Conclusion

Lajpat Rai emerged on the political horizon of India at a time when the Indian National Congress was in formative stage. Congress methods and policies were based on prayers, petitions, resolutions and deputations to the Government. But within three years of its existence it had begun to lose official sympathy on account of its progressive demands. The British authorities, alarmed by the growing strength of its demands and aspirations began to encourage reactionary forces against the national organisation. In the closing decade of the nineteenth century there was an increasing emphasis in the Congress for the adoption of more vigorous and self reliant methods; extremism in Indian politics can be discerned about this period resulting, in course of time, in the birth of two wings of the Congress. Lajpat Rai was in full sympathy with the new spirit though he differed with the Extremists on certain issues. He was keen to take the message of the Congress to the larger section of the society and instil confidence among the people. Further, by his independent policies, conciliatory endeavours and transparent honesty of purpose, he attempted to consolidate the Congress and save it from inner split.

Lajpat Rai was one of the foremost leaders of the Congress; he played a very significant part in the history of this national organisation. To activize and strengthen the national movement under the Congress he adopted the policy of vigorous and persuasive speeches in its annual sessions. When he found the Congress wanting in energy and activity he kept himself aloof from its
annual meetings. By constructive criticism, public and private writings, lecture tours and close intimacy with the national leaders he continued to work for national regeneration. Through these he focused the attention of Indian elite towards the need for self-reliance and self-help, constitution for the Congress and self-Government to create political consciousness for the advancement of national movement. His eloquency and ideas which impressed the national leaders led to his election as a Congress delegate (1905) to England to educate British public opinion on the Indian situation and to win the support of Labour, Democratic and Socialist parties. Here he made efforts to explain the Indian situation to the British electorate. He also paid a short visit to the United States of America to draw their attention towards the economic and political status of Indians in that country. The visit was highly significant. Lala Lajpat Rai was now convinced that the national movement in India could make rapid strides if political consciousness permeated among the masses too.

On his return Lajpat Rai vigorously extended full support and encouragement to the Boycott and swadeshi programme of the Congress. He organised a number of meetings in his province against the partition of Bengal.

Congress was the symbol of national unity and main vehicle of the national growth. At a time when this unity was seriously threatened, Lajpat Rai made great efforts to patch up ideological differences among the Moderates and the Extremists in the Congress. In this he was successful at the provincial level but not at the national level. His participation in the convention at Allahabad
(April 1908) was the fulfilment of three objects - constitution for the Congress, support to India's aim of self-government and to bridge the gulf between the two sections of the Congress. He succeeded in his two former objects.

His visits to Britain on two occasions between 1908 and 1910 were due to his strict surveillance in India and deadlock in Indian politics on account of split in the Congress. There he furthered the cause of the national movements in many ways. He severely criticised the depotic and unjust policy of the Government of India. He made relentless efforts to win the British sympathy for Indian demands and aspirations.

His intense patriotic feelings, forceful oration and constructive work again influenced the national leaders to send him (1914) as an official Congress delegate to England to promote the cause of Indian nationalism. This, ironically, resulted in his five years exile.

Lajpat Rai's technique of national work abroad was not only different from other Indians but also more effective in furthering the cause of India's independence. Through his mighty pen, formation of associations and propaganda organisations he set a novel example in educating the foreign people about Indian situation. By meeting various political leaders and other influential persons in Britain, America, and Japan, he endeavoured to make India's problem an international issue. He strove to win their sympathy and moral support for India's struggle against foreign domination. For example, he met the Japanese Prime Minister and addressed American Senate Committee. His aloofness from the
revolutionaries abroad was due to several reasons - their plans being impracticable; his concern against jeopardising Indian interest at the conclusion of the war; unpreparedness of Indians for armed revolution; and his keenness to return to his country as early as possible.

On his return to India Lajpat Rai actively involved himself in the nationalist movement. Gandhi launched the non-cooperation Movement on account of the harsh and repressive policy of the Government after the war. Lajpat Rai threw himself heart and soul in the movement. He presided over the historic special session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta. We have seen how Lajpat Rai had some objections to Gandhi's non-cooperation resolution which he attempted to amend at Nagpur (December 1920). Under his dynamic leadership the non-cooperation movement acquired great following and strength in Punjab. He directed the movement in the rural and urban areas of the Punjab, visited various provinces in this connection and impressed upon the Congress leaders to accelerate the struggle. As a consequence he was imprisoned for one and a half years.

On his release from prison, he supported, as this study shows, the newly emerged Swaraj Party to fight for the national struggle from within the Legislatures and to maintain unity among the national leaders. But he gradually drifted from the Swaraj Party's harmful "walkout" policy and formed the Independent Congress Party in order to support the various measures on the basis of national interest and merits. This step invited the opposition of many leaders. Despite relentless efforts of his opponents he was
elected to the Legislative Assembly on account of his popularity and selfless work. His full support to the Nehru Committee Report and the passing of the boycott resolution against the Simon Commission reflects his statesmanship and nationalistic vision for the political advancement of India.

In Indian politics Lajpat Rai's position was unique. He held independent opinions on almost all important questions. For this he was never criticised in Congress circles for the leaders recognised his patriotic fervour and honesty of purpose. Even in the last stage of his life he continued to have independent opinions. In projecting the limited goal of Swaraj or Dominion Status for India and constitution for the Congress his thinking was more in line with the Moderates rather than with the Extremists. Of course he had innermost and ultimate desire to secure complete independence for India. In his advocacy of Swadeshi, boycott, national education and passive resistance for the realisation of Swaraj, Lajpat Rai could be said to have had greater resemblance with the Extremists. Like them he endeavoured to make the Congress broad-based; he wanted to infuse more manliness, boldness and vigour into Congress activities. Like Tilak he wanted to carry the Congress message to the common people of India. It was with this aim that in 1905 he urged Gokhale to have a "mass meeting" of about one lakh of people at Benaras coinciding the Congress session. All his life he emphasised the dire necessity of self-reliance.

Lala Lajpat Rai had so much in common with the Extremists in terms of political ideology and methods of work. Then why did he
not join their camp openly and publicly? Lajpat Rai realising the crucial and difficult nature of the Indians' struggle against British domination did not want any division or schism in the national ranks. In the fight against Imperialism he was keen to offer united resistance. Division or disunity in the national camp, he knew, would only weaken the struggle. Hence his persistent efforts to bring about conciliation between the two warring wings of the Congress. His role as a "mediator" or a "reconciler" was largely actuated on account of this desire.

Incidentally, Lajpat Rai's permanent surveillance especially after his deportation by the Criminal Intelligence Department was not the result of his connection with the Extremists. Perhaps it was general policy of the Government to watch the activities of all national leaders of India. As we have found that he was closely watched in India and abroad only on the basis of suspicion. Or perhaps it was to demoralize Lajpat Rai. But being a practical man and frank by character and temperament this policy never effected his moral, patriotic and national activities.

Lajpat Rai was not in favour of sacrificing the interests of his province or community while representing the greater interest of the nation. Some communal leaders of the Punjab like Zafar Ali Khan and Parmanand pressed him hard to yield to their narrow outlook. They even challenged his leadership in 1926 and 1928. But he remained firm on his national standpoint. To him, in fact, the mixture of religion in politics was an obstacle to the national growth. He did not want to impose religious principles in Indian
politics. Therefore, he laid emphasis on moulding the attitude of the members of different religious communities. As the six chapter shows, he did not permit members of the Hindu Mahasabha - a Hindu social organisation - to participate in the Assembly's election on their own tickets. This fact proves his sense of national patriotism.

The Punjab politics received an impetus and attained new dimensions since his involvement with the Indian National Congress particularly after his first visit to Britain and America as a Congress delegate. To create political consciousness in his province he directed the local bodies, invited Congress elite in the Punjab. His work also impressed the Executive of the Congress. His strong leadership during critical times like the non-cooperation movement, the legislative elections in 1926, the publicity in favour of Nehru Committee Report and the boycott of Simon Commission unfolded political mentality of the people and his popularity among them. He was foremost leader of his province who stimulated its politics and brought the province an national platform.

This study reveals that Lajpat Rai had visualized the plural character of the Indian society. He pleaded for the accommodation of interests of the different communities within a larger framework of united India. His understanding of the psychology of communalism led him to make minor political concessions under a federal government. As we have seen he was in favour of representation in the legislative bodies on the basis of population.
He was also ready to give some concessions to minorities of India. But he was in no case ready to surrender to the sectarian trends which were being encouraged and claimed by the British and communal leaders i.e. communal representation on the basis of communal electorates. In fact, he was not ready to accept narrow communal outlook which might present a challenge or prove dangerous to the security and unity of India, growth of Nationalism and political emancipation of the country. His approach to communal problem was nationalistic. If his proposals had been accepted, perhaps the partition of the country could have been averted.

In this way by his unique eloquency, practical and untiring personality, strenuous work and intense national patriotism he added a brilliant chapter in the advancement of Indian nationalism.