



LALA LAJPAT RAI: LEADER IN NEWS

NEWS: India is remembering Lala Lajpat Rai on his 160th Birth Anniversary.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Early Life and Background

- Born on 28th January 1865 in Dhudike, Ludhiana district, Punjab.
 - Lala Lajpat Rai was born into an Arya Samaji Hindu family in Dhudike, a small village in present-day Punjab. His father, Munshi Radha Krishan, was a scholar of Persian and Urdu, which influenced Lajpat Rai's early education.

Role in the "Lal Bal Pal" Trio

- He was one of the "Lal Bal Pal" trio, along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal.
 - Lala Lajpat Rai was a prominent leader in India's struggle for independence. Alongside Bal Gangadhar Tilak from Maharashtra and Bipin Chandra Pal from Bengal, he formed the famous trio known as "Lal Bal Pal." They championed the cause of nationalism and fought against British rule through assertive means, advocating self-rule and Swadeshi movements.



Support for Social and Religious Reforms

- He supported the Shuddhi movement.



- The Shuddhi movement, initiated by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and later championed by the Arya Samaj, aimed to reconvert those who had left Hinduism, particularly due to force or inducement by other religious groups. Lajpat Rai actively supported this movement to preserve Hindu identity and counteract British and Christian missionary influences.

Contributions to Social and Educational Reforms

- **Joined Arya Samaj in 1882 and became one of its prominent leaders.**
 - Influenced by the teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Lajpat Rai joined the Arya Samaj, a reformist Hindu organization focused on Vedic ideals, equality, and social reform. He became one of its foremost leaders, advocating education, self-reliance, and national pride.
- **Played a key role in social welfare, famine relief, and abolition of untouchability.**
 - Lajpat Rai was deeply involved in humanitarian efforts. During times of famine and natural disasters, he mobilized resources to aid those in need. He also worked towards eliminating untouchability and promoting caste equality, aligning with Arya Samaj's vision of an inclusive society.
- **Founded the Hindu Relief Movement in 1897 to help famine-stricken people and prevent missionary influence.**
 - The Hindu Relief Movement was established to assist those suffering from famine and to prevent Christian missionaries from using famine relief as a means of religious conversion. It aimed to provide aid while preserving India's cultural and religious identity.
- **He founded Punjab National Bank, Lakshmi Insurance Company, and the Servants of the People Society.**
 - Punjab National Bank, founded in 1894, was established to promote self-reliance in financial matters, reducing dependence on British-controlled banks.
 - Lakshmi Insurance Company was another initiative to provide financial security to Indians.
 - The Servants of the People Society (1921) was set up to train dedicated social workers who would work towards the upliftment of society.
- **He was associated with the establishment of DAV College for educational purposes.**
 - Lajpat Rai played a crucial role in setting up Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) Colleges, which combined modern education with Vedic teachings. DAV College in Lahore (now in Pakistan) was among the first such institutions, promoting nationalistic education and self-reliance.



Writing and Advocacy

- **Wrote biographies on Mazzini, Garibaldi, Shivaji, and Swami Dayanand.**
 - Lajpat Rai wrote extensively about historical figures who embodied resistance, nationalism, and reform. He admired leaders like Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi from Italy, Shivaji Maharaj from India, and Swami Dayanand Saraswati for their contributions to their respective nations.
- **Authored “Unhappy India” in response to Katherine Mayo’s “Mother India” and Young India: An Interpretation.**
 - Katherine Mayo’s book *Mother India* (1927) painted a negative picture of Indian society, highlighting issues such as child marriage and caste discrimination to justify British rule. Lajpat Rai responded with *Unhappy India*, in which he strongly criticized Mayo’s portrayal and defended India’s dignity.
 - His book *Young India: An Interpretation* outlined his vision for India's independence and social transformation.
- **Used his writings to advocate for India’s freedom and culture.**
 - His literary works were not just academic but were aimed at awakening nationalist consciousness, encouraging Indians to resist colonial rule and embrace their cultural heritage.

Political Activities and Nationalism

- **Opposed British colonial policies, became a prominent leader in Indian National Congress.**
 - Lajpat Rai actively participated in the Indian National Congress (INC) and emerged as a key leader. He opposed exploitative British policies, advocating for self-rule and economic independence.
- **Advocated for Swadeshi and opposed British repression after the partition of Bengal in 1905.**
 - The partition of Bengal by the British in 1905 was seen as a divide-and-rule strategy. Lajpat Rai strongly opposed it and promoted the Swadeshi movement, urging Indians to boycott British goods and support indigenous industries.
- **Criticized “Moderate” politics, advocating for more direct action and self-reliance.**
 - While early Congress leaders adopted a moderate approach of petitions and negotiations, Lajpat Rai, along with Tilak and Pal, argued for more assertive resistance, including boycotts, strikes, and mass mobilization.
- **He was widely recognized as Punjab Kesari.**



- "Punjab Kesari" means "Lion of Punjab," a title given to Lajpat Rai in recognition of his fierce patriotism, leadership, and relentless fight against British rule.

Exile and International Efforts

- **Went into exile in 1907, toured England and the USA, speaking against British colonialism.**
 - Due to his revolutionary activities, the British government exiled him to Burma (Myanmar) and later he voluntarily left for England and the USA. During his travels, he delivered speeches and wrote articles exposing British exploitation in India.
- **Started "Indian Home Rule League of America" to support India's independence movement.**
 - In 1917, he founded the Indian Home Rule League of America in New York to garner international support for India's independence, interacting with American politicians, intellectuals, and journalists.

Return to India and Later Contributions

- **In the special session of the Congress held in Calcutta (1920), Lala Lajpat Rai was elected President by the All India Congress Committee.**
 - In the wake of growing unrest against British rule, he was elected Congress President in 1920, playing a significant role in shaping the national movement.
- **It was under his leadership that the Congress adopted the resolution of Non-cooperation with the British Government after the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy.**
 - The Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919) shook the nation, prompting Congress to adopt the Non-Cooperation Movement under Gandhi's leadership, with Lajpat Rai playing a key role in its implementation.

Final Struggle and Death

- **Led the boycott procession against the Simon Commission in 1928.**
 - The Simon Commission, set up by the British to review constitutional reforms, did not include any Indian members. Lajpat Rai led mass protests, chanting "Simon Go Back" in Lahore.
- **Received fatal injuries from police lathi charges on 30th October 1928, dying on 17th November 1928.**
 - During the protests, the British police, under James A. Scott, brutally lathi-charged the demonstrators. Lajpat Rai was severely injured and succumbed to his wounds a few weeks later. His death ignited further revolutionary activities, inspiring Bhagat Singh and others to avenge his death.



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Legacy

- **Lala Lajpat Rai's contributions to the freedom movement, social reforms, and education continue to inspire generations.**
 - He left behind a legacy of nationalism, self-reliance, and social service. His works in politics, education, and social reform continue to inspire the youth of India.
- **Left a legacy of patriotism, sacrifice, and inspiration for India's freedom struggle.**
 - His dedication to the nation, even at the cost of his life, made him an enduring symbol of India's struggle for independence.

Source: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2096925>

