CHAPTER III

LIFE AND ACTIVITIES

OF

SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE
3.0 Introduction

Syama Prasad Mookerjee was both a liberal thinker and a nationalist, in the truest sense of the terms. He practiced realism which was absolutely free of dogma. At his heart he practised core liberal principles.

While giving a convocation address on February 12th, 1936, he said that, - “Our ideal is to provide extensive facilities for education from the lowest grade to the highest; to mould our educational purpose and to draw out the best qualities that is hidden in our youths and to train them intellectually as well as physically for service in all spheres of national activity in town, villages and cities. Our ideal is to make the widest provision for sound liberal education......Our ideal is to make our universities and institutions the home of same progressive thought.”

The pattern of liberal nationalism according to him was a recurrent theme involving the youth and grooming them. This very spirit of Syama Prasad Mookerjee could be seen all through his tenure as Vice Chancellor and well after that. He was of the opinion that if the youth of our country could be given a chance to live with amplest facility and opportunity to enrich themselves, then development was inevitable. He actually did not spend much time in seeking Government permission. He himself took decisions such as, expanding the curriculum to include Sciences and Engineering, delimit the scope for higher education, etc.

Syama Prasad was glorified due to the tireless efforts he made while giving relief to the famine stricken people. All his deeds came from his love for the people of this country. Though he was a Hindu political leader, he felt the need to counteract the communist sentiment of the government, as he was not anti-Muslim in any way. He wanted to unite the Hindu voices, and protect them against the onslaught of communal propaganda of the Muslim League. When the issue of partition came, he vehemently opposed it. Syama Prasad joined the first independent Government of free India as Minister for Industries and Supply though he resigned shortly, because of his difference of opinion regarding Nehru – Liaqat Pact. He also became
the first member of the opposition in the Parliament and Constituent Assembly of India. His role in the Lok Sabha as the leader of opposition earned him the title ‘Lion of Parliament’.

Last, but not the least, Mookerjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangha on October 21st, 1951 at Delhi and became its President. Syama Prasad Mookerjee spoke of how an idea of India, that transcended both caste and religion and called for political citizenship to each one without any sort of discrimination. One sees his economic liberalism, when his ideas on the role of private capital in the industrial development of India, became clear. He stood for a well-planned decentralized national economy.

3.1 His brief life sketch

We Indians celebrated the birth centenary year of Syama Prasad Mookerjee in 2001. To this illustrious man of Bengal, follows a very vivacious and charismatic life, which can be studied.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee was born on 6th July 1901. His father, Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, and grandfather, Dr. Gangaprasad Mookerjee, had an equally illustrious academic as well as social life record. It would be interesting to note that Gangaprasad was a direct descendant of a cousin of Kritibas Ojha, the famed translator of Ramayana into Bengali.

Gangaprasad’s parents, namely Biswanath and Brahmamayee, died, leaving behind four sons-Durgaprasad, Hariprasad, Gangaprasad and Radhikaprasad, all in their teens. The eldest brother took charge of the family and worked as a school teacher in his early days. Later on, he studied Civil Engineering and eventually became the District Engineer of Ghazipur (now in Uttar Pradesh.). He finally settled in Calcutta, where he sent his brothers to reputed schools. That was the time of Bengal Renaissance, and the Bengali elite class made their presence felt in whatever way they could.
Among the four sons of Biswanath, Gangaprasad, the third one, turned out to be very meritorious. He studied at the prestigious Hare school and later on sat for the Entrance Examination in 1857, only to get himself admitted to Presidency College with a scholarship. He completed his B.A in 1861. Thereafter, he studied modern medicine at Medical College in Calcutta whereby he graduated with distinction in 1866. He became a private practitioner. While in medical college, he had married Jagattarini, and on 28th June 1864, she gave birth to her first child, Asutosh, who grew up to be a great son of Bengal. In 1873, on the Bengali new year day, Gangaprasad moved to his newly bought house at Bhawanipore at 77, Russa Pagla Road (now 77, Asutosh Mookerjee Road). This house, in times to come, became an abode of a lot of activities regarding education, law and politics.

Gangaprasad had two sons, Asutosh and Hemanta Kumar (b. 1866) and a daughter Hemlata (b. 1874). Both Hemanta and Hemlata died prematurely. Gangaprasad had a great love for his mother tongue and thereby he wrote a Bengal edition of the Ramayana. He was the pioneer in writing medical books in Bengali, which was obviously a great contribution to the Bengali society in those days.

Asutosh, the only surviving child of Gangaprasad, grew up in an environment which was very sombre. He loved books which he read to his heart’s content till his last days. This gave rise to one of the largest library with the largest collection of books in the country and that too belonging to one person.

Asutosh went to a vernacular school at Bhowanipore for two years. He then spent a few years at home being trained under a private tutor and his father. Later he joined the South Suburban School, where he fortunately came under the influence of Sivnath Shastri, the school’s headmaster. Then he joined Presidency college and passed with distinction.

It is very important to mention here, that his uncle, Radhikaprasad Mookerjee was a Fellow of the Calcutta University. Asutosh got hold of the various papers and Minutes of the Calcutta University, and sent them to his uncle. This was the
beginning of his interest in the affairs of the Calcutta University. Asutosh became not only a renowned mathematician, but was one of the first Indians to do research work on it. However he excelled in other subjects, like, English, Philosophy, Sanskrit, Law, History and Science. It is really surprising to know that he was versed in French and German which helped him to study the original works of great foreign mathematicians. The then D.P.I of Bengal. Sir Alfred Croft rightfully offered him a post in the education department but Asutosh declined the offer. He claimed that until he was given respect at par with the European professors, he will not join, and so did not leave Presidency College.

In 1886 Asutosh married Smt. Jogmaya Devi. Asutosh had already joined City College in 1884 to study Law. In 1888, he took the L.L.B degree and joined the Calcutta High Court as a Vakil. He was also appointed Tagore Law Professor in 1898. Later in 1904, he accepted a seat on the bench in 1904.

But, the greatest work of Asutosh is, in the sphere of University Education at University of Calcutta, his Alma Mater. His greatest achievement was the transformation of Calcutta University from an examining body to one of the greatest teaching University in the east. He became a member of the Senate in 1889. In the following year he became a fellow of the Syndicate. He was the Vice-Chancellor from 1906 to 1914 and again from 1921 to 1923. He continuously laid and unlaid various policies, schemes and plans, which was later aptly carried on by his worthy son, Syama Prasad. Asutosh was conferred Knighthood in his absentia, as his mother asked him to refrain from travelling to England. He was a dictator in his own right, an authoritative person, only when situation demanded and thus was aptly named as ‘Banglar Bagh’.

Syama Prasad was the second son of Sir Asutosh, a worthy son with most of his qualities inherited. Syama Prasad, infact went a step further by dwelving into politics. Sir Dhirendra Nath Sen, a contemporary of Syama Prasad, had remarked, “Syama Prasad owed to his father his amazing capacity for work, his knowledge of men and affairs, his passionate devotion to the cause he had made his own, his
tender care and consideration for scholars and students, his broad human sympathy and his courage and self-confidence. But it would be wrong to think that Syama Prasad was great because his father was great; that the son was no more than the sire’s pale shadow. The son watched the father with admiration, followed him devotedly and utilized to the fullest extent both his rich personal qualities, so that in the fullness of time he became a fighter, a builder and a leader” (Roy, 2012, pg. 7).

Syama Prasad was born on 6th July 1901. He had six siblings – three brothers and three sisters. Older to Syama Prasad was Ramaprasad, who became the judge of the High Court in his own right. Next to Syama Prasad, the third son of Asutosh was Umaprasad who became a famed trekker and travel writer in Bengali. The youngest brother was Bamaprasad, who was an engineer by profession. Among the three sisters of Syama Prasad, the eldest was Kamala, who died at the young age of 28, while his father was alive. Here it may be mentioned that Kamala was married in 1904 at the age of nine to Shubhendu Sundar Banerjee, a grandson of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the famed writer of Vande Mataram. The second sister of Syama Prasad was Amala and the youngest was Ramala.

Syama Prasad was married to Sudha Devi, but she also parted for heavenly abode in 1933, leaving young Syama Prasad of 32 years to look after the family. He had two sons, Anutosh and Debatosh. Anutosh was a businessman and Debatosh was an employee in Tata.

Syama Prasad, in his early years, was greatly influenced by his grandmother Jagattarini’s brother, Adhar Chandra Chatterjee. He used to have long story telling sessions with Syama Prasad. He was also very fond of his own maternal uncle, Panchanan Bhattacharya and visited his native place, Krishnanagar very often.

Syama Prasad was basically an introvert as well as emotional. After his wife Sudha Devi died, his sister in law, Tara Devi looked after his children.
3.2 His education

Syama Prasad started going to school at the age of five years and directly got admitted to class II. His father Sir Asutosh took the initiative of setting up of the Mitra Institution Branch at Bhawanipore, along with Sir Bisheswar Mitra. According to a retired teacher of the school, Sri Harshnath Bandhyopadhay, B.L., “Syama Prasad had various positive qualities as a student. He never fought with his fellow friends in school. He was quite attentive to his lessons and respected his teachers. He was a diligent student as well” (Roy, K. 2008, pp. 13).

As a child, Syama Prasad was not really interested in sports or any activity of the kind. Instead, he was very much interested in reading and was a voracious reader. Though he was just one year elder to Umaprasad, he was three classes ahead. But during that time nobody was allowed to sit for the Matriculation examination before 16 years of age, so he went to his ancestral home in Madhupur for a break. Shortly after, he sat for his school leaving examination, which he passed with a first division and a scholarship. He got himself admitted to Presidency College, the most prestigious one in those days. Hereafter he passed his Intermediate class in Arts in 1919 and acquired the first position in I.A. After this he did his B.A class with honours in English, where he secured the first position in 1921. Besides this, he topped both in the I.A. and B.A in Bengali as well. For the above feat, he was awarded the Bankim Chandra gold and silver medals.

It is important to mention here that his father, Sir Asutosh had introduced M.A classes in Bengali defying many a opposition from various quarters. Infact he was determined to give his mother tongue a rightful status in the University. Apart from this, to set an example, Asutosh encouraged his own son, Syama Prasad to join the M.A classes in Bengali. He knew very well, that this would act as an incentive to fellow students to join this course in Bengali which was till then, not very popular.

Syama Prasad joined the law classes at the University. Here also he stood first both in Masters of Arts in 1923 and Bachelor of Law the next year. It is delightful
tomention that in his Bengali classes he chose to write a thesis on the social plays of Girish Chandra Ghosh, a famous Bengali actor and playwright of the 19th century and also a follower of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa.

When he was in the M.A class, Syama Prasad along with Ramaprasad started writing a Bengali monthly journal called *Bangabasi*, which continued successfully for six years to come. Quite a few poems and prose compositions of Tagore were published here for the first time.

Many reputed personalities contributed to this journal, such as Jyotirindranath Tagore, Surendra Nath Sen, Kabishhekar Kalidas Ray, Chapala Bala Basu, Kumud Ranjan Mollik, Binoy Kumar Sarkar (an economist) and many other eminent personalities. But the best part of this journal was that it published ‘*Pather Dabi*’, in serials written by the famous novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterjee. But by this time, Syama Prasad and Ramaprasad became too busy with other works and the journal had to be discontinued from 1928. On 16th April 1922, Syama Prasad entered into wedlock, while he was pursuing M.A. He got married to Sudha Chakraborty, daughter of Beni Madhab Chakraborty and grand daughter of Bihari Lal Chakraborty, the famed poet in Bengali. It may hereby be mentioned that another son of Bihari Lal Chakraborty, with the name Saral Kumar Chakraborty married the eldest daughter of Rabindra Nath Tagore.

Syama Prasad after studying English, always wanted to be a journalist. His father encouraged this and sent him to Pat Lovett, a famed journalist and editor of a popular weekly ‘Capital’. Much later, Syama Prasad himself founded a English daily called ‘Nationalist’ and ‘Hindustan’ in Bengali in 1944.

Coming back to his pursuit of higher studies, Syama Prasad expressed his wish to go to England to become a barrister after passing the B.L examination in 1924. To this Asutosh was very much against.

During 1920s particularly, the Mookerjee family lost quite a few of their family members. Kamala, Syama Prasad’s eldest sister died in 1923, after which, Asutosh
was so aggrieved, that he stopped celebrating Durga puja at his household. Sir Asutosh himself left this world in 1924 at the age of 60. But much before this time, Syama Prasad had already started grooming himself in the affairs of the University under the guidance of his father. He was already a fellow of the University Senate in the faculty of Arts. At this very time, Syama Prasad Mookerjee was due to go to Simla for a conference and Asutosh to Patna. Both of them left for the station together and later departed for their destination. Unfortunately, that was the last time Syama Prasad spoke to his father. Syama Prasad received a telegraph while in Simla, saying that his father was very ill. But when he reached Patna, Asutosh had already passed away.

Syama Prasad left for England in 1925, to study law after his father’s demise. He stayed at 112, Gower Street in London and joined the Lincoln’s Inn. There, his roommate was Surendra Nath Sen (historian) and Jatindra Mohan Majumdar (a friend). It should be mentioned here that though Syama Prasad went to England to study law, his primary motive was to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the British and French Universities. He therefore sat for his preliminary bar examination in a haste, as a result for which he did not fare very well. At last, in 1927, he became a barrister-at-law and came back to his country. During the time he was in England, a conference was held in 1926 between the English Universities and Syama Prasad. The then professor of University of Calcutta and later the president of India, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, visited England as a representative from India. Another stalwart and the great scientist, Sir Prafulla Chandra Roy also had many educational discussion with Syama Prasad. In addition to all these, Syama Prasad went all the way to Paris to gain knowledge of the French Universities, with the help of the British ambassador Lord Krew, who was a great friend of Asutosh.

Syama Prasad’s stay in England proved to be quite positive with regard to various significant friendships with outstanding personalities. One of them was Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. Syama Prasad already knew him, back in Calcutta though. Sir Asutosh had already seated him on the George V Chair of Professorship of Mental
and Moral sciences of Calcutta University. While in England, this friendship grew deeper in the years to come.

Discussing Syama Prasad’s early life, mention must be made of his very short married life. He and Sudha Devi lived for only eleven years together, as Sudha Devi died an untimely death in 1933. Their children were very small at the time.

### 3.3 Politics and Syama Prasad Mookerjee

On studying the political influence of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the researcher observed that, he actually encountered three ministries, respectively led by Fazlul Haq, Nazimmudin and Suhrawardy. All of these leaders were dominated by the Muslim League, while Syama Prasad was the most strong and vocal opposition in the Assembly.

The political career of Syama Prasad was marked by high idealism. He had already, as is known, a very busy and significant career as an educationist. Only when the Secondary Education Bill was raised, did he decide, that it was high time he joined politics.

As has already been mentioned, he was elected as member of the Legislative Council of Bengal, with a Congress ticket, representing the Calcutta University in the year 1929. The next year, Congress decided to boycott the Legislature, and as a result, asked Syama Prasad to resign as a member, much against his wish. So later on, he contested the election as an independent candidate and won. He was re-elected from the University Constituency in 1937.

The time span of 1937-1946 was not only the most formative and crucial period in the political career of Dr. Mookerjee, it was also the most outstanding stage in the history of India.
Though his primary loyalty was to the cause of education, he was forced into politics, only to safeguard certain issues regarding education and then on political issues. Throughout his political career, he tried to be secular in his views and activities, but circumstances compelled him to fight for the plight of the Hindus, while he ignored the fact that few people gave him a communal colour. He took a rightful step in joining the Hindu Mahasabha- the platform from which he worked to safeguard the Hindus from the clutches of Jinnah and his Muslim League. In this chapter, it is noticed, how Syama Prasad forgot his own standing and lent out his hand towards the various social activities, such as, providing of relief for the victims of the great Bengal Famine, victims of the riots, etc.

3.3.1  His Political Influence

Though Syama Prasad did not actively take part in the war for independence, he indirectly influenced many fields, in his various capacities.

At the onset of his political career, Syama Prasad belonged to the Congress. Infact, in 1929, he won a seat for the member of Bengal Legislative Council, from the University constituency. But, in the very next year he resigned, (as the Congress decided to boycott the Legislature) only to win again as an independent candidate. In 1937, General Election was held, and he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly, from the Calcutta University constituency again.

During his Vice-Chancellorship, he tried to consume, whatever his father had initiated, though Syama Prasad’s term as Vice – Chancellor was far shorter than Asutosh’s. Syama Prasad could not work peacefully, as he wished, because of various political uprisings. The leaders of Bengal did not take much interest in education as they were too engrossed in politics of the day. The Provincial Government became communal. “It was never failing devotion to the great temple of learning, an ardent spirit of service and timeless industry which enabled him to pilot the ship along the right track.” (Bannerjee, A., 2000 A.D., Pg.16).
His successor as a Vice-Chancellor was Azizul Haque, speaker of the Bengal Legislative Assembly. He was nominated by the Muslim League, for the furtherance of Muslim influence in the working of the University. Azizul was totally incapable of the post. As Syama Prasad wrote in his English diary on January 2, 1939, “It is amazing how utterly indifferent he is to the work and needs of the University – except in so far as Muslims are concerned.” But, only because, Syama Prasad was in a very influential post in the Senate and the Syndicate, he could aptly deal with such a lopsided Vice-Chancellor. The next Vice-Chancellor was Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, with a very intimate connection within the University. But he too was engrossed with the function of the Corporation and the personal fights he had with Bengal Provincial Congress. His successor was Dr. Radhabinod Pal, an advocate of High Court, and spared very little time with the University. Notwithstanding, Syama Prasad kept a very watchful eye on the University from outside, till he left for New Delhi.

We all know, that he had very close relation with Bengal politics, which was a projection of his ever-growing educational career. He preferred to fight against the alien government, by staying with the works of the Legislature. He did not ever support Civil Disobedience. Though he was not cut out to be a committed politician, he could never cut himself absolutely off from the political events. As a matter of fact, he was of the opinion that he could fight for the people only from this platform. This is the reason why he was re-elected to the Council as an independent candidate from that constituency in 1930 and again in 1937. When the day he came to know that Congress had accepted the Ramsay MacDonald’s Communal Award, his sense of justice was shattered. Syama Prasad wrote in his English Diary on October 10, 1944, “….. the Hindus for their advanced views and extreme nationalism were so punished as to be thrown at the mercy of a highly reactionary communal majority unalterable even by an appeal to the Electorate.” (Bannerjee, A., 2000 A.D., Pg. 21).

Syama Prasad records some of the instances of Hindu suffering. For e.g. the ratio of communal representation in respect of services, the supersession of better
qualifications in respect of Hindus, the defilement of Hindu images, the preferential treatment of the Muslims in technical and educational services, laws against Hindus, encouragement of riots, attacks on Hindu women, etc. With all this, his ideal of a properly balanced political rights of all communities, came to a dead end. At this instance, Syama Prasad changed his role from an eminent educationalist to an active politician to counteract the working of the Communal Award.

This award had an adverse effect on the social and political life of Bengal during 1937-44. He very well knew that the Hindu culture and especially Bengali language, will definitely suffer in the hands of the Government consisting of an intolerant communal majority (Muslims were majority at that time).

When the ministry was formed in 1937, the Bengal Legislative Assembly had in the Congress sixty members and formed the ministry with another party. The Muslims were divided into four groups:- Independants- 43; Muslim League-39(Sir Khwaja Nazimuddin as leader); Krishak Praja Party (Fazlul Huq as leader) -36; and Tripura Krishak Samiti -5. Nonetheless, Syama Prasad was oblivious of this, though not by choice. The Muslim League party consisted of Bengali speaking and Urdu speaking upper class Muslims. The Krishak Praja Party represented the Muslim farmers. According to Syama Prasad, Fazlul wanted power but did not want to work under the Muslim League, which had secured more seats than the Krishak Praja Party. Actually Fazlul wanted the Congress to form a Coalition Ministry, with himself as the Prime Minister, doing which, he could have combated the British – cum – League conspiracy. Unfortunately, the Congress High Command did not agree to this coalition. The political blunder of the Congress was not clear. It was definitely based on any principle – infact the neighboring state of Assam underwent the coalition with the Congress. So, it may be said that the act of the Congress had definitely invited miseries to millions of Bengali Hindus, especially those from East Bengal, who were ultimately taken to be as refugees later. Taking advantage of the situation, the Government at that time, wanted to make Provincial Autonomy a success. Syama Prasad mentioned in his Diary (October 20, 1944) that Sarat Bose declared that the Congress has come to
the Legislature to end the Constitution and not work with it. Ultimately, Fazlul Huq and the Muslim League formed the Ministry with Fazlul as the Prime Minister. By and large, the Hindu Ministers were in a strong position, only because of the grace of Muslim Legislators, and not because of the support of the Hindu members in general. Interestingly, the most popular among the Muslim League ministers was H.S. Suhrawardy, the notorious person connected with Pakistan politics. To add to this plight, there was the presence of M.H. Ispahani, an Urdu speaking merchant, and an agent of Jinnah in Calcutta.

Syama Prasad was a helpless spectator in this transformation of political scene in Bengal. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Humayun Kabir tried his utmost to include Syama Prasadin the Cabinet, but failed because of Muslim opposition. But, it may be noted here that Syama Prasadin his lifetime or while working in the University, never went against the Muslims ultimately.

In the cabinet of eleven ministers, five were Hindus and five Muslims, of whom four were taken from the Muslim League, and remaining one member came from the Krishak Praja Party. Fazlul Huq, was just a nominal head, as the main power was vested in the hands of the Muslim League along with the Europeans.

In 1938, the legislature recommended 60% of all Government appointments for Muslims. In 1940, a special Communal Ratio Officer was recruited to implement the above policy, wherein, the non-deserving Muslims were recruited, even from outside, as against the well – deserving qualified Hindus already in the state. Infact, this gave rise to the influx of non – Bengali League supporters from outside. To add to this, in 1938, Fazlul Ministry changed the rules of police recruitment too. It said that 50% of the police recruit should be Muslims. Some Hindu leaders led by the Maharaja of Burdwan and Syama Prasad, who did not still represent any political party yet, requested the acting Governor of Bengal to look into this Communal ratio in services. But everything fell into deaf ears. By 1938, the Cabinet was reconstituted, with all the members being the Leaguers, and thereby consolidating its position in Bengal. Jinnah, infact, selected Fazlul Huq as the
mover of the Pakistan Resolution. Actually, Bengal was of primary importance because of two reasons:- a) Bengal had the largest number of Muslims, and b) in the other Muslim majority provinces, i.e. the Punjab, the Unionist Party did not support the League.

In 1940, Syama Prasad became the working President of the Veer Savarkar led Hindu Mahasabha. He thought that this was the best way to protect the cause of the Hindus. The very next year, he became the All-India President of the Mahasabha. Standing on this platform, he many a times requested the Congress for a unified movement against the League rule. But the Congress refused, saying that this would project them as communal in public. Owing to many stray incidents, it was seen that the Hindus were being tortured by the Muslims at large in East Bengal, which disturbed Syama Prasad a lot.

Throughout 1938 and 1939, Syama Prasad had fought against the communal policy of the League. He, infact, gave a very powerful speech in the House, supporting the no-confidence motion against the League Ministry. He also strongly spoke against the Calcutta Corporation Bill, Secondary Education Bill, misuse of D.I.R. and illegally detaining of deters.

Syama Prasad had requested the Bengal Congress Leadership, including Subhas Chandra Bose, to take a firm stand against the above atrocities; but Subhas Bose declined to do so, as he was of the opinion that it would affect the secular image of their party.

In reality, the Calcutta Corporation election was held on March 1940, and was a contest between the Mahasabha led by Syama Prasad, and Forward Bloc led by Bose. As Bose could not demand power on his own, he co-opted with the Muslim League. The Mahasabha won about 50% of seats, after the election, while the Congress supported the candidate of the League, A.R. Siddiqui who was chosen by Bose for Mayorship. Actually, the League was determined to have control over the Corporation, although the Hindu population was the majority.
In 1941, Syama Prasad became the Finance Minister in Fazlul Haq led Coalition Ministry. In 1942, he went to join the Bhagalpur session of the Mahasabha, where he was arrested and detained under the Defence of India Rules, but was released later. After this, he resigned from the ministry of Bengal as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government.

Another thing the League was to bring the entire system of education under its control. The University of Dacca was already under its control. Regarding the Calcutta University, Hindus were firmly and largely attached to it. Unfortunately, Azizul Haque, the speaker of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, was appointed the Vice-Chancellor in 1938, and his main interest was to serve his own community, barring the deserving Hindus. As it turned out, it was very difficult to capture Calcutta University. So, it tried to weaken it by taking away its control over the Secondary Education. Thereby, it introduced the infamous Secondary Education Bill, in order to create a Board, which could control the schools in Bengal.

For Syama Prasad, this was the limit of tolerance, whereby he was forced to come out of his academic arena to the “dusty and noisy career of a politician.” All these years, he had just protested against the League’s activities to curtail Hindu rights in relation to departments other than education. But when education was made a party to League and communal politics, he felt it necessary to go for public opinion. This was the time he came very close to Hindu Mahasabha.

In 1939, the Annual Conference of All India Hindu Mahasabha was held in Calcutta. Veer Savarkar was the then President of the Mahasabha, who met Syama Prasad and immediately sensed a tremendous potential in him, in becoming a political personality of a national status.

Till then, Syama Prasad was known as an educationist and a young nationalist leader. But when the political scene changed in Bengal, he realized that, individual protest would not be enough. A political forum was the demand of the hour, which he found in the Mahasabha. Syama Prasad spear-headed in his determination of
Life and activities of Syama Prasad Mookerjee

protecting the interest of majority Hindus in Bengal and majority Hindu population of the sub-continent.

Later he presided over the Amritsar session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha. In 1944, at the Hindu Mahasabha Session in Bilaspur, he made a historic statement. It goes like this, “...... there will be special rights regarding, the religion and cultural rights of the minority classes, in the Constitution.” By this statement, he made others understand that he was not communal at all, as was generally felt by many.

In 1946, Calcutta witnessed a mass killing scheme, drawn out by Jinnah and Suhrawardy. It was later known as the ‘Great Calcutta Killing’, which Syama Prasad vehemently criticized. That same year, he was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly from Bengal. It was in the same year, that he, along with a few Congress leaders fought against all odds to retain a portion of Punjab and Bengal in the Indian Union, in order to safeguard the Hindu population. Leaders like Kiranshankar Roy, Shasanka Sekhar Sanyal, etc. supported this decision of Syama Prasad. Along with this, he formed the Hindustan National Guard in the same year.

By this time, the Congress as a party hesitated to oppose Acts and Bills, which were anti-Hindu and anti-national. Again when Syama Prasad asked the Bose brothers to support him, they refused, as their position in the Congress had already weakened. Subhas Bose was almost driven out of the Presidentship of the Congress, due to the fact that he had contested twice, defeating Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gandhi’s nominee. At last, Bose was expelled from the Congress, as he was trying to form a party of his own, Forward Bloc. Jinnah, at this time, stigmatized the Congress as Gandhi Hindu Congress. (Bannerjee, A. 2000 A.D., Pg.32). This split, strengthened the Muslim league, but it did not open any new line for Syama Prasad. Both parties placated the Muslims. The only party that stood behind him was the Mahasabha, which had a great leader in him. Subhas Bose feared that if Syama Prasad went ahead with his Bengal politics and formed a rival political party, then his own party will be endangered. So Bose threatened Syama
Prasad to stay away from forming a rival party. Syama Prasad never bothered about this, and went ahead.

3.3.2 His Role as a Legislator

Again, the researcher thought it necessary to discuss Syama Prasad’s role as a Legislator in the Bengal Legislative Council. He was, as was already known, a very powerful speaker. Herein, the researcher thought it necessary to study the background of Syama Prasad’s entry into politics—whether it be educational, political or financial—in a much larger context. At the onset, he was not very keen on mass movement and agitation, and rather felt that constitutional changes could solve many a problem. But, after the Communal Award of Ramsay Macdonald in 1932, Syama Prasad became highly apprehensive, regarding the increased onset of Muslim League dominance in constitutional politics.

Elections, for the first time was held in 1936 according to the India Act of 1935. Infact, the results in 1937, changed the total political equation in the country. This time, the Indian National Congress won the majority, with Krishak Praja Party running as the second majority party. Fazlul Huq, leader of this party, expected Congress to join hands with him and form a Coalition Ministry, and which could have ultimately ended the communal game of Jinnah’s Muslim League in Bengal. But the Congress decided otherwise that is, not join hands with Fazlul Huq. As a result, Huq welcomed the next majority party, that is, the Muslim League, to form the First Coalition Government, with himself as the Premier of Bengal.

Hence the Muslim League got a fair chance to strengthen its position, thereby shelving the possibility of communal harmony in Bengal. Infact, the League increased the number of Muslim members in all Government bodies, right from the Calcutta Corporation to the Municipalities and District Boards. Syama Prasad throughout 1938 and 1939, fought relentlessly in the Legislative Assembly against this, with a passive European support. He realized that individual protest was not effective, and so when he failed to get Congress support, he joined the Hindu Mahasabha, aiming to protect the Hindus in Bengal, from the atrocities of
the League. Ultimately, when the Congress split in the Legislative Assembly, Syama Prasad started to fight against two fronts simultaneously, that is, the British Government and Muslim League.

Much later, a coalition was formed between Syama Prasad, Krishak Praja Party and the Congress—and he felt that this would bring about communal harmony, amity and unity in Bengal.

The above being the political scenario of Bengal, Syama Prasad as a Legislator, gave quite a few outstanding speeches, in relation to education, politics and finance. The researcher thought it necessary to study them in detail.

Syama Prasad as a member of the Legislative Council, gave certain outstanding speeches regarding the political picture of the then Government. First of all, he put forward certain suggestions and questions to the speaker of the House, in order to bring into public, certain very important political issues, which went to change the political scenario at the time.

3.3.3 His initiative regarding the detenus at Andaman

In those days, according to the Bengal Criminal Act, the detenus were sent to Andaman, which was taken to be a penal settlement. Syama Prasad vehemently opposed to this policy. He viewed that the prisoners should not be sent out of their motherland, in order to serve out their sentences. But the Government did not even consider or hear their grievances, and so, the detenus, had to go for a hunger strike. Syama Prasad reasoned out that, the prisoners did not have any other option, because they did not live in a place where public opinion made its influence felt. Redress was denied to them. He also criticized that the Government, which had asked the leaders of the public to influence the criminals to end their hunger strike, did not have a policy to this effect. Syama Prasad reminded the Government that in 1921, Sir William Vincent, in the Indian Legislative Assembly, issued orders to the extent that, all political prisoners and women should be immediately returned to their respective provinces. Infact, nobody was prepared to justify the policy of sending convicts hundreds of miles away from their home to a place, where even
the Government had no control. Lastly, he made the Government realize that if any of those prisoners died in detention, the responsibility would rest on persons who took such a step, in alliance with the Government.

So, the researcher points out that Syama Prasad was so aware of the rights of Indians, that he always pressurized the Government to justify whatever action they took, politically.

3.3.4 Advancing the National cause

Next, Syama Prasad while speaking in the house, declared, that the Ministers of the then Ministry, did not at all enjoy the confidence of the majority of the Indian members of this House. He pointed out that the Government of Bengal had no comprehensive constructive programme for advancing the national cause. Though the Government had plenty of funds at their disposal, areas like Industries, Agriculture, Public Health, Sanitation, Education and Unemployment, were not taken onto the path of progress. Syama Prasad, as a political leader, forced the Government to realize, that no difference could be made between Hindus and Muslims regarding poverty, disease, illiteracy, industrial facilities, economic depression, etc. He contributed to the political society in way, where, at least he could voice his opinion and point out defects of the Government and its effects.

Another very important contribution of Syama Prasad as a political leader was his protest against the presentation of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Bill. He was convinced that this Bill surpassed all previous discredit of the then Government. One of the most important feature that Syama Prasad was against, was the abandoning of the Joint Electorate, at a time, when it already existed, in all civic bodies, municipalities, district boards, on the basis of representation of various communities. He wanted to know why Calcutta was an exception.

Similarly, Syama Prasad pointed out that there was high discrepancy in the redistribution of seats. No uniform principle was followed in regard to the percent of seats in accordance to the percent of population of each community. Inspite of the Hindus being the majority tax payers, they were relegated to the position of a
minority in Corporation. Infact, in the Corporation seats, mention of Muslim constituency, Europeans constituency had been made. But there was no mention of the Hindus, who came under General constituency.

He did not hesitate to proclaim that the Bill was actually designed to minimize the strength of the Hindus of Bengal. Syama Prasad claimed that it was his birthright to see, that in future, Hindus were to be described as Hindus, in the time of distribution among various communities.

3.3.5 His recommendation on Defence

The researcher studies yet another political contribution of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, which was of great importance. He made the Government and the members of the House to discuss a vital policy regarding Defence. He brought out a great discredit of the Government into the limelight by mentioning the orders of the Provincial Government in accordance with the provisions of the Defence of India Ordinance, where it was found that the Government of Bengal had really cut-throat the necessity to protect public safety and peace.

When coming to the discussion of the aims of war of the Government of India, he reminds the Provincial Government, that the Assembly urged the Government to take steps, such as, (i) to enable the Bengalees to participate in the defence of their Motherland; (ii) to avail opportunities to the Bengalees for proper military training in all branches of war; (iii) to raise a Bengalee Regiment and organise mechanized units on a permanent basis. Syama Prasad also announced that the Assembly had recognised the fact that India has the right to freedom and Independence, and thereby a full Dominion Status to be attained, at the end of the war.

He lamented that, all said and done, India’s Defence policy has been deliberately carried on against the best interest of this country. He did not forget to mention that it was the Hindus of Bengal, who first sounded the clarion call for freedom, and this was the very reason why it had to face the wrath of the British Government.
3.3.6 Declaration of Famine

Syama Prasad Mookerjee in his own right, as a political leader, went on to discuss about the food situation in Bengal. Though there was acute shortage of food supplies in Bengal, the Civil Supplies Ministry, headed by Mr. Suhrawardy, declared that there was no food shortage. Syama Prasad at this stage brought into public notice, the fact that the Minister had intentionally sent wealthy traders and other private individuals, to buy rice from Orissa and Bihar, with full liberty. As a result, there arose a man-made shortage of food in these neighbouring state, and the price of rice shot up. Suhrawardy’s evil motives came to the limelight at once. While the Bengal Legislative Assembly boasted of controlling the province, the Ministry of Food and Supplies on the other hand went on to appoint a sole private agency like the Ispahanis to make huge profits, and that too without any official document. Syama Prasad infact, made the Government oblige in declaring the condition as that of a ‘famine’, and hence made the Government take full responsibility for feeding the people. Later, he suggested that there should be a full and complete control over prices and supplies by the Government. He also advised that if traders were given opportunity, then they would deplete the province with unfair means and unequitable distribution of food grains. He was very fair in suggesting that there should not be any party politics in this process as, no one party, whether in power or opposition, could solve the problem. He asked for the unity of all, so that the Ministry had the confidence of the people—in fact it could be a national approach as well. So, we see that, Syama Prasad always had a very broad outlook, and not confined to his province only. While debating the above issue, Syama Prasad opened the eyes of the public, saying that foodgrains were arriving from different parts of the country, but honesty was lacking in the Government distribution agent itself. Herein started the rise of public opinion in Bengal, which was very much wanted at the time, in order to steer the State out of starvation.

There were many political upheavals, which Syama Prasad dealt with successfully, and rightfully counteracted, for the betterment of the society and protection of the
minority, whether Muslims or Hindus. In this regard, the researcher thought it worthwhile to mention the role of Syama Prasad in bringing to light, the injustice that was done by the Muslim League Government, in 1946, towards the Hindus in Noakhali and Chandpur, now in Bangladesh. Syama Prasad raised this issue in the Assembly, in his political capacity. He openly proclaimed, that the riots in Noakhali, was a pre-planned and a deliberate programme for mass-conversion of the minority. Though the League Ministry said that it was not mass-killing; they actually suppressed the actual number of deaths to the public. Mass conversion was even more horrible than even physical death—anybody who opposed conversion, was rightaway killed. All the Hindu symbols were destroyed. Women were tortured and transported to other states. When there was infinite confusion there, the Government did not bother to interfere and stop the arson and crimes done.

While studying the political influence of Syama Prasad, in Bengal and India at large, we come to witness his ardent wish to bring about social harmony and equality. He was never against the Muslims. What he was against was the partiality of the Government towards favouring the Muslims and depriving the Hindus, in whatever ways they could. For example, in the above case of Noakhali, the League Government chalked out two different policies, one which affects the Muslims of Bihar, and another that affects the Hindu minority. The Government threatened to stop rations and relief measures to the Hindu refugees if they did not go back to Bengal. But on the other hand, some 150,000 Muslims were brought to Bengal from Bihar. Syama Prasad very bravely questioned the Ministry, as to whose expense were the above Muslims brought to Bengal from Bihar. He very justifiably said that the actual motive of Mr. Suhrawardy was to increase the population of Muslims in those parts of Bengal, where they were a minority. It was one and only Syama Prasad who brought out the true intentions of the Muslim League.

3.3.7 His joining the Hindu Mahasabha

Besides all the above issues that Syama Prasad placed before the public, the House or the Assembly, there definitely were many other political problems he took up. By then it was already known that the major cause of his joining politics was the
socio-political situation, specially that of the aftermath of the Government of India
Act.1935- that which actually imposed a provincial constitution on Bengal, with
Bengali Hindus being debarred from exercising any sort of political power in their
own province. In fact, by the end of 1939, he clearly understood that the Congress
would never take up the cause of Hindus in Bengal. He tried to explain the
situation to Subhas and Sarat Bose, but they too retreated on the ground that, the
cause would be too much communal in character. Thereby, Dr. Mookerjee in his
own capacity, toured different parts of Bengal in 1939, and realized the desperate
position of the Hindus. At around this time, the entry of Syama Prasad to the Hindu
Mahasabha and soon becoming its Working President, marked the actual beginning
of his true political career. His entry was welcomed by Gandhiji, who appreciated
Dr. Mookerjee nationalistic outlook, alongside his attitude towards the protection
of the Hindus. Much later, it was at the insistence of Gandiji, that Nehru invited
him to be a minister in the first Indian Cabinet in 1947. It was felt all over the
country, that a powerful rising star was shining bright on the Indian Horizon, and
Syama Prasad came to the limelight as an All-India national figure due to his
political courage, oratory and organization skill.

3.3.8 Secondary Education Bill

Apart from all this, with the presentation of the Secondary Education Bill in 1940,
there was a serious financial repercussion in the University. As the fees for
Matriculation Examination were a significant source of revenue of the University,
the Muslim League tried to deprive the university from this and so curtailed many a
function of the university. Again, when the muslims tried to usurp control over
higher education and municipal politics with the help of the two Black Bills,
Syama Prasad was forced to associate himself with the communal politics. It may
also be said that during this time, he had a bit more free time for politics, since he
had already retired from the post of vice-chancellor of Calcutta university at that
time.

Regarding the Secondary Education Bill, he was successful in foiling the League’s
plans to muslimize the above Bill, of course through legislation. Syama Prasad on
behalf of the opposition, demanded that the system of education should be such, that would enable Muslims of Bengal to develop themselves according to their beliefs. Similarly, he wanted the Hindus also to develop their education according to their best tradition. On September 1941, Dr. Mookerjee rose to support the motion for re-committal of the Secondary Education Bill to the Select Committee – all the above exposed the quality of the man as a constitutional and a parliamentary politician.

3.3.9 Other Political upheavals

All this time, the Quit India Movement was taking pace. Syama Prasad Mookerjee felt that this uprising was becoming stronger, mainly due to the repressive policy and hasty decisions of the Government. He stressed that the situation was going out of control on account of the refusal of the Government to transfer power to the people of India.

Another very interesting fact was the dialog between Syama Prasad and Lord Linlithgo, wherein Syama Prasad was asked to explain the meaning of a ‘National Government’, for which he dedicated his life. Syama Prasad infact, had really no answer for three reasons—firstly, he was sure that the Congress and the League would have never supported him; secondly, a Government based entirely on the Hindu Mahasabha, would never be national in the true sense, and thirdly, a Hindu political Government at the Centre, would have invited a lot of trouble.

A few days later, Syama Prasad met Jinnah and suggested that, both of them could demand an interim national government. Jinnah highly objected to it, wherein he washed his hands off this discussion and came back to Bengal.

At around this time, many political events took place, due to the wrong policies taken by the Government. For example, the Great Calcutta Famine of 1943—it was absolutely man-made, but the Government did not accept the blame. Dr. Mookerjee tried his best to make Governor Herbert, change his stance, but failed. Herbert, carried on his twin policies, i.e., the Denial and Evacuation Policy in Midnapore, keeping it a top secret, and which eventually led to the complete breakdown of the
social and economic life of Bengal. If the Government had listened to Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who was then the Finance Minister, then Bengal would have been saved of a lot of damage. When Dr. Mookerjee felt that it was impossible to stop the failing policies of the Government, he resigned from the Cabinet on 16th November, 1942. So it can be said that the fall of the Progressive Coalition was accelerated by Syama Prasad’s resignation.

After his resignation, Syama Prasad put all his effort into the relief work in the famine effected areas of Midnapore for the Hindus and Muslims alike.

However, the famine had abated, and Dr. Mookerjee had time to join the Amritsar Session of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1943. He proclaimed that as long as communalism existed in the field of Indian administration, the Mahasabha would be a political platform, for the achievement of the rights of the Hindus all over India. He claimed that the political goal of the Mahasabha was the complete independence of India. In fact, as a Mahasabha leader, he was the first one to protest against the Pakistan Resolution, based on Jinnah’s Two-Nation Theory.

Later, when Gandhiji’s overture to Jinnah made him great, Dr. Mookerjee was acclaimed anti-British. Syama Prasad watched regretfully the shifting of the Mahasabha support over to the Congress. This was the result of the Congress declaring that there would be no compromise on Pakistan. So, the common people felt that as the Congress had accepted the principles of Mahasabha, a separate existence of the Hindu Mahasabha was unnecessary. Finally, in 1945, Dr. Mookerjee called a meeting of the All India Hindu Mahasabha Working Committee in Calcutta, where Bhopatkar was elected the acting president in place of Syama Prasad, as his health was failing gradually. At the same time, he withdrew his name from the Calcutta University Syndicate elections, and his eldest brother, Rama Prasad replaced him.

The researcher, while referring to the thoughts of Syama Prasad regarding the civil war, felt that, the partition did not solve any problem. According to Syama Prasad, a civil war was welcome, where the Hindus would have easily won, because of
their sheer majority, and thereby the country would have been united, as it was originally. He later on went to join politics again in Independent India.

On the other hand, the researcher thought it important to mention that Syama Prasad was one of the greatest political influence in bringing about the partition of Bengal. It was due to his untiring effort that the Bengali Hindus got their homeland, as Syama Prasad very rightfully snatched West Bengal from the clutches of Jinnah. By that time, Syama Prasad had become Bengal’s outstanding leader and spokesman. So, he was nominated as minister in the National Government formed on 15th August, 1947.

Astonishingly, at around this time, near about 3000 Hindus were driven out of Narayangunge, a sub-division of Dacca, to the Indian state of Tripura. The Mahasabha had sent relief from Calcutta, and Syama Prasad went their personally to settle them in Agartala. This, he wanted to make known to the public, but the Defence of India Rules, posed an obstacle. He wrote to Gandhi, who in turn asked Maulana Azad (president, Congress) to make the Bengal Legislators support Syama Prasad. Hence, he was able to tell the country what Muslims had done to the Hindus, residing in Dacca.

This shows what sort of political influence he exercised in quite a few respects. It may be rightly said that Dr. Mookerjee’s entry into politics infused new vigour in the Hindu Mahasabha’s movement in Bengal and India at large. Later, due to his vitality, the Congress also started working in the interest of the persecuted Hindus of Bengal. The researcher traces another very important political step that he took during the reign of Fazlul Haq, the then Chief Minister of Bengl. At this point of time Syama Prasad thought it necessary to keep the League out of power, in the wider interest of Bengal, and India, as a whole. He very wisely befriended Haq and all the non-congress Hindu Legislators, which ultimately got rid of the Muslim League ministry. On 7th of December, Haq resigned from the Coalition Ministry with 127 legislators following him. Thereon, the Progressive Coalition Ministry was sworn in, on the 12th of December, in which Dr. Mookerjee became the Finance Minister. His opposition made a public statement to the effect that Syama
Prasad actually looked after the Muslims of Bengal, as he did with the Hindus of Bengal; this he could do because he personally was absolutely free of communal bias. He, within just two years of his joining mainstream politics in the second Haq Ministry, enjoyed huge public support, specially that of the Hindus, Anglo Indians and Indian Christians.

Though this ministry had to face various obstacles at the onset, Syama Prasad began to be looked upon as the guiding star of the Coalition Ministry. This party consisted of more than 150 members without the official Congress party, and therefore enjoyed the majority in the house. He claimed that this party was the first one of its kind that had a considerable backing of Muslims in Bengal.

Syama Prasad was a great visionary. This is evident from the fact that he was already thinking about an army for Bengal for its protection from the Japanese invasion. The foreign rule, as usual, objected to it. Syama Prasad retaliated by saying that all the objections raised could be overcome, only if the British trusted the Indians and Bengalis. Though his appeal of having an army consisting of both Muslims and Hindus, he failed to convince the British, they had already faced Bengali middleclass militancy in various leaders like Surya Sen, Khudiram Bose etc.

Another very important political event that happened was that of the partition of India. He was highly against the scheme of non-accession, where the provinces were being empowered to secede from the Indian Union and this, Syama Prasad thought, went against the political unity of India.

Bengal under the Haq ministry was not liked by many officials in the cabinet. He felt that the Governor was highly partial regarding constitutional steps. At this very time, the Congress had already finalized the ‘Quit India’ phase, and Syama Prasad could very well feel that this would bring about a terrible rejection from the British. Few months later, Dr. Mookerjee came to know that all the responsible ministers of the province were expected to resign in case they disagreed with the Government of India’s policy of repression. Infact, the important documents were shown to the
ICS British officers, and not to the ministers. A meeting followed, with the Governor meeting the cabinet ministers, who sought adjournment, on the ground that the documents were withheld from them. The ministers, along with Syama Prasad did not resign on this very ground. At this stage, the situation was so sensitive that, the British let loose a regime of total repression at the slightest provocation. The Quit India Movement put India into a state of rebellion. There was huge destruction, specially on the transportation system. Bengal was ablaze and Calcutta went under acute acts of Government repression.

As Syama Prasad had the experience of being the Finance Minister of Bengal, he was very rightfully given the portfolio of Ministry of Industry and Supply. Infact, even his political rivals, appreciated the way he handled various industrial problems and policy – framing in the most formative years of free India.

3.3.10 Syama Prasad’s role in Jammu and Kashmir

The researcher thought that it necessary to throw light on Syama Prasad’s role in the Jammu and Kashmir issue, which had already taken a good deal of attention from all parts of India. To begin with, it is to be noted that Jammu and Kashmir with Ladakh was the largest native state in British India. At the time of independence, Pandit Nehru and other leaders did not at all bother about Jammu and Kashmir, and so accepted the partition imposed by the British as it is. On October 25th, 1947, Jammu and Kashmir was invaded by Pakistan and Srinagar faced grave problems with the influx of Hindu refugees from Pakistan. Nehru immediately sent army assistance, and later instructed Jammu and Kashmir Government to make Sheikh Abdullah, the Prime Minister of an interim Government. But, Abdullah did not gain full support from the Sikhs, Hindus, and even Muslims. Many vital areas of Jammu and Kashmir were usurped by Pakistan, but Abdullah was least interested in the recovery of the lost territory. On the other hand, Nehru, was busy with his image building, represented by himself as the Prime Minister of India.
Much later, after the assassination of Gandhi, the JPP followers (Jammu Praja Parishad) were suppressed. Some residents of Jammu went to meet Syama Prasad, the then Minister in the National Cabinet, as a protest against the Nehru – Liaqat Ali Pact in 1950. Syama Prasad was duly warned about the fact that there was a fear of a second partition of India on communal line. Syama Prasad, as he had always been anti-communal, went to Jammu in 1952, where he was very warmly received by people from all walks of life. Syama Prasad discussed with Abdullah that the people of Jammu was genuinely interested in being integrated into the Indian Union. Unfortunately, Syama Prasad failed to convince Nehru and Abdullah, regarding the above issue.

During this time, Syama Prasad was highly active in organising relief for the refugees from East Pakistan. In 1951, he founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangha, and also launched the ‘The People’, an English weekly. Then, he was elected to the Indian Parliament in the first general election in 1952 and, then formed the National Democratic Party, as an opposition in the Lok Sabha. In November, 1951, Pandit Premnath Dogra came to see Syama Prasad, and sought his help to build a public opinion in the favour of the Jana Sangha. By that time, the J.P.P had already started the Satyagraha movement with the slogan, - *ek bidhan* (Indian Constitution), *ek pradhan* (President of India) and *ek nishan* (Indian Flag) – for Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. He demanded that Jammu and Ladakh should be fully integrated with India. He could very well predict that Abdullah was already making plans for independent Kashmir. He made quite an effort for peaceful solution, by corresponding with Nehru and Abdullah, but everything went unheard. Instead, thousands of people were tortured. As a protest against this, Syama Prasad, as the Jana Sangha President, observed the All India Save Jammu Day on 5th March, 1953. On 6th March, Section 144 was imposed in Delhi, when Syama Prasad and other leaders were arrested at Chandni Chowk. Unfortunately, they were not produced before the court of the Magistrate, within twenty four hours as per law. Ultimately with the intervention of Bhaagwati Prasad, Bijon Mukherjee and Hasan, Syama Prasad and others were later released. He entered Kashmir on 11th of May, 1953, and was immediately arrested by Abdullah’s police force on the
Life and activities of Syama Prasad Mukherjee

ground, that he did not have a valid permit to enter the territory. He was kept under detention without trial for about one and a half months. Syama Prasad fell ill, but no proper medical assistance was given. He breathed his last there on 23rd June, 1953, at the age of 52. Last, but not the least, it may be said that from all the informative sources that is got, it is felt that Syama Prasad had a deep understanding of the Kashmir problem. He went for constitutional politics and had deep faith in democracy – his motto of life was the Unity and Integrity of India.

3.3.11 Syama Prasad’s Political Contribution related to Education

Syama Prasad’s speeches in the Assembly show that he suggested a few things to the Speaker of the House, regarding the educational expansion in the province. He put forward his views that, such institutions should be established where boys of all nationalities could study together. He reminds the Government, regarding the issue of a common curriculum for the schools. But he also points out that the ‘makhtabs’ were not adhering to the policy of common books and curriculum; infact the Government itself had issued a special instruction, for special books to be written for only the Makhtabs, including religions instruction. Herein, Syama Prasad demanded that, if that be the practice, then the Hindu children should not be forced to attend these schools, because it was reported that in areas where 80% of the population were Hindus, the only primary institution available were the makhtabs. Therefore, Syama Prasad asked the makhtabs to be removed and a uniform kind of primary schools, with one kind of text books, curriculum, one method of teaching, should be introduced. If it was otherwise, then separate educational institutions of the Hindus of this province should be provided. So, here, Syama Prasad as a political leader demanded the expansion of education, especially safeguarding Hindu education, keeping in mind the situation of the province.

Syama Prasad in his capacity as an Assembly member and very deep into Bengal politics, observed that Muslim Leaguers like Mr. Ispahani tried their utmost to taint the prestigious Calcutta University. As, Syama Prasad himself was the Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University at that time, he made it clear to everybody that the Vice Chancellor recommends certain names only, which goes to the Minister of
Education and then to the Chancellor. To fight against the communal tendency of the League, he established the fact that there were no objection to having a larger number of Muslims on the Senate or in any other bodies of the University. Though, Syama Prasad’s main duty was looking into the educational activities of the University, he nevertheless got entangled in political tussle with the League, in relation to the University itself. He made it very clear to his critics, that all appointment for the teaching as well as non-teaching post, were made either by the Appointment Board or the Selection Committee.

Syama Prasad claimed that the University belonged to the people of Bengal—whether it be Muslims, Hindus, or any other castes. At this point, he observed though, that the Hindus had taken a larger interest in the running of the University than any other community. Of course, it was observed that they had much greater contribution to the educational field. He pointed out that the number of Hindu students in the Arts colleges, professional colleges, Medical and Engineering colleges, far outnumbered the Muslims. The Muslims did not even pursue their education till the secondary stage, barring a few. Syama Prasad stressed that the University and the Hindu population at large, were prepared to co-operate with the Muslims in this regard. He wished that the University should stand for, and serve all communities in Bengal. He welcomed the Muslims to come forward and capture the University by the strength of merit, sacrifice and service. Syama Prasad again initiated the setting up of a good girls’ hostel, one for the Muslims and one for the Hindus. Concerning the Bethune College, a premier college run by the Government for the benefit of women in this country, the University had come forward with a payment of at least one lakh of rupees, as a grant, in addition to the existing Government aid. He also hoped that alike the statutory grant for the Dacca University, a Bill should also be introduced in the House, to consider the case of Calcutta University regarding a similar grant. Syama Prasad complained to the Government that there should be a comprehensive and definite policy on the part of the Government for the various stages of education, and that which will go to secure gradually, educational reconstruction. Another significant grant Syama
Prasad wanted the Government to increase, was in the case of adult education, for which no proper policy was yet drawn.

When the question of secondary education came to the forefront, he found that nothing much was done by the Government. He, therefore, took the initiative to reform this stage along the lines of the recommendations of two distinguished British officers, Messrs. Abbot and Wood. Syama Prasad here stated that the private support and enterprises were the majority agencies of secondary education till then. But, the time had come for the Government to come forward. There was a general demand, that after Matriculation, the students were to be diverted to different streams—vocational, agricultural, technical and commercial, so that there would not be too much load on the University for higher education in academics. But, sadly, the Government did not frame any policy regarding this. It was Syama Prasad who pointed out these short comings to the Government authorities and himself took great initiative in bringing the above into reality.

Apart from all these, Syama Prasad laid a great stress on higher education, besides the regular colleges. One of them was a Military College in Bengal. He proclaimed that this would in no way involve any particular community as such. He just wanted a state policy regarding this and which could be a part of the Youth Welfare Movement. He also demanded an assurance from the Chief Minister about a grant of three lakhs of rupees which would be spent only for the physical health and education for both Muslims and Hindus.

Next he tread on to the path of University education. He claimed that the University College of Science was the pride of Bengal and India. Here, he wanted to introduce a new subject like Aeronautics, but was held back because of dearth of funds. Later, he compelled the Government to look into this field of Science education, with a proper policy and purpose.

Last but not the least, Syama Prasad went on to throw light on the Bengal Secondary Education Bill, put forward in 1940. He pronounced that the secondary education administration needed to be simplified. According to the previous rule, it
was laid down that a secondary school, which was not approved and registered by the Executive Council, would not be able to send any candidate for examination, including Matriculation of the Calcutta University—in addition, any student of such school will not be eligible for any sort of stipend or scholarship awarded by the Provincial Government or the Board. Syama Prasad strongly opposed to this and demanded the amendment of such rules. Though he agreed that the advancement of secondary education was the main purpose of the Bill, he felt that the public had the right to know the kind of education that was going to be controlled by the so called Board. He also suggested that the prevalent system of secondary education was predominantly literary in character. So, a need for a new direction was felt. Herein, Syama Prasad demanded that the Government must agree to transfer special education, like technical, industrial, agricultural, commercial, over to the control of the New Board of Secondary Education.

Next, Syama Prasad gave an important proposal, wherein, he opined that there could be different types of secondary education—one type would be secular and open to all, and another kind would be partly secular. So, in imparting such education, there would be English, Science, Vernacular, Mathematics, Geography, History and Hindu or Islamic culture. He also suggested that there will be a final examination at the end of these types of education, after which the students could go to higher studies in the University. Hence, the transfer of the control of secondary education to a Board of Secondary Education, was a great contribution of Syama Prasad as a politician. He was very confident that on this basis of equality, Hindus and Muslims could sit together and develop their education system consistently.

Apart from the above, Syama Prasad opined that the University vigorously pursued the scheme for training of teachers of the secondary schools. But, due to limited fund the University could not go as far. Herein, Syama Prasad requested the Government to take up the responsibility for the above.

The researcher, on the other hand, studied the disadvantages of Dual Control over the secondary education— that by the University and Education Department.
Syama Prasad said that he had discussed the matter regarding common rules for all education institutions, with the then DPI, Mr. Bottomley, but without no advancement. So, he suggested that, if the educational reforms were to be brought, the dual control should be done away with. In relation to this, he said that he still welcomed the establishment of the Board of Education, provided it had consistent demand and without any political or repressive measure. This very thought of Syama Prasad was a great contribution in the educational field for the days to come.

The researcher felt that the Secondary Education Bill brought forward a lot of criticism. Syama Prasad openly went against this, for the betterment of the University as well as the secondary education system. He observed that the Bill disclosed a hostile attitude on the part of the framers of the Bill towards the Calcutta University. He also felt that secondary education must be closely linked with the University stage, and if the educational interest are not to suffer, then there ought to be a broader recognition of the responsibility of the University and guide the cause of education in the best interest of the nation. He appealed to the public not to accept the Bill, ofcourse in the truest interest of the secondary education system.

So, the researcher acclaimed these Bill to be ill-intended. As it was very tough to capture Calcutta University, the League Ministry introduced this Bill (to create a Board to get control over the schools in Bengal) to weaken the University by curbing its control over secondary education. So, for Syama Prasad, this Bill crossed his tolerance level. He came out of the garden of education and tread onto the field of politics. The very thought of education being politicised communally was unbearable to him. So, as a politician, he tried to safeguard the cause of education from the first day in politics, to the last.

The researcher studied the political struggle of Syama Prasad from mid 30’s to mid 40’s, from very close quarters. There were a series of political events, which ultimately led to the partition of India. Ofcourse, this period, include both his political as well as educational endeavours. He was the most vocal leader in the
opposition in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, mainly in relation to the communal policy of the League. Syama Prasad was very apprehensive about the fact that official control was being exercised by the Government of Bengal in the field of education. He very rightfully warned the Government that the table would ultimately be turned on the Muslims themselves.

Syama Prasad believed, if education was rightly planned and implemented, then Bengal will have a great future. But this Bengal should include all parties and communities, and who stand for the welfare of the province. He wished that education may be so planned so as to rouse pride and respect for all cultures, along with the value of tolerance and understanding. He worked tirelessly for the upliftment of the total system of education with the help of grants, expansion policies, a proper budget. It can be said that Syama Prasad could actually fight for the above, only because he was a very strong opposition member in the Assembly. These were his very own political influence in the education sector of Bengal at that time. He rescued the education system from being communalised, the result of which would have been the destruction of the intellectual Bengalees.

Considering Syama Prasad’s political standing, many areas were mapped by Syamaprasadhimself. At the onset of his political career, Syama Prasaddid not go for mass movement. But the attitude of the Congress mainly, compelled him to take a side. He fought for the detenus in the Andamans; he went on to debate on the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Bill; suggested the adoption of proper war aims of the Government of India, etc. The researcher studied as to how Syama Prasad tried his utmost to solve the food situation in Bengal, and was successful in bringing out the real picture in front of the public.

To conclude, it may be said, that Syama Prasad stood for one thing—there should be willingness on the part of both parties to sink their differences and come to an amiable consensus. He very much wished that the administration in Bengal should have total confidence of both the Muslims and the Hindus alike and put the interest of the Province in front.
3.4 His Educational activities

At the time when Sir Asutosh became the Vice-Chancellor of University of Calcutta, Bengal’s education system was totally broken and was lacking excellence in any particular discipline. Everyone was busy with the anti-partition movement of Bengal. The youth and students started to leave schools and colleges in order to join the movement. On the other hand, words were being circulated that a national university needed to be established, but nothing concrete came about. At this very juncture, Asutosh held the reigns of Calcutta University. Herein begins the story of how Asutosh had trained Syama Prasad in the working of the same. This training started just a few days before Asutosh’s demise, when Syama Prasad was going to the Simla Conference for some University work. Sir C.V. Raman was accompanying him. Asutosh went to see them off at the station. On the way, Asutosh specifically discussed with his son about the working of the University, as well as his house, family, library, etc. That very year, he was appointed the Fellow from the Faculty of Arts, in place of Dr. Haren Mukherjee. But, little did Syama Prasad know that, this was the last time he would be speaking to his father.

So with the appropriate training from a Vice-Chancellor father, Syama Prasad was already and rightfully expected to be a fine and efficient administrator. He was like a pillar in the working of the University.

According to Syama Prasad himself, education was his first love, and not politics. He enjoyed his freedom in the educational arena to the fullest extent. In his diary, he had written “My tendencies lay in the sphere of educational administration and did not feel at all attracted by the noisy and dusty career of a politician. I thought the best way to serve my country would be through the path of education.” (Diary, 2.1.1944).

He was first and foremost an educationist and that, which had been already forecasted by his father, when he was still a young child. Dr. Anil Chandra
Banerjee, wrote in his book, “Asutosh found in Syama Prasad some qualities of mind and character which he thought, would make him a good educationist.”

In a letter to Pat Lovett, editor of ‘Capital’ dated July 23\textsuperscript{rd} 1923, Asutosh wrote a few words about his young son. He said that Syama Prasad had the making of a man in him. It was not a fond father’s affectionate estimate of a beloved son. As later events proved, it was a wise man’s correct and valuable assessment of a promising youth. He was one of the leading pioneers in thinking that education was the only way for any nation to emerge out successfully in all fields.

The Calcutta University had already turned into an esteemed educational institution during the days of Sir Asutosh. Syama Prasad had been duly trained to step into the shoes of his father. The Calcutta University was founded in 1857, which is perhaps one of the oldest Universities in the Indian sub-continent. The same year India witnessed the Sepoy Mutiny with its target of overthrowing the foreign rule. On the other hand, the main aim of the establishment of the University was to bring out the total educational system from the clutches of the British rulers. (Singha, D. pp.1). According to another law of the University, in 1857, two new Universities were set-up at Bombay and Madras. The law was signed by the Viceroy on 24\textsuperscript{th} of January, which is the University’s Foundation Day. The University was and still is, majorly an affiliating body. Sir Asutosh decided, that worldwide students, specially Asians will not go to London, Cambridge, Oxford, Berlin, Paris or Boston Universities for higher studies any further; instead they will come to this city to attain knowledge at the Calcutta University. All the post-graduate colleges under the banner of Calcutta University are called constituent colleges. Long before, this university had the jurisdiction outside West Bengal – such as Punjab, Burma, Kapurthala and most of north India. But gradually the jurisdiction shrunk.

This University has the pride to have four Nobel Laureates – Rabindranath Tagore, Ronald Ross, C.V.Raman and Amartya Sen (Roy Tathagata, 2012, pp .44).
Syama Prasad worked vehemently only for 28 years. The first 14 years (1924 – 38) he dwelt strictly on the field of education. The rest he spent in the political arena, as there was great uprisal for the independence of his country, and for which he was very much concerned. He dedicated his life to serve his country, through education.

During that time, though the education system was under the speculation of the Government, the major education policies were decided and controlled by the various luminaries of the society, who were in turn attached to the University. Syama Prasad due to his prior training from his father, could actually visualize and frame the principle, ideals, aims that should be followed by an independent country, and to bring about a nationalistic education system at large.

During the days of Syama Prasad, the school leaving examination was also conducted by the University. During his time, the University was very much autonomous, headed by the Chancellor, the post of which was held ex-officio by the Honourable Governor of the state. The Chancellor in turn appointed a Vice-Chancellor who literally ran the institution with the help of the Syndicate. There existed a still larger body in the University known as the Senate. The Syndicate was answerable to the Senate, and the members of the Senate were mostly the academic and non-academic persons within the University. When Sir Asutosh died, Syama Prasad was already a member of the University Senate and soon he became a member of the Syndicate as well, at a very young age of only 23.

It may be thought unfair that the position of such a high esteem be placed by hereditary succession, but the manner in which he steered himself through the various methods of the University administration, proved the aforesaid thought, wrong.

While he was working as an independent member of the Syndicate, he already started to think about the changes he wanted to bring about in the field of education. While he was in England, pursuing his career to become a Barrister, he
Life and activities of Syama Prasad Mookerjee

actually, instead of trying to excel in the field of law, studied the working of the various Universities in Britain.

Syama Prasad with the help of his coaching and training in the University affair, worked with great vigor and interest. Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, noticed him wherein he wrote a letter saying, “no one is prepared to work so hard and so selflessly as you are now doing”. (Roy, T. pp. 46). Syama Prasad Mookerjee was very close to Acharya Ray and showed his indispensability by extending his term by ten years after retirement of Acharya Ray. Acharya did not accept any salary during these years, instead donated the entire amount to the University. Even when Acharya Ray reached the age of 75 in 1937, Syama Prasad refused to let him go, thereby appointing him as Professor Emeritus. Syama Prasad had the great quality of working smoothly with his seniors as well as juniors. In 1926, a Congress of Universities of the British Empire was held in London which was hosted by the Cambridge University. Herein, Syama Prasad sent Acharya Ray to represent the Calcutta University at the Congress.

After the death of Sir Asutosh, administration of the University changed largely. The then Syndicate declined eminent scholars from visiting the University as guest lecturers. For example – Tagore had sent Dr. Sten Konow, a Russian fugitive linguist and Dr. Bogdanov, a philologist, to the University for accommodation. Both their requests were declined by the Syndicate. At this stage, Syama Prasad was a newcomer to the Syndicate and so could not influence the decision of the above body. But it was fortunate that during the era of Syama Prasad as a Vice-Chancellor, the University got to see its golden days once again. One of Syama Prasad’s great achievement as a Vice-Chancellor was bringing in Rabindranath Tagore to contribute towards the activities of the university. Tagore was already 73 years at that time and not in good health. Notwithstanding, the poet was invited frequently to give lectures at the university and was showered with medals and honours of various types. The poet was also appointed as a member of the board of management of the Khaira bequest to the university.
Syama Prasad, in order to influence the government policies on education, decided to go for nomination of the Bengal Legislative Council seat from the University Constituency with a Congress ticket. He was elected and became the youngest council member in the province. However, that same year, the Congress asked everybody to boycott the Councils with the objective of getting complete independence. Syama Prasad did not agree to this as he was in the Council for the purpose of education and not politics. But because he had been elected with the help of a party ticket he resigned and again asked for nomination as an independent candidate, where he came out successful.

It is important to remember that Sir Asutosh as a Vice-Chancellor (second time) was followed by the eminent lawyer and freedom fighter, Mr. Bhupendranath Bose, in 1914, and who was also the president of the Indian National Congress. He was in turn followed by William Ewart Greaves. Then came the famous historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar. The next in succession was W.S. Urquhart.

Till then, everything was running in its usual manner, till the time, when Dr. Hassan Suhrawardy, a Medical Officer with the East Indian Railway, succeeded Urquhart. Actually, the British Government tried to push forward the Muslims as a trump card, against the upcoming protests of the Hindus and Indians in general. This was very clear, because Suhrawardy was in no way connected with the field of education as such. In fact, he was the first Muslim to be appointed the Vice Chancellor from 1930 – 34. During his tenure, he appointed his cousin, Professor Suhrawardy (Hasan Shaheed Suhrawardy) as the Vageshvari Professor of Comparative Arts. Here it may be mentioned that the Professor was the brother of the ill-famed Husseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy who was the Premier of Bengal from 1945 to 1947, and then the Civil Supplies Minister during the famine and the brain behind the Great Calcutta Killings.

Here, it may be mentioned that inspite of all this, Prof. Suhrawardy was of a very different personality – he was a renowned academician. He had studied Art in Oxford, Russia and France. He also taught English at the University of St.
Petersburg. Infact, in later years, Tagore had invited him to Viswa – Bharati to research on Iranian Art and therein served as the Nizam Professor, with the support of Abanindranath Tagore as well, who was the last incumbent to the post. Though Syama Prasad had endorsed this appointment, his elder brother Ramaprasad and Manmatha Nath Mookerjee had opposed the appointment. Few others were also against it as they thought that Professor Suhrawardy was not quite familiar with the Indian Arts. Besides this, many thought that he had the advantage of being related to the then Vice chancellor, Dr. Hassan Suhrawardy.

But against all odds, Syama Prasad clarified that appointing Prof. Suhrawardy was actually a message to the country and world at large that the University of Calcutta was open to all deserving candidates, and not confined to a class, as it was said. Also during Syama Prasad’s regime, University of Bengal was actually the University of India.

Another milestone that Syama Prasad achieved, while he was the Vice Chancellor., was involving Tagore in the core working of the University. Tagore was then, at the ripe age of 73, had no way but to respond to Syama Prasad’s invitation. Here it may be mentioned that the Tagore family was already in touch with the University during Asutosh’s time. During Syama Prasad’s regime, Abanindra Nath Tagore, already held the post of Vageshwani Professor of Arts. Tagore’s son-in-law, Nagendra Nath was already appointed to the Khaira Chair of Agricultural Science.

It is important to mention that, during this time, all students were attracted by the Non Co-operation, movement of Gandhiji, and thereby started leaving their studies, and hence University as a result.

In 1932, Syama Prasad passed a resolution in the Senate wherein it was decided that, Tagore would be invited to deliver a course of lectures related to the Bengali language and literature at the post- graduate level. Tagore was conferred the status of a Professor, with the exception that, the usual University rules would not be applicable for him. Quite contrary to this, the Brahma Samaj and the Bangiya
Sahitya Parishad, quite diplomatically tried to dissuade Tagore from accepting the above position of honour in the University. However, Syama Prasad was successful in persuading Tagore to do otherwise. Tagore had immense confidence and love for the young Syama Prasad and ultimately relented to his request.

In 1934, an International Club was inaugurated, with the help of funds, donated by Andrew Carnagie, an American philanthropist, trying to promote world peace.

A felicitation was given to the poet by the University Cultural Association. In reply to this, the poet delivered a lecture on human values. Another very illustrious endeavour of Syama Prasad, was the establishment of Asutosh College, an undergraduate college, on the birthday of Sir Asutosh.

At this very time, Azizul Haque, who was the provincial minister-in-charge of education, and a Muslim Leader from Nadia, took another step forward to honour the poet, alike Syama Prasad. He launched a scheme, called Education Week on February 8, 1936. Herein, Tagore proposed that a set of books would be published for popular education. But, unfortunately, the scheme did not get enough support from the successive provincial governments. And so, a few books were published, including a book by Tagore himself.

During this juncture of time, Syama Prasad faced a lot of tragedy in his personal life. He had lost his few months old son and then his wife of eleven years, Sudha Devi. Inspite of all these, he put his utmost effort to run the University at the fullest possible way. Henceforth, the people at the University saw a careless and less formidable Syama Prasad, who was otherwise quite confident and appropriate in his appearance.

Syama Prasad by this time, had the full responsibility of remaining at the University as a de-facto. U.C. Suhravady was quite incapable of running the University, as he knew nothing about the administration, and clearly passed on every responsibility and judgement to Syama Prasad. Syama Prasad, on the other
hand, gladly extended his co-operation. All knew that Syama Prasad was the man behind Suhrawardy, running the institution.

In addition to all these activities wherein Syama Prasad tried to establish proximity with Tagore, in regard to the University, he went a step further, which should not go unsound. It has already been discussed that a request was made by Tagore regarding the employment of a few foreign delegates as professors at Calcutta University, which was ultimately turned down.

As soon as Hasan Suhrawardy became the vice chancellor, Syama Prasad persuaded him to accept the requests of Tagore and went on to invite Dr. Anna Selig, the Executive Secretary of the International University service, Germany, to become Reader in this University, after she finished her lectures at Viswa Bharati.

Ultimately, Syama Prasad became the rightful and youngest Vice Chancellor ever in 1934. Of course, the then Governor of Bengal, Sir John Anderson appointed Syama Prasad as the Vice Chancellor for the second time as well. During the first Senate meeting, after his appointment, Hasan Suhrawardy paid him a warm tribute, wherein he acknowledged the co-operation he got from Syama Prasad and let others know about his arduous hard work which brought about many reorganization in the University itself.

Another great scholar of Persia and the founder of Iran Society in Calcutta, Dr. M. Ishaque, who was also a member of the Senate, actually arranged for a party in Syama Prasad’s honor at the zoological gardens.

As is known, Calcutta University was the premier University in the whole country, and Syama Prasad being its head at such a young age, definitely shook hard the rigid hierarchy of the British rules. At that time, the Vice Chancellors and the Chancellors, were known as non-officials and the post were honorary. The post itself was a little less than equal to that of the Governor.
In all the by gone years, the Vice-Chancellors used to work in the University for a couple of hours on week days. But Syama Prasad, in his own typical work culture, spend the entire day, including Sundays.

In fact, the major part of Syama Prasad’s achievement, specially in the educational field was during his tenure as a Vice Chancellors (1934 – 38), at which stage he was successful in bringing about quite a few fundamental changes.

First of all, Syama Prasad wanted to set right the existing educational system, originally planned and framed by the typical colonialist, Thomas Babington Macaulay. We all are aware of the statement, Macaulay made in his famous ‘Minute’ on Indian Education’ in 1835. He went on to write, ‘…….. A single shelf of a European Library could match the whole native literature of India and Arabia ……. I externally never met any orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanskrit poetry could be even compared to that of the Great European nations ……… It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England …….. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinion, morals, and in intellect.’(Roy T. pp- 51-52)

In all, Macaulay wanted a group of Indians, who would consider themselves superior to those who was not well conversed in English language and thereby enjoy respect in the society.

Another thing needs to be mentioned. Even before Syama Prasad became the Vice Chancellor, on 12th February, 1933, he presented a very enlightening speech at the All Bengal University and College Teachers’ Conference. The very first thing which he pointed out was that, the existing system of education did not cater to the practical need of students. Unemployment was largely existent. He criticized the
then education system by saying that education should not only be there for the 
sake of acquiring knowledge itself; it should have an underlining of a particular 
vocation. Education should be more life-oriented.

During his Vice Chancellorship for four yrs., he gave three convocation addresses, 
wherein he suggested the basic vocational education (1935-38). Around that time, 
he was invited to three other University to give the convocation address, namely – 
Nagpur (1936), Mumbai (1937) and Patna (1937). Even after he was completely 
engaged in the political arena, he presented convocation addresses in five other 
University, in addition to the above. They were– Agra University (1940), Banaras 
Hindu University (1940), Gurukul University (1943), Sri Arobindo University, 
Pondichery (1951) and Delhi University (1952).

At the All India Education Conference at Nagpur in 1935, Syama Prasad said that 
education should provide people with apt leadership at the national level, prepared 
to serve in the regional courts and participate in the working of the corporation as 
well. He felt that India, particularly at that time, needed Indians with appropriate 
intelligence and with education at the University level. Without literate manpower, 
it would be impossible for a nation to free itself.

Keeping in mind all the above, he spoke at the All Teachers’ Conference, wherein 
he suggested the following :- “It is also for you not only to inculcate in the minds 
of youths the passion for knowledge and truth and the spirit of reverence, but also 
to foster in them that love of their motherland – that real patriotism – which impels 
one to sacrifice everything for the good of one’s country.

In relation to the above, it can be stated here that Asutosh always projected the 
idea,- Freedom first, Freedom second and Freedom always, (Roy. T, pp.52), 
ofcourse in the field of education. Macaulay’s education system led to a 
contradictory result for the Indians. The students educated themselves in the 
occidental arena, through which they gained knowledge, along with the idea of 
revolution or protest against imperialism. In any case, Syama Prasad did not
believe in revolution or war, till it was inevitable. Though he went for de-
macaulisation, he did not do it overtly. He went along in his own constitutional and
orderly way.

Syama Prasad being the Vice Chancellor, had a very constructive and solid idea, or
may be said, suggestions, regarding the aims of national education. He thought
that it was important to chalk out the aims in specific terms, so as to inculcate in
the students the necessity of education which will ultimately bring about freedom
and spirit of reverence, and side by side the sense of patriotism, which was duly
lacking at that juncture.

As is already known, he was of the idea, that the educational institutions were
mere manufacturing agents to produce educated clerks. He felt, that India needed
such higher institution that would bring about educated gentry in all fields -
financial, industrial, business etc. The University will make Indians grow up to
citizens, appropriately catering to the strength that our country needed the most, as
per the situation. To bring about such aforesaid ideal citizens, Syama Prasad in his
second convocation address in 1936 voiced quite a few important notable aims of
education in general. They were:-

- He suggested, that our education system should be very liberal in character.
  He meant that cultural and vocational along with technical training, should
  be given, so as to bring about a complete educated youth. While saying this,
  he very well knew, that to bring this system into practice, the first and
  foremost requirement was the making of good guides and teachers.

- As a link to the above aim, he went on to say that teachers should be given
  a lot of privileges as well as facilities to enrich themselves. They should be
  able to become appropriate personnel who would interpret knowledge to
  the students, which would in turn help in the making of good and strong
  citizens, - upright, true, and brave in their character.
• This very national education should be provided in all spheres of the society, - from the lowest strata to the highest one. The educational purpose itself should be moulded so as to bring about the best qualities in man and women – youth in general, and then go on to train them both physically and intellectually, so that they can render a devoted service to the nation, that is India.

• Syama Prasad never failed to understand that western civilization and culture had, in fact, quite a few merit, from which the Indians could draw inspiration and strength. They, could in fact, apply the western skills, if needed, in their own national education system.

• He also suggested that the University under his tenure, would give scope to all religious sects, men and women. Everybody would be eligible to get education, irrespective of any caste or creed. The teachers and students would be allowed to work together to achieve any noble cause. If needed, the state as well as the common citizen would, definitely come forward in this regard.

• For the above aims to be materialized, Syama Prasad suggested a few ways – and also the fundamental condition to be adopted for the above.

He was of the opinion that, India should enjoy a congenial political status, wherein decisions could be taken freely, keeping in mind the need of the nation, at large. So, a free India was the basic criteria to bring about the fulfillment of the above aims. He specifically mentioned, that whenever the Constitution of free India adopted its name, - whether a Dominion status, Swaraj or Self Government – his one and only concern was the fact that the constitution that was to be framed should give the Universities real power, in order to give birth to well deserved Indians.

If there is no freedom of the country, then freedom of education is destined to be a far cry. Interestingly enough, when Syama Prasad went to England to study law,
he was totally engrossed with the thought of how to steer his country out of the colonial system of education. Hence his main object of his visit to England had already changed. He was more interested in knowing the running of the French and British University. So, he hastily finished his Bar examinations, thereby utilizing the rest of his stay to study the pattern of western educational systems, so that he could imbibe certain positive clause of the western system into that of Calcutta University administration.

Infact, he firmly believed that, the youth and only the youth population could bring about a glorious situation, if aptly trained by the University. Keeping this in mind, he mentioned this very fact in his speech on the University Foundation Day, held at the Maidan. He went on to say that, - “I have abundant faith in the glory of youth and what I ask from authorities in the name of students of Bengal is that they be given a chance to live, an opportunity to enjoy life and the amplest facilities for the development of their health and character, so that in the days to come, they may be assets in the furtherance of the highest interests of our motherland.

The colonial rules, in its hey days, did not pay much heed to the funding of the education system as a whole. Syama Prasad stressed that, the state should agree to spend much more generously and adequately on every stages of education, than it had spent in the past.

In 1938, he said, he had in mind, a policy which would improve the total education system, from the lowest to the highest. To eradicate illiteracy, primary education way very necessary. It would instil in them great values, and would finally bring about the splinter of nationalism in the hearts of millions of Indians. Next in line came the secondary stage where it would actually prepare students for higher education. They could choose their line of education and in turn serve the country. Finally, higher education, such as, college and University, would conclude the very process that was initiated in the secondary stage, in order to open its petals in the future fields of science and technology and humanities. Syama Prasad expressed his wish to remodel the syllabus, reorganize the training systems and examination,
so that the student becomes powerful intellects. He wanted the learned youth to become a critical judge (positively) and apply his knowledge to the fullest extent. Herein, he stressed the use of Indian languages, called the ‘Vernacular’, as the medium of instruction till the Matriculation level and the study of these languages for further study, as well.

Syama Prasad suggested another very noble idea regarding education, in a country like India. He said, that education, to reach the mass, had to be very cheap, but without compromising with the quality. As a corollary, he went on to say that, with due respect to the past benefactors, he requested the rich and blessed, to please donate money to the University with open hands. Everything said and done, the most important thing that was to be noted was that, the ideal education hence suggested should be in close connection with the industry, trade and commence. Without this, the trained men will not be able to apply their acquired skill and knowledge. He had already stressed on vocational education, and thereby make individuals independent and strong.

Herein, arose a very significant consideration. He wanted the University to be absolutely free from political upheavals, that which was rampant at the time. Syama Prasad was actually afraid of the various political movements going out of its way to spoil the stable working condition and malign the University as a result.

All said and done, Syama Prasad opined that the quest for knowledge and the inculcation of gratitude was not the end of all duties of the University. So, just a year after he became the Vice Chancellor of this renowned University and in his very first convocation address, he did not forget to mention the importance of celebrating the Foundation Day of the University. Here it is appropriate to say that, before 1935, nobody celebrated the Foundation Day. So, from this day onwards, 24th January, 1935 was celebrated with a lot of pomp and show. It was a very colourful event in the history of Calcutta University.
As it happened, the University Act, Act No. II of 1857, was passed by the Legislative Council and received the Governor General’s assent on 24\textsuperscript{th} January, 1857. On this day, there was no inaugural celebration as such. Syama Prasad suggested that the Foundation Day may be now celebrated on 24\textsuperscript{th} January. He became the Vice Chancellor on 8\textsuperscript{th} August, 1934. The same year, on 12\textsuperscript{th} January Charuchandra Biswas, a Syndicate Member, requested that 24\textsuperscript{th} January should be a holiday – which was agreed upon by all other members.

During the celebration of the Foundation Day, huge number of boys and girls from all affiliated college would march with a band, with their individual college symbols and uniforms. At the head of the procession, there would be boys with the University Flag, designed by Syama Prasad. The procession would start from Presidency College at 7.30 A.M. and finish at Calcutta Maidan. Here the Vice Chancellor and the Syndicate members would be waiting to take the salute from the students. Senate members would also be there along with other delegates of the state as well as the University. At that very day, an elaborate exhibition of gymnastics from the students would be presented. To add a jewel to the crown, the students would sing ‘Chalo Jai, chalo jai’ while marching on that particular day, This song was specially composed by Tagore.

It may be highlighted that the entire programme was started and finished with the famous song ‘Vandemataram’. But, unfortunately, the students of Islamia College did not wish to join the procession, as a protest, along with all other muslim students. But, the thing that was most prominent was the absence of the Union Jack. During that time, the Union Jack was swaying all over the country; but, back in Bengal, Syama Prasad showed the courage to ban the Union Jack in the University Foundation Day celebration.

Syama Prasad his very first address to the gathering at the maidan, he went on to say, “from every corner of this great province, there rises today the anxious question, shall we live, or shall we die, shall we rise on shall we fall, shall we unite or shall we divide, shall we strive to reconstruct or shall we follow the barren path
of destruction. Let me gather in my own, the voices of you, all who are assembled here today and of those whom you represent and send back the response, we shall live, we shall rise, we shall unite and shall accept the truth and service as the motto of our lives”.

He let everybody know about his very own scheme, that he wanted to execute, in the University. He expressed his wish, where he wanted to develop in the students – strength, self-reliance, and pride regarding their own national culture. He wanted the students of this University, or the educational system at large, promote peace and happiness and have a very broad outlook. He discouraged class hatred. The students were expected to glorify Bengal by becoming great leaders and render service to the motherland. To carry out all the above, a flag was indispensable. A flag was already there, but a British one. Before, the University emblem had the seal of British India and with the words ‘Advancement of Learning’ written inside. Syama Prasad set on to change this emblem and seal and got a customized University crest, which was placed at the centre of the flag in deep blue. What he did was to change the emblem into one full blown ‘Lotus’, with the word ‘Shri’ in Bengali letter. – which meant eternal beauty.

Here, it may be mentioned that, though Syama Prasad wanted to avoid politics at its best, destiny proved it otherwise. He got a little entangled into politics in the field of education itself. As has already been mentioned, the bygone seventyfive years had seen colonial British influence all certificates and diplomas, given from the University. But Syama Prasad, with all his patriotic emotions, could not digest this. He worked hard for atleast three to four years, and with the help of a few Bengali scholars, changed the British emblem. In the first ever march – the ‘Lotus’ and ‘Shri’ was shining bright on the flag.

Nevertheless, a controversy floated, ofcourse with a political tint. Many said that the new emblem represented idolatry, which went against Muslim sentiment. The muslim leaders and students started protesting. An anti-Hindu movement emerged, wherein, the muslim students wanted to boycott the University and side by side,
claimed that a separate Islamic University be set up. In 1937, Tagore gave his convocation address in Bengali, where Vice Chancellor Syama Prasad, actually wore a dhoti and Punjabi before putting a gown on top, and he went to deliver his speech. But this convocation was boycotted by all Muslim students, inspite of being invited. Ministers such as Fazilal Huq, Najimuddin, Suhrawardy, Azizul Haque, stayed away from the function. Finally, Syama Prasad compromised with this religious fanatism. The word ‘Shri’ was removed, and in its place was seen ‘sun rays’ along the circumference, and a full blown lotus inside.

Infact, Syama Prasad realized that all-round development of the personality of the students was very much the call of the day. Bringing the students of various colleges together in occasions like the Foundation Day, was equally welcome. It was for the first time that at the convocation ceremony of the Calcutta University, Syama Prasad introduced the national dress to be worn, finally changing the University’s ‘Court of Arms’.

It may be referred to the report of the Daily, Anandabazar Patrika, on 31st January, 1937, wherein we come to know in detail the happenings of the very first foundation day of Calcutta University. The report goes as following :-

“At 7 A.M. the students of mostly all colleges under the Calcutta University, came and assembled at the Presidency ground. Then, they started marching through College Street, Wellington street, Dharmatala street and reached the Maidan. At the head of the procession, the University flag was flying high. Then followed the flags of the different colleges who marched, singing the song written by Tagore. Thousands of people cheered from both the sides of the Red Road. The students of the law college led the procession with the University flag. After the flag was hoisted by Syama Prasad, a group of students of the Bethune and Asutosh College sang the song ‘Cholo Jai Cholo Jai’ – which was applauded by thousands of spectators. The procession of St. Paul’s College, Shibpur Engineering College and Presidency College, were noticed specially by all. The Medical College also took part. But the most number of students came from Asutosh College, wearing dhotis.
This year, many colleges from the mufassal participated as well. Syama Prasad, the great man he was, said that celebrating the Foundation Day with such pomp and show, was not the only objective of the University. He, infact tried to bring all students from Bengal together and go ahead with the work or studies they had in mind. Syama Prasad wanted ‘co-operation’ to be the incentive put forward by the Foundation Day programme. He visualized a United Bengal – the educated Hindus, Muslims and Christian youths marching with the iconic independent flag. At the end of the speech by the Chairman, everybody sang the National Anthem with due respect. Later in the day, the Vice Chancellor gave away ‘certificate of excellence’ and ‘University Blue’, to the deserving candidates. The famous cricketer from Bengal, S. Banerjee, received this ‘University Blue’, honour.

3.5 His Activities in the Central Government

Syama Prasad is considered the godfather of Modern Nationalism. He was inspired by his parents to lead a ‘pure and manly life’. It is a well known fact, that the first phase of his career was spent enormously in the field of education, specially in Bengal. Due to certain reasons and particular circumstances though, he was forced to join politics. Politics he joined in a small way in 1929, which was characterized by high idealism. He was already working as a Congress candidate, representing Calcutta University, and joined the Bengal Legislature. At that very time, the Secondary Education Bill and Calcutta University Bills were passed, for which Syama Prasad had great opposition. He tried to persuade the Congress to oust the Ministry, but in vain.

During this period, Syama Prasad was highly influenced by Veer Savarkar and finally joined the Hindu Mahasabha in 1944. Syama Prasad somehow got drifted into the fold of Hindu Mahasabha, and he took this as an instrument, with the help of which he could serve his country and Hindus in particular. Infact, he actively participated in the 21st session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, under the Presidentship of Veer Savarkar. Syama Prasad Mookerjee himself became the working president of the All India Hindu Mahasabha later on.
It is interesting to note the cause of his joining the Mahasabha. Syama Prasad Mookerjee had a strong reaction to the communal politics of the Muslim League in Bengal and the Centre. He was of the opinion that the League had anti-national and disruptive forces in its working. So, he felt the need to counteract the communalist and separatist Muslim League of Jinnah. Truly speaking, Syama Prasad wanted the Hindu Mahasabha to be a apolitical body for the service of the masses, and not be restricted to Hindus alone. But, when Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, the blame was put on the Hindu Mahasabha, for which it became unpopular. Syama Prasad himself condemned the murder.

Further, when the Bhagalpur session of the Hindu Mahasabha was banned in Bihar, Dr. Mookerjee proceeded to defy the ban, got arrested, and was detained under the Defence of India Rules, though later released. With this in mind, he more or less dwelled into politics mainly, in the Centre. Most of his contribution is political, as he had no time or scope to contribute into any other field. Around this time, the Quit India movement had taken up a good pace, wherein the British unleashed a reign of terror in the country. Many Congress leaders were jailed. At this very juncture, Syama Prasad was among the very few leaders available, to take up this national cause and responsibility. He, therein persuaded the Government to desist from its repressive measures, but failed. As a protest, he quit the Bengal Cabinet and went forward to lead the national forces against the British.

However, Dr.Mookerjee was a political leader who felt that there was a need to counteract the communalist and separatist Muslim League of Jinnah – who in turn was demanding Muslim rights and a Muslim state of Pakistan. Syama Prasad propagated the Hindu practice of tolerance and communal respect as the reason for a healthy, prosperous and safe Muslim population in the country.

Along with Savarkar, Syama Prasad considered the \textit{Hindutva} as an instrument to awake the national spirit. According to him, it was a source to India’s rich civilization and its sacred culture, which carries the message of universal brotherhood. He was a nationalist to the core. ‘Country comes first’ – is what he
believed in, all his life. His motto of life was ‘Live and let live’. Infact, he lived and
died for the cause of the country. Syama Prasad was initially a strong opponent of
the Partition of India. In contrast to this, it may be mentioned that Syama
Prasad thought otherwise following the communal riots of 1946, organised by
H.S.Suhrawardy. Syama Prasad strongly felt that Hindus could not possibly live
comfortably in a Muslim dominated state. Infact, he himself supported the Partition
of Bengal in 1946, in order to prevent the inclusion of the Hindu majority areas in a
Muslim dominated East Pakistan. Thus, West Bengal was saved from the clutches
of the Muslim League, and remained with the Indian Union.

Even though Syama Prasad was not opposed to Muslims, he wanted that the
Hindus be protected from Muslim League onslaught. He visualized the peaceful co-
existence of people of all religion – though, later, his views were strongly shaken
by the Noakhali genocide in East Bengal where the Muslims cruelly massacred the
Hindus. Infact, when he resigned from the post of the Ministry of Industry and
Supply in 1950, he said, “........there is an impression in many quarters that the
agreement recently made, is the first great attempt of its kind to solve the problem
of minorities.” But, actually the administration failed to tackle the problem. The
Hindus were gradually exterminated from the North Western Frontier Province and
Baluchistan and later from Sind, as well. About 13 million Hindus were expelled
from East Pakistan.

After India became independent, the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, on the
advice of Mahatma Gandhi, inducted Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee in the Interim
Central Government in 1946 in New Delhi, as a Minister for Industry and Supply.
He framed the first industrial policy of the new Government of India. He proved to
be an excellent administrator. Many hold that, he was primarily responsible for the
adoption of the policy of mixed economy in the industrial field, by the Government
of India. He very rightfully said that, if Government, the Universities and the
Industrial organisations were made to participate in a national policy of intensive
industrialisation, none can resist the early attainment of India’s economic freedom.
Here, in the Centre, he carved respect from many Indians as well as by many
members of the Indian National Congress. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had a lot of praise for Syama Prasad Mookerjee. At this very time, came a very controversial issue of Nehru’s 1949 Delhi Pact with Liyakat Ali Khan, the Pakistan Prime Minister. Syama Prasad was firmly against the resolution made between the Indian and Pakistani Prime Minister, regarding the establishment of Minority Commission and guarantee minority rights in both the countries.

In addition to the above, he wanted Nehru to declare that Pakistan was directly responsible for the terrible influx of refugees, most of them Hindus. He disliked Nehru’s abject Muslim appeasement. As a result, on this issue of the 1950 Delhi Pact with Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Syama Prasad resigned from the Cabinet on 6th April, 1950. When the two Prime Ministers met and signed the agreement, Syama Prasad could feel that the riots in East Pakistan was a deliberate and cold blooded plan to expel the minorities from East Pakistan. One of the significant suggestions he made was the exchange of population, which of course Nehru rejected. Syama Prasad tried his best, to make Nehru understand the negative impact of the influx of refugees could bring about on India, but failed. Pandit Nehru and Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee had forever contrasting opinions about the plight of Hindus in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Syama Prasad wanted India to go to war against Pakistan to surrender one-third of this territory, for the rehabilitation of Hindu refugees, who had fled to India. But this request of Syama Prasad proved to be too late, as the Nehru–Liyakat pact had already been signed.

On October 21st, 1951, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangha (Indian People’s Union), after discussing at length with Sri Guruji Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, leader of the RSS at Delhi. Syama Prasad became its first President. Again, in 1952 elections, Bharatiya Jana Sangha won three seats in the Parliament of India, of which one seat was that of Syama Prasad. Simultaneously, he had also formed the National Democratic Party within the Parliament, which consisted of thirty two Members of Parliament and ten members of the Rajya Sabha. This party was however not recognised as an opposition party, by the Speaker of the house. It is important to note here, that Bharatiya Jana Sangha
favoured uniform civil code governing personal law matters for both the Hindus and the Muslims. Along with the above two clauses, the Bharatiya Jana Sangha wanted that there should be an end to the special status in Jammu and Kashmir. Later, he again voiced his opposition regarding the Article 370 arrangement, which he termed as ‘Balkanisation of India’, and the 3-nation theory of Sheikh Abdullah. As a protest, the Hindu Mahasabha, Bharatiya Jana Sangha and Ram Rajya Parishad launched a Satyagraha movement in order to remove the perilous provision of the Congress.

Syama Prasad had vehemently opposed the decision of the Indian National Congress regarding the granting of a special status to Kashmir, their own flag and Prime Minister. The Congress even decided that no one could enter Kashmir, including the President of India, without the permission of the Prime Minister of Kashmir. Syama Prasad once rightfully said, “Ek desh mein do Vidhan, do Pradhan aur do Nishaan nahi chalenge”, which means, a single country cannot have two constitutions, two Prime Ministers and two flags or National Emblems. The Congress also went on to say that no Indian Citizen from any other State could settle in Kashmir, and if at all they visited the state, they were to collect ID cards. Syama Prasad actually championed the cause of integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India. Another landmark contribution of his was the fact that he was able to retain parts of Bengal and Punjab during the partition of India.

Syama Prasad once again took part in the rejection of Cripp’s offer, which gave support to Muslim League’s demand for partition of India. Later on, he wrote to Lord Linlithgo, the Viceroy, to take into account the proposal for an Indo-British settlement. He also wanted to interview Gandhi in jail, but was not given permission.

As an opposition leader in the Centre, he delivered a convocation address at the Golden Jubilee Celebration of Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention held in Pondicherry in 1951. He also opposed the Indian Constitution amending Bill, in the Parliament, which was otherwise trying to restrict the fundamental rights, with
special reference to detention without trial. He gave a historic speech in the Parliament on Security Act. All the above activities made him a very strong opposition leader in the Lok Sabha.

3.6 Other works

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, will always be remembered due to his forward looking views and suggestions on education and women’s rights. While he was the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University and well after that, he tried to set up colleges for women, even arranging for their hostels, besides the colleges. He thought that there could not be any gender discrimination in the field of education. He fought for their rights as well.

Alongside, he had a strong vision regarding establishing bilateral ties with the neighbouring countries. He opined that when Indians visited foreign lands, they carried with them messages of peace and goodwill.

One of his great works, was his vision, his opinion on nuclear energy. He, infact, wanted to see India as a successful nuclear power. He said that India has all the raw materials for the development of atomic energy and had said that this atomic energy might affect all phases of human life. He laid the foundation stone for the Institute of Nuclear Physics in Calcutta in 1948. He tried to make the people understand that atomic energy could be a source of power, transportable, limitless in quantity and usable for majority of man’s needs.

After independence, when he joined the Interim Government of Nehru as a Cabinet Minister, he experienced his economic liberalism grounded, while facing the realities of India. His views were very clear regarding the role of private capital in the industrial development of India. He stressed on the relation between capital and labour. Syama Prasad supported the giving of full scope to private enterprises with suitable Government regulation. He stood for a rational co-ordination between private and public capital.
While the researcher went through the inaugural presidential address to the Jana Sangha, it is noticed that he stood for a well planned, decentralized national economy. He also stressed that, the sanctity of private property should be observed.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee founded an English weekly, “The People”, for which he took time off from his very busy schedule. Although he was fully occupied in the political activities, his connection with literary, social and religious organisations and associations did not cease to function. He even joined the celebration of ‘Sanchi’ where the relics of Sariputta and Moggalana, disciples of Buddha, were finally reposed. He visited Burma, Cambodia and other Buddhist countries of South East Asia as the President of Mahabodhi Society of India.

On the other side, in 1935, he became Member of the Court and Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, where he took an active interest in its smooth running.

Apart from this, a highly versatile character can be seen in Syama Prasad. We notice his spark in the world of journalism as well. He was the editor-in-chief of the English daily, “Nationalist”, and Bengali Daily, “Hindustan”, and ‘Janasangha’. During the years 1923-24, Mr. Pat Lovett edited a magazine named ‘Capital’, where Syama Prasad wrote an editorial column named ‘Ditches Diary’.

Syama Prasad was the Chairman of Asiatic Society of Bengal for two years. He was also appointed an executive member of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, as well as of the Indian Statistical Institute.

3.7 Conclusion

Syama Prasad in a speech in December 1943, said that he stood for no special favours for Hindus, but for welfare and advancement of India as a whole.

Regarding the field of education, he was of the opinion that Indian Universities must play a role in making of a new India. Indian varsities should not regard themselves as exclusive bodies, apart from the country’s current life. The alumni of
the University should be instilled with the country’s history and civilization. They should have unity, strength and bravery. They should make themselves available for the various services to the nation.

Regarding foreign relations, he was of the opinion that India had lived peacefully with her neighbouring countries with messages of peace and goodwill.

After he had formed Bharatiya Jana Sangha, it tried to promote free-market economics as opposed to the socialism of Nehru’s policies. Syama Prasad also took up the cause of integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India. Later on, this party of Syama Prasad Mookerjee went on to form the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 1970s. To voice his opposition, he turned outside the Parliament. He termed the arrangement under Article 370 as the ‘Balkanisation’ of India. When all the Congress leaders were facing political incompetence to deal with the Muslim problem in India, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee said a few prophetic words in his last speech in Parliament in 1952. He mentioned that there should be a planned exchange of population and property at Governmental level as part of the Partition scheme, in order to bring about peace and harmony in the society.

He was a nationalist to the core of his heart. His watch word has always been, ‘country comes first’. Till his last day, he believed and practiced this and died a martyr’s death. His services were lost to the country at a time when it was most required. It is hoped that his legacy will be fresh in the minds of people and it will guide the cultural, political and educational activities of the nation for the future.

Syama Prasad is equally respected by members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha and Vishwa Hindu Parishad. In a speech in December 1943, he made it clear that he stood for no special favours for Hindus, but for welfare and advancement of India as a whole. This he did because, during that time, the words ‘secularism /communalism’ underwent a cynical interpretation. He never agreed to compromise with one’s conviction for love of self-interest or power and he never clamoured for power in any office. He thereby had no hesitation in resigning from the Cabinet, so headed by Nehru.
Dr. Mookerjee was a democrat and a fighter for liberty and freedom of expression of every individual. As a result, he very much opposed the motion in Parliament, regarding the amendment of the Bill, which was restricting the fundamental rights.

He was successfully defeated both the Congress and the Communist candidates, and got elected to the Parliament in General Election from South Calcutta Constituency.

To conclude, few things may be mentioned, that has been done to pay homage to this great leader of India. On 27th August, 1998, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation named a bridge after Mookerjee.

On 22nd April, 2010, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi’s newly constructed Rs. 650 crore building was named ‘Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Civil Centre’. It was inaugurated by then Home Minister P. Chidambaram.

In 2001, CSIR, the main research funding institute of the Government of India, formed a new fellowship named after him. The Syama Prasad Mookerjee Fellowship is the most prestigious one given in India for doing a Ph.D. Only 20% of students who clear the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF CSIR/UGC) are eligible to sit for this examination. The sacrifice of life of Syama Prasad Mookerjee for the cause of integration of Kashmir with rest of India, ultimately, forced the Indian Government to bring Jammu and Kashmir under the Indian Constitution, Union Parliament, Supreme Court and the Election Commission of India.
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"My tendencies lay in the shape of educational administration and I did not feel attracted by the noisy and dusty career of a politician. I thought the best way to serve my country would be through the path of Education."

- Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee