

Nation-in-Narration: Lala Lajpat Rai and the Communal Question

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THE PROBLEM

The present essay is an attempt to read Lala Lajpat Rai's writings including his *Young India* (1915) as narratives of the nation in the context of communal question. In order to understand how India's nationness was being narrated by some of the leading actors on the theatre of India's freedom struggle, Lala Lajpat Rai's *Yong India* may well be considered a key-text in this regard. But the task of reading and analysing a text as a narrative of the nation in fraught with all kinds of possible political or critical incorrectness at the present time as the very legitimacy of the usage of the term "nation" is in danger—thanks to the unbridled march of the discourses of economic (neo-imperialistic) globalization.¹ It is interesting to note that Lalaji's significant contribution to Indian nationalism has been *occluded* (rather than included) in the contemporary historiography by conveniently branding him as a communalist or a liberal communalist. In the first part of the essay, I will highlight, first, the examples of Lalaji's misconstruction as a communalist in the contemporary historiography, and then I will produce examples from Lalaji's own writings (including his seminal text *Young India*) and speeches to prove the hollowness and lack of historicity of such claims. In the second part, Lalaji's *Young India* will be discussed along with other writings as the narratives of the nation by focussing the reader's attention on the relevance of the text to the nation-question that the leaders of Indian freedom struggle confronted with in the early twentieth century.

I

A. HISTORY'S HERESY, HISTORIANS' GAIN:
RECLAIMING LALAJI FROM THE MARGINS OF HISTORY.

That Lala Lajpat Rai was a great nationalist leader is beyond doubt. Even a cursory survey of the tributes paid to him by his contemporaries, including Gandhiji and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, during his lifetime and even after his death will suffice to prove this point.² What, however, perturbs a reader most is the biased verdict of the contemporary historians who declared him, first, an extremist Hindu Nationalist, and then, a communalist or a liberal communalist afterwards.³ Here, it is worthwhile to consider some of the concrete examples of Lalaji's distortion as a communalist in the text books of modern Indian history.

The most glaring examples of misreading Lalaji's role in the freedom struggle come from the much acclaimed text book of modern Indian history, *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947* (edited by Prof. Bipan Chandra, *et al.*).⁴ In the two chapters of the book ("The Rise and Growth of Communalism" and "Communalism—The Liberal Phase"), Prof. Bipan Chandra has rather assiduously proved that Lala Lajpat Rai was a liberal or moderate communalist. Believing that communalism is "basically and above all an *Ideology* on which communal politics is based," he laments that many nationalists "fell prey to it or thought within its digits" and "saw themselves as Nationalist Hindus, Nationalist Muslims, Nationalist Sikhs, etc. *and not as simple nationalists*" (emphasis added). He, then, goes on to asseverate that most of "the communalist before 1937—the Hindu Mahasabha the Muslim League, the Ali Brothers after 1925, M.A. Jinnah, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, and N.C. Kelkar after 1922—functioned within a liberal communal framework."⁵ In order to legitimise his inclusion of Lalaji (or his exclusion from the list of secular nationalists) in the category of liberal communalism, he characterises it as the second stage of communalism. According to him, "the liberal communalist *was basically a believer in and practitioner of communal politics*; but he still upheld certain liberal, democratic, humanist and nationalist values. Even while holding that India consisted of distinct religion-based communities . . . he continued to believe and profess publicly that these different communal interests could be gradually accommodated and brought into harmony with the over-all developing national interests, and India built as a nation."⁶ Elsewhere in the book, he blames the Congress leaders for their failure to "expose the communalism and semi-communalism of leaders like

Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai and Moulana Mohammad Ali who often worked within Congress ranks.”⁷ Bipin Chandra makes similar remarks on Lalaji in his another book—*Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*⁸ while analysing the communal problem in India’s freedom struggle. Thus, Bipin Chandra lumps Lalaji together with the communalist nationalists without even once checking out the legitimacy of his claims or pronouncements from Lalaji’s own writings and speeches which are available in abundance to disprove his thesis. Before I contradict his biased verdict on Lalaji, let me illustrate a few more examples from yet another important text book of modern Indian history to prove my thesis that Lalaji was, indeed, “more sinned against than sinning” and was a true nationalist, if there was one.

And if Bipin Chandra could do it, Sumit Sarkar could not be far behind! In his much-prescribed text book of modern Indian history, he has this to say on Lalaji’s role in the national movement for freedom—“Malaviya formed an Independent Congress Party in alliance with Lajpat Rai and the Responsive Cooperators, with a programme which combined political moderation with *uninhibited communalism*”⁹ (emphasis added).

Another place, Sarkar comments on Lalaji’s communalist proclivities in this manner: “As his very revealing autobiography makes clear, it was the Hindi-Urdu-controversy of the 1880s which made Lala Lajpat Rai become ‘wedded to the idea of Hindu nationality’. Lala Lajpat Rai started “making pro-Hindi-speeches even before learning the Devnagri alphabet.”¹⁰ Another scholar, Prabha Dixit, in her essay on “The Ideology of Hindu Nationalism”¹¹ studies Lala Lajpat Rai as a Punjabi Hindu Nationalist in conjunction with Sri Aurobindo and V.D. Savarkar, whose nationalism “stemmed from the deeply felt insecurity of the urban Hindu middle class and was sustained throughout by their class interest . . . as a counterweight to the imbalance of their position in Punjab.”¹²

B. THE TEXTUAL POLITICS: THE PRE-POST-(EROUS)-1922-DIVIDE

What seems to emerge from the above mentioned constructions of Lala Lajpat Rai’s nationalism is the general consensus among the secular historians that he was, first, a communalist and a liberal or a moderate communalist, afterwards especially after 1922 (when he joined the Hindu Mahasabha), irrespective of the lack of textual or contextual evidences in support of their claims. I now wish to share

with the readers that whatever Lalaji wrote or said about the communal problem in India (most notably the Hindu-Muslim-unity-question) or the nation-question, constitutes an irrefutable evidence of his being a constructive nationalist, both in pre-and-post-1922 phases. Hence, the fallacy of pre-post (erous)-1922-divide.

Let us, first, begin with Lalaji's formative and impressionable years as a growing child. His upbringing and the environment at home was quite liberal and catholic without a taint of the so-called Hindu orthodoxy. His grandfather was a Jain, his father an unofficial Muslim and his mother a Paurāṇic Hindu. Of his early days, he says, "My father taught me a portion of the *Qur'ān*, and I distinctly remember that I used to recite *namāz*. Sometimes, I tried even to fast during the *ramzān*."¹² Lalaji, no doubt, received the first religious or spiritual impressions from the *Qur'ān* and the observance of Islamic rituals. Secondly, his father taught him a good deal of Persian also and his first flush of patriotism was the result of his love for Persian and Urdu literature. The books that moved him most and made a patriot of him were not the Vedas; these were the Persian and Urdu books—*Firdausi's Shāh Nāmā*, Maulvi Muhammad Hussain's *Qāsis-i-Hindi*, *Sikandar Nāmā*, *Rasum-i-Hind* and *Wāqīāt-i-Hind*. He admits the influence of these books on his life in this way: "I read again and over again the portions of Maulvi Muhammad Hussain's *Qāsis-i-Hind* (Part II) which eulogises the valiant deeds of the Rajputs, Ala-ud-din Khilji's raids on Chitor, Humayun's tribulation, Akbar's conquests—all these left impressions on my mind as lasting as a carving on the stone."¹³ And he candidly confesses that the whole of his boyhood was "taken up by the study of Urdu, Persian and Arabic."¹⁴ How can a child, brought up in such liberating and liberal environment become a communalist over night is really a conundrum of history!

Sumit Sarkar highlights his conversion to Hindu extremism which was a result of the Urdu-Hindu controversy of the 1880s and exposes Lalaji's so-called "hypocrisy" of delivering speeches in support of Hindi without having learnt its alphabet. Sarkar carefully omits the total context and chooses the facts arbitrarily to prove his charges. Perhaps, he picked up this portion of Lalaji's autobiographical writings—"The Hindi-Urdu-controversy taught me my first lesson in Hindu nationalism. My mind took a turn at this time and there was no turning back thereafter. . . . What this work took me to Ambala and I made a public speech there advocating Hindi and opposing Urdu, I actually did not know the Hindi alphabet."¹⁵ What Prof. Sumit Sarkar deliberately omits

is the fact that soon after this incident, Lalaji "learnt the Hindi alphabet and gave up studying Persian and Arabic."¹⁶ But his love for Urdu and Persian remained, in spite of his disclaimer as has been evident from his writings and speeches. He also wrote a novel in Urdu. He delivered his address at the Allahabad Congress in 1888 in Hindustani. Sumit Sarkar did not mention these facts. Moreover, he never concealed his personal liking for Persian and Urdu.

Now, we have to analyse what kind of nationalism or communalism or liberal communalism is manifest in his pre-1922 phase in his writings and speeches including his *Young India*. His first important writings are his "Open Letters to the Hon'ble Sir Syed Ahmad"¹⁷ (written in 1888 anonymously by "The son of an old follower of yours") which showcased his idea of nationhood and his subsequent differences with Sir Syed Ahmed for preaching Muslim separatism and opposition to Congress. Lalaji whole heartedly supports Sir Syed's idea of India's nationness by citing his famous 1884 speech delivered at Lahore:

"In the word nation, I included both Hindu and Muslims because that is the only meaning which I can attach to it (i.e. nation or *qaum*). We inhabit the same land, are subject to the rule of same governors, the fountains of benefit for all of us are the same and the pangs of famine also we suffer equally. These are the different grounds upon which I call both of these races which inhabit India by one word; i.e., "Hindu" meaning to say that they are the inhabitants of Hindustan. While in legislative council, I was always anxious for the prosperity of this nation."¹⁸ Lalaji minced no words in criticising his boyhood hero, Sir Syed Ahmad for his *volte-face*. "Anybody reading these extracts (i.e. extracts from Sir Syed's speeches) will be once for all convinced of the former loftiness and present lowness of your position. Poor Sir Syed, you must feel sorry, for all this inconsistency, though you may not have the boldness to say so"¹⁹ Lacing his lacerating letters with sarcasm, irony, taunt and satire, he ends them by citing an English poem which is rich in its metaphoric suggestivities in order to caution, Sir Syed:

I know a maiden to see
 Take care
 She can both false and friendly be
 Beware! Beware!
 Trust her not,
 She is fooling thee
 * * * *

She has a bosom as white as snow,
 Take care,
 She knows how much it is best to show
 Beware! Beware!²⁰

In his another article, "A Study of Hindu Nationalism"²¹ written as a rejoinder to a write-up, "Creation of a Hindu Nationality" (by Mr. Madho Ram), he warns the Hindus against making *a religious, cultural or linguistic homogeneity* as a sign of India's nationhood: "It is wrong to suppose that the idea of nationalism or nationality requires a complete union in all details of religious, social, economic, or political life or that it requires a complete freedom from sectarian quarrels or disputes or jealousies".²²

This was, perhaps, the first bold acceptance of *differences* (in the present-day post-modern sense) as the constituents of nationality. Gandhi also fore grounded "differences" prevailing in Indian society as the signs of India's nationness in his *Hind Swarāj* (1909). Lalaji's notion of nationhood was, indeed, pluralistic and all-embracing as it was always self-critical: "The truth is that honest differences, controversial discussions, and criticisms of public men by public men, are absolutely necessary for the healthy growth and progress of nationality."²³

In his yet another important article, "The National Outlook: The Great Need of The Situation" he reinforces the now familiar unity-in-diversity idea in the context of India's nationhood, "The chief object of human yearning is, has been, and ought to be, to find harmony in diversity. Nations are built and unified by differences that exist between the various classes of their population."²⁴ Lalaji outlines the significance of national struggle in which the masses have to participate as primary actors to build the nation, their differences, linguistic, religious, and cultural notwithstanding:

"Struggle, hard struggle is the law of progress, yes, struggle we must, both inner as well as against others. There must be struggle between honesty and dishonesty, between indolence and energy, and between time serving selfishness and noble disinterestedness, without this struggle no nation can every aspire to be great and influential.²⁵ From what angle does his discourse of the nation appear "communalist" or "semi-communalist"? Going by Lalaji's idea of nationalism, one could either be a nationalist or a communalist, one could not be both. Why didn't the so-called, self-styled "secular historians" of today notice

Lalaji's reaction to the 1909, separate electorate reforms which bear a testimony of his being a constructive nationalist:

"That the present reforms are not based on the democratic ideal of the West may be true; but the reason for their enthusiastic reception in India is that they are believed to be a step towards an actual democratic form of government *without distinction of Hindu, Mohammedan [sic], Parsi and the rest*. That is the goal of the Hindu politician, *he does not seek a Hindu majority crushing Mohammedan [sic] or other minorities. Aiming then to obliterate all religious distinction for national political purposes, he objects to communal representation or communal voting which would accentuate these distinctions.*"²⁶ (emphasis added)

Now, it becomes obvious that Lalaji's tolerance and catholicity was, unfortunately being judged by the "intolerant" historians of today! Hence, his vilification in history texts.

II

A. YOUNG INDIA:²⁷ A NARRATIVE OF THE NATION

Now, it is worthwhile to reread Lalaji's famous text of pre-1922 period, *Young India: An Interpretation and a History of the Nationalist Movement From Within* as a narrative of the nation only to check out whether it contains communalist ideology or not. It will also be analysed how, in the very early part of the twentieth century, Lalaji narrated the nation in the text. As compared to Gandhiji's *Hind Swarāj or Indian Home Rule*, which is an equally important text addressing the nation-question from a moral and civilizational perspective, the narrative of *Young India* is more political, more historical and more empirical which appeals directly to a reader's reason. In this "Introduction" to *Young India*, Lalaji comments how both the communities; i.e., the Hindus and the Muslims (as other minorities also) can come together to make India a nation and gain freedom: "With their Hindu countrymen they [Muslims] feel that India must occupy the first place in their affections and thoughts, and that it was inconsistent for them to be Mohammedan in religion and Indian in Politics. . . . The Hindus have come to realise that after all the *Mohammedan [sic] rule in India was not so bad or tyrannical and oppressive as they were told it was by interested historians*. The Mohammedans [sic] feel that they can be as proud of the Hindu heroes, Rama and Krishna, of the Hindu epics, . . . of Hindu science and Hindu philosophy as the Hindus themselves are, without being false

to their religion or to their community. Similarly, the Hindus feel that they can be as proud of a Sher Shah and an Akbar and a Shah Jahan, of Alberuni, of Ibn Batuta, of Abul Fazal, Faizi and Galib, as the Mohammedan [*sic*] can be. Ney, they can go a step further and say that even Aurangzeb was not, after all, so bad as they had supposed him to be. Hindus and Mohammedans [*sic*] have discovered that they can take part in each other's festivals and take pride in each other's past, without in any way being traitors to their respective religions and communities."²⁸

As it is evident from this quotation, Lalaji was trying to translate the textual Western secularism into an Indian discourse of secularism, if we borrow the modern terminology. But the secular historians could not and would not take any notice of his great contribution in this regard.

It is, indeed, amazing to note that in *Young India* Lalaji extensively quotes in about eleven pages (pp. 58-69) the maximum space given to an individual in the book. Some important extracts from the speech of Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haq, the president of the All-India Muslim League held at Bombay in December, 1915 which shows his genuine nationalism. A few examples will suffice to prove this point. "We are Indian Muslims. These words, 'Indian Muslims', convey the idea of our nationality and of our religion, and as long as we keep our duties and responsibilities arising from these factors before our eyes we can hardly go wrong. . . . When a question concerning the welfare of India and of justice to Indians arises, I am not only an Indian first, but an Indian next and an Indian to the last, an Indian and an Indian alone, favouring non-community and no individual, but on the side of those who desire the advancement of India as a whole without prejudice to the rights and interests of any individual, much less of any community, whether my own or another."²⁹

Can Lalaji's "secular" credentials be doubted even when we judge him by the latest accretions to this much abused Western idea in the Indian context? Where is the poison of communal hatred for the other and sheer obscurantism in his discourse? Lalaji also wrote in *Young India* that the Muslim rule was not foreign. It was a tremendous feat of interpreting history in a new way which was in keeping with the nation project.³⁰ It is interesting to note that Lalaji describes V.D. Savarkar, a fiery advocate of Hindutva in only 21 lines whereas he narrates Mazhar-ul-Haq's speech in about eleven pages! Even Aurbobindo Ghosh occupies less space (only about ten pages) than the President of the

All Indian Muslim League! How can a modern historian accuse him of playing the communalist or liberal communalist card? Before any modern or postmodern historian could pontificate on how Indian history should or ought to be written, Lalaji was frank and courageous enough to lay down the agenda for a future "Secular" historian:

But there is a religious conflict in India cannot be denied. Even that conflict is more artificial than real, manufactured quite recently by interested parties. In no time since the days of Aurangzeb the religious seriously tried to overpower and cast out the other? Did even Aurangzeb do it? Even a careful scanning of the history of India for the last one thousand years; from the invasion of Abul Qasim upto the disappearance of the last vestige of Mogul sovereignty shows nothing which by any stretch of imagination may be compared with conflict between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism which raged in Europe for over four centuries. . . . The general massacre ordered by Tamerlane and Nadir Shah made no distinction between Hindus and Mohammedans [*sic*]. There is no authentic record of Aurangzeb having ordered any general massacre of the Hindus.³¹

Hence the continued assertion of Lalaji, from 1888 to the end of his life, that the Hindus and the Muslim, irrespective of their differences, can reconstruct the nation. *Young India* was first published in 1915 (it was banned and the ban was lifted only in 1926!) and his article "The Teaching of Patriotism" was published in *Modern Review* (June 1919) in 1919. He extended the scope of the nationalist agenda outlined by him in *Young India* in this article:

Hindus and Mohammedans [*sic*] have come to realize that India is the country of all of them, that their future prosperity and progress depends on their unity and that religion is a matter of individual faith and taste and that in the common civil life of the country, religion does not and should not interfere. But it must form an important part of the active teaching of patriotism in India to impress on the minds of young children the fact of their common country, of their common political and economic interests, of their common history and their common destiny.³²

It becomes clear that Lalaji was trying to make the socio-political environment in both its aspects; i.e. the performative and the pedagogic free from the virus of communalism.

Consciously or unconsciously, Lalaji seems to have predicted through his far-sighted and immaculate wisdom, most of the present-day controversies regarding the doctoring or mutilation of historical discourse in the text-books of history in India. Lalaji has something important to say regarding the methodology of history writing for a future historian:

The teaching of Hindu-Mohammedan unity can be much facilitated by the writing of special and *carefully worded* theses on the lives of our national heroes. Lives of Shivaji,

[Maharana] Partap and [Guru] Gobind Singh, as well as those of Akbar, Sher Shah and Shah Jahan must be *carefully* written. They should contain no untruths; they should be scrupulously true, but written from a broad patriotic and national point of view. They should be a composite production of patriotic and scientific history. Hindus should learn to take pride in the achievements of Mohammedan heroes, saints and writers, and the Mohammedans in those of the Hindus.³³

Even Bipan Chandra admits that the "penetration of communal ideology into the nationalist ranks" was largely because of the "wide prevalence of the communal view of Indian history."³⁴ Strangely enough, even then Prof. Bipan Chandra conveniently ignored Lalaji's tremendous contribution to the method of writing Indian history in order to make it free from communalist biases. But, look at the travesty of justice, Bipan Chandra branded Lalaji as nationalist who worked within the communalist or liberal communalist framework! But the plot of silencing Lalaji's potent voices through a biased historiography will not be successful for ever. It is totally baseless to label Lajpat Rai as a communalist in his pre- and post-1922 phases. The fact of the matter is that Lalaji's voices never died, because energy never dies as science does tell us, and it is time to resurrect his voices from the debris of history. It is shocking indeed that Bipan Chandra and Sumit Sarkar did not notice the contents of his Presidential address delivered in 1925 in the All India Hindu Mahāsabhā Conference? Lalaji, as a critical insider of Hinduism, subverted and deconstructed the very agenda of Hindu or Muslim orthodoxy, from the platform of an institution which was notorious for spreading Hindu communalism in the 1920s:

The Hindus have no political aim of their own separate from those of their countrymen of other faiths. They will be stultifying themselves if they replace nationalism by communalism. We know that all Muslims do not want Muslim Raj and we also know as a fact that the bulk of the Hindus do not want a Hindu Raj. What the latter are striving after is a National government, founded on justice to all communities, all classes and all interests. In my judgement, the cry of a Hindu Raj or a Muslim Raj is purely mischievous and ought to be discouraged.³⁵

Had Lalaji's been a communalist either a die-hard or a liberal, he could not have narrated the nation the way he did (as he always did throughout his life) from the podium of the Hindu Mahasabha. In fact, by using a bit of postmodern jargon, it can be said that he deconstructed the very discourse of Hindu communalism and completely transformed it, at least in his discourse, into nationalism. In yet another revealing example, Lalaji wrote an article on "The Indian Problem" published serially in *The Tribune* (8-10 January 1924) which reiterated

his unswerving faith in the necessity of Hindu-Muslim amity for the making of the nation and gaining independence:

What then is our conception of nationhood? What do we mean by Hindu-Muslim unity? The expression Hindu-Muslim unity is only symbolic. It is not exclusive, but inclusive. When we speak of Hindu-Muslim unity, we do not exclude the other religious communities like the Sikhs, the Christians, the Parsis and the Buddhists, the Jains, from our conception of unity or from our idea of nationhood. The Indian nation, such as it is or such as we intend to build, neither is nor will be exclusively Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian. It will be each and all. That is my Swarāj. That is my goal of nationhood.³⁶

At best, Lalaji's formulations manifest in the preceding lines can be termed as liberal nationalism—and not liberal communalism! In 1924, Lalaji, a prolific writer as he was, published a series of thirteen articles on "The Hindu-Muslim Problem," *The Tribune* (Nov.-Dec. 1924) in which he even criticized Mahatma Gandhi for bringing and mixing religious matters with politics and appealed to all to divorce religion from politics:

It was still more unfortunate that Mahatma Gandhi and the leaders of the Khilāfat Movement should have brought religion into such prominence in connection with a movement which was really and fundamentally more political than religious. The desire to seek religious sanction for the various items of the Non-Cooperation programme was another great blunder.³⁷

I wonder where, when and how Lalaji drifted into the communalist ideology or propaganda in his pre or post 1922 career, as his entire discourse on the nation question gives no indication of this slow or sudden "drift" towards communalism as alleged by his detractors. At worst, he may be said to be gravitating towards a communitarian position, which is far from being a communalist. Continuing the same line of nationalist argument as was manifest in his "Open Letter" (1888) and *Young India* (1915), he declared that "I cannot subscribe to the proposition that either Hinduism or Islam is so narrow as to make it impossible for the followers of the two religions to become politically united. To be frank, we will have to follow Europe in this matter if we really desire political freedom. Religion must be divorced from politics. I say nothing against religion or *dharma* in this sense, but, I do mean that ceremonial aspect of religion should not be permitted to create barriers or political distinctions between religions or between different religious communities as such."³⁸

Can one imagine a more pragmatic vision of a "secular" India than this? If this is communalism, then who, of all the nationalist

leaders including Gandhi, Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad was not a communalist? These are the uncomfortable questions that demand a deep introspection and confession of sins committed by the so-called secular historians in the writing of modern Indian history. One can go back again to the central question: Did Lalaji become a communalist even after joining the Hindu Mahasabha in the post-1922 phase? Had the self-styled secularist historians read his writings and speeches of the post-1922 period carefully, this blatant historical blunder could have been avoided. For example, one wonders *how* and *why* the otherwise hawk-eyed and alert secular, (left) historians failed to read this section of Lalaji's speech delivered from the platform of the Hindu Mahasabha on 5 December 1925:

Let us live and struggle for freedom as brothers whose interests are one and indivisible. Let us live and die for each other, so that India may live and prosper as a Nation. India is neither Hindu nor Muslim. It is not even both. It is one. It is India. . . . To the Hindus, I will say, "If there are any among you who still dream of a Hindu Raj in this country, who think they can crush the Mussalmans and be the supreme power in this land, tell them that they are fools, or to be more accurate, that they are insane, and that their insanity will ruin their Hinduism along with their country."³⁹

It is significant to note that "us" in the above mentioned example connotes the Hindus and the Muslims as well as other minority communities in India.

The managers of the Hindu Mahasabha may have nurtured communalist ideology in 1920s but they would have repented their decision to appoint Lala Lajpat Rai as President of Hindu Mahasabha. Where is even the faintest hint of the much propagated "Two-Nation-Theory" in Lalaji's discourse which formed the fulcrum of Jinnah's communalism? Another injustice done to the sacred memory of Lalaji by the latter-day historians is by clubbing him with Madam Mohan Malviya, N.C. Kelkar and M.A. Jinnah in the category of communalist leaders. Lalaji had great admiration for both Gandhiji and Malaviyaji but differed from them profoundly in his world-views and political convictions. Didn't he put forth emphatically in his article "My Political Creed" his differences from Mahatmaji and Malaviyaji both:

"I differ from both not only in temperament but also in principles and programmes. . . . The introduction of religion in any shape or manner in the non-Cooperation programme was in my judgement a great blunder."⁴⁰ But, to tell the truth, we have to admit that Lalaji's voices of sanity and communal harmony which were so potent and so powerful at one point of our national freedom struggle have deliber-

ately been silenced by those historians who wear their secularism on their sleeves. They, perhaps, forget that Lalaji's voices of constructive nationalism⁴¹ may well be rediscovered and rehistoricised by the same people for whom he lived, and for whom, he died also.⁴² It is time we recovered Lajpat Rai from the miasma of contemporary historiography and got him reinstalled at his proper place in the pantheon of Indian nationalism.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Some of the recent discourses critiquing the significance of the nation are as follows:

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983; Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation-and-narration*. London: Routledge, 1995; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations And Nationalism: Programme, Myth, Reality Cambridge*. Cambridge University Press, 1992; Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse and The Nation and Its Fragments*, in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*, Delhi: OUP, 1999; Ashis Nandy, "Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and Politics of Self," Nandy, *Return From Exile*. Delhi: OUP, 1998; Edward Said, *Orientalism*. NY: Pantheon, 1978; and *The Culture of Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1993.

2. Mahatma Gandhi in his speech delivered at a condolence meeting at Ahmedabad on Nov. 18, 1928 paid rich tributes to him, which is a much better appraisal of Lalaji than the one done by the secular historians:

Lalaji's heart was full of universal love. . . . He did not have the slightest enmity towards the Muslims. It was his innermost desire that Hindus and Muslims should live as brothers. He wanted that in India there should be neither Hindu rule nor Muslim rule but a rule of all people" (*The Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 76). Even Nehruji, who did not mention him in his *Discovery of India* (1946) paid him glowing tributes as "the greatest of our leaders", "the most popular man in Punjab" p. 174) and commented on Lalaji: "He was usually considered an extremist in Indian politics, but his general outlook was definitely constitutional and moderate. Force of circumstances and not choice had made him an ally of Tilak and other extremists." (p. 63). *An Autobiography*, New Delhi: J.L. Nehru Memorial Fund, 1995.

3. See Bipan Chandra *et al.*, *India's Struggle for Freedom 1857-1947*. New Delhi: Viking, 1990; Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Communalism in Modern India*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1979; *Modern India*, New Delhi: NCERT, 1982, Sumit Sarkar *Modern India*, New Delhi: Macmillan, 1995; Thomas Panthem and Kenneth L. Deutseh (eds.), *Political Thought in Modern India*. New Delhi: Sage, 1986. These are some of the prescribed text books in schools, and university syllabi.
4. Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan, K.N. Panikkar, *India's Struggle for Independence 1957-1947I*. New Delhi: Viking, 1990, p. 399.