CHAPTER V

LALPAT RAI'S CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM.
Nationalism is a very complex phenomena and its expression in concrete form varies from state to state and people to people. Though nationalism has its roots deep in the past, most of the western historians are generally agreed upon the modern origin of nationalism. In its modern connotation, it did not originate before the second half of the 18th century.


2. "Any use of the word nationalism to describe historical happenings before the eighteenth century is probably anachronistic; loyalty to family and tribe appeared in pre-historic societies. Patriotism towards city-state and Empire existed in ancient Greece and Rome. Consciousness of nationality and some forms of national patriotism can be traced back to the late medieval period in France and England. The idea that patriotism is identifiable with devotion to the nation spread widely and became popular in Western Europe only towards the end of the eighteenth century during the era of the French Revolution. It is with reference to this era that the term nationalism can accurately be used for the first time." (Shafer, Boyd, C., Nationalism Myth and Reality, (New York, 1955), p. 5).
Some historians like Gooch and Sorel believe that "Nationalism is a child of French Revolution." 3

The French Revolution acted as a catalytic agent to the nascent nationalisms in different countries of Europe which by taking cue from the former broke the fetters of imperial domination. Also the French conquests and oppressions in many of the German lands, including Prussia and Austria stimulated a sense of national patriotism as a result of which the German nation became independent in 1871. By the end of 19th century, the idea of nationalism had become a great force in the West and many countries had formed or were forming nation-states. To quote Boyd C. Shafer:

"Conscious of cultural similarities, the peoples of these nations possessed or wished to obtain their own sovereign governments, their own nation-states. The national governments unified their respective peoples still further, exacting from them devotion and service to death. To all good patriots their national cultures, territory, and governments became sacred." 4


4. Quoted from Shafer, Boyd C., op.clt., p. 134.
Many historians are inclined to agree that no single definition of nationalism is possible.\(^5\)

Broadly speaking, the idea of a nation may be regarded as the basis of nationalism. The existence of a nation, which is the basic premise of nationalism, implies common political sentiment and it may be explained as the sense of feeling of identity in a group of people defined in terms of space and time. Explaining the meaning of the word "Nation" Carlton J.H. Hayes declared:

"The word 'nation' has been employed since the seventh century to describe the population of a sovereign political state regardless of any racial or linguistic unity and this description still holds general sanction."\(^6\)

According to Hans Kohn the distinguishing characteristic of modern nations is their political sovereignty.\(^7\)

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5. John A. Marriot has pointed out that "The Principle of nationality has defied definition and even analysis." (See Synder Lewis, L., The Meaning of Nationalism, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press 1954, p. 5). Bryce has admitted his inability to define nationality. In a similar vein J.P. Goorh writes "Nationalism is an organism, a spiritual entity and all attempts to penetrate its secrets by the light of mechanical interpretation break down before the test of experience." (Ibid.). Similarly H.L. Fetherstone also feels that "Nationalism is not capable of scientific definition." (Ibid.).


Nationalism connotes a community of ideals, ideas and beliefs in a people inhabiting a common territory and through government founded on common loyalties. In other words, it is a form of group consciousness, a state of mind of a group of people occupying a definite territory and united by language, culture, tradition, political and economic aspirations, religion, etc. It is essentially, a feeling or sentiment which impels an individual to give supreme loyalty to a politically independent compact group. Nevertheless, it is not a natural sentiment like the love of a mother for a child and vice versa. To a psychologist, nationalism is a sentiment which is recreated in each generation by acculturation and is transmitted from mind to mind by education.

Nationalism was largely a product of the French Revolution and a polemic against political and social tyranny. Upto the middle of the 19th century, this type of nationalism, based on concern for the common man, his needs and aspirations influenced politics. But from the middle of the 19th century uptil the middle of the 20th century,

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Nationalism had taken a chauvinistic and aggressive turn and became militant in nature. After the Second World War, nationalism mellowed down to internationalism and tempered earlier nationalistic concepts with humanism and humanitarianism. Nationalism may, thus, vary from the benign love of a country to a destructive hatred of the foreigner. Nationalism is also determined by the historical and geographical conditions of a country, the social milieu and the complex of political and economic forces.

Nationalism signified different things to different peoples. To those smarting under autocratic and despotic rules it meant freedom from tyranny. To those who lived under democracy and popular sovereignty, it meant economic, industrial and social development, and to those living under alien colonial rule, it meant political and economic freedom. In India, which was a unit of the British Empire, nationalism was directed against the continuation of the foreign rule. The first real challenge to the British in India was the 'Indian mutiny' which to the Indian nationalists meant the 'first war of Independence'. Though the British did succeed in suppressing the 'insurrection' of 1857, they could not stem the tide of national awakening that was spreading slowly but steadily all over the country.
Nationalism implied ethnological and geographical unity and solidarity and had been always a phenomenon of Indian life.  

Lajpat Rai. Hinduism and Indian Nationalism.

Indian Nationalism originated in the nationalism of the elite and gradually it assumed the humanistic aspect in a feeling for the masses. It made a comparative study of the currents of nationalism in other parts of the world. Nationalism and Internationalism in Indian thought are not contradictory terms, but in a way complimentary.

Lajpat Rai did not believe that the idea of Nationality was an essentially European and modern idea. According to him the ideas of "nationality" and "Patriotism" were as old as the different countries into which the earth

10. Hans Kohn says, "A truer basis of unity than modern national sentiment was to be found in a common intellectual heritage, persisting through an unbroken tradition and moulding and permeating India's whole social life to the minutest detail, and in the peculiar contemplative piety which lies at the root of all the various forms of Hinduism." (Kohn Hans: A History of Nationalism in the East (London, 1929), p.349).

was divided, as ancient as the distinctions of race and religion which have existed from times immemorial. They might have been more phenomenal in one epoch than in another. Their hold on different races and nations might have varied in intensity or extent. In India, common intellectual heritage, tradition and social life fostered the idea of nationality, but that was not sufficiently strong. Percival Griffiths maintains that the advent of the Muslims on the Indian scene introduced divergence of race, religion, language and social traditions, and these, in turn greatly marred the growth of Indian nationality.

When Lajpat Rai began his political career, his community was gaining consciousness of its cultural decadence, political enslavement and economic serfdom. Conviction was gaining ground that a supreme effort was needed to raise the Hindu community to a place of honour by freeing it from the foreign yoke. Hindus lacked homogeneity and their community contained several religious groups which were engaged in mutual bickerings and feuds. Love of the motherland could be their only common bond.

12. Ibid., pp. 252-53.
Lajpat Rai's nationalism, therefore, was rooted in his intense love of the motherland. Devotion to the motherland, according to him, was the only religion. He said:

"We know of only one religion, the love of our motherland..................our worship. It is through worshipping her that we will attain communion with God."14.

Service and sacrifice, were the only offerings, that, a devotee could bring to propitiate the Goddess.15 The immediate task before Lajpat Rai was to work for the liberation of the motherland from the foreign rule.

**His Nationalism in the World Perspective.**

The nationalism he preached had its kinship with the liberal humanitarian nationalism of the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe. Every nationality, according to the humanitarian nationalists, was entitled to its own development

15. Lajpat Rai remarked: "If India is ever to be free and great, the present generation of Indians must pledge themselves to a life of incessant sacrifice and toil. Ours is the privilege of laying the foundations of the future of India on our sufferings......." (Lajpat Rai, Lala; *Great Thoughts* (Lahore), p.2.).
consonant with its peculiar genius. Each nation were to concentrate on its national development and sympathise with other nations striving for similar ends. The division of humanity into a number of nationalities followed from the providential arrangement and was, therefore, in keeping, with Nature's aim of the perfection of humanity.16

Mazzini's writings were definitely a formative and inspiring influence on Lajpat Rai's life, and he was deeply stirred and affected by his teaching in regard to patriotism, nationalism, national unity, freedom and democracy.17 He had acknowledged his debt to Mazzini, declaring him his 'Guru.' He could have become a valiant fighter for the freedom of India even without the Mazzini influence. But Mazzini's teachings immunized him against the usual concomitants of purely parochial nationalism. His love of his people became a necessary and integral part of an all-embracing love for mankind. The Mazzini doctrine provided immunity, on the one hand, against a parochial or aggrandizing nationalism, and on the other, against a vague and watery cosmopolitanism. So he fought for Indian liberty as much from love of India as from his

17. In his impressionable student days even before he had sufficiently come under the spell of the Arya Samaj to declare Davanand as his 'Guru,' young Lajpat came under the spell of a European teacher whose gospel so gripped his soul that he had no hesitation in accepting him as a Guru. This was Giuseppe Mazzini, leader of the movement that unified and liberated Italy in the nineteenth century. (Key-note Address by Feroze Chand at a Seminar on 'Lajpat Rai and Relevance of his Ideas Today' (Chandigarh, 1972), p.4.
passionate concern for Freedom. 13

Lajpat Rai wrote monographs on the lives of such fiery patriots as Mazzini and Garibaldi to kindle the fire of patriotism among his people and to educate them about the nationalist movements in other parts of the world. He was fond of repeating that the sapling of freedom was nurtured by the blood of martyrs. He called upon the Hindus and the Muslims to form a United front against the foreign enemy. He declared that:

"Our struggle for freedom must be carried on in India........the tree of the nation calls for blood; world history was written in letters of blood. Let us crown our national movement with martyrdom."18.

Lajpat Rai's book, Young India, was an authentic interpretation of the Indian nationalist movement. He claimed that the motives underlying the movement of 1857 were both political and national. Later on, the repressive measures of the Lytton's, Curzons and Sydenhams, through a process of anti-pathetic reactions, gave fresh impetus to and substantially shaped Indian nationalism. As a keen

18. Punjab Native Newspaper Reports, Paisa Akkbar, December 12-13, 1905. This speech was cited by the government of Punjab in support of its decision to deport Lajpat Rai in 1907.

student of the world politics, Lajpat Rai evinced deep interest in those events abroad that helped the cause of Indian nationalism. Commenting on the world situation, he interpreted India's struggle for 'Swaraj' as a part of the worldwide movements of liberation from the stranglehold of imperialism and capitalism. With the prescience of a genius, he saw the writing on the wall, and foretold that the force of Britain's paternalistic dominance had to end, and the fall of capitalism was not merely essential, but, inevitable too. He was no soaring idealist and his optimism was not visionary. On the contrary, it received a strong confirmation from world events happening outside India. These were: the defeat of Italians at the hands of Abyssinians in 1896, the events of the Boer War (1899-1902), the revolutionary movements of China and Persia, Japan's victory over Russia and China's boycott of American goods.

Lajpat Rai was fully confident of the ultimate victory of nationalist forces and believed that India was bound to realise the ideal of Swaraj soon. In regard to nationalism as a worldwide phenomenon, Lajpat Rai wrote:

"There can be no doubt that Indian nationalism is receiving a great deal of support from world forces operating outside India. On the political side it has been inspired and strengthened by the forces of European Nationalism -- the struggles and successes of the English proletariat, the suffering and the eventual triumph of the French revolutionists, the efforts and victories of the Italians, the continued struggle of Russians,
Mazzini, whose ideas had left a deep mark on Lajpat Rai, was of the view that man's central and great duty was to all mankind. Lajpat Rai's view of nationalism was not narrow, but was akin to Mazzini's concept of Nationalism:

"The nation, is the God-appointed instrument for the welfare of the human race, and in this alone its moral essence lies..........Fatherlands are but workshops of humanity."  

Lajpat Rai's view of nationalism was both exclusive and inclusive, for, it demanded complete dedication and loyalty to a group at a particular stage in the development of human civilization, yet, it did not imply hostility or indifference to the rest of humanity. It was considered as the best means of serving humanity as a community could contribute most to humanity by seeking perfection in accordance with its own genius.

Lajpat Rai believed that so long as Asia, and in it

22. Ibid., p.155.
especially India, was in bondage, peace could not be restored to the world. He said:

"Asia alone -- and in Asia, India principally can teach that self and others are merely different points of view of one and the same experience." 23

Freedom was the harmonious unimpeded working of the law of One's own nature. 24 He alone could work for the world who could indentify himself with it. "Enunciating the concept of a world ideal as the goal of Indian Nationalism, Lajpat Rai said:

"Let us not forget that we desire freedom not only for ourselves, our country and our continent but for every human being, every nation and the whole world of nations and men. Our ideal is a world ideal, a whole civilisation in which the ideals and the civilization of every nation can find a place." 25

Lajpat Rai's nationalism involved international co-operation. He favoured the idea of maintaining intimate relations with other nations on the basis of equality. He said:

"We desire to have the fullest and the most intimate relations with the rest of the world,

but we must be equal among equals, neither dominant nor dependent. That is our ideal for free democratic India."26

His Concept of Composite Nationalism.

Lajpat Rai looked upon India as a nation notwithstanding her religious and linguistic diversities. He recognised the all pervasive complexity in religious, social and political spheres. He emphasised that India was practically 'an epitome of the world.'27 There was a sense of unity in diversity. He believed that the vast bulk of our population (both Hindu and Mohammadan), belonged to one race.28 The blood that flowed in their veins was mostly of Aryan stock. The spoken language of the vast bulk of the population, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, had a common origin. Even the Dravidian languages gave ample evidence of the Aryan influence.29 The idea of nationality did not necessarily imply a complete union amongst all its members, on all matters. Nor did it suggest the existence of a perfect concord and harmony amongst its members or leaders.30 Lajpat Rai

26. Ibid., p. 37.
28. Ibid., The Tribune, (Lahore) October 24, 1912.
asked:

"Has there been any nation in the past, or is there any nation now living which has been or is free from these differences or quarrels?"31

In an 'open letter to Lloyd George' the Prime Minister of England, Lajpat Rai wrote that in defending their conduct the British statesmen and bureaucrats alleged that India was not a nation. Lajpat Rai pleaded:

"Very well, sir, divide India into small nations and give them self-Government separately. You will admit that there are parts of India which are homogeneous, entitled to be called small nations in the sense in which Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark and Holland are. The bulk of the population follow the same religion, speak the same language and belong to the same race."32

The statement, that India is not a nation, was neither true nor false. It depended on how and from what point of view one looked at it. Modern history, and the conditions prevailing in a large number of modern nations have demolished all the old theories of nationhood.33 A common nationhood transcended the differences of religion, language and culture. India was a nation and could become

32. Ibid., p. 276.
33. To quote Lajpat Rai: "Remember, please, that I do not admit that India is not a nation or that the sameness of language, religion and race is necessary for a political national existence. Switzerland, Canada, the United States, South Africa, Russia, Austria and Hungary have demolished that theory." (Ibid., p. 276).
effectively so if one could find a remedy for the clash of creeds.34

He admitted that India was divided by communities, sects, and provinces, religion, language and customs. The wave of western civilization was levelling these differences and creating a community of interests and feelings.

He exploded the myth that Mohammadans had no roots in the Indian soil. Out of the seventy million Muslims of India, only eight million could claim descent from non-Indian ancestors, and the rest of them, were Indian in origin.35 In the wake of national awakening people began to look into themselves and realised that with all their differences, they were after-all the branches of a common tree, descendants of the same stock, inheritors of the same civilization. Even Mohammadans, taken as a whole, could not say that in their traditions, languages, and customs, they had nothing in common with the Hindus.36

35. Lajpat Rai: Young India (Lahore) 1927, p.60.
36. Quoted from Lajpat Rai's Presidential Address at the 'All India Swadeshi Conference' held at Surat in December, 1907. See Lajpat Rai: Writings and Speeches, Vol. II, p. 195.
he declared:

"The congeries of nations that inhabited this country had begun to realize that after all they were one people, with the same blood running through their veins. They had common traditions, history, and faith in the future."37

To Lajpat Rai, even the Muslim rule was not foreign in character as they had adopted India as their own country. The Muslim rule in India led to the development of a new civilization as a result of the combined efforts of both Muslims and Hindus. He urged all Indians to take mutual pride in the achievements of both Hindu and Muslim heroes and saints.38

Lajpat Rai approached the communal problem in India in a scientific manner. To him, the solution to the problem lay in emphasising economic and political interests which were common to both the communities rather than

37. Ibid., p. 145.

38. To quote Lajpat Rai: "If Mother India had an Ashoka, she had an Akbar too; if she had a Chaitanya, she had a Kabir also. For every Hindu hero, she cite a Mohammedan hero." (The Modern Review, Calcutta), June, 1919, Vol. XXV, p. 629.
harping on their religious differences. He pleaded for setting aside denominational quarrels and disputes for a concerted action in the common interest of the nation. He exclaimed that:

"If the Hindu, Mohammadan and Sikh soldier can fight for the Empire shoulder to shoulder in the field of battle, why can't the Hindus and Mohammadans and Sikhs at home combine to fight our poverty and ignorance - the common enemies of the whole nation?"

He, however, wanted the younger generation to guard against the danger of a narrow cramping nationalism which would not unite India. He exhorted the youth to be eclectic in their response to various religions and culture which had contributed in diverse ways to the composite character of Indian Nation. For him, true

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39. To quote Lajpat Rai: "It is my firm conviction that Hindus and Mohammadans, their religious ideals are so different that it is impossible to expect a complete social union of them in the near future. But that is no reason why they cannot make a common cause in political work. Against non-Indians they have common grievances. In the political future of the country both are equally interested. When the foreigner insults an Indian or treats them with contempt, he hardly stops to enquire if the object of his insult is a Hindu or a Mohammadan. When the European want a monopoly of certain high offices in the state they make no exceptions in favour of Mohammadans. Why can't we stand shoulder to shoulder on the political platform?" (The Modern Review (Calcutta) June 1919, Vol.XXV, p.629).

40. Letter to the Editor, The Tribune (Lahore), October 20, 1915.

41. Lajpat Rai: Writings and Speeches, Vol. II, p. 219. Quoted from Lajpat Rai's "message to Young India" Presidential Address at the All India College Students Conference held at Nagpur on December 25, 1920.
nationalism was above the religion and sect.\textsuperscript{42}

No doubt, Lajpat Rai had intense feelings for his own religion and community, but he never allowed it to become injurious to the interests of other communities. Early in his public career, as a worker and a leader of the Arya Samaj, he claimed that Hindus by themselves were a nationality. He was led to this viewpoint in his attempt to prove that the ancient Indians knew the idea of nationality, in order to refute the claim that nationalism was essentially a European concept and Hindus in the past were unaware of it.\textsuperscript{43} But he did not believe that Hindus alone constituted the Indian nation in the contemporary Indian situation. He enunciated the idea of a composite Indian nation in which Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, etc., had a common life and culture. In his book, the Arya Samaj he said:

"The Arya Samaj has to remember that the India of Today is not exclusively Hindu. Its prosperity and future depends on the reconciliation of Hinduism with that greater 'ism,' the Indian nationalism -- which alone can secure for India its rightful place in the comity of nations."\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 220.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Lajpat Rai, \textit{The Man in His Own Words} (Madras) 1907), p. 57.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Lajpat Rai, \textit{Writings and Speeches}, Vol. I., p. 220.
\end{itemize}
The Indian nation could not be exclusively Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. It had to be for each and all. That was his goal of Nationhood.45

For united national existence, Lajpat Rai would go any length in accommodating the Muslims, but would not succumb to threats or coercion. To those Muslims who talked of 'Jehad' against the Hindus, Lajpat Rai pleaded:

"For Gods' the last twelve hundred years we have heard that cry every day of our national existence.............We are prepared to subordinate our communal life to national life."46

Of course, Muslim distrust of Hindus could successfully block the avenues of 'Swarajya.' Lajpat Rai forewarned that the Muslims must not forget that active Hindu hostility also could harm the Islamic world. He, therefore, admonished the leaders of both the communities to eschew the Language of threats and distrust.47 He declared:

"Let us live and struggle for freedom as brothers whose interests are one and indivisible. Let us live and die for each other, so that India may live and prosper as a nation. India is neither Hindu nor Muslim. It is one. It is India."48

45. Lajpat Rai, Ideals of Non-Co-operation, (Madras, 1924) p. 78.
47. Ibid., p. 221.
48. Ibid., p. 221.
Lajpat Rai asked the Hindus to desist from nursing the dreams of a Hindu Raj in the country. He denounced those Hindu fanatics who thought they could crush the Muslims and be the supreme power. Such an attitude was nothing but insane and would ruin their Hinduism along with their country.

Explaining the causes of Hindu-Muslim riots, Lajpat Rai referred to the widespread diffusion of the idea that the Hindus were "Kafirs," that the Muslims were in a state of war with them and their property and women were "halal" for the Muslims. This notion, Lajpat Rai contended, had been rubbed into the mind of the Muslim masses and Muslim middle classes, by clever propagandists and influential leaders. It was the duty of the Muslim nationalists to inaugurate and carry on an extensive propaganda to destroy this notion and to impress on the minds of their co-religionists the truth that Hindus were not 'Kafirs' and that even on the occasion of fights and quarrels, their temples, their women and their property were inviolable and unassailable.

49. Ibid., p. 222.

50. Quoted from Lajpat Rai's article on "The Hindu-Muslim Problem" The Tribune, December 5, 1924. Lajpat Rai wrote a series of thirteen articles in The Tribune and other leading Indian newspapers in November-December 1924.
Lajpat Rai pleaded that since the times had changed, the conception of a 'Kafir' must change. No Hindu who believed in and worshiped one God, could be called a 'Kafir,' unless the definition of a 'Kafir' be that every non-Muslim is a 'Kafir.' Lajpat Rai exclaimed: "Are the Hindus 'Kafirs'?'' If they are, all talk of unity between Hindus and Mussalmans is absurd." It was not a mechanical union that would make India a nation. What was needed was a chemical union and "change of heart." He, therefore, exhorted the apostles of unity, especially the Muslim leaders, that all their efforts be directed towards removing the idea that the Hindus were 'Kafirs.'

From a political point of view, it was all the more necessary, that religious differences be narrowed down. For a United India, emphasis should be more on the points on which different religions agreed than on their differences. It demanded the rationalising of religion and religious practices to the farthest extent possible. To quote him:

"The sum total of my reasoning is this, that one of the causes of the present tension between Hindus and Mohammadans has been the unfortunate revival of the idea of absolute freedom in the matter of religious observances. But when we come to observances we have to consider the environment in which we live and in the interest of peace and neighbourly goodwill, to avoid social

collision, have to sacrifice a certain amount of our freedom." 52

Thus, he was firmly convinced that India needed more of rationalism and toleration than orthodoxy and bigotry. He declared, "We cannot create United India and cannot win Swaraj in any shape, unless the religious cankar is removed." 53 He, therefore, pleaded that every effort should be made (a) to integrate the different religions as much as possible by emphasising the points on which they agree, by eliminating non-essentials and by restricting essential differences within the narrowest limits; (b) to remove all barriers to free social intercourse between the communities. 54

**Secular Nationalism.**

Lajpat Rai did not accept the view that religion could be the basis of a nation. The history of the several European countries showed that they had all to face such situations as India faced sometime or other in the process of their national evolution. What helped them to become nations was a decisive refusal on their part to give in before the claims of religion. As a fundamental principle

of their policy they recognised the supremacy of state over religion, and gradually removed all religious distinctions so far as they affected the constitution of the State. Lajpat Rai deprecated the acceptance of the principle of communal representation which was a concession to religion and the negation of nationalism. He emphatically stated that:

"No one can be a true Nationalist who is not an Indian from first to last. He may be an Indian Hindu or an Indian Mussalman, but he must be an Indian all the time. A man who says he is prepared to sacrifice the freedom of India for the freedom of 'Jazirat-ul-Arab' cannot be an Indian nationalist." 55

Discussing the question of communal representation with separate electorates in all the legislatures, local bodies, universities and other official or semi-official bodies, Lajpat Rai asserted that once India accepted communal representation with separate electorates there was no chance of its being ever abolished without a civil war. A civil war would end in the supremacy of one of the communities over the others. He warned that the Muslim demand for communal representation with separate electorates strengthened the position of 'anti-Swarajists' both among the Hindus and the Muslims. It was an effective retort

55. Ibid., p. 205.
to the contention that India was ripe for 'Swaraj.'

It provided for a complete division of India, as it were, into two sections: a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India.

The remedy was that the Muslims, wherever they were in a compact majority, should form their government without forcing a division of the country on the principle of separate electorates. His suggestion was that Punjab should be partitioned into two provinces, the Western Panjab with a large Muslims majority to be a Muslim-governed Province; and the Eastern Panjab with a large Hindu Sikh majority, to be a non-Muslim governed Province.

The Muslims would have four Muslim states: (1) The Pathan Province or the North-East Frontier, (2) Western Panjab, (3) Sindh, and (4) East Bengal. If there were compact Muslim communities in any other parts of India, sufficiently large to form a province they could be similarly constituted. But he left no doubt, whatever, that it was not a united India. It meant a clear partition of India into a Muslim-India and a non-Muslim India.

56. To quote Lajpat Rai: "Communal representation by itself is a sufficiently bad principle, destructive of, and antagonistic to, the idea of common nationhood, but separate electorates make this vicious principle immeasurably worse. If our Muslim countrymen are really earnest in their belief in nationalism and in their demand for 'Swaraj' the least they can do is not to insist on separate electorate." (Ibid., p. 211).

57. Ibid., p. 213.
In order to contain the hold of religion over politics, Lajpat Rai opposed the system of separate electorate as it implied the supremacy of the religion over the state. He was opposed not only to the Muslim demand for communal representation but also to the caste Hindu demand for separate representation. Nevertheless, he was willing to concede adequate representation to the minorities in the elected bodies through proportional representation. So Lajpat Rai was a strong supporter of reconciliation between communities constituting a nation. He differed with other Indian leaders in his approach to the communal problem. He disapproved of Gandhi's doctrine of "mutual surrender." He urged a co-relation of interests sustaining a community of all classes and sections in the nation, in the development of a national ethics, a national will, the self-evolving of a higher loyalty.

Lajpat Rai's concept of nationhood, however, rested on fundamental equality of all constituting a nation. It

53. Ibid., p. 213.
59. The Tribune, (Lahore), April 17, 1927.
implied that no member of a nation be considered as inferior on the ground of his vocation, religion or race. His concept of nationhood was democratic. Any idea of practice of untouchability was repugnant to the solidarity of a nation. The eradication of untouchability in India was essential for the healthy growth of the Indian nation. He reminded his people that all programmes for the removal of untouchability or for ameliorating the conditions of untouchables were not acts of patronage towards the 'untouchables,' but were steps in self-education, a preparation for 'Swarajya,' and the preliminaries of democracy.

Nevertheless, Lajpat Rai was fully aware of the sectarian, religious, racial and linguistic differences amongst Indians which could make any observer sceptical about India's claim to be a nation. Hindu-Muslim differences generated so much tension amongst the Indians that it became well-nigh impossible for them to speak with

62. To quote Lajpat Rai: "Every human being who has his home in India, whatever his race or religion or occupation, is an Indian, a member of the Indian nation and entitled to be treated as an equal among equals." (Ibid., p. 29).

63. Lajpat Rai said: "To evolve, a democracy, to constitute a free state, to develop a Government of 'Swaraj' is impossible unless all parts of the nation are in a position to make their contribution to the common purpose, the common will and common work." (Ibid., p. 31).
one voice about their political and economic rights. He tried to compose their differences and made valuable suggestions for national integration. In a series of articles which he wrote at different times, he made a penetrating analysis of the communal situation. Unity could not be achieved by the total annihilation of identity of any community. All communities should be brought together in a free and equal association removing all social and legal barriers imposing segregation.64

There is no denying the fact that Lajpat Rai was keen to ensure the inner strength and efficiency of the Hindu community as a part of united and self-governing Indian Nation. But, it would be wrong to accuse him of communalism. He was always anxious to achieve a rapprochement with the Muslims and forge a united front.65

64. Lajpat Rai said: "The ignoring of differences is the most fatal mistakes in policies, or industry or international life; every difference that is swept up feeds and enriches society; every difference which is ignored feeds on society and eventually corrupts it ....... The unifying of difference is the eternal process of life -- the creative synthesis; the highest act of creation, the atonement." (Lajpat Rai, Ideals of Non-co-operation, (Madras, 1924), pp. 16-17.

65. In his Presidential Address to the Bombay Hindu Conference held in December, 1925, Lajpat Rai said: "The conference would promote good feelings between the Hindus and other communities in India and to act in a friendly way with them with a view to evolve a united and self-governing Indian Nation." (Ibid., p.4).
He deprecated the introduction of religion into politics. In August 1926, he contended that "It was the greatest mistake of our times to reintroduce religious dogmas and doctrines into politics." He stressed the importance of subordinating all non-vital communal differences to the needs of nation-building. He envisaged in the future constitution of India religious liberty to all religious denominations subject only to such restrictions as were inevitable for the maintenance of general law and order. To this, he thought, must be added the absolute religious neutrality of the future state. In this respect, Lajpat Rai was, perhaps, the earliest exponent of the idea of secular state.

Lajpat Rai disparaged all separatist tendencies. The Hindu Mahasabha that he tried to build was not a political body. He threw his weight about in preventing

66. To quote Lajpat Rai: "Recognition of religious differences in the field of politics are hardly the correct way of reaching the ideal...... I do not believe in a unity based on hatred...... The introduction of religion in the non-co-operation programme was in my judgement a great blunder." (The People, (Lahore), July 26, 1925).

67. Lajpat Rai wrote: "The future 'Swarajya' Government should not be at liberty to use public funds for any religious or denominational purpose whatsoever, in a land of many religions and many cults. This, to my view, is the best safeguard against religious or denominational partisanship. With this provision the risks of the majority rule are very much lessened." (The Tribune, (Lahore), December 9, 1923. See Lajpat Rai's Presidential Address at the 'Punjab Provincial Hindu Conference' held at Bombay in December, 1923).
Hindu Maha Sabha from standing as a rival to the Congress and participating in political activity by contesting elections. He advocated that in the interest of national solidarity all 'Sangathans' and 'Anjumans' and communities merged themselves into the National Congress Movement. He proclaimed:

"We should have only one national organisation, one flag and one platform in order to be able to free ourselves not only from foreign yoke, but also from disintegrating forces at home." 68

The object of the Hindu Maha-Sabha, according to him, was to crystallize, articulate and defend the exclusive interests of the Hindus, because the Congress, being the common organization of all communities, could not perform this task. The Hindu Maha-Sabha did not aim at jeopardising the just rights of other communities. Nor was it to divert the attention of the Hindus from their primary and foremost objective of liberating their country from the bonds of political servility. So long as he was associated with Hindu Mahasabha, he saved it from falling into the hands of such self-seeking Hindu leaders who were hammering into the heads of the Hindus that their interest lay in co-operating with the British.

Similarly he kept subdued the extremist political current in Hindu community that gave rise to a separatist approach spearheaded by leaders like Bhai Parmanand and Savarkar. In fact, Lajpat Rai's association with Hindu Maha Sabha followed from his awareness of the weaknesses of Hindu community which were a stumbling block to Hindu-Muslim unity, because these encouraged a militant section amongst the Muslims to humble Hindus into submission through violence and aggressiveness, particularly in areas and regions where they were in a majority. It was this situation that Lajpat Rai faced in his own Province. There was hardly any Hindu leader in the Punjab of his stature who could restore confidence among Hindus in the face of aggressive designs of the Muslim educated classes under the leadership of Fazl-i-Husain and his tribe. Lajpat Rai, therefore, upheld the cause of Hindus even at the risk of compromising his nationalist ideals and commitments. Explaining his position he said:

"They (Muslims) insist on communal representation all along the political line and also on organising their separate communal entity so completely as to become the dominating communal entity in India..... Under the circumstances it becomes absolutely essential for the Hindus to organise themselves in order to avert these consequences. Communal organisation has thus been thrust upon us....."69

One of the reasons for his withdrawal from the Swaraj party was that he did not like the walkout policy of the Swarajist leaders and believed:

"The sort of 'Hindu interests' I have named above cannot adequately be taken care of if the Hindus keep out. To that extent I am a communist and I do not feel ashamed of that for it in no way soils my nationalism."70

Gandhi very well understood the difficult position of Lajpat Rai and appreciated his commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity and unadulterated nationalism. Lajpat Rai lent support to the 'Shuddhi' movement. Personally he was against proselytisation and was fully aware of the deleterious effects of the 'Shuddhi' movement on Indian nationalism. In 1926, Lajpat Rai explained his position thus:

"In my life I have dabbled in religion, even in dogma. Dogma has never taken possession of my soul. Support to proselytism except in communal self-defence has never been my hobby. Religious communalism is not my role. I love Hinduism because according to my conception of it, it does not insist on dogmas and doctrines -- Proselytising for the sake of adding to its numbers has never formed part of Hinduism."71

Lajpat Rai clarified his stand on 'Shuddhi' movement thus:

"The activities of the Christian and Islamic missionaries and propagandists have led to the Hindu entering the field of active proselytism. Legally and morally they have every right to do so. It is difficult to blame them -- yet it is

70. *The People*, (Lahore), October 3, 1926.
not my role and I do not propose to lend my
active support to such work even if I may be
supposed to some extent to have done so in the
past." 72

In his anxiety to settle the difference between
the two communities which had become almost irreconcilable
after the collapse of non-co-operation movement, Lajpat Rai
was even led to accept the idea of the partition of the
Punjab. 72 This was not a concession to divisive or
disruptive forces but only a recognition of genuine
aspirations of the parties in the dispute. 73 He was guided

72. Ibid., p. 218.

73. The peculiar situation in the Punjab was a barrier
to the solution of the communal problem in the
country. Background to this problem was provided by
the fact that Muslims in the Punjab were 56% and so
they clamoured for an effective majority in the
elective bodies in the Province. But this position
was not acceptable to the Hindus who were controlling
the political and economic life of the Province on
account of their economic, political and educational
superiority. Nor could this demand of the Muslims
be conceded by the Sikhs who were about 13% in the
Punjab but were its rulers before the province was
annexed by the British rule and were making major
contribution to the land revenue of the Province.
They demanded adequate weightage in the elective
bodies of the province which could be given only out
of the share of the Muslims who would not agree to
it as it would reduce them from majority to minority.
Hence in order to reconcile the aspirations of all
the communities Lajpat Rai recommended the partition
of the Punjab into Western Punjab with a large
Muslim majority and Eastern Punjab with a large
Hindu-Sikh majority as separate provinces. Lajpat Rai
made it clear that it was certainly not the united
India that he stood for.
by the principle of federalism which sought to reconcile divergent loyalties in a national community composed of several sub-communities having a variety of language, culture and religion.

Conclusion:

Notwithstanding his intense love for the motherland, Lajpat Rai never lost sight of the wider interest of humanity. His devotion to Hinduism sprang from his conviction that it taught equal respect for all religions. Despite the fact that he was deeply involved in religious as well as political interests of his community, he was opposed to the introduction of religion into politics. In this respect he was a secularist. His commitment to democracy was thoroughgoing. He, however, turned to it for the solution of many a pressing problems of his community, his country, or humanity at large.

One discovers at times a certain dichotomy between Lajpat Rai's profession and practice. This may partly be explained by the fact that he was deeply involved with the current social and political problems and that he was no arm-chair thinker. The demands of a particular situation considerably influenced his actions. Situation and context are very important for understanding his
attitudes and actions in public life. An ambivalence that haunted him stemmed from his inability to reconcile the interest of his own community in his province with the wider national interest. At times he could succeed in it but the quick pace of the events in the Punjab offset his precarious successes.