one that allows people to move to higher or lower positions is 'class'. The other which freezed individuals in the social position they were born in is 'caste'. So every society oscillates between class and a caste. You would have noticed that for Lohia the meaning of both these words differs from their common usage.

The central idea of Lohia's theory of history is that both the principles described above are related to each other: the external and the internal changes take place together. A society which is at the centre of the world tends to have class division; a society which has lost the external struggle develops caste system. **Can you see what connects the two principles?**

It is not simply a matter of chance. The connecting link, according to Lohia, is the search for technological efficiency by every society. When a society succeeds in attaining increasing levels of efficiency, this success has both internal and external consequences. Externally, that society rises in power in relation to other societies. Internally, it can accommodate social struggle for mobility. However, such maximization takes place only in one or two dimensions, and at the cost of all other dimensions. Therefore after some time this process reaches a dead-end. Then the society starts declining. Internally it has to adopt the rigid division of castes because there are lesser goods for distribution. In its relationship with other societies, it is no longer the centre of power. The centre shifts to some other nation. That is how the wheel of history moves.

Will the wheel of history go on turning endlessly? Fortunately not, Lohia would say. There is also a third principle that operates in history. Unlike the first two, it works for human unity or what Lohia called 'approximation of mankind'. Throughout history several forces have brought humanity closer in various spheres of life: technologies of production, language ideas, religions, etc. This principle works both among different nations and within a nation. Till now such approximation has taken place as a result of external forces, independent of human will. However, according to Lohia, today we have reached the stage of 'wilful approximation of human race', a stage where human beings can come together through conscious efforts. This should

be the next step in human progress. Only such a step would enable us to stop the march of the wheel of history.

### 26.3.2 Capitalism and Communism

Lohia's theory of history contained general principles. But the point was how to apply it to the contemporary situation? This is what Lohia does in his analysis of the two faces of modern civilization: capitalism and communism. For the last three to four hundred years Europe (including America) has been at the centre of the world. The distinguishing features of the modern European civilization are: continuous application of revolutionary technology to the sphere of production, striving for rising standards of living and an attempt to have greater social equality. In his essay 'Economics after Marx', Lohia makes an attempt to understand the historical origins of this system by questioning the marxist theory regarding the origins of capitalism. His main criticism of the marxist theory was that it explains the rise of capitalism only by reference to developments specific to European societies. Lohia argues that actually right from its beginning capitalism has depended upon external resources. These external resources came from colonies. Marx was right in saying that capitalism is based on the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist. But he did not notice that both of them participate in a more fundamental exploitation of the colonies. In this sense capitalism and colonialism were born together. This was the main point of Lohia's theory of 'twin origin of capitalism and colonialism'.

From this Lohia concluded that non-European societies like India cannot develop capitalism. *Can you see the reason why?* The reasoning is very simple. If capitalism can arise only with the help of colonialism, and if countries like India cannot now have any colonies, it follows that India cannot also imitate the capitalist development of Europe. Lohia did not question the possibility of capitalism only in the non-European world.

He doubted the future of this system even in Europe and America. He reasoned that the shrinking of colonies after the second world war had posed a serious challenge to the survival of the capitalist system.

What is the alternative to capitalism? Is communism the answer? In Lohia's view communism only appears to be so; in reality it is no different from capitalism. Both of these are just two faces of the modern civilization. Both depend on heavy capitalization, centralized economic mechanism and large-scale technology. Communism merely changes the ownership pattern while retaining the technology. Therefore both capitalism and communism are equally irrelevant for non-Western countries like India.

Neither communism nor capitalism can escape the crisis of modern civilization. This crisis has arisen, according to Lohia, because its technology has now reached a dead-end. This civilization cannot create a revolutionary technology any more. As a result, it cannot spread any further in geographical terms. Gradually it will lose its pre-eminence in the world. The crisis of the modern civilization can also be seen in the moral and spiritual decline in these societies. The individual has been reduced to a cog in the machine. In the light of all this it naturally seemed to Lohia that the stage was now set for another turning of the wheel of history.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) State the three main principles of Lohia's theory of history,

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2) Which of the following statements correctly represent Lohia's theory?

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| i) Class represents absence of mobility                        | True/False |
| ii) External power leads to internal Class division.           | True/False |
| iii) Decline in technological efficiency leads to caste system | True/False |
| iv) Colonialism developed much after the rise of capitalism    | True/False |



- 3) What, according to Lohia, are the common features of capitalism and communism?

### Do It Yourself

- 1) Why did Lohia follow the historical method? Do you think it is necessary to understand history in order to know the present?
- 2) Read more about philosophy of history and the theories of other thinkers mentioned in the text. How did they influence Lohia? Is this form of inquiry popular even today?

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## 26.4 GOALS FOR FUTURE

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The socialists, as you know, aim at a world without injustice. They recognise that there are various kinds of injustices. But most of the socialists have insisted that one kind of injustice — economic inequality — is the basis for all others: Therefore their ideal of socialist revolution aims at eliminating economic inequality. As you can anticipate by now, Lohia differed with this conventional socialist view. For him it was a very narrow goal. He identified seven aspects which require independent revolutions, i.e., the achievement of any one of these does not automatically lead to all others. These 'seven revolutions' are:

- 1) Revolution against economic injustice
- 2) Revolution against caste system
- 3) Revolution against gender inequality
- 4) Nationalist revolution against imperialism
- 5) Revolution against colour discrimination
- 6) Revolution for individual rights against collectivity
- 7) Procedural revolution of non-violent civil disobedience.

We have already talked about the first revolution. This involves putting an end to poverty and economic inequality by eliminating the gap between the rich and the poor. The next two revolutions identify two more aspects of social inequality: caste and gender. We have already seen that for Lohia caste means any stagnant social hierarchy. In that sense caste is not unique to India. Indian caste system is only the worst form of this type. Caste system results into a vicious circle: caste means restricted opportunities for many, which tends to limit their abilities, and this in turn leads to further restricted opportunities for them, and so on. This process can destroy the intellectual life of a civilization. That is the reason why Lohia was very strongly opposed to the Indian Caste system and wanted its abolition. He was also one of these few Indian political thinkers who were very outspoken on the question of women and their unequal treatment. He said that gender inequality was the basis of all other injustices. Here the goal is not merely to secure economic and employment opportunities for women. It is basically a question of cultural and social values which are deep rooted in our civilization. These values legitimize the belief that women are naturally inferior and meant for household work. Even while defining the ideals for women, they are taught to be submissive and dependent. Lohia wanted a basic change in all such beliefs and attitudes regarding women. He was of the opinion that on both these questions—caste and gender inequalities — giving merely equal opportunities will not be enough. Those who have suffered injustice on these grounds have to be given preferential opportunities for some time to enable them to become equal.

The fourth revolution is well known to all of us: fight for national freedom against alien rule. You would think that this revolution has already been achieved in India and other countries of the third world. But Lohia points out that economic imperialism operates even today and needs to be fought against. The fifth revolution seeks to end the injustice based on the colour of the skin, and to establish equality between the white and the non-white races. This is also an aesthetic revolution because it challenges the bias in our contemporary standards of beauty against the dark skin. The goal of the sixth revolution is similar to those of the liberals like J.S.

## 26.5 STRATEGY FOR BRINGING ABOUT CHANGES

This brings us to the final aspect of Lohia's thought: how to go from the existing conditions to the desirable order stated above? One answer to this question could be: the realisation of these ideals is in the logic of history: these will be realized automatically in the course of time. Lohia strongly opposed such a view which he called 'automotive philosophy'. For this view implies that whatever exists is the ideal for that time; it ignores the negative aspects of the existing reality. Another related danger is the tendency to justify any political action by its expected remote consequences.

Violent and dictatorial actions are often justified as necessary for bringing about peace and democracy in the long run. The danger in this reasoning is that it can be used to justify anything, even if the expected consequences do not actually follow. Against this, Lohia proposes his doctrine of 'immediacy': every single act must be justified immediately, i.e., in terms of its immediate consequences. For instance, if the end is peace, every single act for it must result in greater peace. This principle would ensure that the stated ends are pursued consistently.

You might say that these are very general and negative statements. The real question is: what is the appropriate form of political action? Some of the existing ideologies answer this question by concentrating only on one form of action: communists on struggle; Gandhians on constructive work; democratic socialists on parliamentary activities. Lohia said that these forms are not opposed to one another. Socialists must learn to integrate all of these in their programme. His slogan 'Vote, Jail and spade' symbolised this synthesis. Struggle has always been the main strategy of the socialists. But the question is: what kind of struggle? On this point Lohia argued for the relevance of the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha. The most effective and moral weapon that the people have against injustice is non-violent civil disobedience, a peaceful refusal to obey. Here non-violence would mean that there should be no advocacy and organisation of violence; occasional acts of violence in an essentially non-violent movement are not ruled out. He could say so because for him non-violence was rational principle: violence is wrong because it always proves counter-productive and fails to lead to good consequences. Apart from struggle, Lohia argued for incorporating the other two forms of actions mentioned above in the socialist programme. Elections are important because they are the expression of people's will. It is through elections and its results that the party can teach the people and learn from them. Constructive work is the chief instrument for organising and educating the people which the socialists must not overlook.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 5

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) State Lohia's principle of immediacy in your own words.

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.....

- 2) What do the following symbols stand for?

Vote .....

Jail .....

Space .....

### Do It Yourself

- 1) Write an essay for or against the following propositions:

- i) Political violence is always counter-productive  
ii) Civil disobedience against a democratic government is justified

Instead of an essay you could also think of a group discussion or a debate on these topics.



polity; Indian Communists on property.  
Note down the similarities and differences that you observe.

Rammanohar Lohia

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## 26.6 A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

In the first section we had compared Lohia's thought with a rough but original sketch. That image already implied our assessment of Lohia's thought: it is interesting because it says something new; however, the new ideas are neither always carefully thought nor fully worked out. Now we are in a position to substantiate that assessment.

Let us take the positive aspect first. **Can you list some of the ideas of Lohia which you found new?**

There are many of them which might have come to your mind: the three principles of his cyclical theory of history; the theory of twin origins of capitalism and colonialism; the idea that capitalism and communism are essentially the same; the broadening of the conventional socialist goals; the idea of small-scale machine and low capitalization; the principle of immediacy; the combination of struggle with non-violence and of parliamentary and constructive with revolutionary aspects of political action. You can elaborate each of these and also add to this list.

**Can you identify a common element in all these new ideas of Lohia?**

All these new ideas are in one way or another based upon his basic insight that the existing socialist theory was centred around Europe, and that there was a need to rethink its fundamentals to overcome this weakness. To think of such theoretical programme was Lohia's main contribution to Indian socialist thinking. He did not merely think of this programme; he also tried to execute it. He did so in a non-dogmatic manner by bringing together ideas from various sources. In this he successfully underlined the need to integrate the competing ideologies of his time: above all, Marxism and Gandhism.

On the negative side, you would have noted several weaknesses in Lohia's thought. The first that might have come to your mind is something we have already noted: his thought is only like a rough sketch. Most of his ideas are not thought out in necessary details. **Can you think of some examples?**

You might have thought of the following: Lohia does not specify the various stages of his theory of history; he does not explain why capitalism and communism did not decline after the second world war; he does not carefully consider how decentralization was to be combined with planning; the application of small-scale machine to our times is not illustrated; the practicability of the idea of world government in today's international order is not shown; he fails to make clear the relevance of non-violence in international politics. Here again you can add some more inadequacies to this list.

Let us try to see the reason why his theory had so many weaknesses and inadequacies. This takes us to a more basic problem in his thought: the speculative mode of reasoning that he adopted. Due to this method, he tended to neglect the empirical basis of his ideas. Take the example of his theory of history. It does not explain why should there be just one centre of power in the world at one point of time? Have caste and class always changed into each other? The third principle seems the weakest: is it anything more than Lohia's wishful thinking? All these questions require historical facts which Lohia never cared to give. Moreover, he completely accepted the questionable assumption of substantive philosophy of history that there is a 'logic' or 'principle' behind the entire history. Such an assumption is no longer taken for granted by students of history. A closer look at his theories might also reveal something else. The theories and concepts which seem his impressive achievements are mostly simple inversions of the existing Eurocentric ideas: small machine instead of large, decentralisation in place of centralisation, and so on. Such a theory is very often like a mirror-image of what it opposes. If this is so, isn't Lohia's thought still a prisoner of the European mind?

We may sum up our assessment of Lohia by separating two theoretical activities: raising a question and providing an answer to it. It is possible that a person is good at one but not the other. This seems to be the case with Lohia. His most valuable contribution lies in the fresh questions that he raised against the existing socialist theory. But his own answers to these questions are rather weak. In that sense Lohia's theoretical project remains to be completed.

### Do It Yourself

- 8) Do you agree with this assessment of Lohia? Think of arguments to support Lohia against our criticisms above?
- 9) Earlier we had asked you to think of your own answers to the three questions of political theory. Now compare them with Lohia's answers. Have you learnt something after reading this unit?

Rammanohar Lohia

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## 26.7 LET US SUM UP

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Lohia was perhaps the most original of the Indian socialist thinkers. His originality lies in his challenge to the Eurocentric assumptions of the existing socialist theory and his attempt to build an alternative. This new doctrine can be seen in his new historical analysis, new goals for the future, and new thinking on the question of strategy. In his view, history moves in a cycle which relates to both external and internal aspects of societies. This cycle has today put capitalism and communism—two faces of essentially the same civilization—on the top of the world. However, the extension of this civilization to the non-European world is neither possible nor desirable. These countries must evolve new economic and political institutions based on decentralisation. What the world needs today is a revolution in several dimensions. In order to bring it about, political action should effectively combine electoral parliamentary and constructive activity with struggle against injustice through non-violent civil disobedience. In all these respects, Lohia achieved more in terms of creating possibility of fresh theorisation than realising that possibility himself.

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## 26.8 KEY WORDS

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**Aesthetic:** concerning the sense of beauty

**Dichotomy:** division into two opposite parts

**Doctrine:** statement of principles; system of beliefs

**Dogmatic:** based on unthinking acceptance of a set of belief or principles

**Hierarchy:** organisation (of society) into higher and lower ranks

**Oscillate:** to keep moving between two objects.

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## 26.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

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Lohia's own writings are more readable and clear accounts of his ideas than any of the available commentaries. The best introduction is his *Marx, Gandhi and Societies* (Hyderabad, Navhind, 1963): in this you can read the essays, 'Statement of Principles' 'The Doctrinal Foundation of Socialism' and 'Preface' in that order. For his economic ideas 'Economics after Marx' in the same book, and for his theory of history his *Wheel of History* (Bombay: Sindhu Publication, 1985) may be consulted.

For different listing of Lohia's ideas on various aspects see: N. C. Mehrotra, *Lohia: A Study* (Delhi: Atma Ram, 1978); M. Arumugam, *Socialist Thought in India: The Contribution of Rammanohar Lohia* (New Delhi: Sterling 1978); Indumati Kelkar, *Lohia: Siddanta Aur Karma* (Hyderabad: Navhind, 1963); V.K. Arora, *Rammanohar Lohia and Socialism in India* (Now Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1984). For an understanding of his broader intellectual context see Thomas as Pantham and Kenneth Deutsch, eds., *Political Thought in Modern India* (New Delhi: Sage, 1986) and Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

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## 26.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Congress, Congress Socialist Party, Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, Socialist Party, Samyukta Socialist Party.

- 2) The answer may mention any two of the following: wide range of interest, originality, non-acceptance of any ideology in totality, attempt an synthesis of conceptual dichotomies, lack of complete coherence.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

- 1) Other socialist thinkers accepted the Western doctrine as it was; Lohia challenged this dependence and tried to develop an alternate theory which included the non-European experience also.
- 2) Europe/West; Universal, non-European/non-Western; analysis; goal; strategy.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 3**

- 1) (i) Shift in the centre of power from one region of the world to another (ii) Internal oscillation between class and caste (iii) Increasing approximation of mankind
- 2) (i) False (ii) True (iii) True (iv) False
- 3) Heavy capitalization, centralised economic mechanism, large-scale technology.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 4**

- 1) Low capitalization; Decentralised economy; Small-scale technology; internal and external, social and spiritual equality; Decent standard of living.
- 2) Economic injustice, caste system, gender inequality, imperialism colour discrimination, violation of individual privacy by collectivity.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 5**

- 1) Every act must be justified by its immediate consequences.
- 2) Parliamentary electoral activities: struggle against injustice; constructive work.