

# Syamaprasad Mookerjee as a Man and a Patriot

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There was a great re-awakening of India in the second half of the 19th century as a result of her close contact with the new thought currents emanating from the West. In the history of Indian political awakening Surendranath Banerjea stood in the forefront of the Indian leaders since the 70s of the 19th century. His fiery messages through the Students' Association and the Indian Association (1875-76) placed before the English-educated countrymen the vision of composite Indian Nationalism (not Hindu nationalism).

Twenty years after the birth of the Congress, Bengal in 1905 was flooded by the surging tides of the Swadeshi Movement the ideal of which was one indivisible Indian nation and the complete independence for India. Bepin Chandra Pal, Upadhyay Brahmabandhab and Sri Aurobindo were the greatest protagonists of the new political ideals. In spite of their profound regard for Hinduism and its cultural heritage, they were broad-minded enough to accommodate everybody, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, in the common nationality. They ardently cherished the ideal of selfless service to the country without clamouring like the present-day politicians for personal gains and profits, and that was the central spiritual foundation of Indian Nationalism. Syamaprasad Mookerjee belonged to that shining band of Indian patriots and social servants.

Syamaprasad was a worthy son of a worthy father, Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee, who was generally honoured during his lifetime and even after his death as Banglar Bagh or the Bengal Tiger. Syamaprasad not only continued his father's intellectual and patriotic traditions, but also pushed them forward and upward. The world-renowned thinker Benoy Sarkar has offered to Syamaprasad, the tribute of Bapka Beta (worthy son of a worthy father) in his Baitlake written by this humble self (Calcutta, 1942).

Among the countless patriotic souls that India produced in course of her national struggle for Freedom, few could bear comparison with Syamaprasad in patriotic self-sacrifice and dedication to the cause of the country. On 17 July 1942 the rebel poet of Bengal, Kazi Nazrul Islam, wrote a touching letter from Madhupur to Syamaprasad, then a member of Fazlul Haq's progressive Coalition Ministry. His observations run as follows:

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>Ú<sub>j</sub>ú "à<sup>[3</sup> \à[> "à<sup>3</sup>àÒü &Öü ®<sub>j</sub>à't<sub>j</sub>àÈçìA<sub>j</sub> šèøç Ñ-à<ã> A<sub>j</sub><sup>1</sup>â—ē[<sup>f</sup>> ààR<sub>j</sub>à°ã<sup>1</sup> "âš>àìA<sub>j</sub> \* Îâ®<sub>j</sub>àÈ  
àÎâìA<sub>j</sub>Öü ÎA<sub>j</sub>ì<sup>0</sup> "àìK<sup>3</sup>i> šØ<sub>j</sub>ìâ—"âš>à'âÒü Òìâ> &i<sup>f</sup>iÂ<sup>1</sup> Î<sub>t</sub><sub>j</sub>,A<sub>j</sub>à<sup>1</sup> >àÜA<sub>j</sub>ìú”

Can there be a greater tribute to Syamaprasad as a non-communal political leader than the one voiced by Kazi Nazrul Islam, that exceptional cosmopolitan humanist?

Syamaprasad was the second son of Sir Ashutosh, being born in Calcutta in the ancestral house on 6th July, 1901. Even in the early stages of his life, his father could notice in him certain special qualities which prompted him to make a comment about his son to Pat Lovett of the Capital journal on 23rd July 1923: 'He has the making of a man in him'. It was not a mere expression of a father's natural affection for a son, but the realistic assessment of his son's futuristic possibilities.

Educational background

In 1917, Syamaprasad passed the Entrance Examination in the First Division with a Government scholarship. He was admitted to the Intermediate Arts Class at the Presidency College, wherefrom he passed the F. A. Examination in 1919 standing First in the University. He took up Honours in English and continued his undergraduate studies at the same college and came into close contact with the legendary Professor of English, Mr Percival, who was extremely satisfied with the brilliant result of Syamaprasad and gave him the charge of conducting Presidency College Magazine. Syamaprasad addressed a memorable letter to Prof. Percival on 20th November, 1920 in which he expressed his deepest reverence for his great Professor. Syamaprasad expressed boundless joy and pride in receiving so deep affection from his intellectual guru, Professor Percival. He prayed to him for blessing him so that he could develop 'pure and manly life'. Not prize, not scholarship, not honour, not mere learning, —no such small thing he wanted from his beloved Professor; his only prayer was his Professor's blessings to him for the growth of his 'pure and manly life'. The spiritual animation that inspired Syamaprasad to make such an unusual prayer to his teacher is almost without a parallel in modern history.

In 1921, Syamaprasad stood First in the First Class in English Honours. Two years later, he recorded a similar victory in his Post-Graduate studies in Indian Vernacular. In 1924, he stood First in the First Class in B. L. Examination and was elected a Fellow of the University Senate (1924). On Sir Ashutosh's death (25th May, 1924) he was also elected a Fellow of the University Syndicate in the vacancy created by his father's death.

In this connection, it is necessary to emphasize that although saturated with patriotic feelings, Sir Ashutosh thought it imprudent to come into direct confrontation with the Government; but at the same time he was the last man to yield like an imbecile coward to the Government's insolence. When Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal and Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, made a slighting comment on Sir Ashutosh's introduction of higher Post-Graduate studies at the University as a 'thoughtless expansion', Ashutosh retorted in the Senate in a thunderous voice, 'Freedom first, freedom second, freedom always'. The sum and substance of this retort was that in the interests of real educational development freedom was a pre-condition of success. Syamaprasad's close intimacy with the University of Calcutta was fostered by such an intellectual and moral discipline.

Syamaprasad was in the true sense of the term a worthy successor to Sir Ashutosh in the educational field. He was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta for two terms during 1934-36 and 1936-38. He was the youngest Vice-Chancellor of the University. Following his father's example, he took some effective steps for the development of the Bengali language and imparted a new sense of dignity to the mother tongue as the chief medium of education and culture. There was no parochialism in him. His approach to life was as much national as universal.

It was under his Vice-Chancellorship that the world-poet Rabindranath Tagore was invited to deliver the Convocation Speech in 1937. It was the usual practice throughout India at that time to deliver Convocation Speeches in the English language. Rabindranath for the first time broke that colonial tradition and surprised the whole of India by delivering his Convocation Speech in his mother tongue, that is, in Bengali.

In the 1930s Syamaprasad received high recognition as an intellectual both at home and abroad. These laurels include his nomination as Indian representative at the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations.

Plunge into politics

At the beginning of his youth, Syamaprasad's main concern was the question of development of education in national interests. His plunge into politics was noticeable a few years later. To combat the weakness of the Congress and the aggressive posture of the Muslim League was founded the All-India Hindu Mahasabha by V. D. Savarkar. Syamaprasad joined its Calcutta session in 1939, and during 1940-44 he became at first the Working President and then the permanent President of that organisation in Bengal. In Freedom's battle, these years (1940-44) were highly significant in the history of India. The Muslim League headed by Mohammad Ali Jinnah at its session at Lahore (1940) raised for the first time an effective demand for the partition of India and the formation of a sovereign state for the Muslims comprising Muslim majority North-Western India together with Muslim majority areas in Eastern India comprising Bengal and parts of Assam. In order to counter the aggressive designs of the separatist two-nation theory of the Muslim League, Syamaprasad at the organizational level connected himself more effectively with the All-India Hindu Mahasabha.

Syamaprasad once told me in 1946, 'Organized tyranny can be faced by organized resistance'. Herein lay his supreme justification for his identifying himself completely with All-India Hindu Mahasabha as a part of his real-politik. To condemn Syamaprasad as communal on this score is worse than folly. In the meantime, in 1942 took place the Quit India Movement which was under the Congress leadership the last and the greatest anti-imperialist struggle taking a violent turn and shaking the British Empire in India to its very foundations. Midnapore became the most important storm-centre of that violent upsurge. But that was the last phase of a grim fight against the British imperialism in India by the Congress, after which its leadership became more and more anxious for seizing and sharing political power on a compromise formula with the Muslim League even by sacrificing the longcherished ideal of one indivisible Indian nation. Power, position and purse became the main concern of the Congress leadership despite Gandhiji's presence on the scene. It was a degrading condition of the Congress leadership. The situation took a turn for the worse day by day till India was partitioned and political power transferred to the two communities, which was miscalled Independence of India of August 1947. The naked fakir Gandhiji, staying at that time in a humble cottage at Beliaghata, Calcutta, was simply weeping while this bleeding operation overtook his beloved country.

### Strongest voice in the opposition

It is worthy of notice that Syamaprasad was the strongest voice in the Opposition camp against the weak-kneed imbecile leadership of the Congress and the aggressive demand of the Muslim League for separatism in secret connivance with the British Government.

In the early 40s of the last century Syamaprasad functioned with consummate ability as the Finance Minister of the Fazlul Haq's Progressive Qualition Ministry of undivided Bengal. Fazlul Haq was in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity and stood in opposition to the Muslim League's separatist politics. Syamaprasad was the staunchest critic of Muslim League's communalism. But he was catholic enough to respect the sentiments of the Muslim community with all his sincerity. His ambition was to forge a united Indian nation with the co-operation and support of all the children of Mother India, no matter what be their colour or caste, creed or cultural heritage.

While working as the Minister in the Haq Ministry, Syamaprasad wrote certain strong-worded letters both to the Governor of Bengal and the Viceroy of India. A book entitled A Phase of the Indian Struggle was published bearing his name (Calcutta, 1942). It was banned by the British Government immediately after its publication.

The first significance of this book of Syamaprasad, in the estimation of Professor Benoy Sarkar, was that all these letters were written not after quitting or losing his job as a Minister, but while continuing as a full-fledged Minister. This single fact shows the extremely courageous stand taken by Syamaprasad on the political issues. In Benoy Sarkar's *Baitake* (Calcutta, 1942) Benoy Sarkar, while offering greetings to Syamaprasad, observed: '[W]ith these letters the prestige of the Bengalis' has immensely raised'. His voluntary resignation on grounds of principles from the Haq Ministry was a glorious instance of his self-sacrificing spirit.

From Syamaprasad's English Diary of 1946 we came to learn that the greatest political work of the Hindu Mahasabha as led by himself was to dispel the sense of anxiety and insecurity of Pakistan domination from the mind of the Hindus. The central idea in his scheme of national freedom was not 'to exchange slavery under the British with slavery under Pakistan'. He preferred death to dishonour. In his English Diary he wrote on 4th January 1946 the following words: 'Force must in the last analysis be met with force. An internal policy of non-resistance to armed violence would eventually condemn any society to dissolution'.

### A true child of Aurobindo

In these words of Syamaprasad we find the ringing tone or vibrating voice of Sri Aurobindo of the *Swadeshi* times. His editorial article under the caption "The Realism of Indian Nationalistic Policy" (published in *Bande Mataram* daily on April 24, 1908) records his conviction that no nation on earth has ever attained its freedom from foreign domination by pursuing a policy of mere Ahimsa or non-violence. A subject nation has to fight out its freedom battle not merely by pacific methods, but also by the method of 'purification by blood and fire'. In his article on 'The Morality of Boycott' written in 1908, Aurobindo again advocated the fiery energy and courageous resistance to tyranny in a manly way for the redemption of the mother country.

In 1907, reports were pouring in from East Bengal regarding systematic insult and repression, even the violation of the chastity of women by the mercenary Muslim goondas under instigation of the British masters. These mercenary Muslims went to the length of violating the sanctity of Vasanti Devi, whose image was broken. Immediately thereafter, Sri Aurobindo observed in his *Bande Mataram* daily, the greatest organ of the extremist political party, 'And as our people (the Hindu people) do not lift their finger or court death when seeing women violated before their eyes, they have morally ceased to exist . . . If Bengal has been seized with such a severe palsy as not to strike a blow even for the honour of our women, it is better for her people to be blotted from the earth than encumber it longer with their disgrace'. Syamaprasad was psychologically and spiritually a true child of Aurobindo's vehemence and fighting qualities.

I have seen with my own eyes the 'Direct Action' initiated by the Muslim League in Calcutta on 16th August in 1946. In the face of the sudden organized attacks by the Muslims thousands of innocent Hindus were murdered whose bodies lay scattered here and there on the main roads of Calcutta. It at once drew the strongest protest from Syamaprasad Mookerjee both inside the Bengal Legislative Assembly and outside. The event has gone down in history as the Great Calcutta Killings. The suddenness and organized violence with which the innocent Hindus were caught unawares and done to death beggar description. Retaliatory action on the part of the Hindus started before long. The agents of the Muslim League turned their attention next from Calcutta (where they were in a minority) to Noakhali and Tripura (where they enjoyed overwhelming majority) to butcher to death by organized violence thousands and thousands of Hindus. The heated exchange of words between Syamaprasad and Mr Suhrawardy, the Premier, in the Bengal Legislative Assembly is still fresh and undimmed in many

minds.

In 1946, Syamaprasad was elected a Member of the Constituent Assembly from undivided Bengal preceding the Partition of India on communal basis in August 1947. It was mainly through his efforts that an organised movement was launched that ultimately created the State of West Bengal with Hindu majority and integrated with the Indian Union. At that time Saratchandra Bose (the elder brother of Netaji) and Mr Suhrawardy etc. raised the cry for the formation of a sovereign independent state for the Bengalis comprising all parts of Bengal including Calcutta and Assam. In this critical hour Syamaprasad with his far-sighted political vision and clear thinking stood out in the toughest opposition to Sarat Bose-Suhrawardy plan. The State of West Bengal in its present shape, however small and truncated, was more the handiwork of Syamaprasad Mookerjee than anybody else. If for nothing else, at least for this heroic act of carving out for the Bengali Hindus a homeland of their own and integrated with the sovereign Indian Republic that we should remain grateful to him.

In Nehru's Cabinet

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, while forming his Cabinet, was compelled by circumstances to include in his Ministry a critic and formidable personality like Syamaprasad Mookerjee and offered to him the charge of the Portfolio of Industry and Supply as a Cabinet Minister. In course of a short time he proved his calibre in handling the Department in a masterly way. He had already given enough proof of his remarkable vision and ability in handling educational matters as well as financial matters as the Finance Minister of the undivided Bengal. He never allowed his vision to be circumscribed by certain preconceived political notions. He saw things with his own clear eyes and judged them in the light of his conscience and intelligence, and the whole approach was inspired by fervent patriotic passion and pragmatism.

It needs be emphasized that Syamaprasad shone like a luminous star in Pandit Nehru's first Ministry, sometimes casting even the Prime Minister himself into the shade. As a result of sharp difference of views between himself and the Prime Minister, he tendered resignation to his ministerial office after a term of two years and a half (15th August 1947-8th April 1950). His high regard for moral principles and patriotic dedication to the cause of India lay at the root of his voluntary resignation which was simply exemplary. The fundamental reason of his resignation was his conscientious total disapproval of Nehru's Pakistan appeasement policy most injurious to India's national interests.

In the year 1950, lakhs and lakhs of Hindus of East Bengal became victims of Pakistani religious fanaticism and sought refuge in West Bengal and other parts of the Indian Union. Syamaprasad took upon himself the urgent task of rehabilitating and feeding these lakhs of displaced Hindus. In 1951 he founded in Delhi a new political party called 'Bharatiya Jana Sangha' with himself as President. In subsequent times this party was transformed into the Bharatiya Janata Party popularly known as the B. J. P. It was apparently pro-Hindu in outlook but

Indian nationalist through and through in deeper spirit. Atal Behari Bajpayee was its foremost leader for many years. The formation of the Central Government in New Delhi with Bajpayee as the Prime Minister (2001-2005) was a vindication of Syamaprasad's political vision and statesmanship.

In 1950, the Indian Constitution was promulgated and in the General Elections held under this Constitution in 1952, Syamaprasad stood as a candidate from South Calcutta constituency and defeated both the Congress and the Communist candidates by huge margin and was elected a member of the first Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Parliament, in 1952. Both inside the Parliament and outside he became the most vocal and vigorous critic of Pandit Nehru's policy of Pakistan appeasement. In respect

of Jammu and Kashmir, Syamaprasad's policy was consistently non-communal, the fostering of Hindu-Muslim tolerance and respect and full-fledged integration of that territory with the Indian Republic. His logic and conscience led him to feel very strongly that Nehru's Pakistan appeasement policy was a marked sign of his weakness fraught with dangerous consequences for India. His keen sense of realism taught him that mere mouthing of high-sounding words or catchy political slogans was nothing but escapism from hard realities.

In this context I contributed an article under the title of 'Pandit Nehru must Lead or Leave' to the famous Calcutta daily, Advance, on 3rd April 1950 in which I voiced my feelings in the following words: 'The Nehru Ministry must immediately bid adieu to its traditional policy of Pak appeasement which, in the present context, will be tantamount to political harakiri for the whole race. It is better to die after a brave fight against wrong than to perish through a cowardly surrender to a wrongdoer. Gandhiji's categorical direction for action in a situation like the present had always been thus: "I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she would in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour."'

Immediately after the publication of this passionate article on the part of the writer, it drew the attention of the Central Intelligence Department and a letter was sent to him asking him to show cause 'why he shall not be discharged from Government service.' The writer was a newcomer in Government Service and did not know the binding rules and regulations for a Government employee. In that critical situation it was Dr Atul Chandra Gupta, the greatest Bengali scholar of the time, who saved the writer from imminent danger by his wise legal advice. In 1952, the Government of West Bengal in the Education Department, while confirming the writer as a Lecturer in History, added a subclause to the effect 'confirmed but with a warning.'

In the years 1952-53 Syamaprasad stood forth both in the Parliament and outside as the strongest political opponent of Pandit Nehru and put systematic pressure on the Nehru Government to replace its policy of Pak appeasement by a vigorous line of action befitting the safety and honour of the great Indian nation.

#### Nehru-Syamaprasad correspondence

During 1951-52, there was a lot of important correspondence of Syamaprasad with Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, and with Sheikh Abdullah, the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir. This correspondence reveals Syamaprasad as a clear-sighted statesman as distinct from a demagogic politician. The autocratic deal of Abdullah set up against him a revolting Praja Parishad, an association of Jammu tribals, and changed Jammu and Kashmir into an explosive area. Instead of sitting idle, Syamaprasad courageously proceeded to find out an honourable solution between Abdullah and Praja Parishad and also to find out a proper solution for the full integration of Jammu & Kashmir with India. Pandit Nehru's view was that Kashmir was already an integral part of Indian Union. Syamaprasad on his behalf questioned the logic of Nehru Government's retention of the special permit system for any Indian

entering the territory of Jammu & Kashmir. Syamaprasad repeatedly asked the question, if Jammu and Kashmir had become integrated with India, why the special permit system should continue any longer? Completely frustrated at Nehru's attitude to this question, Syamaprasad decided to make an on-the-spot enquiry of the real conditions of Jammu & Kashmir. Before starting for Jammu & Kashmir even without having formal permit Syamaprasad sent a telegraphic message to Abdullah to which a negative reply was sent by the latter which was received by Syamaprasad only when he was on the way to

crossing the river dividing

India and Jammu & Kashmir. He was arrested (11th May, 1953) and brought to Srinagar as an ordinary culprit and put into a jail like an ordinary culprit, not given the status of a political prisoner. Prime Minister Nehru on his part, in the face of this intriguing situation, stood indifferent and did not utter a single word in favour of the release of so great a public leader and political co-worker of the Indian Lok Sabha.

While kept as a prisoner in the Srinagar Central Jail, he was not only denied proper medical treatment but was also subjected to a wrong line of treatment. When Syamaprasad was eventually almost at death's door in Srinagar Jail, Pandit Nehru, in spite of his two-day stay in the Srinagar Rajbhavan did not care to visit his erstwhile political colleague of so high a stature, as a matter of common courtesy. On 23rd June, 1953 Syamaprasad succumbed to death and on the following day his ceremonial cremation took place at the Keoratala burning ghat of South Calcutta in the midst of tears from lakhs of his admirers, followers and devotees. The termination of his life in the way described above is the most tragic and touching. Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan once observed in course of his Hibbert Lectures: 'Crucifixion is the way in which we honour our supreme guides and teachers'. This dangerous observation of Radhakrishnan can be applied with full justification to Syamaprasad Mookerjee.

Syamaprasad was not merely an educationist and political leader, he represented in his personality a high level of moral and spiritual consciousness. In 1946, when he was advised by his physicians absolute rest in view of the deterioration of his health, Syamaprasad recorded in his Diary that behind this visible universe there is an unseen Reality controlling its course. He recorded further that he had received many honours from here and abroad whose material value is immense, but in spite of all these he asked the question to himself why man suffers so much mentally and does not find peace in his soul. He attributed the whole thing to the operation of ego-consciousness or I-consciousness of the individual self. It is because our work is done not in a disinterested spirit, but only to satisfy our personal ego. A classic example of this spiritual depth was revealed marvellously in the character of Acharya Satischandra Mukherjee of the famous Dawn Society and The Dawn Magazine. He was a pioneer of many illustrious things in this country, but he attributed every bit of his work to divine grace. After a careful perusal of Syamaprasad's life story the conviction has grown strong in me that he represented an exceptionally high order of spiritual qualities.

#### False notions

It is sad to note that in the Post-Independence period certain false notions have grown up in our country about our acquisition of Independence in 1947. The renowned scholar Dr Tara Chand in his History of India's Freedom Struggle has perpetuated for posterity the fictitious theory that India won her Freedom's battle by a 'unique method' and that method was Gandhiji's ahimsa or non-violence. Dr Uma Mukherjee, the celebrated historian of India's revolutionary movement, has countered Dr Tara Chand's view in her numerous writings, showing that the role of the revolutionaries was not in any way less important in India's achievement of Freedom than Gandhiji's method of non-violence.

The second false notion propagated by many scholars that the great Swadeshi Movement of Bengal (1905-1911) was dominated by the Hindu revivalist ideas which ultimately alienated the Muslims from the India's freedom movement. It requires to be emphasized that in the initial phases of the Swadeshi Movement the Hindus and Muslims fought the Freedom's battle shoulder to shoulder. The overwhelming mass of materials in support of this view is still preserved in the Intelligence Branch Records. Henry Nevinson, the renowned British journalist, who was an eyewitness to the scene, has recorded in his *The New Spirit in India* (London, 1908) which is thoroughly documentary.

Many scholars and writers from the days of Valentine Chirol of the Swadeshi times to Rajani Palme Dutt and Jawaharlal Nehru have asserted that the Swadeshi Movement of 1905-06 assumed a religious and reactionary character as evidenced by the annual celebration of the Shivaji Festival, the frequent references by the topmost leaders of the Movement like Bepin Pal and Upadhyay Brahmabandhab and Sri Aurobindo to the Gītā, the Mahābhārata and such other Hindu classics as well as the constant use of the slogan Bande Mataram which Valentine Chirol misunderstood as an invocation to Goddess Kālī. We should be careful to observe that revivalist movement does not necessarily mean a reactionary trend. The towering scholar Professor Hiren Mukerji in a famous speech at renowned Deutsche Academic (1967) has emphatically stated that a revivalist movement may have progressive as well as regressive aspects and has rejected once for all Pandit Nehru's view that ' . . . socially speaking, the revival of nationalism in India after 1907 is definitely reactionary'.

I beg to call your attention in this connection to the great Italian Renaissance of the 15th century which was a major landmark in Europe's transition from medievalism to modernism. It began with a passionate search for the restoration of the Graeco-Roman or the Classical culture, but ended, in the words of Bertrand Russell, in a joyful liberation of man from medieval shackles. Turning to Indian history we may refer to Dayananda Saraswati's, 'Back to the Vedas' movement which was a progressive and regenerating force in the 19th century India. Similarly, if the great leaders of the Swadeshi Movement including Sri Aurobindo preached any religion in politics, it was the religion of patriotism to which everything else had to be subordinated. 'The Mother', writes Sri Aurobindo, 'asks us for no schemes, no plans, no methods, . . . she asks us for our hearts, our lives, nothing less, nothing more. . . . Self-abandonment is the demand made upon us. She (Mother) asks of us, "How many will live for me? How many will die for me?" And awaits our answer'. (Vide, Sri Aurobindo's article on 'The Demand of the Mother', published in the Bande Mataram, Weekly Edition, April 12, 1908).

To conclude, Syamaprasad Mookerjee was one of the finest examples of a cultural humanist and a political statesman. He not merely preached high ideals of secularism, democracy and patriotism which were also an integral part of his very life process and were incarnated in him as much as in the lives of Bepin Chandra Pal, Upadhyay Brahmabandhab, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. I have been a close observer of the turns and realities of Indian political scenario since the early 30s of the last century. Those who now generally pass for politicians and parade as patriots, excepting a microscopic minority, are in the words of Sri Aurobindo, ' . . . the place-hunter, the title-hunter, the popularity-hunter, the politician of mixed motives and crooked ways, the trimmer, the light speaker and ready swearer.' Certainly this sort of degraded leadership cannot be the proper instrument for Indian regeneration. What we need today the most is the emergence of a new type of dedicated leadership whose foundation will be the uttermost sincerity, passionate love and sacrifice for the country. As I look around our society I often feel sad and agonized as an octogenarian at the degrading social and political scenario of India of today. 'Out of the evil cometh good', so runs the ancient proverb. The evil cannot hold its sway for ever. It is a truism to state that the darkest hours of the night are followed by a shining dawn. It is my sincere conviction that the day is not distant when a patriot and statesman of the stature of Syamaprasad Mookerjee with all his moral and spiritual fire and energy will reappear on the scene and rescue the country from the depths of her moral degradation.

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