

Ram Manohar Lohia

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In News

- Ram Manohar Lohia, (born March 23, 1910) was a prominent figure in socialist politics and in the movement towards Indian independence.

Biography

- Ram Manohar Lohia was born on 23 March 1910 at Akbarpur, currently part of the state of Uttar Pradesh, India.
- His mother died in 1912, when he was just two years old, and he was later brought up by his father Hiralal who never remarried.
- In 1918 he accompanied his father to Bombay where he completed his high school education.
- He attended the Banaras Hindu University to complete his intermediate course work after standing first in his school's matriculation examinations in 1927.
- He then joined the Vidyasagar College, under the University of Calcutta and in 1929, earned his B.A. degree.
- He decided to attend Frederick William University (today's Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany), choosing it over the prestigious educational institutes in Britain, to convey his dim view of British philosophy.
- He soon learnt German and received financial assistance based on his outstanding academic performance, studying national economy as his major subject as a doctoral student from 1929 to 1933.
- Lohia wrote his Ph.D thesis paper on the topic of Salt Taxation in India, focusing on Gandhi's socio-economic theory.

Ram Manohar Lohia Role

Pre-Independence

- Lohia was noticed by the political circles in India when he wrote letters to several news agencies in Europe against the Maharaja of Bikaner representing Indian in the League of Nations.
- On returning to India, he joined the Indian National Congress. He also played a huge role in founding the Congress Socialist Party. He was appointed the first Secretary of the All India Congress Committee's (AICC) foreign affairs department.
- In 1934, Lohia became actively involved in the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), a left-wing group within the Indian National Congress; he served on the CSP executive committee and edited its weekly journal.
- He opposed the Indian participation on the side of Great Britain in World War II and was arrested for anti-British remarks in 1939 and 1940.
- He was arrested in 1940 for making anti-war speeches.
- Lohia along with other CSP leaders mobilize support for the Quit India movement (a campaign initiated by Mohandas K. Gandhi to urge the withdrawal of British authorities from India) in 1942. He was jailed again in 1944–46 for such resistance activities.

Post-Independent

- Lohia and other CSP members left the Congress in 1948.
- He became a member of the Praja Socialist Party upon its formation in 1952 and served as general secretary for a brief period, but conflicts within the party led to his resignation in 1955.
- Later that year Lohia established a new Socialist Party, for which he became chairman as well as the editor of its journal, Mankind.
- He advocated for various socio-political reforms in his capacity as party leader, including the abolition of the caste system, the adoption of Hindi as India's national

language, and stronger protection of civil liberties.

- Some of his works include: 'Marx, Gandhi and Socialism', 'Guilty Men of India's Partition', etc.
- In 1963, Lohia was elected to the Lok Sabha.
- He passed away in 1967.

Major Contribution

- Lohia favoured the use of Hindi as the official language of India. In his own words, "The use of English is a hindrance to original thinking, progenitor of inferiority feelings and a gap between the educated and uneducated public. Come, let us unite to restore Hindi to its original glory."
- Realizing the hindrance poverty would have to development and the making of a strong nation, he encouraged the people to voluntarily come forward and engage in the construction of roads, canals and wells.
- He was famously against upper caste dominance and was instrumental in creating 60% reservation of seats for minorities, women and the backward classes in the legislature.
- He also wished to do away with private schools in the country and wanted everyone irrespective of class and caste to get educated in upgraded government schools. He believed this would eradicate divisions in society.
- His anti-English and pro-reservation policies did make him unpopular among some people in the political circles. He did not also shy away from criticizing the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of whom he wrote in a pamphlet titled '25000 rupees in a day', that the money spent on the PM on a single day was way more than what India could then afford.
- Lohia also advocated the overthrow of despotic rule in Nepal as well as the Goan liberation from Portuguese rule.
- In his last few years, he was against the Congress as he

felt that there was a need for divergent political parties to come to power and that excess clout in one party was detrimental to the country.