CHAPTER II
LAJPAT RAI AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (Contd.)
1906 - 1914

Lord Curzon had departed from India when Lajpat Rai returned from England in November 1905. The last days of his regime were marked by a new political ferment largely created by oppressive and anti-Indian policies of the Government. Convinced that the British rule was "juster, purer and more beneficiant than either any other foreign rule or the rule of Indians themselves", he believed that India must be governed autocratically. His failure to recognise Indian demands and aspirations lent a new robustness and appeal to Indian nationalism. In 1905 India was vibrating with a new life, and there were signs of the 'New Spirit' in the air.

The partition of Bengal followed by the Swadeshi and boycott agitations convulsed the country. The political basis of the empire as well as the economic policies of the Government were severely attacked. Economically, the unrest was seen as largely owing to the belief strongly held by "three-fourths of the educated class" that the economic policy of the Government was "radically unsound and grossly unfair to India." People quoted Bradlaugh, Digby, and Naoroji, and maintained that the 'drain' to England was the real cause of the poverty of the people.\(^1\) People were hard hit by rising prices inside the country. The Government were convinced that there were economic causes for the political discontent. Authorities at home were informed that in Bengal the middle classes

\(^1\) Minto Papers, Correspondence (England and Abroad), Letters and Telegrams, Vol. 1, No. 155.
from which the politicians came, generally had fixed income, i.e. wages of government and zamindari services, and the people were badly affected by the continuous rise in prices over many years. Some suggested a rise in wages as a ready remedy against rising prices, but others opposed it.

Government's refusal to meet the political and economic demands and its repressive measures against the growing national movement shook the faith of an increasing number of Indians in the ideology and technique of Liberal Nationalism. They began to rally round the group of militant nationalists (the Extremists), who drew inspiration from India's past, invoked the great episodes in the history of the Indian people, and tried to infuse national pride and self-respect among them. They criticised the idealizing of the western and specially British culture by the Liberals. The Extremists asserted that this would only breed an inferiority complex among the Indians and sap their national pride and self-confidence so vital to the struggle for freedom. In Bengal a mass passive resistance movement was launched. Many Congress leaders, so far Moderates believing in strictly constitutional methods, were swept into it.

The new leaders, called the 'Nationalists' or 'Extremists', were impatient with the 'medicant' policy of the Congress and wanted to infuse militancy into its programme. They had no faith in resolutions, prayers and petitions for liberating the country from alien rule. The partition of Bengal proved a blessing in disguise for the Extremists who were led by ardent patriots like B.G. Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh.² Lajpat Rai

² B. 1872; passed Indian Civil Service Examination, Linguistic Scholar, arrested 1908; d. 1950.
too subscribed to their political ideology so far as he accepted Swaraj, Swadeshi and Boycott as the new religion of India. During his stay in London he had witnessed some mass demonstrations and Lajpat Rai advocated the use of such methods to create an effect on the British Raj. He advocated a change in the nature of the Congress programme with a view to enlisting support of a wider section of the Indian people for the national movement. From London, in a letter to Babu Ganga Prasad Varma of Lucknow, Lajpat Rai had written:

"Unless you are prepared to change the nature of your (Congress) movement in this direction you are not likely to make any progress towards political freedom at all and I am sure that if the Congress will not take the initiative in this matter, some other movement may have to be set up to do the same and then the Congress will dwindle into insignificance."

But the Congress leadership was not, by and large, in favour of such a change. Lajpat Rai was with the Extremists in criticising the "old" methods of the Congress. He did not place any reliance on English promises or their sense of justice. But he differed from them as to the ultimate aim of the Indians and the methods of agitation. The Extremists like Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh rejected the methods of the Moderates as well as their aim of colonial self-government. To them conciliation between Indian patriotism and loyalty to the empire was anathema, and the idea of self-governing India within the empire a contradiction between two incompatible entities. On the contrary, Lajpat Rai and Tilak never conceived of Swaraj as complete independence from Britain.

3. Letter, August 3, 1905, Lajpat Rai to Ganga Prasad Varma, Gokhale Papers, See also Appendix I.
They would have been satisfied with a larger measure of self-government. Lajpat Rai favoured the limited objective of Dominion Status. He wanted to steer clear of extreme views and strike the golden mean. He was not for severing links with the British Commonwealth: "We are not even now averse to remain with the British Commonwealth, if we are allowed to remain on our terms, by our free choice and by our free will and we will decide that question, when the time comes, on its merits in the light of our own interests and not by coercion or fear."\(^4\) In April, 1908 Lajpat Rai supported the Allahabad Convention's resolution which reaffirmed that the Congress did not desire to leave the empire and would strive for the ideal of colonial self-government taking recourse only to methods of constitutional agitation. In 1919 Lajpat Rai again made a summing up of the objective the country had in view: "The Moderates want colonial self-government step by step and so do the Extremists."\(^5\) Lajpat Rai, therefore, was in favour of colonial self-government and constitutional agitation.

Lajpat Rai and Tilak were two prominent leaders of India. Both leaders had regard for each other. But they differed on certain ideas. Tilak endeavoured to secure national freedom by attacking all kinds of external authority forcibly imposed on India. He considered that national regeneration was to be secured through the elimination of foreign domination. Tilak subordinated all other considerations to this end.\(^6\) On the contrary, Lajpat Rai

\(^6\) *Ibid.*
did not want to make unflinching attack on the bureaucracy, for a mission of moral re-generation was the dominant note in his life. He wanted to secure national freedom through the improvement of social and national efficiency which would accelerate the attainment of national freedom and preserve it to the glory of the nation. Although both leaders believed in the desirability of propaganda in foreign countries but Lajpat Rai was superior to Tilak in realising the need of this sort of propaganda as early as 1905. Tilak recognised it only on his visit to England in 1919, that the Indian political freedom could best be won by conducting propaganda in America and the European countries and thus gaining international sympathy for India. 7

On his return from Benaras Congress in January 1906, Lajpat Rai found an awkward situation in the Punjab. Some Congressmen who had sympathy with the Moderates were not satisfied with his role in the last session of the Indian National Congress. They charged him that he had betrayed Gokhale in England and in the Benaras Congress. He was also accused for his intimacy with Tilak. H.L. Hundly, the new Editor of the Tribune, wrote articles against his attitude. The fact was that Lajpat Rai's independent position was misunderstood by some people in the Punjab. 8 He was a man who had his own status and broad nationalistic outlook. On March 3, 1906, in a letter to Gokhale, Lajpat Rai wrote about this controversy thus: "Some mischievous people with whom I have had

7. Ibid., p. 37.
extensive differences in the Arya Samaj have been trying to give out in the column of the Vernacular Press in this province that during the last session of the Indian National Congress I tried to spread libellous remarks about your work in England and attempted to create difficulties in your way in guiding the proceedings of the Indian National Congress." 9 He refuted the allegation and added: "I am proud of fact that in connection with the work of the Congress deputation to England my name has been associated with you." 10 In another letter to Gokhale, Lajpat Rai wrote: "The whole country feels proud of you and is very grateful to you for the example of duty and sacrifice that you are holding to them in your person." 11 Lajpat Rai drew inspiration from Gokhale and sought his advice for political work. "What line will you advise me personally to adopt with regard to political work? You know my sympathies are in the direction of self-help and self-reliance. I can devote the most of my time to political work if I can once determine what told in that line." 12 He even instructed the Indian Association of Lahore to collect subscriptions to meet the expenses of Gokhale's proposed visit to England in 1906. 13 Lajpat Rai had also deep regard for Tilak. He held in high esteem both Gokhale and Tilak, and felt a genuine pride in claiming the good-will and friendship of both. 14 All his efforts were, therefore,

10. Ibid.
directed towards maintaining unity in the national camp.

Lajpat Rai was surprised at the virulent Moderates' opposition, and fearing that continued controversy would imperil the growth of constructive political programme he made an effort to heal the schism in the Punjab. He was also keen to take the Congress message to the masses. The October 1906 provincial conference at Ambala gave Lajpat Rai an opportunity to achieve these objectives. By minimising doctrinal differences and appealing for unity, Lajpat Rai won Moderates' support. He also succeeded in convincing them the necessity of establishing District Congress branches which would carry on systematic agitation over "meaningful" issues such as income tax rate, British Zulum (oppression) and begar (pressing of people into service without payment). He emphasised the importance of spreading the Congress movement to the mofussil. As a result of his efforts the Punjab Congress had branches in over twenty district towns by February 1907. At the same meeting Lajpat Rai also tried to gain political support of all communities. He said that Punjab Congress would remain non-sectarian and would take up only broad issues pertaining to the entire educated classes. The strategy was successful. Several prominent Muslims led by Fazal-i-Husain established a pro-Congress Muslim League and cooperated in the meetings sponsored by Lajpat Rai.

The gulf between the leaders of the Indian National Congress was fast growing since its last session. As a leader of the Punjab Congress Lajpat Rai did not want his province to join this unnecessary controversy. In an editorial Lajpat Rai explained the neutral position of the Punjab Congress towards the national leaders thus:

"So far as we are in the Punjab are concerned, we feel real and sincere respect both for Mr. Gokhale and Mr. Tilak. We admire the work of both Babu Surendra Nath Bannerjea as well as that of Bipin Chandra Pal." 17

He had intense desire to maintain unity and avert split in the national organisation. He described that controversy "extremely silly", and held both groups responsible for this development. 18 He did not relish the extravagant attacks on the "old" leaders though he regretted that they had failed to change with the times. 19 He also blamed the "old" leaders for their unreasonable suspicion about Tilak, whom the new leaders wanted to elect the President of the next Congress. He advised the Congressmen to accept the decision of Reception Committee with good grace. He also stated that the decision of the majority should bind all. 20 Thus, Lajpat Rai was in favour of a united Congress.

By December 1906, when the Indian National Congress met at Calcutta, the differences between the Extremists and Moderates had become sharpened and a fierce controversy raged. The first issue was the election of President. The Extremists suggested

17. Panjabee (Lahore), October 13, 1906.
that as Punjab had not provided a President for the Congress, it might be appropriate to elect Lajpat Rai to the office. But the Moderates were not ready to accept the candidature of any Extremist who demanded a constitution. They complained: "Behind all is Tilak who, knowing how he is regarded by the sober section of the Congress Party, has been moving heaven and earth to get Lajpat Rai elected for the President. 'Today Lajpat Rai and tomorrow Tilak'. Where will be the Congress be?" Thus the presidential issue was the first principal point of difference between the two wings of the Congress. The demand of constitution for the Congress was another point of controversy. It was vehemently opposed by the Moderates. Finally, Boycott, Swadeshi, National education and self-government on colonial lines were the burning issues for the forthcoming Congress. The Extremists had returned from the Benaras Congress in an unhappy mood. They came to Calcutta to carry out these resolutions.

Sir William Wedderburn was very much upset at this new situation. On August 23, 1906 in a letter to Lajpat, Sir William Wedderburn urged him to help the Congress in the hour of its crisis. He wrote to him to use his influence in order to keep the Congress "on its present lines, at any rate until Mr. Morley has had time to get his feet on firm ground." Lala Lajpat Rai was keen to maintain "the unity and solidarity" of the Congress, but he was not confident of the ultimate results because, in his opinion,

Bengal was in a "great ferment" and "new" ideas were replacing "old" ones.24 He, however, assured Wedderburn that he would act up to his wishes and would do his best to avert the split.25 Gokhale too had special regard for and confidence in Lajpat Rai. He said that as a public worker Lajpat Rai was more selfless than either Tilak or Pal and, though his name was freely used by Bipin Chandra Pal and his party, he was not with them in their views or methods and he perhaps would have been more actively "on our side today if greater tact had been displayed in the past in meeting the wishes of men like him."26 It was a very accurate assessment of Lajpat Rai's views and ideology.

The Moderates stunned by the activities of the Extremists decided to have Dadabhai Naoroji as the President for the 1906 session knowing fully well that the Extremists would not oppose openly the election of the "Grand Old Man" of India.27 Naoroji accepted the offer. Welcoming the election, Lajpat Rai wrote: "Mr. Naoroji's formal election as President will stop all irritation and all quarrels about the President."28 Thus a great crisis in the Congress was averted.

Lajpat Rai arrived at Calcutta on December 26, 1906 to attend the session of the Indian National Congress. The Congress met on December 27. The address of the President was a plea for moderation

25. Ibid.
26. Letter, October 20, 1906, Gokhale to Natesan, Ibid.
27. Letter, October 4, 1906, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, Ibid.
28. Ibid.
and constitutional agitation, and the aim of the Congress was stated in clear terms - "self-Government or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the colonies". Naoroji demanded it as the birth right of Indians as British citizen.

The discussion on December 27, 1906 was on the partition resolution. In this resolution the Congress recorded its "emphatic protest against the partition of Bengal", and regretted that it was "wholly and decisively against the wishes of the majority of the people of Bengal." It also asked for an inquiry by the Government over the partition issue. The Extremists argued that the time had come to give up idea of petitioning the government for enquiries and they moved an amendment that the clause be struck out. Dadabhai Naoroji thought that the feeling of the House was not in favour of the amendment but wisely refused to put it to a vote. In the end the Moderates decided to accept the amendment, and speaking in the session Jurendra Nath Bannerjea said that "all reference to the commission of inquiry will be deleted" from the final wording of the resolution.

The real conflict came on the wording of the Boycott and Swadeshi resolutions. At the 1905 Congress, the Congress leaders had accepted that the boycott of foreign goods was a legitimate technique for use in Bengal. The Extremists now attempted to widen the concept by arguing that boycott be applied to every British

thing and in every province. When the Moderates insisted on limiting the endorsement of boycott to only Bengal, Bipin Chandra Pal demanded Congress recommendation of universal economic and political boycott. Pal's demand was rejected by the Moderates. Intervening in the controversy Lajpat Rai supported the boycott resolution and described it as the religion of new India; the manifestation of self-sacrificing patriotism; the means of moulding a self-reliant Indian Nation and the spearhead of India's national struggle against British rule.33 Lajpat Rai attempted to solve the controversy by introducing an amendment. "To me", Lajpat Rai writes, "it appeared that the difference in the attitude of the two groups was one of the word only. So I moved an amendment which though not accepted by the Extremist leaders was carried by majority. Bipin Chandra Pal and his party walked out. The leader of the moderates, Gokhale, was pleased with me and said I had solved the situation."34 Thus drafted resolution in committee read: "Having regard to the fact that the people of this country have little or no voice in its administration, and that their representations to the Government do not receive due consideration, that the Boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal by way of protest against the partition of that province, was and is legitimate."35

The resolution on Swadeshi also evoked fierce controversy. Lajpat Rai again endeavoured to reconcile the two warring groups. He brought about a temporary compromise by inserting the words "even at some sacrifice". The resolution read thus: "This Congress

34. Lajpat Rai's Autobiographical Writings, p. 114.
accord its most cordial support to the Swadeshi movement and calls upon the people of the country to labour for its success by making earnest and sustained efforts to promote the growth of indigenous industries and to stimulate the production of indigenous articles by giving them preference over imported commodities even at some sacrifice.\textsuperscript{36} Supporting this resolution Lajpat Rai declared:

"The first thing which Swadeshism reminds you of constantly is that in the use of articles, in the use of the necessaries of life you have a duty to perform towards your country and that duty can best be performed by the consumption of Indian-make articles in preference to foreign commodities. One thing which this resolution calls upon you to do is to encourage the production of all home-made articles.\textsuperscript{37}"

Lajpat Rai described Swadeshism as a right step towards self-reliance. He asked his countrymen to invest their capital in setting up industries. This, he said, would be a great service to the country.\textsuperscript{38}

At Calcutta Lajpat Rai acted as peace-maker to maintain unity within the Congress. It was at least partly due to his efforts that Congress was saved from an open rupture for another year. Here he exercised his skill and influence in bringing about workable compromise between the Moderates and the Extremists.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{36} Report of the twentieth-second I.N.C., Calcutta 1906.
\bibitem{37} \textit{Ibid.}, p. iii.
\bibitem{38} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{thebibliography}
On his return to Punjab after Calcutta Congress, Lajpat Rai made extensive tours and actively engaged himself in educating public opinion about the political situation and the Swadeshi resolution. On January 13 and 14, 1907, in his address at Sialkot, Lajpat Rai urged his 4,000 audiences to assist the Swadeshi movement by boycotting all foreign goods, in particular foreign sugar.39

At Lyallpur on March 21 and 22, 1907, Lajpat Rai expressed satisfaction on the unity of the Hindus and Muslims: "Our whole strength lies in standing side by side and remaining united.... take this vow of Union on your Koran and Shastras and no power on earth can humiliate you."40 Expressing the importance of unity among all classes he said: "When we became united in the interests of the country, no force in the world will be able to separate us from each other."41

On March 26, 1907 Lajpat Rai visited Allahabad and delivered lectures on "The new spirit". He drew attention to the then existing political situation and the means to be adopted to improve it. In his second address he advised the people to boycott British courts and start Panchayats for the adjudication of disputes.42

The Punjab, Lajpat Rai's home province, which had been relatively quiet during Curzon's regime was in ferment during 1906-07; a 'new air' was blowing in men's mind. The circumstances leading to Lajpat Rai's deportation will be discussed in another

40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
Here it is sufficient to say that this unrest was due to several causes. A series of unjust administrative and legislative measures of the local Government were responsible for this state of affairs. Significant among these were the Colonization Bill, increase of irrigation rates in the Sari Doab Canal Colony and the abnormal increase of land revenue in Rawalpindi district. With the rising unrest the bureaucracy was taken by panic as the year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Sepoy’s uprising at Meerut and they had terrible apprehensions of evil days. They blamed the politicians for the unrest, quite oblivious of the genuine grievances of the people. In this tense situation the Punjab Government wanted to make an impressive show of force, and they struck at Lajpat Rai, the most popular leader of the province, and Sardar Ajit Singh, the well-known extremist leader. He was arrested on May 9, 1907, and was quietly deported to Mandalay under Regulation III of 1818. Ajit Singh followed him there a few days later. The Extremists as well as the Moderates joined in protest against the deportation. Tilak took a challenging posture in the Kesari, “if the rulers adopt this Russian method then the subjects in India will have to imitate the subjects in Russia.” Gokhale castigated the Government for their high handed action in deporting his Punjabi friend whose aims and methods had been strictly constitutional. The Indian National Congress of 1907 and 1908 criticised the Regulation III of 1818. The Viceroy also felt that Lajpat Rai’s deportation was hasty and unjust. He and

43. Born in Jullundur (Punjab), a revolutionary; deported 1907; published Peshwa, later renamed Bharat Mata and Sahai; founded Bharat Mata Society; visited Persia, Rome, Geneva, Paris, Rio de Janeiro in South America; joined Ghadar Party; arrested in 1st War; d. 1947.
Ajit Singh were restored to freedom six months after their arrest. Lajpat Rai returned home on November 19, 1907.

During the period Lajpat Rai was in Mandalay the struggle between the two wings of Congress had taken a new turn. Both parties were endeavouring to seize the organization and run it on their own lines alone. They were making attempts to demonstrate their strength at the next Congress to be held at Surat.

After his release Lajpat Rai was at the height of his popularity, and the Extremists wanted to put his name for the Presidency of the National Congress. According to the convention the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the previous session was usually voted to the chair. But the Extremists resented the nomination of Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh owing to his moderate sympathies. There was also a rumour that the four militant resolutions of the Calcutta Congress were not to be taken up for consideration. Meanwhile, Lajpat Rai was released. This news, though welcome in every respect, tended to make the Congress "confusion worse confounded". At once, as if by instinct, the cry went round that Lajpat Rai was the fittest man to preside over the annual Congress. At Surat on November 21, 1907 the Reception Committee was formed and the office bearers of the Congress were appointed. The Presidential election was to take place on November 24, 1907. The young Nationalists of Surat and adjoining places stoutly suggested the name of Lajpat Rai for the Presidential post.

44. B. 1845; member of the Indian Legislative Council, 1891-1896 and again 1906-07; Chairman of the Congress Reception Committee 1906; President of the I.N.C. 1907 and 1908; d. 1921.
Gokhale opposed this proposal. He argued, "coaxed, appealed; and when every device proved unavailing, he removed the velvet glove from off his mailed fist, and challenged the young nationalists to secure Lajpat Rai's election in the face of the packed majority of the Moderates." Later on after the Surat split Gokhale gave three reasons for not considering the candidature of Lajpat Rai: "First, that, with only a month at the disposal of the Reception Committee, for making arrangements which, in other places, had taken at least three to four months, any division among the workers at Surat was most undesirable as it was sure to hamper the progress of their carrying their proposal about Lajpat Rai, their strength being only five or six out of about two hundred who were expected to attend that afternoon meeting, and that the rejection of Mr. Lajpat Rai's name would only be a painful and wanton humiliation for him, and thirdly and lastly, that though Lajpat Rai had been personally restored to freedom, the larger question of the principle involved in his deportation had yet to be fought out, and it would best be fought out by keeping up the feeling of the country united and intact behind him, and that this feeling was sure to be divided if one section of the Congress tried to run him as a party candidate. The Congress must, of course, express condemnation of Government measures when necessary, but it had other important work to do. We can not do without the help and cooperation of Government in many matters at our present stage." But the Extremist section did not agree with Gokhale's point of view.

47. Ibid.
48. Letter, January 8, 1908, Gokhale to Newspapers, Gokhale Papers.
In the beginning Lajpat Rai did not comment when his name was first mentioned for Presidentship of the National Congress. He did not even give reply to his supporters' letters. When the Moderates changed the venue of the Congress from Nagpur to Surat, the Extremists approached Lajpat Rai to preside over a separate National Congress at Nagpur. But Lajpat Rai did not want any split within the Congress. He opposed their proposal of holding a separate National Congress. He replied that Punjab sentiment was firmly opposed to the idea. On November 3, 1907, Lajpat Rai broke his silence and deplored the controversy on the presidential issue. He decided to keep himself aloof from the Congress controversy. He requested all his friends "to desist from mentioning my name in connection therewith", and he appealed to them to "accept the nomination of the Reception Committee in a spirit of loyalty and love". He wanted peace within the Congress. So he assured Gokhale that the Committee's action regarding the presidency had his full support, and he added, "I am prepared to heartily cooperate with you in your noble efforts to preserve harmony in the national ranks, but I am afraid my voice is not likely to prove more effectual than yours." However, he further said, "I shall do my best and I hope that our efforts might at any rate reduce the number of irreconcilables." He received a number of letters and telegrams to accept the presidency if "it was formally made" to him. But Lajpat Rai was not ready to consider

49. Letters, November 3, 1907, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
any such proposal unless he was sure that "it had the unanimous consent not only of the Reception Committee, but of the leaders as well."^4

At Reception Committee's meeting on November 23, 1907, Gokhale tried to win over the younger elements by telling them that since he was going to pass a resolution of protest against the arrest and deportation of Lajpat Rai, he should not occupy the Chair. Gokhale is reported to have said, "How can we snap our fingers at Government? Surely we can not flout the Government at this stage. The authorities will throttle our movement in no time."^55 The Extremists, on the contrary, were keen to secure Lajpat Rai for the Presidency. They would not allow the hero of the hour to be humiliated by "unworthy" steps of the Moderates. The younger elements replied that by electing him to the Presidential Chair a hundred times stronger protest against his deportation would thus be made. But Gokhale and other Moderates leaders would not hear of Lajpat Rai's name. The Extremists, therefore, left the meeting in disgust and Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh was then "unanimously elected" President by the votes of those who remained at the meeting. But in the Kesari, December 10. 1907, Tilak insisted that Lajpat Rai must become the President of the Surat Congress:

"If it was a question of honouring a patriot, Lala Lajpat Rai had made tremendous sacrifices and suffered for the country and there could be no comparison between him and Rash Behari Ghosh. We do not say that Gokhale worked against Lajpat Rai out of personal malice or hatred but his activity

---

54. Ibid.
was calculated to commit the Congress to harmful beliefs...
If you want to do honour to Lalaji, elect him President of
the Congress. If you cannot do it, keep quiet. Who are you
merely to invite Lajpat Rai to the Surat Congress? He can
come there in his own right as a delegate. Why he should be
your guest?56

On the eve of the Surat session, Aurobindo Ghose called upon
the Extremists to counter the "Bombay loyalists" and set up a
separate Nationalist Conference. Consequently, the first Indian
Nationalist Conference was held at Haripur on the outskirts of
Surat on December 23, 1907. It was presided over by Aurobindo and
addressed by Tilak. Entrance to the Nationalists' Conference was
conditional upon a personal declaration of being a 'Nationalist',
and the Conference went on to pass resolutions on total boycott
and independence.57 Although, the Extremists' Nationalist
Conference presented a consolidated front, it contained two distinct
groups: one led by Tilak who repudiated any intention to cause a
split in the Congress, the other led by Aurobindo who sought to
capture the Congress or wreck it.58

In such confused situation, Lajpat Rai arrived at Surat on
the morning of December 25th 1907. He was keen to bring about
unity in the two Congress groups. Apart from the sharp controversy
regarding the election of the President, the Extremists also feared
that the Moderates intended to tone down the four resolutions passed
in the Calcutta Congress viz., Swadeshi, Swarajya, Boycott and
National Education. He saw, on the day of his arrival, Tilak and
Khaparde in the afternoon and intimated to them his intention of

56. Ibid.
57. B.N.N.R. Bengalee (Calcutta) December 25, 1907.
58. Ghose, Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother,
(Pondicherry, 1953), p. 47.
arranging a meeting of a few leading delegates from each side to settle the various questions in dispute. They agreed and Lajpat Rai went to Gokhale to arrange for the meeting. Tilak and Khaparde returned to the Nationalist Conference which was being held that evening. At this Conference a Nationalist Committee consisting of one Nationalist delegate from each province was appointed to carry on the negotiations with the other side; and it was decided if the Nationalist Committee failed to obtain any assurance from the responsible Congress officials about status quo being maintained, the Nationalists should begin their opposition from the election of the President.

After this Lajpat Rai went to see Gokhale and appraised him of the situation. But Gokhale did not favour Lajpat Rai's idea of a meeting of a few representatives of the two camps to sort out the disputed points. Gokhale's reaction speaks for itself:

"Lajpat Rai had a brief talk with me. It was on the 25th December, in the evening, at the Railway Station when he had gone there to receive the President, about a proposal made by Mr. Tilak that five men on his side and five men on the other should meet together and settle the wording of the resolutions. I pointed out to Mr. Lajpat Rai that it was the business of the Subject Committee to settle the wording and that a Committee such as Mr. Tilak suggested had never been pointed before. Moreover it was easy for Mr. Tilak, whose followers were meeting in a Conference day after day, to nominate five men to represent his side. But amidst the excitement and bitterness of feeling then prevailing, what five men, I asked, could claim the authority or undertake the responsibility to act in the name of the other delegates and I said to him, "let the Subject Committee meet tomorrow and let us see if any differences remain to be adjusted. And, if any remain, you can make this proposal to the Subject Committee. Lajpat saw the force of this and did not press the suggestion further."

59. Letter, January 8, 1908, Gokhale to Newspaper, Gokhale Papers.
In the face of this situation Lajpat Rai realised that compromise was not possible. He was unhappy and sad. He did not make any further effort. When no intimation was received from Lajpat Rai on the night of the 25th, or the morning of the 26th December regarding the proposal of a joint Committee for reconciliation proposed by him, nor a copy of the draft resolutions supplied to Tilak or any other delegates to enable them to judge if sliding back from the old position was really intended then the Extremists decided to oppose the Presidential election.

In the meantime, Tilak and Khaparde met Surendranath Bannerjea and told him that they would withdraw all opposition if the Nationalist Party was assured that its status at the session would not be attacked and if, when the resolution on the election of the President was discussed, some graceful reference was made to the public's desire to have Lajpat Rai in the Chair. This condition Bannerjea accepted as he himself was to speak on the resolution formally proposing the President, but he could give no assurance as to the first condition. Thus not much came out of a last minute attempt for compromise.

On the morning of December 26, 1907, the twenty-third session of the Congress met at Surat. The impending split could be anticipated on the first day, when Bannerjea formally introduced the President-elect, Rash Behari Ghosh. Tumultous hisses and shouts interrupted Bannerjea's speech, and the general meeting had to be suspended. On the following day, Khaparde

describes the events thus:

"When the Congress sitting commenced again Surendra Babu resumed his speech and was patiently heard. Then Tilak who had given notice of amendment got up to the platform to move it. The Chairman ruled it out of the order. Tilak wished to appeal to the delegates. This the Chairman and the Moderates would not allow. A Moderate, I think, Ambala, threw a chair at Tilak. This enraged all our party. A show thrown by a Moderate at Tilak struck Surendra Babu on the back and Sir P.M. Mehta on the cheek. There arose a tremendous uproar and many young men got up on the platform. There was a free fight. Dr. Gadre got hurt. Bhagat, Dr. Moonje, Mr. Thengadi and a number of others protected Tilak and brought him out safe. I also came out and we sat in C.P. (Central Provinces) Tent. The Police took possession of the Randal. The Moderates brought the storm on themselves and some of them were roughly handled."  

Although Tilak’s objection to the election of the President sparked off the uproar, he was by no means responsible for the split in the Congress. He regretted the outbreak and believed that it was "accidental and unexpected."  In a letter to his father, Jawaharlal Nehru who was studying in England rightly commented about the Surat split: "You will most probably throw all the blame on Tilak and the Extremists. They may have been to blame for it, but the Moderates had certainly a lot to do with it. I do not at all object R.B. Ghose being president, but the manner in which he was declared president in the face of opposition can hardly be defended from any point of view."  The following admission of Aurobindo is revealing, "very few people know that it was I, (without consulting Tilak), who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress."  

62. Khaparde’s diary, December 27, 1907, Khaparde Papers.  
64. Letter, January 2, 1908, Jawaharlal to Motilal Nehru, M.L. Nehru Papers.  
After the dissolution of the Congress, the Moderates announced their decision to hold a Convention of the Moderate Party. In an attempt to forestall the convention, Tilak approached Bannerjea with a compromise suggestion. He proposed to waive his opposition to Rash Behari Ghosh's election provided the resolutions on Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education retained their 1906 formulation. In return, Bannerjea stipulated to Tilak the following unconditional public apology: "I and my party beg to withdraw in the best interests of the Congress our opposition to Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh's presidency and regret the incident that took place." Tilak concurred, provided that Bannerjea agreed to walk out from the Congress in the event that the resolutions were carried in their milder form. Bannerjea refused and the negotiations broke down.

Lajpat Rai implored the Moderates not to oust the Extremists and thereby expose them to Government persecution. In a last minute attempt, he tried to persuade Gokhale to postpone the meeting of the convention. Gokhale himself admitted that Lajpat Rai made many secret attempts "for reunion." But nothing came out of these attempts and the convention met on December 28, 1907 at the Congress pavilion. Rash Behari presided and a Committee for drafting the Constitution of the Congress was formed.

The Punjab delegates were unhappy at the Surat incident. They wanted to remain aloof from both the groups of the Congress.

67. Ibid., p. 27.
68. Letter, January 8, 1908, Gokhale to newspapers, Gokhale Papers.
They requested their leader, Lajpat Rai, not to take part in any convention or conference. Lajpat Rai informed Krishnaswamy Iyiar, a Congress leader, that:

"As the majority of the Punjab delegates have for the present decided not to take part in any convention or Conference called by either parts ... you will kindly remove my name (Lajpat Rai) from the list of those who had agreed to call a convention.

Lajpat Rai".  

But Lajpat Rai individually decided to attend the convention of the Moderates because its aim was the attainment of self-government for India similar to that enjoyed by self-governing members of the British Empire through constitutional means.

Nine hundred delegates including Lajpat Rai attended the Moderates' Convention which passed the following resolution:

"The attainment by India of Self-Government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and participation by her in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those Members is the goal of our political aspirations.

The advance towards this goal is to be by strictly constitutional means by bringing about a steady reform of existing system of administration and by promoting national unity, fostering public spirit, and improving the condition of the mass of the people. And that all meetings held for the promotion of the aims and objects above indicated have to be conducted in an orderly manner with due submission to the authority of those that are entrusted with the power to control their procedure."  

On the other hand, three hundred Extremists met under the presidency of Aurobindo Ghose and reiterated the 1906 resolution on Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education and self-government. The Extremists' meeting appointed a Committee to

---

69. B. 1863; educationalist; Chairman of the Congress Reception Committee 1903; Member of the Legislative Assembly 1907; Judge 1910; d. 1911.
70. Letter, December 27, 1907, op. cit.
71. Surat Congress and Conference (Madras, 1908), Appendix B.
outline future plans. However, it did not issue precise directions, and it never met again.

Lajpat Rai made another conciliatory attempt on December 30, 1907, when the All India Swadeshi Conference met at Surat. The Chairman was Lajpat Rai and he made a forceful and independent speech. In the first place he stated that the Indians realised themselves as one people with a common tradition and common faith. He warned the gathering that their enemies were trying to disunite the people, that the latest move was to play off the Moderates and the Extremists against each other. He implored the Moderates not to play into the hands of the common foe. He said that it was not wisdom to give the Extremists to the "persecution of government" officials. He also appealed to the Extremists "not to be impatient of the slowness of age and the voice of practical experience." As a matter of fact, he made it clear to both wings that "we ought to prove to the foreigner that against them we are all one whatever may be our differences." 

In 1908, Lajpat Rai again made several unsuccessful conciliatory attempts. On January 13, he visited Calcutta with the object of smoothing away the differences between the Extremists and the Moderates. He also met Motilal Ghosh of the Anrit Bazar Patrika. Lajpat Rai himself writes in this regard thus: "In 1908 at the request of Lokmanya Tilak I 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." 

---

73. Letter, April 1, 1908, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, Gokhale Papers.
was also anxious for unity. "Lajpat Rai and the whole Punjab contingent will work actively for reunion."76 As a man with a pragmatic approach to Indian politics he wanted the two groups to work within the one National organisation.

The Punjab had two views on the question of participation in the Moderates' Convention of April 1908 which was to adopt a constitution and rules of procedure for the Congress. Some Congressmen wanted to keep the Punjab neutral from the two groups of the Congress. The other group, led by Harkishan Lal, was in favour of attending the Moderates' convention. Lajpat Rai had sympathy with the later. Firstly, he wanted to bridge up the gulf between the two groups. Secondly, he was in favour of Congress Constitution which was to be adopted in the convention. Finally, Gokhale was persuading him through private correspondence to attend the convention meeting.77 On March 13, 1908, Lajpat Rai called a meeting of the Punjab sub-committee to take the final decision on the controversy. This meeting was presided by Lajpat Rai. After a hot discussion, the Committee decided to attend the Moderates' convention at Calcutta. It also adopted a constitution, and selected Lajpat Rai and Harikishan to represent the Punjab in the forthcoming convention.

The Moderates' convention reassembled at Allahabad under the name of the All India Conference on April 18 and 19, 1908. Fifty-five members attended, including Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, who presided the Conference. Lajpat Rai was appointed a member of the Committee meeting. It drew a constitution for the Congress.78

76. Letter, January 8, 1908, Gokhale to newspapers, Gokhale Papers
77. Letter, March 20, 1908, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, ibid.
It specified that the object of the Indian National Congress was the attainment of self-government within the British Empire, to be achieved strictly by constitutional means and by gradual reform of the existing system of administration. Every delegate to the Congress had to express in writing his acceptance of this article of faith of the Congress. In addition, the constitution laid down disciplinary rules which ensured the exclusion of rebellious members from the Congress.

On the other hand, the Extremists held their private meeting on October 10th and 11th, 1908 in Bombay under Dr. Balakrishna Shivaram Moonje of Nagpur. Lajpat Rai did not attend this meeting. The Extremists passed a resolution:

"That this meeting of the Nationalists considers it inadvisable to accept the "creed" required to be signed by the Allahabad Convention Committee, whose proceedings they consider were illegal, unconstitutional and arbitrary.

That this meeting of the Nationalists considers it advisable to authorise the "Congress Continuation Committee" to organise the next session of the Congress on the lines hitherto followed....

That a deputation of "four" should proceed to Calcutta to confer with the extremist leaders regarding the advisability of continuing the Congress on its present lines, or the inauguration of a Congress on Nationalist lines."

Though Lajpat Rai had attended the Allahabad meeting of the Convention Committee in April 1908 and had signed the new "Creed" of the Congress, he soon drifted from it. His political ideas did

79. The Indian National Congress (Natesan, Madras, 1911), Appendix B, Article 1.

80. B. 1872; member of the Home Rule League; participated in the non-cooperation movement; worked in the Swaraj Party; Responsive co-operative Party; elected president of the Hindu Mahasabha and Central Legislature in 1926; formed the Hindu Military Education Society in 1937; d. 1948.

81. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political-B), Nos. 63-70, October 1908.
not fit in the Congress programme. The extinction of the extreme left wing, Lajpat Rai felt, was a "menace to the Congress". He soon questioned the representative character of the national body under the exclusive control and management of the Moderates.82 In the Panjabee, Lajpat Rai wrote:

"The Convention had no right or title to make a constitution for the old Indian National Congress. It could only recommend one which, when adopted by the later, even by a majority of votes, would have established its right to continue its old life. Personally I make no secret of the opinion that the principles as settled by the Allahabad Convention are the only principles on which the Congress can run as such, but what I can not bring myself to accept is the high handed precedent of fastening the constitution on those who had no legal hand in framing it, and too in the name of the old organisation." 83

Lajpat Rai had another grievance against those Congress leaders who supported the principle of separate denominational representation for the minority community as embodied in the reform scheme of 1909. He was opposed to separate communal electorates and thought, along with many Hindus leaders of the Punjab, that the Congress had acted against Hindu interests, particularly, in the case of his own province where the Hindus were in a majority. For these reasons Lajpat Rai's interest in the Congress waned and he did not attend its annual meetings until 1912.

Again, Lajpat Rai's work in connection with maintaining unity in the Congress was misunderstood by his friends. The Tribune of Lahore published the inconsistencies in his speeches

82. The Panjabee (Lahore), July 15, 1909.
83. Ibid.
and claimed he was "playing both side". H.L. Handy, the editor of the Tribune, published letters in the vernacular papers against his role in Surat Congress. Lajpat Rai denied the allegations. He declared that he wanted to patch up the differences by remaining aloof from both groups for the sake of Congress unity. He asked Harkrishan Lal, a local leader to control Indian Association and the Punjab Congress and he left for England.

Numerous reasons compelled Lajpat Rai to leave India. Since his release from deportation, the Government kept eyes on his activities. On May 28, 1908 in a letter to Gokhale, Lajpat Rai wrote: "The Police of course never leaves me alone and are after me like a shadow." Again, on August 20, in his letter to Gokhale who was then in England, he wrote: "My life here is a constant misery on account of close espionage kept on me. I feel very much worried and have consequently been suffering from sleeplessness." The repressive policy of the Government, more particularly the deportations of nine Bengal leaders, and the imprisonment of Tilak had upset him. Then he was getting sick of Lahore life and he thought it was impossible to tolerate "imposters, hypocrites and traitors." Some Arya Samaj leaders in Punjab were opposed to participation in active politics on the part of Samaj leaders. They wanted to confine their activities to

84. For example the article in The Tribune (Lahore), January 8, 1908.
85. Letter, January 22, 1908, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, Gokhale Papers
86. Letter, May 28, 1908, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, ibid.
87. Letter, August 20, 1908, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, ibid.
88. Home Department, G.C.I. (Political), Deposit, Nos. 7, November 1908. See also Home Deptt. (Poll.) Nos. 63-70, November 1908.
social reform and spread of education alone. Lajpat Rai, on the contrary, favoured active participation in the political life of the country.\textsuperscript{39} The existence of continual controversy in the Congress also led him to avoid Nationalist activities in India. He hoped that a short absence might restore the equilibrium of his mind, and enable him to resume his work in a more hopeful mood.\textsuperscript{90}

Lajpat Rai left India in the last week of August and he arrived in London on September 15, 1908. On his way, he stayed for a week at Egypt where the young Turks had won a grand national achievement. On his arrival at London, he refused to indulge into any political discussion or a statement of his views and he is reported to have said that, "nothing should be said about his visit."\textsuperscript{91} According to the secret reports of the Government, "Lajpat Rai kept aloof from the revolutionary party."\textsuperscript{92}

During his stay in England in 1908-09, Lajpat Rai could not keep himself away from the basic principles of the Congress. He started Nationalist activities there. He was present at the National Day celebrations on October 16, 1908 which was presided over by Sir H.H. Bhowanogree. Lajpat Rai moved the first resolution protesting against the position of natives in South Africa. On the same day, he presided a "Bande Mataram" celebration. On this occasion, Lajpat Rai said:

"Nationalism was reborn in India on October 16, 1905. The partition might remain or be modified but the idea it had

\textsuperscript{39} Letter, January 22, 1908, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, Gokhale Papers.
\textsuperscript{90} Home Department, G.C.I. (Political-B), Nos.63-70, November, 1908.
\textsuperscript{91} Foreign Department, G.C.I. (General-B) Nos.13, 1909. Confidential.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
given birth to would never die. For them 16th October was a day of love, a day of devotion, a day for worship, a day for sacrifice. 93

In England many British politicians had become his friends. Mr. Hart Davies and Parker, Labour M.P.'s, for Halifax were his friends. On December 20, 1908, Lajpat Rai was invited by Parker to deliver a lecture at Cardiff. In his speech, he disclosed some unpleasant truths about the British administration of India and he compared his audience in their struggle against the capitalists with the people of India struggling against bureaucracy. Discussing about political developments in India, Lajpat Rai said: "The movement in India is bound to have its influence upon your movement in England. If we aim at the progress of humanity we shall aim at peace and this can only be had where justice and truth prevail. In these circumstances the Indian cause is the cause of humanity, the cause of the Indian masses is the cause of the English masses, the cause of the Indian democracy is the cause of the English democracy, the cause of the English working man is the cause of the Indian working man, and it is in that light that I ask you to study this question and give your opinions when you are asked to give them." 94 He appealed to the Labourities to help the Indian agitation as the success of the latter would deal a blow to the class of capitalists and landlords. 95

93. The Government reports describe that Lajpat Rai went to England via Paris where "a meeting was held at the house of K.L. Banker in his honour. Kotwal and several others Extremists were present and took Lajpat Rai to task for his moderation." He arrived in London on September 5, 1908 and drove to the Indian House. He was one of the first residents at the house when it was started in 1904. Ibid.


95. Foreign Department, G.O.I. (General), No. 13, 1909. Confidential.
Lajpat Rai attended a meeting of the Congress Extremists in London. The meeting was held as a kind of protest to the prohibition of the Congress at Nagpur. Bipin Chandra Pal was also present. G.K. Khaparde was put in the chair. The meeting passed a resolution wherein Swaraj was declared to be the goal of the Indian Nationalists. They also expressed their full sympathy and moral support to the Irish, Egyptian and Persian Nationalists struggling for the emancipation of their respective countries. 96

In England Lajpat Rai endeavoured to further the cause of India through his speeches and meeting the members of Parliament. During his brief visit he met members of the Parliament and delivered lectures in which he referred to the inadequacies of the Indian administration. He also drew their attention to the deplorable condition of Indians in South Africa. He appealed to the Labour Party to support the Indian struggle for emancipation. He returned to Lahore in March 1909.

The twenty-fourth Congress was held under Rash Behari Ghosh at Madras in December 1908. It was a purely Moderates' Congress. The keynote of the 1908 Moderates' Congress was its expression of gratitude for the proposed reforms by the Government of India which had been announced two weeks before the Congress convened. 97 The Congress gratitude turned into dissatisfaction when the details framed under the Act were announced at the end of 1909. Harkishan Lal led the Punjab delegates at this session. He invited the

96. Foreign Department, G.O.I. (General), Confidential-B. No. 13, 1909.
Congress to Lahore. But on his return to Lahore he could not find members for a Reception Committee. Even Punjab Provincial Congress Committee did not give much response at its annual meeting. He realised that had he known that there was so much reluctance in the Punjab to join the Congress on the part of those who had hitherto taken an active part in all kinds of political agitation, he would not have invited the Congress to the Punjab. He admitted that the majority of the political leaders in the Punjab were opposed to joining the Congress. Lajpat Rai wanted to remain away for some time from the Congress. He struck to his original intention of not returning to Lahore till April 1909. In the absence of Lajpat Rai the Punjab Congress was devoid of leadership and it remained inactive. It was officially accepted that, "the Congress preparations would remain practically at a standstill till his return."

The reforms, which were embodied in the Indian Councils Act of 1909, enlarged the Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils; conceded non-official majorities in the provinces while retaining the official majority in the centre; and allowed members of the Councils to move resolutions and ask supplementary questions. Above all, the reforms recognized the principle of election to the enlarged Legislative Councils, though not through constituencies

98. Home Department, (Political-3), No.1-11, February 1909.
99. The Tribune (Lahore), July 5, 1909.
100. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political-3), Nos.103-110, April 1908.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
but through the expanded representation of municipal and district boards, universities, chamber of commerce, Land-holders Association; and, most important, they gave the Muslims separate electorate.

The 1909 Congress condemned the separate electorates for the Muslims as designed to aggravate communal differences. It considered the franchise to be illiberal and rooted in the distrust of the educated classes. It regretted that the non-official majorities in the provincial legislative councils had been rendered ineffective by the system of nomination. But the Congress gratefully accepted the Act of 1909 as a "fairly liberal measure." 103

Lajpat Rai, who was in England in 1909, considered the reform scheme as the most mischievous one that could be conceived in the present condition of India for it permanently divided the country into two hostile camps - Hindu and Mohammadan. He did not complain of the preference shown to the Mohammads but he condemned the principle which divided the country into two hostile groups. Then again the franchise had been unevenly distributed, some people had three votes and others none. 104 Lajpat Rai also condemned the executive authority of the Government to prohibit certain individuals from contesting elections. He felt that there was no use of such reform when the present system of Government of India was polluting the manhood of the country and making patriotism and public spirit a crime. 105 He said that India had hoped much from the Liberal Party, that the policy of repression had thrown

104. Foreign Department, G.O.I. (General) Confidential-B, vide, Circular No. 7 of 1910.
105. Ibid.
upon them a feeling of despair and this would only lead to
greater difficulties in the future.106 In the issue of India,
dated 17th June 1910 there was reprint from the Morning Leader
of an interview with Lajpat Rai in which he described reformed
Councils as "a case of an ounce of reconciliation and ten pounds
of repression. So far, the reforms have been a pure farce. The
'new members' have been mostly unofficial hangers on of the
Government or the princes, rarely in true sense representative;
and even so the officials have exerted themselves to reduce
their share in the deliberations to a farce."107 He felt that
independent criticism of Government action had been stifled.

Lajpat Rai came to India in February 1910 but soon he had
to leave his country on account of the precarious condition of
his son.108 He left Bombay on the 17th March 1910 for London.
In England, Lajpat Rai worked for the release of Tilak and other
political prisoners. According to the Government report he
himself was interested in securing the assistance of the Radical
and social reform parties at home in obtaining the release of
Tilak and other Congress leaders as an act of grace on the occasion
of new king Emperor's accession. He even suggested to some of his
Lahore friends the necessity of submitting a memorial on the

106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Lajpat Rai's son, Pyare Kishan was in a sanatorium for
consumption in Dartnor, Devanshire. He arrived at Marseilles
on the 1st April and proceeded to Paris where he remained until
the 9th April, 1910. Nothing is known of what he did there
and how he went to London. He arrived at London on 29th
April 1910 where he took up his residence at 90, Glozebury
Road, West Kensington, and latterly went to stay at 280,
Cromwell Groul Shepherd's Bush. He visited on several
occasions his son who was still in a weak condition. Ibid.
subject, but the suggestion was not accepted. In this connection, his letter appeared in the Daily News, on the 9th May, 1910 entitled, "Lord Morley's opportunity - a suggestion by Lajpat Rai."

The installation of the New King, however, is Lord Morley's opportunity to make the Crown even more popular in India. Orientals always connect kingship with unbounded mercy and unsurpassable generosity. It is customary for kings to signalise their accession to the throne by acts of clemency. Let the reign of George V herald an era of peace and goodwill towards India. There can be no better way of appealing to the imagination of the Indian people than by giving freedom to men like Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh and others who are suffering for their political opinions. This is the right moment for a general amnesty for all political offences committed in the past, accompanied by a suspension, if not a total repeal of the gagging acts passed during the last four years. Let us start with a clean slate. 109

Lajpat Rai was the first Congress leader who attended the Conference on the defence of Nationalities and Subject Races held at Caxton Hall on 28th, 29th and 30th June, 1910 under the auspices of the International Committee formed in 1907. In the course of his speech, Lajpat Rai said that imperialism in his country meant the supression of all public spirit through the ban of free speech and the imprisonment of those whom the Government considered to be agitators. Lord Morley's good intentions had been frustrated by the limitations laid upon them by the Indian Government and by the series of repressive decrees that now stifled the liberty of the Press, prevented public meeting, allowed trial without jury, and by the corruption and cruelty of the Police. 110 Lajpat Rai further said that these measures, by driving the National spirit

109. Foreign Department, G.C.I. (General), Confidential-B, 1910, No. 43.
110. Foreign Department, G.C.I. (General), Confidential-B, 1910, No. 7.
under ground, could only result in terrorism quite foreign to the nature of the people. Such suppression had deprived the reforms of all their graces and had bitterly disappointed the high hopes with which the accession of the Liberal Party to power in 1906 had created among true Indian patriots.\footnote{Ibid.}

Lajpat Rai returned on 21st September 1910 to India. During his brief stay abroad he made use of every opportunity to further India's cause.

The twenty-sixth Indian National Congress was held at Allahabad on 26th December 1910. It was presided over by William Wedderburn who had realised that Congress was in a difficult position, "being regarded with disfavour by a certain class of officials, while it is attacked by those holding extreme views as ineffective by reason of its moderation."\footnote{Letter, December 17, 1910, William Wedderburn to Hardinge, Hardinge Papers.} He felt that the bureaucracy was trying to divide and rule. Yet the draft resolution of the Congress expressed "respect towards British Empire."\footnote{Telegram, December 26, 1910, H.I.H. Crew to Viceroy, enclosure of the Congress draft resolution, Hardinge Papers.} Lajpat Rai who had returned to India from England was absent from this Congress session.

The absence of Lajpat Rai from the Indian politics had created restlessness in the minds of Punjab people. They wanted to work under his nationalistic leadership. Soon an opportunity presented itself which enabled the people of Punjab to demonstrate

\begin{footnotes}
\item[Ibid.]
\item[112] Letter, December 17, 1910, William Wedderburn to Hardinge, Hardinge Papers.
\item[113] Telegram, December 26, 1910, H.I.H. Crew to Viceroy, enclosure of the Congress draft resolution, Hardinge Papers.
\end{footnotes}
their faith and confidence in Lajpat Rai. It was the Municipal elections of 1911. A meeting was held at Lahore on June 3, in support of his candidature in the Municipal election. Lajpat was also keen to resume political work in the country. During his stay in England and as a result of his contacts with English leaders, he realised that keeping away from the main currents of Indian political life was not a wise policy. His English friends also emphasised the importance of carrying on work in India.

But the Government did not look upon Lajpat Rai's entry into active politics with favour. They had complete record of his activities which they considered as "harmful". However, the Government's attitude changed, and soon Lajpat Rai received a letter from the Commissioner of Lahore stating that the Government had no objection to his contesting election. The governmental records show that the British Government changed their policy in view of Lajpat Rai's "desire to make peace with the Government". But this does not seem to be the real reason. The efforts of the friends of Lajpat Rai in England were responsible for this change. They were persuading the British authorities that the restrictions on Lajpat Rai should be removed. This is clear from the telegram from Ramsay Macdonald, M.P., to Lajpat Rai:

"Parliament rises for holidays. Government have no objection to your election."

During election Lajpat Rai addressed numerous meetings which were attended by thousands of people. But he was careful to avoid

115. Home Department, G.O.I. (Political-B), August 1911, Nos. 41-44.
unpleasant political subjects. He also refused to lead any procession during the election. He was elected to Lahore Municipal Committee, and he secured the highest number of votes in his ward.

In 1912, Lajpat Rai re-entered the Congress at its annual session at Bankipore, Patna. Here, the constitutionist leaders brought forward a resolution condemning the Delhi bomb outrage. Lajpat Rai supported the resolution and said: "I know that the heart of this country is entirely against the cult of bomb and if there are any people in this country who believe that by propagating this cult of bomb they can advance the future political progress of the country, they are not only mistaken but they are doing a great wrong not to the past of this country but to the future of this country because they are placing obstacles untold in the way of those who are trying their level best to raise the social, moral and political status of their country, and work in the public life becomes almost impossible in this state of things when bomb after bomb is in this way thrown at persons who are doing their level best to redress our grievances, to make us hopeful, and to put us on a platform of confidence." Lajpat Rai condemned the terrorist activities and considered it not only against the tradition of Indian but also a great hinderance in the political progress of the country. His unforgettable performance at this session was the fervent advocacy of the cause of Indians in South Africa in a vigorous speech which roused the enthusiasm of the audience to a very high pitch.

At the next Congress at Karachi, held in December 1913, he again spoke on this subject. The delegates greatly applauded his bold and vigorous speech. He also led a campaign in the Punjab for raising funds for the Indian sufferers in South Africa. On December 14, 1913, in a letter to Gokhale, Lajpat Rai himself wrote about South African collection thus: "I have ordered another remittance of Rs.2,000 being sent to you yesterday - I hope you will get it along with this letter or a little later."117

At Karachi Congress it was resolved to send a deputation of Congressmen to England to represent Indian views on the South African question, the Press Act, the reform of the Indian Council and the separation of judicial and executive functions.118 Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State for India, was expected to introduce in Parliament a Bill for the reform of the India Office early in the spring of 1914. The members of this deputation were to be selected by the provincial organisations affiliated to the Congress who were to be responsible for the expenses of the trip in case the delegate himself could not find the same. In pursuance of this resolution Lajpat Rai was selected as a representative of the Punjab. The other four members were Bhupendra Nath Basu119 of Bengal, Krishan Sahay120 of Bihar and M.A. Jinnah121 of

117. Letter, December 14, 1913, Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, Gokhale Papers.
118. Letter, April 25, 1914, Reginald Craddock to Hardinge, enclosure of Congress resolution to this letter, Hardinge Papers.
119. B. 1859, attorney of the Calcutta High Court; President of the I.N.C., 1914, Member of the Secretary of States' Council 1917-24, d. 1924.
120. B. 1886; Vice Chairman of the I.N.C. 1912, titled Rai Sahib 1912; Member of the Imperial Council 1913; Governor of Bihar, d. 1921.
121. B. 1876; Barrister of the Bombay High Court; President of the Muslim League 1916, 1920 and from 1934 till his death; Governor General of Pakistan 1947-48.
Lajpat Rai's journey to London was delayed for the police suspected his hand in Lahore bomb case in which accused Balraj and Balmokand were involved and who had been directly and intimately associated with him. After the evidence for the prosecution was finished, he was permitted to go. He reached London on the 17th of May 1914. The other Congress delegates had reached earlier.

Before his arrival, Lajpat Rai's Congress colleagues had already seen Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State for India, and discussed with him the provisions of the Bill which he was going to introduce in the House. The Bill aimed at reducing the number of the members of India Council and also effecting improvement in the functioning of the Council by increasing the powers of the Secretary of State. On his arrival in London Lajpat Rai met Wedderburn. "At the meeting", writes Lajpat Rai, "the principal subject of discussion was Lord Crewe's India Office Bill, the state of unrest in the Punjab." Lajpat Rai and other delegates pleaded for larger representation of Indians on the India Council. This, they believed, would make the Council more representative of India. Wedderburn fully concurred with these views.

122. Lajpat Rai's last Autobiographical Fragment vide The People (Lahore), January 4, 1931, p. 7.
123. B. in Punjab; revolutionary; hanged 1916.
124. B. 1391; revolutionary; hanged 1916.
125. Lajpat Rai's last Autobiographical Fragment, op. cit.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid.
The Secretary of State, however, rejected these suggestions. It was after this rejection that Lajpat Rai began to demand the total abolition of the Council. Lord Crewe explained this:

"What passes comprehension is demeanour of the delegates. The best known among them, Mr. Lajpat Rai, yesterday publicly advocated the entire abolition of the Council. He came to England to plead for larger Indian representation upon it, and now clamours for it to be wiped out of existence."128

The Bill was, however, very stoutly opposed by the Torry Party, and the Torry Press raised quite a howl over it. The Bill in reality raised three issues - the extent to which the council ought to be non-official in its personnel, the manner in which India should be represented and the degree of its control over the Minister. Personally, Lajpat Rai saw no reason to welcome the Bill. But along with his colleague he submitted notes to the Secretary of State in which he suggested radical changes but gave general support to the Bill. Lajpat Rai's own views about the Bill were reflected as follows: "The delegates of the Indian National Congress were prepared to accept it as a first instalment of the intended reform, though they never concealed their disappointment at the inadequate representation of independent Indian opinion, and particularly at the proposed method of selection of Indian members."129 On July 7, 1914, the Bill was rejected on account of Torry Party opposition. Lajpat Rai argued "The Torry Party in the House of Lords made short work of it, though they spoilt a great deal of logic in doing so.130 Thus ended Lajpat Rai's formal official work of the Congress delegation.

128. Ibid., p. 7.
130. Ibid., p. 10.
The great War broke out when Lajpat Rai was about to leave London for India. He was keen to return as early as possible. He writes: "Before leaving London for the Summer School I had made all arrangements for a tour on the continent en route to India. It was my intention to visit France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Balkans, Turkey and Egypt. Several friends including the Webbs had given me letters of introduction for prominent people in these countries who could help me in the study of conditions there. It was my intention to leave England on or before the first of August. I returned to London on the 30th of July and found the air full of fears."\(^\text{131}\)

When the War broke out Lajpat Rai refused to take up the attitude of the majority of Indian politicians. He objected to the proposal of Congress delegation to issue a statement of loyalty on behalf of the Congress in the British Committee of the Indian Congress. He objected on various grounds: "No formal meeting of the delegation was called to consider the question, the delegation was defunct having finished its work and dissolved itself formally after the rejection of the Bill, the Indian leaders at home had not expressed their minds and sent us instruction."\(^\text{132}\)

Despite his objections some Indian Congressmen in England put Lajpat Rai's name in the belief that he would, as a matter of course, accept a draft made by Sir W. Wedderburn. About this Pandit Bhagwan Din Dube, a Congressman in London, informed Lajpat Rai by wire on 7th August 1914:

"Letter to Lord Crewe, assuring our loyalty signed by elderly Indians including delegates, if you wish sign come immediately 3 middle Temple Lane."\(^\text{133}\)

\(^\text{131.} \) Ibid.
\(^\text{132.} \) Ibid.
\(^\text{133.} \) Ibid., February 1, 1931. \)
letter from England:

"Because I have fundamental differences with most of the Congress leaders both on the principles on which and the manner in which the Congress is run... Congress should be run in the interest of the political education of the people and not for obtaining political concessions from the Government.... The Congress propaganda now is affected by two considerations - fear of the Government and fear of the minorities. Both have been carried to a point which has considerably reduced the value of the Congress as a school of political education.... I feel that by accepting the Presidentship of the Congress I will be putting myself in a wrong hole."

Lajpat Rai reiterated that his political creed was substantially the same as it was before the deportation. The prospect of discussing ordinary platitudes in a presidential speech to win laurels did not appeal to him.

Although the Madras Reception Committee initially recommended Lajpat Rai for the office of the President, but soon opposition to this recommendation began to grow. Before his wishes were known in India some of the prominent Congress leaders such as Dinshaw Wacha, Subramania Iyer, G.K. Natesan, Navab Syed Mohamed and Fazul Haq, scared at the prospects of Lajpat Rai's election as President set afoot a move to make a second reference to the Provincial Committees with the motive of reversing the earlier decision. Eventually they succeeded. Two of the Provincial Committees changed their decision under pressure.

137. Ibid.
138. B. 1885; journalist and social reformer; arrested 1906; Secretary of the Madras Mahajan Sabha; d. 1916.
139. B. 1873; journalist, edited Indian Review; member of the Council of State; member of the Indian Tariff Board 1933; d. 1949.
140. B. 1873; participated in founding the All India Muslim League 1906; President of the Indian Muslim League 1916-21; Minister in Bengal 1924; Home Minister in Pakistan 1955; Governor of East Pakistan 1956; d. 1962.
Justifying this action, Subramanya Iyer explained that since Lajpat Rai was a person non grata with the Government and with the Muslims, his election to the presidency was inopportune.\textsuperscript{141} In fact, some Muslim members of the Congress warned that they would not attend the session if Lajpat Rai presided.\textsuperscript{142} It appears that there was opposition to Lajpat Rai becoming the Congress President from certain Muslim quarters. Lajpat Rai's nomination was turned down and the Reception Committee elected Bhupendra Nath Basu as the president of the Madras Congress.

The attitude of the Government towards Lajpat Rai was based on hatred and suspicion on account of inadequate information during 1906-14. Earlier, his movements were watched in England in 1905. The Government had history sheet of his life, activities and speeches which he had delivered during the Congress sessions of 1905 and 1906.\textsuperscript{143} But the Punjab which was in ferment on account of various unjust administrative measures and legislative acts in 1906-07 gave opportunity to the Government to deport him to Mandalay because he was the most popular leader of the province. Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, in a Minute to the Viceroy described him dangerous agitator and revolutionary, and requested the Viceroy to deport Lajpat Rai. Erle Richards and

\textsuperscript{141} Lajpat Rai: \textit{Writings and Speeches}, Vol. I, p. 216.
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{P.N.N}, The Jhang Sial (Lahore), October 28, 1914.
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Home Department, G.C.I.} (Political-B), August 1907, Nos. 148-235.
Sir H. Adamson, Members of the Viceroy's Council were against the policy of deportation. They preferred to adopt other stringent methods. But the Viceroy, trusting the Lieutenant Governor's judgement, gave him all he had asked for. Minto, therefore, issued orders of deportation without consulting the Secretary of State for India. Soon he realised: "Lajpat Rai is undoubtedly a man of high character and very much respected by his countrymen." The views of Morley, the Secretary of State, about Lajpat Rai were entirely based on the Viceroy's report. Earlier, Morley supported the deportation in the British Parliament on the ground of Ibbetson's Minute. But when he was informed about the real reasons of Punjab's unrest, he immediately issued order of his release.

The deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai was turning point in his life as also in the formulation of British policy and attitude towards the Punjab leader. From now onwards the Government began to view his activities with the utmost suspicion. Consequently, Lajpat Rai was placed under permanent surveillance. He was closely watched by the detectives of the Government. This is obvious from his letter dated January 28, 1908 to Gokhale. Even his social work was secretly watched by the Police. On July 9, 1908, in a letter to Gokhale, Lajpat Rai wrote: "My men are being followed and worried by the Police and some of the Europeans have expressed the suspicion referred to above." The truth is that, he added, "all sort of philanthropist and national work is being

looked down with suspicion by the authorities." He further added, "They do not like the nationalists doing any work which is likely to add to their popularity and influence with their own countrymen. This is of course impossible to avoid."\(^{146}\) When Lajpat Rai reached London, he reiterated on August 23, 1908: "I am watched and followed by detectives even in this country."\(^{147}\)

Again, Lajpat Rai was closely watched during the viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge (1910-16). The Criminal Intelligence Department was behind him. In a note submitted on July 22, 1911 to Lord Hardinge, J.L. Jenkins, Member of the Viceroy's Council, described Lajpat Rai as "by no means the harmless philanthropist."\(^{148}\) The Government alert as it was, had a complete record of his speeches, writings and conduct. Lord Hardinge's Government fully believed that Lajpat Rai was "a revolutionary and political enthusiast inspired by the most intense hatred of the British Government."\(^{149}\) To prove this view the note gives the following quotation from a speech delivered by him on December 13, 1905:

"Youngmen your blood is hot. The tree of the nation calls for blood. It is watered with blood. The writing in heaven concerning the intellectual idea of the Indian nation appears to have been inscribed in blood. The memory of your martyrdom will remain. The foundations of buildings have Khingar thrown into them to make them strong. Let us throw ourselves into the foundations of the National edifice to serve the purpose of Khingar."\(^{150}\)

\(^{146}\) Letter, July 9, 1908, ibid.
\(^{147}\) Letter, November 23, 1908, ibid.
\(^{148}\) Note, July 22, 1911, J.L. Jenkins to Hardinge, Hardinge Papers.
\(^{149}\) Ibid.
\(^{150}\) Ibid.
The note described Lajpat Rai as, "more careful in his utterances, though his meaning was sufficiently obvious, but his Lieutenant, Ajit Singh, was more outspoken, and his speeches teem with exhortations to rise and slaughter the British oppressors."

Another charge against Lajpat Rai was that he had advised Permanand to supply revolutionary literature to Indian students abroad which would "lead to solid results". The British thought that Lajpat Rai's efforts in famine-relief in the United Provinces were inspired, not by philanthropy, but by hatred of the British and of the Christian religion for he himself said that "something" ought to be done to prevent the hearts of the people being drawn to the British officers and the missionaries who were engaged in the relief of the famine-stricken. The Government considered him, "most notorious of the gang of conspirators and plotters of assassination", and they alleged that Lajpat Rai had a hand in the establishment of various secret revolutionary societies in Europe and America. "In fact", the note says, "whatever Lajpat Rai may be now, 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 has been disturbeld during the past few years."

In another letter to the Viceroy, dated September 1, 1911, Jenkins giving the latest information about Lajpat Rai wrote that, "he and Markishan Lal and Gupta, Editor of the Tribune, have entered

151. Ibid.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid.
into an alliance. Gupta wishes to start a campaign in the districts against revenue settlement - dangerous thing anywhere and most dangerous in the Punjab. Lajpat Rai said he could not at present take any prominent or open part in any movement against Government, but would give Gupta letters of recommendation to his friends.\textsuperscript{154} The Commissioner of Lahore, Dewan Bahadur Narendra Nath, who described Lajpat Rai, a "dreadful" man to deal with, had written to him asking what attitude he meant to adopt towards Gupta’s campaign. It was pointed out in the letter that Punjab Government had power to remove him from the Municipal Board of Lahore if he misconducted himself.\textsuperscript{155}

In 1914, Lajpat Rai’s membership of the Congress delegation which was to go to England raised a hue and cry among British bureaucracy. They tried to prevent his departure on the ground that he was involved in Lahore conspiracy case.

Lord Hardinge also viewed Lajpat Rai with suspicion. He regarded him as a "dangerous" leader and a person who was "in touch with the Extremists."\textsuperscript{156} The Government of India and India office in England also did not view with favour the activities of Lajpat Rai. When the Viceroy informed the Secretary of State about Lajpat Rai’s inclusion in Congress delegation which was coming to England the latter felt concerned. He replied that the "affair is complicated by the statement that extreme men like Lajpat Rai are mentioned as coming over. There is obvious difficulty in admitting him to this office."\textsuperscript{157} The Viceroy wanted to prevent Lajpat Rai

\textsuperscript{154}. Letter, September 1, 1911, Jenkins to Hardinge, Hardinge Papers.\textsuperscript{155}. Ibid.\textsuperscript{156}. Letter, March 4, 1914, Hardinge to Crewe, Hardinge Papers.\textsuperscript{157}. Letter, April 3, 1914, Hardinge to Crewe, Hardinge Papers.
coming to England on the ground of his deportation in 1907. But Secretary of State replied that "mere fact of his having been deported is not sufficient in itself." The Members of the Viceroy's Council were not in favour of permitting Congress deputation to see the Secretary of State. They informed Hardinge that Lord Curzon had refused to meet Sir Henry Cotton on the ground that he came out as "President of the Indian Congress" in December 1904. Reginald Craddock, a Member of the Viceroy's Council, described the impending meeting of a National Congress delegation with the Secretary of State as "a new and dangerous departure, since it will break the rule that communique of a public or quasi-public character from the Secretary of State to India must come through the Government of India." He informed the Viceroy that Lord Morley met Indian politicians like Gokhale, Surendranath, Bhupeniranath etc. but the interviews and discussions were always private. He described the permission to meet Secretary of State as a "formal recognition that it has ever received in India." But Reginald Craddock realized that he did not think that it would be "politic to attempt to bar Lajpat Rai's presence among the Indian received privately by Lord Crewe officially." He was not very enthusiastic to meet Congress deputation. He wrote to Viceroy that "these gentlemen apparently wanted talk about all sorts of subjects, the Press Act, the

158. Letter, April 30, 1914, Crewe to Hardinge, ibid.
159. Letter, April 25, 1914, Reginald Craddock to Hardinge, ibid.
161. Ibid.
162. Ibid.
separation of Judicial and Executive functions and God knows what. In any case conversations indicating their views may appear more appropriate in India, can not be discussed here at all.\(^{163}\) Lajpat Rai knew that he was not responsible in Delhi and Lahore case in which some persons were died. He reached London in May 1914.

However, Lajpat Rai was considered as an extremist and dangerous by the Government. His movements were closely watched by the secret agents and the Government had record of his activities.

To sum up, we may say that Lajpat Rai was a unique leader of the Congress in 1906-14. He played very significant role in spreading the Congress ideology in and outside the country and in averting the split in the Congress. All this alarmed the Government. He did not exclusively tag himself with any group of the Congress. He shared common ideology of the Moderates and the Extremists. Like the Moderates he was in favour of colonial self-government and a constitution for the Congress. He also had regard for old leaders. He, therefore, attended the Moderates' session of the Congress after the Surat split, the convention at Allahabad and signed the Congress creed in April 1908. But in his advocacy of Swadeshi, boycott, national education and passive resistance for the realisation of Swaraj, Lajpat Rai could be said to have has affinity with the Extremists. In spite of their ideological differences, Lajpat Rai emphasised to maintain unity and harmony in the Congress. For this, he deplored the controversy in the

\(^{163}\) Letter, April 3, 1914, Crewe to Hardinge, Hardinge Papers.
Moderates and the Extremists in Calcutta and Surat Congress. He also refused to consider his name for the presidency. As a true Congress well-wisher, he made repeated endeavours to save the Congress from split in 1906, 1907 and 1908. On his failure in maintaining peace and harmony in the Congress he left for England as a frustrated Congressman to keep himself aloof from unpleasant controversy, and he started his Nationalist activities in accordance with the spirit of Congress. He did very useful work in educating the English opinion about Indian condition and demands. For this Lajpat Rai visited England thrice (1908-09, 1910 and 1914).

Lajpat Rai's deportation made him immensely popular in the country, but it also sowed the seeds of suspicion and hatred. The Government started to consider him dangerous, revolutionary and anti-British. Lord Minto and Hardinge's Government had complete record of his activities. Lajpat Rai, thus, was strictly watched by the secret agents of the Government.