

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee and West Bengal Day-2026, 20th June: Then and Now

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ABSTRACT

At the outset, we express our sincere gratitude to the present Government of West Bengal for officially recognizing a long-forgotten yet epoch-making historical event after seventy-nine years of India's independence. It is for the first time that a government has accorded official recognition to this significant chapter of history. The Government directed all the government and private educational institutions, along with various social organizations across the state, to observe "*West Bengal Day-2026*" on 20th June, 2026. This paper examines the contributions of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee for the formation of West Bengal. This Paper attempts to evaluate Mookherjee's struggle for the rights of the Hindus. This paper attempts to portray the unforgettable journey of Mookherjee in the history of West Bengal. This paper seeks to analyze Mookherjee's re-evaluation of the history of West Bengal.

Keywords: Hindu, Partition, Government, Political, Independence, Culture, History

Objectives

- 1) The primary objective of this article is to comprehensively analyze Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee's pivotal role in shaping the territorial, political, and academic landscape of modern India.
- 2) To examine his critical role during the 1947 partition, specifically how he secured West Bengal and parts of Assam for India.
- 3) To investigate his fierce opposition to Article 370, his demand for complete integration, and the lasting impact of his ultimate sacrifice in 1953.
- 4) To outline his journey from India's first Minister for Industry and Supply to founding the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh*, breaking early single-party dominance.
- 5) To assess his progressive tenure as the youngest Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University and his push for vernacular and scientific education.
- 6) To connect his historical vision and ideologies to modern Indian political milestones, such as the constitutional changes made in 2019.

INTRODUCTION

With the central theme, "*The History of Bengal and the Partition of Bengal within India*", we would like make a humble attempt to discuss the subject "*Syama Prasad and West Bengal Day-2026: Then and Now.*" At the very outset, it must be emphasized that from ancient times until India's independence, the history of Bengal was rich, vibrant, and intellectually distinguished. Owing to its geographical location, language, literature, culture, heritage, educational achievements, economic prosperity, and political consciousness, Bengal occupied a unique and prestigious position in the Indian subcontinent. A careful examination of Bengal's historical evolution clearly reveals the foundations of this glorious legacy. However, over the centuries particularly

during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century's, the political and social character of Bengal underwent significant transformation. In the early twentieth century, British colonial rule adopted a carefully calculated political strategy that ultimately laid the foundation for the partition of Bengal. Through a series of administrative and diplomatic measures, the colonial government created conditions favourable to the division of the province. It is noteworthy that in 1854, the territories comprising present-day Bihar, Odisha, Assam, and the undivided Bengal were brought together to form the Bengal Presidency, one of the largest administrative units under British India. Subsequently, the British administration used the enormous size of the Presidency as one of the principal justifications for proposing the partition of Bengal.

Meanwhile, the nineteenth century witnessed significant religious and social reform movements among both Hindus and Muslims, leading to the growth of distinct communal and political identities. Within Hindu society, organizations advocating Hindu revivalism, the concept of a *Hindu Rashtra*, and the vision of a Hindu India gradually gained influence. In later years, organizations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) further strengthened these ideological currents. On the other hand, in 1867, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan advanced the idea that Hindus and Muslims constituted two separate nations. Later, in 1890, Abdul Halim Sharar suggested that India should be divided into Hindu and Muslim majority regions, accompanied by an exchange of populations. Against this intellectual and political background, the All India Muslim League was established in Dhaka on 30th December, 1906 under the leadership of Nawab Sir Khwaja Salimullah. At the same time, organizations such as the Muslim League, Tabligh, Tanzim, and Anjuman further consolidated Muslim communal consciousness and increasingly articulated the demand for a separate Muslim homeland. These political, social, and ideological developments gradually shaped the historical context that ultimately culminated in the Partition of Bengal, the Partition of India, and the creation of the state of West Bengal.

From the Partition of Bengal to the Partition of India:

The background and the underlying story of the Partition of Bengal may be summarized as follows. With the principal objective of weakening the united nationalist movement in Bengal, Lord Curzon, in 1905, divided Bengal into two provinces under the pretext of administrative convenience: (1) Bengal and (2) Eastern Bengal and Assam. Under pressure from the so-called Hindu *bhadralok* (educated elite) of Bengal, the British Government annulled the Partition of Bengal in 1911. In 1912, the capital of British India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. Thus, the British Government's policy of "Divide and Rule" represented a calculated political strategy. It is argued that the process initiated by the Partition of Bengal ultimately culminated in the Partition of Bengal and India in 1947. Through democratic political efforts opposing the partition of Bengal, the province of West Bengal emerged on 20th June, 1947. In this context, Bharati Kesari Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee, one of the leading representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha, is presented as having played a significant role in the movement for the creation of West Bengal.

Personal Profile of Syama Prasad Mookherjee:

Syama Prasad Mookherjee was born on 6th July, 1901 in the city of Calcutta to Sir Ashutosh Mookherjee and Yogamaya Devi. As the worthy son of an illustrious father, he was nurtured in an environment enriched by education, culture, politics, and spiritual consciousness. He established himself in society as a champion of Bengal and its people. The history of Bengal is a history of glory, and its prosperity has long been a source of pride. In this context, Syama Prasad Mookherjee's multifaceted contributions deserve special recognition. He was regarded as a distinguished exponent of Bengal's literature, culture, and heritage; an educationist; a jurist; an ideal teacher; a compassionate public servant; a man of immense generosity and sensitivity; self-reliant, tolerant, and empathetic; a farsighted politician; a patriot; a nationalist; a principled and law-abiding leader; honest, competent, learned, humble, and free from arrogance; a man of exemplary character; an efficient administrator and organizer; an advocate of an undivided India; and a politician known for his secular outlook, non-communal approach, and vision. Within the broader social framework, he demonstrated exceptional leadership in higher education through the university system, in politics through the legislature and the cabinet, and in public organization through the Hindu Mahasabha and later the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh*. Above all, he was remembered as a farsighted statesman, a humanitarian, a self-sacrificing patriot, and an outstanding

national leader who remained steadfast in his principles and continued his uncompromising struggle throughout his life.

Why Was the Hindu Mahasabha Established?

From Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1867 to Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1940, it is argued that many Muslim political leaders advocated the establishment of separate political arrangements for Hindus and Muslims in India. From the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 to the years 1906-1907, Indian national politics underwent significant changes. The All-India Muslim League was founded in 1906 to safeguard the interests of Muslims, while the Indian National Congress experienced an ideological split in 1907. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 introduced separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims, marking a decisive turn toward politics based on communal interests and divisions. Consequently, different communities became increasingly concerned with protecting their respective interests and strengthening their internal unity. After the annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1911, the united struggle of the Bengali people compelled the British Government to retreat from its earlier policy. It was against this political backdrop that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya established the All-India Hindu Mahasabha at the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar in 1915. The principal objectives of the organization were to safeguard the interests of Hindus, maintain social and political balance, strengthen Hindu unity, preserve the Sanatana Hindu religion, culture, and way of life throughout India, and organize Hindus for their collective self-defense. It was with these aims that the Hindu Mahasabha was founded.

Gandhi's Policy of Muslim Appeasement in Indian National Politics:

The history of the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in Indian politics has been one of constant tension concerning their respective national identities and unity. The British transformed these religious differences into a political arrangement by introducing separate electorates. However, with the Lucknow Pact of 1916, the Indian National Congress began a policy of accommodation towards the Muslim League by accepting separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims. In this context, under the Government of India Act of 1919, Muslim League leaders obtained political concessions greater than what their population proportion justified. Yet, they were not seen to participate actively or even passively in nationalist movements to any significant extent. With the rise of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian national politics during 1920-21, a new call for Hindu-Muslim unity emerged through the fusion of the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Khilafat Movement. Gandhi compared the Khilafat issue to the mythical Kamadhenu and stated: "*Gandhiji called Khilafat the Kamdhenu as it was for him an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Musalmans, which would not arise in a hundred years.*" In reality, Gandhi's political philosophy was founded upon the principles of non-violence and fearlessness, principles from which he never deviated.

The Bengal Pact: Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das's Politics of Muslim Appeasement:

After Gandhi's attempt to establish Hindu-Muslim unity through the Khilafat Movement failed, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das initiated another effort at limited communal harmony in Bengal through the Bengal Pact. He believed that India's independence would remain unattainable without Hindu-Muslim unity. However, the unequal and controversial provisions of the Bengal Pact ultimately produced disappointing results. The untimely death of Deshbandhu further weakened the initiative, and the consequences proved disastrous. Serious communal riots broke out at Kohat in 1923 and in Calcutta in April 1926, exposing the fragility of communal harmony. Hindutva, the Concept of the Hindu Rashtra, and V. D. Savarkar. Against the backdrop of these disturbing developments, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar articulated the ideological foundations of *Hindutva* and the concept of the *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation). *Hindutva* became one of the principal theoretical foundations of Hindu nationalist politics in India. Savarkar first presented this ideology systematically in his 1923 book, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* According to Savarkar, *Hindutva* was not merely a religious faith or a set of rituals but a form of political and cultural nationalism. He identified three essential pillars of *Hindutva*: *Fatherland* (*Pitribhumi*), *Holy Land* (*Punyabhumi*), and *Race/Community* (*Jati*). By *Fatherland*, he meant that the Indian Territory extending from the Indus River to the seas constituted the homeland of Hindus. *Holy Land* referred to those whose sacred religious sites lay within India. By *Race/Community*, he emphasized a common heritage of blood and culture. In his writings on the *Hindu Rashtra*, Savarkar elaborated upon three major themes:

(1) **Hindu Rashtra:** India, according to him, was an indivisible Hindu nation. He regarded Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs as members of a common cultural and civilizational community. (2) **Minorities and the Two-Nation Theory:** Savarkar argued that since the sacred religious centres of Muslims and Christians such as Mecca and Jerusalem lay outside India, questions arose regarding their complete emotional and cultural allegiance to the Indian nation. This perspective contributed to the conception of Hindus and Muslims as two distinct nations, an idea that later exerted a profound influence on Indian politics. (3) **Hindutva versus Hinduism:** Savarkar distinguished Hinduism as a religion concerned with spiritual liberation and individual faith, whereas Hindutva, in his conception, represented a broader political and cultural ideology aimed at uniting the people of India under a common Hindu cultural identity. Within this context, Savarkar viewed what he regarded as the Congress policy of accommodating Muslim political demands as a dangerous trend. He questioned why such concessions were being extended to communities whose holy lands, in his view, lay outside India. Consequently, he attached great importance to the doctrines of Hindutva and the Hindu Rashtra. During this same period, Syama Prasad Mookherjee, having qualified as a barrister in England, represented the University of Calcutta at the Conference of Universities of the British Empire in London. His thoughtful interventions earned widespread appreciation. Throughout his academic career, he consistently sought to keep education above political considerations and communal divisions. Like his father, Sir Ashutosh Mookherjee, his contribution to education possessed remarkable breadth and vision.

Syama Prasad Mookherjee - The Educationist:

The year 1924 marked a period of profound personal sorrow for Syama Prasad Mookherjee with the death of his father. Following in his father's footsteps, he began practicing law at the Calcutta High Court while simultaneously joining the University of Calcutta as an honorary lecturer in Bengali language and literature. Owing to his exceptional ability, he became a Fellow of the University and a member of both the Senate and the Syndicate at only twenty-four years of age. In 1934, at the age of thirty-three, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, becoming the youngest Vice-Chancellor of India's largest university. He also served as Chairman of the Postgraduate Councils in Arts and Science and Dean of the Faculty of Arts. His academic record was extraordinary: he secured first-class first positions in English Honours, M.A., M.A in Bengali, and Bachelor of Law examinations. In 1932, he played a distinguished role in introducing Bengali as the medium for matriculation studies and examinations and was instrumental in appointing Rabindranath Tagore as a Special Professor at the University. In 1938, he represented India on the League of Nations' Intellectual Cooperation Committee. During his tenure, Islamic History was introduced into the curriculum of the University of Calcutta. He also promoted the teaching of Hindi and Urdu and introduced Assamese at the undergraduate level. New disciplines such as Communication Studies, Engineering, Public Health, Psychology, and Mathematics flourished under his leadership. His contributions significantly advanced Bengal's education, culture, history, literature, and scientific development.

Syama Prasad Mookherjee and Active Politics:

The circumstances that drew Syama Prasad Mookherjee into active politics were both difficult and rooted in the turbulent realities of the time. As communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims intensified in Indian politics and the British colonial administration increasingly relied upon the Muslim League, national politics witnessed the demand for Dominion Status under leaders such as Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mahatma Gandhi, culminating in the demand for *Poorna Swaraj* (Complete Independence) at the Lahore Congress of 1929. Amid these turbulent developments, Syama Prasad Mookherjee entered the Bengal Legislative Council in 1929 as the representative of the University of Calcutta on behalf of the Congress. When the Civil Disobedience Movement began in 1930, he became dissatisfied with what he considered the Congress's gradualist approach. Believing that the cause of complete independence required decisive action transcending communal considerations, he opposed what he regarded as Congress's policy of accommodating Muslim political demands and advocated mobilizing all Indians while keeping religion and communal identity outside politics. He maintained that even if only ten out of every hundred people supported such a policy, it would still be worthwhile. In his opinion, the Congress lacked the courage to adopt such an uncompromising position. Consequently, he resigned from the Legislative Council in 1930 and successfully contested the subsequent by-election as an independent candidate, returning once again to the Bengal Legislative Council. His principal objective was to oppose governmental injustice from within the legislature while simultaneously

mobilizing public opinion outside it to secure redress and restrain arbitrary government action. He believed that this was a level of political courage that the Congress, committed to a gradual approach, failed to demonstrate. When the British Parliament enacted the Government of India Act of 1935, introducing provincial autonomy, elections under this constitutional framework were held in 1937.

1937 – The Interim Government and Syama Prasad Mookherjee:

The 1937 provincial elections witnessed the participation of three principal political parties: the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Sarat Chandra Bose (Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's elder brother), the Muslim League led by Khwaja Nazimuddin, and the *Krishak Praja Party* headed by A. K. Fazlul Huq. Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee, however, contested the election as an independent candidate from the University of Calcutta constituency and emerged victorious. It is noteworthy that although the Congress emerged as the largest party, it declined to form a coalition government with the *Krishak Praja Party* in Bengal, despite Fazlul Huq's willingness to participate in such a government. Consequently, Fazlul Huq moved closer to the Muslim League and eventually formed a coalition ministry with its support. One of the most significant political developments of 1939 was the resignation of Subhas Chandra Bose from the Congress. At the same time, another important but relatively overlooked event was Syama Prasad Mookherjee's joining the All India Hindu Mahasabha at its Calcutta session in 1939. The question naturally arises: why did selfless and patriotic leaders such as Syama Prasad Mookherjee and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose resign from the country's largest political organization, the Indian National Congress? According to this interpretation, the answer lies in Subhas Chandra Bose's correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi. It is argued that Gandhi, together with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, and G. D. Birla, opposed the formation of a Congress, *Krishak Praja Party* coalition government. As a consequence, many Muslims in Bengal gradually came under the influence of the Muslim League, and communal anti-Hindu riots began to spread. According to this account, Syama Prasad Mookherjee played a leading role in protecting Bengal and its people from this grave and turbulent situation.

1934-1938: The Manifestation of Communalism at the University of Calcutta:

From 1934 to 1938, Syama Prasad Mookherjee served as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta. During this period, he established himself as an efficient and impartial administrator. His contributions included fostering nationalism and discipline among students, improving the standard of education, strengthening the University's infrastructure, introducing the observance of the University's Foundation Day, reforming Bengali spelling, establishing the Bengali Terminology Committee, inviting Rabindranath Tagore to deliver the Convocation Address in Bengali, and redesigning the University's official emblem. Several developments during this period made him increasingly conscious of the future political direction of Bengal. One notable issue concerned the replacement of the University's official emblem. The earlier emblem, regarded as a symbol of British imperial authority and arrogance, was replaced after extensive discussions, committee deliberations, and expert consultations with a new emblem featuring the Bengali letter "Sri" upon a fully blossomed lotus. However, sections of the Muslim community objected to the new emblem, arguing that the "Sri" symbol placed on the lotus was contrary to Islamic principles, reflected idolatry, and offended Muslim religious beliefs.

Moreover, after the Fazlul Huq-Muslim League ministry assumed office in 1937, opposition was also expressed to the singing of "Vande Mataram" and the Indian tricolour. According to this interpretation, the Muslim League, encouraged by its newly acquired political authority, increasingly perceived elements of literature, art, music, and culture as manifestations of Hindu influence and protested against them. During the University's convocation that year, many Muslim students reportedly boycotted the ceremony attended by Rabindranath Tagore, an act described here as discourteous towards the poet. According to this account, the policies of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Fazlul Huq ministry intensified communal politics. On 8th August, 1938, the Muslim League government appointed Sir Azizul Huq as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta. The author argues that, just as the Writers' Building had become associated with communal politics, the University's Darbhanga Building also became subject to similar political influences. It is further argued that, as a consequence of the Congress's political decisions, the Muslim League government increasingly intervened in Bengal's educational administration. Through the Calcutta Municipal Bill, Hindu representation in the Calcutta Corporation was allegedly reduced. Likewise, the Secondary Education Bill transferred control of secondary education from the University to a Secondary Education Board in which Muslims were said to exercise greater

influence. Faced with these developments, Syama Prasad Mookherjee approached Congress leaders, urging them to oppose government policies that he believed were detrimental to Hindu interests. Referring to these circumstances, he wrote in *Leaves from a Diary*: *"1939 continued to be a year of Hindu oppression at the hands of a communal Ministry with Fazlul Haq at its head. Legislative and administrative measures were either adopted or advocated which aimed at a deliberate curtailment of Hindu rights... The party which evoked my sympathy and support was Congress. The Congress, however, lamentably betrayed the interest of the Hindus."*

Syama Prasad Mookherjee and the Hindu Mahasabha:

The question arises as to why Syama Prasad Mookherjee joined the Hindu Mahasabha. According to this interpretation, the principal advisers behind his decision were prominent Hindu Mahasabha leaders such as Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee, Surendranath Banerjee, and Ashutosh Lahiri. He was also encouraged and inspired by Swami Pranabananda, the founder of the *Bharat Sevashram Sangha*. Swami Pranabananda envisioned the political movement of the Hindu Mahasabha and the organizational activities of the *Bharat Sevashram Sangha* as complementary to one another. It was for this reason that he encouraged and invited Syama Prasad Mookherjee to join the organization. Swami Pranabananda is also quoted as saying: *"The leader who can stand before the Hindus of the world is the one whom I have chosen and left behind."* (Swami Nirmalananda, *Banger Hindu O Samaj Bibartan*). Immediately after joining the Hindu Mahasabha in 1939, Syama Prasad Mookherjee was appointed its Acting President. The following year, in 1940, he became the Working President. He subsequently served as the President of the organization from 1943 to 1947. It is also mentioned that at a Hindu gathering held in February 1941, Syama Prasad Mookherjee addressed Muslims by saying: *"If you wish to live in Pakistan, then pack your bags and leave India immediately."* According to the author, more than eighty years have now passed since this statement was made, and the time has come to reassess Mookherjee's political foresight and to re-examine this largely forgotten chapter of history.

1940-1942: The Lahore Resolution (Pakistan Resolution) and Syama Prasad Mookherjee:

On the eve of the Second World War, the political history of Bengal was marked by immense complexity. International developments, national issues, and a deep provincial political crisis converged to create an atmosphere of uncertainty. On 22nd March, 1940, at the open session of the All-India Muslim League in Lahore, its President, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, asked A. K. Fazlul Huq to move the historic Lahore Resolution. The resolution was adopted on 24th March, 1940 and subsequently became famous as the Pakistan Resolution. Following its adoption, the audience stood up and hailed Fazlul Huq with the slogan *"Sher-e-Bangla Zindabad"* (Long Live the Tiger of Bengal). Jinnah's position was unequivocal: India was not one nation. According to him, a review of the previous twelve hundred years of history demonstrated that the subcontinent had always been divided into "Hindu India" and "Muslim India." This argument formed the basis of his Two-Nation Theory. Consequently, pro-League Muslim intellectuals in Bengal extended the Pakistan Resolution into the cultural sphere, propagating the idea that Hindu culture and Muslim culture were fundamentally distinct. Fazlul Huq felt increasingly uneasy with this interpretation. He could not accept such a communal explanation of Bengali culture. As a result, the conflict between Fazlul Huq and Jinnah intensified in July 1941. Huq openly rebelled against what he described as Jinnah's authoritarian conduct. The Muslim League leadership then began efforts to bring down Huq's ministry. Recognizing these conspiracies, a meeting was held on 27th November, 1940 at the residence of J. C. Gupta, where prominent leaders including Sarat Chandra Bose, A. K. Fazlul Huq, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee, Shamsuddin Ahmed, Khan Bahadur Hashem Ali Khan, and Hem Chandra Naskar met to formulate a common political strategy.

Sarat Chandra Bose (elder brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose) drafted a political document that laid the foundation for a new ministry. Based on this document, the Progressive Coalition Party was formed under the leadership of Fazlul Huq. When Muslim League members resigned on 1st December, 1941, the League ministry collapsed. On 3rd December, Fazlul Huq formally assumed leadership of the new coalition, and with the support of the *Krishak Praja Party*, a section of the Indian National Congress, and the Hindu Mahasabha, he once again formed the provincial government. On 12th December, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee assumed office as the Finance Minister in Huq's cabinet. On 20th June, 1942, Fazlul Huq organized a Hindu-Muslim Unity Conference at the Calcutta Town Hall to strengthen communal harmony. During this period, Jinnah intensified his opposition to the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi argued that the Hindu-Muslim problem could only be

resolved after the end of British rule in India. Jinnah, however, insisted that acceptance of Pakistan was the only solution to the communal question. As a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, Syama Prasad Mookherjee played a significant role in separating the *Krishak Praja Party* from the influence of the Muslim League. At the same time, he advocated the ideal of a united India and made persistent efforts to preserve the historical, cultural, literary, and civilization unity of Bengal against communal interpretations.

1943–1945: The Khwaja Nazimuddin Ministry in Bengal and Syama Prasad Mookherjee:

Various allegations brought against the Fazlul Huq Ministry created intense political turmoil in Bengal. Khwaja Nazimuddin and other Muslim League leaders accused Huq's government of being sympathetic toward the Indian National Congress, the Forward Bloc, and other organizations engaged in what they described as anti-government or seditious activities. They also criticized Huq's ministry for appealing to the Government of India for the release of Sarat Chandra Bose and alleged that it was indirectly facilitating a possible invasion of India by the Axis Powers. As a result, the British administration gradually withdrew its support from the Huq government. During this crisis, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee firmly defended Fazlul Huq, arguing that the course adopted by Huq offered the best hope for safeguarding both Bengal and India. Mookherjee also publicly exposed instances of corruption involving several Muslim League ministers. Despite his efforts, the British Government decided to remove Fazlul Huq from office and facilitate the formation of a ministry led by the Muslim League. Accordingly, on 24th April, 1943, a new ministry headed by Sir Khwaja Nazimuddin was formed with British support. Muhammad Ali Jinnah denounced Fazlul Huq as a "traitor." The removal of Huq through constitutional means and the establishment of a communal and conservative Muslim League ministry generated considerable resentment among sections of both the Indian National Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha.

The Bengal Famine of 1943 and Syama Prasad Mookherjee:

It is noteworthy that while the Quit India Movement was at its peak in undivided Midnapore, Bengal was simultaneously struck by the devastating Bengal Famine of 1943 (known in Bengali as the *Panchasher Manvantar*). At the beginning of 1943 (Bengali year 1350), Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee was serving as Finance Minister in the Fazlul Huq Ministry. The government attempted to attribute the famine primarily to crop failure. However, the subsequent Muslim League ministry displayed severe administrative incompetence and irresponsibility in dealing with the humanitarian crisis. Among political leaders, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee emerged as one of the strongest voices, both inside and outside the Bengal Legislative Assembly, highlighting the causes, extent, consequences, and possible remedies for the famine. He argued that the principal causes of the famine were governmental neglect, administrative failure, and official mismanagement. Because of governmental indifference, neither food distribution nor rehabilitation measures were effectively organized.

The political atmosphere was further complicated because many members of the Muslim League ministry were unwilling to cooperate sincerely with Fazlul Huq. Mookherjee's work, *Rashtra Sangram O Panchasher Manvantar* ("National Struggle and the Bengal Famine"), has been regarded as an important historical document discussing the famine and the responsibilities of the government. On 17th January, 1943, Mookherjee wrote to Chief Minister Fazlul Huq, explaining the causes and growing severity of the famine and urging the government to take immediate and effective relief measures. However, owing to continued governmental inaction, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee resigned from the office of Finance Minister, although he retained his membership in the Bengal Legislative Assembly. Thereafter, he devoted himself to organizing famine relief and rehabilitation efforts across Bengal. Through his humanitarian work during one of Bengal's greatest natural and human tragedies, Syama Prasad Mookherjee earned widespread recognition as a compassionate leader, patriot, and dedicated public servant.

20th June, 1947: The Demand for the Homeland of West Bengal and Syama Prasad Mookherjee:

It is noteworthy that Syama Prasad Mookherjee served as the All-India President of the *Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha* from 1943 to 1947. In this capacity, while he upheld the ideal of a united India in national politics, he also remained steadfast in his own views regarding the demands and proposals of both the Muslim League

and the Indian National Congress concerning the prevention of India's partition. Mookherjee argued that if the Muslim League could achieve Pakistan through its political movement, then Bengal too should be divided. He believed that the British Government's acceptance of Jinnah's demand would effectively transform an undivided Bengal into a "Virtual Pakistan." Consequently, he sent a telegram to London demanding that if Pakistan was to be created, Bengal must also be partitioned. He maintained that the partition of Bengal alongside the partition of India would provide a practical solution to the problem; otherwise, Hindus in a united Bengal would become politically subjugated. Mookherjee was the first to raise this demand publicly. Recognizing that the task was too great for him alone, he appealed to the entire Congress leadership to join the movement for the partition of Bengal. According to this interpretation, had his foresight not prevailed, the present-day homeland of West Bengal might not have come into existence. On 1st May, 1947, in a letter to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Mookherjee clearly stated: *"If Jinnah's demand remains unchanged, then do not allow the partition of Bengal to fail."*

Syama Prasad Mookherjee as the Protector of Bengal and the Bengalis:

Syama Prasad Mookherjee emerged as a leading advocate for Bengal, motivated by his affection for the Bengali people and his desire to preserve Bengal's history, heritage, traditions, literature, and culture. The noted historian Amal Tripathi (a native of Medinipur) wrote that on 26th April 1947, Mookherjee went to Delhi and urged the Congress Working Committee to adopt a resolution supporting the partition of Bengal. He was accompanied by Kiran Shankar Roy and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. Mookherjee argued that since the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the Hindu Mahasabha were working together on the issue, it deserved serious consideration. Mookherjee continued his efforts in every possible way. Under his leadership, campaigns were organized to mobilize public opinion in favour of the partition of Bengal. Several newspapers, organizations, and institutions also passed resolutions supporting the proposal.

At that time, Sarat Chandra Bose, the elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose, asserted that the majority of Hindus did not want Bengal to be partitioned. Mookherjee disagreed and sought to demonstrate, through public support, that many Bengalis favoured partition. He also questioned the demand for a plebiscite, arguing that after the experiences of the referendums in Sylhet and the North-West Frontier Province, no sensible person could advocate another referendum conducted under conditions of intimidation and violence. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, on the other hand, supported the creation of an independent "Greater Bengal" comprising Bengal, Assam, and parts of Bihar, where the Muslim majority of undivided Bengal would exercise political dominance. However, according to this account, the proposal could not succeed because of the strong opposition of Syama Prasad Mookherjee and the Hindu Mahasabha.

The Tarakeswar Session of the Hindu Mahasabha and Syama Prasad Mookherjee:

During the final phase of British rule, when India was experiencing widespread political unrest and instability, Syama Prasad Mookherjee undertook an extensive campaign to secure the partition of Bengal and preserve what he regarded as the homeland of the Bengali Hindus. Between March and June 1947, he addressed approximately seventy-six Hindu Mahasabha conferences. Among these, the most significant was the three-day conference held at Tarakeswar in the Hooghly district from 4th to 6th April, 1947. It was a massive gathering of Hindus in support of the partition of Bengal. On the second day of the conference, Syama Prasad Mookherjee formally endorsed and declared his support for the demand for the partition of Bengal.

Voting in the Bengal Legislative Assembly under the Leadership of Syama Prasad:

It is noteworthy that Muhammad Ali Jinnah's All-India Muslim League had, by this time, succeeded in creating the conditions under which the British Government ultimately accepted the demand for a separate state of Pakistan based on religion. The devastating communal riots of 1946 and the atmosphere of communal tension that spread throughout India created a grave political crisis. Eventually, the Indian National Congress also accepted the path of partition, with the exception of a few leaders such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Apart from these leaders, no significant proposal was raised within the Congress to oppose the partition of India. As a result, the partition of the country could not be prevented (Ram Manohar Lohia, India's Culprits of Partition).

According to the British Government's announcement of 3rd June, 1947, members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly would vote separately as representatives of the Muslim-majority and Hindu-majority areas to determine the future of Bengal. Accordingly, the Assembly met on 20th June, 1947. At that time, the composition of the Bengal Legislative Assembly was as follows: Muslim League-114 members, Congress-86, Krishak Praja Party-3, Independent Muslims-3, Anglo-Indians-4, Indian Christians-3, Independent Scheduled Caste members- 2, and the Communist Party-3.

It is important to note that three separate sessions of the Assembly were held on that day. The first was the session of the undivided Bengal Legislative Assembly; the second consisted of representatives from the Hindu-majority districts; and the third comprised representatives from the Muslim-majority districts. The session of the Hindu-majority representatives was presided over by Maharaja Sir Uday Chand Mahtab of Burdwan. Twenty-one members voted against the proposal, all of whom were members of the Muslim League. Among those who supported the proposal were five notable non-League members: Syama Prasad Mookherjee of the Hindu Mahasabha, the independent Uday Chand Mahtab, Mukunda Bihari Mallick representing the Independent Scheduled Caste group, and Communist leaders Jyoti Basu and Ratan Lal Brahman. It is noteworthy that two Communist legislators voted in favour of the creation of West Bengal despite their party's official position.

Furthermore, on 20th June, 1947, a total of 58 members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly voted in favour of the creation of West Bengal. Among them were two representatives from Midnapore: Rajanikanta Pramanik, a monk and direct disciple of Sri Sri Ma Sarada Devi, and Nikunja Bihari Maity, who later became the first Education Minister of West Bengal and was the father of Smt. Abha Maity. Twenty-one members voted against the proposal. Consequently, the decision to partition Bengal was approved by a vote of 58 to 21. This raises an important question: why is Syama Prasad Mookherjee often credited for the partition of Bengal or the creation of West Bengal as a separate homeland? In response, it may be said: *"Syamaprasad was successful in mobilizing the Hindu community for division; Sarat Bose and his allies could not resist the tide."*

The central issue was that, once the partition of India appeared inevitable, Syama Prasad Mookherjee became one of the strongest advocates for the partition of Bengal. He argued that if India was to be divided on the basis of Hindu-Muslim majorities, Bengal should also be partitioned according to the same principle. He was among the earliest and most vocal leaders to advance this demand. His principal slogan was: *"We want our homeland, and we shall secure it either now or never."* According to the author, this should remain our slogan. Finally, as a student of history, one cannot suppress historical facts. The historian Sugata Bose, whom the author describes as a staunch critic, wrote in Anandabazar Patrika on 12th July, 2000: *"If we are to honour the advocate of Bengal's partition as the hero of the Bengalis or the creator of West Bengal, then instead of Syama Prasad Mookherjee, we should place Lord Curzon on the pedestal of worship."* The authors argue that such a statement is deeply painful. In the authors' views, Lord Curzon's objective in partitioning Bengal in 1905 was to create division between Hindus and Muslims. By contrast, the author contends that the partition of Bengal in 1947 aimed to provide a secure homeland for Bengali Hindus against the communal hostility that had emerged among sections of Muslim society. The author further notes that historian Partha Chatterjee wrote in Anandabazar Patrika on 26th June, 2026: *"By March 1947, regardless of political affiliation, the opinion of the Hindu middle class was in favour of the partition of Bengal."*

The author argues that, from a sociological perspective, it may be an exaggeration to attribute the entire success of the movement solely to Syama Prasad Mookherjee or to claim that he alone determined its outcome. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied, according to the author, that despite the Hindu Mahasabha being a relatively weak political party, Syama Prasad's strong leadership succeeded in persuading the Bengal Congress to participate in the movement for the partition of Bengal. The author further argues that Syama Prasad Mookherjee acted with political foresight. Since the partition of India had become unavoidable, he sought to ensure that the provinces were also partitioned in such a way that the largest possible number of Hindus would remain within India. The author asks whether such an effort could be considered unjust. According to the author, even today the Hindus of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) continue to face insecurity. Therefore, the author concludes that Syama Prasad Mookherjee deserves to be regarded as the principal architect of the creation of West Bengal. The author also expresses the view that the efforts of the present State and Central

Governments to acquaint future generations with what the author considers the true history constitute an outstanding example of genuine secular historical education

CONCLUSION

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee stands as a monumental architect of modern India. His life was defined by an unwavering commitment to the nation's sovereign integrity, democratic pluriformity, and intellectual advancement. Moving beyond the role of a traditional politician, he functioned as a visionary statesman. His interventions during India's transition through partition and early independence altered the country's geopolitical and ideological landscape. He forced the partition of Bengal in 1947. This crucial intervention prevented the loss of entire strategic regions to Pakistan. It directly secured West Bengal and Assam as integral parts of India, creating a vital homeland for millions of refugees. He launched an unyielding campaign against Article 370. He rejected the concept of a separate flag, constitution, and prime minister for Jammu and Kashmir. His slogan, "*Ek desh mein do vidhan, do pradhan aur do nishannahichallenge*," became a historic rallying cry for full constitutional integration. He established the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* in 1951. This foundational step broke the single-party monopoly of the early post-independence era. It sowed the seeds for the multi-party democracy and political landscape India experiences today. He served as the youngest Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. During his tenure, he modernised the curriculum, introduced vernacular languages, and pioneered advanced scientific research, blending nationalistic pride with academic excellence. Dr. Mookherjee's life culminated in the ultimate sacrifice. In 1953, he defied unjust entry restrictions to enter Jammu and Kashmir, leading to his arrest and tragic demise in custody. This martyrdom cemented his position as a champion of Indian unity. Decades later, his ideological vision found validation. He was died for the unjust and foul treatment in the custody. The constitutional changes made to Article 370 in August 2019 directly fulfilled his lifelong mission of absolute national integration. Dr. Mookherjee remains an enduring symbol of courage, intellectual honesty, and uncompromising patriotism. His legacy continues to guide India's sovereign policies and identity.

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