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On

Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee

A selfless Patriot inaugurated

By

Shri Amit Shah, National President
Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee: A Selfless Patriot

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee के आधिकारिक रूप से हिंदी भाषा में नहीं है। हालांकि, उनके हिंदी भाषा में कुछ अन्य संदर्भ हैं।

रAREST INDIVIDUALS, BY A SHREDDING TONGUE AND CONVOLUTION, LEAVE AN INDELIBLE MARK ON THE SANDS OF TIME. Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was one such towering personality. He made significant contributions to the political and cultural life of the country at a critical juncture leaving an enduring imprint on the history of modern India. He was a man of wide knowledge, unshakeable purpose and possessed an indomitable will. Greatly devoted and attuned to civilizational India and her rich heritage and traditions, Dr. Mookerjee imbued its values in his own life and rose to become an example worthy of emulation. An eminent educationalist, an outstanding statesman and a forthright and articulate parliamentarian, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee’s multifaceted personality made a lasting impression on all those who came in touch with him. A patriot and a nationalist to the core, he strove relentlessly for the unity and integrity of India and laid down his life in the cause of her unity.

Born on 6 July 1901, Syama Prasad was brought up and educated under the personal care of his illustrious father, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, a renowned academic and a jurist of his time. A brilliant student, Syama Prasad secured top positions in school and university and was to be closely associated with the educational activities of his distinguished father at a very young age. Even before he formally received his M.A. degree, he was elected to the Senate and Syndicate of Calcutta University in 1924 and had the honour of becoming its youngest Vice-Chancellor at the age of 33 in 1938. The period of his Vice-Chancellorship (1934-38) was hailed as an exceptionally eventful period in the history of Calcutta University.

Endowed with a sharp intellect and a golden heart, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was destined to play a stellar role in the political life of the country in 1939. His and its Working President from 1940-44 and President, 1944-47. At an early age, he became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council and the Bengal Legislative Assembly. He took a prominent part in the debates and raised his voice against the repressive measures of the British Government. In 1939, he became Finance Minister in the Progressive Democratic Coalition Government of Bengal headed by A.K. Fazlul Haq. Later, his eloquence and parliamentary skills as the leader of opposition in the first Lok Sabha earned him the title ‘The Lion of Parliament’.

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee demonstrated his commitment to national cause when he resigned as Finance Minister of Bengal in 1942 in protest against the British Government’s indifference to the plight of those affected by the devastating cyclone in Midnapore, Bengal. The Bengal famine of 1943 brought the humanitarian aspect of Syama Prasad’s personality to the fore. He left no stone unturned for organising large-scale relief for the famine-stricken people. Later, after partition, he again devoted himself wholeheartedly to the cause of refugees who began pouring in from East Bengal.

Dr. Mookerjee was a strong advocate of a united India and organised a wide range of activities to propagate the cause of the country. His statesmanship prevented the whole of Punjab and Bengal from becoming a part of Pakistan. Recognising his contribution in the struggle for freedom, Mahatma Gandhi advised Jawaharlal Nehru to include him in the first Union Cabinet of August 1947. As Minister of Defence and Supply, Dr. Mookerjee laid the foundation of India’s industrial policy which put India firmly on the path of industrial development. He, however, resigned from the Cabinet in April 1950 owing to differences with Prime Minister Nehru over the Delhi Pact or Nehru-Liaquat Pact signed with Pakistan pertaining to the safety of Hindu minorities. Dr. Mookerjee felt that the Pact would be incapable of protecting the Hindus of East Pakistan. His exit from the Cabinet marked the beginning and most memorable phase of Dr. Mookerjee’s life.

After quitting the Cabinet, Dr. Mookerjee concentrated his energies in creating an alternative political platform to crystallise an alternate path for national regeneration. The striking aspect of his thought and actions was his broadminded approach to issues which characterised all his political moves. In 1947, Dr. Mookerjee proposed that Hindu Mahasabha eschew politics and devote itself to social and cultural work. When that did not happen, he resigned from all positions of the Mahasabha in 1948. Later in 1951, he launched Bharatiya Jana Sangh, a new political party open to all citizens with the aim of ‘rebuilding Bharat’ on the basis of ‘Bharatva Sankalp’ and ‘Maryada’. Returning to the Lok Sabha from south Calcutta in the First General Elections held in 1951-1952, Dr. Mookerjee brought together a number of small parties to form the National Democratic Party in Parliament and projected a strong opposition in the Lok Sabha.

A selfless worker and leader for the unity and integrity of the country, Dr. Mookerjee took up the cause of Jammu-Kashmir’s integration in 1952 which had been hanging fire for full integration of Jammu-Kashmir State with India and the full application of the Constitution of India there. Defying the ban on entry, he visited Jammu-Kashmir to assess the situation there. He was arrested on 11 May 1953. His tragic and untimely death while in detention at Srinagar on 23 June 1953 shocked the entire nation. He died a martyr’s death to the cause of Indian unity.

In the words of Ateh Bihari Vajpayee:

“...He was the first martyr to the cause of India’s unity and integrity. His towering personality, his debating skills, his political sagacity and above all his humanism will continue to inspire and guide generations to come...”
The tragic and untimely death of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee in detention on 23 June 1953 caused shock, dismay and indignation throughout the country. The physically cramped and unhealthy atmosphere of his detention quarters, the issue of medical neglect and of his being administered medicines to which he was acutely allergic also surfaced. It led to a national outcry for an official inquiry. However, despite appeals from his aged mother, from members of his family who were well known personalities, his political supporters and from leaders across the political spectrum, the Nehru Government refused sanction to conduct an inquiry into the mysterious demise in detention of one of the most popular and charismatic leaders of the age.

Dr. Mookerjee was the first martyr in the cause of national unity after independence. His uncompromising stand for India's integrity and unity symbolised his deep patriotic zeal and conviction. His valiant support and ultimate sacrifice for India's unification remains etched in the national psyche of post-independence India. A selfless patriot who laid down his life for the independence of his country, he sacrificed himself for the freedom and unity of India, thereby leaving an indelible mark on Indian history.

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A Multifaceted Personality
Son of an Illustrious Father

Syama Prasad Mookerjee’s father, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee (1864-1924), known as 'Banglar Bagh' (Bengal Tiger), was a man of indomitable will and exemplary courage of conviction. At the beginning of the twentieth century, besides science and mathematics Sir Asutosh also excelled in the field of law and education. After making his mark as a student at the Presidency College, he became a Professor of Mathematics at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science at a very early age. He was the Founder-President of the Calcutta Mathematical Society and also President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. He also wrote several books on mathematics. He was President of the Maha Bodhi Society of India (1911-24) and served as a judge in the Calcutta High Court for nearly two decades. Sir Asutosh also held important positions in the University of Calcutta as Chairman of most of the Committees of the Senate, and as its Vice-Chancellor for twelve years (1906-14, 1921-23). This period saw greater Indianisation of the University through an encouragement of Indian languages, cultural study and historical research. He invited the likes of C.V. Raman and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan to the university to undertake teaching and research. He represented the University in the Bengal Legislature and served with distinction on the Sadler Commission, also known as Calcutta University Commission (1917-19). His son, Syama Prasad, inherited his indomitable courage, intellectual and administrative acumen and became a highly devoted educationist at a very young age.
Syama Prasad Mookerjee was an exceptionally bright student. His academic career was consistently brilliant. He distinguished himself with top positions in almost all the examinations and graduated from the Presidency College, Calcutta with Honours in English in 1921, standing first in class. He topped in the M.A. examination in Bengali language and literature from Calcutta University in 1923 and again topped the B.L. examination from the same University. He proceeded to England in 1926 for higher studies and was called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn in 1927.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee exhibited an amazing flair for writing as a student. He edited the Presidency College magazine in 1921-1922 and also started Banga Wani (Voice of Bengal), a Bengali journal in 1922. Under the pen name ‘Ditch’, he wrote a regular feature for Capital, 1923-24. He also wrote for the Calcutta Review. By writing for these journals, he developed a fascinating style both in Bengali and English. He again took to journalism in the forties when he started his own dailies Nationalist (English) and Hindustan (Bengali) in order to further the cause of India’s freedom. The Nationalist was considered by the colonial government to be “consistently anti-British.”
A Visionary Educationist

Syama Prasad Mookerjee had the privilege of being associated with the educational activities of his father as a student which gave him valuable training in the work of Calcutta University. His talents received early appreciation and Syama Prasad was appointed a Member of the Senate of Calcutta University at the young age of 23 and was elected Fellow of the University in 1924. The very same year he was elected a member of the Syndicate, a position he held up to the end of 1947. In 1929, he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council from the Calcutta University constituency. His vast educational experience and acumen led him to be appointed Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University in 1934, at the young age of 33. The youngest person ever to hold office, he served for two successive terms until 1938. In his tenure as Vice-Chancellor, the system of secondary education was reorganised, Bengal became the medium of instruction and examination, a Teachers’ Training Department was established, a Fine Arts Gallery and Museum of Indian Arts were founded, a spacious central library was constructed and a military training course (University Cadet Corps) was initiated. It was for the first time in the history of Calcutta University that at the invitation of Dr. Mookerjee, the Convocation Address was delivered in Bengal by Rabindranath Tagore in 1937. He however, didn’t remain confined to academics as he was destined to play a larger role in the political arena in the service of his motherland.

"Education is one sphere of activity on which the State can never be accused of over-spending. If our planning is sound and administration correct, the larger we spend the more solid will be the results leading to national prosperity and solidarity."

Convocation Address, Visha-Bharati University, Calcutta, 24 December 1950

"It is through education that the ultimate battle of Indian freedom will be won. The gigantic task of reconstruction, cultural, social, economic and political can be rendered possible through the co-ordinated efforts of bands of trained and disciplined Indians. Armed with the knowledge of India’s past glory and greatness, her strength and weakness, it is they who can place before their country a programme of work, which while loyal to the fundamental traditions of Indian civilization will be adapted to the changing conditions of the modern world."

Convocation Address, Gurujiul Kirti Vidyasagars, 25 April 1943

"The Indian universities, if they are to play their role in the rebuilding of a new India, must not regard themselves as exclusive institutions which exist apart from the currents of the country’s life. Let them train their alumni in a worthy manner, saturate them with the lessons of Indian history and civilization, instil into them unity and reason, strength and dauntlessness, inspire them with skill and knowledge and teach them to apply themselves devotedly and unselfishly to the service of their fellowmen. Let the teachers of the universities consider it their sacred duty to be the interpreters of India’s heritage, the seekers of truth and knowledge, and prove to the world that Indian scholars are second to none in their efforts to serve the cause of the humanities and the sciences in relation to the unalloyed progress of India and of human civilization itself."

Convocation Address, Patna University, 27 November 1937
Finance Minister of Bengal

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly from the Calcutta University constituency in 1937. In 1940, he was elected Working President of the Hindu Mahasabha. His astute statesmanship led to the formation of the Progressive Coalition Ministry in 1941 with A.K. Fazlul Haq, leader of the Krishak Praja Party, as Premier. The Muslim League was completely sidelined and Dr. Mookerjee, as Finance Minister, in the coalition ministry proved to be an exemplary administrator who worked impartially for all sections of society. This coalition was popularly known as the Syama-Haq Ministry.

In October 1942, the district of Midnapore was struck by cyclone and tsunami rendering thousands of people homeless. Syama Prasad toured the cyclone affected areas to organise relief work but his efforts were hampered by the colonial bureaucracy. Instead of providing relief the British administration unleashed repression on the hapless people. Describing provincial autonomy as a 'colossal mockery' he accused the British bureaucracy and government of 'unwarranted' interference 'with the work of the Ministry'. Syama Prasad resigned as Finance Minister in November 1942. He made a powerful statement on his resignation in the Bengal Legislative Assembly. He appealed to the government to stop all repression and release all the Congress leaders of Bengal who were arrested for the August movement and support the formation of an 'Indian National Government...clothed with that freedom which is the birthright of India.'

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter of resignation to the Governor of Bengal, 16 November 1942

Dr. Mookerjee’s statement on resignation, Bengal Legislative Assembly, 12 February 1943

New Bengal Cabinet
Mr. Fazlul Haq becomes Premier again

Dr. S. P. Mookerjee’s voice of Deba: Others to be named shortly

Cyclone Havoc
Midnapore cyclone

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter of resignation to the Governor of Bengal, 16 November 1942

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 12 December 1941

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 21 October 1942

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 30 October 1942

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 22 November 1942

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 24 November 1942

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter of resignation to the Governor of Bengal, 16 November 1942

Ashutosh Lahiri Papers, NMWL, Archives

Ashutosh Lahiri Papers, NMWL, Archives

Dr. Mookerjee’s statement on resignation, Bengal Legislative Assembly, 12 February 1943

NMWL Microfilm Collection
In 1943, Bengal found itself in the grip of the worst man-made famine and epidemic recorded in human history. It was a criminal and genocidal act of the British Government in India. All attempts were made by the government to suppress news and comments on the critical food situation in Bengal. Dr. Mookerjee plunged headlong into manifold humanitarian, administrative and political activities for giving solace to the victims. He raised the non-official relief organisations such as the Bengal Relief Committee, Hindu Mahasabha Relief Committee, and also set up a Relief Coordination Committee to coordinate relief work between various organisations. Dr. Mookerjee’s appeal for support received a huge response from all parts of India. Dr. Mookerjee also exposed the attitude of the British authorities and the Muslim League Government, its ‘indifference’, ‘undisguised hostility’ towards the victims of the famine. He said, ‘It is not nature’s hand alone… Political maladministration lies at the root of the present catastrophe.’ Dr. Mookerjee’s deep commitment for relief work throws light on his deep compassion for his countrymen unshackled by any consideration of religion, caste and creed. It was solely due to his efforts that the famine was brought to public notice all over the country.

More Deaths From Starvation In Bengal
Calcutta City

"The food crisis in Bengal has caused a grave situation in the province and the public mind has been intensively stirred by what is happening everyday in Bengal causing death and destitution on a colossal scale. The only streak of light in this unhappy situation is that the press and the public of our sister provinces have splendidly come forward to help us in our distress in all possible manner for which we are deeply grateful to them."

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter to Dr. N.B. Khan, 13 October 1943, N.B. Khan Papers, NAL.

S.R. Mookerjee Papers, NMML Archives

"The Bombay Chronicle."

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter to the House of Commons, India, 14 July 1943.

S.R. Mookerjee Papers, NMML Archives

"...Sir, the question which I would like to put to the House is: what is the solution of this great calamity? Where will our parties be, where shall we be, if life in Bengal comes to an abrupt end, not on account of any ravages of nature as had happened on previous occasions but on account of a wrong policy pursued by the authorities responsible for the administration of this province and country. For nearly two centuries the people have been bled to death, exploitation has gone unchecked. During the last four years for the so-called purposes of the War the interests of the common people have been ruthlessly sacrificed and they have to-day almost reached Death’s door..."

Speech on Food Situation in Bengal, Bengal Legislative Assembly, 14 July 1943, Ashutosh Lahiri Papers, NMML Archives

Ashutosh Lahiri Papers, NMML Archives

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 11, 17 & 18 April 1943

Bombay Chronicle, 14 August 1943

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

NMML Micromfilm Collection

NMML Micromfilm Collection

NMML Micromfilm Collection
The year 1939 ushered in a new chapter in the life of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee for it saw him playing a leading role in the Hindu Mahasabha. Totally disillusioned by the working of the provincial autonomy and the policies of the Congress and the Muslim League towards the Hindus of Bengal, Dr. Mookerjee joined the Hindu Mahasabha at the behest of Veer Savarkar and Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee, a leading barrister of Calcutta High Court. Mahatma Gandhi was greatly impressed by the broad and nationalistic outlook of Dr. Mookerjee and when told about his entry into Hindu Mahasabha, he said, ‘somebody was needed to lead the Hindus after Malaviyaji’. Dr. Mookerjee’s speedy rise as a national leader was due to his political courage, enthusiasm for the cause which he had taken up, and organisational skill and oratory. Under him, for the first time the Hindus of Bengal and of India as a whole, found a spokesman who did not care at all for political expediency or personal interest. He was Working President of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1940 to 1944 and in 1944 was elected its President at the Bilaspur session and continued in that position till 1947. In his presidential address he observed that Swaraj was the essential remedy for all national ills. Under his uncompromising and farsighted leadership, Hindu Mahasabha emerged as an all-India force and took a leading part in the affairs of the country.

"We want to see a Free Hindustan! marching forward as one of the great progressive countries of the world, equal in all the glorious traditions of her past, the home of diverse faiths and cultures, all treated as equals, all owing their undying loyalty and allegiance to the eternal spirit of Bharatmata, whose sons and daughters, though not swayed by the western doctrine of power and possesssion, will yet acquire sufficient strength and valour not only to maintain internal peace and defend her frontiers but also to function as a willing protector of human rights and liberty throughout the civilized world."

Address at Hindu Mahasabha Session, Dacca, 27th December 1946

"...To be called upon to occupy such an office [is] a sacred trust and a privilege, which [is] all the more enhanced when one succeeds a president so patriotic, devoted and fearless as Veer Savarkar, whose dynamic personality and career of suffering and sacrifice gave a new life and vigour to the Hindu Mahasabha."

Dr. Mookerjee’s speech accepting presidency of Hindu Mahasabha, Bilaspur Session, December 1944

[Image: Dr. Mookerjee Papers, INML Archives]

[Image: Dr. Mookerjee, President of Hindu Mahasabha, 1940-1944]

[Image: Dr. Mookerjee, President of Hindu Mahasabha, 1940-1944]
Dr. Mookerjee put up a stiff opposition to the idea of partition and forcefully advocated a united India. He met Mahatma Gandhi and discussed the situation with him. Dr. Mookerjee met the Cabinet Mission accompanied by L.B. Bhopatkar as representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha. Dr. Mookerjee argued forcefully against partition before the Cabinet Mission and said that the British should immediately declare India free and independent, that the integrity and indivisibility of the country should be maintained at any cost and that partition would be economically unsound, disastrous, politically unwise and suicidal.

The Cabinet Mission, however, recommended a plan that divided the country on the basis of minority and majority areas of Hindus and Muslims. As a result, there were widespread communal disturbances in Bengal and Punjab. The call for ‘Direct Action’ given by the Muslim League in July 1946 led to grave communal riots in August in Calcutta and all over Bengal. Dr. Mookerjee toured the worst affected areas, Noakhali and Tipperah, and arranged for the rehabilitation of the victims. He formed a volunteer group, the Hindustan National Guards for this purpose. He also played a leading role in restoring the confidence and morale of the people and took on the Muslim League through the dint of his political leadership and fearless activism.

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter to Gandhi, 22 May 1947
Gandhi Papers, NWM, Archives

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter to Gandhi, 13 March 1947
Gandhi Papers, NWM, Archives

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter to Gandhi, 11 April 1946
S.P. Mookerjee Papers, NWM, Archives

Dr. Mookerjee addressing a public meeting in Punjab

Dr. Mookerjee with Gandhi, New Delhi

Hindu Mahasabha’s Memorandum to Cabinet Mission, 15 April 1946, Transfer of Powers Papers, N.A.I.

Dr. Mookerjee with L.B. Bhopatkar, New Delhi, 1946

Dr. Mookerjee’s letter to Gandhi, New Delhi, 1946

Dr. Mookerjee in the Cabinet Mission

Dr. Mookerjee’s telegram to Dr. Mookerjee, 11 April 1946
S.P. Mookerjee Papers, NWM, Archives

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee
As events moved swiftly towards the acceptance of the partition plan, Dr. Mookerjee advocated the partition of Muslim-majority Bengal. He mobilised public opinion in favour of a homeland for Bengali Hindus by attaching the Hindu areas of Bengal to India. His forceful, cogent and timely advocacy of the scheme for the partition of Bengal succeeded in winning over a large number of Hindu leaders in the province including Congressmen to his side. In March 1947, Bengali Hindu members of the Indian Legislative Assembly at a meeting adopted a resolution favouring the scheme. Dr. Mookerjee also met Viceroy Mountbatten in this regard. A two-day conference of Hindus convened by Dr. Mookerjee and attended by leading intellectuals, scholars such as R.C. Majumdar, Dr. Sunil Kumar Chatterji and Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerjee unanimously passed a resolution that a ‘separate province must be created comprising the Hindu majority areas in Bengal’. It was Dr. Mookerjee’s convincing intervention and leadership that saved a portion of Bengal, especially the historic and strategically important city of Calcutta from becoming part of Pakistan. The creation of West Bengal was undoubtedly one of the greatest achievements of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. It crippled and gave a death blow to Jinnah’s dream of a greater Pakistan and also ensured a safe homeland for Bengali Hindus who were being pushed out of East Pakistan.
Dr. Mookerjee was elected to the Constituent Assembly and took an active part in the drafting of the Indian Constitution. At the behest of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Mookerjee was invited by Jawaharlal Nehru to join the first Union Cabinet in 1947. Mahatma Gandhi argued that independence had come as a result of the joint efforts of all the ‘nationalist forces.’ Dr. Mookerjee was given the portfolio of Industry and Supply. This gave him an opportunity to lay the foundation of India’s industrial policy and prepare the ground for the nation’s industrial development in the years to come.

Three gigantic industrial undertakings and a river valley project of free India of great national importance, were conceived and organised by Dr. Mookerjee—Chittaranjan Locomotive Works Factory, Sindri Fertiliser Factory, Hindustan Aircraft Factory and the Damodar Valley Corporation. He had also conceived the plan of establishing the steel plant of Bhilai. Besides heavy industries, Dr. Mookerjee also understood the importance of developing India’s small-scale and handloom industries. During his tenure, the All-India Handicrafts Board, the All-India Handloom Board and the Khadi and Village Industries Board were set up. The Textile Research Institute and the Industrial Finance Corporation were also set up at this time. For the improvement of the age-old Indian silk industry, he established the Central Silk Board in 1949 and also promoted the idea of the Central Cottage Emporium in Delhi ‘to market and advertise the goods made in the provinces.’

“Of all the remedies suggested for India, the most practical and effective is her increased industrial and agricultural production. This, coupled with the adoption of reasonable price structures and a better and more rational system of distribution, can alone raise the standard of living of millions of India’s underfed and undernourished population.”

Presidential speech of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee at the First Session of the Central Academy of Industrial Research, New Delhi, 24-25 January 1949.

Dr. Mookerjee was a champion of Indian craftsmanship and he encouraged its development. He visited several countries and interacted with Indian craftsmen. His efforts led to the establishment of the Central Cottage Emporium in Delhi and the promotion of Indian handicrafts.

Dr. Mookerjee inspected a factory and also inaugurated an exhibition. He was a strong proponent of Indian manufacturing and saw it as a means to achieve self-reliance.

**Kendrai Udhyog aur Apuriti Mantri**

Union Minister of Industry and Supply

Dr. Mookerjee was a key figure in the drafting of the Indian Constitution and was appointed by Jawaharlal Nehru to join the first Union Cabinet in 1947. He believed in the importance of industrial development and played a crucial role in establishing several important industries and organisations. His contributions helped lay the foundation for India's industrial growth in the years to come.
Resignation from the Union Cabinet

The year 1950 marked a watershed in the life of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. At the time of Partition he had given assurance to the Hindus of East Bengal that ‘if their lives and honour were jeopardised and attacked, free India would not remain an idle spectator and their just cause would be boldly taken up by the Government and people of India’. In February 1950, a massive state-sponsored attack was launched on the Hindus of East Pakistan leading to a huge exodus of Hindus into West Bengal, Tripura and Assam. Jawaharlal Nehru proposed talks with Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the protection of Hindus in East Pakistan. Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee opposed the proposal as he considered Liaquat Ali Khan himself to be responsible for the unfortunate situation. But Nehru proceeded with the talks and invited Liaquat Ali Khan to Delhi for signing an agreement. Dr. Mookerjee felt that in the recent past agreements had been dishonoured by Pakistan and the Delhi Pact would only be a ‘patchwork’ leading to no permanent solution or promise of safeguard, nor would it lead to peace. Dr. Mookerjee had no alternative but to resign from the Cabinet as he felt that he had not been able to redeem his pledge to the Hindus of east Bengal. The whole of Bengal rallied around him in support.
Dr. Mookerjee’s resignation from the Cabinet and his launching himself into all-India mainstream opposition politics proved to be a turning point not only in his own life but also for the nation. He received massive support from the people for his stand against the Nehru-Liaquat Pact. He was now a leader without a party. He started working towards forming a new party as a broad-based nationalist alternative to the Congress. He held wide-ranging discussions over the formation of this alternative with various personalities, the most prominent being M.S. Goel, the second Head of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. His efforts bore fruit in October 1951, An All-India Convention attended by delegates from all parts of the country took place on 21 October 1951 in Raghojuli Arya Kanya Higher Secondary School, New Delhi. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh was formally launched at the Convention. The name of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was proposed as its President and was unanimously accepted.

Dr. Mookerjee as President of the new party visualised President Sangh as the spearhead of the nationalist forces in the country and open to all citizens who owed allegiance to Bharat and Bharatiya Sanskriti and Maryada.

At its first All-India Jana Sangh Conference in Kanpur on 29-31 December 1952, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was elected its General Secretary. Dr. Mookerjee also recruited a very young Swayamsevak called Atal Bihari Vajpayee as his Private Secretary, who later became the Prime Minister of India.

Organiser: 22 October 1951

S. P. Mookerjee Papers, INML Archives

Principles and Policies, BJP-Party Documents
Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee developed deep devotion from his early youth towards Indian art, literature and culture. He had worked closely with his father Sir Asutosh Mookerjee in various cultural activities of Calcutta University and the Maha Bodhi Society of India. Dr. Mookerjee became President of the Maha Bodhi Society in January 1943 and held the position till his untimely death in 1953. He took a keen and active interest in reviving centres of Buddhism in the country and in propagating the teachings of Lord Buddha.

The holy relics of Sariputta and Moggallana Arahans, the two principal disciples of Lord Buddha, were brought back from the British Museum in London to India after nearly a century (these were taken away by Cunningham in 1851) on 13 January 1949. Dr. Mookerjee received these relics from Prime Minister Nehru at a ceremony in Calcutta on 14 January 1949. The relics were re-enshrined in the new ‘Vihar’ specially built for this purpose at Sanchi in November 1952 in the presence of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the Vice-President of India.
Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee played a leading role in forging a link with the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia namely, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon and Tibet. In 1952, on receiving a request from these countries to send some portions of the holy relics of Sariputta and Mogallana to them for worship, he decided to visit these countries. He went to Burma and Cambodia and presented them with some portion of the sacred relics. The people of these countries came out in large numbers to listen to Dr. Mookerjee’s speech on the message of Buddha and how India and the countries of Southeast Asia could work together to bring in a new Asian age. The Burmese Prime Minister, Thakin Nu, wrote to Dr. Mookerjee expressing his ‘gratitude and appreciation for the noble and generous gift which would further cement the already very close and unique relationship between our two sister countries, and help in our common cause for the propagation and revival of Buddhist Dhamma... The whole of the Buddhist world, I am sure, would join me in saying “sadhu! sadhu! sadhu!” for the noble gesture and meritorious deed of your good self and the Maha Bodhi Society of India.’

...The teachings of the Buddha based on simplicity and good behaviour, on truth and justice, knew no petty barriers of race, colour or community. They are capable of creating a solid foundation of peace and good-will on which true human brotherhood can be built... Buddha is one of India’s Avatars. And there are several countries in Asia where Buddhism still survives as a living religion. It is but natural that the people of these countries should look up to India as the land of the Buddha and the holy cities associated with His birth, enlightenment and Nirvana continue to attract thousands of visitors from far and near...
The Lion of Parliament

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was returned to the first Lok Sabha in the first general elections in 1951-52. Jana Sangh, the party that he launched, could return only two more members. There was no combined opposition and hence no Leader of Opposition. However, the one man who stood head and shoulders above all others in the opposition was Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. His pre-eminence was recognised by all, friends and opponents. He took the lead in organising the opposition in Parliament and brought together a number of small parties including the Ganatantra Parishad of Orissa, the Akali Dal of Punjab, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Ram Rajya Parishad and a number of independents to form the National Democratic Party in Parliament. It included some of the finest parliamentarians in the opposition like N.C. Chatterjee and Sardar Hukum Singh. Dr. Mookerjee was elected its leader. He became the chief spokesman of the opposition and was accepted as the unofficial leader of opposition.

His parliamentary skills and eloquence, his nationalistic and constructive approach to the problems facing the country raised his stature as a statesman to new heights and made him the bulwark and one of the chief spokespersons of freedom and democracy in the country. He made some of the most forceful and remarkable speeches on poignant issues facing the country and won the admiration of one and all. His role in Parliament as the leader of opposition earned him the title ‘The Lion of Parliament’.

"I am not for violent resistance, we do not want chaos and disorder in this country but the same non-violent resistance which was taught to the gentlemen occupying the Treasury benches today is not forgotten on the soil of India and that resistance may come. If Government persists in passing legislation or doing administrative acts which are really disliked by the majority of the people of this country, but I am hoping that we will be able to do our duties that while we express ourselves freely and strongly and without fear we will be able to resolve by mutual discussion divergent viewpoints and take only such decisions which will be to the benefit of the people at large and be openly justified before the bar of world opinion.”

Dr. Mookerjee’s speech in Lok Sabha, 21 May 1952, Parliamentary Debates, Vol. I, No. 4, 1952

"We are today to discuss a matter of very vital importance not only to millions of individuals but to the entire country. It is not the first time that this matter is coming up before the House. I have been given by me to place the viewpoint of a large number of citizens of this country on this grave issue during the last 2½ years.

Today I feel overwhelmed by a sense of pangs and sorrow as also a sense of responsibility and duty not to speak on this motion. I feel along with the many that the policy hitherto pursued by the Government of India has not been at all satisfactory and it has failed to achieve the objective in view. Many of us have expressed opinions which have not been favorably accepted by the Government. The issue before us has been of momentous that none of us would like to proceed in an atmosphere of anger or passion but would like to place our respective viewpoints with the utmost frankness in the hope that before it is too late a solution to this gigantic problem can be found.”

Dr. Mookerjee’s speech on the motion regarding negotiations between India and Pakistan, Lok Sabha, 15 November 1952, Parliamentary Debates, Vol. I, No. 1, 1952
राष्ट्रीय एकता और अखण्डता के समर्थक
Champion for National Unity and Integrity

जॉ. राम वर्मा प्रसाद मुखर्जी के जीवन के अंतिम पंहुँच महाने जम्मू-कश्मीर मुद्दे के राष्ट्रीय और
tक्षणरत समाज की दिशा में प्रवचन. राष्ट्रीय एकता और अखण्डता के प्रति उनकी प्रतिकृति
और मान्यता के लिए नए महाने का प्रकाश था। जॉ. राम वर्मा प्रसाद ने लिखा कि प्रदेश के लिए
वे नए यहां अंतलोहित कार्यकर्ता के रूप में जम्मू-कश्मीर जनता परिवर्तन के उद्देश्यों
लोगों में फैलने वाले कार्यकर्ता के रूप में लोगों को वे अर्थवाणी के साथ साथ
सरकारी रूप से सङ्केतक नहीं रहते थे। उनकी अधिकारियों की दूरी ने 
एक साथी लोगों के बीच बनाई थी। उनकी अनुशंसा के माध्यम से उन्होंने अपनी
शक्ति को हैदराबाद की दूरी को सामना कर लिया।

1953 में राजनीतिक और राष्ट्रवादी कार्यकर्ता को अंकें यह
भी हिल गई। 8 मार्च 1953 को उन्होंने जम्मू-कश्मीर के 
राष्ट्रपति के रूप में चुनाव करने के लिए दर्ज की गई थी। उन्होंने 
जम्मू-कश्मीर के राष्ट्रपति के रूप में चुनाव करने के लिए दर्ज की गई थी।
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Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee’s efforts during the last fifteen months of his life for a
national and rational solution of the Jammu-Kashmir issue stand testimony to his
commitment to the unity and integrity of the country and his deep love for his
motherland. Dr. Mookerjee identified himself with the Jammu-Kashmir Praja
Parishad led by Prem Nath Dogra which had launched a peaceful Satyagraha in support of its
demand for the full integration of the State of Jammu-Kashmir with the Indian
Union. Dr. Mookerjee gave the rallying cry of ‘Ek Desh Mein Do Vidhan, Do
Prachan Aur Do Nishan Nahin Chalenge.’ The Jammu-Kashmir Government
unleashed unprecedented oppression on the Satyagrahis, jailing many of
its leaders. In a true democratic spirit, Dr. Mookerjee called for talks and met
Sheikh Abdullah in August 1952 and Yuvraj Karan Singh to find an amicable
solution to the problem. He also wrote several letters to Sheikh Abdullah and
Jawaharlal Nehru in this regard. In a statement in Parliament on 16 March 1953,
Dr. Mookerjee appealed in vain to Nehru to take initiative to settle the question.
Dr. Mookerjee then decided to visit Jammu-Kashmir in May 1953 to personally
survey the situation. It was to prove his last journey; he left Delhi for Jammu on
8 May 1953. He was allowed to enter Kashmir without permit but was arrested
by the Kashmir police and taken to Srinagar. Dr. Mookerjee was kept in
detention in a small cottage in Srinagar. It was here that he fell seriously ill and
received indifferent medical attention till his condition rapidly deteriorated.