CHAPTER VI

BIO-DATA OF THE EMINENT FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF HARYANA
AND IMPACT OF THEIR ACTIVITIES

The history of the freedom movement of Haryana is incomplete without mentioning the lives and works of the nationalists of Haryana region. The eminent freedom fighters of Haryana were Lala Murlidhar, Lala Duni Chand, Lala Sham Lal of Hissar, Lala Sham Lal of Rohtak, Neki Ram Sharma, Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava, Sri Ram Sharma, Lala Deshbandhu Gupta, Chaudhary Ranvir Singh and Banarsi Das Gupta.

They were unbending soldiers in the cause of Swaraj and undying Symbols of communal harmony and unity. They were the man who never compromised on principles and never backslided from the path of their moral struggle. It was their relentless struggle during the several movements, understudy, that awakened the Haryanamen and tried to bring them into the mainstream of national life.
Lala Murli Dhar (1850-1924)

One of the founder members of the Indian National Congress, Lala Murli Dhar, was born in 1850 in an Aggarwal family. He settled himself permanently at Ambala in 1872 as a lawyer. He won the respect not only of his countrymen but the government, too. The government honoured him by awarding the titles of Kaiser Hind and Rai Sahib. But, the bestowing of the titles could not deviate him from the path of serving his country.

In the inaugural session of the Congress, held at Bombay in December 1885, Lala Murli Dhar attended as a representative of the native newspaper - The Tribune and actively participated in its proceedings. Murli Dhar proposed the following resolution in which he urged his Congress brethren to secure maximum involvement of the people:

That the resolutions passed by this Congress be communicated to the Political Associations in each province. The Congress must take some steps to give effect to the Resolutions passed. It is necessary that the opinion of the intelligent classes among their countrymen should be brought upon all the subjects discussed by the Congress.

1. The Tribune, 30.4.1924
2. Ibid., 19.8.1920.
4. Ibid., pp. 4 and 147
Despite his old age and weak health, Murli Char never missed any chance to attend and address the forthcoming sessions of the Indian National Congress. In September 1920 when Lala Lajpat Rai was on his way to Calcutta as the President-elect of the Special Congress, he happened to meet Murli Dhar at Ambala railway station. It was with great difficulty and considerable pursuasion that Lajpat Rai succeeded in dissuading ailing Murli Dhar from his resolve to go to Calcutta to attend the Special Congress. To finance the activities of the Congress, Murli Dhar also offered his services. In 1889, he collected Rs. 555/- and deposited the amount with the Congress. Recognising the services of Murli Dhar rendered to the cause of the Congress, F. Sitaramayya remarked in the following words:

"We may not forget to record the name of Lala Murli Dhar who went to the second session of the Congress in 1886 straight from prison released on bail."  

Murli Dhar, in his capacity as President of the Ambala District Congress Committee, denounced the Montague Chelmsford Declaration by sending the following cable of protest to Edwin Montague, the Secretary of State for India, on 31 May 1920:

"Council strength inadequate, residential qualification mischievous, urban constituencies unnatural, unwielded, Punjab Rules calculated to defeat reforms."  

Murli Dhar's services rendered to the cause of the Non-cooperation movement, despite his old age and weak health, were significant. The surrender of titles was one of the constituents of the movement and he promptly responded to the call by doffling the title of Rai Sahib and became plain Lala Murli Dhar. He also returned his Sanad and Kaiser Hind.

Swadeshi constituted another item on the Non-cooperation programme. Murli Dhar had in fact, supported the cause of swadeshi much earlier. Speaking from the platform of the Nagpur Congress in 1891, he made the following address in favour of Swadeshi:

Every rupee you have spent on Europe-made articles is a rupee of which you have robbed your poorer brethren, the lowest handicraftsman who can now no longer earn a living.

Three decades later Mahatma Gandhi joined Murli Dhar's voice in a similar vein. Thus, Murli Dhar was the first Congress site who considered swadeshi as a great weapon to get rid of the foreign yoke.

The first Ambala Division Congerence was held at Bhiwani on 22-24 October 1920. It was presided over by Murli Dhar; addressed by Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and Ali Brothers; and attended by thousands of people from neighbouring districts of Haryana and Rajasthan. A grand reception was accorded to Murli

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Dhar. During his presidential speech, Murli Dhar paid tributes to late Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, appreciated the services of Mahatma Gandhi, discussed the features of the Non-cooperation movement hoping their successful implementation, criticised the government policy regarding the Punjab and Khilafat questions, and appealed to the people to unite and work out the destinies of the country to attain swaraj.  

By the end of 1921, more than 25,000 people were arrested. Murli Dhar was not arrested but he worked hard to support the cause of the Non-cooperation movement by cultivating Hindu-Muslim unity, encouraging the use of Swadeshi, and collecting money for the Swaraj Fund. He urged the government to release Ali Brothers unconditionally, in a public meeting held at Ambala in October 1921. Murli Dhar recited on Urdu poem packed with emotional fervour and patriotic tinge in a public meeting when Lala Lajpat Rai was arrested on 6 December 1921.

On account of strenuous labour, Murli Dhar's health started deteriorating and the Grand Old Man of Punjab died on 25 April 1924 at Ambala. His funeral procession was the largest within the living memory of Ambala.

11. Home Political File No.76 (D), December 1920.
13. Ibid., 28.4.1924.
Murli Dhar's public life, extending over to half a century, had always been a great source of inspiration in the history of the freedom movement. Throughout his life, Murli Dhar trod the path of a warrior and like a true warrior he died in harness.
Lala Duni Chand Ambalvi, one of the associates of Mahatma Gandhi, was born in 1873 at Manakpura, a village of Patiala State. His father, Lala Telu Ram met with an untimely end and the whole family was scattered.

After receiving his early education from his native village, Duni Chand went to Patiala from where he passed his Matriculation examination. After having acquired the professional training by passing Licentiate-in-Law examination, he started his legal practice at Patiala and later shifted to Ambala.

The imposition of the Colonisation Bill, in 1907, aggravated the poverty of the Punjab farmers. Sardar Ajit Singh, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Syed Hyder Riza came forward to register the resentment of the Kisans. The kisan leaders organised the anti-Colonisation Bill agitations and the government deported Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai to Mondlay on 9 May 1907. Duni Chand, who took keen interest in the movement, was influenced by its leaders, and determined to fight against the foreign yoke.

Duni Chand suspended his lucrative practice at Bar and jumped into the Non-cooperation movement. As a non-cooperator he withdrew his candidature from the forthcoming elections to the Punjab Legislative Council in September 1920. 

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15. Majumdar, R.C., Struggle for Freedom p.79.
undertook extensive tour of Ambala district and addressed public meetings at several villages. In his speeches, he compared the sad plight of India with that of the development of free countries and urged the people to cultivate their age old spiritual and cultural inheritance. He further exhorted the masses to boycott the use of intoxicants, donate liberally to the Swaraj Fund, maintain Hindu-Muslim unity, and be fearless as well as firm in the hour of trial posed by the Non-cooperation movement. He was arrested in January 1922 while picking and auction sale of liquor contracts on the premises of Ambala Court. He was sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment and was kept in the Dera Gazhi Khan Jail.

On 23 July 1923, Duni Chand along with Dhan Abdul Rashid, another freedom fighter of Ambala, was released.

Duni Chand resumed his legal practice in 1923 and was served with a notice to show-cause why he should not be suspended from practising because of his conviction and imprisonment under the Act XIV of 1908. This was the first show-cause notice served upon a legal practitioner in British India for his participation in the freedom movement. It was taken as a challenge for all. The notice was a challenge not only to Lala Duni Chand but to all legal practitioners who wanted to serve their country.

17. The Tribune, 15.6.1921.
When Mahatma Gandhi started the Civil Disobedience movement in April 1930, Duni Chand once again suspended his legal practice and led the people to achieve the aims of the movement. He toured several places asking the people to violate the government laws, to boycott foreign goods, to promote the picketing of liquor shops, and to adopt swadeshi. He was arrested at Delhi along with other members of the Congress Working Committee, in August 1930 and was sentenced to six months imprisonment. Dune Chand's sincerity towards the movement was commended by no less a man than Gandhi himself: "I do hope that you and Mrs. Duni Chand will not fail to sacrifice your all in this final battle for freedom."

The Quit India movement was launched in August 1942. Thousands of Indians were arrested throughout the country. Duni Chand was also arrested inspite of his old age and failing health.

Duni Chand was not only freedom fighter but an author, too. His articles were published in India and abroad. He toured Europe in 1927 to attend the Conference at Cologue (Germany), held under the auspices of the League of Nations, against imperialism. During his stay in England, his article, 'the pitiable plight of the political prisoners in Indian jails' was published in December 1927.

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24. The Young India, 29.12.1927
He authored a book on Punjab politics, the Ulster of India, and it was published in 1936. He contributed a number of articles to The Tribune, The Punjabee, and the Bande Matram. He also issued several pamphlets on contemporary political situation.

Duni Chand was a seasoned parliamentarian. He was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1923, and the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1937. As a parliamentarian, he proved himself vocal and a powerful speaker. He contested the elections through the Indian National Congress.

Duni Chand's services as a social worker were significant. In 1924, he collected rupees 1032 and annas 12 for the Jamuna Flood Relief Work. In 1934, he remitted more than Rs. 1,000/- for the Bihar Earthquake Relief Fund. Being the first graduate of Punjab, he tried his best to promote the cause of education. He served the Anglo-Sanskrit High School, Ambala as Manager from 1906-21. He worked as a member of the D.A.V. College Management, Lahore for a number of years. He founded the Krishan Prasad Kanya Mahavidyala Ambala. He donated funds to finance several educational institutions in Punjab. Speaking from the floor of the Punjab

26. The Tribune, 11.11.1924.
27. Ibid., 4.2.1934.
Legislative Assembly he urged the government to promote the cause of the primary education in the province. Moreover, Duni Chand had progressive views on society. He criticised social evils like, untouchability, and rigidity of the caste system. He supported the widow-remarriage and demanded equality for women.
Lala Sham Lal, Hissar (1878-1957)

Lala Sham Lal, popularly known as Sham Lal Satyagrahi, was born in 1878 at Sirsa. His father, Lala Rati Ram, was a petition-writer in the local court of Sirsa. Sham Lal received his early education at Sirsa. He passed his Matriculation examination from the Government High School, Hissar. He had to suspend his studies to earn and collect money for his higher education. He went to Lahore and it was there that he resumed his studies and took his degree in Laws. He started his career as a lawyer first at Sirsa and then at Hissar in 1910. At Hissar, he earned a lot and started living luxuriously.

The Ambala Division Conference, held at Bhawani in 1920 gave a turning point to Sham Lal's life. He was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi (who addressed the conference), so profoundly that Sham Lal immediately converted himself from an aristocrat to a Gandhite.

Sham Lal jumped into the Non-cooperation movement in October 1920. He suspended his lucrative legal practice. He also persuaded other fellow-lawyers to respond to the nationwide call of the Non-cooperation movement.

In 1920-21 Sham Lal took a leading part in organising the movements of boycott of foreign cloth. He collected all the garments made of foreign cloth from his own family and burnt them to ashes. And then he along with his wife, Chand Bai and

28. Eminent Freedom Fighters of Haryana, M.M. Juneja
29. Ibid
his son, Madan Gopal went to the houses of affluent people of Hissar, collected several hundreds foreign clothes, and consigned them to fire on 1 August 1921.30 A large number of men, women, and children witnessed and enjoyed the bonfire. It was followed by many other towns. Since then, several hundreds of people of his region did away with the ginning cloth and adopted khaddar.

Swadeshi was also one of the items of the Non-cooperation movement. Sham Lal worked hard to popularise the swadeshi, especially khaddar. A band of national volunteers led by Sham Lal made a whirlwind tour asking the people to play charkha and wear khaddar. Consequently, the Hissar district became one of the few districts of India where every home, rich or poor, could boast of having at least a charkha.

Because of his active part in the Non-cooperation movement, Sham Lal was arrested on 15 January 1922 at Hissar under Section 117 of the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Law Amendment Act.31 He was sentenced to six month's imprisonment and was sent to the Central Jail, Ambala.

As a result of Sham Lal's efforts, thirty Congress Committees were established in Hissar district; Rs. 6,000/- were collected for the Tilak Swaraj Fund; 1,000 members were enrolled for the Congress; several panchayats of chamars and mochis, who used to

30. The Tribune, 5.8.1921
31. The Tribune, 18.1.1922
make the largest consumption of liquor, resolved to abstain from drinking in future; and the licence holders of liquor shops requested the government to cancel their contracts. Several students, including his son, Madan Gopal, suspended their studies; and a number of lawyers suspended their legal practice.

During his imprisonment Sham Lal studied Aurbindo's writings and was influenced greatly. After his release, he rushed to Pondichery (headquarters of Sri Aurobindo) to have the darshan of Aurobindo, a great nationalist and spiritualist.

During the World War II, Mahatma Gandhi came forward and took an active part in it. Accompanied by Dada Ganeshi Lal, he made a whirlwind tour of Ambala Division. He addressed public meetings at Ambala, Jagadhari, Ladwa, Thaneswar, Shahbad, Kaithal, Panipat, Rohtak and Gurgaon appealing the people to follow the Constructive Programme of the Congress, and have implicit faith in Gandhi's leadership. Sham Lal offered satyagraha on 8 January 1941 at Hissar. He made anti-War slogans, and was arrested on the same day. He was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. Sham Lal was sent to the Gujrat Special Jail (Punjab).

Not only Sham Lal but his wife and son were also arrested as they had actively participated in the Individual Satyagraha. Chand Bai was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and was sent to the Lahore Female Jail. Madan Gopal was sentenced to nine months imprisonment and was sent to the Gujrat Special Jail.

31. The Tribune, 18.1.1922
32. Ibid., 12.6.1921
33. Haryana Ke Swantantrata Senani p.7
34. Ibid
daughter-in-law (Madan-Gopal's wife) was not arrested but she organised the women-folk to support the satyagraha.

After his release, Sham Lal resumed his legal practice. Sham Lal served his country through the Indian National. He was the founder President of the Hissar District Congress Committee. He presided over the Lyallpur session of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee. He, along with his wife and son, attended several sessions of the Congress.

Sham Lal had been a member of provincial and central legislatures for a number of years. In 1923, he contested election to the Punjab Legislative Council successfully. In 1940, he was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly. Being a legislator, he was quite conscious about the duties of legislators, especially representing the Congress.

Sham Lal had a passion for writing, too. He contributed a number of articles to the Gram Sewak, a weekly, propagating the doctrine of Khadi and non-violence.

Sham Lal, his wife and son had been ashramvasis at Sabarmati Ashram and they learnt spinning and carting under the spell of Mahatma Gandhi.

Sham Lal, opposed the existing social evils such as purdah system, untouchability and dowry system. He led a very simple and austere life. He advocated Hindu-Muslim unity. He attacked begar praths which was in existence inspite of the Punjab Government's orders.

35. Sharma, Shri Ram, Haryana Ka Itihas, p.112
Lala Sham Lal, Rohtak (1883-1940)

Lala Sham Lal, a self sacrificing person, was born in a village of Rohtak district on 12 August 1883. His father was an arji navis at Sampla Court (Rohtak district). Sham Lal passed his Matriculation examination from the Government High School, Rohtak. It was purely by dint of his ability and industry that he was able to take his B.A. degree from the D.A.V College, Lahore, and to pass final Law examination in 1905. During his student days he got married to Nagini Devi and the couple was blessed with two daughters. In 1905, he started his career as a lawyer at Rohtak and soon made a mark in his profession. In course of time he was drawn towards the national movement.

Sham Lal was the founder Secretary of the Rohtak District Congress Committee in 1916. He actively participated in the anti-Rowlatt Bills agitation in 1919. He suspended his lucrative practice in October 1920 to play an active part in the Non-cooperation movement. He withdrew his candidature from the general elections of 1920.

In November 1920, Sham Lal organised a political conference at Rohtak to secure maximum involvement of the people for the Non-cooperation movement. In December 1920, he got the Jat High

36. Fauja Singh, Eminent Freedom Fighters p.211
37. Haryana Ka Swantantrata Senani p.4
38. Fauja Singh, op. cit.
39. The Tribune 16.10.1920
School, Rohtak converted into a national school. He also started paying Rs. 300/- per month to the institution. From February-October 1921, he toured several villages of Rohtak district to popularise the movement. As a result, a number of people enlisted themselves as members of the Congress. Several Congress Committees were formed. The Tilak Swaraj Fund was collected, the bonfires of foreign cloth were celebrated. Sham Lal was arrested for his loyalty to the Non-cooperation and was convicted.

Once again, Sham Lal suspended his legal practice and went to the Sabarmati Ashram in the beginning of 1930 where he remained in close contact with Mahatma Gandhi. As an ashramvasi he learned the value of non-violence better than before and vowed never to give it up. When Gandhi started his March to Dandi on 12 March 1930, Sham Lal expressed his eagerness to join it. But, Gandhi did not agree to it and said, 'why should I exchange this gold mohur for a mere pice?' Gandhi sent Sham Lal back to Rohtak giving him the responsibility of bringing about political consciousness among the people of his area to make the Salt Satyagraha a success. Accordingly, Sham Lal reached Rohtak and started taking leading in the Satyagraha.

There were certain salt-wells in Rohtak itself but Sham Lal wanted to choose a rural area where the people of Rohtak district could assemble and start the Salt Satyagraha. He was

41. The Navjivan, 13.4.1930.
of the opinion that the decision would bring about political as well as economic consciousness among the rural and weaker sections of the society. With this end in view, Zahidpur village 30 miles from Rohtak (where nature has also provided many salt-wells) was chosen as the place for the Civil Disobedience.

Thus, a salt-well was taken on lease in Zahidpur village on 20 March 1930, but the district authorities tried to foil the move. Sham Lal, being the President of the Rohtak District Congress Committee, protested against the Official attitude.

A charge of spreading disaffection among the people, levelled against Sham Lal and he was arrested at Rohtak on 5 April 1930 under Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code. He was produced in the court where the speech which formed the basis of the prosecution (the speech was made on 5 March 1930) was shown to him. Thereupon, immediately he replied: 'I consider it my religion to spread disaffection against this Government.' On 8 April 1930, there was a huge crowd outside the court-room to welcome Sham Lal who was to be produced in the court for trial. When Sham Lal reached, the people raised national slogans; profusely garlanded him; and showered flowers on him. There was a great show of police force to control

42. Eminent Freedom Fighters in Haryana, M.M. Juneja Sabarmati Nidhi, 16762)
43. Gandhi Collected Works, Vol. 43, p.201
44. The Tribune, 9.4.1930
45. Ibid, 10.4.1940
the mob. On 12 April 1930, Sham Lal was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. He received the sentence cheerfully and gave the following message to the people of his district:

I am very happy that I am going to jail. I desire that the fight for freedom should be carried on under the leadership of Pandit Shri Ram Sharma, my nominee, Mahatmaji expects much from this district. This is the first place where he especially sent one of his chosen volunteers. Boycott foreign cloth completely and wear khaddar.

Sham Lal was released before the expiry of his sentence because of the Gandhi-Irwin Truce. But even after the truce, the Congress activities continued in Rohtak district under the leadership of Sham Lal. By June 1931, there was at least one Congress worker in each police station, about 2,500 members were enrolled, and 125 Congress Committees were established. The district authorities were upset and started repression.

During his imprisonment in the Gujrat Jail, Sham Lal came into close contact with the revolutionaries who were rotting in the dark and dreary cells His heart was melted and he decided to save the precious lives of the revolutionaries. After his release, Sham Lal offered himself to the task of defending the accused in the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case and the Delhi Conspiracy Case.

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46. Haryana Ke Swantantrata Senani, op.cit.
47. The Tribune, 16.4.1930.
Being the counsel of the revolutionaries, Sham Lal moved a writ of Babes Corpus in the Punjab High Court, Lahore, challenging the legality of Bhagat Singh and his comrades detention and their proposed execution sometime in October 1930. But, that writ was turned down on 20 February 1931. Sham Lal was shocked to learn the execution of these spirited sons of the soil and pledged himself to plead for the remaining revolutionaries who were sacrificing every bit of their belongings for the cause of their country.

Now sham Lal became the Senior Counsel in the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case and conducted the trials with conspicuous ability and won the confidence of the accused and the countrymen. Acting as the Defence Counsel, many sleepless nights fell to Sham Lal's lot scanning papers preparing for the defence of the young revolutionaries. With his unflinching courage, he thundered in the law courts and hundreds of people used to swarm the courts to witness and hear the arguing elocutionist, Sham Lal. Furthermore, he approached Gandhi several times in connection with the revolutionary accused cases and sought his intervention to secure their release. Sham Lal got the civil liberties of reading newspapers, magazines, journals, and books to the accused granted; and secured the acquittal of ten accused and the commutation of sentence of the remaining seventeen. For more than three years, he suspended his all other activities and kept himself available solely for the cause of the revolutionaries.

While arguing a revision petition in the Punjab High Court in connection with the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case, Sham Lal was held up for contempt of court in July 1932 for having questioned the impartiality of the judges, and was asked to withdraw his words.\(^{51}\)

He informed the court that he had come ready for any punishment. The court only expressed its disapproval of his conduct and inflicted on other punishment.\(^{52}\)

Recognising the selfless services of Sham Lal, rendered to the cause of the accused revolutionaries, Yash Pal and Gulab Singh - two prominent revolutionaries, respectively paid the following tributes:

"Sham Lalji suspended his princely practice during the days of Non-cooperation movement but had to resume the same to earn money but to save the precious lives of the revolutionaries."\(^{53}\)

In 1936, Italy conquered Ethiopia by bombs and poison gas. Sham Lal condemned the aggressive action of Italy and sympathised with the people of Ethiopia. He called the Italian victory as another proof of the curse of Imperialism and Fascism. He blamed the League of Nations, because, it failed in its duty towards an oppressed nation by adopting the power to subjugate a poor nation.\(^{54}\)

He asked his countrymen to learn a lesson from it and remember that no body helps the weak.

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51. Fauja Singh, op. cit., p.212
52. Yash Pal, op. cit., p.57
53. Ibid.
54. The Tribune, 10.5.1936
Sham Lal was a parliamentarian, too. He was returned to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1934 and remained its member till his death. He was the only Congress member elected from Punjab. His speeches, generally full of anecdotes, were heard with great interest. The Congress High Command always respected his opinion. He had been the President of the Rohtak District Congress Committee, the Member of the All-India Congress Committee, and the Senior Vice-President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee.

Sham Lal was also a social worker. In 1930, Hissar district suffered from a devastating famine. The harvests for three years had failed successively in the district and the Harijans became the worst sufferers. He was one of the founder members of the non-official agency which started relief operations. He made an appeal to the people, the All India Spinners' Association, and the All-India Anti-untouchability League, to support the victims. His appeal was responded favourably Further more, an Anti untouchability League was established under his leadership that created social awakening among the untouchables.

Sham Lal died on 8 January 1940. By his death, the Congress lost a great pillar of strength and the nation was deprived of a brilliant lawyer, a seasoned parliamentarian, and above all, a public-spirited citizen.

55. Ibid., 9.1.1940.
56. Sabarmati Nidhi 19155, pp. 1120-21, Eminent Freedom Fighters in Haryana, M.M. Juneja
57. Ibid.
Neki Ram Sharma (1887-1956)

Neki Ram Sharma, a karma yogi, was born on 7 September 1887 at Kelanga village of Rohtak district.  

After receiving his early education from his grand father, Prithvi Raj, a Sanskrit scholar, Neki Ram joined the Victoria Pathshala, Sitapur and then the queen’s College, Kanshi for higher education. Apart from the early influences of his grandfather, his passion for ancient Hindu Literature, his association with Swami Ram Tirth, Madan Mohan Malviya, Lok Manya Tilak, and Lala Lajpat Rai, were some other factors that left an indelible impression on his mind and proved instruments in shaping his future course of life.

Deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh to Mandalay, prosecution of Lok Manya Tilak, increase in land taxation, and miserable plight of the poor farmers, these were the incidents that touched the inner-most chords of Neki Ram's being and fired him with patriotic zeal. He embraced the revolutionary ideas of Sardar Ajit Singh and Sufi Amba Prashad and tried to meet them, but, in vain. In 1908, he went to Calcutta with a view to learning the technique of bombmaking where he happened to meet Surendernath Banerjea, a great Moderate who tempered his revolutionary thinking with his moderate ideas. Consequently, Neki Ram abandoned the path of violence and was converted to the gospel of non-violence. Now, he joined the Indian National Congress and started serving the cause of independence through it.

58. Haryana Ke Swantantrata Senani (Rohtak, 1973) p.3
For the first time, Neki Ram was shot into limelight on 9 February 1917 when he addressed a public meeting at Bombay. It was organised by mahatma Gandhi in support of the Indians living in South Africa and was also attended by Lokmanya Tilak. Comparing the sad plight of his country with that of Draupdi (when Kaurvas mortified her by disrobing her) Neki Ram made such a passionate speech that even moved Tilak to tears, let alone the audience.

Neki Ram always regarded Tilak as model before him. Neki Ram was closely associated with the Home Rule Movement started by Tilak, Neki Ram played a vital role in making the movement, a success, especially in Hindi-speaking provinces. In 1918, Neki Ram along with Afaf Ali was arrested when he defied Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code by holding a public meeting at Delhi to educate the people about the Home Rule movement. This was the first time in his life when he was arrested. By 1918, Neki Ram was regarded an enemy of the British and they tried to win him over. The Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak called him and made the following offer: 'You shall get 25 murbbas of land if you give up your activities.' Thereupon in a patriot's fashion, Neki Ram replied: 'You are talking only of 25 murbbas of land. The whole of India is my own land and one day you will be thrown out of it. Subsequently, his activities were constantly watched and no chance was spared by the government to arrest him.

60. Goswami, K.P. (Compiled), Mahatma Gandhi—a chronology, p.66.
61. Ibid.
63. Sugla, Hardattroy, Pandit Neki Ram Sharma Abhinandan Granth, p.90
To intensify his activities, Neka Ram shifted his family from Kelanga to Bhiwani in March 1920. In the course of his action, his family had to undergo many hardships. Though, the people of Bhiwani wanted to accommodate his family, they could not do so owing to the government's repression. So, his family had to take shelter in the local clock-tower for some time. Lala Nankaran Das was kind enough to rent out an apartment of his house to Neki Ram's family but was soon constrained to get the same vacated because of the fear of harassment by the officials. At that time one of Neki Ram's daughters was barely of five days. Even such hardships could not prove a stymie in his mission but boosted his morale.

When the Non-cooperation movement was started, Neki Ram came forward and supported it wholeheartedly. He felt that no extort the maximum support from the people it was necessary that they must be touched by the magical presence of Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders. So, he approached Gandhi and requested him to visit Haryana. Gandhi, who had already been much impressed with the sacrifices of Neki Ram, readily consented. Accordingly Gandhi accompanied by Maulana Mohamad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Swami Satyadev, and Mrs Kasturba Gandhi reached Bhiwani on 22 October 1920 to address the Ambala Division Conferences. More than 60,000 people from neighbouring districts of Haryana and Rajasthan could be seen swarming at Bhiwani to receive them. It was verily the proudest day in the history of Haryana in general and Bhiwani in particular. Because of Neki

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64. Home Political File No. 76-D, December 1920.
Ram's zealous participation in the Non-cooperation movement, Bhiwani was once again visited by Gandhi along with Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Azad, Lala Pyare Lal, and others on 15 February 1921 to address the Haryana Rural Conference. The Bhiwani conferences proved fruitful and gave a turning point to the movement in this region.

Gandhi was highly appreciative of the arrangements and organisation of the Bhiwani Conference held in October 1920. Despite a large crowd there was perfect order at the pandal. But, what impressed him most was the conspicuous absence of any chair. He considered this an exemplary arrangement and expressed desire that in future also this example be followed. Henceforth, it became a practice in all the forthcoming sessions of the Congress.

Apart from organising the Bhiwani conferences, Neki Ram made several whirl-wind tours exhorting different sections of society to come forward and serve the cause of the Non-cooperation movement. In November 1920, he addressed the students of Rohtak, Bhiwani, and Hissar. Referring to the old Shastras and the Puranas he pointed out that how even in ancient time the young stood for the cause of righteousness and truth. The students were so much impressed by his speech that they firmly resolved to boycott their schools, foreign goods, and to use khaddar. He also urged the schools managing committees to sever all government connections.

66. The Young India, 27.10.1920.
67. The Tribune, 27.11.1920.
On 30 November 1920, Neki Ram addressed a public meeting at Hissar in which he asked the electorate and contestants to boycott the ensuing elections to the Assembly and Provincial Councils. He also showed the hollowness of the arguments of all candidates. The whole audience agreed to boycott the Councils Resolutions, requiring voters to refrain from voting and forming a deputation requesting candidates to withdraw, were unanimously passed. In accordance with the resolution, Lala Hari Kishan Datt, withdrew from the rural constituency.

A similar meeting was addressed by Neki Ram at Bhiwani on 9 February 1921 wherein he pointed out that swaraj could not be attained by the Councils which were rather road-stones in the sacred path of cherished goal. The only way to attain swaraj, he emphatically held, lay in the non-violent Non-cooperation movement. Some candidates voluntarily withdrew their candidature and several voters did not go to polls.

On the eve of the Prince of Wales visit to India in November 1921, Neki Ram was prominently associated with the programme of hartal launched by the Congress to foil the preparations for the reception of the royal guest. To make the programme effective, Gandhi invited Neki Ram to Bombay. Neki Ram readily agreed and instantly proceeded to Bombay from Bhiwani. A week before the arrival of the Prince, Neki Ram and Sarojini Naidu, addressed

68. Ibid., 2-12-1920

69. Sugla, op., cit., p. 48
several gatherings daily in the city, aimed at training the people for the impending boycott. The Prince of Wales landed at Bombay on 17 November 1921 and the royal procession was cheered by a crowd of Europeans, Eurasians, Parsis, and the affluent section of Bombay. Unfortunately, the swelling mob turned violent and burnt tram-cars, motors, several liquor shops, a Parsi Temple, etc. Neki Ram worked hard in helping the victims of the fray. He escaped twice the police gun point. At Bombay he came to know about his warrants of arrest and left for Bhiwani after getting the permission of Gandhi. Gandhi appreciated Neki Ram's services rendered during the riots in Bombay, saying: "Pandit Neki Ram Sharma was instrumental in saving precious lives when on the 17th instant a liquor shop was reduced to ashes in Bhindi Bazar, Bombay".

The warrants were issued against Neki Ram in connection with a speech he had delivered in Lahore. As soon as he reached Bhiwani, he was arrested and brought to Lahore. A public meeting was held at Bhiwani on 24 November 1921, attended by thousands of people in which the services of Neki Ram were eulogised. Neki Ram was prosecuted under Section 153 (A), the Indian Penal Code, in the court of Justice Muir Hussain and was sentenced to eight months' rigorous imprisonment on 28 November 1921. When the judgement was announced, several prominent nationalists like, Lala Lajpat Rai, Chaudhary Rambhaj Datt, Lala Duni Chand, and Pandit K. Santanam were present in the court.

70. Ibid., p.49
71. The Young India, 1.12.1921.
72. The Tribune, 8.12.1921.
73. Ibid., 29.11.1921.
Neki Ram was kept in a cell for some days in the Central Jail, Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai criticised the government's attitude regarding Neki Ram's conviction and treatment in the following words:

This trial and conviction of Neki Ram afford another instance of the farcical nature of the political trial in the country. There was nothing in his speech which could be construed as having fomenting hatred between any two sections of His Majesty's subjects.\(^{74}\)

Neki Ram was released on 15 July 1922 and was accorded hearty reception all along the route from Mianwali to Bhiwani. A mammoth meeting was arranged in his honour at Bhiwani on 17 July 1922 in which he thanked the public and said that the time for further trials was yet to come and the people must prepare themselves for all sacrifices for the attainment of swaraj.\(^{75}\)

Neki Ram did his best to intensify Gandhi's Salt satyagraha. In 1930 he addressed several public meetings exhorting the people to support the satyagraha. Under his leadership the people of Bhiwanit manufactured contraband salt and it was followed by other places, too. Moreover, the people of his region boycotted foreign cloth, the cloth dealers agreed not to import foreign cloth, and the commission agents vowed not to sell foreign cloth to their customers. The people adopted swadeshi, thousands of spinning wheels started working for the production of Khaddar, and several liquor shops were picketed. Because of his leading participation in the Salt Satyagraha, Neki Ram was convicted, sentenced to six

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 30.11.1921
\(^{75}\) The Tribune, 19.7.1922.
months imprisonment, and fined Rs. 200/- for breach of the Salt Act. The people continued the satyagraha even after his arrest.

After the Gandhi Irwin Pact, Neki Ram was released on 12 March 1931. After his release, Neki Ram resumed his national activities. He addressed numerous rural meetings. Under his supervision the Congress volunteers continued picketing in spite of certain selfish merchants opposition. Under the Picketing Ordinance, Neki Ram was arrested on 19 January 1932. He was sentenced to three years imprisonment and was sent to the Multan Jail. But, he was released on 30 April 1932 and re-arrested on 29 May 1932. Now he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and was again sent to the Multan Jail.

When Gandhi started the Individual Satyagraha in October 1940, Neki Ram, appeared on the forefront in this satyagraha and was arrested. He was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment.

Being a Member of the All-India Congress Committee, Neki Ram reached Bombay on 7 August 1942 to attend its meeting where the historic decision of the Quit India movement was taken. Serious disturbances broke out all over India and by the end of 1942, over 60,000 men and women had been arrested. Neki Ram was also arrested at Bhiwani under the Defence of India Rules and was sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment on 15 August 1942. He was sent to the Shahpur Jail hand-cuffed.

76. Ibid., 28.5.1930
78. Ibid., May 11 and 29, 1932
80. The Tribune, 16,8.1942.
After his release, Neki Ram devoted himself to the cause of supporting the Indian National Army. In 1945, he toured several places along with Jawaharlal Nehru and collected money for the welfare of the INA, which was crippled after the disappearance of Subhas Chandra Bose.

Neki Ram was not only a freedom fighter but a social reformer, too. He achieved success in abolishing begar praths in Punjab. He was of the opinion that the begar was one of the causes of indifference of the people to speedy progress of the freedom movement. With the object of eradicating this curse and of ameliorating the lot of the poor and down-trodden labourers, he enlisted their support to launch an anti-begar campaign.

His efforts did not prove infructuous as the poor people refused to give begar and the government had at last to bow before the demand. The Government servants who were adversely affected by the abolition of begar became so jealous of Neki Ram that they started dubbing him as Badi Ram instead of Neki Ram.81

The extermination of begar gave a heavy blow to the government which could not have been possible but for the untiring efforts of Neki Ram. Even Sir Edward Maclagon, the Government of Punjab visited Hissar on 30 July 1921, met Neki Ram and felicitated him on his remarkable success in eradicating beggar pratha.

Neki Ram braved the cause of poor farmers of Haryana who were the grave victims of feudal set-up. He organised the oppressed peasantry of Skinner Estate. He spared no risk to get

81. Sugla, op. cit. p., 42.
the genuine grievances of the peasants redressed and ultimately Skinner had to bow down and an agreement was reached between him and the farmers. In connection with the Kisan Movement he was arrested on 29 April 1930 under Sections 107 and 114 of the Indian Penal Code. The cause of peasantry was so dear to Neki Ram that he persuaded the Punjab Government to concede the demand of a canal for irrigation purposes in Haryana. He toured the province in the summer of 1940 asking the farmers to unite and fight for the cause. Ultimately, a Bhakra Canal was dug which is still watering the thirsty land of Haryana.

Besides, being an eloquent speaker, Neki Ram had a flair for teaching and writing. He taught Hindi to Lokmanya Tilak. He wrote a book entitled Shasan Sudhar Praveshikha in 1920. He published a Hindi weekly, the Sandesh from Bhiwani which made its first appearance on 16 July 1924.

The life of Neki Ram Sharma is a saga of services, sufferings, and sacrifices. He was instrumental in bringing about social, economic, and political consciousness among his countrymen, especially the rural and weaker sections of the society. He shines like a brilliant star amidst the galaxy of freedom fighters.

82. The Tribune, 1.5.1930.
83. Juneja, M.N., Neki Ram Sharma and the Freedom Movement, p.95
84. Sugla, op. cit., p.34.
85. Sharma, Neki Ram, Shasan Sudhar Praveshika
86. The Tribune, 19.6.1924.
Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava (1889-1966)

Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava, a valued associate of Mahatma Gandhi, was born on 8 March 1889 at Sirsa. His father, Munshi Badri Prashad, was a government servant in the Punjab. The ancestors of Gopi Chand belonged to Rewari originally and they had shed their blood in the great revolt of 1857 in supporting Rao Tula Ram. After the failure of the revolt, Pandit Kanya Lal, the grand father of Gopi Chand migrated to Sirsa. Gopi Chand passed his Matriculation examination from the C.A.V. High School, Hissar in 1905. After completing his schooling he went to Lahore for higher education. He passed his Intermediate examination from the D.A.V. College, After completing his M.B.B.S. from the King Edward's College in 1912, Gopi Chand started his career as a medical practitioner at Lahore.

Apart from the early influences of his forefathers, Gopi Chand derived inspiration from Dr; Nihal Chand Sikri and Lala Lajpat Rai. It was Dr. Nihal Chand Sikri, a prominent Congressmen of Lahore, who brought Gopi Chand in touch with the Congress movement. Lala Lajpat Rai's return to India in 1920 also gave a great turn to Gopi Chand's public life. As soon as Lajpat Rai reached Lahore, Gopi Chand came into his close contact and became his staunch follower.

87. Joshi, Shadi Ram, Insanqiat Ke Pahredar, p.103.
88. Haryana Ke Swantantrata Senani, p.52.
89. Joshi, op. cit.
90. Sen, op. cit.
Gopi Chand came into limelight first during the 1919 disturbances when he took an active part in them. By 1921, he had become an enthusiastic worker of the Indian National Congress. To support the cause of the Non-cooperation movement, he gave up his private practice. On 4 December 1921, Gopi Chand along with Lajpat Rai, Lalkhan, and Santanam was arrested at Lahore. He was tried under the Seditious Meeting Act in the court of Justice J.E. Keough. Gopi Chand was sentenced to four months imprisonment and fined Rs. 300/- on 7 January 1922. Mahatma Gandhi condemned the arrest.

After the Non-cooperation movement, Gopi Chand participated in the national activities with more enthusiasm. In the beginning of 1923, he and Lala Duni Chand (of Lahore) led the satyagraha in connection with the removal of Lord Lawrence's statue which made them an immediate target of official wrath and both were arrested in January 1923. The accused were tried in the court jail room and were always brought there hand-cuffed. On 3 March 1923, they were sentenced to eight months' imprisonment.

The Simon Commission reached Lahore in October 1928. A peaceful procession led by Lajpat Rai was organised there. Gopi Chand took leading part in organising the anti-Simon agitation. A British police official aimed lathi blows at the chest of Lajpat Rai. Gopi Chand also sustained injuries while protecting Lajpat Rai. Gopi Chand received two injuries on the top of his head, three on the left shoulder, one on the left upper arm, one on the lower arm, one on the right elbow, and one on the right side of nose.

92. The Young India, 8.1.1922.
93. The Tribune, 1.2.1923.
95. The Tribune, 3.11.1928.
Gopi Chand played an active part in the civil disobedience. He was arrested twice, first in 1930 and then in 1933. In another movement known as the Individual Satyagraha started by Gandhi in October 1940, Gopi Chand made anti-War slogans and was arrested. He was kept in the Lahore Central Jail. He was ill-treated during his trial.

In the last mass movement, the Quit India movement, Gopi Chand, a great Gandhite was also arrested and was sentenced to two and a half year's imprisonment.

Though, Gopi Chand firmly believed in non-violence, he had all sympathies with the terrorist freedom-fighters. He paid several visits to the revolutionary prisoners in Lahore and shared their feelings.

Gopi Chand put the problems of the revolutionary prisoners in proper perspective and approached the great leaders of the day to understand their problems. As a result of his efforts, Jawahar Lal Nehru, the President of the Indian National Congress accompanied by Gopi Chand, visited the Central and Borstal jails of Lahore on 8 August 1929. Nehru had a patient talk with Bhagat Singh, Batukeshwar, Jatin Das, Ajoy Ghosh, and Shiv Verma. He enquired about the health of Jatin Das. The principles involved in the hunger strike and terms on which that could be terminated were also discussed.

96. Sen, op. cit.
97. Joshi, op. cit.
98. The Tribune, 10.8.1929
99. Ibid.
The revolutionary prisoners always regarded Gopi Chand their saviour and shared their sentiments with him. Jatin Das told him before his death that unless four or five youngmen laid down their lives, their mission would not be fulfilled.

After sixty three days of fasting, Jatin Das died in the Lahore Jail on 13 September 1929. Gopi Chand was shocked to know the sad demise and immediately resigned from the membership of the Punjab Legislative Council as a protest.

In October 1930, after a farcical trial the judgement regarding the Lahore Conspiracy Case was pronounced. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were sentenced to death, seven to transportation, and the remaining to long terms of imprisonment. A defence council, comprising prominent publicmen including Gopi Chand, was formed which decided that a petition for leave to appeal be sent to the Privy Council. When Bhagat Singh realised that appeal to the Privy Council had rich potentialities as a media for propaganda abroad Gopi Chand along with others applied to the Privy Council but the petition was rejected in February 1931.

Gopi Chand served his country mainly through the Indian National Congress. He joined it after the Jallianwalah Bagh tragedy and held many positions of responsibility. He was the Secretary of the Lahore Distinct Congress Committee in 1921, President of the Lahore City Congress Committee in 1922, and a Member of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee from 1921-26. He was the General Secretary of the Reception Committee of the Lahore Congress, 1929. He continued his affiliation with the Congress

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100. Ibid., 27.9.1929.
102. Joshi, op. cit.
till 1951.

Gopi Chand had been a seasoned parliamentarian, too. He was the Member of the Lahore Municipal Committee from 1920-24. He was elected to the Punjab Legislative Council in 1927 and resigned after the death of Jatin Das. In 1937, he was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly and became the leader of the opposition when the Unionist Ministry was formed under the Premiership of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. As a Leader of the opposition, Gopi Chand acquitted himself with distinction and credit. In response to Gandhi's call, he resigned the membership of Legislative Assembly in 1940.
Shri Ram Sharma (b. 1899)

Shri Ram Sharma, popularly known as the grand old man of Haryana, was born on 1 October 1899 at Jhajjar town in Rohtak district. He belongs to a family of Maharastrian Brahmins who had settled down at Bahadurgarh after the Third Battle of Panipat, 1761. His forefathers later migrated to Jhajjar, then a princely state. His father, Pandit Bishambhar Dayal was a journalist at Lahore.

Shri Ram started taking active part in the national activities during his student days. In 1917, Lokmanya Tilak visited Delhi. Shri Ram a student of Hindu College, Delhi organised the reception of Tilak. To honour Tilak, Shri Ram arranged and addressed a public meeting, too.

At the call of Gandhi Shri Ram in 1920 goodbye to his educational career when he was studying in the 4th year.

On 1 January 1921, Shri Ram reached his home district Rohtak to lead the Non-cooperation movement. In February 1921 he, along with three other students of his college, toured several places of the district urging the people to support the movement. This tour was completed in ten days visiting twenty villages a day. In June 1921, he was prohibited from addressing any public meeting in the district of Rohtak till the end of the year.

103. Haryana Ke Swantantrata Senani, p.3
104. Oral History Transcript, Accession No. 191.
105. The Tribune, 27.2.1921.
Now he switched over to Gurgaon district where he founded the Congress Committee. Immediately after the end of 1921, Shri Ram reached Rohtak and was arrested on 15 January 1922. He was convicted under Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code and was sentenced to a year's rigorous imprisonment. The people of Rohtak observed hartal on the day of his arrest. After his release, Shri Ram devoted himself to the task of re-awakening the masses who had suffered a blow after the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement. He made several tours in Haryana exhorting the people to deprecate communal feelings, promote swadeshi, and eradicate untouchability and begar.

Shri Ram attended the historic session of the Indian National Congress held at Lahore in 1929 and took active part in its proceedings. During the session, Gandhi put up the official resolution condemning a bomb attack on Lord Irwin. Shri Ram, along with Subhas Chandra Bose, voted against the Resolution and walked out.

Shri Ram worked hard to make the Salt Satyagraha, a success. In March 1930, he visited numerous places of Rohtak district explaining the significance of the Dandi March to the people. Again in April 1930, he visited the rural areas of his district and asked the people to enlist themselves as Congress volunteers.

The people of Rohtak led by Shri Ram manufactured contraband salt

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106. The Tribune, 19.1.1922.
107. Ibid. 19.12.1924.
108. The revolutionaries exploded bombs under the Viceroy Lord Irwin's special train in New Delhi 24 December 1929.
109. The Tribune, 15.3.1930.
110. Ibid., 27.3.1930.
in Kalalan Muhalla after taking water out of a salt-well. He was arrested twice during the Civil Disobedience movement. His first arrest was made on 11 April 1930 and he was sentenced to one year's imprisonment.\(^\text{112}\) Again, he was arrested on 19 December 1931, charged with five cases and heavy security of Rs. 10,000/- was demanded in each case.\(^\text{113}\) He was sentenced to one and a half year's imprisonment.\(^\text{114}\)

To make the individual Satyagraha effective, Shri Ram visited several places of his district in December 1940.\(^\text{115}\) He collected Rs. 1,000/- for the Satyagraha Fund and got a number of satyagraha pledges signed.\(^\text{116}\) After getting the permission of Gandhi, he offered satyagraha at Rohtak on 7 January 1941 by making anti-War slogans.\(^\text{117}\) He was arrested and sentenced to one and a half year's imprisonment.\(^\text{118}\) Once again in 1942 Movement Shri Ram was arrested ans sentenced to three years imprisonment.\(^\text{119}\)

\(^{111}\) Oral History Transcript, op. cit.
\(^{112}\) The Tribune, 13.4.1930
\(^{113}\) Ibid. 21.12.1931
\(^{114}\) Ibid.
\(^{115}\) The Tribune, 4.1.1941
\(^{116}\) Ibid.
\(^{117}\) Ibid.
\(^{118}\) Haryana Ke Swantantrata Senani, op. cit. p.56
\(^{119}\) Ibid.
Shri Ram is not only a freedom fighter but has a passion for journalism, too. As a pioneer of journalism in Haryana, he started publishing an Urdu Weekly Haryana Tilak at Rohtak on 18 March 1923 to support the cause of the Congress. The journal saw many ups and downs. Its publication was stopped during the political upheaval under the orders of the Punjab Government in 1930, 1932, and 1942. The Unionist Government disallowed its publication in 1939 and consiscated it in 1941. Shri Ram Managed to carry on publishing the paper from the U.P. under different titles.

Shri Ram's life style is simple and spartan. He has been a rebel throughout his public life. He spent more than seven years in British and Congress jails.

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120. Rohtak District Gazetteer, p.314.  
121. Ibid.  
122. Ibid.
Lala Deshbandhu Gupta (1900-1951)

Lala Deshbandhu Gupta, a freedom fighter and champion of free press, was born on 14 July 1900 in a lower middle class family at Panipat. His father, Lala Shadi Lal, was a petition-writer in the law-court of Panipat. At the young age of nineteen Deshbandhu was married to Sona Devi who became his partner in political activities as well. Sona Devi always wore Khadi, took part in demonstrations organised by the Congress, and courted arrest a number of times.

While he was studying in the final year of Intermediate class, Deshbandhu bade farewell to his college and devoted himself to the cause of the Non-cooperation movement.

In April-May 1921, Deshbandhu addressed several public meetings at Sungola, Kamalpur, Mangla, Shahpur, Biana, Indri, Somash, and Rambha in Karnal district. He explained the meaning of swaraj, the importance of becoming members of the Indian National Congress, and the outcome of donating for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Deshbandhu arranged a political conference at Panipat on 2 July 1921. It was addressed by leaders like, Lala Lajpat Rai, Hakim Ajmal Khan, and Pandit Neki Ram Sharma and attended by thousands of people. Lala Lajpat Rai was presented with a purse of Rs. 21,000/- by Deshbandhu who had collected the money from the people of his district for the Tilak Swaraj Fund.

Furthermore, thirty five Congress Committees were formed in the district by the end of May 1921.

124. The Tribune, 17.4.1921 and 20.5.1921.
125. Ibid., 10.7.1921.
126. Ibid.
Deshbandhu was on a visit to Delhi to invite some Congress leaders for his home district. The metropolitan city was in a ferment on the question of boycotting the visit of the Prince of Wales. The authorities wanted to put up a show by holding a conference of the Depressed Classes. The Congress volunteers led by Deshbandhu captured the conference and wrecked it. The elderly Congressites were impressed and made him the Propaganda Secretary of the Delhi Provincial Congress Committee. 127

Deshbandhu's active participation in the non-cooperation movement resulted in his arrest. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and was detained in the Mianwali Jail. 128 During this imprisonment he had the opportunity to have the company of Swami Shradhananand who influenced the young Deshbandhu greatly. On being release, Deshbandhu came into contact with Lala Lajpat Rai who at once recognised the sterling qualities of this young enthusiast and took him into his political camp.

Deshbandhu and his wife, Sona Devi, took active part in the Civil disobedience movement. Deshbandhu was arrested twice in 1930 and was sentenced to three months and seven and a half month's imprisonment. 129 His wife, Sona Devi, was also arrested with a baby (Vishnu Bhagwan) in her arms and convicted. 130 In 1932, Deshbandhu organised the 47th session of the Indian National Congress at Delhi. The session was held at Chandni Chowk, which was otherwise declared as unlawful. The police showered lathi blows on one hundred and fifty unarmed delegates and arrested many of them.

127. Sen, op. cit.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
including Deshbandhu. He was detained for two months and was removed from the membership of the Delhi Municipality.\textsuperscript{131} Gandhi started the Individual Satyagraha in October 1940. Deshbandhu, a chosen satyagrahi for Delhi, was arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.\textsuperscript{132} During the Quit India movement, Deshbandhu was also arrested under the Defence of India Rules in 1942.

Deshbandhu was a journalist of international repute. He entered journalism in his early twenties receiving his first lessons in this profession from Lala Lajpat Rai and Swami Shardhanand. Deshbandhu used to take dictations from Lala Lajpat Rai of articles for the Bande Matram paper. Swami Shardhanand started the daily Taj of which Deshbandhu first became the editor and then the director. On 8 October 1923, Deshbandhu was arrested because of his forceful articles and was sentenced to one year's imprisonment.\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Fortnightly Reports File No. 18/18.11./1940
\textsuperscript{133} Who's who op. cit. p. 149.
Chaudhary Ranbir Singh (b. 1914)

Chaudhary Ranbir Singh, the son of an agriculturist was born on 26 November 1914 at Sandhi village in Rohtak district. He hails from a patriotic Jat family. After completing his educational career, he joined the Indian National Congress in 1938 and missed no occasion to appear on the scene. In all, he was arrested eight times and was placed behind prison bars for four years.

In October 1940 when Mahatma Gandhi launched the Individual Satyagraha, Ranbir Singh was chosen a satyagrahi for Rohtak. Before courting arrest, he visited several places of Karnal and Rohtak districts in March and June 1941. While addressing the meetings, he exhorted the people to join the Congress ranks in large numbers and those who could not offer satyagrahis who had been arrested hitherto. He explained the general political situation in the world vis-a-vis India. Because of his efforts several persons, especially the ruralites enlisted themselves as the members of the Congress, contributed to the Satyagraha Fund, and signed the Satyagraha Pledges.

Ranbir Singh was arrested twice during the Individual Satyagraha. His first arrest was made on 4 April 1941 at Rohtak and was sentenced to one year's imprisonment. He was kept in the Ferozepur Jail and was released on 24 June 1941. In July 1941, he gave a notice to the Rohtak district authorities of his intention

135. The Tribune, 19.3.1941.
136. Rajya Sabha, op. cit.
and made anti-War slogans. Consequently, he was arrested on 23 July 1941 at Rohtak, sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment, and sent to the hostal Jail, Lahore. But, he was released on 21 December 1941.\textsuperscript{138} After his release, Ranbir Singh was accorded a grand reception by the people of Rohtak, Ranbir Singh, along with other freedom fighters—Diwan Dilawar Singh, Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, Chaudhary Nanhoo Ram, Mohammad Abdul Ghani Uerashi, and Swami Shiv Nath, was garlanded on his arrival at Rohtak and was taken in a procession which passed through the main bazars of the city amidst shouts of national slogans.\textsuperscript{139}

In February 1942, Ranbir Singh was again arrested after making an anti-War speech at a public meeting held at Sargor village near Barnala and was released in March 1942.\textsuperscript{140} Ranbir Singh Jumped into the Quit India movement and was arrested on 24 September 1942 under the Defence of India Rules.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} The Tribune, 31.12.1941.
\textsuperscript{140} Rajya Sabha, op. cit.
Banarsi Das Gupta (b. 1919)

Banarsi Das Gupta, the son of Lala Ram Swaroop Gupta, was born on 13 September 1919 at Manharu village, 10 kilometre from Bhiwani. Apart from his teachers, the literature of Swami Dayanand Saraswati and personalities like, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, P. Sitaramayya, and Neki Ram Sharma impressed Banarsi Das greatly.

During the pre-Independence days, the rajas of princely states used to inflict torture on their subjects. These rajas were backed by the British Government. To improve the condition of the people of the states, the Praja Mandal movement was started in 1929. This movement reached its height of popularity in 1938. Banarsi Das made his entry into the movement in the same year. The first session of the Punjab States Praja Mandal was held at Ludhiana in 1938. It was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru. Banarsi Das and five other students reached Ludhiana from Pialni to attend the session. There, he happened to meet a Jind delegate named Hans Raj Rahbar, a budding leftist leader. These two young leaders decided to found the Jind Praja Mandal and arranged its first session at Sangrur. With that, Banarsi Das said good-bye to the college.

141. Haryana Review (Chandigarh), December 1975.
Banarsi Das was the founder Member of the Jind State Praja Mandal and with this his life became a long story of incessant struggle against the exploitation of the people of princely states by the rajas. He organised this institution and remained its Secretary and President for a number of years. The move to bring down the princely order and to restore to people a democratic government had since gathered momentum. He propagated educational, social economic masses. The Jind Government poaced several restrictions on Banarsi Das's activities in 1941. He defied the restrictions and earned his first jail term. He was chained and detained in the Faridkot Jail. The police made him slog long distances with fetters on. This caused deep wounds near his ankles and the blood oozed out. The jail authorities thereupon took pity on the young lad and exempted his from hard labour. He was set free six months later. He succeeded in getting the princely grip loosened and secured political rights for the subjects of the Jind State.

Banarsi Das, being a Gandhite, jumped into the mass movement of 1942. His leading part in the movement led to his arrest and he was interned for three years. Thus, his second imprisonment came during the Quit India movement and lasted from 1942 to 1944.

143. Fauja Singh, Eminent Freedom Fighters of Punjab, p.77.
144. Fauza Singh, op. cit, p.78
Thus during the period from 1919 to 1942 the people of Haryana awakened and started participating in the struggle for Swaraj in full swing. Their leaders contributed a lot for social uplift, spread of education, elimination of poverty and above all freedom of the country. The political condition after the first world war, impact of western education and Socio-Cultural movements and the sacrifices of Haryana's freedom fighters inspired the commonmen to fight for the freedom of the country. Their relentless struggle had a great impact on the British government which lost its complacency.