

# Lala Lajpat Rai, Biography, Anti-Simon Commission Protest

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Lala Lajpat Rai, also known as **Punjab Kesari** (Lion of Punjab), was a prominent nationalist leader, freedom fighter, and social reformer. Rai played a crucial role in India's independence movement, particularly through his leadership in the **extremist** wing of the Indian National Congress (INC) alongside **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** and **Bipin Chandra Pal**, forming the famous **Lal-Bal-Pal** trio.

A staunch advocate of **Swaraj**, Rai also led protests against the **Simon Commission** in 1928, where he sustained fatal injuries. In addition to his political career, he was a social reformer who championed education and fought against caste discrimination. His writings and journalistic endeavours further galvanized public opinion against British rule.

## Lala Lajpat Rai Biography

Lala Lajpat Rai was born on 28 January 1865 in Dhudike village, Punjab. Rai attended Government College, Lahore, where he studied law. His exposure to the **Arya Samaj** during his education influenced his outlook on social and

political issues, inspiring him to work towards the upliftment of Indian society.

## Lala Lajpat Rai Political Career

Lala Lajpat Rai's political journey was deeply intertwined with India's growing nationalist movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1914, Lala Lajpat Rai gave up his law practice to fully commit himself to the cause of India's independence. In October 1917, he founded the **Indian Home Rule League of America** in New York, which aimed to spread awareness about India's fight for self-rule. Later he was also elected deputy leader of the **Central Legislative Assembly** in 1926.

## Lala Lajpat Rai Association with INC

Lala Lajpat Rai's association with the Indian National Congress was a significant aspect of his political career. He aligned with the **extremist faction** of the Congress led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, advocating for more direct action and self-rule. The trio, popularly known as **Lal-Bal-Pal**, pushed for **Swaraj, Swadeshi, and Boycott** of British goods during the Swadeshi Movement.

- In 1920, Rai was elected as the **President** of the INC at the special session in **Calcutta**.
- His presidency marked a period of transition for the INC, as the party was preparing for the Non-Cooperation Movement.

## Lala Lajpat Rai Freedom Movement

Lala Lajpat Rai was an ardent supporter of the **Swadeshi Movement**, which aimed at promoting Indian goods and boycotting British products. He actively participated in protests against the **1905 Partition of Bengal**, which was seen as an attempt by the British to divide and weaken the nationalist movement. Rai's leadership during this period helped mobilize the masses in Punjab, strengthening the anti-colonial resistance.

- During the **Home Rule agitation**, Rai advocated for greater autonomy for Indians within the British Empire.
- However, unlike some radicals, he supported cooperation with the British government where necessary. He encouraged Indians to hold government offices if it could benefit the national cause.
- At first, Lala Lajpat Rai opposed Gandhi's idea of **non-cooperation**. However, he eventually came around to support the movement. Indeed, he voiced opposition to its withdrawal in 1922, following the **Chauri-Chaura incident**.

## Lala Lajpat Rai Simon Commission Protest

One of the defining moments of Rai's political life came in 1928 when the British government sent the **Simon Commission**, which had no Indian representatives. Lala Lajpat Rai led the protests against the Commission, famously raising the slogan "**Simon Go Back**." On October 30, 1928, during a protest in Lahore, Rai was severely injured after being struck by police batons during a lathi charge. He later succumbed to his injuries on November 17, 1928.

## Lala Lajpat Rai Social Reforms

In addition to his political activism, Rai was deeply committed to social reforms. He was an ardent supporter of education and the upliftment of the underprivileged sections of society. He helped **Mahatma Hansraj** in the establishment of the **Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) College** in Lahore, aimed at providing modern education rooted in Indian values.

- Lala Lajpat Rai worked to eliminate caste discrimination, promote women's rights, and fight for the upliftment of the poor and marginalized.
- He was a strong proponent of **Vedic teachings** and believed that the sacred Vedas should be accessible to all, regardless of caste or social status.
- Rai argued that everyone should have the right to read, recite, and learn from the Vedas, as knowledge was essential for societal reform and upliftment.

## Lala Lajpat Rai Literary Works

Lala Lajpat Rai was a prolific writer and journalist. He founded and edited several newspapers, including *Vande Mataram*, and *Arya Gazette*, which became platforms for disseminating nationalist ideas. Rai also authored several books, including **Young India**, *England's Debt to India*, *The Story of My Deportation*, and *Unhappy India*, and a series of popular biographies on Mazzini, Garibaldi, and **Swami Dayanand**. His literary contributions were vital in shaping public opinion against colonial rule.

## Lala Lajpat Rai UPSC PYQs

**Q)** He wrote biographies of Mazzini, Garibaldi, Shivaji, and Shrikrishna; stayed in America for some time; and was also elected to the Central Assembly. He was **(UPSC Prelims 2018)**

(a) Aurobindo Ghosh (b) Bipin Chandra Pal

(c) Lala Lajpat Rai (d) Motilal Nehru

**Ans: (c)**

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