Lala Lajpat Rai

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Indian History*

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to Lala Lajpat Rai on his birth anniversary.

- **Born in –** 28 January 1865, Ludhiana district, Punjab.
- **Parents –** Father Shri Radha Kishan, teacher of Urdu and Persian, and mother Smt. Gulab Devi.
- **Early Activism –** Showed leadership qualities from school days.
- ***In 1882, joined the Arya Samaj***, founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati; worked for social and national revival.
- **Ideology – *Advocated militant nationalism.***
- Believed in self-reliance, self-help, Swadeshi, and Swaraj as India's birthright.
- **Freedom Struggle –** He was a part of the Lal-Bal-Pal trio.
- **Swadeshi Movement –** Promoted Swadeshi in Punjab, encouraging local goods and self-reliance.
- Opposed British economic policies like the ***Punjab Colonisation Act*** and irrigation rate hikes.
- **Political Representation –** Represented Indian grievances before the British public in England (1905) with Gopal Krishna Gokhale.
- Highlighted the plight of "half-starving and half-dying people of India."
- **Exile & International Advocacy –** During WWI, in the USA, countered British propaganda and raised awareness about colonial oppression.
- ***Founded the Indian Home Rule League of America (1916)*** to support Home Rule and promote Indo-American relations.
- **Congress Leadership –** Elected as President of the Indian National Congress (1920, Calcutta session).
- Advocated the *Non-Cooperation Movement* after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
- **Anti-Simon Commission –** Led ***boycott and protest against the all-white Simon Commission (1928).***

- Injured during a lathi-charge in Lahore; injuries led to his death, making him a martyr.
- **Social Reform – Arya Samaj –** Became a leading member; made it a platform for social service.
- **Famine & Disaster Relief –** Provided relief during famines (1896, 1899–1900, 1907–08) and the Kangra earthquake (1905).
- **Untouchability Abolition –** Supported Harijan upliftment and abolition of untouchability.
- Funded schools and purchased land to establish homes and schools for the depressed classes.
- **Education –** Strong advocate for education as a tool for social progress and freedom.
- Associated with DAV College; emphasized education as a foundation for national development.
- **Women & Child Welfare –** Worked for women's upliftment and orphanages for destitute children.
- **Title –** He was popularly known as Punjab Kesari (Lion of Punjab) and Sher-e-Punjab.
- **Literary works –** It includes Unhappy India, Young India, England's Debt to India, and The Story of My Deportation.

References

1. PIB | Lala Lajpat Rai
2. INDIAN CULTURE | Lala Lajpat Rai
3. Sansad | Lala Lajpat Rai

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