

## National Movement in Ambala from Swadeshi to Khilafat

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### **Abstract:-**

The Indian intelligentsia started making cohesive objectives for the government by establishing the Indian National Congress. The primary goals were to create National unity, foster camaraderie amongst people, erase provincial prejudices, encourage in-depth debate on pressing political issues, and select the best course of action for Indian political leaders to advance the common good. <sup>1</sup> Certainly, it was a fantastic gathering of educated Indians who shared a platform "for the common political good." <sup>2</sup> The Congress's top figures exhibited restraint and respect for the British Crown. The educated Indians wanted their rightful and legal participation in all areas of government. <sup>3</sup> They demonstrated a strong belief in the justice and fairness of the British system. The Congress was indeed established with the support and blessing of the British Empire. Despite having a mild beginning, it encountered opposition from various sources, including British officials, Muslims, and princely chieftains who supported the British throne. <sup>4</sup> Lala Murlidhar, a pleader from Ambala, was one of the representatives of Haryana who properly represented the Indian National Congress. Munshi Jwala Prashad, an Ambala lawyer, and Satyanand Agnihotri, the head of the Brahmo Samaj. Murlidhar backed the motion calling for the enlargement and reform of the supreme and local legislative councils. He argued that to prevent opponents from misrepresenting and even demonizing them, the educated class's viewpoint should be prioritized in the approved resolutions.

Key Words: - Indian, National, government

### **Introduction:-**

The significant aspects on which resolutions were passed included the administration of justice, the jury system that the British instituted, the oppressive British government, the separation of the executive from the judicial function, the economic conditions of the Indian masses, the boycott of British goods and adoption of Swadesh goods, the establishment of a legislative council for the Punjab province, etc.<sup>5</sup>

All of the organizations that were founded had a modest start but subsequently adjusted their methods and tactics to establish themselves as strong platforms. At first, the government's stance was hostile against Congress. However, it surfaced when its fourth session was scheduled to take place in Allahabad in 1888. On the eve of its holding, the local authorities in Allahabad

became hostile. The session was held in spite of all obstacles. The provincial administration opposed having its meeting in Allahabad. When a new, youthful personality appeared at this perfect time, it was a moment to remember for Haryana. Lala Lajpat Rai, was his name, and he had recently entered politics.<sup>6</sup>

When Babu Balmukund Gupta, Din Dayal' Lala Lajpat Rai, Chhabil Das, and Gauri Shanker began showing a great interest in Congress operations, the representation of Haryana rose. All of these regional authorities disapproved of the British-instituted legal system's reliance primarily on available evidence. The justice that was previously administered by the local panchayats was prompt, wise, and founded on the truth and facts, but the new one was costly, capricious, and oppressive. There was no effective way to check the judges' actions and no appeals process. Lala Murlidhar denouncing this system, observed; "I can say that accused persons do not get that fair and impartial trial before Magistrate which they would get in a trial by jury. If one thing has been found to work well in one part of this country, why should it not work well in other similar circumstanced provinces. It must necessarily be successful; it is not an exotic plant. India has known it from time immemorial; it is not a new system in Punjab as it exists in every village and every community and even among the lowest classes of the people, who..... are wiser than we are in certain respects, as they manage their own affairs by their own juries and seldom go to courts." He is perhaps more irresistible than the czar of Russia himself.....A man belonging to the class in Ambala district was challenged to the Magistrate by the *Tehsildar* for spending more money than was prescribed by the rules of his caste upon the marriage of his son".<sup>8</sup>

Every meeting of the Indian National Congress between 1886 and 1906 saw the passage of resolutions. The colonial government did not ignore the sincere request. Despite such an arrogant attitude, another Haryanavi leader suggested: "But there is another way in which you can affect the courts' independence. The second remedy is by giving a High Court to this Province, a status by which it will be able not only to acquire independence itself but also be able to support the Subordinate Courts, especially when come into conflict with the whimsical policy of any executive officer of the Government.... By the approach of the one scheme you take it out of the range of possibilities for justice to be tempered with by executive functions by the other you make it possible for judicial officers to have nothing, to do with political matters..... One scheme is a negative method, while the other is a positive method of privilege about the same end. If the court is raised to the status of a High Court, the judges will hold their office during the pleasure of the Queen. It will not be possible for the Government to dismiss them because they did not agree to follow the policy of the executive officials".<sup>9</sup>

The Haryana delegates were confident that Lala Lajpat Rai would bring up their concerns on the national stage when he became a prominent figure in Congress. He spoke Hindustani, his native tongue (a mixture of Hindi and Urdu). This language was used only by the leaders. He backed the decision on the legislative council's changes and disapproved of how the officials acted in response to their legitimate requests.<sup>10</sup> In support of his views, he observed in plain terms: "I come here to tell you why we want to have the right of interpellation. A few days ago, a highly responsible officer of the Government visited one of the towns of Punjab. The town's inhabitants, including the Vice-President of its municipality and its leading men, waited on the high officer for a redress of grievances concerning a certain department. Can you guess what the reply of that officer was? It was practically to that effect, viz. that the Government of India had its own interest to consult and did not care for the people... tell me,

how can the people have a voice in the council of the Government if not by representation? How can the people of a country have their voices constantly heard if not through their representatives?"<sup>11</sup>

When Congress began to insist that Indians be represented in the councils, all of the Congressmen denounced the government officials' reckless behaviour, which even encouraged a segment of the Muslim population to be antagonistic toward the Congress. Syed Ahmed Khan initiated the initiative out of concern that, should the demand be granted, the Legislative Councils would be heavily populated by Hindus due to their higher numerical strength. His resistance to the councils was a result of this characteristic. He didn't share Lalaji's opinion, and she didn't enjoy how he criticized legislative changes. Lalaji made it clear: "This most loyal of Indian Mohammedans who now stigmatize us as traitors, 30 years ago demanded for India reforms of the same character as we now after 30 years of education and progress pray for in the resolution."<sup>12</sup>

They worked hard, and the Indian Councils Act of 1892 was eventually approved. The measure did not give in to the Congress demand for a legislative council for Punjab. However, this Act allowed the council members to participate in and ask questions during the yearly budget process without having the ability to cast a vote.<sup>13</sup>

These rules were unacceptable since they did not reflect the preferences of the populace. Insofar as the evolution of India's constitutional history was concerned, it was considered a success for Congress when such rights were granted for the first time, notwithstanding the acceptance of the half-demand.<sup>14</sup> In terms of legislative affairs, there was a significant increase. The youth could be self-sufficient through technical education if provided to them. He observed that in a poor country like India, it was appropriate to initiate such kind of education that was immensely needed for the younger generation. Such efforts could raise national standards like westward countries.<sup>15</sup> It was indeed a right demand for the Punjabi youth.

Even the government employees drawing good salaries could not afford to pay the higher fees for their children studying in any government school.<sup>16</sup> Such a hike in the fee structure was not proper for the government. Speaking in an angry mood on this important issue, he roared: "A soldier of Punjab who fought for the British in the fields of Egypt, Abyssinia, and Afghanistan was paid Rs. 71- per month (while the British soldier was getting many hundreds of rupees in the same capacity) and how can he afford to pay for the education of his son."<sup>17</sup> He even proposed the establishment of provincial committees in every province to spread industrial and technical education.<sup>18</sup> Such suggestions could provide self-reliance and self-dependency to the youths who had no job in the administration branch. Many other speakers also spoke and resolutions were drafted for submission to the government.<sup>19</sup>

As the new owners, the moneylenders became absentee landlords and got their lands cultivated by the same peasants as cultivators. The new owners of the lands wanted more and more crops but did not invest money so that the lands could continue to be fertile. As an economic loss to the agricultural enterprise, the government did not take any step at this point.<sup>20</sup>

The British Government, which was bent upon the Punjab peasantry for military recruitment and agricultural production, decided to do something for the land transaction going on between the cultivators and the moneylenders. Keeping the overall scenario in view, the Punjab

Alienation of Land Act XIII of 1900 was passed to protect the cultivators' interests. The government has its own political interests in this Act. Why did the government pass this Act? First, the government wanted to minimize the influence of the moneylenders, the prominent class of the Punjabi elite.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, the government's main aim was to create a division between the cultivators and the moneylenders and called it the agriculturists and non-agriculturists. Thirdly, by doing so, the government had ulterior motives and raised a class of agriculturist moneylenders on whose loyalty the government could bank upon and use as a bulwark against the educated middle classes agitating against the government. Most of the businessmen doing money-lending business were Congress supporters against British rule.<sup>22</sup> Lastly, the government wanted to minimize the importance of lawyers in society as they had been earning enormous amounts of money through this legal profession. If land disputes between the moneylenders and the cultivators were minimized and controlled, litigation would come down automatically. The most significant aspect was that they were the members of the Indian National Congress, challenging British rule not only in Punjab but also in India.<sup>23</sup>

They joined the Congress organisation in large numbers in order to protect their moral and material interests. But they were also raising common issues in order to muster the support of the people in their respective regions.<sup>24</sup>

They treated it as a move to silence the rising tide of nationalism in Bengal. Curzon's partition of Bengal created a great hue and cry in the whole of India. When the session of the Congress was held at Benares in 1905, it became the main issue.<sup>25</sup> Ambala and other districts of Haryana did represent the session in large numbers. Such representatives were Lajpat Rai, Churamani, Dwarka Prasad, Lala Murlidhar, Duni Chand, etc., who attended the session. It is important to tell here that the leaders of the Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharam Sabha did develop both the religious and nationalist awakening and were instrumental in creating a viable public opinion.<sup>26</sup> The Diaries of Dr. Ramji Lai and confidential reports of the government confirm such facts.

Therefore, it is our duty to show Englishmen that we have risen to the sense of consciousness, that we are no longer beggars and that we are subjects of an Empire where people are struggling to achieve that position which is their right by right of natural law.... If therefore, you want to be heard.... with respect, you must approach with determination, with signs that you are determined to achieve your right at any cost".<sup>27</sup> There will be nothing left for the people of this country to be loyal to the British Government if these things are taken away if the right of meeting, if the right of petition and if the right of constitutional agitation are taken away from us".<sup>28</sup>

He said, "Don't conceal your heads, and don't behave like cowards. Once having adopted that manly policy, stick to it till the last.... It is no matter of shame for us that the National Congress in the last 21 years should not have produced at least a number of political sanyasis that could sacrifice their lives for the political regeneration of the country."<sup>29</sup> His speech was full of anguish and hatred towards the Congress leadership, which failed to create a dynamic leadership that could unite and politically awaken the Indian people. Before further discussion, it is relevant here to tell those issues taken up between the years 1885-1905 by Congress. These were the expansion of the legislative councils, Indians at one of the civil services and its exams to be held in India, British economic policies, poverty of India, British high-handedness, reduction of expenditure, taxation policy, technical and industrial education, separation of the

executive from judiciary, adoption of swadeshi, boycott of British goods, Land Alienation Act, foreign policy, military expenditure, the partition of Bengal, etc.<sup>30</sup>

In the early phase of the freedom struggle, petition, prayer, and please were important tactics applied by the Congress leaders in the moderate era as popularly known.<sup>31</sup> It was the seeding shown period on which a large tree was to be grown up in the form of nationalistic activism. The two biggest movements created by the partition were the Swadeshi and Boycott, which were instrumental in rejuvenating political unity at all Indian levels. Lajpat Rai told the Congressmen that “the first thing to promote Swadeshi to take our capital into our own hands and to devote it for our own people, followed by consecrating it to the production of house-made industries and help of our young men to distribute these articles.”<sup>32</sup> He affirmed that there was a dire need to spread the movement among the masses.

The whole trade was in the hands of the Europeans, but it was an experiment to change the country's economic scenario and make the Indian producers, to some extent, self-sufficient.<sup>34</sup> Both movements gave confidence to the people that self-help and self-reliance were the only essentials for the success of the movement. The Tribune, a popular paper in Punjab, rightly observes these movements caught ‘the imagination of the people’ and ‘became their chief weapons’. Arya Samajists were the prominent actors in spearheading such movements in the regions of Haryana. However, they had to face the atrocities of British rule, but they never feared it.<sup>35</sup> This period created a new spirit of political awakening, which was even accepted by the Lt. Governor of Punjab in their autobiographies.

The agrarian legislation, swadeshi and boycott movements paved the way for the leadership of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh during the agrarian disturbances in Punjab. The Punjab Government, in the name of peace and security, deported both leaders in 1907.<sup>36</sup>

Their deportation spread like wildfire in the Punjab province and throughout India. This incident boiled the water, and mass protests started throughout India. The voice of their deportations became a matter of hot discussion even in the British Parliament and in newspapers.<sup>37</sup>

The Indian revolutionaries living outside the country also wrote about the deportation of popular leaders of Punjab. Besides, Congress split at Surat, anti-partition agitation, swadeshi and boycott movements, the rapid spread of Arya Samaj activities, social discrimination, and agrarian disturbance in 1906-07 were issues significantly impacted the nationalist movement in India in general and Punjab in particular. The participation of the Punjab and Haryana in the Congress sessions immensely increased between 1909-1914.<sup>38</sup> This period has been considered as the period of recession, but the situation was to some extent different in the region.

The agitational works of the Congress had now shifted from India to England as the British bureaucracy had not conceded the just demands of the Congress. Two clubs, Hisar Hindu club and Yuvak Mandli, were founded for the collection of money for nationalist papers such as Hindustan, Arya Gazette, Swarajya, and Keshri. The people of Ambala never lagged behind the other districts of Punjab as far as political and social activities were concerned. All these activities made Lajpat Rai a very popular leader, first in Punjab and then at all Indian level.<sup>39</sup>

The communal representation in the reform proposals of 1909 was not acceptable to the Congress leaders, as their views at the Lahore session in 1909 made it evident. The Congress leaders did not like the principles of communal representation as it would definitely divide the country's social fabric and create tension in various sections of society. The leaders of Haryana

showed anguishes when the new reforms were introduced. Two leaders from Haryana i.e., Jawahar Lai Bhargava, an advocate of Hisar, and Chaudhary Lai Chand, an advocate of Rohtak district, were made members of the Punjab Legislative Council.<sup>42</sup>

The suppressive activities of the Punjab Government made the movement relatively slow. Soon after this, World War I broke out in August 1914, and the British Government urged for moral and material support from the people of India in general and Punjab in particular. Despite the financial assistance rendered by the people of Haryana, their grievances against British rule were not redressed. The people of Haryana made enough contributions both in terms of money and men power (military recruitments) as the table given below shows, If the above table is analyzed, it can be said that a considerable contribution in terms of cash was made to the British as a War loan. Ambala district was the next district that also contributed a lot. The contribution from the Karnal district was quite low. Rohtak district made the highest contribution in the number of recruitments to the British army, followed by Gurgaon district. The people of all sections rendered feasible assistance to the British Government, but their grievances could not get any attention. After the end of the First World War, several thousand military personnel were discharged from the military services without any pension.<sup>44</sup>

The government did not make any effort in their re-employment. Such an attitude of the colonial regime increased their agonies and discontent. Due to economic inflation and an increase in the rise of prices of food grains and other requirements created great difficulties for their survival. The prices of all foodstuffs had increased five times. The government only gave some relief to the people living in the towns but not to those living in the villages.<sup>45</sup> The people of Haryana made the highest contribution in the form of money to the government. The people of Ambala helped the government in its war efforts. The village peasants gave recruits to Army but in the period following the First World War they were rendered jobless and a feeling of discontentment crept into them. The rich people of Bhiwani had initially promised fifteen lakhs of rupees but increased to twenty-five lakhs by the end of the war.<sup>46</sup>

All the food commodities had gone up many times by January 1919. The Bajra-Jowar, the rough cereals usually consumed by the animals, became quite rare. However, some steps were taken by the government but were also insufficient. The scarcity of food stuff, plague, and influenza created disaffection towards the government. Besides War, natural calamities were heavy on the subsistence problems for the people. More than thirty thousand people lost their lives in I World War in Punjab, including Haryana. The natural calamities also created heavy mortality rates. Both the Rohtak and Gurgaon districts were the great sufferers in terms of casualties in war and natural calamities.<sup>48</sup> It can be observed that the people of Haryana had to be prey to both and faced hardships even after the war. Their disaffection continued to add misery against the policies of colonial rule.<sup>49</sup> The participation of the people of Haryana regions in the national movement remained at a low ebb at that time. Most leaders and people supported the government in the war rather than the movement. The revolutionary activities had started taking place in many other provinces, but no activity of any type in the regions of Haryana. Most of the Indian leaders actively supported the war efforts of the British during the war in order to gain dominion status. The moral stand taken by the leaders in support of the British Government was perhaps reciprocal in lieu of concessions in the form of reforms after the war.<sup>50</sup>

Before going further, the activities going on during the World War-1 should be given due consideration. The anti-Turkish policy of Great Britain, the establishment of the Ghadr Party (1913), the Komagata Maru incident (1914), and the formation of the Home Rule League created multiple problems for colonial rule. Under these circumstances, Mrs. Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak came forward and raised a new slogan, i.e., 'Home Rule for India,' to create and broaden the mass base of the movement.<sup>51</sup> There was a vacuum in the leadership of the Congress as its leaders like Gopal Krishan Gokhale, A.O. Hume, Pherozshah Mehta, etc., were no more, and many others were suffering from old-age infirmities. Ireland had already achieved Home Rule, which greatly inspired both the leaders not only to demand Home Rule but also fulfilled the vacuum in leadership.<sup>52</sup>

From the thirty-first session of the Congress held at Bombay, Annie Besant had called upon the Congressmen to start the Home Rule League as founded by the Irish Nationalists. She was happy when Ireland got home rule. The Congressmen did not approve his programme. She established the All India Home Rule League at Madras on 3 September 1916. In order to extend support to her, Tilak also convened a meeting of like-minded politicians and discussed the issue and his future course of action. Hence, he formally launched the Home Rule League on 28 April, 1916.<sup>53</sup>

In a meeting held at Poona, Tilak explained the meaning of his Home Rule League in the following lines: "Our domestic affairs must be in our own hands. We do not want separation from England. The Home Rule League's mission is to propagate the right of Swaraj, Home Rule, and the spirit behind it is eternal and indestructible. No weapon can cut its spirit; no fire can burn it; no water can wet it; no wind can dry it. The Congressmen assemble only once a year, and then they have to wait till the next year. But the object of the Home Rule League is to work all the year round."<sup>54</sup> It was indeed a new experiment in Indian politics which was to attract the attention of the masses to work throughout the year.

Neki Ram Sharma continued to address different meetings in Delhi where he used to contact the other Congress leaders. In a meeting held in Delhi on 26 November 1917, under the Presidentship of Abdur Rahman, he urged the gathering to join Home Rule League in large numbers for the nation's cause. He was unhappy with the order of entry restriction on Tilak in Delhi and Punjab. He made it clear that the movement was not for the separation of India from England but for the right of Swaraj, which was their due.<sup>55</sup> Highlighting the significance of the movement, he affirmed that their organization would continue to work throughout the year while Congress met once a year. This was the major difference between the functioning of both organizations. In such a situation, the relevance of the Home Rule League was greatly felt so that it could remain in touch with the people throughout the year. The other leaders who also addressed the meeting were Tej Bahadur Sapru, Asaf Ali, Rangaswami Ayenger, and others.<sup>56</sup> Before further discussion, it would be relevant here to throw some light on the Lucknow Pact. First of all, the extremist section of the Congress, which had left this national organization after the Surat Split in 1907, came to the fold of the Congress with a hegemonic position. Secondly, both the Indian National Congress and Muslim League made an alliance that became famous and known as the Lucknow Pact. Both organizations demanded self-government at an early date. There was an agreement for the separate electorates given to the Muslims in the imperial and provincial legislatures.<sup>57</sup>

This Pact, in fact, surprised the colonial regime, which also felt that despite its expression of loyalty, Congress made no secret of the fact that it demanded political reforms as a price of

Indian loyalty. Tilak, however, had developed quite a different attitude due to long imprisonment and apathy, alongwith the dominance of the moderate leadership for an extended period. He joined the Lucknow session of the Congress with the cooperation of Bipan Chandra Pal and Annie Besant.<sup>58</sup>

The formation of these new organizations did not like by the Congressmen as it was deemed to weaken the Congress movement. Both of them denounced such an apprehension of the leaders and affirmed that their organization would function as a supplementary in close cooperation with the Congress movement. It was a new turn in the history of the Congress movement. All the Congressmen wanted Swaraj, which became their watchword in the given situation. The government did not like the goal of Annie Besant as World War I was going on. Keeping the situation in view, Madras Government interned her for some time. Her internment became a matter of hot discussion in India and England. There was criticism of the decision of the provincial government of Madras. In order to calm the boiling political situation, she was freed from the goal. She became quite a popular leader and got her due when she was requested to chair the Calcutta Congress session in 1917.<sup>59</sup>

Neki Ram Sharma was significantly impacted by the Home Rule movement started by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He came into contact with Tilak, who appreciated the efforts of Sharmaji. He was requested to come to Bombay in order to speed up the movement. He not only went there but also addressed the meeting alongwith Tilak and Gandhi. His address made him very popular in the eyes of these leaders as his address was very impressive. Tilak congratulated and held a detailed discussion with him regarding the future course of action. After Bombay deliberations, both Sharmaji and Tilak reached Central Provinces and Berar, where impressive speeches were made and worked with the Marwaris.<sup>60</sup>

Funds were collected for broadening the base of their organization. Both pledged to render their services to the nation's cause. The Marwaris, like Jammalal Bajaj, liberally donated funds to the organization. When the movement began to become popular, the local authorities became quite suspicious of their activities and asked Seth Jammalal Bajaj not to help them nor allowed them to stay with him.

### **Conclusion :-**

In order to expose such ambitious candidates for the next elections, Neki Ram travelled to several places. What should the candidates' qualifications be? How can the best legislator candidates be selected? He first sought to explain to the candidates their responsibilities if they won. Second, only deserving candidates should be permitted to run in the elections. He made it in clearer terms: "All the voters of a constituency should assemble at a place to discuss the merits and demerits of the candidates. The preferred candidate should then be asked to pledge himself like a member of the House of Commons that he, after being elected, will do nothing against the wishes of his people and will step down if he cannot prove himself up to their expectations." How he was in advance in his views as the Indian people have felt such thing in now while he had already supported such views in 1920.



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