When Lajpat Rai was released in August 1923, the Congress had split into two factions. One of them known as Swaraj Party and led by Deshbandhu Das, Motilal Nehru, Seshadri Srinivasa Iyengar and others wanted to enter the Legislative Councils and Assembly. The other party headed by Rajagopalachariar, Vithalbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others thought that council entry was incompatible with non-cooperation and its result would be an end of the atmosphere of civil resistance. C.R. Das had announced the formation of the Congress Khilafat Swaraj Party immediately after Gaya Congress on January 1, 1923. The manifesto of the new organisation declared that "while the goal of the party is the attainment of Swaraj, the immediate objective of the party is the speedy attainment of full Dominion Status." The programme of the party was to frame a constitution adopting such machinery and system as suitable to the conditions of the country and the genius of the people. Towards the end of 1922 Lajpat Rai had extended his support to the Swarajist group by advocating a change in the Congress programme. In a letter to C.R. Das, written from Lahore Jail, on the eve of the Gaya Congress, he advised rethinking about the Congress programme and changes in view of the prevailing...

1. B. 1874; lawyer; President of the I.N.C. 1926; member of the Legislative Council; d. 1941.
2. B. 1884; lawyer; President of the I.N.C. 1934; first President of India; d. 1962.
4. Ibid., p. 221.
political situation. He wrote:

"I am disposed to think (tentatively) that it will be a mistake to go into the Councils either for cooperation and or for obstruction. The terms responsive co-operation or responsive non-cooperation, are mere phrases which mean nothing. The best we can do is to follow the Sinn Fein plan and attempt to set up a rival Government. A rival assembly and rival councils elected on Government franchise will be a great moral victory.... Politics is a changing game and I do not believe in any inflexible, cut and dried scheme good for all times and under all circumstances." 5

After his release Lajpat Rai commended the Swarajist programme, although he insisted on unity in the Congress ranks. He supported the Swaraj Party for he planned to fight for national cause from within the councils. In the councils his object was to "create such a deadlock as would force hands of the Government to make terms with us and release Mahatma Gandhi and also to prevent the new council for being used for repressive purposes." 6 But at the same time Lajpat Rai was keen to maintain unity in the Congress ranks. He realised, "this is only possible by allowing a pro-council friends liberty of conscience and action." 7 He did not want to repeat a Surat like split in the history of Congress.

Meanwhile a special session of the Indian National Congress was held at Delhi in September 1923. Its main aim was to consider the demand of Swaraj Party. Lajpat Rai could not attend the special session owing to ill health. He, however, issued a manifesto appealing for unity. He said that a mass civil disobedience on a large scale had, for the time being, to be indefinitely postponed and that in the absence of Gandhi their task consisted of "securing

6. The Tribune (Lahore), September 23, 1923.
7. Ibid.
his release, discovering another personality who may, in course of time, take his place, in the meantime keeping the flag flying and devising some other methods to compel the Government to negotiate." He also advocated that the council boycott should be suspended and that the elections should be contested. The candidates should follow the programme which would be laid down for them at the special session of the Congress at Delhi. His advice was heeded, and consequently the Delhi Congress resolved to concede freedom to those who were in favour of parliamentary activity and suspended all propaganda against entering the councils.

The election campaign for the Swarajists in Punjab towards the end of 1923 was virtually run by Lajpat Rai. He toured the province extensively, made forceful speeches in favour of Swaraj Party and wrote innumerable articles. By his powerful exertions he greatly contributed to the success of the party. He could not contest himself on account of the restriction imposed upon him as he had undergone two years' imprisonment. On October 25, 1923, in an appeal to his countrymen, Lajpat Rai said: "Only Swarajists should be sent to the new councils. Every Indian who signs the Swaraj Party's creed is a Swarajist. Those who can not sign that creed should unhesitatingly make room for Swarajists...." The Swarajists had a striking success in the elections for the Legislative Assembly, securing 45 elected seats in a House of 145. It was better organized in the Punjab. The official report of the Punjab admitted, "Its leaders undoubtedly exercised great influence

9. Ibid.
10. The Tribune (Lahore), October 25, 1923.
over the people and they were personally responsible for the success attained by the Swarajists.\textsuperscript{11}

As mentioned above Lajpat Rai could not contest the election in 1923 on account of the ban imposed by the Government. But his absence from the central Legislative Assembly was actually felt by the Swarajists. They, therefore, worked for his election. After the expiry of ban on his election in 1925 Lala Hansraj resigned from the Assembly, thus making it possible for Lajpat Rai to enter the Central Legislative Assembly. His election to the Assembly on December 8, 1925 proved a great source of strength to the opposition. After taking the oath of membership, he formally joined the Swaraj Party.

Towards the end of 1925 the Swaraj Party was rocked by an inner dissension, and the cleavage deepened with the emergence of the "Responsivist" group which included K.R. Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar and Balkrishna Shivaram Koonje.\textsuperscript{12} This new group stood for co-operation, or opposition to the bureaucracy in response to or in accordance with the changing circumstances. They realised the hollowness of obstructionist and "walkout" policy. The division within the Swaraj Party was due to the acceptance of official posts and cooperation with the Government. S.B. Tambe, a prominent leader of the Swarajists in the Central Province, had accepted the membership of the Executive Council of the province and V.J. Patel was elected as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. These incidents led to a bitter controversy. Motilal Nehru, the leader

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Administrative Report of the Punjab for the year 1923-24, para-4, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{12} B. 1872; medical doctor; member of the Central Legislative Assembly 1926-30; President of the Hindu Mahasabha 1926; d. 1948.
\end{itemize}
of the Party, demanded from Tambe an explanation and called a meeting of the All India Swaraj Party to consider the matter at Nagpur. Before the meeting took place, Jayakar, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the Legislative Council of Bombay, defended Tambe and issued a statement asserting that Tambe's action was analogous to the acceptance of the salaried post of the President of the Legislative Assembly by V.J. Patel. He suggested a re-examination of the policy of refusing offices and asked whether time had not come when places of influence, power and responsibility ought to be unhesitatingly taken. The resolution of the Executive Committee of the Party at Nagpur on November 2, 1925 condemning Tambe's action as violation of the constitution and a gross breach of discipline had the unfortunate effect of uniting most of the Maharashtrian members of the Legislature against the Executive Committee of the Swaraj Party. Jayakar and Kelkar resigned from the Executive Committee and formed a new party of responsive cooperationists with the intention of giving a fillip to the council entry programme "by occupying every place of power, initiative and responsibility and giving no quarter to the bureaucracy."  

On his part, Lajpat Rai was opposed to "uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction," and repudiated the Swaraj Party's policy of indiscriminate walkouts from the Legislatures. He had sympathy with those who were in favour of responsive cooperation.

14. B. 1877; associated with Home Rule Agitation 1914-18; member of the Congress delegation to England 1919; member of the Legislative Assembly; d. 1934.
though he did not entirely agree with their views. He was keen to avert a split in the Swaraj Party and made every attempt to bring about reconciliation between the two groups. To heal the breach in the Swaraj Party, Lajpat Rai wrote articles in his organ *The People*. He also made efforts along with Mrs. Naidu to bring about a compromise between the two warring wings of the Party. They succeeded in arranging a conference in Bombay between the leading responsive cooperators and the orthodox Swarajists on November 4, 1925. Amongst those present at the Conference were Motilal Nehru, Jayakar, Kelkar, Srinivasa Iyengar, A. Rangaswami Iyengar, Tulsi Chandra Goswami,¹⁵ Jamnadas Mehta, Abhyankar and Moonje. The advice given by Lajpat Rai and Mrs. Naidu, who were also present, was heeded. It was decided that the vocal hostilities should close on either side till the Congress session to be held at Kanpur decided the question one way or the other.¹⁶ At the Kanpur session the Congress resolved to accept the original Swarajist programme, but Lajpat Rai decided to remain with the Swaraj Party, in preference to joining the Responsive group.

Lajpat Rai remained a member of Swaraj Party from January 1926 to August 1926, a period of about eight months. He was a member of the Central Legislative Assembly from 1925 to 1928. He made the fullest use of the forum provided by the membership of the Assembly in espousing India's cause. In a number of stirring and memorable speeches he brought about the evils effects of British rule in terms of growing poverty, unemployment, price-rise and

¹⁵. B. 1898; member of the Swaraj Party; member of the Central Legislative Assembly; d. 1957.
¹⁶. The Indian Quarterly Register, July-December, 1925, Vol.II, p. 56.
exploitation of India's resources to the advantage of Britain. Forcefully and eloquently he demanded that India must be given self-rule. Lala Lajpat Rai had emerged as an outstanding leader of the Swaraj Party. By his selfless work, honesty of purpose and dedicated nationalistic activity he won for himself a place of highest respect in the Swaraj circles. It was largely on account of his advice and influence that a split in the party was averted.

On August 24, 1926, Lajpat Rai resigned from the Swaraj Party when the Legislative Assembly was in session at Simla, and formed along with I.N. Malaviya the Congress Nationalist Party. The reason for such a step are not far to seek. Firstly, he did not like the walkout policy of the Swarajist leaders and believed, "the walkout has injured the interests of the country in general and of the Hindus in particular."17 Some Muslim members of the legislature did not adapt the policy of walkout like the Swarajists. They cooperated with the Government, and gave full support to it on all important issues. As a result of this support they were getting many advantages and concessions from the Government in terms of jobs, share in the services etc. Lajpat Rai reacted sharply to this and considered it harmful to other communities. He was of the opinion that "one community is determined to use the Reforms and legislatures to their best advantage. If the other communities keep out an attitude of obstruction, they go to wall."18 Secondly, he wanted strong opposition party in the

17. The Tribune (Lahore), September 5, 1926.
18. Ibid.
legislatures. He observed that the opposition to the Government largely rested on the elected Hindus and some Muslims. "If they walk out, Lajpat Rai writes, "this opposition is considerably weakened." Thirdly, he also believed that the Swarajists had failed in their original programme to wreck the Reforms from within.

Lajpat Rai was essentially an independent person in politics. Before his election to the assembly he had often criticised the Swaraj Party, and he disapproved of its policy of continuous obstruction. His views on communal problem too were not in harmony with those of Swarajist leaders. Inspite of these differences he had joined the Swaraj Party in January 1926 when he was elected to the Assembly. At the Kanpur session he felt inclined towards the responsivists, but when hard pressed by his friends he decided to support the Swarajists. He bitterly criticised the continuous obstructionism of the Party. In March 1926 even before the vote on the budget was taken the Swaraj Party staged a walkout in the Central Legislative Assembly. This evoked a strong protest from Lajpat Rai. In the summer of 1926 Lajpat Rai attended the International Labour Conference at Geneva and also visited Britain and France. On his return in August 1926 he found the Swarajists still following the "walkout" policy. This distressed Lajpat Rai. He wanted that the Swaraj Party must attend the monsoon session of the Assembly because two important issues - the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill and the communal resolution were to be discussed. But the Party turned

19. The People (Lahore), September 12, 1926.
20. Ibid.
down his proposal. Unable to bear the strain of Party discipline, Lajpat Rai decided to quit. In his letter of resignation he wrote to Motilal Nehru:

"Swaraj Party as at present constituted is distinctly harmful to the Hindus not so much in the matter of their differences with the Muslims as it is so, intrinsically in matters between the Government and the Hindus. The walkout has positively been more harmful to the Hindus than to any other class or community. You say, you came to the Assembly to wreck the Reforms and everything that it implied, although you have not acted in that spirit, and have attended the Assembly for one purpose at least even after the "walk out". I, however, did not come to the Assembly with that object or on that principle, nor did I stand for election on the Swaraj Party ticket."\(^{22}\)

After his resignation from the Swaraj Party, Lajpat Rai collaborated with Madan Mohan Malaviya in organizing the Independent Congress Party in the first week of September.\(^{23}\) The Party was similar to the Nationalist Party Malaviya had launched in Delhi in March and which had been merged subsequently with the Responsive Co-operation Party. The new party expressed itself against the "walkout" programme of the Swarajists and also against the Congress policy on the communal question. Though committed to the ideal of communal unity, the new party was not in favour of achieving that at the cost of legitimate Hindu interests.

Lajpat Rai's break with the Swaraj Party gave birth to a severe controversy in the Punjab Provincial Congress. Earlier, there was not much opposition to the Lala in the provincial Congress on account of his great influence. But now Satyapal, the Secretary

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) The president was Lajpat Rai, general secretary, Malaviya, joint secretaries, E. Raghavendra Rao (C.P. Hindustani) and Lala Ram Prasad (Bihar).
of the Punjab Congress, Duni Chand of Ambala, Gopichand and Girdhari Lal became more vocal in their criticism against him. They were close to Motilal Nehru who had also become bitter due to Lajpat Rai's resignation from the Swaraj Party. The forthcoming election of the Legislative Assembly made the differences wider and acute. Lajpat Rai wanted to contest the election in his province as an independent candidate. He, therefore, refused to sign the Congress pledge in August 1926. Henceforth Satyapal recommended to the leaders of the All India Congress Committee to strike off his name from the list of the Congress candidates. Gandhi who had great regard for Lajpat Rai strongly opposed Satyapal's recommendation. In a letter dated August 23, 1926, Gandhi wrote: "I understand what you say, but I do not appreciate your attitude towards Lalaji. There are many matters on which I do not agree with him, but his sincerity, his love of the country are undeniable. His self-sacrifice and unbroken record of service entitle him to our respect and affection and make him indispensible for any public work in the Punjab." Even this letter of Gandhi could not change the mind of the opponents of Lajpat Rai, and the gulf in the Punjab Pradesh Congress continued.

On the eve of the elections Lajpat Rai started a vigorous propaganda in favour of Independent Congress Party. He made extensive tours, used vernacular newspapers of the Punjab and The Bombay Chronicle of Bombay to propagate his views. This frightened Satyapal. On November 4, 1926, in a letter to Motilal Nehru,

24. Letter, undated, Satyapal to the President of the A.I.C.C. vide A.I.C.C. File No. 52 (ii), 1926.
25. Ibid.
Satyapal wrote about Lajpat Rai's influence and the miserable position of other parties thus: *Lajpat Rai is actively engaged in maligning Congress, Swaraj Party and the Congress nominees for legislative bodies. He is using all his eloquence and resources to run down the Congress. He has set up rival candidates against Congress nominees.... The Congress in the Punjab has been mercilessly handled by Lajpat Rai and its hold on the people has been miserably lostened by the vigorous vilifying campaign carried on by Lajpat Rai and his assistants against the Congress. It is, therefore, that I approach you with a request that you will please take the trouble of visiting our province in order to strengthen our hands in the struggle." 

Motilal Nehru put two candidates, Raizada Hansraj and Dewan Chaman Lal, against Lajpat Rai in his two constituencies, but they were defeated from both the places. The enormous influence and popularity of lala Lajpat Rai can be seen from the fact that the Punjab Congress Secretary, Satyapal, was badly defeated in the election. He lost his security deposit.

Thus despite relentless efforts of Lajpat Rai's opponents he was able to secure a remarkable victory over Swaraj Party. The resounding success of Lajpat Rai can be gauged from the ratio of the seats of Independent Congress Party and Swaraj Party, 13:2 and 2:0 in the Punjab Legislative Council and Central Legislative Assembly respectively. Lajpat Rai secured 2937 votes against 106 in Jullundur division constituency and 7553 against 1607 in the

West-Punjab constituency. These results revealed his popularity and political ascendency in the province.

In the Assembly Lajpat Rai fervently espoused the popular causes, and allied himself with the Congress in opposing the unjust measures of the Government. Forgetting the bitter memories of the acrimonious debate of the election days, Motilal and Lajpat Rai re-established their cordial relations to work for the national cause.

National activities in India suffered a serious set back with the collapse of the non-cooperation movement. The rising tide of communal passions further greatly weakened it. The Hindu-Muslim unity in the heyday of the non-cooperation movement was now a mere memory. Trust had given way to distrust. Earlier, the Moplah outbreak in 1921 in which the Muslims of Malabar wreaked their vengeance on their Hindu neighbours was a painful memory to the Hindus. In 1923-24 there were communal outbreaks at Sambhar, Amritsar, Gulbarga and Kohat. Thus the short lived Hindu-Muslim unity was disappearing. It was a great set-back to the national struggle.

In 1927 a new life was infused into the national struggle. The main factor that brought about this sudden and unexpected revival was the decision of the British Government to appoint the Indian Statutory Commission to enquire into the question of Indian Reforms. The Government of India Act of 1919 contained a provision that a commission would be appointed after ten years to advise the British Government as to what administrative reforms

30. The People (Lahore), December 12, 1926.
might be introduced in India. A commission of seven members headed by and English jurist, Sir John Simon, was about to come to India in 1927. The composition of that commission infuriated the Indians because there was not a single Indian member on it. It was a negation of India's right to make her own future constitution. British disclaimers, notwithstanding, the composition of the Simon Commission was looked upon by Indian public opinion as a calculated insult to the Indian people. Following the Government's announcement of November 8, 1927 a general wave of indignation swept across the entire country. Contrary to official assessment almost all parties were unanimous in their protests, and a strong movement gained momentum to boycott the commission and its enquiries. By the end of the year all major parties including the Indian National Congress, the National Liberal Federation and All India Hindu Mahasabha had joined their hands to boycott the commission. As regards the Muslim League, Jinnah and his followers joined the boycott, but Mohammad Shafi's group in Punjab voted for cooperation.

The appointment of the all white commission did not come as a surprise to Lajpat Rai. While in England in 1926 he had carefully observed the trends in the Indian policy of the Conservative Government and the commission's composition too was anticipated by him. From the very beginning he was clear that the right course for him as well as for the country was to boycott the commission. Immediately after its formal announcement he categorically stated that he was "not going to associate with the Commission in any shape or manner - not that I am sure the boycott will prove effective, but because it is repugnant to my political sense to do so."31

31. The People (Lahore), November 17, 1927.
He took exception not merely to the exclusion of Indians, but to the very policy which was behind the appointment of the commission. He knew from his past experience that their (Indian's) advice to the Government had no significance, their representatives no force and their co-operation no value. According to him it was waste of time and energy to try to offer co-operation. Questioning the right of the British Parliament to decide the type of the constitution which India was to have, Lajpat Rai held that the boycott should be irrevocable and nothing should be said of the terms on which Indians could cooperate. Even the appointment of a few Indians on the commission would not persuade him to lend his support to it. Lajpat Rai sent a cable to Colonel Wedgwood: "No change in the scheme of commission acceptable unless an equal number of non-official Indians are appointed on equal status."32

Lajpat Rai was of the opinion that Indians alone should decide their own constitution. He suggested a round table conference of a hundred eminent Indians of all parties and communities to take up the question of framing the constitution. A committee of twenty-one members might meet at Delhi or Bombay to start the work of drafting. The Round Table Conference might be fixed for January 15, 1928. Any constitution drafted by the Conference should be forwarded to the Secretary of State.33 He organised a vigorous campaign against the commission through press and public platforms. He warned those Hindu leaders of the Punjab who were inclined to co-operate with the commission that their pro-government attitude

32. The Times of India, November 22, 1927.
33. The Tribune (Lahore), November 18, 1927.
would not effect any change in the pro-Muslim policy of the Government.

As early as February 16, 1928 Lajpat Rai moved a resolution in the Central Legislative Assembly urging the boycott of the commission in all stages and in all forms. During the debate in the Assembly he said that he had no faith in the bonafides of the Government, in the competence of the commission either or of the people who had appointed the commission. He said: "... All that the Commission will do will be practically recording in a gramophone what they will be told by the bureaucracy here and eventually they will be recording in another gramophone their recommendations in consultation with some other people in England." He also questioned the competence of any commission to settle the fitness of nations to rule themselves. Their ignorance of India, Indian history and politics was, in his judgement, their greatest disqualification for the task which had been entrusted to them. He also questioned the commission's ability to settle the Indian problems. He believed that the Indian question could be successfully tackled if representatives from England and India sit in a spirit of conciliation and accommodation. His resolution was carried with the overwhelming support of the Indian elected members.

In December 1927 the Indian National Congress met at Madras for its annual session and decided to convene an All Parties

35. *Ibid*.
Conference to draft a constitution for free India. The satirical tone of Birkenhead challenging Indians' ability to frame her own constitution helped in forging a united front. The Congress proposal for All Parties Conference was universally acclaimed, and the Conference met in Delhi in February 1928 under the chairmanship of M.A. Ansari, the Congress President. The Conference appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to draft a constitution for free India and to report on the communal problem. The report of the Nehru Committee was the first attempt of the Indians to frame their own constitution. It submitted its report in August, 1928 and its detailed recommendations were placed before the All Parties Conference at Lucknow from August 28 to 31, 1928. The Nehru Committee recommended that the immediate goal of India was the attainment of the Dominion Status, that India should have a unitary government that the system of separate electorates introduced by the Government of India Act of 1909 and retained in the Act of 1919 should be abolished, that minorities should have reservation of seats in the legislative bodies for ten years, but strictly in proportion to their numbers in the population, and three new provinces where Muslims were in a majority should be created.

In the words of Lajpat Rai this constitution making body could not evoke so much interest and enthusiasm but for Lord Birkenhead's challenge to India's intellectual capacity to frame a constitution. In a public meeting at Lahore Lajpat Rai welcomed the Nehru Report, and moved a resolution in its

37. 'Arya Swaraj Sabha's Statement' (Lahore, undated), Jayakar Papers.
appreciation. He characterised the report as "a monumental work worthy of the best tradition of Indian public life." He unhesitatingly accepted the goal of Dominion Status as outlined in the Report. He did not subscribe to the view of severing connection with the British altogether. But at the same time he would not oppose the propaganda by the younger Congressmen for complete independence. For Lajpat Rai the happiest part of the Nehru Report was the abolition of separate electorates and the abolition of communal representation except for certain minorities for a period of ten years. It was, in fact, a re-affirmation of his own stand against the sinister principle of separate communal representation which had been accepted both in the Congress-League Scheme of 1916 and the Bengal Pact of 1923. He earnestly pleaded that the Report should be judged from a national point of view and not from a narrow angle. Lajpat Rai pointed out emphatically that the Committee's conception of the future Government of India was the only one on which the building of a free India was possible. He declared, "those who will oppose it will practically oppose Swaraj and may be justly described as the enemies of India." He denounced even those Punjab Hindu leaders who were against the acceptance of the Report, and who were asking for separate

38. The People (Lahore), August 23, 1928.

39. The Nehru Report was discussed all through 1928 and generally approved by the Working Committee of the Congress, but not formally adopted by the Congress itself. Its recommendation that India should have Dominion Status was the main point of the left-wing nationalist attack led by Jawaharlal Nehru who insisted upon the adoption of complete Independence as the goal.

40. The Tribune (Lahore), August 24, 1928.
electorates and reservation of seats for Hindus in the provincial legislature. He sounded a note of warning to those Punjabi detractors of the Nehru Report who claimed to be the champions of the Hindu interests. He asked them to desist from a course which would alienate the Punjab Hindus from the rest of Hindu India. He also urged the English to concede the recommendations of the Report which, he said, were "reasonable" and "just". Failure to accept the Report, Lajpat Rai feared, might make India "a hot bed of revolutionary activities."  

From February, 1928 onwards Lajpat Rai was chiefly pre-occupied with the task of mobilizing public opinion in favour of the total boycott of Simon Commission and later on for the publicity of the Nehru Committee Report. In April and May he visited Kashmir, Madras city, Trichinopoly, Ernakulam, Cape Comorin and Trivandrum. In his utterances he suggested that a house to house propaganda should be undertaken in order to obtain signatures to a manifesto declaring the determination of the people not to give evidence before the Statutory Commission or cooperate with it in any manner. His tour aroused considerable public enthusiasm. The various meetings which he addressed were largely attended. Thousands signed the manifesto protesting against the Simon Commission.  

On his return Lajpat Rai found discontent and sharp differences among the major communities of the Punjab on account of Nehru Committee Report. Many leaders of the three chief communities

41. The People (Lahore), August 23, 1923.
42. Home Department, C.O.I. (Political) F.No. I, April 1928.
of Punjab were in favour of separate representation, and they demanded more seats than their population warranted. But the Report regarded communal representation highly injurious for the national growth. To win their support in favour of the Report Lajpat Rai convened fourteenth session of the Punjab Political Conference at Lyallpur from September 28 to 30, 1928. On his invitation, Ansari was also present. In his speech the Lala asked the Muslims, the Hindus and the Sikhs to accept the recommendations of the Report which, in his opinion, would prove useful in the advancement of Nationalism.\textsuperscript{43} Ansari also spoke in favour of the Report. However, in the meeting Lajpat Rai had to encounter determined opposition from many Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs; they persisted in their demand for separate representation. Bhai Parmanand, a leading leader of Hindu Mahasabha, was strongly in favour of reservation of seats for the Hindus. In this connection Lajpat Rai informed Motilal, "Bhai Parmanand's party at Lahore has gained a certain amount of strength. Some high placed Hindu officials are supporting the demand for reservation of seats for the Hindu minorities. I am seeing the Hindu leaders of Lahore one by one and am winning them over to my side. This evening I have invited 4 or 5 of them to my house for consultation."\textsuperscript{44} Demand for separate Muslim representation was voiced by Zafar Ali Khan, a leading leader of the Muslim League. The Sikhs too, by and large, were in favour of separate representation. In the face of this stiff opposition Lajpat Rai's task was most arduous, but

\textsuperscript{43} Letter, October 5, 1928, Lajpat Rai to Motilal Nehru, vide A.I.C.C. F.No. 108/1928. (Supplementary).

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
ultimately he succeeded. He made a forceful plea in favour of Nehru Report and exhorted them to work for the unity of the nation. He moved a resolution in favour of Nehru Committee Report and inspite of opposition from some individuals like Bhai Parmanand he was able to carry the resolution. The passing of this resolution is a measure of Lajpat Rai's popularity and his political hold on the province.

Further Lajpat Rai worked whole heartedly for the acceptance of the Nehru Report and the boycott of Simon Commission. He made an effort to win over certain editors of vernacular papers like Maulana Zafar Ali of Zaminpar and Krishna of Pratap who were not in favour of the Report. It appears that he met with some success in this endeavour. Many Punjab papers which had hitherto opposed the report began to publish articles and editorials pleading for the acceptance of the Report. Lajpat Rai also asked Pheroz Chand, the editor of Bande Mataram, to step up the publicity in favour of the Report.

Lajpat Rai made strenuous efforts to mobilize public opinion against the Simon Commission. It was largely on account of his exertions that a majority of the Punjab leaders were ready to boycott the forthcoming visit of Simon commission. Despite his old age and ill health, Lajpat Rai was in the forefront of the movement to boycott it. After presiding over the Agra Provincial

45. Letter, October 5, 1928, ibid.; See also Appendix No. XII.
47. Other vernacular newspapers were The Tej (Lahore), The Nava Kal (Lahore), The Siyasat (Lahore).
Hindu Conference held at Etawah on October 27-28, Lajpat Rai was back in Lahore on October 30, the day Simon commission was to arrive at Lahore. While he was leading a mass procession against it in front of the Lahore railway station, he was severely struck by the police with sticks and batons. The police attack was unprovoked and wanton. Lajpat Rai writes: "We were absolutely peaceful and gave no provocation to the police to attack us. But quite unprovoked a police officer began to strike us lathis. He had a knobbed hunter in his hand. He gave me two blows and two of his constables gave me another two. One of these blows given to me was aimed at my heart, and very near to my heart I received a stroke which has caused a bruise sufficiently long and broad."48 From Lala's account it appears that the blows were deliberately aimed at him. The physical injuries that he received were not very serious but the proud leader felt very shocked at being struck. The brutal attack hurt him. At a public meeting held the same evening at Lahore, he condemned the unwarranted and merciless action of the police officials. After narrating the circumstances of the brutal attack he warned the Government about the possible consequences of its policy of repression. He asserted:

"I want to say from this platform, that every blow that was hurled at us this afternoon, was a nail in the coffin of the British Empire. Nobody who has seen that sight is ever likely to forget it. It has sunk deep into our soul. We have to avenge ourselves of this cowardly attack, not by violently attacking them but by gaining our freedom. I wish to warn the Government that if a violent revolution takes place in this country, the responsibility for bringing it about will fall on such officers as misbehaved themselves this afternoon. Our creed still stands and we are pledged to struggle to peaceful non-violence. But if the Government and its officers

48. The Tribune (Lahore), November 2, 1928.
continue to behave like this I would not wonder if the young men were to go out of our hands and do whatever they chose with the object of gaining the freedom of their country. I do not know whether I shall be alive to see that day. But whether alive or dead, if that day is forced on them by the Government, my spirit from behind will bless them for their struggle."49

Lajpat Rai did not survive the assault very long. Within a week of the incident (November 3) he went to Delhi to attend the All-Parties Conference, and returned to Lahore on November 8 before his scheduled programme because of ill health. While in Delhi he told M.R. Jayakar: "I feel weak, but apart from the wound I feel that I am not the same man as before. I feel that it is a most disgusting humiliation when so attacked."50 He felt angry and bitter not so much at the personal humiliation as at the national humiliation involved in the assault on him.51 He died on the morning of November 17, 1928.52

49. The Tribune (Lahore), November 2, 1928.
50. Lajpat Rai: Writings and Speeches, p. LXIII.
52. Jyotish Chandra Ghosal writes about Lajpat Rai's death thus: 'Ever since the beating he received on the day of the arrival of the Simon Commission, said Lalaji's son and his two family doctors, "Lalaji has been feeling weak and was complaining of exhaustion. There were no signs of any organic or functional disease in the heart. Signs of exhaustion have been more pronounced. Lalaji felt uneasy very often and weaker than he used to feel before." His old affection pleurisy was in evidence. However, Lalaji had been feeling tolerably well till the night of the 16th November. That day at night his grandson, Bharat Bhushan was massaging him. But he felt that he could not go to sleep if the massage was continued. So Bharat Bhushan left him at 1.30 A.M. Lalaji passed an uneasy night. About 6.30 A.M. he sat up in bed and said he was feeling pain. He then lay down and his breathing became hard. Bharat Bhushan went to call Lalaji's son who was in the next room, but as soon as they both came back, they found that his breathing had stopped. Thus on November 17, 1928 at 7.30 A.M. passed away the noble soul to have entered peace at the blessed feet of the Almighty father.' Jyotish Chandra Ghosal, Life of Lajpat Rai (Calcutta, 1928), pp. 34-35.
As forecast by Lajpat Rai in his speech of October 30, 1928, a violent revolutionary movement sprang in the Punjab. Following his tragic death a powerful movement arose to avenge the cowardly attack on him. Saunders, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, met a violent death at the hands of a young revolutionary, Bhagat Singh who became a popular hero in India. Later on he was hanged. His popularity, as pointed out by Jawaharlal Nehru, was not due to his act of terrorism, "but because he seemed to vindicate, for the moment the honour of Lala Lajpat Rai, and through him of the nation." Tributes to Lajpat Rai were paid by numerous leaders from India and abroad.

53. Bhagat Singh and his associates wanted to kill J.A. Scott, Superintendent of Police Senior who was chiefly responsible for the first attack on Lajpat Rai. The People (Lahore), November 1928.


55. Writing in Young India, Gandhi said, "Men like Lalaji cannot die so long as the sun shines in the Indian sky." Ghosal, Jyotish Chandra, Life of Lajpat Rai (Calcutta, 1928), p. 42.

Motilal Nehru said: "By the sudden death of Lala Lajpat Rai at this critical struggle I have lost the invaluable assistance of a great colleague and the country of the devoted services of a selfless patriot." ibid.

M.A. Jinnah wrote: "He was undoubtedly a great figure in the political world of India, and whether one could always see eye to eye with him or not he was an earnest and sincere worker." ibid., p. 43.

Subhas Chandra Bose wrote: "....with the death of Lala Lajpat Rai passes away, one of the foremost champions of Indian Nationalism." ibid. Dr. S.J.T. Sunderland, his American friend said, "Lajpat Rai was a great man. He would have been regarded as great if he had been born in and lived his life in England, America or any other country. He was more great in more directions than one, for he was many sided man. It may almost be said that he was three or four or five men in one. He had travelled, observed and studied in many countries - in Europe, Asia and America." The People (Lahore), January 3, 1924, p. 10.
The assault on Lajpat Rai on October 30, 1928 has become a matter of fierce controversy. The officials denied that Lajpat Rai received any injury at the hands of the Police. According to one official report:

"The death of Lajpat Rai on November 18th (sic) 1928 was falsely alleged by the party (revolutionary Party) to be the result of his having been beaten by the police during disturbances on the occasion of the arrival of the Simon Commission in Lahore some weeks earlier. This allegation was widely made at the time but in point of fact L. Lajpat Rai received no injury at the hands of the police."56

Boyd, the Commissioner of Rawalpindi division, held an inquiry into the incident in which Lajpat Rai was injured: He gave his verdict thus:

"In the scuffle some blows and injuries were inevitable, but I think that the police acted with restraint and I doubt whether a crowd in Britain would be handled more gently than was that at the Lahore railway station."57

But the eye-witness accounts and the photographs prove beyond doubt that Lajpat Rai received injuries at the hands of the police.

Lala Hans Raj, an eye-witness of the incident said in the Legislative Assembly:

"I can say so with certainty for at the time I could see both the people and the police. We were there for quite 15 minutes, when Mr. Scott came through the opening and, without any explanation, gave Lala (Lajpat Rai) two hard blows with his stick. I was standing next to Lalaji."58

Another eye-witness of the police attack, Madan Mohan Malaviya said:

"I saw him (Lajpat Rai) a few minutes after the attack, and I am sorry to say I saw him three times after that, but I never saw him happy. It seemed that the effect and the shame of the attack had gone deep into his heart."59

57. The Tribune (Lahore), December 2, 1928.
59. Ibid., p. 339.
Lajpat Rai's original photograph, a very reliable and important source now available, clearly indicates that he received two injuries which caused bleeding. Boyd inquiry commission also accepted that force was used which resulted in "blows and injuries" on October 30, 1928 at the Lahore railway station. The Tribune published the very next day, "Lajpat Rai got two blows on chest." On an inquiry from Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai informed him telegraphically on October 31 about the incident as follows:

"MANY THANKS FOR TELEGRAM DELIVERED LAST NIGHT INJURIES PAINFUL BUT NOT SERIOUS SATYAPAL HANS RAJ ALSO STILL SUFFERING."62

In the face of this evidence the official version is blatantly untrue. By openly confessing that the death of Lajpat Rai was caused by police lathi blows, the Government ran the risk of inviting greater outburst of public indignation.

What was the effect of blows on Lajpat Rai? The doctors attending on him were of the opinion that the police attack hastened his death. The general impression in the country was that injuries had caused the death of the leader and that the police had deliberately murdered Lajpat Rai. According to Dr. Gopi Chand, an eye-witness of the incident, Lajpat Rai's "injuries were the direct cause of collapse of his heart."63 Subhas Chandra Bose

60. "Lala Lajpat Rai with Lathi blows 30th October 1928". Photograph available in the Punjab University Library, Chandigarh.
61. The Tribune (Lahore), November 1, 1928.
62. Telegram, October 31, 1928, Lajpat Rai to Motilal Nehru, vide A.I.C.C. File No. 108/1928. Lajpat Rai's clothes (Kurta and Pyjama) which he wore on the day of incident and having blood stains are still preserved by the Servants of the People Society, New Delhi.
Bose writes: "Simon Commission was indirectly responsible for his death."64 According to Jawaharlal Nehru, "there can be doubt that the mental shock which accompanied the physical injuries had a tremendous effect on Lajpat Rai."65 It is difficult to reach any definite conclusion as to the effect of injuries on Lajpat Rai. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh perhaps rightly assessed that "that assault on Lajpat Rai was too much for him at a time when he was far gone in years, and as a result of the injuries he received, he died on November 17."66

II

The communal problem which became more complex and explosive during 1920-28 engaged Lajpat Rai's serious attention. His views on communal problem and his attitude towards the Muslims are a subject of keen controversy; he has been attacked both by the nationalists and the communalists for being a "staunch Hindu". It is therefore desirable to analyse Lajpat Rai's views on communal problem and the solutions that he suggested for solving this burning question of the day.

Lajpat Rai started his public life as a staunch Nationalist—strongly believing that the Hindus and the Muslims should join hands in their struggle for independence against the alien rulers. His speeches and writings amply demonstrate his conviction in Hindu-

66. Ghose, Prafulla Chandra, Mahatma Gandhi as I saw Him (Delhi, 1968), p. 133.
Muslim unity for political purposes. In 1889 at the fifth Indian National Congress speaking on the question of representation in the legislatures, he said that he was quite content to be represented by any good Mohammadan or Sikh member. After passing the Swadeshi resolution at Calcutta Congress in 1906, he made many speeches in which he expressed the importance of unity among all communities for the interests of the country. When the Indian Councils Act of 1909 introduced separate electorates, Lajpat Rai bitterly condemned it. He felt it would permanently divide the country into two hostile camps, Hindu and Mohammadan. Lajpat Rai, though greatly influenced by the teachings of Arya Samaj, believed in the concept of composite Nationalism. He thought that despite social and religious differences the various communities of India had common political objectives. Writing in his book entitled Arya Samaj in 1914 he said, "the Arya Samaj has to remember that the India of today is not exclusively Hindu. Its prosperity and future depends on the reconciliation of Hinduism with that greater 'ism', the Indian nationalism which alone can secure for India its rightful place in the comity of nations. Anything that may prevent or even hinder that consummation is a sin for which there can be expiation." He was happy to witness friendly feelings between the two communities on his return to India in February 1920. In his first welcome speech at Bombay which was attended by different communities, Lajpat Rai expressed

69. Foreign Department, G.O.I. (Confidential-B), vide circular No. 7 of 1910, p. 49.
the importance of the Hindu Muslim unity thus:

"My friends, I must tell you that henceforth we should recognise it as a fundamental doctrine that the unity of the Hindus and Mohammadans will be a great asset to our political future. In this unity we shall not be guided by the temporary benefit of this community or that. We shall not adopt it as a measure of political expediency. But we shall adopt it as a fundamental doctrine of our faith to stick to our death-beds until we win our freedom. Not till then only, but thereafter too, we shall live in this country as brothers determined to work together, determined to resist together, and determined to win. That is one of the fundamental doctrines which we must adopt as a first article of our political faith."  

Lajpat Rai supported the Indian Muslims in their attempt to get the Khilafat wrongs redressed. He said, "English statesmen object to the interference of Indian Muslims in the affairs of the Turkish empire. India should emphatically record a protest against that view. Turkey was defeated mainly by the Indian army for which India paid. That point alone gives every Indian, Hindu or Mohammadan or Buddhist, a right to be heard in the Turkish Settlement... The Turkish question is an Indian affair and must receive our best attention." To strengthen the bonds of Hindu Muslim unity in India on the question of Turkish problem he held that, "it was a national duty to focus and consolidate Indian opinion on the Turkish question and to press it on the British people for consideration." To

Thus Lajpat Rai emphasised the importance of unity among all communities of India for the growth of Nationalism and political emancipation of the country.

72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., p. 41.
The Hindu-Muslim unity forged under the leadership of Gandhi during non-cooperation days proved temporary. After the withdrawal of non-cooperation movement in 1922 and the abolition of the institution of Khilafat in 1924 the Hindu-Muslim relations took a turn for the worse. After 1924 India witnessed an orgy of serious communal riots in various parts. In March and April there were communal riots of a serious nature in Amritsar, Multan and other parts of Punjab. In May there were further riots between Hindus and Muslims in Amritsar and some disturbances in Sind. In June and July communal outbreaks occurred in Moradabad, Meerut as well as Allahabad, and riots of a serious and distressing character took place in Amritsar, Panipat, Jabalpur, Gonda, Agra, Rai Bareilly and Kohat. Thus the short lived Hindu-Muslim unity soon disappeared.

Gandhi's mighty effort to bring about political union between the two communities against the British received a serious set back.

Lajpat Rai was shocked at these communal riots in India particularly at Kohat in the North West Frontier Province on September 9-10, 1924. The tragedy triggered off as a result of an anti-Muslim poem published by a local Hindu. The Hindus suffered enormously. 155 were killed and practically the whole Hindu population had to quit Kohat. Gandhi held this poem responsible for the communal riots at Kohat, and he undertook a fast of 21 days to create a climate for communal harmony. He advised the Hindu population of Kohat to trust the Muslims. Lajpat Rai did not agree with Gandhi's advice and judgement about the Kohat tragedy.

74. Home Department, (Poll.) F.No. K.W. to 249/VIII.
In an article he categorically stated that the advice given by Gandhi to Kohat Hindus to repose complete trust in the Muslims of the town after riots was not sound and practical. He also disagreed with Gandhi's opinion that the "Kohat Hindus should have died defending their lives and temples and that they were guilty of cowardice in not doing so." Further, Lajpat Rai believed that the "pamphlet (poem) has much less to do with the riots." In his opinion the riots took place because of the protests of the Hindus against the conversions to Islam. In a confidential letter to M.R. Jayakar, Lajpat Rai wrote:

"One of the causes which led to Muslim anger against Hindus was the fact that whereas formerly Hindus did not protest against conversions to Islam, their attitude had changed during these last 3 or 4 years, even before the Shuddhi propaganda, and Hindus used to take such legitimate action as they could to get back the converted Hindus. This used to enrage the Muslims."

Thus Lajpat Rai's assessment of Kohat tragedy was entirely at variance with that of Gandhi. Gandhi's estimate was rather superficial, blaming one single poem for communal riots of such magnitude. Lajpat Rai, on the contrary, wanted to probe deeper to find out the more fundamental cause of communal disturbances. He therefore began to make a political and economic study of the riots. He contributed fourteen articles to the Tribune in November and December 1924 analysing the deeper causes of communal problem. He was convinced that social and religious differences

76. The Tribune (Lahore), January 1, 1925.
77. Letter, February 9, 1925, Lajpat Rai to Jayakar, Jayakar Papers.
78. Ibid. See also Home Department (Poll.), F.No. K.W. to 249/VIII.
between Hindus and Muslims were not the root cause of communal question. The policies of the British imperial rulers, introduction of separate electorates, economic backwardness of the Muslims were largely responsible for Hindu-Muslim problem; it was, in his view a political problem which should therefore be solved on political basis.79

It may be mentioned here that Lajpat Rai stoutly opposed the system of separate electorates. A large number of Muslim leaders had been demanding communal representation with separate electorates in the legislatures, local bodies, universities and other official and semi-official bodies. The most outstanding among them was Fazil-i-Husain80 who with a view to rescue his community from "the morass of intellectual stagnation, economic backwardness, political inferiority" strongly advocated separate electorates and weightage. The Muslims in his opinion constituted "a palsied limb" of the Indian nation. They, therefore, deserved this "special treatment" for restoration to life and vigour.81 Lajpat Rai regarded it "theoretically and practically a negation of the united nationhood." "It provides", he added, "for a complete division of India, as it is into two sections a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India."82 Lajpat Rai's opposition to separate communal electorates and the Lucknow Pact (1916) which gave a seal

79. The Tribune (Lahore), December 24, 1924.
80. B. 1877; Member, Punjab Legislative Council, 1916; Minister for Education, Punjub, 1921-23 and 1924-25; Revenue Member, Punjub, 1926-27; Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, 1930-35; Promoted Muslim interests in all spheres; d. 1936.
82. The Tribune (Lahore), December 24, 1924.
of approval to them can be gauged from his letter to Jayakar. He said: "I consider from the national point of view that the acceptance of the principle of communal representation in the Lucknow Pact of 1916 was a great blunder... It must be conceded that the Lucknow Pact was more or less a patch up affair between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress." He was convinced that separate electorates were wholly irreconcilable with Indian Nationalism. It is for this reason that he strived for the abolition of this pernicious system.

Lajpat Rai had a solution to this vexed problem. Earlier, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, an important leader of Muslim League, had suggested the formation of Hindu provinces and Muslim provinces under a National Federal Government. Lajpat Rai considered these proposals as sound and workable solution to the communal question. He suggested that the Punjab should be partitioned into the two provinces; the Western Punjab with a large Muslim majority and the Eastern Punjab with a large Hindu-Sikh majority. Lajpat Rai's scheme may be summed up in his own words: "Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (1) The Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier, (2) Western Punjab, (3) Sindh, and (4) Eastern Bengal. If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a Province, they should be similarly constituted."84

Lajpat Rai's suggestion is not an affirmation of the two nation theory. On the contrary it betrays Lala's strong political

84. The Tribune (Lahore), December 24, 1924.
realism. He wanted to satisfy Muslim aspirations, a factor of paramount importance, within the framework of Indian unity. This solution is a tribute to his political foresight, assessment of the political situation then existing in the country. Unfortunately the Congress did not pay any attention to his solution; in fact the Congress leaders underrated the strength of Muslim aspiration. If this solution had been accepted in 1924 perhaps the partition of the country might have been averted for the Muslim League which subsequently became a formidable political force was rather weak at that time.

In December 1924 Lajpat Rai attended a Conference at Amritsar which was called to solve the communal problem. Gandhi presided over this Conference. He was keen to restore communal harmony in Punjab which was brutally shaken by Kohat disturbances. It was attended by the leaders of three major communities. The Conference revealed wide differences on the communal question. Many leaders belonging to the three communities demanded representation on the basis of separate electorates. Lajpat Rai considered the communal electorates against the growth of Nationalism. In the Conference he asserted that once India accepted communal representation with separate electorates there was no chance of its being abolished without a civil war. He favoured the adoption of some system, like proportional representation, for ensuring adequate representation of the minorities in the elected bodies. He also appreciated the Muslim aspiration for a fair share in the public services. For this he wanted greater educational and economic

85. Ibid.
opportunities for the Muslims which, he thought, alone could meet this demand without upsetting the Hindus. Further, he favoured recruitment to public services through a properly representative Public Service Commission in order to ensure to each community its due share in this sphere. Zafar Ali Khan, a Muslim leader, refused to accept Lajpat Rai's suggestions and in the Conference he made some uncharitable remarks about him. At this Gandhi intervened and he asked the Muslims to trust Lajpat Rai as he was anxious for Hindu-Muslim unity, though he had his doubts about its attainment. "Let me not conceal", said Gandhi, "my regard for Lalaji. I hold him to be brave, self-sacrificing, generous, truthful and godfearing. His patriotism is of the purest type. He has few equals in the quantity or the quality of service to the country. And if a man like him may be suspected of base motives, we would have to despair of Hindu-Muslim unity, as we would have to, if we suspected the Ali Brothers of base motives..." Gandhi felt sorry for the remarks made by Zafar Ali Khan against Lajpat Rai. "Such remarks", he added, "had greatly touched him and had broken his heart."

Thus the attempts of national leaders to reach any amicable solution in the Conference failed. Lajpat Rai strived hard to explain his views and to solve the difficult communal problem on nationalistic grounds but without success.

87. Ibid., p. 213. See also A.I.C.C. File No. 19/1923.
88. B. 1873; editor of the Zamindar; a founder member of the All India Muslim League, participated in the Khilafat movement; sentenced to five years' imprisonment (1920-25); member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly 1937-46; d. 1956.
90. Ibid., Vol. XXV, p. 436.
91. Ibid., pp. 401-403.
After the failure of Amritsar Conference the national leader, anxious to solve communal problem, convened an All India Parties Conference at Delhi on January 23, 1925. It was attended by over 70 persons including representatives of sixteen political and non-political organisations under the presidentship of Gandhi. In addition to discussing the preservation of unity in the Congress rank, the Swaraj scheme etc. the Conference concentrated on the discussion of communal problem. The differences between the leaders were reflected in the proceedings of the Conference. Jinnah stated that the consensus of Muslim opinion was that there should be communal representation by separate electorates. He also wanted weightage for his co-religionists. But he was not ready to give the same privilege to other communities. Lajpat Rai stood for "joint electorates, and population as the basis everywhere." He refused to accept separate electorates. He also refused to accept "51% Muslim representation in Punjab and Bengal and the present percentage in other provinces as demanded by Jinnah." In the discussion he stated that the Lucknow Pact was concluded to carry the Musalmans in the demand of self-Government. It was, in his opinion, a blunder. He described the communal representation "a negation of nationalism."

93. Ibid.
94. Letter, February 2, 1925, Lajpat Rai to M.R. Jayakar, Jayakar Papers. See also Appendix No. IX.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
"The growth of communalism meant, "he added, "the death knell of nationalism."97

Lajpat Rai's opposition to communal representation stemmed from another consideration. He feared that by conceding Muslim's demand of communal representation the safety of India might be in jeopardy. He explained: "I am more and more convinced that communal representation will be a serious blunder for India's safety, since under its application, we shall be handing over the most valuable parts of India's border to Mohammadan governments. We must guard against that."98 Lajpat Rai was ready to consider any solution to the problem if offered in sincerity and keeping the larger interests of the country in view. He said: "If the question was approached from the national point of view and not from the communal he was willing to come to any agreement."99

Motilal supported Lajpat Rai on his stand. However, no agreement was reached in the All India Parties Conference.

This Conference shows that Lajpat Rai was not a narrow minded leader. He was anxious to accept any agreement which could solve the communal problem from nationalistic point of view.

Lajpat Rai joined the Hindu Mahasabha, a Hindu organisation, in 1925. With the rise of communal passion this body attained great strength and popularity with the Hindus. The object of Hindu Mahasabha, according to him, was to crystallize, articulate and defend the exclusive interests of the Hindus because the

Congress being the common organization of all communities could not perform this task. The Hindu Mahasabha, he said, did not aim to interfere in the just rights of other communities. Nor was it to divert the attention of the Hindus from their primary and foremost object of liberating their country from the bonds of political servility. He wanted to keep Hindu Mahasabha aloof from active politics. He favoured to confine its work to safeguarding the interests of the Hindus and to carry out social reforms in the country. The All India Hindu Mahasabha held two sessions at Calcutta and Kanpur on April 11 and December 29, 1925. Lajpat Rai presided over the first. In his presidential address, he stated that the "Hindus have no political aims of their own separate from those of their countrymen of other faiths." Here he said that the Lucknow Pact was a mistake, and he reaffirmed his faith in Hindu-Muslim unity for political advancement in the following declaration:

"In my judgement the cry of a Hindu Raj or of a Muslim Raj is purely mischievous and ought to be discouraged.... The correct thing for us to do is to strive for a democratic Raj in which the Hindus, the Muslims and the other communities may participate as Indians and not as followers of any particular religion." 101

The communal riots generally resulted in a great loss in lives and property of the two communities. The Hindu leaders were upset about it and they ascribed the suffering of the Hindus to their internal weakness. One solution offered was the strengthening of the community. Some Hindu leaders, therefore,

100. The Tribune (Lahore), March 2, 1925.
started **Shuddhi** and **Sangathan**, as a counterblast to Muslim Tabligh and Tanzim. **Shuddhi** aimed at the conversion of those who had left the Hindu fold, and **Sangathan** constituted an attempt to consolidate and strengthen the Hindu community. Lajpat Rai expressed his support to these movements. But he was not a narrow minded religious bigot.\(^{102}\) Personally Lajpat Rai was against proselytisation and he was fully aware of the deleterious effects of the **Shuddhi** movement on Indian Nationalism. In 1926 he expressed his position thus: "In my life I have dabbled in religion, even in dogma. Dogma has never taken possession of my soul. Support of proselytism except in communal self-defence has never been my hobby. Religious communalism is not my role. I love Hinduism because according to my conception of it, it does not insist on dogmas and doctrines. Proselytising for the sake of adding to its members has never formed part of Hinduism."\(^{103}\) Lajpat Rai clarified his stand on **Shuddhi** movement thus: "the activities of the Christian and Islamic missionaries and propagandists have led to the Hindu entering the field of active proselytism. Legally and morally they have every right to do so. It is difficult to blame them...yet it is not my role and I do not propose to lend my active support to such work even if I may be supposed to some extent have done so in the past."\(^{104}\)

However, despite his connection with the Hindu Mahasabha Lajpat Rai was opposed to the introduction of religion into politics. He asked the Hindu leaders to confine their work to social, economic development of their people without harming the interests of other communities.

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103. *The Tribune* (Lahore), March 2, 1926.
In 1926 the general elections took place in India. Lajpat Rai had formed his own Independent Congress Party with the collaboration of Madan Mohan Malaviya. His party included men like Dr. Moonje, Haridayanath Kunzru and Kunshi Iswar Saran who did not belong to Hindu Mahasabha. He opposed the idea of the Hindu Mahasabha running its own candidates for the legislatures. He declared: "I am in favour of organising the Hindu community, strengthening and solidifying it religiously, socially and economically, but I do not favour the idea of Hindu setting up a separate political existence of their own." This angered many of his sympathisers in the Hindu Mahasabha. But he remained firm and reiterated that elections should be conducted and contested only under the labels of political bodies.

This shows that Lajpat Rai wanted to keep religion and politics separate. Although working for and sympathising with the upliftment of the Hindus he believed that the political interests of the two communities were identical. He also did not like the presence of social and religious bodies in various legislative organs. This was against his concept of Rationalism.

Lajpat Rai's freedom from narrow communalism can be visualised from another incident. In 1927 a scurrilous pamphlet entitled Rangila Rasul was published by two Arya Samajists. It bitterly

105. B. 1887; Social reformer; liberal in politics; member of the U.P. Legislative Council 1921-23, the Indian Legislative Assembly 1927-30 and again 1937 to after independence; founder of the Indian Council of World Affairs (Sapru House, New Delhi).
106. B. 1874; social reformer; president of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee in 1918; member of the Indian Legislative Assembly; d. 1947.
107. Lajpat Rai's statement, August 7 (year not mentioned) Jayakar Papers.
108. The Tribune (Lahore), March 2, 1926.
109. Home Department, C.O.I. (Poll.), F.No.27/II of 1919. Ishwar Prasad Sharma and M.L. Varma were authors of the articles.
attacked prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam. This publication created great resentment among the Muslims of Punjab. Although the authors were acquitted by the Punjab High Court, but Lajpat Rai held them morally guilty. "I wanted to submit that as soon as I heard of the decision of the High Court in the Rangila Rasul case, I lost no time to saying that although, technically the writer of the Rangila Rasul had been acquitted yet morally he was guilty."\textsuperscript{110} He went to the length of supporting the Government in amending the law to deal effectively with such offences even though it amounted to curtailment of civil liberties.\textsuperscript{111}

In September-October 1928, Lajpat Rai was involved in mobilising public opinion in favour of Nehru Committee Report which had recommended abolition of separate electorates. In Punjab many leaders belonging to three major communities were demanding separate electorates in the legislative bodies. To dissuade them from this harmful path Lajpat Rai convened a political conference at Lyallpur. Here he impressed upon them the political advantages of joint electorates and urged them to accept the Nehru Committee Report. Some communal leaders attempted to disgrace him. Bhai Parmanand unable to see eye to eye with Lajpat Rai's views resigned from the Working Committee of All India Hindu Mahasabha.\textsuperscript{112} It was largely on account of Lajpat Rai's firm faith in Nationalism, persuasive skill and his political ascendency that

\textsuperscript{110} Lajpat Rai: Writings and Speeches, Vol.II, pp. 360-63.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{112} Letter, October 2, 1928, Lajpat Rai to Motilal Nehru, vide A.I.C.C. F.No. 108/1928 (Supplementary).
a resolution in support of Nehru Report was carried in the
Lyallpur conference.

Lajpat Rai continued to strive for Hindu-Muslim unity and he was quite optimistic about it. A few days before his death he wrote: "I do not consider that an understanding between Hindus and Mohammadans is impossible." However, he did not live to see the tragic consequences of the communal problem.

Lajpat Rai was one of the most important and central figures on the Indian national scene during 1920-28. On his arrival from U.S.A. in 1920 he found the country on the verge of a powerful national struggle. Popular feelings were aroused on account of various unpopular and repressive measures of the Government. The Hindus and Muslims, showing a new political consciousness and having grievances against the British Government, were coming together. Under the dynamic leadership of Gandhi they launched non-cooperation movement against the bureaucracy. Lajpat Rai threw his heart and soul into this great national struggle; he directed and animated the movement in Punjab. To stimulate political consciousness among the masses, so essential for the success of the movement, he undertook extensive tours of the province. His inspiring speeches resulted in the formation of secret societies at many places; boycott of foreign goods and government educational institutional received great impetus. Many left government service and renounced titles at the call of Lala Lajpat Rai. He was popular among the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims

113. The People (Lahore), October 25, 1928. See also Home Deptt. (Poll.) June Nos. 1, June 1928.
and under his guidance and leadership the non-cooperation movement in Punjab assumed great force and following. In addition to his activities in Punjab he also visited U.P., Bihar, Bombay, Madras and other parts of the country to stimulate non-cooperation movement.

During the greater part of this period Lajpat Rai was the most eminent representative from Punjab in All India Congress Committee and Congress Working Committee. It was largely due to his efforts and pleadings that Punjab atrocities were brought to the forefront and bitterly condemned in the Congress meetings. He also influenced the programme and policy of the Congress. His views regarding the implementation of non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement in phases and gradually were accepted by Gandhi. Further, in September 1923 he successfully appealed to the Congress leaders to permit the Swarajists to contest elections and enter the councils.

Lajpat Rai's association with the Swaraj Party was to maintain unity among the national leaders, to bring flexibility in the Indian politics and to fight for political advancement from within the legislative bodies. Later when a split occurred in the Swaraj Party he made strenous efforts to patch up the differences between the two rival groups. His formation of the Independent Congress Party was a powerful protest against the harmful and ineffective policy of the Swaraj Party i.e. indiscriminate walkouts. In the Assembly he worked vigorously for political advancement of the country; his strategy was to create deadlock in the Assembly and thus embarrass the alien rulers. He worked in the closest
cooperation with other Indian leaders for the progress of his country. The passing of the resolution moved by him boycotting the Simon Commission was chiefly on account of his exertions and eloquent speeches; it is also an example of his statesmanship and success in the Assembly.

Lajpat Rai was an ardent and devout Nationalist. His opposition to communal representation on the basis of separate electorates stemmed from his conviction that this would hinder the growth of Nationalism and political emancipation of the country. He, therefore, fought for joint electorates all through his life. At times he strongly opposed Congress policy of appeasing the Muslims to win their support in freedom struggle. Perhaps Lajpat Rai was the first Indian leader who rightly gauged the strength of Muslim feelings and suggested their satisfaction within the framework of Indian unity. His plan to create autonomous Muslim majority areas in a federal structure was largely with this view. Though a Nationalist Lajpat Rai wanted to protect the legitimate interests of the Hindu majority. He joined Hindu Mahasabha mainly for social and religious amelioration of the Hindus, but he never favoured the view that social and religious organisation should enter political arena. He believed that the political aims and aspirations of Hindus and Muslims and other communities were identical.