INTRODUCTION

By character and temperament Lajpat Rai was a realist, rational and a very practical man. He was a man of prompt action and he did not believe in plans, meetings, statements, advertisement and memoranda. He was one of those Indian leaders who gave a new substance and new emphasis to Indian Nationalism. It is true that the new substance and the new emphasis were already in the air and the various religious revivalist movements had aroused pride among the Indians and an admiration for India's past. But it was Lajpat Rai who put the new tendencies into a coherent theory of Nationalism supported by an appeal to a glorious past, an intense consciousness of existing wrongs and a splendid faith in ultimate victory.

Lajpat Rai, with his characteristic independence, was fast moving into the wider sphere of the "Freedom Movement" of the country. The spearhead of this movement was the Indian National Congress; the Congress was already becoming a force to reckon with. Lajpat Rai's association with the Congress started when he was only twenty three years of age. Since then, till the time when circumstances forced him out of it, he worked under and for the Congress with great zeal and perseverance. By the beginning of the twentieth century he became one of the top ranking leaders of the Congress. The Congress had by that time got divided into two wings, popularly known as the Extremists and the Moderates. He was friendly with both of them and he enjoyed the confidence of both wings. For some time he played the role of a conciliator and peace-maker.

There are divergent interpretations of Lajpat Rai's work and policies as a Congress leader. Most of the historians describe him as an extremist. However, his private letters unfold a different
picture. A close study of his letters and activities reveal that Lajpat Rai's position was unique. In politics his "Vision" was independent. He was not an extremist of the school of Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh and Bipin Chandra Pal and it is unjust to tag him with the extremist triumvirate Lal-Bal-Pal. His association with the Moderate leaders was largely for the sake of unity and out of regard for some Moderates such as Gokhale. On the question of the Prince of Wales' visit to India Lajpat Rai fully supported Gokhale. The Extremist leaders in the Congress wanted to pass a resolution boycotting the Royal visit. Gokhale was most unhappy. He appealed to Lajpat Rai. On Gokhale's request Lajpat Rai withdrew his opposition. He was the peace-maker between the Extremists and Moderates. When the dispute over the interpretation of boycott was reopened in the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1906, Lajpat Rai "moved an amendment, which though not accepted by the Extremist leaders was carried by a majority."¹ After his release from Mandalay in November 1907, he did not allow his name to be proposed for presidency of the Congress at Surat by the Extremists. He expressed his unwillingness to become a source of controversy between the two parties and announced his refusal: "You may believe me that I was determined to decline to consider the proposal unless I was sure that it had the unanimous consent not only of the Reception Committee, but of the leaders as well."² He also declined to support the proposal of the Extremists to

¹. Lajpat Rai: Autobiographical Writings, V.C. Joshi, ed. (Delhi, 1965) p. 114.
². Letter, November 3, 1907, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, Gokhale Papers.
hold a separate nationalist Congress at Nagpur. He sincerely wanted to "preserve harmony in the national rank." During the Surat Congress, Lajpat Rai honestly strove for a rapprochement between the two opposition factions and made many secret attempts for "reunion." After the split the Extremists announced their withdrawal from the Congress, but Lajpat Rai continued to be a Congress leader. Further, he attended the Allahabad convention of the Moderates where the new creed of the Congress was formulated and he signed it. In 1908 at the request of Tilak, Lajpat Rai "made several attempts to bridge up the gulf that had been created between his party and moderates by the events of Surat but without success." However, when his peace making attempts failed, he went to England to keep himself aloof from the Congress groupism. He even refused to preside over the Indian National Congress session in 1914: "I felt that by accepting the presidency of the Congress I will be putting myself in a wrong hole." Although Lajpat Rai had signed the pledge of loyalty to the Emperor along with other Congressmen, but he did not believe in unconditional support to the British in the great War. As an independent leader, he maintained that India should not support England in the War as mercenaries. In September 1920, he supported the broad based scheme of non-cooperation movement, but in his independent address he concluded: "I have my personal opinion on the question involved in programme of non-cooperation."

In 1926, Lajpat Rai formed Independent Congress Party, when

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4. Ibid.
5. Letter, January 8, 1908, Gokhale to newspaper, Gokhale Papers.
9. Ibid.
his ideology did not fit in the Swaraj Party.

Lajpat Rai's deportation in May 1907 was not his own seeking and does not support the thesis of his being an Extremist, much less a revolutionary. Official documents now available reveal the thinking of official mind at different levels. The Lieutenant Governor of Punjab alleged: "Lajpat Rai's avowed object is to tamper with native troops". Two members of the Viceroy's council drew his attention that "Lajpat Rai has attended a few meetings only, his speeches have been much more moderate and he is a member of a society of moderates whose policy is to proceed by constitutional means. His arrest will cause the more commotion." 11 Later Lord Minto, the Viceroy, admitted: "I am bound to say the information on which the Punjab Government asked us to take immediate action seemed to me weak, when I became acquainted with it. " 12 The deportation was a turning point in his life. It gave the halo of martyrdom and he returned from Mandalay a great national hero. It added an adamanture stone to the mighty structure of Indian Nationalism that had been rearing up with astounding progress for the last twenty five years.

After his release he was strictly placed under permanent surveillance by the Punjab Government. Accordingly, throughout his life his movements were closely watched by the secret agents of the Criminal Intelligence Department who had a complete record of his description 13 and activities. On August 20, 1908, in a letter from

11. Home Department, G.C.I. (Poll. A) Progs. 4-7 of November 1907.
13. "Height about 5 feet 5 inches; dark complex; longish moustache; clean shaven chain; rather "blear eyed", with a curious habit of blinking; wears semi-European costume; age about 50-55." Vide L.L. Tomkins, Deputy Inspector General of Police, C.I.D., Punjab. Hand Book of the most noted Revolutionaries, Extremists and Political agitators (further cited C.I.D. Diary), Lahore, 2 November, 1918 (Strictly confidential).
Lahore Lajpat Rai writes: "My life here is a constant misery on account of the close espionage kept on me." When he reached England he reiterated: "I am watched and followed by detectives even in this country." In a secret note submitted on July 22, 1911 by the Hon'ble Mr. J.L. Jenkins, Member of the Viceroy's Council, to Lord Hardinge, Lajpat Rai is described as "by no means the harmless philanthropist." One charge against him was that he kept up "the supply of revolutionary literature to Indian students." The British thought that Lajpat Rai's efforts for relief of famine in U.P. were inspired not by philanthropy, but by hatred of the British lest the hearts of the people should be drawn to the British officers. The Government considered him "a ring leader of the gang of conspirators and plotters of assassination" established in Europe by his associates of whom Hardyal is mentioned as "the most notorious". "In fact", the note says, "whatever Lajpat Rai may be, there is not the slightest doubt that he has been a dangerous conspirator, responsible for much of the trouble and the crime by which India had been disturbed during the past few years."

During the five years exile period in England, America and Japan, the India Office in England had complete record of Lajpat Rai's activities. On February 1, 1918 the Secretary of State for India informed the Viceroy: "At present, Lajpat Rai appears to be very active and harmful publicist." The Punjab Government issued a handbook to all Superintendents of Police to watch Lajpat Rai's activities on his arrival. Later, on January 29, 1928, in a letter

15. Letter, November 23, 1908, ibid.
17. Telegram, February 1, 1918, Secretary of State to Viceroy, Chelmsford Papers.
18. C.I.D. Diary, op. cit.
to the Indian Government, Lajpat Rai protested that on his visit at friend's house at Hissar "enquiries were made at his residence by the Police about my coming, intended stay and the object." When pressed hard by the Government of India, the Punjab Government admitted "the surveillance of Lajpat Rai."  

Lajpat Rai had to pass a number of years in exile in England, America and Japan. But even in that period of sorrow and suffering, he worked hard to secure the sympathy of the people of democratic states like U.S.A. and he succeeded in creating certain centres of sympathy and moral support for the suffering Indians. He attempted to make Indian issue an International problem. He made many friends in distant lands with his mighty pen. He may be appropriately described as the first non-official ambassador of the Indian people to America who went on a political mission. In America, Lajpat Rai founded the Indian Home Rule League, with its headquarters at New York, and thus provided his propaganda an institutional form, and made it possible for the Americans sympathetic to the Indian cause, to work in collaboration with Indian Nationalists. A monthly organ of the league entitled Young India was started in January 1918 with Lajpat Rai as its editor. A year later, he set up the Indian Information Bureau in New York to serve as a publicity organisation on behalf of India. Through his writings in America newspapers like The Nation (New York), The New Republic (New York)  

heavily towards Islam. He observed Muslim fasts and deplored Hindu customs and rituals. He was an ardent follower of Syed Ahmed Khan and his close friends were also Muslims. On the other hand, Lajpat Rai's mother, Gulab Devi, came from an orthodox Sikh family. She resented her husband's religious leanings towards Islam and she regularly performed the Puja\textsuperscript{22} and Shradha\textsuperscript{23} rituals in secrecy, in order not to arouse her husband's wrath. Lajpat Rai was married to Radha Devi (1877) who came from an Aggarwal family of Hissar. He had two sons, Amrit Rai, Pyare Lal, and one daughter, Parvati.

Lajpat Rai had his elementary education at school from his father who taught him Urdu and Persian, read to him the Quran\textsuperscript{24} and generally sought to bring him up on Islamic ideals. Throughout his school career, Lajpat Rai was a brilliant student. His ill health sometimes interfered with his studies at Jagraon, Ropar, Lahore, Ludhiana and Delhi but due to his father's keen interest in higher education, he passed in 1880, the Entrance examination of Calcutta University as well as that of Panjab University. He studied law and qualified in December 1882 as a Mukhtiar\textsuperscript{25}.

The two years that he spent at the Government college, Lahore, proved to be an eventful period. These years left a lasting impression on his character and determined largely the course of his public life. "It was in those two years", wrote Lajpat Rai in 1914, "I became wedded to the idea of Hindu nationality. It was in those two years I learnt to respect the ancient Aryan culture which became my guiding

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Worship.
\item \textsuperscript{23} The offering of water, food to the Brahmanas in honour of manes.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Holy Book of Muslims.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Pleader.
\end{itemize}
star for good. It was in those years that I fixed the mission of
my life, not merely in theory but by practical work for it and that
mission continues unchanged to this day.26 At Lahore, Lajpat Rai
came under the influence of Pandit Shiva Narain Agnihotri, leader of
the Brahmo Mandir Samaj, and he was formally initiated in the Samaj
in 1882. But the Brahmo Samaj failed to satisfy his patriotic
longings because of its Western orientation. Further, Brahmo Samaj
at that time was torn by internal dissensions.

At the Government college, Lahore, among Lajpat Rai's
contemporaries, were two ardent young Arya Samajists, Guru Dutt-
Vidyarthi and Hans Raj, who were to influence his life and ideas in
a decisive manner. Speaking of milieu of his college days Lajpat
Rai recalled the change that came about in him, due to his association
with Guru Dutt and Hans Raj. "My outlook began to take on a nationa-
listic colour. The soul nurtured on Islam in infancy, and beginning
adolescence by seeking shelter in the Brahmo Samaj, began to develop
a love for the ancient Hindu culture in the company of Guru Dutt and
Hans Raj."27

The process of change was also helped by the study of Indian
history which developed in Lajpat Rai a sense of pride in the old
heritage of Hindu India and deep sorrow over the degeneration of
Hindus in the wake of alien invasions. Another factor that made a
deep impression and generated nationalistic feelings in him was the
Arya Samaj movement. Those days he also studied some literature about
the controversy that was raging among the three groups of the Brahmo
Samaj.

27. Ibid.
It was in December 1882, that Lajpat Rai joined the Arya Samaj on the occasion of its anniversary celebrations. This was a turning point in his life and he always looked back on this event with pride and gratitude. Within an incredibly short time of his joining it Lajpat Rai became one of the front rank leaders of the Samaj. He was drawn to it by its nationalistic outlook. The Samaj stimulated his patriotic impulses and the spirit of self-sacrifice, self-reliance and self-help. In fact, it prepared him for the larger and more vital field of political work.

Lajpat Rai's initiation into the Arya Samaj symbolized a three fold rejection of his father's idealization of Islam, of his mother's practice of Hindu ritualism which he considered as sheer superstition, and of the Brahma Samaj. Above all, the Arya Samaj reaffirmed his pride in being a Hindu and through its principles and teachings he learnt "to love the Vedic religion, to be proud of Arya greatness, and to make sacrifices for the country." 28

Lajpat Rai's knowledge of Indian history was primarily based on a book entitled Waqiat-i-Hind, 29 from which he learnt that the Hindus were subjected to periodic persecution during the Muslim rule. A second book, entitled Qasis-i-Hind, 30 made a deep impression on his mind. It eulogized the valour of the Rajputs in their struggle against the Muslims and instilled in him a feeling of pride in being a Hindu.

Early in 1882, a fierce controversy was going on in the Punjab over the use of Urdu or Hindi. Lajpat Rai's friends were ardent supporters of Hindi as the most suitable language for the rejuvenation

29. Narrative of India.
30. Judges of India.
of Hindi nationality. He was prompted by his friends to uphold the cause of Hindi. In his first speech in April 1882, at Ambala, he opposed the use of Urdu and declared his newly formed conviction that the political solidarity of the Hindus necessitated the development of Hindi into the national language of India. Significantly, Hindi cause was pleaded in Urdu since Lajpat Rai at that time did not know Hindi script. One outcome of the Urdu-Hindi controversy was that he seriously took up the study of Hindi. In December 1885 Lajpat Rai and Hans Raj founded the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College - an institution which greatly served to spread the doctrines of Arya Samaj. During his brief stay of four years (1882-1886) at Lahore Lajpat Rai was thus exposed to varied influences. The religious and social vibrations of the day exercised a profound influence in shaping his outlook and personality.

After completing his studies he started his legal practice at Lahore in 1886. But soon after passing the pleader examination he decided to shift to Hissar to practice as a vakil. At Hissar, from 1886 to 1892, he achieved splendid success in his legal profession. His income went up to Rs. 17,000 a year. He also maintained his attachment with Arya Samaj's activities. In that effort, he received support from philanthropists and social worker like Lala Chandulal, Lala Lakhpat Raj, and Dr. Ramji Lal. His activities gained momentum. Very soon he was elected member of Hissar Municipal Committee and he also served as its honorary secretary. He was elected unopposed to the Committee from a ward which was predominantly inhabited by the

32. Lawyer.
December 1839, was again attended by Lajpat Rai and this afforded him an opportunity of putting forward his views and arguments before the elite of India.

During his attendance of Congress sessions, Lajpat Rai noted that it was still an exclusive organisation of the elite, the new western-educated, professional classes. Prayers, petitions and protests were instruments for the political reconstruction of India. He found that the Congress leaders cared more for pomp and fame than for the interests of India and the Indians. He fully realised that for giving impetus to the movement, a lot of spade work was to be done among the masses.

Lajpat Rai's growing interest in political affairs convinced him that Hissar was not a proper place for fulfilling his ambitions and aspirations. To enroll as a chief court Vakil, five years practice at Bar was pre-requisite. As soon as he completed the qualifying period, he managed to get a licence for practising at the chief court Lahore, and in 1894 he therefore shifted to Lahore. From 1894 to 1903 Lajpat Rai, generally speaking, did not take much part in active political life. He confined himself to the writing of books, articles, pamphlets for preaching his ideas and to social, educational and humanitarian work. From 1894 to 1903, except the Lahore session of 1900, Lajpat Rai did not attend any annual session of the Congress. His ill health, educational, social and humanitarian work and Congress policies kept him aloof from the Congress sessions. Through the columns of The Tribune (Lahore), he advocated bold and constructive policy for the Congress and called upon its leaders to shed off outdated ideas and undertake serious business for political work. He regarded the policy
of appealing to the conscience of British rulers as of no avail. In 1904, he was in the top echelon of political leaders and at the Bombay session the ardent nationalist of Maharashtra Bal Gangadhar Tilak moved a resolution for sending Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Lajpat Rai as delegates to England for putting before the British people and political leaders, the claims of India. His visit to England, in 1905, was a turning point in his political career and also the history of nationalist movement. On his return to India, he was a changed man with a firm conviction that Indian political salvation would depend on the efforts of her own people and their self-reliance and self-help with regard to political work. "You can at time successfully appeal to humanity and benevolence of individuals but to hope for justice from a nation is hoping against hope. The role of a foreign democracy is in this respect most dangerous."33 It was left to Lord Curzon to give an impetus to a new movement of resistance and vehement opposition. The partition of Bengal in 1905, despite strong protests, created a stir throughout the country. The spirit of moderation began to evaporate and there emerged a new leadership particularly in Bengal and Maharashtra. The new nationalist leaders called the Extremists at that time rejected the passive policy of the Congress based on prayers and petitions. In the annual session of the 1905 Congress, Lajpat Rai played unique role and saved the Congress from breaking up.

The spread of Swadeshi and boycott movement in Punjab and peasants' agitation against the Colonization Bill created widespread anti-British sentiment in the province. The Punjab peasants were stirred and there were strikes at many places. The Punjab Government

regarded the political situation as exceedingly dangerous. In this tense situation, the Local government considered the politicians responsible for serious unrest among the peasants. Lajpat Rai was deported to distant Mandalay, because "he was the most prominent worker of the Province." The Indian press condemned this unjust and arbitrary imprisonment of a great respected leader. The Congress leaders joined in protest. His unjustified arrest created a strong opposition in England and Morley, the Secretary of State, was harrassed by repeated questions in the Parliament. Within a period of six months, the Government decided to restore him to freedom. He was released in November 1907. His brief imprisonment greatly elevated his stature as a national hero.

At Surat in December 1907, the Extremists and the Moderates were struggling to have their nominee and Lajpat Rai's name was put up for presidentship of the year's Congress at that place. He played the role of peacemaker between the two parties and strived hard to bring about a compromise. In 1908, he went to England. On his return to India in 1911, he was elected to the Lahore Municipal Committee where he showed unusual zeal for constructive work although the authorities were always suspicious of his motives. He re-entered the Congress in 1912 and at its annual session at Bankipura in Patna; he advocated the cause of suffering Indians in South Africa and at the next Congress at Karachi, held in 1913, he again spoke on this subject. In May 1914, he went to England as a representative of the Congress to represent the views of the Congress on the reforms of Indian Council, for which a bill was being introduced by the Secretary of State in Parliament and

34. Letter, Gokhale to the Editor, Times of India, Gokhale Papers.
35. C.I.D. Diary, op. cit.
other matters in which Congress had shown interest. In England, he took up the cause of Indians living in Canada where the Canadian government had enacted that no Indian could stay there permanently.\textsuperscript{37}

The War broke out when Lajpat Rai was about to leave England for a trip to the continent. The Government prohibited his entry into India. A political realist, as he was, he then made up his mind to go to the U.S.A. There he visited New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, California and other important towns. He also paid a short visit to Japan. During his stay in the United States, the Indian revolutionaries made repeated overtures to Lajpat Rai to obtain his support for their cause. Lajpat Rai refused to associate himself with their plans. "I am a Hindu Nationalist working for the attainment of self government for India but I do not believe that it would be worthwhile to achieve that end by foreign military intervention and I am sure that the vast bulk of my fellow nationalists in India and elsewhere are of the same mind. What we want is self-government but not a change of masters."\textsuperscript{38} He was pessimistic about the plans of the revolutionaries. He did not want to do anything which might jeopardise India's case at the time of peace settlement of War. Furthermore, he wanted to return to India as early as possible. So he did not want to make alliance with Germany or revolutionaries who could render his return impossible.\textsuperscript{39} In December 1919, lajpat Rai was allowed by the Secretary of State to return India, and he reached Bombay on February 20, 1920.

\textsuperscript{37} Lajpat Rai's Autobiographical Fragment vide \textit{The People} (Lahore), January 13, 1931.

\textsuperscript{38} Lajpat Rai's Diary, p. 3, I.N.A.

\textsuperscript{39} Lajpat Rai: Autobiographical Fragment vide \textit{The People} (Lahore), April 13, 1929, p. 54.
India of 1920 was radically different from India which Lajpat Rai left in 1914. The War had wrought a fundamental transformation of the Indian political scene. Indian national movement had made rapid strides. The Punjab was seething with discontent and indignation on account of Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the repressive policy of the Government. This act of unrestrained brutality and the horrors of the martial law regime in the Punjab roused the country to a bitter determination to fight the alien law. The leadership had passed into new hands and, a new technique of agitation came into vogue. The new technique Satyagraha, launched with protest meetings and hartals by Mahatma Gandhi, received a massive support from Indian masses, Hindus and Muslims alike. In September 1920 Lajpat Rai was elected President of the special session of the Congress at Calcutta. It was at that session that Mahatma Gandhi presented his programme of non-violent non-cooperation. Lajpat Rai at first opposed it. But that very year at the Nagpur session of the Congress, he fell in line with Gandhi. As a sole leader of his province, he threw himself heart and soul to stimulate national consciousness for the success of the movement. Through his extensive tours, speeches and direction he gave a new dimension to the movement. He also visited some places outside the province and influenced the All India Congress Committee's meetings. His popularity alarmed the Government. In December 1921, he was arrested, on the pretext that he had presided over a meeting of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee. He was tried and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. But soon he was released for his arrest had been declared illegal by the Court. However, he was again arrested on another pretext. On his release, Lajpat Rai joined the

40. A.I.C.C. File No.2/1922.
newly founded Swaraj Party. Soon he drifted away from this party and formed Independent Congress Party in 1926. Lajpat Rai was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly in December 1925, and again in August 1926. In the Assembly, it was under his leadership that the resolution advocating the boycott of the Simon Commission, which was coming to India to explore the possibilities of further constitutional development in India, was passed. In the meantime, he attended the Labour Conference in Geneva, and on his return he undertook a fiery campaign against the Simon Commission. In 1927, the Nehru Report was published, in which Motilal Nehru and his colleagues, taking up the challenge of the Secretary of State for India, outlined a scheme of Swaraj for India. Lajpat Rai was impressed by the report and he undertook a tour of the whole of India so as to do propaganda work in its favour. He had hardly begun his work when the Simon Commission arrived at Lahore on October 30, 1928. Lajpat Rai led a peaceful procession to demonstrate their anger and dissatisfaction with the Simon Commission. This was declared illegal and in order to disperse the crowd, the police made Lathi charge. Lajpat Rai received grievous blow on this occasion and as a result of this he was taken ill. He never recovered from this illness and passed away on the morning of November 17, 1928.

Lajpat Rai was a versatile writer. He wrote several short biographies such as Mazzani, Garibaldi, Shivaji, Shri Krishna and Swami Dayananda Saraswati. His other important works were: The Arya Samaj, Young India, The Political Future of India, England's Debt to India, Evolution of Japan, India's will to Freedom, Problem of National Education in India, United States of America, Unhappy India. He was