

Lala Lajpat Rai : An Appraisal

Hazara Singh

M.A., L.L.B.

Formely Head

Department of Journalism, Languages & Culture

Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana

3-C, Udham Singh Nagar, Ludhiana-141001

Telephone : 0161-2302888

First Edition : 2003
Website : 2011

Contents

	Foreword	v
	Preface	viii
I	Lala Lajpat Rai's End : Natural Death or Martyrdom	1
II	My Article in <i>Manch</i>	16
III	Rejoinder to 'Degrade Not Thus the National Heroes'	18
IV	Rejoinder to 'Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Sadhu Singh Hamdard'	24
V	Decision of the Press Council of India	29
VI	Letter from Editor <i>Pratap</i>	32
Part II		
VII	Punjab Unrest (1906-07)	33
VIII	Paradoxical Glimpses	38
Back Matter		
Appendices		
I	<i>The Hindustan Times</i> , Local Edition, Delhi. November 1, 1928 (page I)	47
II	Various Versions about the Health of Lala Ji on 30-10-1928 and Thereafter	48
III	Aik Zaroori Tardid (An Imperative Contradiction)	50
IV	Lala Ji's Days of Disillusion	51

Published by : Hazara Singh
3-C, Udham Singh Nagar,
Ludhiana-141001
Telephone : 0161-2302888
www.hazarasinghprofessor.org

Printed at : **Foil Printers,**
2051, B-XX, Gobind Nagar, Ludhiana
Ph. : 0161-2404979, 2404093
E-mail : foil@vsnl.com

Foreword

I was impressed deeply by the observation that history becomes mystery, when it is presented as ‘my story’ instead of ‘his story’. This not only helped in assessing the past events in an objective manner, but also enabled me to sift facts from fiction. Vested interests, for perpetuating their hold to grab resultant gains, present historical happenings with wilful omissions and subjective additions. Thus, they not only create misgivings about the hero, they adore, but also render great disservice to coming generations by not letting them get wiser by history.

Lala Lajpat Rai was at the peak of his glory, while he was adored as one of the trio, “Bal-Pal-Lal” i.e. Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak, Bipin Chander Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai. Lala Ji was not as much harmed in the police lathi charge, as damaged by his close followers subsequently. The attributing of his death to ruthless police lathi charge created great panic, making the common man feel helpless. Bhagat Singh and his co-patriots had to kill expeditiously an English police officer, right in the district police headquarters, for pulling people out of gripping fear.

Lala Ji disapproved the ritual of presenting petitions praying for benevolent reforms, subscribed to the policy of non-co-operation for getting self-rule, but kept away from resorting to confrontation, as espoused by revolutionaries. That is why he readily participated in the non-co-operation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in early twenties of last century with the slogan “Swaraj within a year”, but got frustrated when the Mahatma in his sole wisdom withdrew

the mass campaign abruptly. The revolutionaries, who had staked their all by participating in the movement, felt let down.

Lala Ji in his exasperation retraced a step backwards by helping to form Swaraj Party, which considered it feasible to get self-rule through participating in legislative bodies, in spite of their clipped wings. He further retrogressed, when after disassociating himself with the Swarajists, he relied on the support of Hindu Mahasabha for his election to Central Assembly.

The revolutionaries who had organised themselves as militant nationalists under the banner of Naujawan Bharat Sabha and Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, disapproved this ongoing retreat of the once staunch nationalist of the eminence of aforesaid trio. They addressed an accusing communication to him in September 1927. This was published in *Kirti*, a Punjabi magazine. Those interested in reading that text may refer to my book, *Shahid Bhagat Singh te Unahan de Sathian Dian Likhtan*. Lala Ji's immediate reaction was to prohibit the entry of H.S.R.A. members in general and its founder figure, Bhagat Singh, in particular to Dwarka Das Library, Lahore. But the frank criticism by the revolutionaries created a mental turmoil in Lala Ji, which he shared with G.D. Birla through his confidential communication of July 12, 1928 (Appendix IV of this text), vide which the fallen hero realised that it was futile to believe in the theory of chain of births, based on punishment and reward for misdeeds or good actions in the preceding life. His getting disillusioned with the concept of God and of morality, based on zonal convenience, loss of faith in fate, and the refusal to accept barren traditions as a way of life, were a sort of resurrection of the once dauntless patriot. Had he not met his mortal end a few months later, a

new Lajpat "Protector of Self-respect" might have risen. Feroze Chand, courageously published that great confession by a great man, in *The People* of November 20 1933, but timidly accepted to omit it from his book *Lajpat Rai - Life and Works*, Publication Division, Govt of India, 1978. Perhaps the new ideas of Lala Ji did not suit the protagonists of obscurant revivalism. Thus, another Caesar was stabbed by his trusted Brutus.

Shahid Bhagat Singh Research Committee contributes ardently to Lala Ji's observation "*I have deeply felt the degradation of my country and the humiliation of countrymen. That has stirred me to action*". This has remained and **shall remain** the common ground between the testimony of Lala Ji and all progressive workers striving for social regeneration of the masses.

Shahid Bhagat Singh Research Committee compliments Professor Hazara Singh for his objective and penetrating appraisal of Lala Lajpat Rai and assures all possible library facilities to other researchers who may undertake projects to smash myths for revealing historical truths.

November 17, 2003

Jagmohan Singh
Secretary,
Shahid Bhagat Singh Research Committee,
2409 Krishna Nagar, Ludhiana

Preface

The history of our freedom struggle for liberation from foreign rule contains many half-truths and myths. I took part in the movement and, thus, not only have personal knowledge of the contemporary events but also learnt about the role, factual as well as fabricated, of many important participants from their surviving colleagues. It had been my earnest effort to present my personal and the gleaned knowledge in an objective manner. This led so often to uncalled for misunderstanding and bitterness, which a chronicler, committed to authentic reporting should be prepared to face.

Lala Lajpat Rai is said to have been injured in police lathi charge outside the Lahore Railway Station on October 30, 1928, while leading anti-Simon Commission demonstration. He passed away on November 17, nineteen days thereafter. According to his own statement, he did not suffer any major blow in that outrage. His death was natural and it is not correct to call that demise a martyrdom. As a political expediency it was made to appear through the press that Lala ji died as a result of injuries inflicted by the police. My narration of that event, based on information gathered from persons, who were either present at the spot or the ones who had suggested the deriving of political gain from the situation, was not relished. Sh. Romesh, Editor, Hind Samachar Publications, Jalandhar, launched a tirade against me in *Hind Samachar* (Urdu), *Jag Bani* (Punjabi) and *Punjab Kesri* (Hindi) in their issues of January 30 and 31, 1983, through the editorial 'Degrade Not Thus the National Heroes'.¹

1. Quomi parwanian di is tra naradri na karo

S. Sadhu Singh Hamdard, Editor, *Ajit*, retorted to that campaign of vilification in four successive issues through a serialised rejoinder, 'What an Annoyance at Historical Truths'². The Daily *Pratap* in its urge, not to give Hind Samachar Publications the exclusive claim to have started that controversy, contributed another four inflammatory articles captioned 'L. Lajpat Rai and S. Sadhu Singh Hamdard'. I got sky-high publicity, adverse as well as favourable, in those ten consecutive days.

I sought clarification from Sh. Romesh, who had been an active worker of Punjab Students Congress, while I was its President during 1945-46, about his outburst against me. He was honest enough to admit that for him journalism was a business, not a mission.

I complained to Press Council of India both against the Hind Samachar Publications and the Daily *Pratap*. The Council had already held in an earlier complaint that in such a situation any of the following three remedial steps be taken by the respondent editor, namely, he may :

- (i) publish the rejoinder of the complainant, followed by his own comments, if necessary ;
- (ii) regret his omission through an approved contradiction ;
- (iii) be prepared to face the legal consequences.

The Hind Samachar Publications published my rejoinder in their issues of August 12, 1984, after having exploited the situation fully for about eighteen months for inflating their circulation.

The Daily *Pratap*, after a lot of wrangling, chose to express

2. Ithasik sachayan te narazgi keh

regrets through a written contradiction in its issue of December 26, 1984, under sustained pressure from the Press Council.

The Council treated the case as settled, closed it on January 25, 1985 and informed the complainant and respondent accordingly.

Thereafter I presented the paper 'Lala Lajpat Rai's End : Natural Death or Martyrdom' on March 23, 1985, in the 19th annual session of Punjab History Conference held at Punjabi University, Patiala. The said paper; my article in Punjabi monthly *Manch*, April-May 1980; the rejoinder published by Hind Samachar Publications in their issues of August 12; 84; the rejoinder that the Daily *Pratap* was reluctant to publish; the consequent decision of Press Council of India on my complaint and the regrets expressed by Sh. Virendra, Editor, *Pratap*, for the lapse, constitute Part I of this text.

Buried Alive, autobiography of S. Ajit Singh, uncle of martyr Bhagat Singh, edited by Pardaman Singh and J.S. Dhanki, (1984) offers a rewarding reading and smashes many a myth woven around Lala Lajpat Rai regarding his role in the Punjab unrest 1906-07.

'Paradoxical Glimpses' refer to the unsteadfastness of Lala Ji in his political activities. Presumably the unhappy domestic environments created by the divergent religious leanings of his parents and an ailing childhood lent young Lajpat Rai a distracting restlessness of mind. This observation gets confirmed by the letter written by Lala Ji to G.D. Birla, a few months before the Simon Commission episode at Lahore.

Ludhiana
November 30, 2003

Hazara Singh

I

Lala Lajpat Rai's End : Natural Death or Martyrdom

There are conflicting accounts about the demise of Lala Lajpat Rai. It is commonly believed that he succumbed to the injuries sustained by him during the lathi charge resorted to by police on the demonstrators protesting against the arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore during October, 1928. The death anniversary of Lala Ji falling on November 17 is stated so often by the media as his martyrdom day. Some researchers who delved deep into the historical records have discovered that Lala Ji was not injured grievously in that police outrage and his death taking place a few weeks thereafter was a natural one. The purpose of this text is to find out firmly :

- (a) the date of arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore,
- (b) the identity of police officer who led the lathi charge on demonstrators, and
- (c) the cause of Lala Ji's subsequent death.

Evidence Examined

The evidence examined for this study has been split into three categories, viz.

- (i) various written accounts of the episode
- (ii) narrations on television by the participants in the demonstration, who are still alive*
- (iii) statement of Lala Ji himself about the police action.

* Alive on the date of presentation of this paper

Written Versions

The arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore, the mode of protest and the action resorted to by police have been mentioned by various writers as follow :

According to Jawahar Lal Nehru :

Meanwhile the Simon Commission had been moving about, pursued by black flags and hostile crowds, shouting, "Go back". Occasionally there were minor conflicts between the police and the crowds. Lahore brought matters to a head and suddenly sent a thrill of indignation throughout the country. The anti-Simon Commission demonstration there was headed by Lala Lajpat Rai, and as he stood by the roadside in front of thousands of demonstrators was assaulted and beaten on his chest with a baton by a young English police officer. There had been no attempt whatever on the part of crowd, much less on part of Lala ji, to indulge in any method of violence. Even so, as he stood peacefully by, he and many of his companions were severely beaten by the police. Anyone who takes part in a street demonstration runs the risk of conflict with the police, and, though demonstrations were almost always perfectly peaceful, Lal Ji must have known this risk and taken it consciously. But still, the manner of assault, the needless brutality of it, came as shock to vast number of people of India. These were the days when we were not used to lathi charge by the police, our sensitiveness had not been blunted by repeated brutality. To find that even the greatest of our leaders, the foremost and most popular man in the Punjab, could be so treated seemed little short of monstrous, and a dull anger spread all over the country, especially in north India. How helpless we were, how despicable when we could not even protect the honour of our chosen leaders.

The physical injury of Lal Ji had been serious enough, as he had been hit on the chest and he had long suffered from heart disease. Probably, in the case of a healthy young man the injury would not have been great, but Lala Ji was neither healthy nor young. What effect this physical injury

had on his death a few weeks later, it is hardly possible to say definitely, though his doctors were of the opinion that it hastened the end. But I think that there can be no doubt that the mental shock which accompanied the physical injury had a tremendous effect on Lala ji. He felt angry and bitter, not so much at the personal humiliation, as at the national humiliation involved in the assault on him.¹

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru refers again to the same incident in his subsequent publication as :

The next year, 1928, saw the British Commission in India. As I have said, it was generally boycotted, and there were big demonstrations against it wherever it went. The Simon Commission it was called from the name of its chairman, and "Simon Commission go back" became a familiar cry all over India. On many occasions the police indulged in lathi charges on the demonstrators. In Lahore even Lala Lajpat Rai was beaten by the police. Some months later Lala Ji died and it was considered probable by doctors that the police beating had hastened his death. All this naturally created great excitement and anger in the country.²

Gulab Singh writes :

The commission reached Lahore on October 20, 1928, when a huge procession greeted it with a black flag demonstration and deafening cries of "Go Back Simon". As the procession was winding its way towards railway station, the police tried to disperse it by ordering it to clear off the roads. The mass of the processionists, however, was so large that it was well nigh impossible to effect a way through it. The whole of the city population appeared to have come out of their homes to join in the procession, which was surging forward like the waves of a mighty sea. Lala Lajpat Rai led the procession. The police therefore, resorted to a free use of lathis and

1. Nehru Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, London, 1936, pp. 173-74
2. Nehru Jawaharlal, *Glimpses of World History*, 4th ed., Lindsay Drummond Limited, 2, Guilford Place, London, January 1948, p. 727

batons and many were injured as a result of it. The profuse bleeding of the innocent and peaceful demonstration failed to produce any effect on the police, and they continued their charge in a frantic bid to make the procession disperse. A batch of young revolutionaries formed a protective cordon around Lala Lajpat Rai with a view to shielding him against any possible attack. This enraged Mr Scott, the Superintendent of Police, and he gave orders for indiscriminate lathi charge on these protectors. Mr Saunders himself began to beat Lala Ji with his baton and blows were aimed at his head and chest. Lala Ji realised that a serious situation had developed, that was likely to lead to bloodshed on a large scale. He, therefore, persuaded the people to disperse. At a public meeting held in the evening to protest against the lathi charge, the Punjab Lion roared thus : 'The Government which attacks its own innocent subjects had no claim to be called civilized government. Bear in mind, such a government does not survive long., I declare that blows struck at me will be the last nails in the coffin of the British rule in India'. The blows on the chest of Lala Ji inflicted a permanent injury upon his heart, as a result of which the great patriot died on November 17, 1928.³

Kali Charan Ghose states :

An Unexpected Turn

The measures adopted by the authorities to quell the disorders left Punjab seething with discontent. Sporadic acts of violence had been taking place at various places from time to time when the Simon Commission reached Lahore on October 30, 1928.

The procession to demonstrate against the commission had been proceeding towards the railway station where it was obstructed by barbed wire fixed to strong wooden posts. In the first row near the barbed wire fencing stood Lala Lajpat Rai and some other leaders.

3. Gulab Singh, *Under the Shadow of Gallows*, 2nd ed., published by Rup Chand, 1963, pp. 39-40

The procession was perfectly non-violent and the people had been waiting without arms when it was attacked unprovoked at the orders of some high police officials. One of the blows struck Lala Ji's umbrella which was badly damaged while he was given a few lathi blows, one of which struck him on his chest. About the assault Lala Ji himself stated that the injuries caused by the police attack although not very serious, yet 'I think their after-effect has resulted in great shock which affected my health'. He died of collapse of heart caused by nervous exhaustion on November 17, 1928. 'The injuries received by him on October 30, no doubt hastened his death' reported his physician.⁴

According to P.N. Chopra :

... Organised the agitation against the visit of the Simon Commission in 1928. Led a demonstration against the commission on October 30, 1928. Seriously wounded in brutal assault with lathis by the police the same day. Succumbed to his injuries on November 17, 1928.⁵

Jagdish Chander Sharma writes :

... died as a martyr on 17th November, 1928 as a result of lathi blows received by him on 20th October, 1928, when he was leading procession of the citizens of Lahore to demonstrate against the arrival of Simon Commission in the city...⁶

Gurdev Singh Deol states :

The Government was bent upon resisting such protests and allowed the police to deal with the crowds in an effective manner. The police, as usual warned the procession to disperse, but it stood there although not indulging in any violence.

4. Ghose, Kali Charan, *The Roll of Honour - Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs*, Vidya Bharti, 1965, pp. 390-91

5. Chopra P.N. (Ed.), *Who's Who Among Indian Martyrs*, Vol. 1, New Delhi, Ministry of Education and Youth Services, Govt. of India, 1969, p. 191

6. Sharma, Jagdish Chander, 'Lajpat Rai Lala'. *Encyclopaedia Indica*, 1st ed. New Delhi, S. Chand & Co. (P) Ltd., 1975, p. 313, col. 2

Despite non-violence on the part of processionists, the police indulged in lathi charge and wielded their batons and lathis with utter brutality. Lalal Lajpat Rai, who led the procession and had earlier refused to take it back, was standing calm and collected ahead of all the demonstrators, when Mr Scott, Supdt. of Police, himself took the lathi and started beating Lala Lajpat Rai mercilessly. Lalaji received the lathi blows on the head. Many other people were also wounded. Bhagat Singh, who was in the front, saw all that happened. He was red with anger and wanted to react, but, as the instructions were to remain non-violent, he controlled himself and looked after the wounded. Lala Lajpat Rai was removed to the hospital where he breathed his last on the 17th of Novemer, 1928, as a result of "his intense grief combined with physical injury".⁷

According to Durga Das Khanna :

I shall not go on with other personal anecdotes any further but jump on to November 17, 1928, when L. Lajpat Rai died as a result of the lathi blows hurled on him by Police Sergeant, Scott, when he was leading a procession against the Simon Commission at the time of their arrival in Lahore.⁸

Manmath Das Gupta writes :

It was during the heyday of these sabhas that the all white Simon Commission was sent from England to India to inquire as to how far India was ripe for self-government. All the Indian parties including Congress decided to boycott it. Wherever the commission went it was greeted with black flags and "Simon go back". During the demonstration at Lahore on 20th October, 1928 the old leader Lala Lajpat Rai was struck by a police lathi and he succumbed to his injuries on 17th November.⁹

Narration by the Surviving Participants

Professor Abdul Majid Khan, while being interviewed by Professor M.S. Cheema for the Door Darshan, Jalandhar, on 17.11.1981 said that he was standing near Lala Lajpat Rai outside the Lahore Railway Station when a heated argument took place between Police S.P. and Lala Ji. Professor Khan categorically stated that no blow was aimed at Lala Ji.

I interviewed Pandit Kishori Lal, a surviving comrade of Shahid Bhagat Singh, for the Door Darshan, Jalandhar on 28.9.1982. He stated that he was an eye-witness to the whole scene at Lahore Railway Station on the fateful day and reiterated that Lala Ji did not receive any blow during the lathi charge. Pandit Kishore Lal further observed that Lala Ji, while protesting against the unwarranted lathi charge by the police, had been demanding consistently an inquiry into the whole episode, which was not accepted by the authorities. The helplessness of the masses coupled with callousness of the rulers imparted a great shock to the sensitive mind of that great patriot, hastening his physical end.

Lala Ji's Own Statement

BLOWS AIMED AT HEART

Lala Ji's Statement

CROWD PERFECTLY NON-VIOLENT

Police Fury

Lahore, October 30

In a statement to the press, Lala Lajpat Rai described what happened at railway station.

He says that attack by the police was quite unwarranted and it is alleged, was led by the Superintendent of Police himself. As I am told, he gave me two blows on my chest and a few of the constables - I cannot say how many - gave me a few blows with regulation lathis, which happily did not fall very heavily on me. The blows left a slight fever and a

7. Deol Gurdev Singh, *Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh : The Man and His Ideology*, Deep Prakashan, Ludhiana, 1978, p. 32
8. Khanna, Durga Das, 'Intimate Reminiscences', *They Died So That India May Live*, Government of Punjab Chandigarh, 1981, p. 4
9. Gupta, Manmath Das, 'Reminiscences', *Ibid.*, p. 12

swelling. I asked the man his name about half a dozen times but he did not give me his name. I shouted to him, "If you are a man give me your name", but he did not reply. From the very beginning he seemed to be bent on doing mischief.¹⁰

Another news reports about the arrival of Simon Commission as follows :

SIMON GO BACK
Demonstration at Station
(From Our Correspondent)

Lahore, Oct. 30

The members of Indian Statutory Commission reached Lahore this afternoon at 2.35 by special train....¹¹

Date of Commission's Arrival at Lahore

The Hindustani Times, Delhi November 1, 1928 confirms firmly that the Simon Commission reached Lahore on the afternoon of October 30, 1928 at 2.35. Hence 'October 20, 1928' as stated by Gulab Singh, Jagdish Chander Sharma and Manmath Das Gupta in their respective accounts as the date of Commission's arrival at Lahore is not correct.

Identity of Police Officer

The writers, referred to earlier, have given a conflicting identity of the police officer who led the lathi charge and was alleged to be responsible for hurling blows at Lala Ji.

Pandit Nehru does not name the *Young Police Officer*. According to Gulab Singh, Mr Scott, Superintendent of Police, gave the orders for indiscriminate lathi charge and Mr Saunders himself began to beat Lala Ji. Durga Das Khanna refers to that official as Police-Sergeant Scott. Lala Ji states that the unprovoked and unwarranted attack by the police was alleged to have been led by the

Superintendent of Police himself, whose name was enquired by Lala Ji half a dozen times, but the latter did not disclose it, in spite of shouting at him by Lala Ji : 'If you are a man give me your name'.

It is not too much to expect that Lala Ji and Superintendent of Police, Lahore, Mr Scott could be knowing each other.

Sardar Sadhu Singh Hamdard in his editorial of *Ajit*, February 3, 1983, Jalandhar, quotes from the Punjabi book *Sachi Sakhi* written by Kapur Singh, an ex-I.C.S. officer, who had been a student of Government College, Lahore in 1928 and was among the demonstrators outside the railway station :

"In 1942, while I was Deputy Commissioner, Karnal and Mr Hamilton Harding, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Ambala Range, the latter told me at a dinner, that it was he who during the arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore had wielded the baton at Lala Lajpat Rai, hitting thereby his umbrella. He also revealed that Mr Scott had been inside the railway station during all that time".

According to Kapur Singh, Hamilton Harding, I.P.S. was Superintendent of Police, Amritsar in 1928 and his services had been requisitioned for assistance in controlling the protest demonstration at Lahore. In reference to dates and months the description of the episode by Kapur Singh seems to be a mere musing, because he does not state them specifically. His style reflects bitterness as well as a tendency to underrate the event. But his mention about Hamilton Harding has revealed a new fact.

In view of the above observations it cannot be precisely ascertained as to who out of Saunders, Scott and Hamilton hit Lala Ji with his cane. Neither Gulab Singh nor D.D. Khanna was among the demonstrators. Lala Ji could not recognise his alleged assailant. Hence the account of Kapur Singh can not be overlooked.

10. *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, Thursday, November 1, 1928, p.1

11. *Ibid.*

Cause of Lala Ji's Death

The admission of Lala Ji himself that the blows hurled by the police *happily did not fall very heavily on him* does not corroborate the observation of the writers, quoted in this text, that Lala Ji got seriously injured.

Both the books by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, referred to in this study, were written by him in Jail, where the facilities for verification of facts were not easily available. He himself has given a sub-title to his autobiography 'An Autobiography with Musings on Recent Events in India'. 'Musing', means 'thinking about a matter without serious concentration'.

The period of a *few weeks* in his first narration and of *some months* in the second one, after which Lala Ji is reported to have died, is difficult to be reconciled. Pandit Ji relied more on his memory than on historical records while making these observations.

Among all the written versions consulted for writing this text, *The Role of Honour : Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs* contains adequate documentation for each and every observation and is thus objective in its inferences.

Surdev Singh Deol simply indulges into hearsay while he states that Scott inflicted a blow on the head of Lala Ji, who was removed to the hospital where he breathed his last on November 17, 1928. Lala Ji was the principal speaker at the protest meeting held on 30th October, 1928 evening outside Mori Gate, Lahore and was not hospitalised.

Both Professor Abdul Majid Khan and Pandit Kishori Lal, who were present among the demonstrators outside the Lahore Railway Station, stated categorically that Lala Ji did not receive any blow on his body during the lathi charge.

The British Government disowned any responsibility for the death of Lala Ji. In reply to a question by Colonel Wedgewood in

the House of Commons, the Under Secretary of State for India, Earl Wintertin said :

"No evidence had been produced to show that death of Lala Lajpat Rai was due to blows received on that occasion".¹²

Chander Mohan stated in the editorial of *Pratap*, February 7, 1983, Jalandhar that

- (i) Dr Lt. Col. Roy examined Lala Lajpat Rai at 9 a.m. on October 30, 1928 (i.e. 5 1/2 hours before the arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore) and recorded that Lala Ji not only complained of dizziness but also of pain while breathing, because of swelling on left chest.
- (ii) Dr Dharmbir examined Lala Ji at 5 p.m. on that day at his residence, subsequent to the demonstration outside the Lahore Railway station and recorded that Lala Ji complained of pain in his right chest and there was obstruction in his heart after 15-20 beats.

The admission of Lala Ji that the blows *happily did not fall very heavily on him* and the confirmation by Chander Mohan that Lala Ji suffered not only from dizziness but also felt pain while breathing because of swelling on left chest, before he left for the railway station for leading the demonstration, bear out that Lala Ji did not receive any grievous blow in the lathi charge. As such his death on November 17, 1928 was natural.

Lala Ji had been leading a normal life after the happenings on October 30, 1928, as borne by the facts that he

- i) addressed a protest meeting the same evening after his medical examination by Dr Dharmbir;
- ii) participated actively thereafter in the AICC session at Delhi; and
- iii) had been writing for his weekly *The People*.

12. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, Vol. 223, No. 15, The 26th November, 1928, p. 6.

Of course, he had been keeping an indifferent health and died of collapse of heart caused by nervous exhaustion on November 17, 1928. It is a misnomer to call such a death a martyrdom.

Confusion Caused by Oratory

The oratory of Lala Ji at the protest meeting held in the evening of October 30, 1928 and that of Mrs Basanti Devi, widow of celebrated Congress leader, C.R. Das, at a condolence gathering during November next seem to have created the impression that Lala Ji had been beaten by the police and he embraced martyrdom by succumbing to those injuries.

Lala Ji observed at the said protest meeting :

*“Every blow struck at us today was nail in the coffin of British Empire”.*¹³

Note may be taken of the pronoun object ‘us’ in Lala Ji’s remarks; ‘It is not every blow struck on me....’ The plural pronoun ‘us’ relates to the demonstrators collectively and not to Lala Ji’s individual person.

Mrs Das while referring to the alleged beating of Lala Ji by the police challenged :

*‘Does the youth and manhood of the country exist? Does it feel the burning shame and disgrace of it? I, a woman of the land, demand a clear answer to this’.*¹⁴

The Hind Samachar Publications, Jalandhar (*Hind Samachar, Jag Bani and Punjab Kesari*) in their issues of May 1, 1984 published a clarification by Amarnath Vidyalankar along with a photo of upper part of the naked body of Lala Ji carrying marks on the left shoulder and chest to show that Lala Ji carried those lash imprints consequent to lathi blows. In the words of Lala Ji :

‘The blows fell close on my left chest and just over the region of the heart’.

None of the alleged blows had hit the shoulder of Lala Ji. Hence the blow marks shown on the naked body in the photo *ibid.* (on the left shoulder and upper part of the chest more than four inches above the region of heart) are not corroborated by the statement of Lala Ji.

Moreover imprints are left if a severe blow falls on a naked part of body and not on the covered one. Lala Ji had gone, properly dressed, to the Lahore Railway Station for leading the demonstration. As such the clarification by Amarnath Vidyanankar which also causes confusion about the date of arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore by stating it as October 29 and the assertion by Romesh in Hind Samachar Publications of January 31, 1983 that Lala Ji was photographed 29 hours after the lathi charge and two marks of serious blows were distinctly visible in that snap do not carry conviction. They rather corroborate the version :

*“...S. Kishen Singh, father of Bhagat Singh reached the house of Lala Ji on learning about his death. He met there Lala Achint Ram, an office-bearer of the Servants of People Society and suggested that a political gain be got out of that death. Achint Ram enquired as to how it could be possible. On the suggestion of Kishen Singh blots of blue ink were put on the dead body of Lala Ji and a photo thereof was released to papers reporting that the death of Lala Ji was caused by the blows sustained by him during the lathi charge....”*¹⁵

The 44th annual session of All India National Congress was held at Calcutta during the last week of December 1928, barely five weeks after the demise of Lala Ji. If Lala Ji had not met a natural death, there would have been vociferous protests, as were

13. *The People*, Lahore, Lajpat Rai Number, April 13, 1929, p. 29

14. *ibid.*

15. Hazara Singh, ‘Lala Lajpat Rai di Shahidi ke Kudrati Maut’, *Manch*, Ahmedgarh, April-May, 1980 : (An article based on an interview with Kulbir Singh, younger brother of martyr Bhagat Singh).

witnessed at Karachi in the March 1931 Congress Session subsequent to the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukhdev to death in the Central Jail Lahore on March 23, 1931 evening.

Two surviving associates of Martyr Bhagat Singh, Sh. Jai Dev Kapoor and Mrs Durga Devi (widow of Shahid Bhagwati Charan Vohra) confirmed that Lala Ji was reluctant to participate in the demonstration in spite of the persuasion by Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, a militant youth organisation, headed by Chander Shekher Azad. The H.S.R.A. circulated a two-leaf handout in Urdu bearing the title *Autobiography of L. Lajpat Rai* with its remaining three pages left blank. This taunting circulation provoked Lala Ji to reach the railway station to join the demonstration despite the medical advice by Dr Lt. Col. Roy, who examined him at 9 a.m. on 30th October, 1928.

The East Punjab Government headed by Dr Gopi Chand Bhargav, observed for the first time in 1947, November 17 as martyrdom anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai by declaring it a public holiday. This practice continued for a few years. Many a person pointed out subsequently (though wrongly) that November 17, in fact, was the martyrdom day of Kartar Singh Sarabha, who was hanged to death in the Central Jail, Lahore on 17.11.1915*. Since then November 17 has not been observed as a public holiday in memory of Lala Lajpat Rai.

Hence the text concludes with an unimpeachable evidence that

- i) Simon Commission arrived at Lahore on 30-10-1928 and not on 20-10-1928 or 29-10-1928,
- ii) It is not certain whether it was Mr Scot, Superintendent of Police, Lahore who hurled baton blow(s) at Lala Ji or some other officer, and

* Kartar Singh Sarabha was executed on November 16, 1915.

- iii) Lala Lajpat Rai died of collapse of heart caused by nervous exhaustion on November 17, 1928. Of course the shock suffered by him on October 30 consequent to police outrage affected his otherwise indifferent health hastening thereby his death.

- 0 -

II

My Article in *Manch**

It is commonly believed that Lala Lajpat Rai was injured in police lathi charge while leading a protest demonstration against the arrival of Simon Commission and he succumbed to the injuries. This incident has also been presented in an emotional manner in the picture *Shaheed* by Manoj Kumar, where Bhagat Singh has been shown touching the feet of dead body of Lala Ji and taking oath that he would avenge himself that national insult.

Simon Commission reached Lahore in the last week of October 1928. Lala Ji passed away on November 17, 1928. From the legal point of view, a demise taking place 24 hours after the sustaining of injuries is not considered as culpable homicide. Lala Ji died about three weeks thereafter.

* Translation of the text 'Lala Lajpat Rai di Shahidi ke Qudrati Maut' published in Punjabi monthly *Manch*, April-May 1980, which led to an outburst by Hindi Samachar Publications, Jalandhar, in early 1983.

Lala Ji had been suffering from diabetes. His demise on November 17 was natural. S. Kishen Singh, father of Bhagat Singh reached the house of Lala Ji on learning about his death. He met there Lala Achint Ram, an office-bearer of the Servants of People Society and suggested that political gain be got out of that death. Achint Ram enquired as to how it could be possible. On the suggestion of Kishen Singh blots of blue ink were put on the dead body of Lala Ji and a photo thereof was released to the papers reporting that the death was caused by the blows sustained by him during the lathi charge, which fact got endorsed from the marks on dead body in the photograph. People believe the sensational part of that news only and do not know about the subsequent contradiction.

Mrs. Basanti Devi, widow of C.R. Das, a celebrated Congress leader, while addressing a condolence meeting observed if an ordinary police official could beat a leader of the eminence of Lala Ji to death in broad day light, she a woman of India, sought to know the reaction of youth to that national outrage. Bhagat Singh, on learning about the challenge hurled by Mrs Basanti Devi, said that it was the right opportunity for the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association to accept that challenge. Accordingly a scheme to murder Mr Scot, Superintendent of Police was drawn, so that people could be told that the murder of Lala Ji had been avenged.

III

Rejoinder to 'Degrade Not Thus the National Heroes'*

The *Hind Samachar*, *Jag Bani* and *Punjab Kesari* carried leading editorials by Sh. Romesh in their issues of January 30 and 31, 1983 under the caption

'Degrade Not Thus the National Heroes'

as a rejoinder to my article

'Lala Lajpat Rai di Shahidi ke Qudrati Maut' published in *Manch*, a Punjabi monthly. While reminiscing my association with the Indian National Congress during the pre-independence era, Sh. Romesh has presumed that I wrote that text after having succumbed to narrow considerations. Ethics of journalism enjoined that Sh. Romesh sought the necessary clarifications from me before reaching the hasty conclusion that I distorted the facts after having been influenced by the prevailing communal tensions in the state. The article under reference was published in the April-May 1980 issue of *Manch*, i.e. long before the assassination of his esteemed father and the launching of morcha by the Akali Dal. That Lala Lajpat Rai died of heart collapse was

* Published by the Hind Samachar publications in their issue of August 12, 1984.

stated as early as 1965 by Sh. Kali Charan Ghose at pages 390-391 of his book *The Roll of Honour - Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs*, published by Vidya Bharati, Calcutta. The reference to Lala Ji reads:

An Unprecedented Turn

The measures adopted by the authorities to quell the disorders left Punjab seething with discontent. Sporadic acts of violence had been taking place at various places from time to time when the Simon Commission reached Lahore on October 30, 1928.

The procession to demonstrate against the Commission has been proceeding towards the railway station where it was obstructed by barbed wire fixed to strong wooden posts. In the first row near the barbed wire fencing stood Lala Lajpat Rai and some other leaders.

The procession was perfectly non-violent and the people had been waiting without arms when it was attacked unprovoked at the orders of some high police officials. One of the blows struck Lala Ji's umbrella which was badly damaged while he was given a few lathi blows, one of which struck him on his chest. About the assault Lala Ji himself stated that the injuries caused by the police attack although not very serious, yet 'I think their after-effect has resulted in a great shock which has affected my health'. He died of collapse of heart caused by nervous exhaustion on November 17, 1928. 'The injuries received by him on October 30, no doubt hastened his death' reported his physicians.

Sh. Ghose has appended a bibliography running into four pages and corroborates each and every observation through proper documentation. It is an undeniable fact that Lala Ji died of heart failure, which is upheld by his own admission and the opinion of his physicians. One wonders as to why any reader or organisation did not point out then that the statement of Sh. Ghose was false and he had allegedly downgraded the martyrdom of Lala Lajpat Rai.

Sh. Romesh further quotes from the autobiography of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, about the latter's reference to the activities of Lala Ji after the visit of Simon Commission to Lahore. He neither states the title of book in full nor refers to the specific page therein. The book *Glimpses of World History* by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru was first published in India in 1934 in two volumes. Lindsay Drummond Limited, 2 Guilford Place, London, brought out its next edition in January 1948. Pandit Ji refers to Lala Ji at page 727 of his book as:

The next year, 1928 saw the British Commission in India. As I have said, it was generally boycotted, and there were big demonstrations against it wherever it went. The Simon Commission it was called, from the name of its chairman, and 'Simon go back' became a familiar cry all over India. On many occasions the police indulged in lathi charges on the demonstrators ; in Lahore even Lala Lajpat Rai was beaten by the police. Some months later Lala Ji died, and it was considered probable by doctors that police beating had hastened his death. All this naturally created great excitement and anger in the country.

No protests were made against the alleged misstatement about the martyrdom of Lala Ji either in 1934 or 1948. Neither Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru nor Sh. Kali Charan Ghose can be branded as a communalist. Then under what logic, the writers quoting them are being dubbed as bigoted by Hind Samachar Publications?

Dr I.D. Aggarwal, a grandson of Lala Lajpat Rai has also been quoted in the editorial of January 31, 83 to be raising an accusing finger at me. It is a fact, however harsh it may seem, that Lala Ji died of collapse of heart, caused by nervous exhaustion on November 17, 1928. The medical opinion given by his physicians, as stated both by Pandit Nehru and Sh. Kali Charan, also endorses that the death was hastened by the shock and was not exclusively caused by the blows.

I have neither been disrespectful towards Lala Ji, as alleged by Dr Aggarwal, nor tried to drag S. Kishen Singh, father of martyr Bhagat Singh, into this controversy. The incident of making a political gain of the natural demise of Lala Ji was narrated to me by S. Kulbir Singh, a brother of Shahid Bhagat Singh. ***Sh. Romesh met S. Kulbir Singh at Faridabad on January 27, 83 and persuaded him hard to either contradict or disown the statement. The latter declined firmly. This happened only three days earlier than the launching of tirade against me.***

It is unfair on the part of Sh. Romesh and Dr Aggarwal to presume that all those writers who refer to facts stated by the contemporaries of Lala Ji are either pro-Akali or the sympathisers of British rule. Ignorance coupled with intolerance leads to self-torture from which both Sh. Romesh and Dr Aggarwal seem to be suffering.

I do not want to be dragged into the unsavoury controversy of Sher-e-Punjab. People of India long before the birth of Lala Ji felicitated the warrior, who deserved it, with this compliment. Let us not make this tribute so cheap. The Urdu press transplanted from Lahore at Jalandhar has been referring to a slogan shouter operating in Ghas Mandi, Ludhiana as Sher-e-Punjab. These papers have nothing constructive to tell and create unpleasant situations so that they may continue to sell.

Let us take note of what two eye witnesses say about the lathi charge which took place on October 30, 1928.

Professor Abdul Majid Khan, when interviewed by the Door Darshan Jalandhar on 17-11-1981 said that he was standing near Lala Lajpat Rai outside the Lahore Railway Station when a heated argument took place between the Police S.P. and Lala Ji. Professor Khan categorically stated that no blow was aimed at Lala Ji.

I also interviewed Pandit Kishori Lal, a surviving comrade of Shahid Bhagat Singh, for the Door Darshan, Jalandhar on 28-9-1982. He stated that he was an eye-witness to the whole scene at the Lahore Railway Station on that fateful day and reiterated that Lala Ji did not receive any serious blow during the lathi charge. Pandit Ji further observed that Lala Ji while protesting against the unwarranted lathi charge by the police, had been demanding consistently an enquiry into the whole episode, which was not accepted by the authorities. The helplessness of the masses coupled with callousness of rulers imparted a great shock to the sensitive mind of that great patriot, hastening his physical end.

Both these interviews are in the library of the Door Darshan, Jalandhar and can be got screened again for ascertaining the authenticity of my observation.

The East Punjab Government headed by Dr Gopi Chand Bhargav observed for the first time 'November 17, 1947' as martyrdom anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai by declaring it a public holiday. This practice continued for a few years. Many researchers pointed out subsequently that November 17, in fact was the martyrdom day of Kartar Singh Sarabha, who was hanged to death in the Central Jail Lahore on 17-11-1915. Since then 'November 17' has not been observed as a public holiday in memory of Lala Lajpat Rai.

I am prepared to contradict factual errors, if any, provided Sh. Romesh and Dr I.D. Aggarwal support their observations through proper documentation.

Lala Ji was a great patriot. The country is proud of him. The Fundamental Duties enshrined in our Constitution enjoin all citizens to relish the noble ideals of freedom struggle and imbibe their spirit.

On 17-11-82, a grandson of Lala Lajpat Rai narrated at the Door Darshan Jalandhar that the father of Lala Lajpat Rai was bent upon embracing Islam and had even reached a mosque for

that purpose, but was persuaded by the entreaties of his wife to reconsider that resolve. He also displayed a picture of Lala Ji as Keshadari Sikh. The researchers have a right to probe into the circumstances as to why Lala Ji got clean-shaven. Was it under the influence of Arya Samaj or did Lala Ji feel that after the introduction of communal electorate, his election to any council would get facilitated as a 'Hindu'? Sh. Romesh or Dr Aggarwal may like to throw light on this issue. Lala Ji was a national hero and his countrymen have a right to know about him as much as can be ascertained.

I am waiting eagerly for the next move of Sh. Romesh repudiating or accepting my version. He may also like to inform whether his late father contested any election to the Haryana Legislative Assembly, as a domicile of that newly created state in 1967 or 1968. It will be helpful in ascertaining the responsibility of Lala Jagat Narain for creating tension in the Punjab.

- 0 -

The lines in bold print at pages 21 and 23, omitted at the time of publishing the text, by the Hind Samachar Publications.

An incomplete block of the front page of *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi November 1, 1928 has been incorporated by Chander Mohan in the text dated February 7, 1983. The following news appears in column 2 thereof :

“Simon Go Back”

Demonstration at Station

Lahore Oct. 30

The members of the Indian Statutory Commission reached Lahore this afternoon at 2:35 by special train and were received on the platform by about 35 people and by an unprecedented.....

The block *ibid.* bearing the bannerline

‘Lahore Police Assault L. Lajpat Rai and Others’

reports at column 4

Blows Aimed at Heart

Lala Ji’s Statement

Crowd Perfectly Non-violent

Police Fury

Lahore Oct. 30

In a statement to the Press Lala Lajpat Rai described what happened at the Lahore Railway Station.

He says the attack by the police was quite unprovoked and unwarranted and it is alleged was led by the Superintendent of Police himself.

As I am told, he gave me two blows on my chest and a few of the constables - I can not say how many - gave me a few blows with regulation lathis, which happily did not fall very heavily on me. The blows fell close on my left chest and just over the region of my heart. The blows left a slight fever and a swelling. I asked the man his name about half a dozen times, but he did not give me his name, I shouted to him ‘If you are a man, give me your name’ but he did not reply. From the very beginning he seemed to be bent on doing mischief.

IV

Rejoinder to

‘Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Sadhu Singh Hamdard’*

The daily *Pratap*, in its issues of February 5, 6, 7 and 8, 1983 carried leading editorials under the caption ‘Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Sadhu Singh Hamdard’ by Chander Mohan, in which derogatory references have been made to me. In the text dated February 6, after having referred to me as a third-rate historian, Chander Mohan claims to reproduce an excerpt from my book on Lala Lajpat Rai. He concludes that piece by assuring that he would reply to Hazara Singh, Sadhu Singh Hamdard and company in his next editorial.

* The rejoinder which the Editor, *Pratap* was reluctant to publish and chose instead to express regrets under the caption ‘Aik Zaroori Tardid’

Chander Mohan states in column 6 of the text under reference that Dr Lt. Col. Roy examined Lala Lajpat Rai at 9.00 a.m. on October 30, 1928 (i.e. 5½ hours before the arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore) and recorded that Lala Ji not only complained of dizziness but also of pain while breathing, because of swelling on his left chest.

Dr Dharambir, who according to Chander Mohan, examined Lala Ji at 5.00 p.m. on that day at his residence, subsequent to the demonstration at the Lahore Railway Station, recorded that Lala Ji complained of pain in his right chest and there was obstruction in his heart after every fifteen to twenty beats. The text dated February 8, is full of abuses for Sadhu Singh Hamdard, Kapur Singh, Hazara Singh and company and drags in many other sources, which relied more on hearsay than on facts.

Dr Sadhu Singh Hamdard and S. Kapur Singh, Ex. M.P. may or may not like to send a rejoinder to Chander Mohan. But I take strong exception to his observations. My acquaintance with S. Sadhu Singh Hamdard dates back to 1946 when I was the President of Punjab Students Congress and he was M.A. (Political Science) student at the Punjab University, Lahore. The scholarship won by me in the intermediate examination was confiscated by the then Government for my participation in the Quit India Movement and I was arrested twice subsequent to that for my leading the 'Save INA Campaign'. S. Sadhu Singh had also been the Editor of *Ajit* (Urdu) during those years. We have never been political co-travellers through he has been publishing my articles on freedom struggle and other topics of current interests as have been doing the editors of *Pratap*, *Vir Pratap*, *Hind Samachar*; *Jag Bani* and *Punjab Kesari*. I have deep regards for Dr Hamdard for his academic attainment and he has been appreciative of my contributions.

I had been a non-official jail visitor to the Hoshiarpur Jail when S. Kapur Singh was Deputy Commissioner, Hoshiarpur. He may not be recollecting me but I still remember his annoyance with me

for my, more than scheduled, visits to the Hoshiarpur Jail to satisfy myself that Lala Jagat Narain and Ch. Balbir Singh, who had been arrested under his orders were receiving proper treatment during that custody. We have never met each other since 1948. The charge of Chander Mohan that Sadhu Singh Hamdard, Kapur Singh, Hazara Singh and company have entered into a league to malign Lala Lajpat Rai is a mere fancy.

He has referred to me as a third-rate writer more than once in his texts. I have been heading the Postgraduate Department of Journalism, Languages and Culture in a leading university of India. Chander Mohan may like to state his academic and professional distinctions other than his wild excursions in his family papers.

He claims to have reproduced from my book on Lajpat Rai. I categorically state that I am not the author of any book on Lala Ji. *Manch*, a Punjabi monthly, published from Ahmedgarh, District Sangrur, carried my article 'Lala Lajpat Rai di Shahidi ke Qudarti Maut' in its issue of April-May 1980. It is certain that Chander Mohan has not gone through that piece and has based his observations on mere hearsay.

The news appearing in the *Hindustan Times* of November 1, 1928, and the medical opinion given by Lt. Col. Roy and Dr Dharambir on October 30, 1928, held out categorically that

- i) Lala Ji suffered from dizziness and pain in chest on the morning of October 30, 1928, i.e. long before the demonstration against Simon Commission at the Lahore Railway Station;
- ii) the blows hurled at him by the Superintendent of Police and the constables (about which he was told by others) did not fall heavily on him; and
- iii) on the evening of October 30, 1928 he felt pain in his chest with irregular beating of heart, but as per report, *had no marks of lathi blows on his body.*

Perhaps Chander Mohan was carried away by the bannerline of the block and did not care to read its contents.

That Lala Ji died of heart attack on November 17, 1928 has also been confirmed by Kali Charan Ghose at pp. 390-91 of his book *The Roll of Honour - Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs*, published by Vidya Bharati, Calcutta in 1965. Sh. Kali Charan Ghose can not be accused of belonging to the company of Sadhu Singh Hamdard. Kapur Singh and Hazara Singh, which haunts the imagination of Chander Mohan.

Professor Abdul Majid Khan, a distinguished nationalist, and Pandit Kishori Lal, an associate of Shahid Bhagat Singh, stated at the Door Darshan Jalandhar on 17-11-1981 and 28-9-1982 respectively that they were present in the demonstration held against the Simon Commission on October 30, 1928 outside the Lahore Railway Station and confirmed that Lala Lajpat Rai did not receive any blow in the lathi charge by the police.

As such it is a historical fact that Lala Ji died a natural death on November 17, 1928, three weeks after the arrival of Simon Commission at Lahore.

The first government of East Panjab, headed by Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava, in which Shri Virendra, father of Chander Mohan, was the Chief Parliamentary Secretary, included November 17, as martyrdom anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai in the list of public holidays. When it was revealed by certain historians subsequently that November 17 was in fact the martyrdom anniversary of Kartar Singh Sarabha, the practice of observing that day as a public holiday was discontinued. No newspaper, including the *Hind Samachar* and *Pratap* protested against that. Chander Mohan may like to ascertain from his esteemed father, if the latter too had been influenced subsequently by Sadhu Singh Hamdard, Kapur Singh, Hazara Singh and company in their alleged tirade against a national leader of the eminence of Lala Lajpat Rai.

- 0 -

V

Decision of the Press Council of India*

In his complaint dated April 2, 1983 Sh. Hazara Singh, Professor, Department of Agricultural Journalism, Languages and Culture, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, alleged that the Editor of Daily *Pratap* by publishing editorials in February 5, 6, 7 and 8, 1983 issues of his paper under the caption 'Lala Lajpat Rai and S. Sadhu Singh Hamdard' by Sh. Chander Mohan, made derogatory remarks about his professional ability, referred to his texts in an uncomplimentary manner without having gone through them and accused him of having entered into league with certain persons for maligning Lala Lajpat Rai. The complainant further stated that the Editor, while making such arbitrary accusations against him did not seek any clarification from him. The Editor also did not publish the rejoinder sent by him in this behalf and thus failed to carry out his journalistic obligations.

* On the complaint of Sh. Hazara Singh against the Editor, Daily *Pratap*, conveyed vide communication No. 14/59/83-Sectt dated March 1, 1985 by Complaint Officer, Press Council of India, Faridkot House, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi-110001.

The Editor in his preliminary comments submitted that the complainant in a communication to him had stated that he reserved his right to invoke the relevant provisions of I.P.C. or Cr.P.C. dealing with libel and therefore he would present his case only when the complainant guaranteed that he would not go to a court of law after the verdict of Council was pronounced. The respondent Editor was informed by the Council that the Press Council Act and Inquiry Regulations did not warrant the procedure as suggested by him and was again requested to furnish his written statement. The respondent, however, did not furnish any written statement.

This matter was listed before the Inquiry Committee at its meeting held on May 8, 1984, when the complainant made appearance before the Committee while no appearance was made on behalf of the Editor.

Shri Singh, the complainant, submitted before the Committee that he had written an article in 'Manch' a monthly, attributing therein that Lala Lajpat Rai died a natural death and not on account of lathi blows. He had quoted two living sources in his article in support thereof. This article was commented upon by the Daily *Pratap*, mentioning him as a third rate historian. The contradiction sent by him was not published in the newspaper. A similar comment was published in *Hind Samachar* which too he had contradicted and his contradiction was published in that paper. When Shri Singh's attention was drawn to the letter from the Editor, *Pratap*, wherein it had been stated that the complainant had threatened the Editor that he would also proceed against him in a court of law, the complainant submitted that he did not receive the Editor's letter. If he had received that letter he would have replied suitably. The complainant also referred to the guidelines of the Press Council framed in *Illustrated Weekly's*

case and stated that he would be satisfied if his contradiction on these lines was published in the Daily *Pratap*. He also submitted that if his contradiction was published he would not go to a court of law. Inquiry in the matter was accordingly concluded. The Committee directed that a letter referring to guidelines framed in the *Illustrated Weekly's* case be addressed to the respondent editor requesting him to publish the complainant's letter of contradiction. Accordingly a letter was addressed to the respondent editor by the Secretariat of the Council requesting him to do the needful. In response thereto the editor replied that if he published the letter sent by the complainant, a new controversy would arise. He further stated that he was, however, prepared to publish just a contradiction to the effect that the facts as published in his paper which were the subject matter of the complaint, were not correct and that a wrong impression had been created about complainant, Mr Hazara Singh.

The matter was once again placed before the Inquiry Committee at its meeting held on November 21, 1984, when after careful examination of the text of the contradiction, the Committee was clearly of the opinion that the editor may be asked to publish the contradiction in terms of the guidelines framed in *Illustrated Weekly's* case. Accordingly, the editor was requested on December 6, 1984 to do the needful. The editor has intimated vide his letter dated December 28, 1984 that the contradiction has since been published in his paper. A clipping to the effect has also been furnished by the editor which has been taken on record.

In view of the fact that a contradiction has been published by the editor, the Committee was inclined to treat the matter as settled and closed. The Council decided accordingly.

VI

Letter from Editor Pratap

Virendra

M.A.

Editor

Daily Pratap (Urdu)

Proprietor

Daily Vir Pratap (Hindi)

Pratap Bhawan

Nehru Garden Road

28th Dec, 84

My dear Sardar Hazara Singh Ji

As desired by the Press Council of India, contradiction regarding your article has been published in our paper. A clipping is enclosed herewith.

Sincerely Yours

Virendra

Encl. As above

Shri Hazara Singh

Deptt. of Journalism

Punjab Agricultural University Ludhiana.

(Translation of 'Aik Zaroori Tardid')

An Imperative Contradiction

In the 5th to 8th February, 1983 issues of Pratap a series of articles captioned 'Lala Lajpat Rai and S. Sadhu Singh Hamdard' were published which contained our comments on a text on Lala Lajpat Rai by Professor Hazara Singh of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. Professor Hazara Singh took exception not only to our comments but contested also the veracity of events alluded to therein. A few of our phrases about Professor Hazara Singh were unbecoming too. We express our regrets on all these.

- 0

32

Part - II

VII

Punjab Unrest (1906-07)

'In most of the books on Indian freedom struggle Ajit Singh's name is generally mentioned along with his senior and better known Congress leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, in connection with the unrest in the Punjab, 1906-07, and their subsequent deportation in 1907. Hardly anything beyond this'.i

In fact Lala Ji shunned Ajit Singh, did not share his aspirations and got dragged in the 1906-07 peasant agitation much against his will.

Causes of Unrest

The British after having wrecked the cottage industries in India, strove systematically to tamper with native agriculture for making it subservient to their industrial inputs. Farmers in selected districts of Bihar were enjoined to cultivate indigo and not any cereal crop, for meeting the requirements of textile industry in U.K. Consequently the farmers starved as successive indigo cropping led to infertility of soil, while the British textile magnates rolled in riches.

Indians were forbidden to prepare salt indigenously from sea water so that the mercantile ships sailing to U.K., packed fully with raw material, may not return insufficiently loaded from there.

People in large number were taken to colonies in tropical regions as indentured labour for working in sugar-cane plantations. Elementary needs like cloth, salt, sugar, etc. began to be imported through ships returning to India.

i.

Buried Alive (Autobiography, Speeches and Writings of an Indian Revolutionary Sardar Ajit Singh), Editors : Pardaman Singh and J.S. Dhanki, Gitanjali Publishing House, Lajpat Nagar iv, New Delhi, 1984, p. i

In pursuance of that policy, a few oppressive regulations and bills were adopted in Punjab also. In the districts of Gurdaspur, Lahore and Amritsar, irrigated by Upper Bari Doab Canal, water rates were enhanced by 50% in November 1906 for discouraging the cultivation of sugar-cane so that market could be created for imported sugar.

In Rawalpindi district, which was not canal irrigated, land revenue was increased by 25%. There the land-owners were mostly Hindus and the cultivators predominantly Muslims. The measure would lend the resentment a communal tinge, consistent with the imperial policy of 'divide and rule'. In the Jehlum-Chenab colonies land had been given either as grant to retired army personnel or sold to peasants from the central districts at nominal rates. The Punjab Colonisation Bill (1906) aimed at converting their proprietary rights into a sort of lease.

The farmers were forbidden to fell or prune trees without the previous sanction of revenue officials. Inheritance by male primogeniture made it imperative that only the eldest son would inherit under the pretext of checking the fragmentation of agricultural land, but the real intention being to find in plenty recruits for the army and as indentured labour abroad among the youngmen going to be, thus, disinherited. In the absence of a male issue the proprietary rights would lapse. All these measures created a lot of resentment among the serving army personnel and unrest among the cultivators.

Opportunity for Ajit Singh

Like other idealist revolutionaries Ajit Singh, to begin with, toyed with the idea of soliciting the assistance of rulers of princely states in India through their *rajgurus* (mentor priests) for organising an armed rebellion against the British Rule. His efforts bore limited success. He attended the annual session of Indian National Congress held at Calcutta in 1904. Bengal was then seething with unrest

against the administrative move of Governor General, Lord Curzon, to bifurcate that province on communal lines. He returned from there with the resolve to explore some solid reasons for starting a campaign in Punjab similar to the one undertaken by Bengal revolutionaries for getting the bifurcation of their province annulled. The oppressive agrarian measures adopted by the Punjab Government provided the opportunity, he had been looking for.

Bharat Mata Society, a secret organisation, was formed for that purpose. To begin with it consisted of three members only; Ajit Singh, his elder brother Kishen Singh and a trusted colleague Ghasita Ram. It was considered desirable to seek the co-operation of Lala Lajpat Rai as well. Kishen Singh, accordingly, discussed the plan, chalked out by Ajit Singh to arouse public opinion against the anti-farmer moves of the provincial government, with Lala Ji.

'Lala Lajpat Rai did not receive the proposition well : he was afraid that this would bring suffering to and imprisonment of all prominent leaders, he considered it a rash step and me a hot-headed person. He refused to participate in the movement but promised to consider the proposal and let us know if it was feasible for him as also for us to start such a movement. In fact he tried to discourage my brother too'. (ibid., pp. 33-34)

But the persistent efforts of Bharat Mata Society through street meetings started getting encouraging response. Bharat Mata Mandir, Lahore, was the centre of these activities. The people thronged in a swelling number to that place to discuss the damaging aspects of the proposed measures.

'Just at that time when these meetings were taking place in Lahore, peasants from adjoining villages waited upon L. Lajpat Rai in deputation and solicited Congress help in getting these bills cancelled. L. Lajpat Rai disappointed them by saying that Congress was helpless in doing anything for them and these bills could not be got cancelled'. (ibid., p. 34)

They came to know there about the meetings being held by the Bharat Mata Society in this context. After attending the meeting held on following Sunday, they felt so enthused that about 180 of them volunteered to work for the society in the affected districts.

To hurl affront at the already aggrieved feelings, the government prompted a few members of Layalpur Bar to hold a thanks-giving meeting for acclaiming the anti-farmer measures as benevolent ones, which turned out to be a disgracing flop. The government resorted to such manipulations to assert that the land belonged to the Crown and the cultivators were mere vassals.

As a sequel thereto the biggest of protest meetings was held on March 3, 1907 at Layalpur. Lala Ji also attended it on being given to understand that Ajit Singh was not one of its organisers. He felt shaken to find Ajit Singh there. After initial hesitation, Lala Ji delivered an eloquently sober speech. When Ajit Singh rose to address the gathering, Lala Ji left the venue. It was there that Banke Dayal, Editor, *Jhang Syal*, recited his historic poem 'Pagri sambhal Jatta'. The myth that British rule was beneficent and humane began to shatter. The unrest started gathering momentum. On Sundays, serving army personnel would attend these meetings in considerable number. The year 1907 marked also the 50th anniversary of 1857 army revolt. A sort of panic started seizing the Britishers.

At an unscheduled meeting addressed by Ajit Singh on April 21, 1907 outside the Rawalpindi Railway Station, an English army officer ordered his men to fire at the gathering. The Indian soldiers raised their rifles towards him instead. He beat a hasty retreat with his unobliging subordinates.

Terrified Lord Kitchener, C-in-C of Royal Indian Army, wrote to the British Government at home, that he would not be responsible for the loyalty of native troops if the proposed legislations were not withdrawn. The Central Government felt obliged to accept his advice.

The campaign started by Bharat Mata Society bagged a resounding success. Before cancelling the oppressive measures, the government in order to give vent to its suffocating rage arrested L. Lajpat Rai on May 7, 1907. Ajit Singh went underground, but sensing that sporadic anti-government riots might not be retaliated, he chose to surrender on June 2, 07 at Amritsar. He was taken to Mandalay, where Lala Ji had been detained. They were kept aloof from each other.

Lala Ji submitted a memorial to the Secretary of State on September 22, 1907, pleading his innocence as follows :

'5. That your petitioner further begs to submit, that he took no part in the Lahore or Rawalpindi riots;

that he did not directly or indirectly encourage any person to bring about the same;

that he did not make any seditious speeches;

that he was always within the bounds of law and constitution in expressing his disapproval of certain Government measures which were at the time of and immediately before his arrest exercising the public mind; that he never advocated any violent or illegal methods of redress, nor did he associate with any people who to his knowledge advocate such measures.

That the suspicion, if entertained against him to having tampered with the loyalty of the native troops of His Majesty's Indian army, is entirely devoid of any foundation;

your petitioner having had no opportunity whatsoever of mixing or communicating with the same.'

The memo consisted of 9 paragraphs and the concluding ones, with their source, are stated in the next chapter at their relevant place. (page 41) Accordingly Lala Ji was released on November 11, 1907.

Ajit Singh, who did not submit any such representation, had also to be released for preventing any likely repercussion.

VIII

Paradoxical Glimpses

L. Lajpat Rai was born on January 28, 1865 at Dhudike village, near Moga, then in Ferozepur district. Feroze Chand, a close associate of Lala Ji, in his foreword to D.S. Sahota's book, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, observes that there had been a deep influence of Sikh way of life on Lala Ji from his early childhood and Guru Gobind Singh was a cardinal source of inspiration for him. His mother, Mrs Gulab Devi, was regular in her recital of *Japji* and *Rehras*. The Lajpat Rai Number of *The People*, an English weekly (edited by Lala Ji during his life time) in its issue of April 13, 1929, carries his two photographs taken in 1895 and 1905 with beard, keshas and turban.

Lala Ji in 'The Story of My Life', serialised posthumously by *The people*, states in its issue of April 18, 1929, (p. 196) under the caption 'Mother's Miracle' :

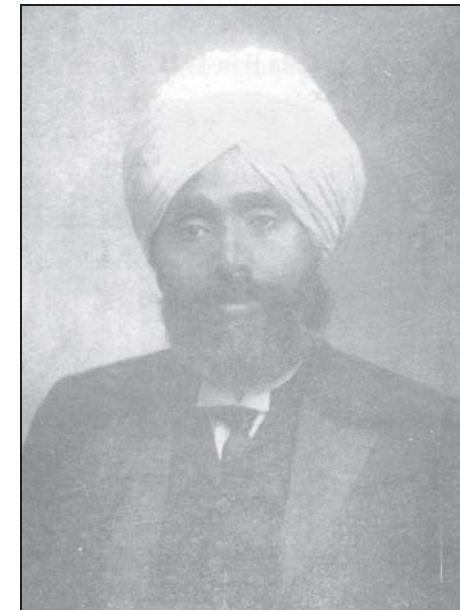
' . . . She had been born in a family where Sikhism reigned supreme. Her father and mother and brothers were Sikhs. They used to recite Japji and observed Hindu rituals and festivals, they wore long hair and in religious matters they worshipped Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh scripture) . . . '

' . . . But by an irony of fate my mother was wedded to a man who was lover of Islam and a friend of Mussalmans and also renewed every day his threat to turn Muslim'.

' . . . That my father did not become a convert to Islam in spite of all these things is nothing short of a miracle and the credit for having wrought this miracle must go to my mother'.



LALA JI IN 1895.



LALA JI IN 1905.

(The People, Lahore April 13, 1929)

Lala ji in 1907



At the time of his deportation to Mandalay.

Lala ji in 1921



Lala ji as a Non-cooperator.

Lala Ji shifted to Lahore in 1881, where he came in contact with the leaders of Arya Samaj and joined it in 1882. He started taking keen interest in the Aryan renaissance through propagation of Vedic literature.

As inferred from the photographs taken at various stages of Lala Ji's life, he got his beard and keshas shaved off in 1905 prior to his sailing for U.K.

II

Lala Ji attended the 5th annual session of Indian National Congress at Bombay in December 1889 and in his discussions with Congress leaders decried their ritual of 'prayers and petitions'.

At the suggestion of Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai was chosen to accompany Gopal Krishan Gokhale to England in 1905 to place before the English the aspirations of Indians. He returned with the bitter impression :

'You can at times successfully appeal to humanity and benevolence of individuals, but to hope for justice from a nation is hoping against hope. The rule of a foreign democracy in this respect is most dangerous'.¹

In spite of his denunciation of the ritual of 'prayers and petitions' (1889) and the disapproval of collective British attitude towards the colonial people (1905), the memorial submitted by Lala Ji in September 1907 from Mandalay seeking his release began and ended as :

'I beg to submit a memorial addressed to His Excellency the Secretary of State for India, for favour of being forwarded through proper channel in accordance with memorial rules.

8. That your petitioner very respectfully prays and earnestly hopes that His Majesty's August Government will not refuse him that justice and fair play for which the British nation

1. *History of the Freedom Movement in the Punjab*, (Volume iv), Punjabi University Patiala, 1978, p. iv.

and their Government are renowned, and that they will order petitioner's release with permission to return to his home and resume his ordinary vocation in life.

9. That last in case His Excellency's Government find it impossible to order the unconditional release of the petitioner, and his restoration to his family, they may very graciously be pleased to permit him to leave India for such time as they may in that behalf choose to fix, with liberty to reside in Great Britain or any other country on the continent of Europe or in America, for which act of kindness your petitioner shall as in duty bound pray for his Majesty and his Ministers.

Mandalay, Fort Dufferin
The 22nd September, 1907

Your petitioner remains
Your Excellency's humble servant
Lajpat Rai of Lahore²

III

Many chroniclers hold that the Punjab Unrest (1906-07) took a political turn under the leadership of Lala Ji and Ajit Singh. How could there be similarity of views and co-ordinated team work between a humble servant of His Majesty's August Government and a revolutionary who preached rebellious rising against that foreign imperial rule?

IV

Ajit Singh, his younger brother Swaran Singh and Sufi Amba Parsad were proposed to be prosecuted by the Punjab Government in 1909 under section 124, I.P.C. for publishing and distributing the seditious books, *Bandar Bant* and *Divide and Rule*. Swaran Singh was arrested, prosecuted for being the publisher of those publications and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. He had to be released on parole due to his deteriorating health. He died in the prime of life in 1910. The other two fled to Iran incognito. **Thereafter various socio-religious bodies, Hindu as well as Sikh, vied with each other to issue disclaimers for pleasing the**

2. *ibid.*, pp. 136-139

government that Ajit Singh did not belong to their faith. The Arya Samaj did not lag behind.

Lajpat Rai thought it expedient to divert his political activities to the uplift of depressed classes from 1910 onwards. As stated by Mohan Lal Secretary, Punjab Achhut Uddhar Mandal, in his article 'Lala Ji and the Depressed Classes' published in *The People*, April 13, 1929, Lajpat Rai felt that it might not be possible to get swaraj within a year, but he was certain to eradicate the social evil of untouchability within that short span of time. His subsequent association with the campaign of *shudhi* (reconversion to Hindu fold) did not cheer the depressed as much as it amused the British, because the growing tacit hostility of Muslims and Christians to the activities of Lala Ji was gradually adding to communal conflicts. In early 1914 Lajpat Rai thwarted the conversion of several hundred families of poor sections to Christianity at Almora (U.P.). He started getting a princely donation of Rs. 5000.00 per month from the munificent Seth Jugal Kishore Birla for that purpose.

Under the darkening shadow of World War First (1914-18) Lajpat Rai left for abroad in May 1914 on a self-chosen exile as per commitment given vide para 9 of his memorial submitted from Mandalay. He returned to India in February 1920. He passed those six years mostly in U.S.A., received generous donations from the Indians settled there for the cause of independence of motherland, but kept at a safe distance from the Ghadar Party and on return spent those huge collections for purpose other than the political, as accused by *Kirti* (Punjabi magazine) in its various issues.

Lala Ji's political career had been a continual game of leaving and joining the Congress, forming new parties and quitting them in disgust. Ultimately he found himself comfortable in Hindu Maha Sabha with the support of which he was elected to Central Assembly.

About two dozen revolutionaries of Punjab led by Kedar Nath Sehgal wrote an open letter to Lala Ji on September 18, 1927, (its

Punjabi translation published in November 1927 issue of *Kirti*), accusing him of :

- i) unsteadfastness in political views;
- ii) side-tracking the policy of national education;
- iii) letting down the Swaraj Party;
- iv) aggravating the Hindu-Muslim tension and
- v) his degenerating from a so-called progressive to a moderate.

That letter offers an objective assessment of the contribution of Punjab Kesari Lala Lajpat Rai to the cause of Indian independence.

VI

The afore-said reprimanding communication addressed to Lala Ji by the revolutionaries had a shattering effect on his mental and physical health.

While expressing scepticism about the universal beneficence of God, rather doubting His very existence; decrying the religious beliefs he had been ardently subscribing to; protesting against the clashing concepts of morality and denouncing the world as absurd in spite of its being real, Lala Ji disclosed his distress to G.D. Birla in a confidential letter on July 12, 1928 (Appendix IV) which concludes with the lament :

'...Public life, public activities, public engagements are no longer alluring. They do not attract me. They do not please me, yet I find I cannot live without them. Oh - What I am to do - I am miserable, I am lonely, I am unhappy. I hug my miserableness, my loneliness and my unhappiness. I want to get rid of this state of mind, but I do not know, how'.

Feroze Chand, Editor, *The People*, for the reasons known to him only, chose to publish this confidential confession five years after the death of Lala Ji in the November 20, 1933 issue of that weekly, highlighting its salient points as follows :

Lala Ji's Days of Disillusion God and Future Life Are Poor Basis for Morality

Lala Ji's Revolt against Traditional Dogmas under Keen Sense of Injustice and Cruelty in the World A Most Revealing Human Document

"How can I believe in a God-said to be just, benevolent, almighty and omniscient - who rules over this absurd world" says Lala Lajpat Rai. This coming up from one who was so long and so intimately associated with a religious movement would sound amazing. Yet those who were in close touch with Lalaji during his last years knew that he had completely changed his outlook on the traditional problems.

The real Lajpat Rai of the years of disillusion is revealed most truly in the letter, we publish today. The letter was written to Syt. G.D. Birla four months and four days before Lala Ji's death. It is a human document of the highest value in which the author x-rays himself with the ruthless frankness, that was his greatest characteristic.

The revealing document deserves to rank with the greatest confessions of the really great.

It is the truest portrayal of Lalaji in his last days. He had ceased to accept traditional dogmas as basis for morality. He had bitter disillusion in public life too. Yet the keen sense of injustice was the perpetual goad to action in which alone he could find some relief.

VII

It is a puzzle as to why Feroze Chand found it discreet to omit his 'Most Revealing Human Document' from the biography* which he authored in the post-independence era.

* *Lajpat Rai - Life and Works*, Publication Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1978.

Lahore Police Assault L. Lajpat Rai & Others.

ATTACK ON LALAJI

ADMITTED: Official Version. LATHIS USED FOR AGITATORS "Sergeant Stoned."

Lahore, Oct., 30.

The official version of today's incidents is now available. It is stated that the processions and meetings were never forbidden at all. The only processions forbidden were those which had not held previous sanction of the Superintendent of Police. Last night the Superintendent of Police issued orders that he would not interfere with any procession inside the Circular Road or which proceeded to station by certain routes indicated in his order. These orders were communicated to the leaders of the boycott movement in writing this morning and they were followed to the letter.

The number of demonstrators that actually came to the station were variously estimated from six hundred to a thousand, the latter being absolutely maximum. At the railway station moveable barbed wire barricades were

POLICE ASSULT L. LAJPAT RAI & OTHER LEADERS.

BRUTAL CHARGE ON PROCESSIONISTS. 25, 000 PROTEST AGAINST POLICE OUTRAGE.

ELECTRIC ATMOSPHERE IN CITY.

Lahore Oct., 30.

The Deputy Inspector General of Police has issued orders that processions within the Circular Road round the city will not be interfered with unless they contravene law by riotous or obstructive behaviour.

The order absolutely prohibits processions from crossing the Circular Road between Taxali Gate and Branderth Road. Processions may proceed along Circular Road and towards Railway Station via Branderth Road or Landa Bazar Road. If any procession attempts to defy this order it will be broken up and arrests will be made if necessary. All persons arrested shall be sent immediately under escort by lorry to the District Police Lines where they will be

BLOWS AIMED AT HEART: Lalaji's Statement. CROWD PERFECTLY NON-VIOLENT Police Fury.

Lahore, Oct. 30.

In a statement to the press Lala Lajpat Rai described what happened at the Railway Station.

He says that the attack by the police was quite unprovoked and unwarranted and it is alleged was led by the Superintendent of Police himself. As I am told, he gave me two blows on my chest and a few of the constables ... I cannot say how many ... gave me a few blows with regulation lathis which happily did not fall very heavily on me. The blows fell close on my left chest and just over the region of the heart. The blows left a slight fever and a swelling. I asked the man his name about half a dozen times but he did not give me his name. I shouted to him, "If you are a man, give me your name", but he did not reply. From the very beginning he seemed to be bent upon doing mischief.

"SIMON GO BACK" Demonstration at Saton. (From Our Correspondent.)

Lahore, Oct. 30. The members of the Indian statutory Commission reached Lahore this afternoon at 2.30 by special train and were received on the platform by about 35 persons and outside by an unprecedented

(The Daily *Pratap*, February 7, 1983)

'..... The stories woven around the exploits of Bhai Parmanand and Lala Lajpat Rai were legion and I still remember how they stirred my imagination as a fresher at high school. The former was then in detention, and the latter had gone to America to escape the unwelcome attention of the Government. We believed the most fanatastic tales then afloat about these legendary heros, even one of them told how Lala Lajpat Rai had been offered the presidentship of United States but had declined the honour because he could not bring himself to forswear the undenying loyalty he owed his motherland'.³

Such fantastic accounts were propagated despite the mandatory provisions of American Constitution that only natural citizens of USA could contest for the office of President.

It is how history is concealed through omissions and distorted through half-truths.

3. Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru & After*, American Edition 1970, p.33

Appendix - II

Various Versions about the Health of Lala Ji on 30-10-1928 and Thereafter

Medical Opinions

- i) Dr Lt. Col. Roy, 9 a.m., October 30, 1928 (5½ hours before the police lathi charge) :

'Lala ji not only complained of dizziness, but also of pain while breathing because of swelling on left chest'.

- ii) Dr Dharambir, 5 p.m., October 30, 1928, subsequent to the police lathi charge :

'Lala Ji complained of pain in his right chest and there was obstruction in his heart after 15-20 beatings'.

There is no mention of blow marks.

- iii) Lala Ji's Own Statement

'...As I am told, he gave me two blows on my chest and a few of the constables - I cannot say how many - gave me a few blows with regulation lathis, which happily did not fall very heavily on me. The blows fell close to my left chest and just over the region of the heart. The blows left a slight fever and a swelling'.

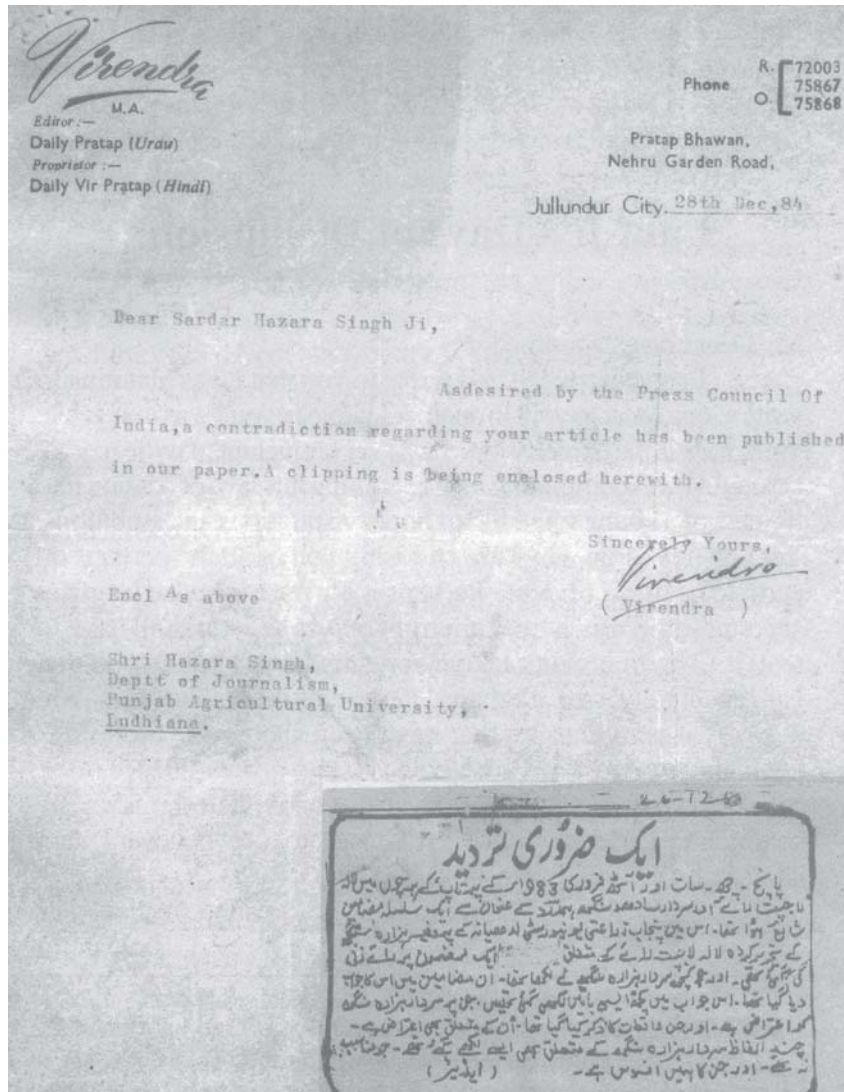


Arrow marks indicate the contusions.

- iv) The photo of naked upper part of the body of Lala Ji printed in the Hind Samachar Publications on May 1, 1984, with a statement of Sh. Amar Nath Vidyalankar (personal secretary of Lala Ji from December 1926 till his demise) showed two blow marks, one on the left shoulder and the other a few inches below on chest. According to Lala Ji the blows fell on his left chest and not on shoulder. Sh. Vidyalankar said that the lathi charge incident took place on October 29, 1928 and the photo was taken on the same evening.
- v) The same photo published in the Daily Tribune, December 1, 1985, (Sunday Reading) released by the Servants of People Society states that the photo was taken 29 hours after the incident, that is on 31st October late evening.
- vi) According to S. Kishen Singh blots of blue ink were put on the body on 17-11-1928 before the cremation.

Appendix - III

Aik Zaroori Tardid



Appendix - IV

Lala Ji's Days of Disillusion*

Poona, 12-7-28

My Dear Ghanshyam,

In one of my letters I wrote to you that I was planning to write a long letter to you. In another I wrote to you I was miserable. Well, here is the explanation. I was very reluctant to write to you. I thought I was committing a sin in pouring this lava of passion into the ears of a young mind full of hopes, aspirations and ambitions. Yet I do not know why I am choosing you of all the persons on earth to be my confidant. Perhaps it is a pure impulse I can not account for it. But here, I am right or wrong, you shall have to read it. You may think I have gone mad, but I assure you that I am absolutely sane. Perhaps I never was saner than I am. You may say it is my nerves that have been shattered. It may be. I don't know, Anyway I am taking you into my confidence in the belief that you will not give me away that you will treat it as strictly confidential and that you will give it back to me whenever I want it back. I want you to preserve it.

Your affectionately,
Lajpat Rai

* Lala Lajpat Rai's letter to Ghanshyam Das Birla, published by *The People*, Lahore, November 20, 1933, under this title.

The document is available with Shahid Bhagat Singh Research Committee as a photo copy of the original publication. Some words therein are not decipherable and have been reproduced as such. The main ideas of Lala Ji have been highlighted through bold print.

I am sick of life both mentally and physically. I suppose the one leads to the other. I have no zest left in me, no go, no desire. Whenever anyone asks me to do anything or whenever I think of doing something, the invariable question that comes out from the depth of my mind is “Oh what is good”? Is there any good in this world? Is it worth all the trouble one takes over it? Is it not all vanity? The fact is that I have lost faith in myself, in God, in Humanity, in life, in the world. Nothing seems to be real or tangible. Everything seems to be ephemeral and the outcome of human vanity. All my life I have fought and struggled against this doctrine. I have thundered from hundreds of platforms that *the doctrine which says “the world is a farce, unreal, imaginary (?) and a delusion” is false and immoral.* In hundreds of articles written for press, I have denounced the teaching of neo Vedanta which calls the world and the life in it a delusion and unreality, yet today in the evening of my life I had myself confronted with the same view. It is curious frame of mind, undefinable, inexpressible in language, yet as real as anything can be, I have reached a stage where all activities, public or private, all desires, all emotions seem to be nothing but vanity, the offshoots of vanity, the developments of vanity. *Life is real, life is earnest seems to me nothing more than the cry of unconscious vanity.* What is there in life which is real and which, one would take as earnest? Are the actions of life real and earnest? Have I not seen the nearest and the dearest, the most intimate relations of life broken into pieces like the pieces of dry rotten wood. There was a time in life when one built a great deal on these relations. One thought life without them impossible. One worked hard, laboured incessantly, did all kind of things, moral and sometimes immoral too, put up with all kinds of discomforts and inconveniences to keep up these relations to meet wants, the wishes, the desires of those whom one loved, one earned money for those, spent it on them, saved it for them and did all sort of things to be useful to them, to serve them. But then the times

changed. All these relations and I also changed. Now they mean nothing to me and I nothing to them. Why? The question has no answer. If it is true of the nearest and dearest relations of the world - connections by blood and marriage - is it not equally true of friendships of the world? Where are the friendships of my childhood. of my youth, and of my middle age? Where are the friends for whom I contracted the deepest affection who I thought were real disinterested friends and loved me for my own sake - whom I considered it my duty to serve and sacrifice for - for whom I undertook the greatest risks and for whose sake I allowed myself to be misunderstood and misrepresented. Where are they? Cast to the winds. I do not care for them and they do not care for me. Some of them are dead but others are alive. I never hear from them and vice-versa. Was there any real foundation for these friendships? Were they based on selfishness or were they based on vanity? It is difficult to answer. Take the case of colleagues in public life. Is not, what is said about relatives and friends alike, equally true of these too? *There was time when I believed in God who heard prayers, rewarded us for our good deeds and punished us for our bad ones. Slowly, gradually but most assuredly this belief is gone. How can I believe in a God who is said to be just, benevolent, almighty and omniscient but who rules over absurd.*

Can this world be handiwork of a beneficent force - of just, merciful and benevolent force.... A world full of injustices... cruelties and barbarity.... (could it be) handiwork of a God.... Where hundreds and thousands.... people, people without.... it is head or heart.... exploiters and selfish people living in luxury and in.... the way insulting..... under foot, grinding into.... And mocking their victims, latter are living lives of unassuming misery, degradation, disgrace ofwant* They do not get even necessities of life. *Why all this inequality? Can this be handiwork of a Just and True God. I reject the reply which all theologians and believers*

* Some words/phrases are not decipherable, but the sense gets conveyed.

give. I myself have indulged in these platitudes thousands of time. But the truth is that there is no satisfactory reply to that question. ***In the light of science one can not honestly believe in a Creator or in a Maker or in a personal God.*** Yest I can understand the reply of Herbert Spencer, there must be an unknown and unknowable force behind all this manifestation of life which is the Primal Cause. But this is not a Personal God who hears prayers and whom people call upon in their troubles and thank in their triumphs and successes. What's fate, and what's God? ***Often when a person calls upon his God to hear his prayer or to do something for him, I am inclined to shout "Stop this tomfoolery there is no thy God. I can find no one of him in this absurd world"***. The world is great but it is absurd. It is magnificent but it is not moral, at least not moral in the sense in which we understand it. It is no place for justice or mercy or kindness or benevolence. It is wonderful but it is mystery. It is open yet it is a riddle which no one has been able to solve so far. You cannot make head or tail of it. It is full of inconsistencies, incompatibilities, intangibilities, contradictions and what seems to an honest observer '*lies*'. What is truth, and where is it? ***Is there any truth in the religions or in creeds or in faiths? Are those who say they have discovered truth labouring under delusion or under a sense of vanity? Did Mahatma Buddha or Christ or Mohammed discover truths? If so where are those "truths"? Why have those truths been distorted? Why have they disunited mankind and divided them into factions, parties and so on? Does truth lead to disruption, disintegration and disunion?*** Is it possible that all these good men are labouring under a sense of unconscious vanity and unthought of conceit? The short and long of it is that I have lost all faith in God or in religion. This world, this wretched world, this warring world, this absurd world is certainly real in the sense that it exists before your eyes. You can not deny its existence, nor its reality in this sense. But you cannot find.... (not decipherable) why? Wherefore... (not

decipherable).... which is not given to man to unfold however much he may try. All the explanations and solutions so far propounded are flat and stale. They do not satisfy my intellect. Yet all this scepticism, agnosticism or blasphemy, if you like to call it, does not lead one to a belief in Epicureanism. What are the casual pleasures of life - those of the senses, are they real, certainly not. They are as much unreal as anything else. Do they lead to happiness or satisfaction? Certainly not. They constitute the greatest delusion of life. I do sometimes feel a hankering for the luxuries of life but when I have got them I feel that I have been guilty of a crime. My conscience begins to bite me. ***A belief in God and in future life is said to be the foundation of morality. I have not yet lost all faith in future life but the future life of soul in the shape of rewards for good deeds and punishment for bad deeds does not appeal to my intellect.*** There may be some kind of future life but a future life based on the theory of rewards and punishment is a grotesque idea. Once upon a time I believed in it. ***But now I think that this theory of rewards for good deeds and punishment for bad deeds is very much responsible for the rotten condition of the Hindus. If being an untouchable and a chandal is a punishment for past bad deeds what justification remains there for the untouchables etc. to rebel against society.*** They have got what they deserved. The Sanatanists are perfectly logical. ***If the poor starving humanity today is poor because it had done bad deeds in the previous birth, that is why, they deserve all they suffer from and in suffering with patience and without complaints lies their salvation. That is a doctrine against which the whole of my soul, intellect and reason revolt. I can not accept such a doctrine. Belief in God and in future life is then very poor foundation for morality.*** Morality must stand on or fall in reality on its own merit. What are the merits? The question again is very perplexing. Is there anything like absolute morality, the standard of morality differs in different countries. (So) then morality cannot be absolute. But I did not start to write a treatise

on morality. My object was to explain why my doubt in the existence of God and in future life does not lead me to life of luxuries or to a life of immorality. *You may well ask me why then I have been in public life so often.. The answer is “purely of selfish reason” - to satisfy my hankering for action or from a habit of mind. I have deeply felt the degradation of my country and the humiliation of country men.* That has stirred me to action. In action alone I thought I could get any relief. The injustice of the situation, the miseries of my country men have sunk deep in my soul. They have made an impression which is ineffaceable. They haunt me day and night. They have made my life miserable. From that misery I took refuge in action. People often complain that my writings and speeches are very bitter, very satirical and very biting. Yes they have to be so because they are true expression of my inner self - *my inner self is very sore, very bitter* very....(not decipherable). The sense of injustice, humiliation and misery overwhelms me. I found relief in expression, in work, in action even in taking risks but the whole weight of my inner feeling leads me to it irresistibly. I am not a brave man by nature but the intensity of my feeling within has made me brave risks and dangers. Early in life I found that there was no happiness for me but there was some satisfaction in work and in action and in expression. So I acted on that impulse and on the dictum of the Upanishad ‘Kuruwanneva Karmani’ etc., etc., but the disappointments and disillusion of public life, the demoralization that prevails all round the civilization and chicanery which are the order of the day in public men have so distrusted and irritated me that whatever little pleasure and satisfaction I did get from public activities has gone. I am in a positively perplexing state of mind. I do not want to engage in public activities; yet I can not abstain from them. I hate making speeches yet I cannot altogether retire and resist invitation to it, though after every speech I ask myself, “Oh what was the good”? I hate public applause. I hate crowds, yet I cannot say I am indifferent to it. I am often

lonely. I do not like loneliness yet I do not feel any happier in company. I seek company yet after the company is gone I feel thankful for having got rid of it. Nothing satisfies me. I know the habit of too much analysis, of tearing things into pieces, is bad. It does not lead to pleasantness yet I often find myself in a hypercritical mood. No one comes up to my ideals. I admire Gandhiji, admire Malaviyaji, but I often find myself indulging in bitter criticism of them. Public life, public activities, public engagements are no longer alluring they do not attract me. They do not please me, yet I find I cannot live without them. Oh! what am I to do - I am miserable, I am lonely, I am unhappy. I hug my miserableness, my loneliness and my unhappiness. I do want to get rid of this state of mind but I don't know how.