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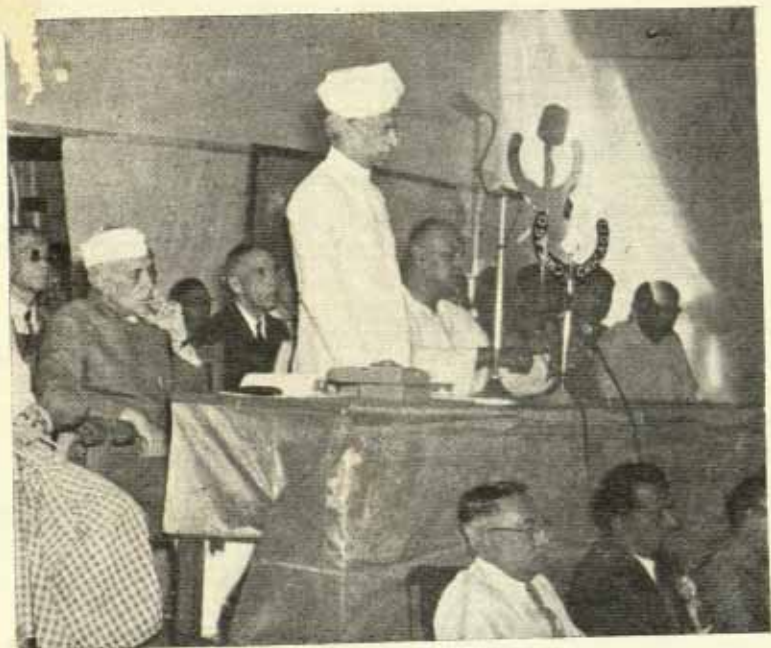
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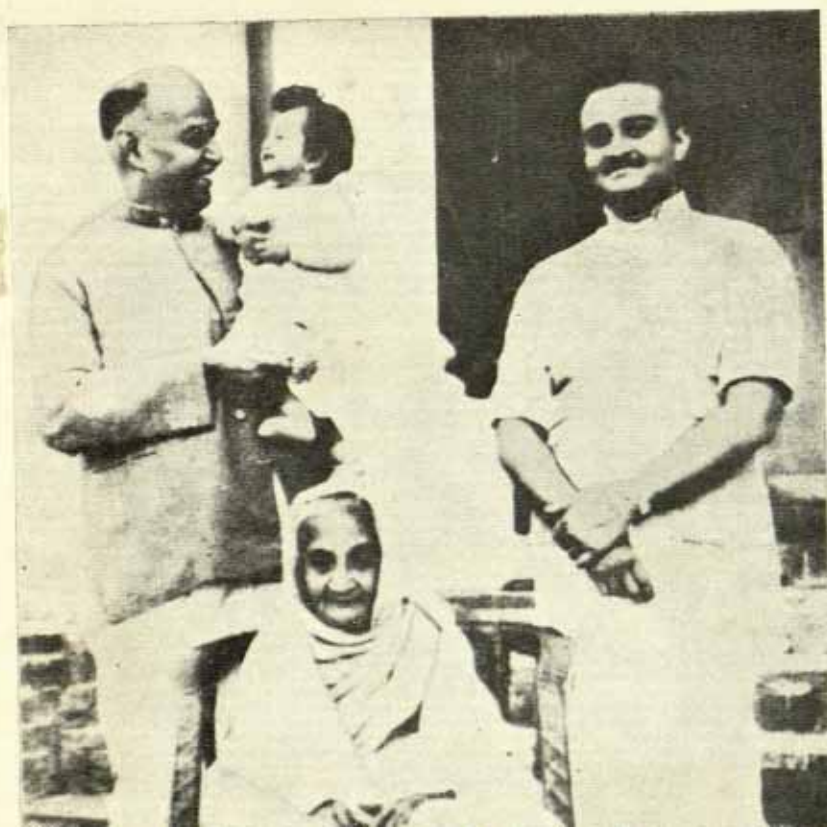
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President
of Mahabodhi
Society
of India

(Below) With mother, son and grandson





(Left) In his study

(Below)
Funeral
Procession
at Calcutta



This is a major effort to put the life of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji in perspective. It starts with an account of his family background and offer a glimpse of his father, Sir Ashutosh Mookerji. The latter was a staunch Hindu whose mind and feelings were deeply rooted in the ancient Hindu culture but who was also open to the 'best' in Western culture and was willing to accept those of its contributions which did not contradict the 'essence' of India.

Brought up by a man of such strong views and character, the son inherited the father's ideas and did his best to disseminate them and have them accepted by all Indians.

The substance of this book is about how he went about his task—in the educational sphere as Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University; in religion as the president of the Mahabodhi Society of India and through the R.S.S. and the Hindu Mahasabha; in politics as a parliamentarian and First President of Jana Sangh, in which capacity he fought celebrated verbal battles with Pandit Nehru, and also as a crusader for Indian unity for which cause he laid down his life in prison in mysterious circumstances. The stout defence of the Jana Sangh, R.S.S. and the Hindu Mahasabha put up by Dr. Mookerji will clear up much of the confused thinking about these controversial institutions.

PORTRAIT OF A MARTYR

BIOGRAPHY OF DR. SHYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE

1940

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BALRAJ MADHOK, M. P.



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1969

JAICO PUBLISHING HOUSE
125, Mahatma Gandhi Road
BOMBAY-1

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Published by

JAMAN H. SHAH
JAICO PUBLISHING HOUSE
125, Mahatma Gandhi Road
Bombay-1

Printed by

V. P. BHAGWAT
Mouj Printing Bureau
Khatau Wadi
Bombay-4

PREFACE

DR. SHYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJI is one of the most remarkable public figures that stalked the Indian stage in the crucial pre-Independence and post-Independence decades of Indian history. Blessed with an elegant personality, brilliant intellect, blotless character, robust self-confidence and high sense of patriotism he rose on the Indian firmament like a meteor, dazzling his friends and critics alike by his versatile genius and excellence of performance in whatever field of activity he entered and then suddenly disappeared in mysterious circumstances leaving behind a trail of light which is steadily gaining in lustre.

Beginning as an educationist at the young age of 23 he rose to be the youngest Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University at the age of 34. Entering politics a few years later, he made his mark as a dynamic and clear-headed politician when he ousted the Muslim League Ministry of Bengal and installed a coalition government under the leadership of Mr. Fazal-ul-Haq in which he himself became the Finance Minister at the age of 42.

Making his debut on the All-India stage soon after, as President of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, he became the most effective spokesman of the nationalist opinion on the crucial question of unity of the country which was being threatened by the Muslim League with the direct encouragement of the British Government and connivance of a section of the Congress leadership.

His entry and exit from the first Central Cabinet of free India, his performance both as member of the Government and as leader of the Opposition and the role he played in the formation and growth of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the instrument that he forged for giving concrete shape to his political philosophy, and his martyrdom in jail for the unity of the country mark him out as one of the most remarkable political figures of all times whose place in history is assured on the basis of real achievement. He was not merely a politician of which India is having a rich crop since freedom. He was a statesman who could see ahead and had the courage of conviction to put forth his views without fear and favour.

I had the good fortune to come in his contact soon after he resigned from the Central Cabinet in April 1950. The association that then began, grew closer after the formation of the Jana Sangh when I became one of the Secretaries of the Party of which he was the first President. Having been closely connected with the Jammu and Kashmir State, I was instrumental in getting him interested in the Kashmir problem which absorbed all his time and energy during the closing months of his dedicated and crowded life. The nearer I went to him the greater grew my admiration for him as a man, as a parliamentarian and as a political leader. He became my model. I looked forward to a great and fruitful future for him and the country under his leadership. The news of his death in detention which reached me when I too was detained in Delhi Jail, therefore, came as a great shock to me. I immediately decided to write his biography as my humble homage to the departed leader and succeeded in bringing out one by the end of the year. But it mainly dealt with his life after the formation of Jana Sangh. It was, therefore, more of a history of the Jana Sangh. It has now been out of print for many years.

The present book contains eleven new chapters on Dr. Mookerji's life from his birth to his entry into the Central Cabinet in 1947. The rest of the book has also been thoroughly revised and re-written.

I am thankful to Justice R. P. Mookerji, elder brother of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji for the valuable help and guidance he gave me for writing this biography. I am also thankful to Shri Ved K. Wadhera and my wife, Kamla, for their valuable assistance. I am grateful to Vaidya Guru Datt, the great savant and author who accompanied Dr. Mookerji in his last journey to Kashmir and was with him in detention till his death for acceding to my request to write the introduction.

Deepavali, October 21,
New Delhi.

BAL RAJ MADHOK

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY, it is said, reflects the interplay of circumstances and personalities. It is a continuing process. Circumstances throw up personalities which in their turn influence them to create situations and conditions suited to the implementation of their ideas and conceptions and realisation of their dreams and ambitions.

India of today in respect of her political institutions, social attitudes and material achievements is mainly the creation of the last hundred and fifty years. The establishment of British rule and the impact it had on the social, political, economic and intellectual life of India produced varied reactions on the Indian mind which got crystallised in two broad streams of thought and sets of personalities which have been shaping Indian thinking and behaviour in various fields of activity ever since.

The first impact of the dazzling British success in face of odds against them on the leaders of thought in India was one of bewilderment and disillusionment which resulted in the growth of inferiority complex in relation to the British masters, their social behaviour, political institutions, thought, culture and values of life. Raja Ram Mohan Rai personified this kind of reaction. He was almost swept off his feet by the glare of the British glory. He not only tacitly accepted the British superiority in all fields but also became a determined campaigner for the acceptance of English language, thought and culture with full faith in British justice as a panacea for India's ills. He became the model for a long time of anglicized Indian thinkers, scholars and political leaders who have played a significant role in the making of modern India. The founding fathers of the Indian National Congress like Sir Dadabhoy Naoroji and the train of Anglo-phile liberals and Russo-phile internationalists like Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Pandit Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal Nehru represent the school of thought and line of action initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Rai.

The other reaction was one of disgust and dismay which at

first resulted in blind hostility to everything British and Western and withdrawal into a closed cell for melancholy brooding, on the part of the custodians of traditional thought and culture of the country. It was particularly so in the case of Muslim theologians and intellectuals who depended entirely on the patronage of erstwhile Muslim rulers and whose thought and outlook was as much alien to the Indian soil as that of the British trespassers. But in course of time it led to self introspection in both the camps resulting in mental readjustments to the changed situation. In the case of Muslim elite it took the shape of a political and intellectual reconciliation with the British masters. Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan led this movement and Aligarh Muslim University became its institutional symbol. But in the case of the rest of the Indian society which found itself cheated of the fruits of long struggle for self-assertion against the alien Turkish and Mughal rulers by the new invaders, it gave rise to a new spirit of intellectual resistance symbolized by Swami Dayanand Saraswati.

Swami Dayanand was as much conscious of the weaknesses that had crept in the national society which made it incapable of successfully meeting the challenges posed by foreign aggressors as Raja Ram Mohan Rai. His solution, however, was different. He decided to attack the weaknesses that had crept into the Indian society by presenting them as later accretions which had polluted the social and cultural structure originally created by the Vedas and developed by leaders of thought and culture in the pre-puranic period. His was a rational and national approach to things both spiritual and mundane. He created a yearning for knowledge together with a spirit of enquiry and critical evaluation of the traditional thought, rituals and social behaviour. He was in fact the harbinger of India's intellectual renaissance.

The D. A. V.—Dayanand Anglo Vedic—movement that was initiated to perpetuate his name and work after his death in 1883 represented a new spirit of rational synthesis of the age old Indian thought and culture with the new thought and culture from the West. Many other savants and scholars in different parts of the country who combined deep grounding in the ancient thought and culture of the country with the benefit of modern Western education introduced by the British

too took the line of action propounded by Swami Dayanand in its broad national context with gusto. The result was a galaxy of leaders of thought and action in various fields in different parts of the country.

Shri Mahadev Govind Ranade and Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, Swami Vivekanand, Shri Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Chander Pal and Shri Ashutosh Mookerji in Bengal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Swami Shraddhanand and Bhai Parmanand in Punjab and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Shri Purshotamdas Tandon in Uttar Pradesh were the main representatives of this thought current at the dawn of the twentieth century.

The tradition and thought process of Dayanand, of BAL, PAL and LAL, of Ashutosh Mookerji, Veer Savarkar and Bhai Parmanand was continued by a growing number of Indian elite when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, operating under the reflected glory of Mahatma Gandhi, seemed to be riding the storm of patriotic fervour against the British rule. Within the Congress Party Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel represented what has come to be known as the Tilak School of Politics, in spite of his total submission to Mahatma Gandhi so long as Gandhiji lived.

Outside the Congress it was given to Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji to carry on the tradition and thought of Dayanand, Bankim and Tilak. As such there was a spiritual affinity between him and Sardar Patel.

The role of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji played in pre-Independence days as an educationist, humanitarian, parliamentarian, administrator and above all as a patriot and campaigner for Indian unity is well-known to any student of Indian affairs. He took up the cudgels against the British Government on behalf of nationalist India in 1942 when all the Congress leaders were in jail. He also outwitted the British and the Muslim League by forming the grand alliance of the nationalist forces in Bengal to oust the Muslim League from power. When the Congress Party laid down arms before the forces of separatism and virtually gave away the whole of Punjab and Bengal to the Muslim League on a platter, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji successfully campaigned for the parti-

tion of the would be Pakistan and saved half of Bengal and half of Punjab for India.

It was in recognition of these services that Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel insisted upon his inclusion in the first Central Cabinet of independent India which took oath of office on August 15, 1947.

His positive contribution as Minister of Industries and Supply in formulating the industrial policy and laying down the foundations of an industrial base for the reconstruction of free India, though important in itself, was overshadowed by the clashes he began to have with the Prime Minister Pandit Nehru on major question of policy pertaining to defence and foreign policy, particularly in regard to relations with Pakistan and the attitude towards the sufferings of the Hindus left behind there, which ultimately compelled him to resign from the Government in April 1950 to educate and mobilise public opinion against Nehru's policies from outside.

As the first member to sit on the Opposition benches in the Constituent Assembly-cum-Parliament of Free India, he became the symbol and leader of democratic opposition to the monopoly of political power which the British bequeathed to the Congress Party before they left India for good. To give an institutional and constitutional shape to the democratic opposition to Nehru Government he founded Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951. This party which has emerged as the second biggest party in the country after the fourth General Elections of India is the most important living memorial to Dr. Mookerji. He literally created it and gave it blood and flesh in the form of a political philosophy and organisational structure. Henceforward the story of Dr. Mookerji became the story of Jana Sangh.

Pandit Nehru instinctively felt the Jana Sangh to be the potential challenge to his monopoly of power and Dr. Mookerji to be his democratic alternative before the country. He, therefore, bent all his energies to malign and discredit the Jana Sangh and its founder-president from the day it came into existence. The first General Election became the occasion for a trial of strength between these two giants of Indian political stage. Pandit Nehru did succeed in staging a come back to power. But Dr. Mookerji also succeeded in putting

the Jana Sangh firmly on the political map of India as one of the four major political parties of the country. He himself was returned to Lok Sabha from his home constituency of North Calcutta and became the virtual leader of the opposition in the Parliament from the day it met for the first time.

The achievements of Dr. Mookerji as a Parliamentarian which earned him the title of 'Lion of Parliament' were more than matched by the raging and tearing campaign he carried on outside the Parliament against the unrealistic and un-national policies of the Nehru Government.

Kashmir which, thanks to the doting attitude of Pandit Nehru towards Sheikh Abdullah, appeared to be steadily slipping out of India through Sheikh Abdullah's machinations, became a test of India's will and capacity to preserve its truncated unity after the partition. Dr. Mookerji clearly saw the dangerous implication of permitting Kashmir, a constituent unit of the country, to assert its independence by having a separate flag, separate constitution and separate Head of the State for the unity of the country as a whole. He, therefore, took up the cause of Jammu and Kashmir Praja Parishad which was fighting for preserving Jammu and Kashmir State as an integral part of India as the cause of Indian unity. This brought him in head-on-clash with Pandit Nehru and his protege, Sheikh Abdullah which grew in intensity in proportion to the intensity of the struggle between the forces of unity and separatism within that State.

Pandit Nehru got an opportunity to get rid of his redoubtable adversary when Dr. Mookerji went to Kashmir in May 1953. Dr. Mookerji was first allowed to enter Jammu and Kashmir State, which he wanted to visit to study the situation there on the spot, and then arrested under a State law to keep him out of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of India.

Dr. Mookerji's death in detention in Kashmir Jail in mysterious circumstances on June 23, 1953 marked the end of a dedicated life on the altar of Indian unity.

The refusal of Pandit Nehru even to order an enquiry into the causes of his death in spite of universal demand created serious doubts in the public mind about his role as also the role of Sheikh Abdullah in this ghastly tragedy. They still remain to be cleared and constitute a grave reflection on Pandit

Nehru as the first Prime Minister of free and democratic India.

I had the privilege to be closely associated with Dr. Mookerji in his closing years. I had a rare opportunity to study his mind and watch his life from close quarters when I accompanied him on his last journey to Kashmir and stayed with him in jail as co-detenué during the last forty days of his life. The more I saw of him the more I began to respect him. He was a fearless patriot for whom his country always came first. His character was pure, his idealism was lofty, his thoughts were high and his living was simple. His life and work can serve as a beacon light to the young and old who want India to grow as a democratic country.

I congratulate Prof. Bal Raj Madhok for writing this biography of Dr. Mookerji. He had worked shoulder to shoulder within him in founding and developing Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The last years of Dr. Mookerji were almost wholly absorbed in building Jana Sangh. As such this biography can also serve as a history of Bharatiya Jana Sangh in its most formative years. As such it will be an invaluable source material for all those who want to get authentic information about Jana Sangh, the motivation for its formation and its basic thought and ideology.

GURU DATT

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Received free from Gazetteer unit, Min. of Education, N. Delhi. Price - Rs 25/-

75860

CHAPTER I

SON OF "SARASWATI"



INDIA, at the turn of the last century, was passing through a ferment—social, cultural, political and above all intellectual. Many factors, seen and unseen, had been at work since the advent of the British rule and consequent impact of the West on the placid mind of India. They had varied reactions on the different sections of the Indian people. Some were swept away by them from their ancient moorings and were tending to become a class of de-nationalised Indians as Macaulay had wanted them to be. Others determinedly reacted against this de-nationalising aspect of the Western education and influence and sought to save the ancient heritage of their land by reviving and idolising her past. And there was another comparatively small group of people who, in keeping with the best in Indian tradition, sought to create a synthesis of the old and the new, of the Bhartiya culture and Western thought and scientific outlook. This class of people mainly consisted of such intellectuals as had drunk deep at the springs of Bhartiya life and culture and had taken to the study of Western thought and literature with an open and balanced mind to assimilate the best in it without losing the best of their own heritage. Such people were naturally few in number. But their influence on the contemporary life and events was tremendous. They set the pattern for the making of new India.

The most representative figure of this class of pioneers was Sir Ashutosh Mookerji. Born in an orthodox high class Brahman family in Calcutta on 29th June, 1864, Shri Ashutosh got full grounding in the ancient lore and culture of the land of his birth. His father Shri Ganga Prasad Mookerji, M. B., was one of the best known physicians of Calcutta of his time. He commanded great respect not only for his professional skill but also for his scrupulously religious life in the best tradition of Brahmins.

Shri Ganga Prasad gave the best available guidance and

education to Ashutosh. He brought him up in the stern discipline of an orthodox but enlightened Hindu home. At the same time he gave him the best of Western education then available in Calcutta.

Ashutosh is known to have worked from 15 to 18 hours a day even during his school days. To keep off drowsiness while reading, Ganga Prasad got prepared a breast-high table at which Ashutosh had to read while standing. He strictly regulated his diet also towards the same end. This hard training coupled with his inborn brilliance soon made Ashutosh the pride of his school. He became a member of the London Mathematical Society while yet a school boy and solved a large number of geometrical problems. Some of his solutions were found to be so excellent that they were accepted in England as original contribution to mathematical studies and were named "Mookerji Theorems" after their inventor.

No wonder that Ashutosh turned out to be an intellectual giant of his age. His mastery over physical sciences, Sanskrit and Law besides mathematics was so great that he came to be regarded as incarnate 'Saraswati' by his contemporaries.

The impress of Sir Ashutosh is writ large over modern Bengal. He had in him the makings of a great political leader and administrator. He made a start on that path in 1899 when he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council as representative of the University of Calcutta, of which he had been elected a Fellow in 1889. He was re-elected to the Bengal Council in 1903 as representative of Calcutta Corporation and was elected to Imperial Legislative Council the same year as representative of the non-official members of the Bengal Council.

But in the meanwhile he had distinguished himself as an educationist and Lord Curzon had been so impressed by his work as a member of the Indian Universities Commission that he considered him to be the one man who could put the recommendations of the Commission, as embodied in the Indian Universities Act of 1904, into operation. He therefore decided to appoint him Vice-Chancellor of the Premier University of Calcutta. That necessitated his elevation to the Calcutta High Court Bench because till then no non-official could be the Vice-Chancellor Calcutta University.

The appointment of Sir Ashutosh as a Judge of the Calcutta High Court in 1904 deprived the country of his active service in the political field. But the loss of politics was the gain of education. As Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University Sir Ashutosh moulded a whole generation of educated Indians after his own pattern. And none approximated to that pattern so well as his second son, Shyama Prasad Mookerji, who was born to his devoted wife, Shrimati Jogmaya Devi, on the 7th of July, 1901, in Calcutta.

Shyama Prasad inherited many of the great qualities of Sir Ashutosh from his birth and others he acquired through his example and guidance.

The most noteworthy of these qualities, which had made Sir Ashutosh the idol of his people, were his robust uncompromising nationalism and his fearlessness.

The nationalism of Sir Ashutosh was not a superficial feeling born out of Western education. It swelled from his orthodoxy, from his pride in Indian heritage and tradition. He made it a point all his life not to wear European dress except where his official duties strictly demanded it. He refused to visit England to attend the coronation of King Edward VII in spite of repeated requests of Lord Curzon. He knew, as his biographer Bipin Pal has put it, that "once a Hindu is tempted to cross the barrier, he loses his claim to real social equality with his political masters and practically concedes to alien ideals and customs, the right to sit in judgment upon national ideals and institutions".

It was this pride in his own heritage and ideals which enabled him to stand up against the current of Westernisation which was then sweeping over Bengal. He was quick to realise that development of national language as distinct from English was essential to create appreciation and love in the new generation for their national life and culture. So he introduced Bengali as a subject in Calcutta University in 1906 and followed it up by instituting the M.A. degree in Indian vernacular, in 1914. Every student for this degree had to study one other regional language of India besides Bengali. His aim was to revive cultural unity of India through the building up of an All India literature in the Indian languages breathing same thought and ideals. It was a far-sighted act of constructive

statesmanship. It has been well expressed in the pithy sentence "He gave to the mother-tongue a place in step-mother's hall" inscribed on the pedestal of his bust in Darbhanga Hall of Calcutta University.

At the same time he was very much alive to the weaknesses that had crept into the social fabric of Indian life and he never allowed his orthodoxy to stand in defence of them. He allowed his young widow-daughter to re-marry in spite of his orthodoxy and rue and cry of other people. He thus proved that his orthodoxy was not incompatible with modernism.

This spirit of robust nationalism of his father and the truly Hindu atmosphere of the house of Sir Ashutosh had a deep influence on Shyama Prasad. His pristine nationalism which later distinguished him from his contemporary politicians was a valuable patrimony that he received from his father.

But the quality of Sir Ashutosh which seems to have impressed young Shyama Prasad most was his fearlessness and ardent love of freedom. Ashutosh was perhaps the most fearless of the public figures of India of his time. At a time when public men and politicians vied with one another in paying tributes to the blessings of the British rule and flattering the British Viceroys, Sir Ashutosh roared like a lion in the Provincial and Imperial Councils putting forth his point of view untrammelled by any considerations of fear or favour. His reply to Lord Curzon when he insisted upon his visiting England has been often quoted as a classic example of his fearlessness. On his telling the Viceroy about his inability to go because his mother did not approve of it, Lord Curzon told him in a commanding tone: "Then tell your mother that the Viceroy and Governor-General of India commands her son to go". Without a moment's hesitation Sir Ashutosh replied: "Then I will tell the Viceroy of India on her behalf that the mother of Ashutosh refuses to let her son be commanded by anybody excepting herself, be he the Viceroy of India or be he anybody greater".

This fearlessness was a natural concomitant of his independence of character and the spirit of freedom which brought him in clash with the highest dignitaries of the British rule in India at every step of his public career. "Freedom first, freedom second, freedom always" was his guiding principle of life.

The life of Sir Ashutosh, his high idealism, pure nationalism, burning patriotism, devotion to learning, love of freedom and a clear perception of the lines on which new India should be moulded proved to be the greatest influence in the shaping of life and outlook of Shyama Prasad Mookerji. Sir Ashutosh recognised early the brilliance and in-born versatility of his young son and helped to develop his potentialities by special personal attention. He wanted Shyama Prasad to become a model of what he wanted the new generation of Indians, which he was moulding through Calcutta University, to be. Shyama Prasad also looked upon him as his hero whose every action and move he minutely studied. He assiduously tried to shape himself after his image.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

SHYAMA PRASAD spent his childhood in Bhawanipur, then a northern suburb of Calcutta, where his ancestral home still stands. This large but moderately built three-storeyed house, better known as 77, Ashutosh Mookerji Road, had been a rendezvous of great intellectuals, jurists, politicians and statesmen of Bengal and India for over half a century. The first thing that catches the eye as one enters the long and dark porch of this old style house is a large wooden name-plate. It reads :

Sir Ashutosh Mookerji	Out
Rama Prasad Mookerji	In
Shyama Prasad Mookerji	Out
Bama Prasad Mookerji	In

followed by a number of other names of the younger members of the Ashutosh family.

To a casual visitor this continuance of the names of the members who are dead and gone on the name-plate looks rather unusual. But to those who know about the noble tradition of this house and its contributions towards the making of modern Bengal and India, this preservation of the names of Sir Ashutosh and Shyama Prasad on the name-plate is a fit reminder of the tradition and the heritage of this house.

This house has been known all over Calcutta as an abode of Saraswati. Sir Ashutosh had filled it with books on all subjects. The books were his one obsession, his ever lasting friends, with whom he conversed day after day, year after year, till the whole house became a vast library of rare books. Every room, every corridor had shelves of books piled up to the ceiling along the walls. The valuable treasure of knowledge, 85,000 books in all, some of them not available anywhere else, were given as a gift to the nation by Dr. Shyama Prasad just a year before his death on behalf of the Mookerji family. This treasure now makes up the Ashutosh Wing of the National

Library of Calcutta. A look at the variety and quality of the books gives an idea of the versatility and rare understanding of sciences and humanities alike which distinguished Sir Ashutosh and his son Shyama Prasad.

This house is also well known to the people around for the pomp and show, devotion and piety, with which poojas had been celebrated there year after year. The most modern of men who have been living in it have continued to be most orthodox also in the matter of poojas and other celebrations, public and private, that enliven and variegate the humdrum life of a Hindu householder. It was at once the most modern and the most orthodox of the great houses of Calcutta.

Young Shyama Prasad saw and imbibed with reverence the spirit of both these aspects of the life of his family. He watched poojas, the strict observance of the religious ceremonies, rituals and discipline by his father and other members of the family. He also listened to discussions on the most modern and scientific subjects between his father and great scholars who went there from all parts of India and abroad. This created in him a reverence for India's age old culture and thought together with deep attachment to Western thought and learning born out of intellectual understanding. A foundation was thus laid of a happy blending of Hindu spirituality, tolerance and humanity together with the scientific outlook and broad understanding of all that is best in the life and ideals of the West. This characterised the life of Shyama Prasad throughout, both as an academician and a parliamentarian.

The general atmosphere in the country, particularly in Bengal, in the early years of the twentieth century, was another potent influence in moulding the life and outlook of young Shyama Prasad. He was born at a time when Lokmanya Tilak's firm assertion that "Freedom is my birth right and I will have it" and Bankim Chandra Chatterji's ecstatic hymn to the motherland—Vande Mataram—had begun a revolution in the minds of all patriotic Indians. The British plan to divide Bengal in order to weaken the nationalists, who mainly happened to be Hindus, was put into operation in 1904. This provoked the dormant national spirit and gave birth to a new phase of national struggle for freedom.

The reaction against the British policy of divide-and-rule manifested itself in two forms. The more ardent among the younger generation took to the cult of the bullet and the bomb in supreme disregard of its hazards. The gospel of action as preached in the *Bhagwad Gita* and as practised by Shivaji, whose memory was revived by Lokmanya Tilak through organised celebration of Shivaji Utsav, became the inspiration for this young and determined group. The association of such great names as that of Lokmanya Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Veer Savarkar, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh and Bhai Parmanand gave a new importance and halo to this cult of do or die.

Those who could not take to this extremist and dangerous path, took to the weapon of Swadeshi to break the economic hold of the British over India. Boycott of foreign ways of life was a natural concomitant of boycott of foreign goods. The cult of Swadeshi revived and intensified the latent national feeling of the people, and led to a re-discovery of their soul by educated Indians. It gave a crushing blow to the growing Westernisation that was then corroding the life of educated India. It made easy the task of nationalising the life and outlook of the new generation set before Shyama Prasad by Sir Ashutosh. Therefore, it is no wonder that it had a lasting effect on the receptive mind of Shyama Prasad. His inborn nationalism was sharpened and strengthened by this atmosphere around him.

The partition of Bengal and the movement for its annulment also brought to light the separatist tendencies of Indian Muslims which could be played upon by the British. By playing the game of the British, the Muslim intelligentsia shook the faith of nationalist India in their patriotism and loyalty to the motherland. It also gave the first inkling of the future of British policy in India. But unfortunately, few Indian politicians of the day could then visualise the deadly significance of this British policy in winning over the Muslims to weaken the nationalist India. Shyama Prasad was too young at that time to raise his finger against this subtle policy of the British which directly led to partition of India in 1947. But he was destined, as we now know, to carry on the most determined fight against this policy after he entered politics to save the

country from its evil effects.

While these influences, of home and outside, were moulding imperceptibly the mind and outlook of young Shyama Prasad, his father was also planning for a suitable type of education and training for his promising son. He could easily afford to send him to any of the public schools run by Englishmen in Calcutta and elsewhere on the lines of public schools in Britain. Most Indians of his status did that then as now. But Ashutosh's nationalism, grounded as it was on Indian culture and ideals, would not allow him to send his son to public schools. He was well aware of the fact that they could de-nationalise even the best and most promising of Indian boys.

The ordinary schools run by the municipality or the government were too neglected and mismanaged to develop the faculties of the children entrusted to them on right lines. They did not come up to Sir Ashutosh's standards. He therefore inspired his friend Shri Bisheshwar Mitter to open his Mitter Institute where Shyama Prasad and his brothers got their early schooling.

Sir Ashutosh thereafter became a regular visitor of Mitter Institute. A great educationist that he was, he personally supervised the arrangements in the school and kept a vigilant eye on the progress of his sons.

He even took personal care in selecting the companions for his sons. He persuaded some of his close friends to send their sons of the same age-group to Mitter Institute, so that the Shyama Prasad and his brothers could have companions of his choice.

The hard training of home and school coupled with vigilance and paternal care of Sir Ashutosh enabled the inborn qualities and brilliance of Shyama Prasad to shine forth. His precocity amazed his teachers and parents alike. He was always far ahead of his class. While still at school he would read books prescribed for F.A. and B.A.

At the same time he began to develop that idealism, that detachment from purely material things of life, which became the strongest feature of his public life. The note-books of his school days contain many stray remarks which give an indication of the working of his mind. On one of them it was found written: "I want to be great. I do not want money". He

did live up to this early idealism. He never allowed money or material comforts of life to motivate his actions and activities.

As Shyama Prasad grew up in school, Sir Ashutosh began to take work of his private secretary from him. He would often dictate him letters which Shyama Prasad wrote in long hand to be typed by him later. Sir Ashutosh also began to take him to the Calcutta University with him which gave him an opportunity to talk to University professors.

This not only provided an outlet for his extraordinary energies, but also enabled him to study from close quarters his father, his way of working and his way of dealing with men and matters. Sir Ashutosh believed in the age old Indian dictum: "It behoves the great to be ever active".

He never idled away his time. The manifold activities that he carried on simultaneously was a miracle for his contemporaries. The practical training that Shyama Prasad had through his close practical association with his father in work, enabled him to imbibe these qualities in himself and develop a spirit of self-confidence which proved to be his greatest asset in later life.

CHAPTER III

TOWARDS A "PURE AND MANLY LIFE"

HAVING passed his matriculation examination from Mitter Institute at the age of sixteen with a scholarship, Shyama Prasad joined Presidency College, in 1917. This change over from school to college marked the beginning of new and very formative period of his life. It brought him into direct domain of his father. He could now feel the touch of his father in shaping of the educational life of Bengal. It provided him new opportunities of assisting Sir Ashutosh in his educational work, and get that insight into the affairs of Calcutta University which fitted so well for carrying on his father's work in the sphere of the University when the mantle, as architect of Calcutta University, fell upon him.

Shyama Prasad was blessed at this stage of his life with a robust health which coupled with his simple living and intellectual brilliance, at once made him a favourite of his teachers and fellow-students. Like his father, he deliberately chose Dhoti and Kurta in preference to the European dress as his normal wear.

He passed his Inter-Arts examination in 1919, standing first in the University. This established his reputation as a student and he was appointed General Secretary of the Presidency College Magazine in 1920. It was a great honour for young Shyama Prasad. The editorship of the college magazine provided him the first opportunity for self-expression. His writings of the time bristle with a young aspirant's vision of life indicative of his great future. Most remarkable among them from the point of view of understanding the man in Shyama Prasad are his letters to Prof. Percival, a great scholar and teacher, who had helped mould a whole generation of Bengali intellectuals and men of action, including Sir Ashutosh, who had studied with him in the Presidency College. Shyama Prasad had heard much about him from his father and he had a keen desire to get introduced to him. His appointment as editor

of the Presidency College Magazine gave him the opportunity to fulfil his desire. He wrote to Prof. Pervical his first letter on September 2, 1920, introducing himself and praying him for an article for the magazine. The acquaintance thus begun grew into deep personal affection between the young student and the great teacher who was then enjoying his well-earned rest in England. The most remarkable of the series of letters that passed between them is the one written by Shyama Prasad on 20th of November, 1920. It gives us an insight into the noble idealism that had taken hold of Shyama Prasad and which continued to shape his actions all through the crowded life. The letter reads :

My Dear Sir,

I was away to Banaras during the Pooja Holidays and returned to Calcutta only a week ago.

I have got your letter. I cannot say how proud I do feel. Such a letter is indeed worthy of you and you alone. From its very beginning to its end, it is couched in such terms, which I cannot but describe as affectionate. They say—the writing shows the man—it is really so, sir, in your case.

We all deeply regret to find you are unable to write something for our magazine. May I request you to accept the copy of the first issue of the magazine for this session, which I am sending to you in a separate cover.

I deem myself fortunate for having been able to get myself acquainted with you and I cannot but express the hope that you will bless me from your inmost heart that I may live a pure and manly life.

I beg to remain sir, with profound respects,

Yours affectionately,
Shyama Prasad Mookerji.

“Pure and manly life” was the ideal he set before himself while still in his teens. He lived up to it. He aspired to be pure and he did remain pure—pure of character, pure of heart, pure in body and soul to the end of his life. He aspired to be manly and he did live a manly life. Manliness was in fact the dominant trait of his character. His fearlessness, his supreme disregard of self and his readiness to fight and suffer

for all just causes were but manifestations of his manliness.

He developed special taste for English literature in the course of his college career. He began to write chaste and flawless English and distinguished himself by standing first in Class I in B.A. with honours in English in 1921. This special proficiency in English naturally suggested that he should take up English for his M.A. But the nationalist in Shyama Prasad objected to it. He had seen how his father had been struggling to give Bengali and other Indian vernaculars their rightful place in the educational curricula of Calcutta University. He set an example for his contemporaries by taking up Indian vernacular—Bengali and one another Indian language instead of English for his M.A., which he passed with a first class in 1923.

While studying for his M.A. he was married in April, 1922, to Shrimati Sudha Devi, who bore him four children—two sons and two daughters—before she died in 1934.

He did his B.L., once again standing first class in the University in 1924, and was enrolled as an advocate of the Calcutta High Court. The flare for writing that he had developed as editor of the Presidency College Magazine drew him to journalism also for some time. He started "Bang Wani" a Bengali journal in 1922. He also wrote a regular feature for "Capital" edited by Pat Lovell under the pen name "Ditch" during 1923-24. The Calcutta Review was also purchased by his father from Thacker Spink during the same period. By writing for these journals, he developed a fascinating style both in Bengali and English. But this lure for journalism was only a passing phase. He again took to it sometime in the forties when he started his own daily "The Nationalist" from Calcutta. But this too was short lived.

With his mastery over language, keen intellect, devastating logic and great gift of eloquence he could have easily risen to the top of the legal profession had he paid it the attention it demanded. But that was not to be. Circumstances beyond his control coupled with his own inborn idealism drove him to a much wider and useful field from the broader national point of view. Instead of remaining content with only pleading for justice for his clients, he was destined to make justice to the whole of India his special concern.

The most unexpected of these circumstances was the untimely death of his father in May, 1924. Sir Ashutosh had retired from judgeship of Calcutta High Court in 1923. By the end of the same year he resigned the vice-chancellorship of Calcutta University after a heated controversy with Lord Lytton, the then Governor of Bengal, over financial support by the Government to the University. Sir Ashutosh was then planning to enter active politics. Had he done so, he would have surely come to the top not only in Bengal but also in All-India politics in no time. But his sudden death in Patna, where he had gone on a professional visit, cut short all plans. It also created a void in the public life of Bengal, particularly in the sphere of the Calcutta University, which was not easy to fill.

The one man who was known to have the closest insight into the educational plans and policies of Sir Ashutosh and the intricacies of the University administration which he controlled as its supreme arbitrator was young Shyama Prasad.

So all well-wishers of the University considered his continued association with the University administration as essential for its healthy growth on the lines laid down by Sir Ashutosh.

It was this consciousness which prompted his old teacher and later Governor of West Bengal, Shri H. C. Mookerji, to vacate his seat in the University senate early in 1924 so that young Shyama Prasad could be elected to it. In June of the same year he was appointed a member of the Syndicate to fill the place of Sir Ashutosh on it. The mantle of Sir Ashutosh in the sphere of the Calcutta University, thus fell upon Shyama Prasad, his natural and spiritual heir, at the young age of 23. He took upon himself to carry on his great tradition and complete his unfinished work of reconstruction of Calcutta University as a fit instrument for national rejuvenation.

CHAPTER IV

THE YOUNGEST VICE-CHANCELLOR

FOR the next fifteen years of his life, Shyama Prasad concentrated his attention on the Calcutta University. He literally made it his own as his father had done before him. He reconstructed it on the foundations laid by his father and established his reputation as an original thinker and brilliant educationist. Even after he took to active politics in 1939, education in general and Calcutta University in particular continued to be an absorbing interest of his life. As a result he continued to be regarded and respected as one of the foremost educationists of the country upto the end of his life, even by those who differed with his politics.

During this period, he served Calcutta University with single minded devotion in various capacities such as President of the Councils of Post-Graduate studies in art and science, Dean of the faculty of Arts and vice-chancellor. Even though he was the youngest ever fellow and syndic of the premier University of the country, his intimate knowledge of the mind of its master architect who was no more there to guide its destinies, gave him an unprecedented position and say in its affairs. He began to be looked upon as a dependable guide in all intricate matters about which the knowledge of the original plan of Sir Ashutosh was deemed necessary. He became the interpreter of his plans and policies about the reconstruction of the University.

But it was yet a time of studentship for Shyama Prasad. He was only 24 and had a keen desire to complete his legal studies in England. He went there in March 1926 and joined the Lincoln's Inn and was called to the English Bar in 1927. While in England he ably represented Calcutta University at the Conference of the Universities of the British Empire. He began to be counted from then onwards as one of the leading educationists of India.

It was in England that Shyama Prasad came in close touch

with Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, whom Sir Ashutosh had put on the road to greatness by bringing him to Calcutta University from Mysore; and Sir Evans Greaves who remained his life-long friend. He was known to be a quiet and unostentatious type of student by his contemporaries in England. But his amiable nature won him a large number of friends. His nurse in the nursing-home to which he had to shift in October, 1926, because of a carbuncle was amusingly annoyed by large number of friends who would come to meet him there posing as his cousins. "This is another cousin coming", she would exclaim whenever a new face peeped in for her permission to meet Shyama Prasad.

After his return from England in 1927 he took to legal practice for some time. But his pre-occupation with the University soon forced him to choose between law, which is a jealous mistress, and public and educational work. He chose the latter and never turned back from it during the rest of his life.

He was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council as a Congress candidate representing the Calcutta University in 1929. He resigned his seat in the Council in 1930 when the Congress decided to boycott the legislatures. But as a practical man he failed to see the utility of withdrawing from the legislatures leaving the field open to toadies, to play mischief. He felt it necessary that the interests of the University be safe-guarded in the legislatures, particularly because education had become a transferred subject under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1921. So he sought re-election and was returned once again in 1930 as an independent member representing the Calcutta University. His main occupation however continued to be service in the cause of education. He sat in the Council as a watch-dog of the interests of the University.

But the real opportunity to show his mettle as an educationist and an administrator came to Shyama Prasad in 1934 when he was appointed vice-chancellor of the Calcutta University. He was only 33 at that time and as such was the youngest vice-chancellor of any university in the country. It was hailed as a fit recognition of his great capabilities.

He had lost his wife a year earlier, in 1933, when he was just 32. His mother to whom he was devotedly attached tried her best to persuade him to marry again. But he refused. He

decided to dedicate the rest of his life to the service of his motherland. He first chose to serve her through the spread of right education among her sons and daughters. Vice-chancellorship of Calcutta University gave him the opportunity to put his aims and ideals regarding education of his people in practice.

Being fully conscious of the fact that university education in India had originated not in the desire for conservation and betterment of her traditional culture, her arts, crafts and industries but mainly for imparting her people Western ideas through the medium of foreign tongue and for ensuring a regular supply of an indigenous machinery for the smooth working of a powerful bureaucracy, he wanted to see the syllabus and courses of studies so remodelled, systems of training and examinations so reorganised that the learner may grow up not as a mechanised recorder of information and theories, not as a dry specialist, but one whose critical judgement is strengthened and whose capacity for broad thinking and wide application of knowledge to problems of life is developed to the fullest extent. He explained his ideal about the reorganisation of educational life more explicitly in his second convocation address delivered on February 12, 1936.

"Our ideal" he said, "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 be hidden in our youth and to train them intellectually, physically for devoted service in all spheres of national activity, in villages, in towns and cities. Our ideal is to make widest provision for a sound liberal education, to find the correct synthesis between vocational and technical training, remembering always that no nation can achieve greatness by turning its youth into a mere machine-made product with nothing but a material end in view. Our ideal is to afford the amplest facilities and privileges to our teachers so that they may be endowed with learning and character and freedom and may regard themselves as not only the torch bearers and interpreters of knowledge and conquerors of new realms of thought, but also as makers of men and women, of leaders and workers, true and brave, upright and patriotic. Our ideal is to link up education with the best elements of our culture and civilization drawing strength, wherever necessary, from the fountain of Western

skill and knowledge. Our ideal is to make our universities and educational institutions the home of liberty and sane and progressive thought—generously assisted by the State and the public—where teachers and students will meet and work in an atmosphere of harmony and mutual understanding, where none will suffer on grounds of caste, sex, creed and religious or political belief."

He pursued this ideal in a systematic way during four years of his vice-chancellorship. He did not spare time, energy, health, convenience, or anything worth in life, where they stood in the way of performance of what he considered his duty even against the advice of his doctors. The first thing to engage his attention as vice-chancellor was the position of Bengali and other vernacular languages in the curricula of the University. He wanted Bengali to occupy its rightful place in the educational life of Bengal. He took a long stride in this direction when he made Bengali the medium of instruction upto the matriculation, and introduced Honours Course in Bengali, Hindi and Urdu. To prepare text-books in Bengali, he got prepared a collection of technical terms and expressions in Bengali to be used in various subjects of study. He visualised a day "when in this manner the University will be able to prepare a complete glossary of words in all subjects and for all standards. This will enrich Bengali language and literature and also make it possible for us to take steps for extending the use of vernaculars for the higher examinations of the University". To enrich Bengali literature and to develop taste of the people for it, the University under his inspiration undertook the publication of a special series of Bengali books on different branches of knowledge. Bengali spelling was also standardised on his initiative.

It was under his vice-chancellorship that Shri Rabindra Nath Tagore delivered his convocation address in Bengali in 1937. It was a new departure in the right direction in the annals of the University. It marked the beginning of the end of the era of English superiority over Bengali and other Indian languages.

He next turned to the reform and reorganisation of the system of examinations and courses of study. He introduced the system of compartmental examinations and gave concession to students who had failed for appearing for examinations with-

out getting themselves admitted into colleges. The whole scheme of high school education was re-oriented by him. A variety of courses, and choices were introduced for the boys and alternative subjects and courses of study were prescribed for the girls.

He realised that increasing flow of trained teachers was a necessary prerequisite for bringing about and sustaining any reforms in the school education. To that end he organised a Teachers' Training Department at the Calcutta University and introduced a system of short-term training courses, including a vacation course—precursor of the present day refresher course—to provide trained teachers for schools.

He realised that an increasing flow of trained teachers was a discouraging factors he initiated military training courses in the scheme of college studies. To the same end he started annual celebration of the University Foundation day, which fell on January 24, at the Calcutta Maidan. All the students of Calcutta would assemble there on the day with their badges and banners and take part in the march-past and other physical displays. It helped in developing *esprit-de-corps* among the students and harmony between the teacher and the taught. Speaking at the first celebration he called upon the Government of the day to provide opportunities for the youth to grow. "I have abundant faith", he declared, "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". It was this solicitude for the genuine interests of the student community which gave him a tremendous hold over their affection and loyalty. While he wanted the authorities to do their duty towards the youth of the country he did not lay much store by them. He went ahead with his own plans for assisting the youth through the Students Welfare Department and Students' Appointment Board. The Students' Welfare Department worked for the promotion of mental and physical health of the students. To create a feeling of brotherhood among them the reserved hostels for the students coming from the so called backward classes were abolished and all of them were provided accommodation in

general hostels and messes attached to the colleges at reduced seat rates.

The Students' Appointment Board gave guidance to the students about choice of careers, contacted employers and recommended to them youth suited to their requirements. It also gave specialised training to the students intending to sit for competitive examination for the public services. While he thus took keen interest in finding employment for the educated youth among whom unemployment was growing fast, he was resolutely opposed to the policy of restricting higher education urged on the ground that "suitable appointments for work cannot be found for all university-trained men".

The society and state, he held, must provide useful employment for educated men. This task cannot be directly undertaken by any seat of learning whose duty will be mainly to provide society with men and women trained according to correct systems and ideals.

On his part he tried to give greater attention to technical and scientific studies. Without any encouragement from the government of the day, he put into effect a scheme for agricultural education and introduced the diploma course in education. He also initiated a scheme for imparting training in the large scale production of certain industrial goods in the Applied Chemistry Department of the University. He paid special attention to the expansion and equipment of science departments which fulfilled in his time the dream of his father that these departments should win, as a matter of right, admiration of the world.

On the Arts side, introduction of Tibetan and Chinese studies as a part of ancient Indian history and culture, the foundation of Ashutosh Museum of Indian Arts and Culture and the work of archeological excavations undertaken by the University were some of his specific contributions to the growth of Calcutta University as a seat of Indian learning. He also improved and enlarged the University Library. The new University Library Hall built in his time was decorated with frescoes illustrating the development of Indian culture and civilisation with special reference to contribution made by Bengal. Last but not the least important work of Shyama Prasad for the Calcutta University before he retired as its

vice-chancellor in August, 1938, was the settlement of the arrangements of Government financial help to the University. It was a ticklish question which had brought Sir Ashutosh into head-long clash with Lord Lytton in 1923, and had been hanging fire since then. According to this settlement Calcutta University was assured of a block grant of Rs. 4,85,000 a year.

His services to Calcutta University and his eminence as an intellectual and educationist had now come to be universally recognised and appreciated. He had been elected a member of the Court and Council of the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, as a representative of the Universities of Eastern India and had also become Chairman of the Inter University Board in the creation of which he had played a leading role. Calcutta University gave expression to its gratitude and appreciation of his services by conferring on him the degree of Honorary Doctor of Laws at a special convocation held in November, 1938. Speaking on the occasion Lord Borthourne, the Chancellor of the University, paid a most befitting tribute to Shyama Prasad when he said : "Nobody can say that Shyama Prasad Mookerji is being honoured by this Honorary degree because he is the son of a great father. It is because he is himself. He has earned every bit of it".

Retirement from vice-chancellorship did not mark the end of his association with Calcutta University. He continued to be the life and soul of it for many more years. Politics, however, began to engage his attention more and more after 1938. But even after he became fully engrossed in politics which latter took him to wider fields of activity in New Delhi, his interest in education in general and Calcutta University in particular continued unabated. The country began to look upon him as a foremost expert on educational problems and his advice on educational matters continued to be sought after with eagerness till the last days of his life. Banaras University also conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws in 1938. The Government of India also gave recognition to his intellectual eminence by nominating him as its representative on the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations in the same year. The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, the premier organisation for Asiatic studies in India, honoured him by electing him its President in 1943.

CHAPTER V

FROM EDUCATION TO POLITICS

FROM education to politics was not a long way during the period of Indian struggle for independence. Education awakened the mind, created political consciousness and aroused the desire for emancipation from the foreign strangle-hold. That is why most political workers and leaders came from the educated and professional classes like lawyers, doctors and teachers.

For a man like Dr. Shyama Prasad, this movement from educational to political sphere was as natural as it was inevitable. His innate nationalism, dauntless courage, power of elocution and family tradition could not but bring him into the political arena for serving his motherland and securing justice for his people in a wider sphere. His father Sir Ashutosh had also planned to enter politics after his retirement from the High Court. But providence did not spare him to enter the political field and take the political leadership of the country, for which he was so eminently fitted, in his hands. The unfulfilled aspirations of his great father might also have been a factor that drove Shyama Prasad into politics. But the major factor was the political situation as it developed itself, particularly after the inauguration of the Government of India Act of 1935. Shyama Prasad had to enter active politics to save the life work of his father and his own in educational spheres from the Islamic vandalism of the Muslim League and the lack of realism and pusillanimity of the Indian National Congress.

He began his political career in a small way as early as 1929 when he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council as a Congress candidate from the University constituency. It was in a way a necessary adjunct to his educational work. He was supposed to act as a watch-dog of the interests of the Calcutta University in the legislature.

The Congress call for boycott of councils a few months later

put him in a fix. As an honest and conscientious man he felt it his duty to obey that call. But as a result he realised that some one must remain in the Council to keep watch over and safeguard the interests of the University which had come to be looked upon by the British bureaucracy as a breeding ground of seditious ideas. He, therefore, resigned his seat in the Council to honour the call of the Congress and sought re-election to it as an independent candidate from the same University constituency. He was re-elected. He got his early training as a speaker and a parliamentarian during this period. He also got insight into the working of the Congress and the Muslim League mind. The Congress attitude towards the Communal Award came as a great shock to him. It shook his faith in that organisation. But his main work continued to be in and for the University outside the Legislature.

The introduction in 1937 of the Provincial part of the Government of India Act of 1935 and the elections to the Provincial Legislatures in the same year created a new situation. He was again elected to the Bengal Assembly from the University constituency and so had the opportunity to study the working of provincial autonomy from very close quarters.

The new assembly elected on the basis of Communal Award had 250 members out of which only 80 were Hindus most of whom had been returned on the Congress ticket. The Muslims were divided between Muslim league led by S. H. Suhrawardy and Krishak Praja Party of A. K. Fazal-ul-Haq. The Congress handling of the situation in and outside the legislature soon provoked him to think afresh about its policies and political conceptions. He saw how bankruptcy of statesmanship on its part was driving all the Muslim members into the fold of the Muslim League. The Muslim League was jeopardising the social, educational and cultural life of Bengal and the very existence of Hindus as equal and self-respecting sons of the soil by pushing through the legislature the Bengal Secondary Education Bill, the University Bill and the Calcutta Corporation Bill. These bills struck at the very foundation of the educational fabric of Bengal which life-long labours of Sir Ashutosh had created mainly with the co-operation and help of Hindu philanthropists and scholars and which Shyama Prasad had been trying to further improve and fortify. The

situation was a challenge to his manliness. He could not see his life work being destroyed by upstart and reckless political adventurers. The man of action in him was roused. The retirement from the vice-chancellorship freed him from the responsibilities of that office. He was free to take up the challenge of politics.

Politics demanded his alignment with one or the other recognised political parties of the country which might provide him with a popular base. Indian National Congress, the most powerful political organisation in the country, with which he had been passively associated since his entry into public life would have been his natural choice but for the experience that he had gained of its mind and its philosophy both in theory and practice, in and outside the legislatures. He had become thoroughly disillusioned with it. Its policy of compromise with the Muslim League even at the cost of clear and vital national interests was repugnant to his innate nationalism.

He was, therefore, in a fix. As a seeker after truth, he was in search of light. His tormented soul wanted a guide. This he found in Sir Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the renowned revolutionary and close companion of Lokmanya Tilak, who was then on a visit to Calcutta. Savarkar had just then been freed from his internment in Ratnagiri District by the Congress Government of Bombay. He had spurned the offer to join the Congress, which was then prepared to offer him the highest position in the organisation, because he felt that the Congress had departed from the aims and ideals which inspired it when he had served it with his life blood. According to Veer Savarkar, the Congress had fallen from the high pedestal of nationalism. He was convinced that Congress policy of appeasement of Muslim League at the cost of the national interests for which Hindus in general stood would destroy Indian unity and the main springs of its national life. He had raised a hornet's nest by joining the Hindu Mahasabha, which he wanted to build as a true instrument of the national will based on the ideal of Hindutva and on the love of the country and its age old culture. He had put a new life in Hindu Mahasabha within a few months and had come to Calcutta to reorganise the Mahasabha movement in Bengal.

Shri N. C. Chatterji, the Calcutta host of Veer Savarkar,

invited a number of leading citizens of the city to meet him. Dr. Shyama Prasad was one of them. He was deeply impressed by Veer Savarkar. His analysis of the Indian political situation and his gospel of unalloyed nationalism as the only effective antidote to Muslim separatism and divide-and-rule policy of the alien rulers appealed to him as a practical and realistic approach to the problems posed by Muslim League in Bengal and elsewhere. He, therefore, decided to join Hindu Mahasabha and make it an effective instrument for check-mating the anti-national policies of the Muslim League and the cowardly passivity of the Congress. He took a leading part in the Annual Session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha held in Calcutta, in December of the same year and became one of its vice-presidents. Soon after he became its Acting President due to the continued ill health of Veer Savarkar, the President.

Dr. Mookerji's decision to join the Hindu Mahasabha instead of the Congress, in which he could have surely reached the top in no time, has been subjected to some ill informed criticism by some of his friends and critics alike. But the answer to their criticism is to be found in Dr. Mookerji's writings and speeches. Speaking at the Amritsar session of the Hindu Mahasabha in December, 1943, he posed the question "why Hindu Mahasabha?" and answered it this :

"So long as communal considerations loom large in the field of Indian administration and sinister Anglo-Muslim conspiracy continues, the Hindu Mahasabha must function as an active and fearless political organisation which can both defend the rights of the Hindus and of India as a whole. So long as a third party remains in India and an aggressive anti-national and anti-Hindu Muslim League party holds its sway over the Muslim masses, enjoying the favours of the British Government, and planning to veto the elementary rights of the majority, Hindus for their sheer existence must have their own political organisation to fight for their own rights and liberties. The political goal of Hindu Mahasabha is complete independence of India. It stands for joint electorates, if necessary with reservation of seats. It asks for no special favours for Hindus in any part of the country. Its aim and policy are consistent with welfare and advancement of India as a whole."

His joining the Hindu Mahasabha in 1939 was welcomed even by a man like Mahatma Gandhi, whom he met at Calcutta for the first time on the 26th of February, 1940. Mahatmaji had just returned from Malikanda, near Dacca, where he had gone to attend the meeting of Nikhil Bharat Charkha Sangh. There he had received the reports of anti-Hindu riots in Noakhali and other places known to be engineered by the Muslims with the connivance of the Muslim League Ministry, and was perturbed over the lot of the Hindus.

He asked Gandhiji why Congress was not opposing separate electorates, which he thought would lead to partition of India at some stage. He referred Gandhiji to Lady Minto's Diary in support of his contention. Gandhiji expressed his ignorance about the Diary and requested him to send him selected passages from it.

When told about Dr. Shyama Prasad's entry into Mahasabha, Mahatmaji said "Somebody was needed to lead the Hindus after Malviyaji". Thereupon Dr. Mookerji commented, "But then you will dub me as communal". Gandhiji's reply was, "Like Shiva who drank the poison after churning the sea, somebody must be there to drink the poison of the Indian politics. It can be you". Gandhiji was greatly impressed by the broad and thoroughly nationalistic outlook of Dr. Mookerji. Before parting, he told him: "Patel is a Congressman with a Hindu mind, you be a Hindu Sabhaite with a Congress mind".

The entry of Dr. Mookerji into Hindu Mahasabha and his quick rise to the position of its Acting President marked the beginning of his active political career.

His entry into active politics was hailed by his admirers and critics alike. His intellectual attainments, dauntless spirit, moral fibre and power of elocution made him look a welcome addition to the political stage of the country. Some, who knew by experience how all absorbing the political field was, felt that the gain to political life would be a loss to the educational and cultural life of the country in which he had already made a mark. The homely remark of a top Congress leader who wrote to him "active politics is like riding a tiger, you can ride it all right but it becomes impossible to climb down from it," was often recalled by Dr. Mookerji in later years when he had come to realise the truth of that friendly advice. But it

must be said to his credit that with all his later preoccupations with politics, he never completely lost touch with educational and cultural activities. The Calcutta University, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore and Mahabodhi Society of India continued to get the benefit of his active association and guidance to the end of his life.

CHAPTER VI

PRESIDENT OF HINDU MAHASABHA

It did not take Shyama Prasad long to make a mark in the political field. His stature had already grown so high and his versatile qualities of head and heart were so well recognised in Bengal that his entry galvanised Bengal Hindu Mahasabha into a dynamic and growing organisation. It began to attract the Hindu intelligentsia, as it had never done in its history before, and began to be looked upon as a force in Bengal politics. His bold but rational presentation of Mahasabha ideology and his frontal attack on the Congress policy of appeasement of and compromise with the Muslim League and other anti-national forces at the cost of the Hindus and to the detriment of the wider interests of the country, created a stir all over Bengal and India.

His appointment as Acting President of the All India Hindu Mahasabha early in 1940 due to continued ill health of the President, Veer Savarkar, gave him a wider stage for the presentation of Mahasabha ideals as he understood them to be. He toured the whole of India, addressed mammoth gatherings and left his impress on all those who came in contact with him. The present writer, who was then studying for his degree in Lahore, heard him for the first time in Winter 1940 when he spoke in English to a packed hall about the aims and ideals of Mahasabha and its differences with the Congress. His exposition was so forceful, so methodical and convincing that he set all his listeners thinking. Many were heard whispering after he had completed his speech that the Hindu Mahasabha, if it was truly what he had explained it to be, and not the Congress was the organisation that could meet the challenge of the time.

In the course of his short stay in Lahore he addressed a rally of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh as well. Speaking on the occasion he said : "I see in this organisation the one silver lining

in the cloudy sky of India". It was this admiration for the R.S.S. which continued to draw him closer and closer to it in his later years.

His whirlwind tour took the country by storm. It was felt everywhere that a new and powerful star was rising on the Indian horizon. His personality gave to the Mahasabha a new status and prestige in the political life of the country, and he himself became an All-India figure.

But Bengal was to continue to be his main field of activity for some time more. It was the situation in Bengal, the miserable plight of the Hindus who were being systematically humiliated and despoiled by the Muslim League with the connivance of the British for the great sin of patriotism, which had impelled him to leave the temple of Saraswati and enter the political arena. He therefore naturally felt that Bengal had the first claim on his attention. The task that faced him in Bengal was twofold. He had to meet the challenge of the Muslim League. He had also to establish his position vis-a-vis the Congress leadership which had come to regard the Hindus as their own flock which could be fleeced by them at will.

The main figure on the Congress side in Bengal at that time was Shri Subhas Chandra Bose. His stand against Gandhiji at the Tripuri Congress and his subsequent retreat from the Congress Presidency had made him a hero in Bengal. He was planning to hold Bengal, and particularly Calcutta, as his own citadel, to demonstrate his hold and strength to Congress High Command by capturing its Corporation elections which were scheduled to be held that year. Dr. Mookerji also decided to set up Hindu Mahasabha candidates to contest all seats.

This pitted the two stalwarts against each other in their bid to win the loyalties of Bengal Hindus. The situation soon made Shri Subhas Bose realise that in a triangular contest between the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and his men, the Muslim League might secure a majority. So he proposed a deal to Dr. Mookerji. The Hindu Mahasabha and his party, he suggested, should contest an agreed number of constituencies to be determined by mutual consultation. Dr. Mookerji agreed. Constituencies were accordingly selected and candidates approved. But they could not arrive at any agreed decision about the candidates to be set up for two particular

constituencies. Dr. Mookerji suggested a way out. A panel was to be submitted by each party to the other out of which the other party should select a candidate who should thereafter be treated as candidate of both the parties. The suggestion was accepted. Shri Subhas Bose selected one, from the panel submitted by Dr. Mookerji. But the man selected by Dr. Mookerji out of the panel submitted by Subhas Bose was not acceptable to the latter. He wanted a supporter of his, a strong man who was neither a Congressman nor a Hindu Sabhaite, but whose physical support was very much valued by him, to be nominated for the seat and not the one selected by Dr. Mookerji in accordance with the agreement.

Dr. Mookerji argued with him to abide by the agreement and not to insist upon the selection of his particular favourite. But Subhas Bose would not agree. He told Dr. Mookerji that force was the ultimate argument in all matters and he would not accept any other candidate even if it meant failure of the pact and contest every seat even though that might result in victory for the third party, the Muslim League. His appeal to save Calcutta Corporation from falling in the hands of Muslim Leaguers had no effect on him. Dr. Mookerji therefore reluctantly decided to accept the challenge.

Subhas Bose with the help of his favourite decided to intimidate the Mahasabha candidates by the use of force. His men would break up all Mahasabha meetings and beat up its candidates. As a result the Mahasabha candidates got so terrified and demoralised that they would not hold any meetings at all. Dr. Mookerji could not tolerate this. He got a meeting announced to be addressed by himself. As soon as he rose to speak a stone hit him in the head which began to bleed profusely. This infuriated the audience that adored him. They fell upon the goondas including the strong-men of Subhas Bose and gave them a thorough beating. That put an end to their hooliganism. Soon after Subhas Bose met Dr. Mookerji and suggested that there should be no interference or attempt at disturbing the meetings of the rival parties.

This incident proved the mettle of Dr. Mookerji as a political leader of the people of Calcutta and created a salutary effect on his opponents. Subhas Bose learned to respect him and they became good friends though their paths remained different.

This friendship slowly grew into mutual admiration. Both were patriots of the purest hue and were fearless men of action. So they could understand and appreciate each other. Both ultimately laid down their lives for the glory and freedom of the motherland as martyrs.

The problem presented by the Muslim League was of a different kind. With the connivance of the British bureaucracy the League Ministry of Bengal was making a planned effort to Muslimise the life of Bengal. There were two main planks in its programme. One was to engineer riots, particularly in East Bengal, to demoralise the Hindus so that they may flee from their homes and hearths or get converted to Islam. The second was to Muslimise the administration and sap the sources of Hindus' pre-eminence in educational and cultural spheres by depriving them of their hold over the University and the secondary education.

Dr. Mookerji successfully checkmated their plans. He was always first to visit the riot affected areas to inspire confidence in the Hindus by his personal courage and by systematic exposure of the League designs. The way he dashed to Dacca early in 1940 when that city was in the grips of worst riots, has become a classic example of his supreme courage, fearlessness and solicitude for the common people.

The riots were pre-planned. There was conspiracy not to let the country even know of the holocaust. Press was forbidden to publish any news about it under the Defence of India Rules. But as soon as Dr. Mookerji came to know of it, he decided to visit Dacca. The British Chief Secretary at first would not permit him to do so. But when he insisted, he was permitted to go. But there was no conveyance. A chartered plane was going to carry some Muslim Ministers there. Shyama Prasad requested the governor for a seat in it. But just before he reached the aerodrome, the plane took off to avoid him. But he was not the man to be daunted by such tactics. He got into a tiny private mono-plane and risked his life in that rickety thing. When he landed safely at Dacca, the British Deputy Commissioner would not let him enter the city on grounds of safety. He would not give him police escort either. But Dr. Mookerji was determined to be amidst his suffering brethren. So he dashed to the city and directly went to the

palace of Nawab of Dacca, the President of Bengal Muslim League, from where the whole carnage was being planned and organised. The whole of Dacca was amazed at his boldness and courage.

After his return to Calcutta, he wanted the public to know what had happened at Dacca. But the press was gagged under Defence of India Rules. The only way to get the news published was to first have the matter raised in Assembly. The press could then give publicity to the news in the form of proceedings of the Assembly. But he needed some minimum support in the Assembly for moving an adjournment motion. He wired to Maulana Azad, the then Congress President to instruct Congress legislatures to support him. But the Muslim in Azad got the better of the nationalist in him. He refused to do anything in the matter just then. Thereupon Dr. Mookerji wrote to Gandhiji who admonished Maulana Azad and directed him to wire to Bengal legislatures to support Shyama Prasad's move. Thus he was able to tell the country what Muslims had done to Dacca Hindus. It was as a result of his exposures in the Assembly that the government was forced to restore calm and punish the guilty.

He was equally successful in foiling the League plans to Muslimise and dominate the secondary education through legislation. Mr. A. K. Fazal-ul-Haq as Chief Minister in the League-Krishak Praja Party coalition was determined to put the Secondary Education Bill, which sought to take away control of secondary education from the University, which was controlled by non-Muslims, and entrust it to a nominated Board with a majority of Muslims on it. Speaking in the Assembly early in 1940 he declared: "The members of the Coalition party are also determined to show the world that they would be untrue to Islam and untrue to their heritage if they do not place this bill permanently on the Statute Book".

But the man who led the opposition to the bill inside and outside the legislature had not only determination but also reason on his side. Dr. Mookerji attacked the bill with such force of logic coupled with persuasive eloquence, that doubts began to assail the hearts of Fazal-ul-Haq's own supporters. His sweet reasonableness, his deep insight into the educational needs and problems of the province and his burning faith in the

justice of his cause won over many an erstwhile supporters of the bill, including the Chief Minister himself, to his side. He finally turned the tables on the Muslim Leaguers with a great speech on the 4th of September, 1941, in the course of which he said :

"I shall ask the government and its supporters to hold their hands and not to proceed with the present bill. Nothing will be more welcome to the Hon'able Chief Minister and to the general public in the province than an agreed measure on educational reform. We the elders may fight our battle in other spheres of differences, but if both of us are anxious that our children should receive better education than what we have ourselves received, why should we not put our hands together and be determined to come to an honourable agreement acceptable to both parties."

His appeal proved to be very timely. Differences had already arisen between Mr. Fazal-ul-Haq and his Muslim League partners. He was not prepared to bow to the dictates of Mr. Jinnah. This was putting a severe strain on his coalition with Muslim League. The indictment of Muslim League and its tactics by Shyama Prasad brought many a waverer to his side. He therefore decided to break with the League. He submitted the resignation of his coalition ministry on the 7th of December, 1941.

This created a new situation. Fazal-ul-Haq, with his Krishak Praja Party was a force in the legislature. But he could not form a ministry of his own because he did not command absolute majority. He needed the support of some Hindu members at least to be able to form a ministry.

The Congress leadership, if it had a grain of realism in it, should have rushed to support him to keep the Muslim League out of office. Such a step might have changed the whole course of Bengal politics, nay even the politics of India as a whole, by weaning away Fazal-ul-Haq from the communal politics of the League. But that was not to be. The Congress leaders seemed to be determined to force Fazal-ul-Haq into the lap of the Muslim League by persistently refusing to form a coalition with him.

Dr. Shyama Prasad was however fully conscious of the dangers inherent in such an eventuality. He considered it to be a

catastrophe for Bengal. He therefore thought it necessary, in the wider interests of Bengal and India, that the Muslim League should be kept out of power by befriending and strengthening Fazal-ul-Haq. To that end he mustered together all the non-Congress Hindu forces in the legislature and formed what is known as the Progressive Coalition with Krishak Praja Party under the leadership of Fazal-ul-Haq. This gave Fazal-ul-Haq absolute majority in the Assembly which forced the British Governor, Sir John Herbert, to invite him, much against his wishes, to form the Government. Mr. Fazal-ul-Haq accepted the invitation and his new cabinet was sworn in on the 17th of December, 1941. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjii became Finance Minister of Bengal in this Coalition Ministry.

CHAPTER VII

THE REBEL MINISTER

ENTRY into Bengal Government at that crucial time marked the beginning of a new and very significant chapter in the crowded life of Shyama Prasad. Bengal had so far known him as an educationist who had entered politics more under compulsion of circumstances than as a matter of choice. His association with the Hindu Mahasabha was frowned upon by many of the Congress-brand nationalists. They doubted his wisdom in joining hands with Fazal-ul-Haq and some took even more uncharitable view of the step he had taken.

But the way Shyama Prasad conducted himself as a Minister, the determined fight he put up against the hostile British Governor and unsympathetic bureaucracy, not only silenced his critics but also raised his stature as a practical and far-seeing politician, a capable administrator and above all as an arch-nationalist.

The position of the coalition ministry was anything but easy. Shri Sarat Chandra Bose who was to join it along with Shyama Prasad and who would have brought a good deal of prestige and strength to the new government was arrested just on the eve of the formation of the ministry following the disappearance of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose from his house-prison. The governor and the British bureaucracy were openly hostile to the new ministry. They were chagrined at their failure to have a Muslim League ministry and wanted the coalition government to fall. The Defence of India Rules had made the position of the Governor, who had direct access to the secretaries and district officers over the heads of the ministry, exceptionally strong vis-a-vis the ministry. The powers of the ministry were circumscribed in many ways and it had little voice in the matter of all important question of defence of the province against the impending Japanese invasion.

But Shyama Prasad was not the man to be daunted by such difficulties. The more hurdles the governor put in the way

of the ministry the more determined Shyama Prasad became to assert the right of the ministry to be heard and obeyed. His stature as an educationist and leader of the intellectual elite of Bengal forced the governor to show him deference whether he liked it or not. Fazal-ul-Haq had the highest regard for Shyama Prasad not only for his abilities but also because he looked upon him as his "Guru Bhai". He held Sir Ashutosh, at whose feet he had received his education, in the highest esteem. As a result, Shyama Prasad soon began to be looked upon as the brain and guiding spirit of the coalition ministry. Within a few days of his becoming a minister, there arose an occasion which demonstrated to the world, as perhaps nothing else could, the dauntless spirit and the courage of conviction of Dr. Mookerji. The annual session of the Hindu Mahasabha was scheduled to be held at Bhagalpur in December end. But the Bihar Government imposed ban on it against which the Mahasabha decided to launch a satyagraha. Dr. Mookerji dashed to Bhagalpur and courted arrest along with other Mahasabha leaders. That remains the solitary case in the annals of British rule in India when a minister of the Crown in one province courted arrest in another province under the same Crown.

The first task before the new ministry was to prepare Bengal to meet the danger of Japanese invasion which was becoming more threatening day by day. The British government of India was then thinking of withdrawing and following a scorched earth policy instead of preparing the people, whom they distrusted, to fight the enemy. The ministry which was prevented by the existing army laws from doing anything to mobilise and train the people for the defence of their homeland, felt very helpless in the matter. Dr. Mookerji, therefore, decided to take up the matter directly with the governor on a personal plane.

Having come to know that the governor was going to New Delhi for consultation with the Governor-General and the C-in-C, he addressed to him on March 7, 1942, a long letter drawing his attention to the pressing need for raising a Home Army in Bengal to meet the impending danger. How the letter, which along with some other letters of Dr. Mookerji addressed to the governor, Sir John Herbert, and the Governor-General,

Lord Linlithgow, including his letter of resignation from the cabinet, came to be proscribed when they were published in book form under the title of "A Phase of Indian Struggle", is a historic event. Being the first political writing of Dr. Mookerji, it gives a clear idea of his robust nationalism, patriotism and high idealism which marked Dr. Mookerji's politics to the end of his life.

"You should impress upon the viceroy", he wrote to Sir John Herbert, "that even at this late hour there should be an immediate settlement between England and India so that Indians may spontaneously feel that it is really a people's war. A strong representative national government with power to direct the defence policy of India in India's paramount interest has to be set up immediately, if we are to win the war."

"It is only a Chinese Generalissimo", he added, "that has inspired the Chinese people to fight the enemy to the last man. It is a Churchill, your own man, that gives you the clarion call at the hour of crisis. . . . Here, on the other hand, real power is in the hands of an irresponsible bureaucracy whom we cannot remove if we consider such removal to be imperative in our national interest."

Referring to his plan of Home Army he wrote, "I have placed before you a number of times my proposal that we should be given the power to raise a Home Army for the defence of Bengal, . . . Your objection," he went on, "to raise a Home Army for Bengal even at a critical time like the present, is that this is entirely against the Indian Army Policy. My reply is that today that policy must be determined first and foremost in the interest of India. Let India's interests be the supreme factor today and let Indians themselves decide how best to tackle the great peril into which you have thrown us."

He concluded his letter with an appeal. "There will be many objections, as I have said before, from routine standpoint. But my appeal to you and through you to the viceroy is that you must be bold enough today to discard red tape and rusty bureaucratic notions of administration. As I have told you repeatedly there are many Indians who do not like that British Administration be perpetuated in India. But there is no sensible well-wisher of India who desires that India should start on a fresh career of foreign subjugation under Japan. We have

almost reached the end of our journey so far as our relationship with England is concerned. What is required now is a broad statesmanship based on a full recognition of the fact that India must in future be controlled by Indians themselves."

This appeal fell on deaf ears and the situation in Bengal and elsewhere continued to deteriorate. In the meanwhile, the British government sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to bring about an interim settlement between the people of India and the British government for the efficient and effective execution of the war policies. He met the top leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League and other political parties including Dr. Shyama Prasad and tried to sell to them what is known as Cripps Proposal. While discussing his proposal with Shyama Prasad, Sir Stafford found to his surprise that he was pressing the Congress view-point with the vehemence of a Congress leader. He therefore slyly asked him, "But are not your party and the Congress constantly at logger-heads?"

"True" replied Shyama Prasad "but that is a quarrel as between a brother and brother. Our goal is the same."

The reply came like a slap on the face of that champion of the divide and rule policy.

While Sir Stafford Cripps was carrying on his negotiations with the Indian leaders about his proposals, which specifically conceded the principle of partition of India on the basis of religion by conceding the right to Muslim majority provinces to secede from India if they so wished, the British governor of Bengal and his agents were busy in torpedoing the coalition ministry of Fazal-ul-Haq which included the leading spokesmen of both the Hindus and Muslims, which thereby gave a direct lie to the British assertion that Hindus and Muslims could not work together. The Governor, and the permanent services, particularly the British and pro-Muslim League personnel of it, were doing everything possible to discredit the ministry, by putting hindrances in the way of its smooth sailing and encouraging the Muslim League opposition to kick up communal trouble. A campaign of vilification was set on foot against Mr. Fazal-ul-Haq and pressure was being put on him that he must relinquish the post of chief minister to enable the Muslim League party to join the coalition. At the same time the Congress, after having rejected the Cripps proposals, was think-

ing of launching a direct action. Realising that the ministry would be expected to fight the Congress agitation and handle situations arising out of it, Dr. Shyama Prasad addressed another letter to the Governor on the 12th of July, in which he made detailed suggestions about easing the political situation in the country in general and Bengal in particular. He also deprecated the Governor's efforts to play down the ministry and boost the Muslim League opposition.

"We are often told," he wrote to the Governor, "that India's future political advancement was being retarded because of the failure of leaders of Hindus and Muslims to work together in the sphere of state administration. For the first time in the history of British India, whatever democratic constitution has been handed over to us, in spite of its manifold defects, was sought to be worked in Bengal by Hindu and Muslim representatives who wielded considerable influence over their own community. The success of this experiment would naturally give a direct lie to the plea of communal disharmony standing in the way of India's political advancement."

He then charged the Governor and his agents with trying to discredit the ministry. After recounting an example of governor's partiality for the Muslim League opposition he wrote "this special pleading for the League which in fact made us look upon you at times not as an impartial constitutional head of the province but as a loyal and distinguished whip of the Muslim League party itself was indeed a mystery to all of us".

He once again appealed to the governor "to take the ministry in his confidence and enable it to serve Bengal and win the co-operation of the people to meet the impending danger of foreign invasion."

But this, like his earlier appeal, had no effect on the Governor who was following a calculated policy of bringing down the ministry ruthlessly and suppressing the rights and liberties of the people so that they should be completely demoralised.

In the meanwhile the failure of the Cripps Mission had made the prospects of a negotiated settlement between the government and the people of India remote and the talk of direct action was in the air. The Working Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha met at Lucknow on the 7th of August. Dr. Mookerji wanted the Mahasabha to plunge in any movement that might

be launched by the Congress for wresting freedom from the unwilling hands of the British. But Veer Savarkar and other leaders of Mahasabha were opposed to this policy. Savarkar stressed the need of militarisation of the country by maximum recruitment to the armed forces.

Before returning to Calcutta, Dr. Mookerji met Mahatma Gandhi, who was proceeding to Bombay, at Allahabad station. Mahatma Gandhi advised Dr. Mookerji not to join the movement that he was then planning on the plea that somebody must remain behind to lead the country when the Congress leaders would be in jail.

The Government of India had got the clue about the proposed "Quit India" move of the Congress and had completed preparations for arresting all the Congress leaders on the 9th of August, the day on which the resolution was passed by the Congress Working Committee, at Bombay. Detailed instructions had been sent to the provincial governors about the steps to be taken to suppress the movement. The Governor of Bengal had shown the letter of the Government of India to the Chief Minister but had refused to take the rest of the ministers in confidence before the policy outlined in it had been executed.

On the 9th of August, after the Congress leaders had been arrested, the Governor called Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji and other ministers and asked them either to accept the policy of the Government of India or to resign.

Dr. Mookerji told him frankly that he could not approve that policy and decided not to resign till he had made an appeal to the Governor General to change that policy. Accordingly he wrote his historic letter to Lord Linlithgow on the 12th of August in which he put forth the view point of nationalist India with commandable fearlessness and logic together with concrete and constructive suggestions for an immediate settlement between England and India.

"The demand of the Congress" he wrote to Lord Linlithgow, as embodied in its last resolution virtually constitutes the national demand of India as a whole. It is regrettable", he added, "that a campaign of misrepresentation is now being carried on in some sections of the foreign press characterising the Congress demand as a virtual invitation to Japan and a surrender to chaos and confusion. No one desires that India

should be plunged into a mass movement resulting in disorder and anarchy. At the same time a refusal on the part of the British Government to deal with the real demand of the people in a spirit of statesmanship will be an even greater disaster; for by this unwise decision it is they and not the Congress who will precipitate a crisis."

After recounting the possible effects of repression he appealed to the Governor-General to take a realistic view of the Indian situation which must be examined in the light of rapidly changing world movements.

He then put forth certain tentative proposals "which may well form the basis of an honourable Indo-British settlement". His proposals were:

1. The British Government should declare that India's freedom is formally recognised.
2. The viceroy or any one deputed by the British Government will be authorised to negotiate with the Indian political parties regarding the formation of an Indian National Government to whom power will be transferred.
3. The Indian National Congress will declare its determination to fight the Axis powers and it will not conclude a separate peace with the enemy.
4. The war policy of India will be in accord with the policy as determined by the Allied War Council on which India will be represented.
5. The C-in-C will remain in charge of the operational control of war in India and will carry out the common policy of the Allied War Council.

The Indian National Government will be able to raise an Indian army whose aim will be to help in the maintenance of internal security and also to defend the country against foreign aggression.

6. The National Government will be composite in character and will include representatives of important groups and parties in the country. It will set up provincial governments also on a similar basis.

7. The membership of the central and provincial cabinets will not be confined to members of the legislatures but may include outsiders who may wield influence in the country and may be of special assistance during the period of the war,

8. The Indian National Government will concentrate on an active policy of industrialisation and economic uplift of India so that India may effectively prosecute the war.

9. The India Office will be abolished.

10. As regards the future constitution, the Indian National Government in due course will take necessary steps for the formation of a Constituent Assembly for the purpose. There will be a treaty between Great Britain and India which will specially deal with minority rights. In any case any minority will have the right to refer proposal regarding the future constitution to the arbitration of an international tribunal in case it considers such a step necessary for the protection of its just rights. The decision of such tribunal will be binding on the Indian Government and on the minority concerned."

"You as the representative of the British Crown," he concluded, "should be authorised to deal with the Indian problem with a definite mandate from the British Government. Other proposals", he added "may also be made. But the principal factor is that the British Government must make up its mind to transfer power before negotiations can at all be started".

He ended this letter on a personal note. "I have intimated to the Governor of Bengal," he informed the Governor-General "that I disapprove of the policy that has been launched by the British Government and their representatives at the present juncture. I am making this appeal to you in the hope that you will not allow false prestige to stand in the way but take immediate action for solving the deadlock. In case, however, you feel that British Government should not move further but allow the present impasse to continue, I must regretfully ask my governor to relieve me of my duties as a minister so that I may have full freedom to help to mobilise public opinion in demanding a settlement".

He requested the Governor-General to forward his letter to the British Prime Minister, Sir Stafford Cripps and the Secretary of State for India "so that whatever the British Government may do, it may appreciate our attitude towards the present crisis".

Dr. Mookerji did not receive a reply to his letter from the Governor-General till September. But in the meantime the engine of repression let loose by the central and provincial

governments to put down any kind of manifestation of resentment against the British policy left no doubt in his mind as to what the reply would be. The refusal of the viceroy to permit him to meet Mahatma Gandhi in jail and secure his approval for his plan of settlement also pointed to the same conclusion. He therefore began to do his duty by the fighters for freedom in his own way. It is well known that he financed Shri J. P. Narain and many other revolutionaries during these hectic days. He arranged to provide books and other facilities to large number of students who had been clapped in jails so that they might be able to prosecute their studies from within the jails. But all his efforts to effect any material change in the policy of repression which was being directed by the governor himself through the permanent officials over the heads of the ministry proved abortive.

The helplessness of the ministry, in whose name the administration was being run, to serve the people and alleviate their suffering was, however, finally and most painfully exposed by the Midnapore disaster. On October 10 Midnapore district was hit by a severe cyclone which resulted in the destruction of thousands of lives and brought untold misery to the people. The unsympathetic bureaucracy, presumably under the instructions of the governor, thought the time fit for wreaking vengeance on the people for their active participation in the freedom movement. Not only the relief was withheld from the victims of cyclone but, what was worse, a veritable reign of terror was let loose by N. M. Khan, the notorious District Magistrate, through police and army personnel which were supposed to render assistance to the people. Thousands of houses were wantonly burnt down, women were assaulted and raped, the cattle were slaughtered and outraged people were hounded down like wild animals.

On getting news of the ghastly tragedy, Dr. Mookerji rushed to Midnapore. What he saw there brought tears to his eyes and he began to tremble with rage. He had sharp exchanges with N. M. Khan, who refused to obey his instructions and persisted in the policy of repression. He even refused to allow private relief to be given to the victims of nature's wrath and bureaucratic repression.

Midnapore proved to be the last straw. Dr. Mookerji felt

convinced that the time had come when he should come out of the government and lead the opposition to the policy being pursued by the British Government and its agents in India and Bengal as a free man and expose the mockery to which the provincial autonomy had been reduced by those who claimed to be fighting to save the world for democracy.

His letter of resignation, which he addressed to the governor, Sir John Herbert, on the November 16, 1942, is a remarkable document. It reveals the fearless spirit of Dr. Mookerji, his solicitude for the welfare of the common man and his righteous anger at the methods adopted by the British agents as perhaps nothing else could.

"My reasons for resignation," he wrote to the Governor "are two-fold. First as I intimated to you at the earliest opportunity, on 9th August last, I disapprove of the policy adopted by the British Government of India with regard to the present political situation in the country. I am aware that you, as provincial Governor, have hardly any responsibility for the formulation of this policy. But my second reason mainly concerns you. And that is connected with the manner, in my opinion unwarranted, in which you have interfered with the work of the ministry and have rendered the so called provincial autonomy into a meaningless farce."

After recounting the events of the last one year and referring in detail to the governor's acts of omission and commission in over-riding or ignoring the advice of the ministry in big and small matters affecting the welfare, rights and liberties of the people of Bengal, he gave him, and through him to the British Government, a bit of the Indian mind in most unambiguous and forceful language.

"If it is a crime" he wrote, "to aspire to see one's country free and shake off all foreign domination, including British, every self-respecting Indian is a criminal. The doctrine of benevolent trusteeship stands exploded and you can no more throw dust into our eyes. Indian representatives, therefore, demand that the policy of administration of their country in all spheres, political, economic and cultural, must be determined by Indian themselves, unfettered by irritating acts of unsympathetic bureaucrats and bungling Governors".

His one year of active association with the Government of

Bengal had given him an intimate picture of the working of the British mind. At the same time it had given him an opportunity to place the view point of nationalist India before the men in power more clearly and lucidly than any Congress leader could have ever attempted and with a sense of responsibility which could not be challenged even by the British bureaucrats. He had given ample proof of his constructive statesmanship, administrative abilities and fearless spirit which had raised his stature in the eyes of the people who began to adore him as the one spokesman of the country in the absence of Congress leaders as also in the eyes of the British rulers who began to fear him as one of their most indomitable opponents. The way he kicked the ministership, when he found that he could do no good to his people by continuing in the ministry, made it clear to all that there was a man whom no temptation could deflect from the path of duty. He had joined the coalition cabinet as a representative of the Mahasabha but he came out of it as the undisputed leader of the entire nationalist Bengal.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HUMANITARIAN

EXIT from the Bengal Cabinet immediately brought Dr. Shyama Prasad on the wider All-India stage. His main purpose in getting out of the government was to be free to mobilise public opinion in support of his plan for a negotiated Indo-British settlement on the basis of the tentative plan submitted by him to Lord Linlithgow. But he did not get much time for that. The food situation in Bengal soon forced the humanitarian in him to concentrate all his attention on devising ways and means for relieving the distress of the famine-stricken people.

Food situation in Bengal had begun to deteriorate by the beginning of 1943. There were many reasons for it. The cyclone that hit Midnapore district in October had completely destroyed the paddy crop in some other districts as well. The stoppage of supplies of rice from Burma after it fell before the Japanese and the denial policy of the British in East Bengal, as a precautionary measure against the Japanese invasion, had further aggravated the situation.

Fazal-ul-Huq ministry drew the attention of the people and the Central Government to this deteriorating food situation in Bengal through a statement made on the floor of the legislative council towards the end of February, 1943. The statement said that there was a deficit of about 25% in rice supply and that steps must be taken to meet this deficit. But this ministry was dismissed by the Governor in March and in April a Muslim League ministry was put in the saddle. The new ministry thought it fit to repudiate the February statement of the previous ministry about food scarcity and instead began to issue statement after statement assuring the people that there was no actual scarcity and that the rise in the prices of rice was due to hoarders who would be forced to release the stocks. This criminal indifference of the Ministry to the actual situation was matched by most irksome restrictions imposed by the British bureaucracy and military authorities on plying

of vehicles and boats in pursuit of the denial policy. Their aim was to demoralise and emaciate the people so that they should not be able to render effective help to Indian National Army of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose if it succeeded in penetrating into Bengal through Burma.

By the beginning of July the food situation had become so grave that thousands of people from the villages began to trek to cities after disposing of all their cattle and chattels in search of food. Even in cities the price of rice had risen so high that most of the middle class families with fixed incomes were finding it difficult to get two square meals. But in spite of all this, the ministry and the bureaucracy went on merrily with their exploded notion that there was no actual deficit and nothing tangible was done to relieve the growing distress of the people.

But Dr. Mookerji who had already seen the distress of the people of Midnapore, for whom he had organised large-scale relief through private efforts, could not remain indifferent to the calamity which appeared to be engulfing the whole of Bengal. He decided to draw the attention of the country at large to the distress in Bengal and organise large-scale relief for the famine-stricken people. To this end he invited some leading politicians, businessmen and philanthropists to a meeting on the 29th of July, to think over the situation and devise ways and means to face it. As a result Bengal Relief Committee was formed with Sir Badri Das Goenka as president and Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji as vice-president.

Soon after Bengal provincial Hindu Mahasabha, of which Dr. Mookerji was the president, organised the Hindu Mahasabha Relief Committee in response to the express wish of some donors who wanted their money to be spent through the Hindu Mahasabha. Dr. Mookerji was the moving spirit behind both the organisations. His appeals for funds found a ready response all over the country. The people had such trust and faith in Dr. Mookerji that large sums of money began to be sent to him to be spent as he thought fit.

After sometime the Arya Samaj, the Marwari Society and the Ramakrishna Mission also plunged into the relief work. They had their separate centres and separate funds for the purpose. This created danger of duplication and consequent

wastage of efforts and money. Dr. Mookerji thereupon took steps to co-ordinate the activities of the different relief societies by setting up a Relief Co-ordination Committee with Shri Badri Das Goenka as president and himself as vice-president.

The response to his appeal for help was tremendous. The whole country from Assam to Kanya Kumari responded magnificently to his call. The Bengal Relief Committee alone received cash donations amounting to Rs. 27,55,502 and commodities such as clothes and grain, etc., valued approximately at rupees ten lakhs. The Hindu Mahasabha Committee received donations amounting to Rs. 8,54,582 in cash besides thousands of maunds of food grains.

As a result of these large-scale relief measures of Bengal Relief Committee and other relief organisations under the guidance of Dr. Mookerji, the distress, particularly in cities, was relieved to some extent. But in spite of these herculean efforts of Dr. Mookerji this man-made famine took toll of more than 30 lakh lives.

The Bengal famine threw lurid light on the *bona fides* and motives of the British Government and its Muslim allies in India. The attitude of the British bureaucracy throughout was openly hostile. It tried to minimise the disaster in every possible way. The demand for forming an all party national coalition ministry, in the place of purely Muslim League ministry, to meet the situation was persistently turned down. The Muslim League in its turn refused to budge from its stand about no scarcity till the situation had completely gone out of its hands. Even then it took no steps to organise relief till after private agencies through their unaided efforts shamed it into action.

In course of time the Muslim League, the Khaksar organisation and the Communist Party also set up their relief committees. But whereas Bengal Relief Committee under the leadership of Dr. Mookerji was giving relief to all, irrespective of caste and creed, the Khaksar and the Muslim League began to exploit the people's misery by sending the Hindu destitutes to their relief centres outside Bengal with a view to ultimately convert them to Islam. When Dr. Mookerji came to know of these activities of Khaksars, he met their leaders working in Calcutta and requested them to make over to Hindu Mahasabha

and other relief organisations those Hindu destitutes who were picked up by them and sent to their different camps outside Bengal and also stop further despatch of destitutes from Bengal. But his request went unheeded. He, along with others, then brought pressure to bear upon the government to put a stop to this state of affairs.

Not in the least important was the powerful voice that Dr. Mookerji raised in and outside the Bengal legislature against the deliberate acts of omission and commission of the British military authorities and the Muslim League government which had created this "man-made famine". He exposed the indifference and even undisguised hostility of the administration towards the victims of their inefficiency and obduracy with relentless force and logic. It was mainly because of him that the whole country came to know of the horrors of the ghastly tragedy of Bengal famine and rose like one man in giving relief and demanding redress from the powers that be. It was mainly because of him that the government was forced to appoint an enquiry committee to go into the causes of the famine and take other remedial steps.

The role that Dr. Mookerji played during this famine in Bengal is comparable to that played by Dr. Rajendra Prasad during the earth-quake in Bihar in 1935. Both threw in their entire energies in the relief of their distressed people and succeeded in tackling terrible situations. The people of Bengal can never forget Shyama Babu, the humanitarian, the friend of the poor, the hungry and the sickly—even though some of them may not have liked his politics.

CHAPTER IX

FIGHTER FOR UNITED INDIA

WHILE Dr. Shyama Prasad was busy with famine relief in Bengal, the Muslim League under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah and with the active connivance of the British, was busy consolidating its position in different parts of the country. The arrest of most of the leaders of the Congress after the rejection of Cripps Proposals, which for the first time conceded, so far as the British were concerned, the principle of partition of India on the basis of religion, had left the field open for the Muslim League to win over the wavering Muslims, and establish its position as the mouth-piece of the Indian Islam.

As the noise made by the Muslim League for partition of India, backed as it was by the entire Muslim and Anglo-Indian Press in the country, grew louder, some Congress leaders like Shri C. Rajagopalachari, who happened to be out of jail began to be unnerved. And in keeping with the tradition developed by the Congress since it came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, their inclination to appease the Muslim League even at the cost of vivisection of the motherland began to manifest itself in different ways. The plan put forth by Shri C. Rajagopalachari, better known as C. R. Formula, which practically accepted partition, was the most notorious of such appeasement gestures.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji considered this to be a very dangerous and disquieting development. He therefore decided to take up the cudgels on behalf of the nationalist India against the nefarious Anglo-Muslim game of destroying the age old unity of the country, whose consolidation in the political sense had been the one positive contribution of the British rule over India.

The 25th Annual Session of the Hindu Mahasabha which was held at Amritsar in December, 1943, gave him the opportunity to call the attention of his countrymen to this new danger and sound a note of warning to all concerned. In

the absence of Shri V. D. Savarkar, the President who could not be present due to illness, Shyama Prasad was called upon to preside over the historic session of the Mahasabha. It was historic firstly because it was being held at a time when political life of nationalist India had been almost brought to a standstill by the British repression and secondly because it marked the highest water-mark of the Hindu Mahasabha popularity in the country. Under the able leadership of Veer Savarkar and Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, the Hindu Mahasabha was then making a successful bid to fill the vacuum created by the expulsion of the Congress from the political arena of India.

The Presidential address delivered by Dr. Mookerji on the occasion gave a clear exposition of his political philosophy and his stand about the demand for partition. "The only solution of the Indian problem," he declared, "is rigidly to exclude all extraneous considerations based on caste and religion from the field of politics. We stand for equal political citizenship of all without any distinction. I admit that there are classes and communities which are backward and which have to be given special protection for educational and economic advancement. The constitution itself should guarantee the preservation of religious, social and cultural rights of different classes". It was thus clear that he did not want any special advantages for the Hindus. His approach to communal problem was absolutely rational and national.

But he was not prepared to offer bribes which might cut at the roots of the national unity to win the cooperation of certain communities for the common national cause. "Patriotism" he declared "can never be purchased at the market place by an open bidding. If the Indian National Congress, as the mouth-piece of progressive Indian public opinion, was prepared to concede, even on fundamental issues affecting national solidarity and self-respect for the sake of winning the support of Muslim leaders, the British representatives were always ready at hand to offer a higher price at every stage and thus frustrate a combination between the two great communities of India. Today the Muslim League, which is acknowledged by the government as perhaps the only spokesman of Muslim view-point in India, has raised the cry

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of breaking India into fragments as a condition precedent to political settlement. None knows better than the British government itself that Pakistan is a sheer impossibility. We oppose it not merely because Hindus cannot tolerate the idea of vivisection of their motherland but because both economically and politically such a decision will be dangerous to the welfare of India as a whole. . . . Let it be clearly understood" he added "that there can be no settlement with the Muslim League on the basis of Pakistan".

Dwelling on the need and the role of the Hindu Mahasabha he declared, "If a time comes when religious and communal considerations disappear from the field of Indian administration and all parties are swayed by one common national ideal, there may be no need for a separate political organisation for Hindus as such. But let us not forget what we really are today. Politics detached from realities is not only meaningless but dangerous".

This stress on realism, on walking on hard earth instead of soaring into sky, was the special contribution of Dr. Mookerji to the Indian political thinking at a time when utopian idealism of Mahatma Gandhi was swaying the minds of Indian intelligentsia. It was this way of thinking which brought him so close to late Sardar Patel in his later days.

The effect of Amritsar session and his great speech was, however, marred to a good extent by an unfortunate lapse of the local Mahasabha leaders. The District Magistrate of Amritsar, probably in pursuit of a set policy not to allow Mahasabha to gain popularity and prestige, imposed a ban on the taking out of the Presidential procession just at the eleventh hour when all preparations for it had been completed. The feelings of the people who had thronged to Amritsar in lakhs for the session ran high. They wanted the procession to be taken out in spite of the ban. Dr. Mookerji was also of the same opinion and wanted that the ban should be broken. But the Reception Committee lacked the courage and guts demanded by the occasion. It decided to drop the procession. This had a demoralising effect on the people who expected the Mahasabha leaders to rise to the occasion and give a practical proof of their preparedness to suffer for a just cause. The Hindu Mahasabha never recovered from this setback it got

at Amritsar in 1943. It fell in popular estimation and thus failed to take advantage of the halo Dr. Mookerji had created for it. Some people even began to doubt the courage and fearlessness of Dr. Mookerji. They failed to realise that he could not override the decision of the Reception Committee in the matter.

A couple of months later, Dr. Mookerji presided over the Fifth Session of All-India Aryan Congress held in Delhi from the 20th to the 22nd of February, 1944. In the course of his Presidential speech he paid a glowing tribute to the late Swami Dayananda Saraswati and the Arya Samaj. "The greatest service of the Arya Samaj" he said "is that it has roused amongst the people a profound sense of individual and national self-respect, a virility of mind and a love of the country's culture and civilisation, destroying the poisonous sense of inferiority complex which turns man into a crowd".

He also strongly condemned the decision of the Muslim League ministry of Sind to ban certain parts of 'Satyarth Prakash'—the monumental work of Swami Dayanand. He appealed to Arya Samajists to work in cooperation with other parties for the consolidation of the Hindu forces and freedom of Hindustan. He dwelt at length on the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and declared that "any one who seeks to disturb India's unity or to foment disruption is guilty of the highest act of treachery and must be resisted at any cost".

The Calcutta Press, then as now, was controlled either by Anglo-Indians or by the Congress. It avoided giving proper publicity to the views of Dr. Mookerji on the question of partition and other pressing national problems. He therefore started an English daily of his own—*The Nationalist*—in 1944. It soon became a powerful organ for moulding public opinion. But the financial strain of running an English daily soon proved too much for him and it had to be closed down after a year.

The stiff opposition of Dr. Mookerji to the idea of partition, and his forceful advocacy for united India, coupled with the rebuffs that Mr. Jinnah got at the hands of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and Sir Chhotu Ram in the Punjab, the key province of Pakistan of his conception, went a long way in nipping the mischief that Cripps Proposals had set on foot.

Mr. Jinnah's stock stood pretty low and the idea of Pakistan began to be scoffed at, even by prominent Muslims.

Just at that time, Dr. Mookerji learnt to his great dismay that Mahatma Gandhi, who had been lately released from prison, had blessed the C. R. Formula for partition and had sought a meeting with the crest-fallen Mr. Jinnah at the latter's residence at Bombay. Nothing could have been more impolitic and inopportune. Dr. Mookerji was deeply distressed at this misconceived move which, he was quick to realise, would bolster up the tottering image of Mr. Jinnah. He therefore immediately decided to do everything possible to prevail upon Mahatma Gandhi to desist from meeting Mr. Jinnah. To that end he sent his trusted secretary, Shri Manoranjan Dhar, with a personal letter to Mahatma Gandhi imploring him not to lend his support to C. R. Formula and not to meet Mr. Jinnah for a settlement on that basis. This letter dated 19th of July, 1944, is a historic document and deserves to be quoted in full for it gives an index of Dr. Mookerji's burning patriotism, his passionate faith in the unity of India and his realistic assessment of the results of the appeasement policy of the Congress towards Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League.

77, Ashutosh Mookerji Road,
Calcutta.

19th July, 1944.

Dear Mahatmaji,

Srijut Manoranjan Choudhury is going to see you with this letter and some notes and papers regarding the Bengal situation. He will explain to you how events have developed in Bengal, both as regards politics and food since August, 1942. All available literature are being sent through him for your perusal.

Frankly speaking, we feel greatly perturbed at the terms offered by Mr. Rajagopalachari to Mr. Jinnah. We are most anxious for a proper Hindu-Moslem settlement. But we do not believe that the way in which Shri Rajagopalachari is proceeding will ever secure that end. Your own past experience must have convinced you that Mr. Jinnah has

no intention of playing the game. He does not regard himself as an Indian and has no concern, whatsoever, for the freedom of India as a whole, for which generations of Indians have lived and died. A possible partition of Bengal and of India is abhorrent to us. In any case, we feel deeply cut that you should have identified yourself with this proposal without hearing different points of view. We regard you as something above the Congress and any commitment made by you places all of us in a position of a great embarrassment. Manoranjan Babu will explain to you how many people in Bengal belonging to different political organisations are feeling on this matter. Our fear is that Mr. Jinnah will treat this offer as a mere spring-board in order to demand further concessions both within Hindusthan area and in the so-called Pakistan area. The result will be further chaos and confusion. The British Government will not move by what you have said, because it has no intention to part with power. Mr. Jinnah will not move, because he does not want that deadlock should be ended. But your concession will remain and will add to our future difficulties. I do implore you to reconsider the step you have taken. If Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League refuse to respond to the terms, you should categorically withdraw your support and stand for an undivided India. Only in 1942, in *Harijan* you expressed yourself in the clearest terms against any scheme of partition of India and you rightly stated that such a proposal would only give rise to new quarrels amongst ourselves.

I feel that you should lay down your scheme for the attainment of Indian freedom with the cooperation of all parties and communities. Those who want freedom for the whole of India with interests of the minorities fully protected should be asked to cooperate with you in popularising such a scheme. Many Moslems today are realising that Pakistan is an impossibility and a hoax. The British government itself is withdrawing its support to Mr. Jinnah wherever it suits government to do so. Just at this psychological moment you raise him up as the only man who can deliver the goods for the Moslem stand-point. This is a great blow to many Moslems outside the League who

imbued by national sentiments have been fighting for the bigger cause of Indian freedom.

I do hope you will realise the serious condition of Hindus in provinces where they are in a minority. You have stated that while approving of the terms you regarded yourself as an Indian and not as a Hindu. Surely, if you as an Indian can specially think of Moslem demands and are prepared to appease Mr. Jinnah on this account, why should I not as a Hindu ask you as an Indian, to stand by the just and legitimate rights of Hindus as well. If you are an Indian and do not concern yourself with Hindu or Moslem questions at all, you should shun the Moslem League completely and only offer to cooperate with all those who are only Indians and nothing else.

I am coming to Poona on 1st August to attend the Tilak anniversary and hope to stay there for three days. Meanwhile, Manoranjan Babu will meet you and bring to me any message that you may be good enough to send to me. I hope you are feeling stronger.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Sd./- SHYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE.

Dr. Mookerji followed up his letter by a personal meeting with Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha on his way back from Poona early in August, 1944. Shri C. Rajagopalachari was also at Wardha at that time. Dr. Mookerji placed before Mahatma Gandhi and C. Rajagopalachari the dangers inherent in any scheme of partition of India on the basis of religion. With a prophetic vision he told Gandhiji that Pakistan if created was bound to have a foreign policy opposite to that of India, which would endanger India's security and create very many new and unseen problems.

Gandhiji, in reply, told him that he was committed to meet Mr. Jinnah and that he could not go back on it. But he assured him that he would never accept partition of India so long as he was alive.

This gave some consolation to Dr. Mookerji. But his fears were not wholly allayed. He gave expression to his fear and anxiety in his presidential address to the 26th session of All-

India Hindu Mahasabha held at Bilaspur in the last week of December, 1944. "Mr. Jinnah's dream of Pakistan" he said "was fading away even from the minds of a section of his own followers. His prestige and that of the Moslem League were on the wane when Gandhiji came forward to give his blessings to what is called the C. R. Formula and thus gave the League a fresh lease of life. Mr. Jinnah has rejected even this scheme and asks for further surrender. Gandhiji's commitment however remains. . . . Once we allow religious considerations to determine the sovereignty of particular areas in India, which will by no means be confined to one single community following one religion, there will be no peace and progress for us. Again self-determination for provincial units will create warring zones within the country and completely shatter its central authority".

"Pakistan," he went on "is no solution of the communal problems. It will rather make them more pronounced and can only end in civil war. Let us not delude ourselves by ignoring the fact that urge for Pakistan is to see Islam re-established in India as the sovereign power. To placate it is to let loose the worst type of fanatical zeal".

He suggested a cessation of hostilities between the Indian political parties and creation of a common platform for the formulation of a common demand on the most fundamental problems of India's liberation and re-construction. "It may be," he added, "that Muslim League will not join in such a demand, but there will be other Muslims who have been stabbed in the back by the C. R. Formula who are prepared to stand for Indian Nationalism with rights of minorities duly protected. It will be an act of the finest Indian statesmanship if today there can be a combination of all the nationalist elements in the public life of India for the preparation of an invulnerable national opposition to the continuance of the imperialistic designs of Britain".

But all his pleadings and exhortations fell on deaf years. The Congress lacked the will and the confidence to ignore the Muslim League and take a correct nationalistic stand. It talked of Indian nationalism and claimed to be the custodian of the rights of all the Indian people as such. But in practice it treated the Muslim League as the sole spokesman of Indian

Muslims and tried to gain its support by striking a bargain with it at the cost of the rights of the Hindus and the wider national interests.

The end of the Second World War in May, 1945, changed the situation. The British thought it fit to extend general amnesty to the Congress leaders and workers in jail and seek a settlement on the basis of Cripps Proposals. To that end the Governor-General, Lord Wavell, convened a conference of political leaders at Simla in August, 1945, to prepare ground for an Interim National government on the basis of parity between the Congress and the Muslim League. The Hindu Mahasabha was not invited to this conference. When the Congress decided to join the Interim Government, Mahatma Gandhi was known to have suggested the inclusion of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji in the cabinet. Sardar Patel liked the idea. But Pandit Nehru would not agree and therefore the idea had to be dropped.

Dr. Mookerji was touring South India at that time. Gandhiji wanted him to come to Delhi or Simla to meet him. But Dr. Mookerji was so disgusted with the Congress surrender to Muslim League on the issue of parity that he did not think it worthwhile to change his programme.

Soon after, the Indian National Army question flared up. The British Indian government decided to try the top leaders of I. N. A. on charges of treason. This was too much for the Indian public opinion, which had come to regard the I. N. A. as the highest type of patriotic venture, to tolerate. Protest meetings and demonstrations began to be held throughout the country. Early in November, 1945, I. N. A.-Day was observed all over the country. In Calcutta students walked out of their classes *en-masse* and held a mighty rally. The police authorities wanted to break the demonstration by show of force. The students were not in a mood to submit. As a result, passions ran high and a violent clash between the students and the police with dangerous repercussions all over Bengal appeared to be inevitable. The situation was, however, saved by the timely intervention of Dr. Mookerji who was held in high esteem by the students as their friend, philosopher and guide. His fearless but tactful handling of the situation won wide applause from all quarters.

In the meanwhile, the Conservative government of Mr. Churchill had fallen and the Labour Party had come to power in Britain. The new government of Mr. Attlee decided to send a high-powered cabinet mission to negotiate on the spot a settlement with the Indian leaders on the basis of complete independence on some agreed basis. It suggested the convening of a Constituent Assembly for which provincial legislatures were to act as electoral colleges, to draw up a new constitution for the country on the basis of a weak centre with only four subjects and autonomous provinces with residuary powers and option to form groups within the Indian Union for specific common purposes.

The Congress till then was officially pledged to partition. The All India Congress Committee at its Allahabad meeting held in 1942 had passed the resolution of Jagat Narain Lal which said that the Congress would not accept partition of India in any form or shape. But the C. R. Formula and Gandhiji's blessings to it had diluted the Congress stand on this vital question to a good extent since then. The Muslim League, on the other hand, was firm on its demand for partition and its position had definitely improved during the war years. It decided to fight the elections to the provincial legislatures on this very issue.

The nationalist opinion in the country was definitely hostile to any idea of vivisection of the motherland. It expected the Congress to take a bold stand in the matter and not submit to pressure tactics of the Muslim League. But the Congress leadership lacked the confidence and the courage of conviction that the situation demanded. Its Working Committee passed a resolution at Poona on the eve of the elections which said everything in support of united India but ended with a tame declaration that the Congress would not force any unwilling part to remain in India. By this Poona resolution the Congress virtually accepted the principle of partition much against the opposition of Sardar Patel. But in public it only harped upon the first part of the resolution and asserted that it would not compromise on the question of partition. It made unity of India the main plank of its election manifesto even though it had actually decided to accept division of the country if Muslim League was returned in majority in the

Muslim majority provinces.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji saw through the Congress game and decided to put up his own candidates wherever possible. But just before the elections, he got his first serious heart attack which kept him confined to bed for a long time. Just then Sardar Patel visited him on his sick bed in Calcutta and assured him that inspite of the Poona resolution he would oppose the partition tooth and nail and appealed to him to strengthen his hands.

As a result the field was left open to the Congress which won most of the Hindu seats all over the country on the specific plank that it will not accept partition of Indian come what may. Dr. Mookerji was returned unopposed to the Bengal Legislative Assembly from the Calcutta University constituency. Soon after, he was elected to the Constituent Assembly of India by the Bengal Legislature.

The elections gave clear majority to the Muslim League in Sind, Punjab and Bengal. In North Western Frontier Province it failed to secure a majority but was returned as the second biggest party. In other provinces too the Muslim electorate solidly backed the Muslim League.

The success at the polls naturally encouraged the Muslim League. It became more aggressive and intransigent about its demand for partition. The Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru began to betray signs of panic. The Poona resolution had already committed it to allow those areas which refused to remain with India to secede. Bengal, Punjab and Sind were now in a position to demand secession in terms of that resolution. The Cabinet Mission began to feel inclined in favour of partition and the Congress too began to think of partition as something inevitable. It had no Abraham Lincoln to give it the correct lead and courage to follow it.

As a last effort Dr. Mookerji met the Cabinet Mission and pleaded with them with all his convincing logic and arguments, not to allow India to be partitioned. But the members of the Cabinet Mission silenced him by showing him the Poona resolution of the Congress which had got all the Hindu votes whereby it stood committed to partition if Muslim majority provinces so decided.

Then Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, a realist as he was, realised that the game had been lost. The Congress had let down India. It was getting ready for the great betrayal of the people who had put faith in it by conceding the demand for Pakistan.

Thereafter, Dr. Mookerji directed his energies to salvage as much as he could from the ship that had begun to sink through the cowardice and imbecility of its own captains because he was convinced that Congress leaders in their impatience and hunger for power would not mind the whole of Bengal and Punjab going to would-be Pakistan.

CHAPTER X

FIGHT FOR PARTITION OF PAKISTAN

Punjab and Bengal were the two key provinces on which the edifice of Pakistan as conceived by the Muslim League rested. Both of them had slight Muslim majorities. The Communal Award had given the Muslim majority in both these provinces additional weightage which had put them in commanding position in both these provinces. The Zonal Scheme which had been put forth as an alternative to partition by the Cabinet Mission had put these provinces as a whole in the two Muslim majority zones to be constituted in the East and West of the country. The Muslim League therefore took it for granted that both of these provinces as a whole would be included in Pakistan. But the redeeming feature in the situation of these provinces was that the Hindu population in both of them was concentrated in districts adjoining the neighbouring Hindu majority provinces. These compact Hindu majority parts of Bengal and Punjab could logically demand their inclusion in India in the event of partition of the country on communal basis.

The Muslim League leadership was conscious of this fact. It therefore decided to take advantage of the situation created by its electoral success, the Congress nervousness and favourable change in British attitude, to terrify Hindus of these areas into submission to their will. The Muslim League leaders and their British patrons were particularly interested in annexing Calcutta to Pakistan. To that end a planned orgy of loot and massacre was let loose on Calcutta on the 16th of August, 1946. Thousands of innocent Hindus were butchered, their houses and shops looted and burnt in broad daylight with the direct connivance of the Muslim League administration.

But the League plan to terrify Hindus out of Calcutta was foiled by the determined resistance put up by the Calcutta Hindus under the fearless leadership of Dr. Shyama Prasad

Mookerji, to the organised goondaism of the Muslim League. The Hindusthan National Guards—a volunteer organisation that had been started by Dr. Mookerji to checkmate the goondaism of the Muslim National Guards of the Muslim League—gave a good account of itself in this crisis. Dr. Mookerji himself moved about the riot-affected areas, with supreme indifference for his own safety, to give courage and consolation to the afflicted people.

Sometime later the same story was repeated in Noakhali and its surrounding villages. Dr. Mookerji was again the first to rush to the affected areas at great personal risk to give succour to the victims of bestial persecution at the hands of soldiers of Islam.

These happenings sent a wave of indignation all over the country. To the Hindus of Bengal they gave a taste of Pakistan. The prospect of utter humiliation and annihilation in their own land for the freedom of which they had made the greatest sacrifices began to assail their hearts. The Congress leaderships, in which they had put their faith, lacked both realism and courage to appreciate the situation and take up its challenge. The eyes of nationalist Bengal were, therefore, once again turned towards Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji.

Dr. Mookerji then decided upon a bold move which partitioned Pakistan of Jinnah's conception and saved half of Bengal for India. He realised that the only way of saving Bengali Hindus from sure annihilation under perpetual Muslim domination was to divide Bengal so as to separate its Hindu majority, Western part from the Muslim majority Eastern part. It was a painful idea for a patriot of Bengal who was conscious of the great sacrifices his predecessors had made to annul the earlier partition of Bengal. It demanded exceptional courage to put forth a proposal which was sure to give in the first instance a great emotional shock to the patriotic Bengalis—none but Dr. Mookerji could have done it.

Once he had made up his mind, he put in all his resources to educate and mobilise public opinion accordingly. He undertook a whirlwind tour of the whole of Bengal, particularly of the East Bengal, addressed mass rallies wherein he boldly put forth his plan of partitioning Bengal to save the Hindu half from being lost to Pakistan.

This was followed by a two day conference of Hindu representatives from all parts of Bengal in the middle of March which unanimously resolved that a separate province must be created comprising the Hindu majority areas in Bengal.

As this move gained momentum and strength it began to be subjected to severe attack both by the Muslim League and the Congress. The Congress critics who were perturbed more by the growing influence of Dr. Mookerji on the Hindu masses than by the move itself, began to shift the onus of accepting partition of the country on Dr. Mookerji. They asserted that the creation of the new province as visualised by Dr. Mookerji would support the cause of Pakistan.

Dr. Mookerji replied to the criticism through a detailed statement issued on March 9, 1947. "It is wrong" he said "that his move supported the cause of Pakistan. We are against Pakistan in any shape or form. It does not, however, depend on Bengali Hindus alone whether division of India will be prevented or not. If Hindus and other nationalist forces throughout India are really determined not to allow any portion of India to go out of the Indian Union, they will get the largest measure of support from Bengali Hindus. If on the other hand an attempt is made to place Bengal out of the Indian Union due to commitments with which the British Government, the Muslim League and the Congress are closely associated, we shall at any rate break the solidarity of Eastern Pakistan, save one area of Bengal and link it up with the Indian Union."

To those who criticised his scheme on the ground that division of Bengal on religious basis would be against the fundamental principle of nationalism he retorted, "No one desires religion to be introduced into politics. But why must we hide our head ostrich-like and ignore present realities? It is not we who want division of India or any part thereof merely on religious considerations. But if we find that the whole of Bengal is going to be dominated by communal frenzy and 45% of its population reduced to a state of slavery only because they follow a particular religious faith, is it a crime on our part to demand that we must have our own territory where we can live as free men? And was not", he asked, "Sind

carved out from Bombay only to placate communal whims and did not many of our present Congress opportunists quietly acquiesce in such division much to the detriment of the Hindus of Sind?"

Referring to the criticism that his scheme would be stoutly opposed by the Muslim League he said that he expected that because "if this scheme succeeds Eastern Pakistan would virtually finish". "It is all the more reason" he added, "why all Hindus in Bengal should sink their differences and stand united on this great issue in spite of all the isms that divide them". He urged upon his compatriotes to look at the problems facing them with "complete realism" and not allow themselves to be carried away by emotions.

He concluded his momentous statement with an appeal to the Congress party in Bengal to rise to the occasion and support his move in the wider interests of nationalist Bengal and India.

His well reasoned and forceful advocacy of the scheme for partition of Bengal did succeed in winning a large number of Congressmen to his side and soon it became the universal demand of Bengali Hindus.

The Muslim League leadership in Bengal was naturally perturbed over it. It could not logically deny the right of the Hindu majority areas of Bengal to determine its own future when it was demanding the same right for Muslim majority areas. But it realised that success of Dr. Mookerji's move would truncate East Pakistan, deprive it of Calcutta and leave it "moth eaten".

Mr. H. S. Suharawardy, the brain of Muslim League in Bengal, then put forth the scheme for United Sovereign Bengal mainly to counteract the move of Dr. Mookerji. He feigned to be a Bengali first and appealed to the Bengali sentiment of the Congress-minded intelligentsia which had an emotional antipathy for any idea of partitioning Bengal once again. Some top Congress leaders like Shri Sarat Chandra Bose fell into his trap. He was reported to have obtained Mahatma Gandhi's blessings as well for his scheme.

But Dr. Mookerji was not the man to be deflected from his resolve by these manoeuvres. He met Mahatma Gandhi at Sadpur on 13th of May, 1947, to ascertain his views on the

Suharawardy scheme of United Sovereign Bengal. Gandhiji told Dr. Mookerji that he had not yet made up his mind but was trying to find out what the proposal really meant. He then asked Dr. Mookerji about his own opinion about it. Dr. Mookerji replied that though apparently Mr. Suharawardy was the author of this scheme, it was really being sponsored by the British commercial interests and that Lord Mountbatten had personally asked him to give the proposal careful consideration. But, Dr. Mookerji asked, what was there to prevent this United Sovereign Bengal from seeking voluntary alliance with Pakistan. Mr. Suharawardy, he feared, could surely manipulate a decision of this kind with the help of the majority of Muslim votes. "Can you contemplate Bengal lying separate from the rest of India?" he asked Gandhiji, to which he had no reply.

In spite of the opposition of some top Congress leaders the move for partition of Bengal, in case the demand for Pakistan was to be conceded, became so popular and powerful that it became impossible for the British Government, the Congress and the Muslim League to resist it. The 3rd June announcement by the British government which laid down the blue print for India's independence after its partition into two States of Bharat and Pakistan conceded the right of Hindu majority areas of Bengal and Punjab to opt out of Pakistan and a Boundary Commission under the Chairmanship of Mr. Radcliffe was appointed to demarcate such areas.

The terms of reference under which the Radcliffe Commission was to work gave it a large scope to play havoc with the boundary line that was to divide Hindu Bengal from the Muslim Bengal that was to go to Pakistan. Dr. Mookerji therefore took up the task of preparing and presenting the case of Hindu Bengal before the Boundary Commission. A Committee of leading jurists was set up for the purpose and a detailed plan showing the areas that should constitute West Bengal on the basis of their being Hindu majority was drawn up. According to it the whole of Khulna district which had over 60% Hindu majority should have come to West Bengal.

But the Congress spokesmen in their anxiety to see East Pakistan grows up as a viable unit were prepared to forgo Indian Bengal's claim to Khulna to appease their Pakistani counterparts. As a result the Radcliffe Award proved to be

very unfair to West Bengal. A large tract of land containing over two million Hindus which should have legitimately formed a part of West Bengal was awarded to Pakistan.

As the plan for partition began to be given effect the Hindu minority in East Bengal, which had already got a bitter taste of Muslim dominated administration, began to feel nervous. The leaders of East Bengal Hindus had supported the demand for partition of Bengal in the hope and on the understanding that their co-patriots of West Bengal and the rest of India will look to their welfare. They wanted to be assured that they would not be left at the sweet mercy of Pakistan. Dr. Mookerji therefore undertook another tour of East Bengal. He persuaded the top Congress leaders like Gandhiji and Sardar Patel also to visit East Bengal and authoritatively reassure its Hindu population which had always remained in the fore-front in the fight for India's independence. At numerous places he told large audiences that he was conscious of the great sacrifices they had made for the wider interests of India and their Hindu brethren of West Bengal and assured them that he would watch their interests and stand by them in all their difficulties. He remained dutifully conscious of this pledge ever after and did all he could to redeem it.

At the same time his performance in the Constituent Assembly of India, his political acumen, oratorical skill and mastery of parliamentary procedure were winning new laurels for him. His position as one of the topmost public figures whose record of service in the cause of the country's independence could be surpassed by few, was universally recognised.

So far as Bengal was concerned, he had become its undisputed leader and spokesman. No wonder therefore that his name readily occurred to the Congress leaders who were then engaged in selecting personnel for the national government to be formed on the 15th of August, 1947.

CHAPTER XI

EXIT FROM THE CENTRAL CABINET

While the heart of every patriotic Indian was bleeding over the imminent vivisection of the motherland and while the people of West Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sindh, and East Bengal were passing through an unprecedented orgy of violence against the body and soul of all those who had stood for the unity of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister designate of independent India minus Pakistan was busy in planning the festivities which were to mark the dawn of freedom with partition and finalising his cabinet which was to be sworn in on August 15. Mookerji was too disgusted with the way the Congress leadership had behaved at this crucial juncture of India's history to have any respect for them or expect any gesture of goodwill from them. He was devoting all his time and energies to salvage as much as possible for India through the partition of would be Pakistan. Pandit Nehru had no love lost for him. Left to himself he would have formed a cabinet of yesman in which even top Congressmen like Late N. V. Gadgil might have had no place.

But fortunately Pandit Nehru did not have quite a free hand in the matter. The Congress organisation was controlled by Sardar Patel. But for Mahatma Gandhi's intervention, Sardar Patel and not Pandit Nehru would have been elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1945 which would have *ipso facto* made him the first Prime Minister of the country. Mahatma Gandhi was conscious of the temperamental weaknesses and ideological obsession of Pandit Nehru as also of the contradictions within the Congress Party, which he wanted to dissolve after freedom had been attained to pave the way for the formation of political parties on the basis of distinguishable social and political programme and ideology. He also realised that freedom had been achieved by the combined efforts of all the nationalist forces in the country and not by Congress alone. He wanted the first Government

of free India to be truly national Government capable of inspiring confidence and creating enthusiasm in the whole nation. He, therefore, insisted that the first cabinet should be broad based. It was on his insistence that a number of distinguished non-congressmen were also invited to join the cabinet. They included Sir John Mathai, the noted economist and business magnate, Sir Shanmukham Chetty, the well-known financial expert, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a celebrated jurist and leader of the Scheduled Castes. They were all invited in their individual capacity for their talents and eminence in the different spheres of national life and not as representatives of any particular interests or parties.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji was not prepared for the invitation. He had developed a distrust and contempt for Congress leaders who had betrayed the faith put in them by the people in the General Election of 1946 which had been fought on the issue of Akhand Bharat versus Pakistan. He was convinced that the most compelling factor in their acceptance of partition of the motherland was not the solicitude for the welfare of the people or the conviction that it would solve the communal problem but a pitiable cowardice and abhorrence of bloodshed together with a compelling desire to get rid of their Muslim League partners in the interim Government, who had proved to be more than a match for them in statecraft, so that they might have a peaceful and secure spell of power. At the same time he apprehended that the Congress leaders might persist in their old game of appeasement of Pakistani Muslims even after getting a licking from them unless they were reinforced from within. His Hindu Mahasabha colleagues, particularly Veer Savarkar, who as a seasoned politician of Tilak School, had always stood for responsive cooperation and, like all true patriots, wanted to give the Congress leaders a fair chance to show their worth, advised him to accept the invitation.

Dr. Mookerji was given the important portfolio of Industry and Supply. He would have personally preferred Education which had been his special field since his early youth. That would have been in the best interests of the country as well. He could have laid a sound foundation for a really national education policy and moulded the new generation of the

country on healthy lines and prepared them for an intellectual revolution which must precede any social and economic revolution worth its name. But that was not to be. Maulana Azad, who knew little about education, Indian culture and heritage, was determined to keep education ministry within his grip with a set purpose. The country has paid dearly for his stewardship of the Education Ministry for the first 15 years of the most formative period of India as a free nation.

The fact that Dr. Mookerji was given charge of the Ministry of Industry and Supply showed the faith the Congress leaders had in his integrity and understanding of vital industrial and economic problems of the country. His experience as Finance Minister of undivided Bengal and his general grasp of things was also a factor in this choice. It gave Dr. Mookerji an opportunity to lay the foundations of India's industrial policy and prepare the ground for industrial development of the country in years to come. The loss to education and cultural life was thus a gain on the economic and industrial side.

His record of work as Minister for Industry and Supply for the two and a half years he remained in office amply justified the faith and trust that had been put in him. He brought his solid intellectual grasp and realistic understanding of the problems of industrialisation in a predominantly agricultural country, whose industrial growth had been deliberately checked by the unsympathetic foreign Government, to bear upon the task entrusted to him. His experience first as Chief Executive of Calcutta University, the biggest employer of top intellectuals and scientists in the country and then as Finance Minister of undivided Bengal stood him in good stead. He suffered from no ideological inhibitions and therefore could handle the task entrusted to him with refreshing realism. His intellectual eminence, mental alertness and rock-like integrity evoked spontaneous respect and fullest cooperation from British trained civilians. As a result he was able to make a fine job of his work. Even his political opponents have nothing but praise for the way he handled the industrial problems and formulated industrial policies in the most formative years of independent India.

The Chitranjan Locomotive Factory, the Sindri Fertilizers Corporation and the Hindustan Aircrafts Factory, Bangalore,

the three most successful and gigantic industrial undertakings of free India, were conceived and organised by him. The new model third class coaches of the Indian Railways manufactured by the Hindustan Aircrafts Factory are also the result of his deep personal interest in the matter. "I myself sat, slept and moved about in the first coach when it was manufactured to test whether it suited common Indian railway travellers" he told me with a legitimate pride when I was travelling in such a third class coach from Delhi to Pathankot in his company in August, 1952. He also initiated talks with some leading German firms for setting up new steel plants to improve the quantity and quality of steel production in India.

He had very clear ideas on the role of private capital in the industrial development of the country as also on relationship between capital and labour. He was convinced that in an industrially backward country like India which had just achieved freedom, the primary task was to mobilise all resources, private and Governmental, for a cooperative effort to make the country self-sufficient in essential goods, particularly those needed for the defence of the country. He was for giving full scope to private enterprise under suitable government regulation and control to play its part in the industrialisation of the country. He wanted the State to utilise its meagre resources for developing that sector of the industry whose development was essential for the defence of the country but for which private capital was not readily forthcoming. He thus wanted a rational co-ordination and adjustment, in the light of the actual conditions in the country, between the Private and the Public enterprise for speedy but orderly industrialisation of the country.

In formulating this policy he was solely guided by a realistic assessment of the needs and circumstances of the country and not by abstract theories or dogmas. He was, in fact, not wedded to any dogma. He kept his mind open and judged every scheme and policy by the criterion of its practicability and usefulness to the people.

Apart from the basic objections to total nationalisation, he was convinced that India had not the requisite resources, experience and trained personnel to nationalise all industries and run them efficiently. He was, therefore, opposed to loose

talk about nationalisation of all industries which only scared the private capital.

He also knew by experience that State managed industries had been generally working less efficiently because of lack of incentive and initiative on the part of Government employees who managed them, excessive use of or blind adherence to government rules and formalities and top-heavy administration. He, therefore, initiated the policy of managing the State controlled industries through corporations, organised on the lines of joint stock companies, with Government supplying the major portion or the whole of the share capital and having some of its own nominees on the Board of Directors together with a number of private industrialists. This has now become the general pattern for running the Public undertakings in India.

The same consideration of wider national good which prompted him to advocate a policy of cooperation and co-ordination between the Private and the Public sectors guided his approach to the question of Industrial labour. He stood for cooperation between the labour and capital in the interest of increasing production. The theory of class struggle as a means of progress never appealed to his rational mind. But he did not want cooperation of labour on the terms of employers. He stood for profit sharing between capital and labour so as to enable labour to develop a genuine interest in the industry. It was this solicitude for the welfare of labour which inspired as much confidence in the labour as his realistic and practical approach to the problem of capital did amongst the employers. The workers of the Hindustan Ship-building Yard at Vishakhapatnam demonstrated their confidence in him when they offered to abide by any decision he might give in regard to their dispute with the management just on the eve of his last tragic journey to Kashmir.

He not only laid down correct policies for his own Departments but also proved a tower of strength for the Government as a whole by his able advocacy and defence of its policies and actions. He used to put his heart and soul into the task entrusted to him. His deep understanding of problems and ingenuity sometimes saved situations which his colleagues thought were hopeless. For instance, one day in 1949 the

Government circles were very much perturbed over the information that some important members, who were known to be authorities on matters like cloth control were going to attack the Control Policy of the Government. The official case appeared to be weak and hopeless. But Dr. Mookerji, who spoke first, in his three hours oration, put the case of the Government in such a forceful and convincing way that those who had come prepared to attack were the first to congratulate him.

On another occasion, a whispering campaign was started by some interested persons about a shady transaction by some officers of the Stores Section of the Supply Department. They were alleged to have sold huge stocks of tooth brushes and combs for a paltry sum, though they were worth much more. Questions on the subject had been tabled in the Parliament. Files about the whole affair, with usual notes, were submitted to Dr. Mookerji by the office staff at about 9.30 A.M. It was admitted in the notes that stocks consisted of tooth brushes both good and bad and the price fetched had been really very low. At about 10.30 A.M. he went to the Parliament and at once began to answer.

Q: Is it a fact that a very small price had been obtained for a large quantity of these articles?

Ans: Yes.

Q: Is it a fact that the articles were in good condition?

Ans: Some were in good condition others were bad.

Q: Were these articles so bad that they could not fetch a good price?

Ans: Yes.

And immediately Dr. Mookerji produced from his pocket a number of tooth brushes absolutely devoid of bristles. The members looked at these worthless articles and were taken aback being at a loss to know how such rubbish could be offered for sale. The questioners had not the heart to utter a word more. Officers of his own department were puzzled as to how he could equip himself with such effective materials within such a short time.

But his performance as a Minister both inside and outside the Parliament was in itself not of much interest to Dr. Mookerji. His competence as an administrator and a

parliamentarian was well known and no one doubted his capacity to handle the job entrusted to him efficiently and effectively. His main object in accepting the invitation to join the cabinet was to impart a touch of realism and firmness to the policies of the Government of free India towards Pakistan, which he was convinced would be India's born enemy, and her protagonists left behind in India. He hoped to reinforce the Government from within and redeem the pledges given by him to the Hindus left behind in Pakistan. He banked on the support of his senior colleagues like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Shri N. V. Gadgil who shared his assessment of Pakistan and his deep concern and anxiety about the fate of Hindus left behind in the areas lost to her.

The number of Hindus including Sikhs left behind in West Pakistan was near about one crore—about eighty lakhs in Punjab, about fifteen lakhs in Sind and about five lakhs in N.-W.F.P., Baluchistan and the States of Bahawalpur, Kalat, Dir and Swat. They owned much of the business and urban property in all these areas. A major part of agricultural lands was also owned by them in the districts of Lyalpur, Sheikh-pura, Montgomery, Lahore and Gujranwala which constituted the backbone of united Punjab from the economic point of view. The city of Lahore proper had a majority of Hindus who owned more than 80 per cent of its business and property. It was directly contiguous to the Hindu majority districts of Amritsar and was situated on the East bank of the Ravi which could form a natural boundary between the two dominions of India and Pakistan. Most of the educational institutions which included the D. A. V. College, Lahore, whose campus was bigger than that of Aligarh Muslim University, were financed and run by them. According to the criteria laid down for the guidance of Radcliffe Commission, Lahore should have been surely awarded to India. But the Commission gave it to Pakistan on the plea that Calcutta was being awarded to India. Calcutta had to remain with India because it was surrounded on all sides by Hindu majority areas of Bengal. But thanks to partisan-cum-political approach of Mr. Radcliffe and ineptitude of the Congress leadership, which failed to present its case effectively, the adjoining dis-

trict of Khulna which had over 60 per cent Hindu population was given away to Pakistan.

What was worse, the district of Thar Parkar in Sind, which was directly contiguous to Jodhpur and Kutch, which had acceded to India, and which had over 80 per cent Hindu population was not given to India. Here the Congress leadership was alone to blame. It never put up a claim for it even though the Muslim League leaders claimed and got Sylhet district cut off from Assam even though it had only 51 per cent Muslim population.

Had Thar Parkar and the adjoining Hindu majority Talukas of Hyderabad district of Sind come to India, not only a truncated Sind like truncated Punjab and Bengal would have remained with India in which Sindhi Hindu refugees from Pak-occupied Sind could have been resettled but also the problem of Kutch arising out of Pak claim on the Rann of Kutch would have never arisen.

The Hindus dominated the economic and cultural life of East Bengal even more than West Punjab and Sind. They numbered over 13 millions and constituted 30 per cent of the total population of East Bengal at the time of partition. They were politically the most conscious section of the community in the whole of Bengal and they had made the greatest sacrifices for the freedom of India. They owned nearly 80 per cent of the national wealth of East Bengal. They owned most of the urban property and organised and financed 95 per cent of the 1,290 high schools and 47 colleges of East Bengal and 90 per cent of teachers from University to high schools came out of them. There were a number of centres of Sanskrit learning spread all over East Bengal. This population of 13 million included a very numerous and progressive middle class and a very active and virile rural population of Nam Sudras. Beside the Hindus there were half a million Buddhists who lived in the Chittagong hill tract. They too were, to a man, opposed to partition.

The two-nation theory on the basis of which partition was demanded and conceded had some logical though dangerous implications. It made Hindus aliens in Pakistan and Muslims aliens in India. The past history of Islam and the utterances and writing of the protagonists of Pakistan before the

partition gave a clear indication that there would be no place for Hindus in Pakistan. Mr. Jinnah had himself admitted it and suggested complete exchange of population in an interview to a foreign correspondent. The late Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a far-sighted jurist, had also clearly pointed out in his famous book—*Thoughts on Partition*—that exchange of population will be the logical corollary of Partition and had given a detailed procedure to bring it about in five years. The Congress leadership accepted the partition but refused to accept its logical corollary of exchange of population. Dr. Mookerji also did not think of it at that time. But Master Tara Singh and other Hindu leaders of Punjab, who had a better insight into the Muslim mind and who had got a foretaste of what was in store for them in Pakistan in the Rawalpindi massacre of March, 1947, were wise enough not to depend upon the assurances of Congress leaders about their safety in Pakistan after they had accepted partition over their head. The massacre of Sheikhpura soon after the formation of Pakistan gave them a clear idea of what was in store for Hindus and Sikhs in the days to come. They, therefore, gave a call to Hindus and Sikhs to leave their hearths and homes and move towards East Punjab just as their ancestors had done when Afghanistan came under the heels of Islam in the 10th century. As a result, within a few months of the partition virtual exchange of population took place between East Punjab and West Punjab. Sindhi Hindus followed suit after a few months. The loss in human lives and misery suffered by the people in this unprecedented upheaval was incalculable. The Hindus lost property worth hundreds of crores of rupees and about one million people lost their lives on both sides. But it saved the suffering Hindus of West Pakistan from the process of slow annihilation like cats and dogs at the hands of the Muslim rulers of Pakistan.

The Hindus of East Bengal failed to see the writing on the wall at that time. Perhaps, they had no such experience to draw upon as their compatriots of West Pakistan had. They were also taken in by the assurances of Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji was a party to such assurances. They had in fact greater faith in him than in all the Congress leaders

put together and looked upon his inclusion in the Indian cabinet as a guarantee for their own security and welfare. Dr. Mookerji too was conscious of the faith they had reposed in him. He had hoped that the Congress leadership would learn the lessons of partition and adopt a reciprocal and firm policy towards Pakistan. He had joined the cabinet to influence the Government from within to honour the assurances and pledges he had given to the Hindus of East Bengal. He, therefore, considered the general policies of the Government, particularly those pertaining to Pakistan, as much his concern as those concerning the departments specifically entrusted to his care.

But it did not take him long to realise that the Congress leaders, particularly Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. Aided and abetted by Maulana Azad, he seemed determined to pursue the same policy of appeasement towards Pakistan that the Congress had pursued towards the Muslim League of which the partition of the country was the result.

It did not take the rulers of Pakistan long to see through the mind of Nehru and Gandhi. They knew how their policy of bluff and bluster towards them had paid rich dividends in the past. They had been able to carve out the vast Islamic State of Pakistan out of India without much effort and were determined to bring the rest of India under the crescent flag through war. "Has ke liya Pakistan—lar ke lenge Hindustan" (we have got Pakistan in fun and we will acquire Hindustan by force) was their pet slogan and it well revealed their mind. They, therefore, decided to follow the same policy of bluff and bluster, of *goondaism* and aggression towards the Congress rulers of India which they had followed toward the Congress on behalf of the Muslim League before the partition. The way Hindu India had submitted to their blackmail and had accepted partition without a murmur encouraged them to persist in their belief that Muslims were destined to rule and that Hindustan could be bullied to submit to their dictates.

They first tried this policy in Kashmir. After having failed to pressurise Maharaja Hari Singh to accede to Pakistan through economic blockade, Pakistan launched an armed attack on Kashmir on October 22, 1947 in spite of the fact that it

had entered into a standstill agreement with the Maharaja on August 15. The *en-masse* desertion of the Muslim soldiers of the Maharaja's army to the invaders made their task easy. They reached the outskirts of Srinagar by October 24. There were two alternatives before the Maharaja. He could either surrender before the armed aggression and sign the instrument of accession acceding his State to Pakistan or fight back the aggressor with Indian help. A proud and patriotic ruler as Hari Singh was, he chose the second alternative. He sent his Prime Minister, Shri Mehar Chand Mahajan, who later rose to be the Chief Justice of India, to Delhi to plead with the Indian leaders to accept the accession of Kashmir and send armed support to defend it against Pakistani hordes. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who claimed to be a Kashmiri and, therefore, had refused to allow Sardar Patel to handle Jammu and Kashmir State, now developed, cold feet. He was unwilling to accept the accession of Jammu and Kashmir lest it should result in Indo-Pak war. His procrastination irritated Justice Mahajan so much that he decided to fly to Karachi and formally surrender Kashmir to Jinnah on condition that safety be assured to the hundred thousand strong Hindu population of Srinagar which was sure to be butchered at the hands of the invaders. But the timely intervention of Sardar Patel and pleadings of Sheikh Abdullah, who had fled from Kashmir in the wake of Pak invasion, saved the situation. Accession of Kashmir was accepted and Indian armed forces were rushed to Srinagar just in time to save it from falling into the hands of the enemy.

It was a victory for the view point of Sardar Patel who had the backing of Dr. Mookerji, Sardar Baldev Singh and Dr. N. V. Gadgil. But the coward in Pandit Nehru reasserted itself when he fell into the trap of Mr. Jinnah who decided to politicalise the issue after he had failed to get a military decision in his favour. He made a mockery of the principle of joint responsibility of the cabinet when he made an offer of plebiscite in Kashmir after normalcy had been restored there, without the approval of the cabinet. Besides being *ultra vires* of the instrument of accession, which did not provide for any conditional accession, this offer betrayed the same policy of appeasement which had been the hallmark of Nehru's

policy towards the Muslim League.

The bungling regarding Kashmir that was thus begun by Pandit Nehru has continued ever since. While Sardar Patel was able to tackle the problem of 600 and odd Princely States, including Bhopal and Hyderabad in one year, Pandit Nehru failed to tackle one State which he considered to be his special domain. Dr. Mookerji had to atone for the sins of Pandit Nehru by laying down his life in a Srinagar jail to save Kashmir from the machination of Sheikh Abdullah who had turned from a supplicant to a dictator because of the wrong approach and policies of Pandit Nehru.

The way Pakistan, even when it was militarily and economically very weak, was able to commit aggression on Kashmir and get away with 33,000 square miles of Indian territory including the strategic region of Gilgit in the bargain, set the pattern of Indo-Pak relations. The rulers of Pakistan learnt that aggression against India pays just as the leaders of Muslim League had learnt before partition that separatism and *goondaism* against Congress pays. Pakistan has been faithfully following the pattern in her relations with India ever since.

Hyderabad too was treated by Pandit Nehru as his special domain for the simple reason that its ruler happened to be a bigoted Musalman. Nizam Usman Ali of Hyderabad knew the character of Pandit Nehru and was fortified by the tacit support of Maulana Azad who had been living on his doles for many years. He, therefore, adopted a very intransigent attitude. He not only refused to accede to India but what was worse, began to conspire with the Portuguese to acquire Goa from them which would have given him an outlet to sea. At the same time he began to increase his army and tyrannise and suppress his Hindu subjects, who constituted 90 per cent of the population of his State, with the help of Razakars led by notorious Kasim Razvi. He secured the services of the British Jurist, Sir Walter Monkton, to negotiate a settlement on his behalf with the Government of India. His success was phenomenal. Pandit Nehru agreed to accept a semi-sovereign status for Hyderabad with a standing army of its own. Encouraged by this climb down by the Government of India, he decided to persist in his demand for recognition

of full sovereignty and began preparations to move the U.N. in the matter.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji deeply felt this national humiliation. He realised the dangers inherent in such a policy of appeasement towards the enemy within. He knew from experience that Pandit Nehru was incapable of firm resolute policy where Muslims were concerned. Many of his other Cabinet colleagues felt the same way. The only way to change this policy, they felt, was to entrust the handling of Hyderabad problem to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who should have, even otherwise, dealt with it as the Minister of States. But it was no easy job to make Pandit Nehru, whose inveterate love of power and dictatorial temperament had become manifest by that time, to withdraw from the handling of this vital question. Dr. Mookerjee thereupon hit upon a clever stratagem to achieve this end.

At a meeting of the Cabinet he pointed out that the Hyderabad question was getting complicated and hence needed special attention. The Prime Minister, he added, was already over-worked and therefore could not be burdened with any more work. He, therefore, suggested that Sardar Patel be requested to handle the problem as his exclusive charge. A number of other ministers supported him. Sardar Patel, who had already been sounded on the matter, expressed his consent to the suggestion even before Pandit Nehru could comment on it. He could not reject the suggestion after Sardar Patel had expressed his acceptance. The handling of Hyderabad question thus passed into the hands of the right man.

It is a well known fact that even after the question had passed out of his hands, Pandit Nehru made many attempts to deflect Sardar Patel from his firm resolve to end the festering sore of Hyderabad once for all by a bold and timely stroke of Police Action. But secure in the support of Shyama Prasad Mookerji and a majority of his other Cabinet colleagues and conscious of the popular demand for bold action, Sardar Patel went ahead with his plans. The Police Action, boldly and efficiently executed, met little resistance. The integration of Hyderabad State with the rest of India was thus finally and irrevocably completed. The whole country remembers Sardar Patel with gratitude for his statesmanship

and realism in tackling the Hyderabad problem. But few are aware of the part, mentioned above, played by Dr. Mookerji in making it possible for Sardar Patel to tackle the problem as he did. How one wishes that the Kashmir problem had also passed into the hands of Sardar Patel through some similar stratagem.

But the problem which brought him in direct conflict with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was the problem of India's relations and dealings with Pakistan, particularly in regard to the condition of Hindu minority in East Bengal. The doting attitude adopted by the Government of India towards Pakistan ever since its inception in the face of deliberate and determined acts of hostility on her part, never appealed to Dr. Mookerji. The utter indifference of the Government of India towards the fate of millions of Hindus in Sind, Baluchistan and N.-W.F.P., not to speak of those in West Punjab who had never asked for partition but who were all the same being victimised and squeezed out of their home lands simply because they happened to be Hindus; who adored undivided India as their mother and made sacrifices for its liberation, appeared to him criminal. The failure of the Government of India to name Pakistan as aggressor, even after the fact of her aggression in Kashmir had been fully established, and the forced payment of Rs. 55 crores to Pakistan under pressure of Gandhiji's fast, pained him and convinced him of the imbecility of the Government of which he himself was a member. He instinctively felt that this policy would only encourage Pakistan, born as it was out of successful bullying of Congress leaders by the Muslim League fanatics, to persist in ruffian tactics towards free India and extermination of all non-Muslims from within its boundaries. Though no heed was paid to his pleadings and protests from within by the Government just then, yet he observed with satisfaction that opinion within and without the Government was growing against this weak-kneed attitude towards Pakistan. Moreover, Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru, the chief advocates of this policy, were getting isolated. He was, therefore, hopeful of reorientation of the policies of Government of India towards Pakistan and the problems its creation had created. Naturally he considered his continuance in the Government useful for the national cause.

But the assassination of Mahatma Gaudhi on the 30th of January, 1948 changed the whole perspective. The unprincipled but clever exploitation of the event for their own ends by Pandit Nehru and his left wing supporters within and without the Congress, created a strong public reaction against the advocates of a bold policy towards Pakistan. Gandhiji, whose popularity and influence on the people had reached the lowest ebb during the days preceding his assassination, overnight became a martyr in the eyes of even his worst critics. His assassination not only rehabilitated him in the hearts of his countrymen but also gave a new lease of life to those who used to shine in his reflected glory. As a result the tables were turned. The idealist Nehru emerged as the political heir of Gandhiji and rose in the people's estimation. On the other hand the realist and practical Sardar Patel and Dr. Mookerji got isolated within and without the Government.

The succeeding months saw the policy of appeasement towards Muslims and Pakistan pursued with a vengeance. Pakistan was quick to take note of the changes in India. It decided to take advantage of the situation by starting a fresh offensive in Kashmir as also against the Hindus within Pakistan. West Pakistan had by that time been well nigh cleared of all the "undesirables" but more than 15 million Hindus still lived in East Bengal. Now came their turn.

Dr. Mookerji was deeply concerned with the job of Hindus in East Pakistan. His position and his attitude towards them was well known. He summed it up in the following convincing passage in the statement he made in Indian Parliament on the 19th of April, 1950, after his resignation from the Cabinet. "When the partition of India became inevitable I played a very large part in creating public opinion in favour of the partition of Bengal, for I felt that if that was not done, the whole of Bengal and also perhaps Assam would fall in Pakistan. At that time little knowing that I would join the first Central Cabinet, I along with others, gave assurances to the Hindus of East Bengal stating that if they suffered at the hands of the future Pakistan Government, if they were denied elementary rights of citizenship, if their lives and honour were jeopardised or attacked, Free India would not remain an idle spectator and their just cause would be boldly taken up by

the Government and people of India."

As the Pakistan Government began to show its dragon's teeth to the Hindus of East Bengal, whose security and interests it had undertaken to safeguard according to the terms of the partition agreement, Dr. Mookerji urged upon Pandit Nehru and his other colleagues to remember the pledges they had given to them and to do something for their safety. The result was the first Inter-Dominion agreement signed at Calcutta in April, 1948, which dealt mainly with the question of minorities in the two Bengals. This agreement, however, failed to produce any lasting results. India on the whole observed its terms, but the exodus of Hindus from East Bengal continued unabated. It was a one way traffic. This is just what Pakistan wished for. There were numerous conferences of officials from both the sides and copious correspondence was exchanged between the two Governments. But judged by actual results, Pakistan's attitude continued to remain unchanged.

The increasing exodus of Hindus from East Bengal and the news of their sad plight, in spite of the April 1948 Agreement, created a stir in India once again. Dr. Mookerji again pressed for some strong and determined action. But all the Nehru Government did was to sign another Inter-Dominion agreement at Delhi in December, 1948. It was a virtual repetition of the first agreement. The same old platitudes about the treatment of Hindu and Muslim minorities in both the countries were solemnly repeated.

Pakistan had no intention to honour this agreement either, and the unending tale of woes of East Bengal Hindus continued. During the course of 1949, the situation in East Bengal deteriorated further and the exodus of a far larger number of Hindus from that province started. In spite of these two Inter-Dominion agreements about 20 lakhs Hindus were forced to leave their hearth and homes in East Bengal during the first two years of Pakistan's existence, besides millions who were uprooted in Punjab and Sind.

But the worst came early in 1950 when a planned massacre of Hindus on a wide scale was started by the Muslims all over the province. According to the Government figures, more than fifty thousand Hindus were butchered, thousands of

Hindu women were abducted and raped and inhuman and most barbarous crimes were perpetrated against them. All the socially conscious Hindus began to be driven out of East Bengal. It was all done with the direct connivance and encouragement of the Pakistan Government.

As the news of this devilish carnage began to seep through to India through the word of mouth of the uprooted humanity from East Bengal, a wave of shock spread all over the country. It even stirred the conscience of many of the men in power, who began to realise the futility of paper agreements with Pakistan which were honoured only in their breach. A feeling of urgency about the problem began to grow and some bold and firm action to dissuade Pakistan from persisting in this game of exterminating or throwing out all the Hindus from East Bengal began to be advocated. It was realised that the problem was not communal but political, not provincial but national. But the one man who remained impervious to all this was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. His innate cowardice which he had been successfully hiding under high sounding slogans and winsome theatricals at mass meetings, would not allow him to take any bold and quick step. He kept fiddling while East Bengal burned.

Everyone including some ministers of the Central Cabinet felt ashamed at the pusillanimity of the Government.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji naturally felt the tragedy most. He led the opposition to Pandit Nehru's dilatory tactics from within. He had a number of passages-at-arms with him in the numerous Cabinet meetings held to discuss the situation. All his hopes were finally dashed to the ground when he learnt of the invitation to Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, whose hands were dripping with blood of countless Hindus, for making another agreement and pious declarations about the welfare of the minorities. He protested against this course of action. He reminded the Prime Minister of the fate of the previous agreements and warned him against falling into the trap of Liaquat Ali Khan who wanted to avoid the nemesis which his satanic policies in Pakistan ought to have brought upon him.

But he was over-ruled by the Prime Minister who lost his temper when he could not meet his arguments. The things

came to such a pass that Dr. Mookerji had to rebuke him and tell him, on his face that he was flouting all traditions and conventions of joint responsibility and joint deliberations of the cabinet in respect of vital national problems such as the one created by the situation in East Bengal.

From that time onwards, Dr. Mookerji felt that he could neither do any good to the country, nor redeem his pledges to the people of East Bengal, by continuing in the Cabinet. The call of duty summoned him to walk out of the exalted position he had held in the Government of his country, which he had accepted for the service of the motherland two and a half years back. He sent in his resignation on the first of April 1950 and Pandit Nehru readily agreed to relieve him of the burden of office. But other Ministers, particularly Sardar Patel did not like Dr. Mookerji's going out of the Cabinet at that crucial time. He pressed him hard to withdraw his resignation. Even Pandit Nehru later requested Dr. Mookerji to reconsider his decision and withdraw the resignation. A lesser man might have yielded to this pressure. But Dr. Mookerji was a man made of sterner stuff. Name, fame and glamour of office had no attraction for him. Like a true sanyasi, he preferred the path of duty towards his people and his conscience to a world of comfort and position; and he thereby proved that he was a true *karma yogi* who had imbibed the spirit of the Lord's *Gita*.

Though the resignation of Dr. Mookerjee failed to deter Pandit Nehru from following the suicidal path of national humiliation and betrayal of the solemn pledges given to Hindu minority left in Pakistan, it did stir the conscience of the nation including some of his cabinet colleagues. Thanks to the determined opposition of Shri N. V. Gadgil and Sardar Patel, the original draft of the Nehru-Liaquat agreement which committed Government of India to reservation of seats for Muslims in legislatures and services, was modified to eliminate these provisions. This saved India from going back to the path which had directly led to partition of 1947, for the time being at least.

The statement that Dr. Mookerji gave in the Parliament on April 19, 1950 regarding the causes of his resignation from the Nehru cabinet is a dignified but pathetic document which

deserves to be read and re-read by all those who want Indo-Pak relations to be put on a sound footing. It reveals that clear grasp of the true character of Pakistan and her rulers and the ideological and practical motivations of their attitude and policies towards India which made his approach to all Indo-Pak problems so refreshingly realistic and practical. It indicated prophetically the course of Indo-Pak relations and the fate of Hindu, Buddhist and Christian minorities left in Pakistan if the Government of India persisted in its policy of appeasement of the aggressor and the oppressor as typified by the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement and the events that preceded it.

"There is nothing of a personal character," he declared, "which has prompted me to resign and I do hope that those with whom I have disagreed will appreciate the depth of my convictions just as I have unhesitatingly appreciated their own. My differences are fundamental and it is not fair or honourable for me to continue as a member of the Government whose policy I cannot approve of.

"I have never felt happy about our attitude towards Pakistan. It has been weak, halting and inconsistent. Our goodness or inaction has been interpreted as weakness by Pakistan. It has made Pakistan more and more intransigent and has made us suffer all the greater and even lowered us in the estimation of our own people. On every important occasion we have remained on the defensive and failed to expose or counteract the designs of Pakistan aimed at us.

"The recent Agreement, to my mind, offers no solution to the basic problem. The evil is far deeper and no patchwork can lead to peace. The establishment of a homogeneous Islamic State is Pakistan's creed and a planned extermination of Hindus and Sikhs and expropriation of their properties constitute its settled policy. As a result of this policy, life for the minorities in Pakistan has become 'nasty, brutish and short'. Let us not be forgetful of the lessons of history. We will do so at our own peril. I am not talking of by-gone times; but if anyone analyses the course of events in Pakistan since its creation, it will be manifest that there is no honourable place for Hindus within that State. The problem is not communal. It is essentially political. The Agreement unfortunately tries to ignore the implications of an Islamic

State. But anyone, who refers carefully to the Objectives Resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and to the speech of its Prime Minister, will find that while talking in one place of protection of minority rights, the Resolution in another place emphatically declares "that the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as enunciated by Islam shall be fully observed". The Prime Minister of Pakistan while moving the Resolution spoke thus :

"You would also notice that the State is not to play the part of a neutral observer wherein the Muslims may be merely free to profess and practise their religion, because such an attitude on the part of the State would be the very negation of the ideals which prompted the demand of Pakistan and it is these ideals which should be the cornerstone of the State which we want to build. The State will create such conditions as are conducive to the building up of a truly Islamic Society which means that the State will have to play a positive part in this effort. You would remember that the Quaid-e-Azam and other leaders of the Muslim League always made unequivocal declarations that the Muslim demand for Pakistan was based upon the fact that the Muslims had their own way of life and a code of conduct. Indeed, Islam lays down specific directions for social behaviour and seeks to guide society in its attitude towards the problems which confront it day to day. Islam is not just a matter of private beliefs and conduct."

In such a Society, let me ask in all seriousness, can any Hindu expect to live with any sense of security in respect of his cultural, religious, economic and political rights?

It is not the ideology preached by Pakistan that is the only disturbing factor. Its performance has been in full accord with its ideology and the minorities have had bitter experiences, times without number of the true character and functioning of an Islamic State. The Agreement has totally failed to deal with this basic problem.

Today there is a general impression that there has been failure both on the part of India and Pakistan to protect their minorities. The fact however is just the reverse of it. A hostile propaganda has been also carried on in some sections of the foreign press. This is a libel on India and truth must be made known to all who desire to know it. The Indian

Government—both at the Centre and in the Provinces and States—generally maintained peace and security throughout the land after Punjab and Delhi disturbances had quietened down, in spite of grave and persistent provocations from Pakistan by reason of its failure to create conditions in Sind and East Bengal whereby minorities could live there peacefully and honourably. It should not be forgotten here that the people who came away from East Bengal or Sind were not those who had decided to migrate to India out of imaginary fear at the time of partition. These were people who were bent on staying in Pakistan, if only they were given a chance to live decent and peaceful lives.

The supreme question of the hour is, can the minorities continue to live with any sense of security in Pakistan? The test of any Agreement is not its reaction within India or in foreign lands, but on the minds of the unfortunate minorities living in Pakistan or those who have been forced to come away already. It is not how a few top-ranking individuals in Pakistan think or desire to act. It is the entire set-up of that State, the mentality of the official circles—high and low—the attitude of the people at large and the activities of organisations such as 'Ansars' which operate together and make it impossible for Hindus to live. It may be that for some months no major occurrences will take place. Meanwhile, we may on our generosity supply them with essential commodities which will give them added strength. That has been Pakistan's technique. Perhaps the next may come during the rainy season when communications are virtually cut off.

I have found myself unable to be a part to the Agreement for the following reasons :

Firstly—we had two such Agreements since Partition for solving the Bengal problem and they were violated by Pakistan without any remedy open to us. Any agreement which has no sanction will not offer any solution.

Secondly—the crux of the problem is Pakistan's concept of an Islamic State and the ultra-communal administration based on it. The Agreement side-tracks this cardinal issue and we are today exactly where we were previous to the Agreement.

Thirdly—India and Pakistan are made to appear guilty, while Pakistan was clearly the aggressor. The Agreement

provides that no propaganda will be permitted against the territorial integrity of the two countries and there will be no incitement to war between them. This almost sounds farcical so long as Pakistan troops occupy a portion of our territory of Kashmir and warlike preparations on its part are in active operation.

Fourthly—events have proved that Hindus cannot live in East Bengal on the assurance of security given by Pakistan. We should accept this as a basic proposition. The present Agreement on the other hand calls upon minorities to look upon Pakistan Government for their safety and honour which is adding insult to injury and is contrary to assurances given by us previously.

Fifthly—there is no proposal to compensate those who have suffered nor will the guilty be ever punished, because no one will dare give evidence before a Pakistan Court. This is in accordance with bitter experience in the past.

Sixthly—Hindus will continue to come away in large numbers and those who have come will not be prepared to go back. On the other hand, Muslims who had gone away will now return and in our determination to implement the Agreement Muslims will not leave India. Our economy will thus be shattered and possible conflict within our country will be greater.

Seventhly—in the garb of protecting minorities in India, the Agreement has reopened the problem of Muslim minority in India, thus seeking to revive those disruptive forces that created Pakistan itself. This principle, carried to its logical conclusion, will create fresh problems for us which, strictly speaking, are against our very Constitution.

The course of India-Pak relations since then, culminating in the unprovoked aggression by Pakistan first in Kutch and then in Kashmir, which resulted in full-fledged Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 and the subsequent developments in India and Pakistan have clearly proved that Dr. Mookerji was a true statesman who could see ahead and was head and shoulder above the petty politicians of the time who could not see beyond their nose.

The genocide of Hindus and other non-Muslim minorities has continued unabated in both wings of Pakistan. While

West Pakistan has been cleared of all Hindus, the number of Hindus in East Bengal has dwindled to about 9 millions instead of going up to 25 million on the basis of the rate of growth of population in Pakistan. On the other hand the number of Muslims in India has been almost doubled. What is worse, the appeasement policy of the Government has put them back into the lap of the Mullahs and the Aligarhi intelligentsia which is leading them by the nose on the path of separatism and disruption. Backed by the Government of Pakistan from without and Pakistan and China agents from within they have begun to plan for another partition of India.

Dr. Mookerji clearly visualised the dangerous potentialities of the India government's policies towards Pakistan and her supporters and agents left behind in India. He therefore began to work to create a political platform through which Indian nationalism might project and assert itself and checkmate the evil effects of the policies being pursued by Pandit Nehru in the name of the Indian National Congress.

QUEST FOR A POLITICAL PLATFORM

THE exit of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji from the Central Cabinet marked the beginning of a new, and as later events were to prove, the most momentous phase of his crowded life. He had entered the cabinet as a provincial leader of Bengal but he came out as a national leader. All the non-Congress nationalists had begun to look upon him as their tribune and spokesman. The Congress legislators and leaders who had watched his life and work from close quarters had also developed a new respect for him. They had begun to look upon him as the most effective critic and opponent of their policies, especially those pertaining to relations with Pakistan.

His resignation created a stir in the country. The Congress circles felt uneasy and the Press controlled by them tried to minimise the importance of the event. But the people in general hailed it as a brave and conscientious act. The citizens of the capital demonstrated their appreciation of the stand taken by Dr. Mookerji by giving him a grand reception which was attended by more than a thousand representative citizens drawn from all walks of life, to congratulate him on his bold decision. Some of the independent-minded Congress-men like Shri H. V. Kamath, M.P., who had been painfully watching democracy being butchered by the one party Parliament, also hailed his exit from the cabinet as the beginning of a healthy opposition within the Parliament. It was taken by them for granted that he would create and lead the Opposition in the Parliament.

But the tragedy of the situation was that no organised opposition then existed within or without the Parliament. The Parliament, which was also the Constituent Assembly, was elected indirectly by the Provincial Legislatures in 1946, when the main problem before the country was the demand for Partition. The Congress then presented itself as the champion of "Akhand Hindustan", i.e., united India and, therefore, it

captured all the Hindu seats. The Muslims, on the other hand, returned only the Muslim League nominees who, for some time, constituted the main opposition. The Partition converted the Muslim League opposition into the Sovereign Parliament of Pakistan. The few Muslim members that remained in the Indian Parliament, joined the Congress to cover up their past sins. So in the parliamentary debates the role of opposition had to be played by a few outspoken Congressmen and the liberals like Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru. But for voting purposes they all belonged to the Congress party. This made the debates and deliberations of the Parliament very superficial and unrealistic. Therefore, after his resignation, Dr. Mookerji found himself a solitary member in the opposition. After some time, however, his erstwhile colleagues in the cabinet, Shri K. C. Neogy and Shri John Mathai, also joined him. But they soon withdrew altogether from the active Parliamentary field thereby leaving Dr. Mookerji to fight the opposition battles single-handed against a steam roller majority.

But a still greater handicap than the absence of any organised Opposition within the Parliament, was the absence of any effective and well knit organisation outside the Parliament that could mobilise and coordinate the nationalist opinion in the country. The Communist party was no doubt there. But it acted, as elsewhere, as the agent of Communist Russia and, therefore, could not appeal to the nationalist opinion in the country. Its cult of the bullet and the bomb, whose worst demonstration it had been giving in Telengana, had isolated it from the general Indian public at least for the time being.

The Socialist Party of India under the joint leadership of Shri J. P. Narain and Acharya Narendra Deva had begun to make some headway. But its basic approach to the problems of the country, political as well as social, was very much the same as that of Nehru's Congress. It was more or less a wing of the Congress party itself.

The Ram Rajya Parishad was another organisation that was just then making some headway in erstwhile princely States like Rajasthan and the then Madhyabharat. It drew its sustenance from feudal elements, and the social and economic policies it advocated were not only very conservative but also too out of date to find acceptance with the people in general.

A dynamic and progressive mind as that of Dr. Mookerji could have little sympathy for this one-sided approach to national problems.

The Hindu Mahasabha, the organisation whose destinies he had guided for many years as its President, was of course in the field, with the same outlook and pursuing policies as before independence and partition of the country. But Dr. Mookerji had outgrown it during the three years since independence.

Immediately after the dawn of independence he realised that the Hindu Mahasabha, if it was to play its rightful role of nationalist opposition to the Congress, must re-orientate its policies and outlook. With the abolition of the separate electorates, the Hindu Mahasabha, he argued, must broaden its base, admit members of all religious communities into it and play its proper role as the national organisation of all the Hindus which term is and ought to be accepted as a synonym for "Indian" because both of the terms have been derived from the Sindhu, which was pronounced Indus by the Greeks. He wanted the Hindu Mahasabha to make the world realise the true import of the word Hindu and take up the task of Hinduising politically, socially as well as culturally, those elements in the country which had been misled by the British propaganda and the Congress folly to detest their own national name and ideals and play the role of disruptionists. The Muslim problem, he was convinced, could be solved in free India, once for all, if their outlook on cultural, social and political problems of the country was Hinduised or nationalised while leaving them free, in keeping with the Hindu tradition of absolute tolerance, to carry on their religion and way of worship as they pleased. That, he thought, was the only sure way of rooting out the poison of two nation theory and undoing the mischief that the British and the Muslim League had done with the connivance of the Congress leaders, who had walked into their trap. Failing that, he suggested, the Mahasabha should cease to be a political organisation and concentrate its energies on the social and cultural uplift of the Hindu society in the religious sense of the term.

The Mahasabha leaders were at that time very much embittered by the Congress betrayal of the trust put in them by the people and the terrible massacre and carnage that had

been going on in Pakistan to exterminate or squeeze out all the Hindus. They wanted to capitalise on the anti-Congress and anti-Muslim feeling that it had generated amongst the Hindu masses in general throughout the country to make the Mahasabha an effective political force. They, therefore, did not think it worth while to accept the advice of Dr. Mookerji either to reorientate the policy or change the character of the Mahasabha.

But with the assassination of Gandhiji on the 30th of January, 1948, the tables were turned on the Mahasabha. The party in power exploited the situation to suppress all its real or imaginary, actual or potential, rivals.

The Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, the best organised and disciplined non-political national organisation of the Hindus in the country, came in for the severest blow. The organisation was put under ban and all its known leaders and workers, running into tens of thousands, were arrested and detained without trial. Some of the Mahasabha leaders were also arrested and the very existence of Mahasabha as a political organisation came to be threatened. This made the Mahasabha leaders nervous and those of its leaders who were outside the jail decided, on the 15th of February, 1948, to accept the advice given by Dr. Mookerji many months earlier to reorientate the policy of the Mahasabha. It decided to suspend its political activities and to concentrate only on social and cultural work. This saved it from the wrath of the party in power. The Mahasabha thereby continued to exist.

The situation however changed in 1949 by the determined effort of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh to assert its right to exist. It sent in about a lakh of young men to fill the prisons of free India to vindicate its right to carry on its perfectly legal nation building activities. The Government had to yield. The ban on the R.S.S. was lifted. The Mahasabha executive, which had taken the earlier decision under stress of circumstances and not out of conviction, thought the time opportune to return to politics. It resolved to rescind its earlier decision and resumed political activities early in August, 1949.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji could not reconcile himself to this decision of the Mahasabha executive. He was not opposed

to its resuming political activities but in that case he wanted it to open its doors to all citizens of India, irrespective of caste and creed, who subscribed to its policies and creed. He therefore decided to disassociate himself from the policy-making of Mahasabha and resigned from its executive. But as a Hindu he continued to be an ordinary member of the Hindu Mahasabha which had been founded primarily for the purpose of bringing about cultural and social uplift and unity in the Hindu society.

Dr. Mookerji's attitude towards Mahasabha during this period has been subjected to uncharitable criticism from certain quarters. He has been charged with weakness and bad faith towards Mahasabha. But the facts prove the contrary. His critics do not seem to realise and appreciate the significance of changes that partition and freedom had wrought in the politics of the country since 15th of August, 1947. But a dynamic mind like that of Dr. Mookerji could not fail to grasp them. He wanted the Mahasabha to grow with the times. It was only when he found that it had lost the will and strength to grow that he left it. He, in fact, outgrew it.

The one organisation outside the precincts of the Congress and its satellites, which had demonstrated its determination and right to exist and keep the torch of true nationalism burning in the face of all odds, rooted as it was in the age old culture of the country, was the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh. It had come out with flying colours from the ordeal of ban and the consequent country wide Satyagraha it launched against it, keeping its ranks all the time as united and disciplined as ever. Its past record of service coupled with the demonstration of its strength made it appear to the people as the organisation of the future. It had begun to capture the imagination of the Indian masses, some of whom, because of its tradition of quiet and self-effacing service, heard of the organisation for the first time. It already had an extensive net-work of branches and a cadre of tried and selfless workers.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji had already come into contact with the founder and leader of this movement, Dr. Kesham Baliram Hedgewar, in the mid-thirties at Calcutta. He had also been aware of the work of this organisation in the prepartition days. Addressing a rally of the R. S. S. workers at Lahore in

1940 he had described it as the "only silver lining in the cloudy sky of India". The good work done by its Swayamsevaks in the Punjab, Kashmir, N.-W.F.P. and Sind during 1947, their self-immolation in the cause of their country and its people and the bravery and strength they had exhibited against brutal and violent attacks of Pakistanis had won his unqualified praise and respect. The restraint of the strong that this organisation had shown after the murder of Gandhiji, in the face of the most cowardly attacks on its leaders and workers by the members of the party in power with the connivance of the police and custodians of law and order, and the proof of its strength given by it during the Satyagraha of 1948-49, had raised its stock and prestige.

But the R.S.S. was, till then, a non-political organisation, devoted exclusively to the work of character building, cultural uplift, social cohesion and awakening of true national consciousness amongst the people in general, in the hope that change in the outlook of the people together with the appreciation of the national ideals and 'Sanskrit' that it was inculcating among them, would, in due course of time, be naturally reflected in the political life of the nation. It, therefore, continued to pursue the policy of giving full freedom to its members to join any political party they wished.

But the developments and happenings during the post-partition years had forced the R.S.S. leaders and workers to do some hard thinking. They had found that the party in power, blinded by self-interest, had not hesitated to give what was intended to be a death blow to the organisation which had done the noblest work during the partition days and which continued to do the most essential national service by building up character and unity in the country. They had also begun to realise that it was not very easy for ordinary members to influence the policies of well organised and well entrenched political parties like the Congress from within for the simple reason that the men who controlled their destinies would not allow fresh blood and fresh ideas to infiltrate and disturb their secure position in citadels of power and influence.

They had, therefore, begun to feel the urgent need of a political organisation which could reflect the ideology and ideas of the R.S.S. in the political sphere and should, therefore, be

able to command the willing allegiance of the R.S.S. workers and supporters. This need, it was felt, would become more pressing after the introduction of adult franchise in the country. Every adult who has a vote must have some political understanding and affiliation to be able to exercise his right of vote purposefully. The growing influence and scope of politics also pointed to the need of shaping it according to the ideals that R.S.S. cherished because the truth of Morley's dictum that "what cuts deep in politics cuts deep all-round" had begun to face them as a bitter reality.

Dr. Mookerji was aware of this trend of thought in the R.S.S. circles. He knew that the attitude of the R.S.S. which drew its main strength and sustenance from the lower middle and working classes, towards social and economic problems of the country could be anything but reactionary. The R.S.S. approach to the problems of culture, nationalism, and partition had his fullest approval. He, therefore, instinctively felt that any political organisation sponsored by, or enjoying the confidence of the R. S. S. could surely and speedily become such a force in the political life of the country as may command his fullest allegiance and also succeed in mobilising and consolidating the non-Congress and non-Communist nationalist public opinion into an effective opposition.

But the R.S.S. leadership was not yet clear in its mind about the shape and character of the political party to which it could lend its support and the role it would have to play in bringing it into existence. There was no unanimity even about the advisability of having such a political organisation. The senior leaders of the organisation who had been mainly drawn into its fold by the magnetic and dedicated personality of Dr. Hedgewar were very disdainful of the very idea of the R.S.S. identifying itself with any political party. They apprehended that it would bring the R.S.S. down from the high pedestal of a common platform for all votaries of 'Hindutva' irrespective of their party affiliation to a narrow and exclusive political group. Politics, they feared, would corrode idealism and spirit of selfless service to society in the R.S.S. and create an unhealthy rivalry between the R.S.S. workers working in different fields.

As against this old guard, there was a younger group of

senior workers who were all out for securing political support for the R.S.S. through a political party. During the period of ban on the R.S.S. most of them were in favour of converting the R.S.S. as such into a political party with all its organisational apparatus and ideological trappings. Such a course, they felt, would avoid the difficulties and pitfalls inherent in an avowedly social and cultural organisation trying to run and control a political party, which might eventually outgrow it, from without. But the lifting of the ban and repeated declaration by Shri M. S. Golwalkar that the R.S.S. would concentrate on social and cultural work, ruled out this course of action.

Ultimately a compromise was struck between these two courses of action. It was decided that the R.S.S. should continue to be a social and cultural organisation as before but it should actively support a political party for the running of which it would spare some senior workers and allow its goodwill to be used by such a party. The example of Jammu and Kashmir Praja Parishad, which was being run on similar lines might have played some part in arriving at such a decision.

Once the decision to have a political party was taken, the question of tackling Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji who was out to form a political party of his own with the help and support of the R.S.S. if possible, and without it if its leadership procrastinated, then assumed importance. A meeting was arranged between Dr. Mookerji and Shri Golwalkar so that each may have the measure of the other. Dr. Mookerji with an independent national stature earned by dint of his own merit and record of service was a dignified man who could not be expected to play a second fiddle to anybody. Shri Golwalkar, on the other hand, with his well entrenched position as the supreme arbiter of the R.S.S., was conscious of his own position and strength. Dr. Mookerji with his eye on the forth-coming elections was in a hurry to form the new party of his conception. The R.S.S. leadership with its greater stress on organisational working and its keen desire to have the real control of the new party in its own hands wanted to take its time to usher it into existence. The delay irritated Dr. Mookerji who, at one stage, even thought of going alone. His impatience was understandable. The sponsors of the Gan Tantra Parishad in

Orissa were pressing him to launch his party. So were many other elements in Bengal and elsewhere. Had Jana Sangh been formed early, all of them would have been comprehended within it.

The preparations were however begun early in January, 1951 when a number of representative citizens of Delhi and Punjab including L. Hans Raj Gupta, the R.S.S. Chief for Delhi and Punjab, Mahashe Krishan, the veteran journalist and leader of Arya Samaj, Ch. Siri Chand the nephew and political heir of Ch. Chhotu Ram, the Jat leader of Haryana, Pt. Mauli Chander Sharma, a noted orator and leader of Sanatana Dharma, L. Bal Raj Bhalla, an old revolutionary and educationist and the author met at New Delhi to draw up tentative plans for starting a new political party for Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi to begin with. Dr. Mookerji attended this meeting and gave it the benefit of his advice and guidance.

While appreciating the special needs and problems of the Punjab and Patiala and East Punjab States, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir resulting from influx of refugees and weak policy of the Government towards Pakistan, Dr. Mookerji stressed the need for formation of an all India Party at an early date. He made it clear that he could form a party in his own province of West Bengal, which faced similar problems, in no time. But such provincial or regional parties will not gain proper status and impetus and therefore will not be able to make much impact on national politics and policies. It was, therefore, decided on his suggestion that preparations for an All India Party should be begun forthwith. The basic principle, ideology and programme were discussed in this meeting in general and a sub-Committee was appointed to draw up a draft manifesto and Constitution of the proposed party in the light of those discussions. It was in this meeting that the proposed party was tentatively christened "Bharatiya Jana Sangh"—Indian People's Party.

In the discussions of the day the approach of the proposed political party to the termed "Hindu Rashtra" and its political, social and cultural implications figured prominently.

Some of the persons present argued that though they were in full agreement with the concept of "Hindu Rashtra", yet they would not like it to be incorporated or used in the objectives

of the proposed party because that might create misunderstanding in the minds of some people. That provoked Dr. Mookerji who gave a convincing exposition of the concept of "Hindu Rashtra" as he understood it. He explained that the British had deliberately given a narrow sectarian connotation to the word Hindu for their imperialistic ends and the Congress leaders had played their game in denouncing everything Hindu as communal. It should be the duty of the new organisation, he pleaded, to dispel these misconceptions and make the world familiar with the broad national import of the word Hindu, the geographical and historical name of the people of Hindustan. "Hindu Rashtra", he argued, was a noble concept. It brought out the basic oneness and the common tradition of all the different sects and creeds of India. It did not denote any particular religion but a commonwealth of all the religions and sects of the country because, whatever be the way of worship of any particular individual, he could not, if he was to be a national of India, cut himself as under from the common cultural and historical traditions of the country. As such it is not, and never was, a communal or narrow concept. Those, he argued, who were scared away by the very word Hindu could not be depended upon for safeguarding the cultural and territorial heritage of the country.

But he was opposed to the word being imposed on those who were not, for the time being, prepared to accept it. He, therefore, suggested that the word Bharatiya and Indian, which are synonyms of the word Hindu but are more acceptable to those under the influence of West, as also to those who lack courage of conviction, should also be used along with the word Hindu till such people shed their inferiority complex and learn to take pride in their own name and traditions.

Pending the formation of the all India organisation, it was decided to go ahead with the formation of Jana Sangh for the Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. It was also decided to form Jana Sangh in as many other states as possible so that the new party could take shape and start growing from below.

Accordingly, a convention of some three hundred representative citizens of Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi was called at Jullundur on 23rd of May, 1951, to form Jana

Sangh for these four contiguous States which for all practical purposes were one unit. The response was most encouraging. Almost all the invitees responded to the invitation.

The attitude of the party in power towards the new organisation became evident even before it was formally born. The Reception Committee had made arrangements for the convention in the compound of the Anglo-Sanskrit High School, within the municipal limits of Jullundur. But on the eve of the convention, just about 24 hours before it was scheduled to meet, the District Magistrate, presumably under instructions from senior leaders of the Congress party banned all meetings within municipal limits of the town. All efforts to secure permission for the convention which, as was clear from the very nature of the task for which it had been convened, was to be a sort of private deliberative meeting of the invitees alone, proved of no avail. Therefore, the venue of the convention had to be shifted overnight to the compound of a cold storage plant just outside the municipal limits.

The convention resolved to form itself into Bharatiya Jana Sangh for Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi which were treated as one unit for the purpose of Jana Sangh organisation. L. Balraj Bhalla, an ex-revolutionary (he was sentenced to transportation for life in connection with Hardinge Bomb Case), and a top educationist of Punjab and the author were elected the first President and the first General Secretary of the new organisation.

About the same time Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji called a similar convention of representative Bengalis at Calcutta which resolved to form a Jana Sangh for West Bengal with Dr. Mookerji as its first President.

Similar conventions were held during the next two months at Lucknow and Indore for forming Jana Sangh in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Bharat. The Lucknow convention elected Shri Din Dayal Upadhyay, as the first General Secretary of Uttar Pradesh Jana Sangh with Rao Krishan Pal Singh as President.

On the 9th of September, 1951, the Presidents, Secretaries and some other prominent workers of the above mentioned Provincial Jana Sanghs of Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Bharat met

at Delhi and decided to give an All-India form to the Party to which Provincial Jana Sanghs may be affiliated. The task of convening an All-India convention for the purpose was entrusted to the Jana Sangh of Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, which thereupon decided to call the convention at New Delhi on the 21st of October, 1951, and appointed its General Secretary, the author, as its convener.

Before the All-India convention met, Provincial conventions were held also at Jaipur, Nagpur and Patna to form provincial Jana Sanghs for Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar respectively. Thus Jana Sangh had come into existence in all the States of North India excepting Assam and Vindhya Pradesh, before it took an All-India shape.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FOUNDER OF JANA SANGH

THE most important decision to be taken, before formally launching the All-India Bharatiya Jana Sangh, was about the person to be elected as its first President at the Convention. It did not, however, take long for the sponsors of the new organisation to decide that the honour must go to Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji. There was no other person in the country with the stature and strength required to carry the burden of an organisation which was destined, from its very inception, to become a force to reckon with.

It was eleventh of October 1951, when at about 8 a.m. Lala Hansraj Gupta, Pandit Mauli Chander Sharma and the author reached 10, Pusa Road, New Delhi, where Dr. Mookerji was then staying, to request him to give his consent to the proposal. Dr. Mookerji received us with a broad smile in the verandah of the house and led us into a small study where he had been working, as was usual with him, since 6.30 a.m. after returning from his morning walk. He was sparsely dressed. A coarse cotton 'dhoti', a 'kurta', a 'chaddar' of coarse silk and country made slippers constituted his whole dress. The room had not enough chairs to seat us all. So Dr. Mookerji himself went to the drawing room of his host to fetch chairs. He took his seat only after all of us had been comfortably seated.

After formal courtesies, L. Hansraj Gupta broached the subject in his own inimitable way, half serious, half humorous, enlivened by some homely touches and references. There was a lull after L. Hansraj had finished. Dr. Mookerji's demeanour became serious. He threw his large body comfortably into his arm chair and plunged right away into deep thought. After a few minutes, he broke the silence with the following measured words.

"It is a great responsibility that you want me to shoulder. I will try to do it in the spirit of humble duty to my mother land. But before I accept it, I want to be clear in my mind

about the character and the future working of the organisation you want me to lead."

Again after a pause lasting about a minute and with a question mark on his face, he dilated in some detail upon what he thought the character and working of Jana Sangh should be, particularly emphasising its relationship with other nationalist forces and organisations in the country, cultural, social as well as political.

He visualised Jana Sangh as the spearhead of the nationalist forces in the country and, therefore, wanted it to be so broad based as to be able to comprehend and consolidate all of them into an effective political organisation. It should be open to all citizens who owed unalloyed allegiance to India and her great culture and heritage which is essentially Hindu in character.

From that very day Dr. Mookerji put his heart and soul into the making of the new organisation. Day after day he sat for long hours with Pt. Mauli Chander Sharma and the author to give final touches to the draft manifesto of the Jana Sangh to be placed before the All-India Convention. It was during the course of discussions about different aspects of the economic programme of the new party that he showed deep insight into the economic ills of the mother-land and his realistic and constructive approach towards them. Till I had an opportunity to observe him from close quarters, there was an impression in my mind that Dr. Mookerji was more on the side of capitalistic economy than on what is popularly known as Socialistic economy. But after discussions with him I realised that I was mistaken. His approach to the economic problems was not coloured by any text-book maxims or pet theories. His was essentially a practical approach guided solely by the stark realities of the Indian economic situation and the urgent need for speedy economic recovery and welfare of India and her teeming millions. That is why in certain respects his approach appeared to be rather drastic and radical while in others it could be called conservative. In fact, it was neither of the two. It was essentially Indian, Hindu or Bhartiya, geared to meet the special needs of India.

An interesting anecdote made this fact amply clear to me. A leading economist and industrialist, who was lending us his

helping hand in the formulation of the economic programme, on coming across the proposal for profit sharing between capital and labour, in the chapter on Industrial relations, in the draft prepared by me, felt somewhat shocked. Thinking that it had been put there by me without the knowledge of Dr. Mookerji, he remarked humourously, "Our young professor seems to be a Communist." But he was soon disillusioned. Dr. Mookerji defended profit sharing as the only practical means of making the labour interested in increasing production which, he held, was the first essential for solving the economic problems of the country. That perhaps explains why a number of people, who joined the Jana Sangh in the beginning under the impression of it being an extreme right wing party, left it when they found it following an independent national policy, untrammelled by ideological inhibitions of the right or the left in a more progressive and radical manner than what they could swallow.

Another incident just on the eve of the convention demonstrated the selfless devotion of Dr. Mookerji to the cause he held dear to his heart and his disregard for personal name or fame. Shri Dwarka Prasad Mishra, the ex-Home-Minister in the Congress Ministry of Madhya Pradesh, had resigned from the Congress party and the State Cabinet in September 1951 and had started a crusade against what he called "communal" and "anti-national" policies of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Shortly afterwards he undertook a short tour of Northern India. Bharatiya Jana Sangh offered him its stage in Delhi where about half a lakh of people heard his tirade against his old organisation and its supreme lord in pin drop silence. The Uttar Pradesh Jana Sangh also, out of courtesy, arranged public meetings for him in some of the cities that he visited in that State. It was then being openly discussed that he would join the Jana Sangh.

But on his return to Madhya Pradesh Shri D. P. Mishra floated an organisation of his own under the name of 'Lok Congress'. This came as a surprise to the sponsors of Jana Sangh convention who had invited him to attend it. He came. Dr. Mookerji and others had long talks with him. But he was found to be hesitant to join Jana Sangh. Someone suggested that perhaps he was not willing to work under any

body else. Without a moment's hesitation, Doctor Mookerji said, "But let him become the President. I will work under him." As he said this his face glowed with an honest and natural earnestness. It showed his selflessness, his spirit of keeping the cause he loved and principles he cherished above his person. No wonder he became the idol of all those who came in contact with him. Much against the general belief that distant lends charm, his greatness and charm appeared to grow as one came closer to him.

The All-India Convention was held in the Ragho-Mal Arya Girls Higher Secondary School, New Delhi. A spacious pandal was constructed which accommodated about a thousand special invitees from amongst the citizens of Delhi as well as about five hundred delegates that came from all parts of India.

All India Bharatiya Jana Sangh was formally launched by the unanimous vote at the convention which also adopted its draft constitution and manifesto. The most thrilling part of the proceedings, however, was the election of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji to lead the new organisation as its first All-India President. His name was proposed by L. Balraj Bhalla of Punjab and was seconded by a number of prominent delegates from different provinces. All of them paid glowing tributes to Dr. Mookerji for his noble record of selfless service to the mother-land and his great qualities of head and heart.

For Dr. Mookerji it marked the beginning of a new, and as later events were to prove, the most momentous phase of his dedicated life. He knew that his task would not be easy. But he had confidence in himself and the teams of young workers that were there to assist him in all the provinces in which Jana Sangh had been formed.

His Presidential address to that historic gathering summed up his political philosophy, his approach to the national and international problems and the lines on which the organisation that he was to lead, was to be run.

Just as he rose to speak, a number of delegates, who were eager to hear him speak in English, requested him to deliver his Presidential address in English. Dr. Mookerji then was not very well up in Hindi. But he insisted upon speaking in Hindi, the national language, at that national gathering.

He made it clear at the very outset of his address that

Bharatiya Jana Sangh was not coming into existence merely to fight the forthcoming general elections and that whatever the result of the elections, "our party must continue to function thereafter carrying a message of hope and goodwill to all classes of people and trying to draw out from them their best efforts in re-building a happier and more prosperous free India."

Explaining the need for the new party he said: "one of the chief reasons for the manifestation of dictatorship in Congress rule is the absence of well-organised opposition parties which alone can act as a healthy check on the majority party and can hold out before the country the prospect of an alternative government".

"Bharatiya Jana Sangh," he declared, "emerges today as an All India Political Party which will function as the principal party in opposition. Opposition," he added, "does not mean senseless or destructive approach to all problems that confront responsible Government. While, therefore, we may have to attack or criticise official measures or acts, our aim will be to approach all problems in a constructive spirit so that we may keep the public vigilant and make our humble contribution in developing a real democratic structure for the sound administration of our country".

Dilating upon the composition and character of Bharatiya Jana Sangh he declared "We have thrown our party open to all citizens of India irrespective of caste, creed or community. While we recognise that in matters of customs, habits, religion and language Bharat presents a unique diversity, the people must be united by a bond of fellowship and understanding inspired by deep devotion and loyalty to the spirit of a common motherland."

"While it will be dangerous to encourage the growth of political minorities on the basis of caste and religion, it is obviously for the vast majority of Bharat's population to assure all classes of people, who are truly loyal to their motherland, that they will be entitled to full protection under the law and to complete equality of treatment in all matters, social, economic and political. Our party gives this assurance unreservedly".

He laid great stress on the need for adopting proper

approach to the age old culture of the country. "Our party," he declared, "believes that future of Bharat lies in the proper appreciation and application of Bharatiya 'Sanskriti' and 'Maryada'. Let all true sons and daughters of India pride themselves in the thought that the heritage that has come to us from ancient days is something noble and enduring, that it must not be allowed to stagnate and degenerate and that free India's future must be closely linked up with Bharatiya ideals, which must, if necessary, undergo changes from time to time so as to make them respond to the needs of modern and scientific age. This must be suitably reflected in our system of education. While we, therefore, aim at a 'Dharma Rajya' or Rule of Law, we only abide by the highest traditions of Bharatiya Sanskriti that bind all people together in ties of real amity and fraternity."

Regarding the "most acute problem of deteriorating economic condition of the people" he explained that his party stood for a "well planned decentralised national economic plan" on the lines of Sarvodaya scheme. "Our party," he said, "is against concentration of economic power in the hands of small groups and cartels. Sanctity of private property will be observed and private enterprise will be given a fair and adequate play subject to national welfare. State ownership and State control will be exercised when found necessary in public interest. The party will stand for progressive decontrol. Social and economic exploitation must be checked, distribution must be fair and equitable and an atmosphere created so that all may jointly work for increased production".

His view about India's foreign policy was that "it should be more realistic, primary consideration being the advancement of the cause of our country and the maintenance of peace and goodwill in international sphere. We believe", he declared, "in democracy and in the maintenance of civil liberties. We are against totalitarianism of any kind whatsoever. We recognise that every nation must have the right to shape its national policy and attitude towards life according to the genius and traditions of the people themselves. Bharat's message to the world has been the doctrine of 'live and let live'. So long as India's right to determine her own pattern is not interfered with, there is no reason why we should not

maintain friendly relations with all other countries".

He stood for reconsideration by India of the decision to stay within the Commonwealth because of "strange policy of partiality towards Pakistan observed by Great Britain".

Regarding Pakistan he had very definite views. "We hold the opinion," he declared, "that partition of Bharat was a tragic folly. It has served no purpose and has not helped to solve any problem economic, political or communal. We believe in the goal of reunited Bharat. We will like it to be achieved through peaceful means and through the realisation by the people of both states that such reunion will be of benefit to the masses and will make the country a real bulwark of peace and freedom. So long as Pakistan continues, we will urge a policy of strict reciprocity. Our party lays great stress on the need for a satisfactory solution of post-partition problems of minorities in Pakistan and evacuee property which Congress Government systematically try to shirk. Our approach to these problems is not at all communal. They are mainly political and economic, and they have to be settled between the two states in a fair and straightforward manner".

Referring to Kashmir which had already begun to loom large on the political horizon, he declared: "Our party feels that the case should be withdrawn from the U.N.O. and there should be no further question of plebiscite. Kashmir is an integral part of India and should be treated as any other state".

Refuting the charge of communalism that had already begun to be levelled against him and the Jana Sangh by Pandit Nehru, he pointed out that "having repeatedly sacrificed Indian Nationalism at the altar of Muslim Communalism, and even after partition having surrendered to the whims and howls of Pakistan Government, it does not lie in the mouth of Pandit Nehru to accuse others of communalism. There is no communalism in India today except the new policy of Muslim appeasement which has been started by Pandit Nehru and his friends for the purpose of winning their votes at the forthcoming election. We have provincialism and other types of class or caste differences in the country today. Let us jointly try to remove these evils so as to lay the foundation for a truly democratic India. The cry of communalism raised by

Pandit Nehru is to side-track the real issues now before the country. The problems before the country today are clearly related to hunger, to poverty, to exploitation, to mal-administration, to corruption, to abject surrender to Pakistan, all being evils for which the main responsibility rests on the Congress and the Government under it".

He concluded his remarkable address with a note of confidence in the new organisation to tackle the problems before the country and a fervent prayer for its success. "We enter upon our task," he said, "with full faith, hope and courage. Let our workers constantly remember that only through service and sacrifice will they be able to win the confidence of masses of the people. The great task of revitalising and reconstructing free Bharat awaits us. The mother calls her children irrespective of class, caste or religion to come to her and serve her. However dark the present clouds may be, Bharat has a great destiny to fulfil in the years to come. May our party whose symbol in the forthcoming elections is a humble earthen 'pradip', try to carry this 'light of hope and unity, faith and courage, to dispel the darkness that surrounds the country. The journey has just begun. May providence endow us with strength and fortitude to remain ever on the right path, not cowed by fears or tempted by favours, and to help to make Bharat great and strong, spiritually and materially, so that she may become a fit and noble instrument in the preservation of world peace and prosperity".

Addressing a huge public meeting in the evening of the same day in Gandhi Grounds, he recalled that Netaji Subhas Bose had launched the Indian National Army on that very day—21st of October. He hoped that Bharatiya Jana Sangh would carry on the fighting tradition of the I. N. A. in the service of the Motherland. He also referred to Pandit Nehru's threat that he would crush Jana Sangh and declared amidst loud applause, "I say, I will crush this crushing mentality".

These often quoted words of Dr. Mookerji signified his determination to stand up to Pandit Nehru and marked the beginning of a direct political confrontation between these two giants of Indian politics which continued till Dr. Mookerji was removed from the stage in 1953 in mysterious circumstances.

THE ELECTORAL BATTLE OF 1952

THE All-India Bharatiya Jana Sangh was born just on the eve of the first General Elections held under the provisions of the new constitution of free India, though the rumblings of its birth had begun to be heard many months earlier. It had not come into existence, as Dr. Mookerji pointed out in his Presidential Address, merely to fight the general elections. In fact, it would have preferred to firmly establish itself organisationally before entering the election arena. But it was impossible to ignore the imminent general elections on whose results depended the political shape of things to come for the next five years. The possibilities of general elections in carrying the message and ideology of the new party to the masses also could not be under-rated or ignored. The party, therefore, decided to contest the elections to the State and Central legislatures wherever circumstances made it possible to do so.

Dr. Mookerji was fully conscious of the strength and resources of the Congress and the determination of its leaders to return to power by fair means or foul. He was also fully aware of the possibilities of the opposition votes getting divided among different parties to the advantage of the Congress. The elections to Delhi Municipal Committee of the same year had painfully demonstrated that fact. He was, therefore, keen for some electoral understanding at least between those opposition parties which had a similar approach to the major problems of the country.

But the time at his disposal was too short for contacting and negotiating with leaders of other opposition parties who had almost started their election campaigns by that time. Therefore, on his suggestion, the Provincial units of Jana Sangh were asked to form electoral pacts with other parties wherever possible on the basis of mutual give and take. Dr. Mookerji himself met Swami Karpatriji of the Ram Rajya Parishad at

Banaras as also the leaders of Hindu Mahasabha to persuade them to give a similar directive to their Provincial branches. The criteria for choosing the candidates, he suggested, should be the integrity and popularity of the candidate. It must be left to the candidates to choose the party label and the symbol. Such candidates should be given the fullest support by the three parties.

In some States such arrangements worked well while in others local rivalries and personal prejudices of party bosses marred them. A high-powered central board of the three parties with overriding powers might have been the remedy. But not only the time available to work out any such arrangements was very short but also the control exercised by the Central Bodies of the Mahasabha and Ram Rajya Parishad over their Provincial units was very weak which made the efficacy of such a remedy extremely doubtful.

On the other hand, Bharatiya Jana Sangh had a band of trained and zealous workers everywhere. But they lacked political experience and the party they represented had as yet no standing. Its very name was unknown to an overwhelming majority of the people. In fact, most of the people were to hear its name during the next two months not so much from its workers and advocates but from its ruthless critics and opponents like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who saw in the new organisation and its redoubtable leader the potentiality to displace the Congress. Dr. Mookerji was pained by this campaign of vilification started against the new party by the Prime Minister from its very inception without even caring to understand what the party was and what it aimed at. But he was also grateful to him for acting as "honorary publicity Secretary" of the new-born organisation which was too poor to arrange for proper and speedy publicity for itself.

But this determined opposition by Pandit Nehru, who made Jana Sangh the sole target of his wrath and criticism throughout his election tours, and the deliberate campaign of misrepresentation of the character, aims and objects of the new party indulged in by the Congress, the Socialist party and the Communist party, made it imperative for Dr. Mookerji to undertake an extensive tour of the country to explain the programme

and policies of Jana Sangh immediately after the Delhi Convention.

It was not an easy job. Jana Sangh had neither the resources nor as yet the organisation to ensure for him even the minimum of comforts and fast means of transportation. The Press too, particularly the English Press, which took its cue from the Prime Minister, was generally hostile to the infant organisation.

But undaunted by all these handicaps, Dr. Mookerji embarked upon the arduous task of awakening the people to the realities of the situation and making them familiar with Jana Sangh's call for duty to the motherland. He began with the Punjab.

It was the author's privilege to be with him during some of his tours. It was rare pleasure and a great experience to be with him in those hectic days. On some days he had to cover as much as two to three hundred miles by train and motor car and address a dozen meetings. The usual programme was to travel by night, cover two or three important places within easy motorable distance from one another during the day, and catch the night train again for the next centre.

Dr. Mookerji was accustomed to sustained hard work from his very childhood. He used to get up, whether in train or at home, at about 5 A.M. and was ready for work after his morning duties and prayers at about 6.30 A.M. He generally worked non-stop from that hour right upto 10 P.M.

But the work that he was now called upon to do was of a different nature. It put on him more physical strain than he had ever stood before, besides straining his vocal chords too much. He attracted huge audiences wherever he went. Hundreds and thousands waited for him even on the small way-side stations. His fame seemed to have spread fast. He had begun to be looked upon by the intelligentsia of the country as the real Leader of the Opposition.

The only other man in the country who was undergoing similar ordeal in those days was the Congress President-cum-Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. But he had the usual resources of the Government and the Congress Party at his disposal. He moved around in comfort in Government planes or military dakotas. He also had the benefit of fine physical

health coupled with unique agility.

But they presented a contrast in their attitude and behaviour, both mental and physical, towards the people whom they wanted to serve and lead. Pandit Nehru, full of arrogance and mad with power, indulged in physical theatricals and fits of temper as a matter of right very much in the fashion of a spoilt child. At Ludhiana, for example, he gave such a violent push to the local Congress President that only luck saved him from falling down from a high rostrum. On the mental plane the burden of his speeches which lacked coherence, logic and argument used to be "after me the deluge". A close analytical study of all the election speeches of Pandit Nehru reveals that he devoted more than half of his total speaking time in denouncing and abusing the opposition parties, particularly the Jana Sangh, and he had little to say about the positive achievements of his party for the four years it had been in power.

Dr. Mookerji, on the other hand, never lost his temper. He sweated and perspired, he looked pulled down and exhausted, but he never quarrelled with the people for that. He took this strain to be quite natural and inevitable concomitant of a crowded public life in a country like India. At times when the strain became unbearable he would turn round and say "Balraj! You are going to kill me today", and then go on with the scheduled programme without betraying any signs of uneasiness. It was his strong will and keen sense of duty which enabled him to go on like this for days and weeks together.

His election speeches which were generally delivered in Hindi, a language in which he was not very proficient at the time, showed his agonised but confident mind, his deep distress over the things as they were moving in the country and his robust confidence in the ultimate destiny of Bharat. He touched on all subjects and problems facing the country. He laid special stress on the problem of providing food, clothing and shelter to the common man, failure to solve which, he held, "would shake the very foundations of our social and economic structure and bring about a revolution". "Bhartiya Jana Sangh", he repeatedly declared "was not wedded to any ism but it will not hesitate to take any action, however drastic, to provide for these."

But he cautioned his countrymen at the same time not to

think that economics was the be all and end all of life. He wanted the economic uplift of the masses to go side by side with their spiritual and cultural uplift. It is the spiritual and cultural values for which Bharat has stood from the dawn of history and which are, and will continue to be, her distinctive characteristic that will bring her the respect and admiration of the world. To lose these values merely in the wild goose chase for economic prosperity, would not solve the real problem of restoring and revitalising the moral fibre of the people which, he felt, was fast decaying.

Pandit Nehru's foreign and domestic policies, particularly his policy towards Pakistan and the Muslims, came in for most eloquent and trenchant criticism from him. He had the unique distinction of studying the working of Pandit Nehru's mind from close quarters. He had also observed that whatever had been achieved by free India during the first few years of her independence had been achieved not because of Pandit Nehru but in spite of him. He recalled with visible anguish how Pandit Nehru had been riding roughshod over the vital interests of India and her people just to win cheap popularity from foreigners for himself. His betrayal of the Hindus in Pakistan, whom he (Nehru) had given solemn pledges on the eve of the partition of the country, was considered by Dr. Mookerji as most unworthy of him and of the great country which had the misfortune of being governed by him.

Dr. Mookerji was amused when he heard people saying that Pandit Nehru, in spite of all his faults and failures, had proved a successful foreign minister and had raised India's stock in the international field. According to him the sole test for judging the success or failure of a country's foreign policy was the good it might have done to the country. Pandit Nehru's foreign policy, he would argue, had rendered the sixteen hundred miles long northern frontier, which had been absolutely safe all through the ages, unsafe and vulnerable by allowing Communist China to swallow Tibet; it had isolated India from the democratic world, without obtaining any advantage from the Communist world which would not trust India till she went completely red; it had made the lot of the people of Indian origin outside India miserable; it had failed to liquidate foreign pockets within the country while loud noise was made against

colonialism elsewhere ; and above all, it had enabled Pakistan to continue to occupy one-third of Jammu and Kashmir State including the strategic region of Gilgit, which she dangled before the eyes of Anglo-Americans as a bargain counter to secure diplomatic support and military aid from them to be used against India.

Dr. Mookerji was no stranger to Pandit Nehru's pusillanimity and cowardice in dealing with India's enemies, especially if they happened to be Muslims. He could not, for obvious reasons, reveal many of the things that transpired in the cabinet when he was in it. But he would often tell his intelligent listeners in the big meetings that he addressed in English : "when I scan the whole course of Indian history, I do not find a single man who has done more harm to this country than Pandit Nehru".

He was not happy to pass this judgment on Pandit Nehru. But he could not help it. The deliberate persistence of Pandit Nehru in wrong, anti-national and unrealistic policies, in spite of repeated appeals and warning from his colleagues, and compatriots, could lead him to no other conclusion. He held Pt. Nehru to be mainly responsible for the partition of India and for the terrible carnage and suffering that followed. The uprooting of millions of Hindus, from the very areas where they had withstood the onslaught of foreign Muslim invaders and rulers for centuries, was to his mind the greatest blow to India as a nation. He also held him responsible for the gradual extermination and squeezing out of the Hindus from East Bengal.

In the course of his election speeches, Dr. Mookerji also took opportunity to clarify some of the allegations made against him by Pandit Nehru. One such point was that he and Master Tara Singh were also parties to India's partition because they had demanded partition of Bengal and Punjab respectively. Speaking at Jamshedpur, in early January, 1952, Dr. Mookerji declared, "It is painful and shameful for a leader like Nehru to indulge in untruths and half truths and say that myself and Master Tara Singh were also parties to partition."

"When it became apparent to me", he explained, "that the Congress, the League and the British had made up their minds to partition the country, and that we were powerless to

prevent it, I demanded the partition of Punjab and Bengal. I demanded that at least a part of these provinces be salvaged from the wreck. What I agreed to and worked for was partition of the proposed Pakistan comprising all Bengal and all Punjab and not the partition of India. That betrayal had been decided betwixt themselves by the two political parties without the consent and against the express wishes of the vast mass of the people."

"If this was a sin", he concluded "I stand before the bar of opinion of my countrymen for a verdict".

Another grave charge of Pandit Nehru against him and his organisation, which he repeated time and again was of communalism. He called Dr. Mookerji and the Jana Sangh communal.

Dr. Mookerji was both amused and grieved by this charge which amounted to the kettle calling the pot black. He held that the one organisation which had consistently encouraged and sustained communalism in the country was the Congress itself. "It surrendered itself during the last 35 years at the feet of the communal leaders. Did you fight," he would ask them, "against the communal award? Who gave the communal percentages for the purpose of having some pact with the Muslim League? Who agreed to partition the country? You might have done it with the best of intentions, because you thought that you could thereby get rid of the British Government, but having sold the country at the altar of communalism to come forward and say that we are communalists is a perversion of truth."

"But if it is to be communalist", he argued, "to love one's country, to love one's community and not think ill of other communities, if we feel with, and attempt to unite 40 crores of Hindus living in India that have been liberated after 1000 years, if we try to recover our lost position in a manner which is 100% consistent with the dynamic principles of Hinduism for which Swami Vivekanand stood, I am proud to be a communalist". Neither Pandit Nehru nor any other Congressman ever tried to reply to this argument and stand of Dr. Mookerji. In fact, they had no reply. Therefore, they took recourse to a campaign of abuses and vilification with the help and co-operation of their regulated press, secure in the thought

that Dr. Mookerji's argumentative replies to their criticism would never reach the electorate whose minds they had been attempting to poison.

Dr. Mookerji considered it the greatest misfortune of India that she had fallen in the most formative and crucial stage of her long and chequered history in the hands of one who had yet to discover what real India was. "Pandit Nehru" he said in a very pathetic tone at a meeting of the elite of the Punjab at Simla, "claims that he has discovered India. But he has yet to discover his own mind which has got a heavy overcoating of what is un-Indian and un-Hindu." The course of events leading up to and after his martyrdom in Kashmir has proved the truth in Dr. Mookerji's assessment of Pandit Nehru and his policies.

But Dr. Mookerji was not the man to be dismayed by the situation. He had faith in India's destiny and confidence in himself as one of her humble devotees. "I will set this man (Pt. Nehru) right," he once said to the author. "If I can take even ten members with me into the Parliament". He made this significant and prophetic remark while the car in which we were travelling was gliding down the tortuous bends of Simla-Kalka road through delightful mountainous scenery. He had been brooding over the prospects of his new party in the forthcoming general elections, for which he had been campaigning so vigorously. In a moment of retrospection he asked, "Have we done the correct thing in entering the election arena in the name of our new party which is barely two months old?" After a moment's silence and without waiting for me to reply, he added, "But now the die is cast, we are in the game"; and it was then that he made the above mentioned remark about his setting Pandit Nehru right.

And, as is well known, he did set him right to some extent even though he could get only two members besides himself into the Parliament on Jana Sangh ticket; and he would surely have set him right completely had the cruel hand of conspirators not removed him from the earthly stage so soon.

In the course of his tours up and down the country during these election months, Dr. Mookerji had the opportunity to watch from close quarters the men, young and old, who constituted the Jana Sangh at the town district and provincial

levels. He could see the symptoms of conflict between the young cadres drawn mainly from the R.S.S. and the older people drawn from the society with diverse social political backgrounds and notions of public work. That conflict was inherent in the genesis of the Jana Sangh. It could be avoided either through the R.S.S. taking over the Jana Sangh organisation completely or through training of young workers and organisers drawn from the R.S.S. in the methods of political work through a democratic organisation.

Dr. Mookerji was quick to grasp this. The untiring zeal, humility and hard work of the young workers drawn from the R.S.S. had impressed him. He himself was essentially a worker and loved to be amongst them. As an educationist he understood the working of young minds. He knew that the youth needed sympathy, encouragement and scope for initiative to develop their latent potentialities and that dictatorial pushing about by those who could not set example of their own life before them repelled them.

As a man of affairs he also realised that it was not easy for older people who had grown up in different atmosphere, to appreciate and sympathise with the limitations of young workers whose training in the R.S.S. made them allergic to outside control and tardy process of decision-making in a democratic set up.

He, therefore, concluded that it was not conducive to the healthy growth of the party to allow persons who are out of tune with the changing times to get control of the young organisation he was building up. He wanted young leaders with dash and initiative. He believed that young workers drawn from the R.S.S. could form excellent leaders with some training and guidance in the political thought and methods of democratic working.

He himself took a hand in training the young leaders. He always attached great importance to the views of young workers and entrusted most responsible jobs to them. He never made any important decision, without first ascertaining the views of young workers. He would encourage them to think and write by entrusting to them the drafting of some of the most important resolutions at the various meetings of the Working Committee. He would encourage them to speak by insisting

that some young workers should speak before he did so. His personal interest and solicitude for the betterment and development of his young workers served as an incentive for them to come up to his expectations. Consequently, he built a second line of leaders in Jana Sangh from amongst younger workers, though he himself too was quite young as compared to the leaders of the Congress. This is more than what can be said of Pt. Nehru, who took deliberate and conscious steps to ensure that no individual, whether young or old, however capable and deserving, came anywhere close to him so as to threaten his unchallenged hold over the Congress party and the Government.

Dr. Mookerji was a parliamentary candidate from his home constituency of South Calcutta. It was not an easy constituency to fight an election from. It contained about 70 thousand Muslim voters out of a total of about 3 lakhs. The Muslim votes had been misguided by the Congress propaganda to look upon the Jana Sangh and Dr. Mookerji as their worst enemies. So they were expected to vote solidly against him. Moreover, the Congress had put up one of the richest men of Calcutta as a candidate against him. The Congress party was determined to defeat him and thereby prevent his return to the Parliament whatever the cost or consequences. Therefore, they committed all their vast financial and human resources their election campaign. The Communists also had a strong candidate in the field.

Dr. Mookerji lacked financial resources. He was neither a rich man nor could he ever think of stooping down to the methods and means that the Congress and Communists were adopting. But the voters knew him and his services to Bengal and India. They returned him with a thumping majority even though he could give very little of his time and attention to his own constituency.

Here again he presented a contrast to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Pandit Nehru had declared that he would not visit his home constituency of Allahabad from which he was fighting the election. But he had to eat his words and make a tremendous personal effort to get elected. His friend Sheikh Abdullah, sent Government jeeps and cars and scores of workers all the way from Kashmir, a distance of about 1,000 miles, to help him.

All his family members and a number of central ministers spent sleepless nights, canvassing votes for him. Though all the Muslim votes were in his pocket, yet his pennyless adversary, Brahmchari Prabhu Datt, was able to secure about 30% of the polled votes.

On the whole the election results were none too flattering for Jana Sangh. In fact it was nothing short of a debacle. Only three of its candidates, including Dr. Mookerji and Barrister U.M. Trivedi out of the 93 who contested on its ticket for the House of the People, were elected. It fared no better in State legislatures. It had put up 742 candidates out of which only 33 were elected. In some provinces like the East Punjab, where Jana Sangh appeared to be the strongest, it could not secure a single seat.

Many factors accounted for this failure at the polls. The most important factor was the infancy of the organisation whose name had not even reached the ears of most of the rural electorate in the country. Much of the publicity it had got by that time had come from its critics who painted it in very lurid colours and created a prejudice in the minds of many people, even before they had known anything about it. It was thus condemned without a hearing.

Secondly it had not been able to build up an appropriate organisational structure in most of the constituencies where its candidates fought elections. It got most of its support from those towns and villages where R.S.S. already had some organisation. But most of the villages had no one to speak for Jana Sangh.

Inexperience of the young workers for whom elections were a novel experience and the lack of resources also accounted for this failure to a great extent. But generally speaking, the inexperience of workers was counterbalanced by their enthusiasm and sincere hard work. But nothing could counterbalance the superiority of the Congress and the Communists, the two richest parties in the country, in resources.

The undue pressure exerted by the party in power through the misuse of official machinery and actual tampering with the ballot boxes was another major factor in the defeat of Jana Sangh. That the ballot boxes were tampered with was admitted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the Parliament. He cited

an example where the symbol of one party was removed from the ballot box and that of another party was pasted instead. But more glaring were the examples of tampering with the ballot boxes, which, as was demonstrated by a number of people, could be opened without damaging the protective seal to take out ballot papers from the ballot boxes.

The electoral officers in some States found themselves helpless in the matter. The author as General Secretary for Jana Sangh of Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, approached Shri Vishnu Bhagwan, Chief Electoral Officer of the Punjab, with the request that special care should be taken to guard the ballot boxes as there were rumours that they were being tampered with while in State custody. This suspicion arose from the fact that counting of votes was to take place many weeks after the polling was over. Mr. Vishnu Bhagwan formally assured me that he was taking every possible precaution, but made the significant remark while I was about to leave his room in the Rest House at Ambala Cantt., "Human nature being what it is, nothing is impossible." The results revealed the truth of the remarks.

In the Punjab the Akali question also was an important factor. Their separatist demands, had scared the general mass of Hindu votes. Naturally, therefore, they wanted to vote *en bloc* for a party which might be able to take an effective stand against them. The Jana Sangh was yet too young to inspire confidence that it would win the majority. On the other hand, Pandit Nehru made an unequivocal declaration at Patiala that Congress would not concede the separatist demands of Akalis. The electoral arrangement between the Jana Sangh and the Akalis in the State of Delhi where the issues agitating the minds of Punjab Hindus did not exist, was exploited by the Congress to blacken Jana Sangh, quietly ignoring the fact that it had itself entered into electoral arrangements with the Muslim League in Madras. This further confused the voters who for fear of splitting the nationalist vote to the advantage of Akalis voted for Congress.

However, it was admitted by all, friends and critics of Jana Sangh alike, that it had given the most determined fight to the Congress wherever it had entered the election arena. Generally speaking, it gave a clean fight, and thus helped to set up a new

tradition of behaviour in elections so essential for the success of democratic experiment in the country.

Dr. Mookerji was convinced by the evidence he received of the tampering of ballot boxes and use of other undemocratic and even immoral practices adopted by the men in power to secure victory in the elections. He, in his own inimitable way, smashed the party in power in Parliament when he declared in thunderous voice that the "Congress has swept, not the polls but the ballot boxes." But he paid a handsome tribute to the Government servants and the election machinery for efficient organisation of the elections, the most gigantic democratic experiment in the history of the world, wherein 170 million votes went to the polls without any kind of clashes or untoward incidents. The responsibility for the mischief, wherever it was done, he declared, lay with the ministers, Central and Provincial, who in their unholy anxiety to return to power misused their position, and not with those who were entrusted with the actual conduct of elections and who had no alternative but to carry out their instructions.

But to his own workers he used to say "We must admit the failure to be due to our own shortcomings and inexperience and handicaps beyond our control. Let us not console ourselves by shifting the whole blame on the party in power. That would be suicidal for the growth of our party. We knew that the party in power would do all that lay in its power to defeat us. So, why complain about that?"

A born optimist that he was, he used to emphasise the bright side of the election results. "We began with zero", he used to argue, "and we have now got something plus everywhere. We have gained something and lost nothing". He counted the gains not strictly in terms of the number of seats won. To him the chief gain was that the Jana Sangh had made its existence known everywhere. Its name and ideology had reached the remotest villages especially in the areas in which it had contested elections. It had secured a foothold in the country and also in the hearts of the people.

The most significant gain was the recognition of Jana Sangh as one of the four All India Parties by the Election Commission of India on the basis of the number of votes polled by it. The elections had brought Jana Sangh in the front rank among the

political parties contesting for the affection of the people, thereby leaving a number of much older parties behind in the race.

But all those who had entered the Jana Sangh on the eve of elections had not the requisite idealism, faith and optimism. Many of them had come to Jana Sangh to seek an opportunity to serve their own political ends. A lot of them belonged to that class of people who worship the rising sun. They thought that the Jana Sangh was a new luminary on the political scene of the country and therefore bowed before it. But when they realised that the Congress star was still in the ascendant, they beat the retreat with indecent haste. Even some of the top and trusted leaders of the new party got disheartened and for some time began to harbour pessimistic thoughts about the prospects of the party which they thought might even prove a flop.

But Dr. Mookerji at the top and the young rank and file at the bottom remained unperturbed. They had entered the file as a matter of duty with the words of the Lord "You have the right to do your duty but not to the reward," on their lips. They honestly felt that they had done their duty. Dr. Mookerji with his robust confidence inspired them to continue their efforts to build a greater and brighter future for the motherland.

It was thus due to the steadfastness and self-confidence of Dr. Mookerji and enthusiasm and capacity for sustained hard work of the young workers, that the infant Jana Sangh could stand the stunning blow of crushing defeat in the general elections and raise its head once again after lying low and inactive for a few months. The achievements of Dr. Mookerji in the Parliament, where he came to be recognised as the virtual Leader of the Opposition, and the persistence of the young workers in the States in the task of revitalising and strengthening the infant organisation, ultimately succeeded in rehabilitating Jana Sangh within a few months of the debacle of general elections.

THE LION OF PARLIAMENT

THE final picture of the party position in Lok Sabha, the House of the People, the sovereign legislature of the whole country, as it emerged out of the general elections, was anything but encouraging for the opposition parties, separately or collectively. The opposition had collectively secured more than 55% of the total votes polled as against 44.63% polled by the Congress Party. Yet the Congress had won 364 seats as against 125 won by the entire opposition. The Congress strength was further augmented by the six members from Jammu and Kashmir State, who were nominated by Sheikh Abdullah's Government and not elected by the people of the State, and the five nominees of the President from among the Anglo-Indians and tribal people of Assam.

To make things worse, the opposition strength of 125 was badly divided. The Communists and their allies, who had 26 members in the new Parliament, constituted the largest organised group in the opposition. But in keeping with the Communist tradition all over the world, they were averse to making a common front with any other group or party except on their own terms, which invariably meant the absorption or extermination of the junior ally. They tried to rope in a few independents. But none dared walk into the spider's parlour.

The Socialists had 12 members and the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party of Acharya Kripalani had 10. Their merger to form the Praja Socialist Party raised their combined strength to 22. The Communists tried to form an alliance with them and even offered the leadership of the combined group to a P.S.P. nominee as a bait. But the Socialists, who had grown wiser after their experience of alliance with Communists during 1935-40, spurned this offer.

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the only other All-India Party had only 3 members, the Ram Rajya Parishad had also three,

the Hindu Mahasabha had four and the Provincial or sectional parties like the Gan Tantra Parishad, the Akali Dal, the Jharkhand Party of the tribals of Bihar and the Tamilnad Toilers Party had five, four, three and four members respectively. The independents who numbered 36 were, as their very title indicated, incapable of united action. Some of them conscientiously felt that they should remain completely independent. Others wanted to use their independence to good purpose by taking sides at will or at the command of their self-interests.

Another notable feature of this motley opposition was that it lacked talent, though not to the same extent as the party in power. None of the top leaders of the Communists, the Socialists and the K.M.P.P. had been able to get in. The one man in the opposition, who stood head and shoulders above all others, just as Pandit Nehru stood among the Congressmen, was Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji. His pre-eminence was recognised by all and it was accepted by his friends and opponents alike that he was to be the chief spokesman of the Opposition in the first elected Parliament of free India.

But technically only that party or group could be recognised as the Opposition party, and its leader treated as the Leader of the Opposition, which had a minimum strength of 50 members. It was felt by many prominent members of the Opposition as also by some Congressmen that such a combination could be formed only under the leadership of Dr. Mookerji. Therefore, efforts were set on foot by a number of such members from the Opposition, soon after the final party positions became known, to create such a combination with the approval and support of Dr. Mookerji. With this end in view, an invitation was issued to most of the non-Communist members in the opposition under the joint signatures of Dr. Mookerji, Shri N. C. Chatterji, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, Shri Rajendra Narain Singh Deo of Patna, leader of the Gan Tantra Parishad, Sardar Hukam Singh, leader of the Akali Dal, Shri Jaipal Singh, leader of the Jharkhand party and a few independents for an exploratory meeting at New Delhi, before the inauguration of the Parliament.

This meeting was held on the 28th of March, 1952, in the Constitution Club and was attended by about 20 individual members and group leaders who together represented about 45

opposition members. It decided to form a combined opposition Parliamentary party on the basis of a minimum common programme.

However, some of the members who had originally signified their consent to join the proposed party got nervous about associating with Dr. Mookerji for fear of incurring the displeasure of the Prime Minister. Thus, they formed an independent group of their own. Dr. Mookerji's proposed opposition party in the Parliament, therefore, when it was actually launched under the name of National Democratic Party could count only 30 members. However it included some of the finest intellects and Parliamentarians in the Opposition like Shri N. C. Chatterji, Sardar Hukam Singh, Shri U. M. Trivedi and Shri B. Ramchander Reddi.

The New Parliament thus opened without any recognised opposition party. The Speaker, however, gave partial recognition to those parties or combinations in the Opposition which had more than twenty-five members as "Parliamentary groups".

But soon afterwards the Praja Socialist Party leaders offered to Dr. Mookerji the cooperation of the P.S.P. members in the Parliament. They were prepared to accept him as their leader in the Parliament within his National Democratic Group so that they may together constitute the official Opposition party in the Parliament, on the condition that the Hindu Mahasabha members were dropped from the proposed combination.

This was a tempting offer. It had all the advantages and no handicaps. By accepting it, Dr. Mookerji would have become the official leader of the Opposition in the country with all the privileges and advantages that go with that position. He would have gained striking power to support his relentless logic and eloquence to enable him to more effectively set Pandit Nehru right.

But the democrat in him revolted against the condition about dropping out the Hindu Mahasabha from the combination. He argued with the P.S.P. leaders that their suggestion betrayed a narrow mindedness worse than communalism with which they charged the Mahasabha, because it amounted to an outright condemnation of that party without even being given a proper hearing. Communalism, he argued, was no charge. The P.S.P., he reminded them, had also been blaggarding him and

his Jana Sangh as communal and reactionary during the elections. But now they were prepared to treat him and his party as national and progressive. The same, he argued, could be true of Hindu Mahasabha. He suggested that a minimum common programme be drawn up. Those agreeing to abide by that programme should be accepted into the combination. Others would automatically be dropped out.

However, the P.S.P. leaders feared the reaction in their own ranks against association with Hindu Mahasabha in any shape or form. They, therefore, insisted upon exclusion of Hindu Mahasabha. They perhaps also failed to understand the mind of Dr. Mookerji, who preferred principles to personal aggrandisement. The P.S.P. offer was rejected by him.

His decision created genuine regret in the hearts of many people who thought that the Jana Sangh-P.S.P. combination in the Parliament would have paved the way for fuller unity of these two parties which, they thought, ideally complemented each other. The pure nationalism of the Jana Sangh based on allegiance to the age-old culture of the land, they felt, together with the economic programme of the P.S.P. would have created a truly popular and effective opposition party in the country. But they failed to realise that the P.S.P. was not a homogeneous party and that its components varied from the extreme leftists of Marxist brand to sober nationalists like Shri Nath Pai, who had begun to understand the importance of culture and spiritual values in the life of the nation. Therefore, no lasting combination with this party was possible till it had set its own house in order and developed a clear cut ideology distinct from that of the Congress and the Communists.

It, however, became increasingly clear in the very first session of the New Parliament, which opened on the 11th of May, 1952, that Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji was the Leader of the Opposition, whether or not he had the requisite party strength. All the Opposition groups in the Parliament, including the Communists, began to look to him for guidance. They all considered him to be their chief spokesman and conceded to him by implication the right to reply on behalf of the Opposition on all major questions. Even more than the Opposition, the party in power looked upon him as the unofficial Leader

of the Opposition. His stature and acumen as a statesman, his parliamentary skill and eloquence, his deep understanding and constructive approach to all the problems facing the country and his following outside Parliament made him appear the only real democratic adversary of the Government. Even many of the Congress members, who in their heart of hearts shared his approach to the problems of the country, had deep admiration for his person and his able advocacy of the policies he considered correct and his fearless and trenchant criticism of what he thought to be wrong and not in the best interests of the country. The Treasury Benches respected him for his deep understanding and appreciation of the issues and problems that came before Parliament. They unconsciously treated him as their superior, both as a man and as a statesman. Most of those in the Council of Ministers had also known his work and worth as a cabinet minister. His searching and penetrating probe into their policies and affairs made them nervous and the ease and cogency with which he demolished their arguments made them fear him.

The one man who looked upon him as his equal was the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He had known him and his work both inside and outside the Cabinet. He had been deeply impressed by his incorruptibility, irrepressible independence, nobility of mind and behaviour and, above all, by his great intellectual attainments and parliamentary skill. But he had never reconciled himself to his views and approach to national problems that was always as refreshingly realistic and practical as his own was pathetically utopian and unrealistic. He built castles in the air while Dr. Mookerji had his feet firmly fixed on the ground.

Having been brought up from his early childhood in an atmosphere of unquestioning submission to his whims and fancies by all, whether high or low, Nehru had developed the fascist tendency to intolerance of all criticism and also an exaggerated sense of self righteousness. This tendency in him had become very marked since the death of Sardar Patel. An awareness that the Congress success at the polls in the general elections had been mainly due to his efforts had somewhat swollen his head. Surrounded as he was by his lackeys, there was none in his cabinet or his party who could stand up to

him and question him or his policies. He had literally become the monarch of all that he surveyed.

Dr. Mookerji was the only man in the Parliament who would not only tell him on his face that he was wrong but who would also demolish his arguments and expose the hollowness and un-national character of his internal and external policies with such devastating vigour and adroitness, supported by irrefutable facts and figures, that many a time Pandit Nehru felt crest fallen before his camp followers. This made him bitter. Failing to find facts to counter the facts and arguments of Dr. Mookerji, he used to lose his temper which resulted in those rare flashes of repartee in which Dr. Mookerji used invariably to outshine him. Though not by word of mouth but by his behaviour he tacitly accepted Dr. Mookerji's position as the Leader of the Opposition, his chief adversary in the Parliament and his substitute before the country.

Dr. Mookerji was painfully aware of these tantrums of Pandit Nehru which frequently exploded in bad temper and of his tendency to regard all criticism of him or his policies as malicious. He also knew that such an approach by the party in power towards the Opposition would reduce the democracy to a farce and thereby spell disaster for the country. Therefore, in his very first speech on the address of the President in the new Parliament on the 21st of May, 1952, he made a sincere and passionate plea for a correct approach towards the Opposition. He said :

"As I was looking to this House for the last two days, I felt, as must have been the feeling of many members of this House, that here we witness the epitome of free India. We here are representative men and women coming from all parts of India elected on adult franchise, representing diverse view points, varied outlook, but I know it, all imbued with one idea and one idea alone : how to make our freedom effective and how to advance the interests of the millions of people of India. It is one of the greatest experiments of history that we are making. Every one of us, no matter to which group or party we may belong, whether we are independents or dependents, must be able to look at the problems from the widest stand point and while appreciating the differences among ourselves we must try to resolve these difficulties and come to conclusions

which will be to the good of the country. If we fail to adjust our differences, what is the alternative before the country? If this great experiment fails, if we go on according to the old fashion with the tyranny of the majority or under a megalomaniac dictatorship, if we do not accept that there are diverse view points honestly expressed and an adjustment of these view points is an essential ingredient of the successful working of democratic government, the alternative will be chaos. The alternative will be a sense of helplessness, frustration in the minds of the people and things will go beyond the control of every one".

Had any heed been paid to this fervent plea for tolerance of the view point of others by the party in power, much of the unfortunate developments that followed could have been avoided and Dr. Mookerji might have been spared to serve the country for many more years.

He also briefly touched, in this first speech, on the main problems and issues that were then, as now, facing the country which, he thought, should be handled not on party lines but as national problems demanding the co-operative effort of all. The first in importance, he held, was the problem of food. He reminded the Parliament that scarcity conditions still prevailed in Rayalseema and parts of West Bengal. He exhorted the Government to give first priority to this question and see that no one died of starvation. He warned that failure to solve this problem would spell disaster because the people, who had become politically conscious, could not be expected to tolerate any government that failed to meet their basic needs of food shelter and clothing.

His sympathy was not merely verbal. He made a practical suggestion, which revealed his truly human heart that cried out for relieving human suffering wherever he found it. Not only this, his suggestion if accepted, would have made the five hundred members of the Parliament actual sharers in the hardship of their suffering countrymen. "We get now Rs. 40 per day," he said, "I do not know what the allowance of the members of the House of People will be hereafter. Let us agree to a voluntary cut of Rs. 10 per day and let us set apart this sum for the purpose of opening homes where these

women and children (of famine affected areas) may be housed and fed".

He also drew pointed attention to the growing dangers of casteism, provincialism and communalism to the national unity. He pleaded for putting a check on them by eradicating the causes giving rise to them. He pointed out "that the very communalism, casteism and provincialism which have been so rightly condemned in the President's address were taken full advantage of in every suitable place by the Congress party for winning elections". This, he declared, was very unfortunate and deplorable. He appealed to the men in power to set an example in this respect by their own conduct and behaviour.

He also referred to the problem of Jammu and Kashmir which had begun to threaten the very integrity and unity of India. He appealed to the Prime Minister to consider the forces which were then at work in Kashmir and which had been revealed for everyone to see by Sheikh Abdullah's declaration that Indian Parliament had no jurisdiction over the Kashmir State.

The interruption that Pandit Nehru made while Dr. Mookerji was making this appeal on Kashmir was characteristic of that self-conceited man. "I know more about Kashmir than Dr. Mookerji", he interrupted. The reply Dr. Mookerji gave to this retort was equally characteristic of him and revealed his clear understanding of the grave implications of the policies being pursued by Sheikh Abdullah in Kashmir with the connivance of Pandit Nehru, and of his determination not to be brow-beaten where the interests of the country were at stake.

"The whole difficulty," Dr. Mookerji retorted "is that the Prime Minister knows more about anything throughout the world than anybody else and he will not accept any advice from anybody. Now how can any Parliamentary work be carried on if that is the attitude? If I make any suggestion he says : I know more than you do. Undoubtedly he does, but I will give some suggestions, place some point of view before him which he must consider".

"I would like to know," he continued, "are Kashmiris Indian first and Kashmiris next or they are Kashmiris first and Indian next, or they are Kashmiris first, second and third and not Indian at all? That is a very important point which we have

to settle". He thus put the real problem of Kashmir in a nutshell for the Prime Minister and the Parliament to consider.

He also referred to the problem of Hindus in East Bengal which was always worrying him and which was again getting serious. According to his information a large number of Hindus were being driven out of East Bengal. He, therefore, expressed surprise at the speech of Pandit Nehru of an earlier day in the course of which he had said that though papers had reported that an exodus had started, the figures proved otherwise. Dr. Mookerji pointed out that it was this failure to realise the gravity and urgency of the situation at critical times that was responsible for the loss of lives, honour and safety of many people in that area. He wanted an assurance that such mistakes would not be repeated again.

This remark infuriated Pandit Nehru and there followed the following brilliant repartee between the two that continued to be a regular and enlivening feature of the Indian Parliament so long as Dr. Mookerji was alive. It gives an insight into the character, nature and approach of the two men as perhaps nothing else does.

Pandit Nehru : "Was my statement wrong?"

Dr. Mookerji : "It is wrong. Let the Prime Minister instead of depending on the reports of his . . ."

Pandit Nehru : "If I place the whole facts and exact figures?"

Dr. Mookerji : "The general statement and approach of the Prime Minister were absolutely wrong. It is a matter of verification. What I suggest to him is this. He may get some figures from official sources. I cannot blame him for that. But if any Hon'ble Member gets up and says that he has information that the exodus has started, it is the duty of a responsible Prime Minister to get up and say : We will take that into consideration and see how to prevent it. . . ."

Pandit Nehru : "The Hon. Member is challenging my statement."

Dr. Mookerji : "This challenge and counter-challenge will be carried on for the whole of the session."

And such challenges and counter-challenges did literally

continue for the whole of the remaining period of the life of Dr. Mookerji.

He was very unhappy over the sense of self-complacency that he found was creeping over the men in power who seemed to care more for the opinions and praises of obliging or interested foreign dignitaries than for the feelings of the people of the country about their policies. He, therefore, made an impassioned plea for attending to the needs of the common man in the course of his speech on the General Budget on the 4th of June, which was acclaimed as one of his greatest speeches in the Indian Parliament. He said :

"The Prime Minister said the other day that today foreigners are coming and praising Government a lot for what it has done. Undoubtedly there are some achievements to the credit of the Government. But let us not only think of what Mrs. Roosevelt has said about us, what Bertrand Russell has said about us or some other gracious lady has said about us. Let us find out what our own people are saying about us. If you are not able to supply food to the people at some reasonable price, if disease and poverty stalks the land, then the foundation for your existence as a Government disappears. This is not being said as a measure of threat. This is a matter which must be taken above party politics. Unless we are able to solve the food problem and to give some measure of economic stability to the common man, whatever big scheme we may talk of, all will disappear into the limbo of oblivion. You will not be able to ensure sufficient public support for the purpose of making your planning schemes a success. I, therefore, say that so far as the present budget is concerned, it is a cheerless budget, it is a colourless budget, a budget that might prove the capacity and efficiency, which undoubtedly the Finance Minister has, to manipulate dry facts and figures in a manner which he thinks would satisfy the conscience of the Chief Accountant ; but if you think of a budget which carried a message of hope and of good cheer, indicating sharing of sacrifices in a common measure with all classes of people, leading to removal of basic wants and privations, then the budget fails and fails miserably."

Dr. Mookerji was strongly opposed to the "policy of drift", of letting things take their course, where vital interests of the

country and the people were at stake. He stood for quick and practical decisions and firmness in carrying them out. His approach to the problem of reorganisation of States on linguistic basis is a fine example of this quality of his mind. While speaking in the Parliament on the resolution on linguistic States on the 7th of July, 1952, he urged the Prime Minister to take initiative in his own hands instead of allowing the things to drift. He said:

"Before things deteriorate I will beg of this House that this question should be gone into. . . . It is no use adopting an ostrich like policy and thinking that everything is going on all-right. If you say: Let us not redistribute the boundaries of India for any consideration, if that is the policy of the Government, let them announce it and face the consequences. Then the people will know where they stand. If you say there is to be redistribution consistent with the declarations that Congress has made for the last 35 years, then do not leave the matter to be decided by the parties concerned but take the initiative in your own hands. This is my appeal to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Let him take the initiative in his own hands, appoint a commission, appoint advisers or call informal conferences of the leading representatives of the areas concerned and try to adjust matters in such a way that they may come to a decision which will be mutually acceptable to all. It is not a question of making some debating point from the Congress side or the non-Congress side. It is a first class national issue which has got to be settled on a national basis not on party basis."

But his words of practical wisdom fell on deaf ears. The men in power allowed the things to drift until the martyrdom of Potti Sri Romulu and the campaign of lawlessness and destruction that followed in its wake, forced their hands. The belated decision of the Government to appoint a high power commission to go into the question of reorganisation of States all over the country is a tribute to the realism and statesmanship of Dr. Mookerji.

But his greatest speech of the session was the one he made on the Preventive Detention Act on the 2nd of August 1952. It not only brought the whole of Opposition, including the Communists, under his wings but completely floored the Home

Minister, Dr. K. N. Katju, who was piloting the bill.

Dr. Mookerji's opposition to Preventive Detention Bill, the principle of detention without trial, sprang from his inborn love of democracy and freedom. Protection of civil liberties of the people of his country was one of the three great ambitions which Dr. Mookerji aspired to achieve from his early youth; the other two were reorganisation of the post-graduate studies in the Calcutta University, a task left unfinished by his father Shri Ashutosh, and the writing of the biography of his illustrious father. The last task he took in hand during his detention in Kashmir. But the cruel hand of death intervened and did not allow him to complete it.

What amazed and annoyed the Treasury Benches most was his resourcefulness in collecting apt passages from their own speeches and writings as also from those of their forebears like Pandit Motilal Nehru to condemn the principles underlying the Bill which, he declared, "is repugnant to any democratic constitution in any part of the civilised world except at a time of emergency or crisis".

But Dr. Katju whose own words—"Detention on mere undisclosed and often on groundless suspicion without charge or trial is opposed to all notions of natural justice and all canons of civilised administration"—he quoted with telling effect, would not listen to his voice of reason. Secure in the overwhelming majority of his party he shook his head at all his arguments and pleadings which drew from Dr. Mookerji the famous retort: "He (Dr. Katju) will never learn anything, forget everything and make a mess of everything."

Five days later, he delivered another great speech, this time on Kashmir. It was a marvellous speech and was listened to with "rapt attention" by a full House and a record number of visitors. One of the visitors of the day Shri C. L. R. Shastri, later wrote about it in the *Modern Review* (November 1952) as "one of the most brilliant orations that has fallen to my lot to hear whether inside or outside Parliament".

By the time the first session of the first elected Parliament of free India came to a close in August 1952, Dr. Mookerji's position as unofficial Leader of the Opposition had been firmly established. The Press which, controlled as it was by the party in power, was by no means friendly to him, admitted

this fact and many of the papers editorially commented on it. The most remarkable tribute came from the *Times of India* which commented that the "mantle of Sardar Patel had fallen on Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji". It was a most befitting tribute because Dr. Mookerji had been exercising the same sort of sobering and restraining influence on the Nehru government from the outside which Sardar Patel had been doing from within as long as he lived. The approach of Dr. Mookerji to most of the national problems was essentially the same as that of Sardar Patel whom he paid glowing tribute—"he was fearless, realistic, bold whenever a case demanded as to how he should act"—in his speech on Kashmir on the 26th of June. Both were practical men of affairs, deeply rooted in the soil of India, who never allowed considerations of name and international fame to get the better of their judgment regarding the real interests of the country. Sardar Patel continued to work with Pandit Nehru even after Dr. Mookerji's resignation from the Cabinet because he was aware that his withdrawal would mean the end of the Congress. Love of the organisation, in the making of which he had shed his life blood, kept him tied to Pandit Nehru against his better judgement.

Another warm tribute came from the pen of Prof. Indar Vidya Vachaspati, M.P., who then edited *Jan Satta*, a pro-Congress Hindi daily of the capital. In a humorous tone he wrote that the one man whom all restaurant and cafeteria keepers in the Parliament buildings cursed was Dr. Mookerji, because whenever he spoke no one stayed back to patronise them.

The second session of the Parliament which began in early November of the same year, saw him reach even greater heights. He made three great speeches in this session on the Estate Duty Bill, the Five-Year Plan and the running sore of East Bengal.

Though he gave his general support to the principles underlying the Estate Duty Bill, yet he urged the Government to tell the Parliament and the country as to how they intended to utilise the income thus collected. "Let us know from the Government," he pleaded, "what their proposals are for tackling the grave and wide spread economic discontent in the country".

His speech on the First Five-Year Plan on the 16th of

December 1952, as an excellent example of constructive criticism of a matter of vital national importance. He paid handsome tributes to the authors of the Plan. At the same time, with the help of facts and figures, he drew attention to the great lacuna in the Plan, namely, the uncertain and undependable premises in respect of finance on which the Plan had been built and the scant attention paid to the basic questions of education, health and industrial self-sufficiency.

He drew pointed attention of the Government to the question of popular enthusiasm and people's co-operation and participation for the Plan without which the Plan, he said, would not be able to achieve its objective. The public co-operation, he pointed out, would come only if the party in power would handle the plan on national and not on party lines. "Do not say you want public co-operation and you have got the Bharat Sewak Samaj for that," he thundered, "and at the same time go on developing it as a 'Benami' Congress show. Do not allow that to be built on party lines".

"Public co-operation" he declared: "will come provided certain essential conditions are fulfilled. If you come forward with a sincere call that you really want to build up an economy not meant mainly for the privileged or the favoured few but for the millions of down-trodden people, not on paper but in reality; if you take such a message to them there is bound to be public co-operation."

"We are anxious to give you co-operation" he asserted. "We are not enemies sitting face to face before each other. You feel for the country; we feel for the country as well. We want that the country should develop. We know that political freedom will be meaningless and fruitless if it is not followed by economic freedom and by social equality. But let us proceed not on party lines. Let there be more tolerance, let there be more appreciation of the other man's point of view. If some of us do not agree with you, do not see eye to eye with you, do not immediately think that we are traitors or enemies of the country. We are here to serve the country and that is the spirit in which I have spoken".

Unfortunately this noble idealism and spirit of surrender for the good of the country was not shared by the "idealist" Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, who either thought and acted

as an individual and a partisan or as an internationalist, and seldom, if ever, as a nationalist.

The final act in the Parliamentary life of this great statesman and parliamentarian was enacted during the budget session of the Parliament in 1953. By this time his mind was fully engrossed with the problem of Jammu and Kashmir. His heart was full and his mind in agony by the reports of repression and suffering of the people of Jammu. He was convinced of the justice of the cause of the people of Jammu and of its wider implications for the unity of India as a whole. He wanted an honourable and fair settlement of the issue and had been in correspondence with Pandit Nehru with that end in view. He, therefore, took the opportunity to make an eloquent and fervent plea in the course of his speech on the budget on the 14th of February, 1953, to the men in power "to look at the issue dispassionately". "Let us not hurl abuses at each other," he appealed to them. "There may be other occasions when we may do so. But if once we decide not to cast motives at each other, if once we proceed on the assumption that all sides are proceeding in a *bona fide* manner and yet not agreeing with each other, it is only then that it will be possible to come to a settlement which will be fair and just".

Referring to the charge of communalism, used to malign him and his organisation as also the Praja Parishad, he asked the Prime Minister to tell him concretely what was communal about him and his party and their stand instead of making vague charges.

"I know," he thundered, "the Prime Minister levels the charge of communalism on all of us. Whenever he cannot meet an argument that is the answer that he has to give. I am quite prepared, I am not making a challenging suggestion, because I am getting sick of this charge which is unfounded, if we want to consider whether Communalism exists in the country or whether it is openly advocated as a plank by any political organisation, let us fix a date for a debate and let us discuss the matter. Let Government bring forward its charges. Let us have a chance of replying. We do not want Communalism in this country. We do not want that on the basis of religion or on the basis of caste one section of Indians should

go on hating other sections. We want to see developed a society where people of diverse religions will be able to live as common citizens and enjoy common rights".

"If there is a feeling that something is being done" he continued, "opposite to this policy which we say is not instead of talking in an abstract way, let us meet privately if he so desires, let us all against whom such charges are levelled, sit together and discuss. We are not enemies of this country. We are not people guilty of treason because we do not agree with you. It does not matter to which party people may belong. None of us is here for doing harm or deliberate injury to the State. Therefore, if Government comes forward with such a charge-sheet; it is only fair and just that it must be a real charge-sheet and we must be able to understand each other's point of view. We may differ. But let us agree to differ in a gentlemanly way and not go on exchanging fire-works and hurling abuses at each other because it does not carry us anywhere."

Pointing out the futility of repression and vilification to cow down the Dogras, he declared, "You will not be able to destroy the Dogras. I have seen some of them, fine elements. It brought tears to my eyes. I saw some men and women, great people, patriotic people, fearless people. They have not been violent upto now. I advised them that if any movement, any protest is to be carried on, it must be on the basis of non-violence because you cannot fight the organised violence of the State and you will lose the sympathy and cooperation of the people. It is a question of civil rights. It is a question of their life and death, of their very existence. Believe them. I have seen Prem Nath Dogra whom I respect with all my heart. I am not ashamed of that. I have met many people in my life. There may be men good or bad or greater than Prem Nath Dogra. He is a loyal citizen and a quiet sufferer. He is a leader who does not lose his head".

Towards the end of this memorable speech he made another plea for a peaceful settlement of the issue. "Even now my appeal to the Prime Minister" he said, "is this. Let us forget the past. Let him take up the matter. He can rise equal to the occasion. He can deliver the goods with Sheikh Abdullah. I do not wish for a moment that you should humiliate the

Government because, then, whom do I humiliate? Our own Government elected by the people of the country. It is not a question of mutual humiliation or gaining one point here or losing another point there. It is the question of settlement of an issue which is of national importance, which may create serious problems and destroy the peace and happiness of large parts of India and I appeal to the Prime Minister to move before it is too late."

But Pandit Nehru, because of his deep prejudices and lack of touch with the realities of the situation in Jammu, had become impervious to all such arguments and pleadings. His inability to meet argument with argument and facts with facts made him sullen and angry. His anger flared up when Dr. Mookerji, towards the close of his speech, casually referred to the results of the four recent bye-elections to the Delhi State Assembly, in which Congress had been badly trounced by the Jana Sangh Hindu Mahasabha combine. This results in the last of those great wordy duels between him and Pandit Nehru which had become a distinctive feature of the Indian Parliament so long as Dr. Mookerji was alive

"Let me assure the Prime Minister" Dr. Mookerji said, "that however much he may decry and distrust us, we also have a little hold on this country. The elections were fought a few days ago. So far as these elections are concerned they are important for this reason. I saw with my own eyes how powerfully the resources of the Government can be made to operate for the purpose of winning the election. I can tell the Prime Minister sometime later. He does not know that money and wine played their part in many a sphere. You talk of Gandhism. . . ."

Pandit Nehru : "It is disgraceful the way this charge is being made."

Dr. Mookerji : "I am glad the Prime Minister said it is disgraceful. It is indeed disgraceful that such things should happen."

Pandit Nehru : "Is it right that in the course of his debate the Hon'ble Member should bring these charges? To make these wild, irresponsible and fantastic charges is perfectly disgraceful for the Hon. Member. This itself shows the nature of his entire speech."

Dr. Mookerji : "Good, very good."

Pandit Nehru : "The mentality behind it, the irresponsibility behind it."

Dr. Mookerji : "His temper shows, more than anything else, his incapacity to rule over this country. Let us not cloud the issue."

Pandit Nehru : "I ask the Hon. Gentlemen. I challenge him to either prove or withdraw his remark about wine and women."

Dr. Mookerji : "I said money and wine. I do not know whether women were used, but I never used the word 'women'."

Pandit Nehru : "I challenge the Hon. Member to prove his irresponsible statement."

Dr. Mookerji : "There is no use losing any temper."

Pandit Nehru : "It is only the Hon. Member's right, I suppose, to lose his temper and say these things."

Dr. Mookerji : "It is the eternal right of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru always to lose his temper and our eternal duty to submit to it."

It was clear to all those who heard and read this brilliant repartee that Pandit Nehru was wrong and that he had been badly worsted.

Dr. Mookerji was not happy over it. He had been trying to persuade the House, and particularly Pandit Nehru, to save the daily worsening situation in Jammu. The uppermost thought in his mind was the good of the country. He therefore rounded off this last of his great speeches in the Indian Parliament with an ennobling and patriotic offer of fullest cooperation to the Government in the case of any emergency. "Whatever may be said against us", he declared, "whatever motives may be ascribed to us, I can give this assurance to the Prime Minister that in case an emergency arises in this country, on behalf of the party I represent including the much maligned group, I offer our unconditional allegiance and support to the Government."

A few days after this historic speech Dr. Mookerji was arrested for alleged violation of Section 144 in Delhi for participating in a procession carrying the remains of some of the victims of police repression in Jammu. He got his last

opportunity to speak in the Parliament on the 26th of April 1953, when he once again pleaded for justice for the people of Jammu and for a re-orientation of Government's policy on Kashmir.

These words fell on deaf ears. Pandit [Nehru seemed impervious to what he said and appeared determined not to hark to his voice of reason. He, it so appears, had made it a question of personal prestige. This obstinacy on his part lowered his prestige in the eyes of many of his colleagues and party-men, who genuinely felt that he was wrong and Dr. Mookerji was right. But no one dared to tell him this on his face. This revealed the moral degradation and the rot that had set in the Congress party and spot-lighted the urgent need for an alternative leadership in the country.

That alternative, it was universally recognised in and outside the Parliament, could be none else than Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji. He had grown in stature and built a country-wide following so essential for a man who might be called upon to lead a vast and varied country like India. He had been leading the Opposition in the best traditions of Parliamentary democracy, opposing not merely for the sake of opposition but in the spirit of constructive opposition to help in bringing about an improvement in the country. He never grudged paying tribute to the Government and offering it his fullest cooperation whenever the occasion demanded. His guiding principle was the good of India and her teeming millions and not any particular ideology or dogma which must be upheld and praised at all costs. This distinguished him from the Communists. The contrast between his attitude and that of the Communists was best brought out by the following repartee between him and Mr. H. N. Mookerji, the deputy leader of the Communist group in the Parliament in the course of his speech on Railway Budget on February 25, 1953, when he was praising the Chittaranjan Locomotive Factory for its being able to manufacture 70% of the component parts of the locomotives.

H. N. Mookerji : "They are not manufacturing locomotives".

Dr. Mookerji : "Perhaps my Hon. friend does not know that. . . We have yet to see a country which manufactures all the hundred per cent parts required for locomotives."

H. N. Mookerji: "There are."

Dr. Mookerji: "It may be Russia about which my Hon. friend knows better than I do. Actually let us look at matters as an Indian and not as a Russian for the time being".

This constructive and nationalistic attitude together with his enlightened but determined resistance to all anti-national and totalitarian policies and trends amongst men in power made him the one bulwark of freedom and democracy in the country. To the man in the street, he had become the most redoubtable fighter for his cause who could even teach Pandit Nehru a lesson. The staff of the Parliament and the Secretariat who often observed him in action in Parliament had begun to call him "The lion of the Parliament". "Dr. Mookerji rules the Parliament though Pandit Nehru may rule the country," they used to say. And to all those interested in the progress of democracy in the country, he was the coming man, the man to watch, the prospective Prime Minister and hope of millions in the country.

CHAPTER XVI

CALL FROM KASHMIR

OUTSIDE the Parliament his main pre-occupations during the year 1952 were the problem presented by the continuously worsening situation in East Bengal and the resultant exodus of Hindus from there; the work in connection with the visit of sacred relics of Sariputta and Mahamoggallana, the two disciples of Gautama Buddha, to the Buddhist countries and their re-enshrinement in the new Stupa at Sanchi, which he attended as President of the Mahabodhi Society of India; and the problem of relationship of Jammu and Kashmir State with the rest of India—a problem to which he devoted himself fully during the closing months of his crowded public life.

His special interest in the problem presented by Jammu and Kashmir State grew casually. As a member of the Central cabinet he had been instrumental in India going to the rescue of that State after it had formally acceded to India on the 26th of October, 1947. Since then, Pandit Nehru had taken the sole charge of Kashmir and others were seldom consulted with regard to the policy about it, particularly, that pertaining to its internal developments. Nor did other ministers, including late Sardar Patel, feel like giving their unsolicited advice to the Prime Minister in matters concerning Kashmir because he was known to consider it as the one feather in his cap for which he alone must have all the credit. Further more many of them did not know much about Kashmir except for what trickled down to them from Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah.

But disconcerting reports about the policies that Sheikh Abdullah pursued within the State had begun to pour into the Indian capital as early as November and December 1947. Justice Kanwar Dalip Singh, who was sent as Agent General of the Government of India to Jammu and Kashmir State early in November, 1947, soon found to his utter shock and disillusionment that Sheikh Abdullah was determined to go

his own way unmindful of the plans and policies laid down by the Government of India. He reported the matter to New Delhi. But he was over-ruled and, therefore, he resigned.

Soon afterwards, Justice Mehar Chand Mahajan, the Prime Minister of the State, whose presence as a sobering influence was irksome to Sheikh Abdullah, was driven out of the State in a most humiliating way. It was a pointer to the shape of things to come in Kashmir which was duly taken note of by the shrewd men like the late Sardar Patel. Then came the arrest and detention without trial and even without any charges being framed against him, of Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, the undisputed leader of the people of Jammu, along with a number of his co-workers in the Praja Parishad. This sent a wave of indignation throughout Jammu. After some months spent in futile efforts to draw the attention of the Government of India to the discriminatory policies of Sheikh Abdullah against the people of Jammu in general and Dogras in particular and complete suppression of civil liberties, the Praja Parishad launched a peaceful and non-violent satyagraha. Its main demands were that the policy of discrimination against the people of Jammu be stopped and Pandit Premnath Dogra be released.

Hundreds of men and women from all parts of Jammu, including some Muslim Dogras, courted arrest during this satyagraha. Sheikh Abdullah's government adopted a policy of brutal repression to put down the movement. Even women were not spared. A number of them were insulted and lathi charged indiscriminately. Thereupon a deputation of some respectable ladies of Jammu city came to Delhi and met a number of members of Parliament and ministers to apprise them of the true facts of the situation in Jammu. They met Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji as well during October, 1948. He was deeply moved by the facts they placed before him. But he expressed his inability to interfere in the matter as it was then the exclusive domain of Pandit Nehru. He therefore advised them to see the Prime Minister who, he told them, was directly handling the Kashmir issue.

Pandit Prem Nath Dogra was released by the Kashmir Government, towards the end of 1948, on the intercession of the Government of India and the Praja Parishad was given

the assurances that no hurdles would be put in the way of its normal democratic activities.

A few months later, the decision to elect a Constituent Assembly for the State which, *inter alia*, would also "ratify the accession of the State to India" was announced. The Praja Parishad decided to contest the elections to this Assembly and began to make preparations for it in right earnest.

But the rejection of 42 out of the total of 59 nomination papers of its candidates by the returning officers on most arbitrary and even whimsical grounds set the Praja Parishad leaders athinking. They began to consider whether it was worth while for them to contest the elections in the face of this unabashed partisanship of the Government in favour of the ruling National Conference party. Pandit Prem Nath Dogra visited New Delhi to draw the attention of the Government of India to the new situation and also to consult the leaders of public opinion in the country about the course of action his organisation should adopt. The attitude of the Government of India appeared to him to be quite discouraging. Most of the leaders outside the Government, including some erstwhile top dignitaries of the Congress, advised him to boycott the elections. He also wanted to consult Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, who had by that time come out of the Government. But Dr. Mookerji was not in Delhi. He therefore entrusted to the author the task of consulting Dr. Mookerji on his return to Delhi.

I met Dr. Mookerji in the Western Court, New Delhi where he was staying since his exit from the cabinet. After I had explained the whole situation to him he opined that the elections should be contested inspite of all odds. His view was that legislatures were the only forums for giving vent to diverse viewpoints on Government policies. Therefore, it would be worth while fighting the elections if thereby the Praja Parishad succeeded in sending into the Assembly even only a single spokesman.

However, before his valuable opinion could reach the Praja Parishad leaders, they had decided to boycott the elections. As a result Sheikh Abdullah was able to fill the State Constituent Assembly with his hand picked nominees, many of whom were known to be Communist or Pakistani. All of

them were returned unopposed.

This Communist-cum-communalist dominated one party Constituent Assembly, contrary to all expectations, systematically set about breaking or weakening the constitutional ties that bound Jammu and Kashmir State to the rest of India, instead of strengthening them. Under the Communist inspiration, Sheikh Abdullah began to take a strictly legalistic view of Article 370, the temporary Article dealing with the special position of Jammu and Kashmir, which was incorporated in the Indian Constitution on the specific request of Sheikh Abdullah and against the definite opinion of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, who smelt the rat behind his insistence upon it. When late Shri Gopala Swamy Aiyangar placed the Article before the Constituent Assembly, many of the members took strong objection to it. Thereupon, Shri Aiyangar tried to pacify them and remove their fears and doubts by stating that the discrimination in regard to Kashmir in the said Article was due to special circumstances in that State which made it unripe for fuller integration. But he added that "It is the hope of everybody here that in due course, even Jammu and Kashmir will become ripe for the same sort of integration as has taken place in the case of other States."

Sheikh Abdullah thereafter began to proceed on the assumption that Kashmir was an independent State with had acceded to India for the limited purpose of defence, foreign affairs and communications. Even in respect of these three subjects, he had mental reservations. Even though defence was a central subject, he insisted upon raising a few thousand strong Militia force to be equipped by India but controlled by him. He even evaded the transfer of State Telegraphs and Telephone Department as also of the strategic high ways within the State, to the Central Ministry of Communications. Even in foreign affairs, he dodged the Government of India by using his Trade Agents at Delhi and Bombay as his diplomatic missions for developing close contacts with foreign missions in India. He could do all this because of the blind support of Pandit Nehru for everything he said or did.

This policy was resented by the people of Jammu, who

wanted complete integration of their State with the rest of India as in the case of other acceding States. They resented the exclusion of the Indian national tricolour flag from all public buildings and functions in the State and the use of National Conference party flag instead. They also resented the insulting attitude adopted by Sheikh Abdullah towards the Dogra Maharaja who had, on the behest of Pandit Nehru, invested him with power against his own better judgement. The systematic elimination of Hindi from educational curricula as also from use in offices, the talk of the Kashmiri nation as distinct from the Indian nation, the transfer of all State valuables, rare manuscripts and some of the institutions from Jammu to Srinagar, the vivisection of Jammu province to carve out of its parts adjoining the Kashmir valley, new Muslim majority districts, and open propaganda in favour of Pakistan by some high and trusted officers of Sheikh Abdullah's Government created genuine doubts and fears in the minds of all nationalists in Jammu and Kashmir about the future of the State with which their own future was so intimately linked.

The matters were brought to a head early in February, 1952, when students of the Government Gandhi Memorial College, Jammu, protested against compulsion to salute the National Conference party flag at an official function. They were dealt with very harshly. As a consequence of the harsh treatment meted out to them, the students of the college went on strike. They also gained the sympathies of the general public who considered their stand to be justified. This gave to the students' agitation the colour of a mass movement. The Kashmir Government exploited the situation to its advantage and arrested Pandit Prem Nath Dogra and many of his co-workers and supporters, detained them without trial, and clamped an eighty-two hours curfew on Jammu city.

These developments attracted for the first time the attention of the whole country to the internal situation in the State and it began to be realised that something was amiss with Abdullah's internal policies. It created amongst the people all over the country a curiosity and desire to know the true facts about the internal situation in the State.

This was followed by a number of ominous statements by

Sheikh Abdullah and his lieutenants in and outside the Kashmir Constituent Assembly. On 24th of March, 1952, for example, Mirza Afzal Beg, the Revenue Minister in Sheikh Abdullah's cabinet, declared in the State Constituent Assembly that "The Jammu and Kashmir State will be a Republic within the Indian Union. . . . So far as the Constitution of the State is concerned we aim at making its framework such that the State will be a Republic like other republics. According to our plans the State will have its own President, a separate National Assembly and a judicial set-up".

This was soon followed by the pompous declaration on the 29th of March in the State Constituent Assembly by Sheikh Abdullah himself, who had returned a few days earlier from Paris, where he had been sent by the Government of India as its delegate to the U.N.O., that "we are a hundred percent sovereign body. No country can put spokes in the wheels of our progress—neither Indian Parliament nor any other Parliament outside the State has any jurisdiction over us." He followed this up by a more damaging speech at Ranbirsinghpura on the 10th of April, in the course of which he said: "Kashmir's accession to India will have to be of a restricted nature so long as communalism has a foot-hold on the soil of India." He called the arguments in favour of full accession to be "childish, unrealistic and savouring of lunacy." And then he threw a fling on India by saying. "Many Kashmiris fear what will happen to them and their position if, for instance, something happens to Pandit Nehru. We do not know. As realists we Kashmiris have to make provision for all eventualities."

These outbursts of Sheikh Abdullah coupled with the reports of happenings in Jammu pricked the bubble of complacency about Kashmir in India. The Press and public opinion reacted sharply to this attempt of the "Tiger of Kashmir" to bite the very hand that had been feeding it. Pandit Nehru alone tried to minimise the gravity of the situation by making the Praja Parishad the scape-goat for the indiscretions and ebullitions of his creature.

Dr. Mookerji was deeply perturbed over these developments. He was not happy with the unexpected turn the discussions had been taking at the U.N.O. with regard to Kashmir. He

was pained by the continued illegal occupation of 1/3 part of the Jammu and Kashmir State by Pakistan and he considered it to be a dangerous blow at the integrity of truncated India. These fresh developments indicated that part of the State which was, both *de jure* and *de facto*, still a part of India was also slipping away. In a public statement he strongly condemned this *volte face* of Sheikh Abdullah, whom he compared to late Mr. Jinnah, and described his speech to be an "offer of accession with his left hand with secession up his sleeves."

But he was not the man to sit content merely by issuing a statement where the integrity and honour of India as a whole was at stake. He became anxious to know for himself the full facts of the situation so that he might educate and guide the public and the Parliament in time about the real situation from which they had been so far deliberately kept in the dark by the Government and the press of the country. This made him keen to meet Pandit Prem Nath Dogra who had just been released from jail under pressure from the Government of India.

He had not to wait long for the opportunity. Pandit Prem Nath Dogra visited New Delhi about the end of April, 1952, to place his case before the leaders of public opinion in India. He met Dr. Mookerji in his suite in the Western Court early in May.

The meeting, judged by subsequent results, was a momentous event in the life of both. Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, who was then in the 70th year of his dedicated life, was a picture of humility and self surrender. But his spirits were high. He narrated to Dr. Mookerji the events that had preceded and succeeded Sheikh Abdullah's rise to power; how he (Abdullah) could not enter Jammu without getting an assurance of support from him; how he had publicly accepted that the responsibility of what happened in Jammu during October, 1947, squarely lay at the doors of Pakistan and her agents who forced the people of Jammu to fight in self defence; how he pressed him (Pandit Dogra) to join National Conference as a pre-requisite to his being taken into his cabinet and how his refusal to sell his conscience for loaves and fishes of office made him his enemy. He also explained

how the hand of cooperation offered by the Praja Parishad for the defence and betterment of the State and her people was spurned by Sheikh Abdullah and how he (Abdullah) had launched a campaign for the Muslimisation of the State in the garb of secularism, and for establishing a totalitarian one party regime in the garb of democracy. The Praja Parishad, he explained, had been putting up with all this under the mistaken impression that Government of India was giving a long rope to Abdullah for securing his support towards the final settlement of the Kashmir problem. They had hoped that all this would end after the integration of the State with the rest of India as in the case of other acceding States, and consequent application of the full Constitution of India to the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

"But this hope", he said in a voice choked with emotion, "has been dashed to the ground by the recent developments in the State. Sheikh Abdullah and his Communist and Communalist supporters are now bent upon cutting Jammu and Kashmir State from India for different reasons. The Communists want to make Kashmir their stronghold which they might be able to use as jumping ground for a red revolution in the rest of India at the opportune moment. They, therefore, want the Indian control over its affairs to be reduced to the minimum. With this idea they are trying to equip the State with full paraphernalia of an independent State. Communalist and Pro-Pakistan supporters of Sheikh Abdullah are also encouraging him in this policy because they feel that it would be easy for Pakistan to grab Kashmir once its ties with India have been loosened."

"All the nationalist elements in the population of the State including the Buddhist of Laddakh, the Dogras of Jammu and a good section of the Kashmiris as well," he added, "are opposed to this policy. They feel that Sheikh Abdullah is making Jammu and Kashmir into another Pakistan. The people of Jammu are particularly scared by it. For them it is a question of life and death. They are determined to resist this policy of cutting Jammu and Kashmir asunder from the rest of India. Their one aspiration is to be governed according to the constitution of India under the Indian tri-colour and they want to owe allegiance to none but the President of India". The

people of Jammu, he emphatically told Dr. Mookerji, were united to a man in this matter and they were prepared to make any sacrifice for asserting their right to be one with India—their common motherland.

The whole thing came as a revelation to Dr. Mookerji who listened to him with rapt attention. He began to see for the first time in clear perspective the real purpose and motive behind Sheikh Abdullah's utterances referred to above. He saw the justice of the stand taken by the Praja Parishad and its wider implications for the unity and integrity of India as a whole. He was impressed by the transparent sincerity of the aged man who had the spirit of the youth in him, and he was visibly moved by his appeal for support to the cause for which Praja Parishad was fighting.

Dr. Mookerji was not the man to jump to conclusions without giving a problem careful and mature thought. He asked for facts to substantiate what Pandit Dogra had narrated to him and he also wanted to ensure that the Parishad had the popular support of the public. As a true democrat, he was the last man to go against the express wishes of the people.

Pandit Prem Nath Dogra was ready with the relevant information. He placed before him facts and figures, supported by documents and copies of official records and publications, in support of his contentions. As regards the popular support for the stand of the Parishad, he invited Dr. Mookerji to visit Jammu to see things for himself.

Dr. Mookerji was convinced by the facts and evidence placed before him about the righteousness and genuineness of the cause of the Praja Parishad. It did not, therefore, take him long after that to chalk out his course of action. He assured Pandit Prem Nath Dogra that he would do everything within his powers to persuade the Government of India to change their policy on Kashmir and thereby check the drift towards the State becoming a sovereign Republic within the Indian Republic with a separate flag, president and constitution of its own. He suggested that Pandit Dogra should place all his facts and figures before the Prime Minister as well.

Pandit Dogra wanted to meet the Prime Minister and tried his best to arrange a meeting. But Pandit Nehru refused even to see him in spite of repeated requests because, it appears,

his mind had been deeply prejudiced against him (Pandit Dogra) by a non-stop flow of false and misleading reports from Sheikh Abdullah.

Dr. Mookerji was deeply pained when he learnt about the democratic Prime Minister's refusal even to meet a recognised leader of public opinion from that part of the country in which the whole nation was interested. It became abundantly clear to him that Pandit Nehru was neither prepared to listen to the pleas and requests of the people of the State nor reconsider his policy on Kashmir unless popular pressure was put on him by the rest of India as well.

He, therefore, gave the lead to the country by getting a resolution passed by the Working Committee of Bharatiya Jana Sangh on the 14th of June, 1952, which emphasised that Jammu and Kashmir State was an integral part of India and declared that "the decision of the State Constituent Assembly concerning an elected President and a separate flag coupled with the recommendations of its Basic Principles Committee that Kashmir will be an autonomous republic are in clear violation of India's sovereignty and the spirit of India's constitution". It further added that: "The committee takes a serious view of this development and wants to remind the people and the Government of India that the Cabinet Mission Scheme of 1945 envisaging a week centre with only three subjects was opposed by the Congress and a large section of Indian opinion as being inimical to India's unity and interests. The fissiparous tendencies of the Muslim League, however, succeeded in dividing India leading to disastrous consequences. To allow the Jammu and Kashmir State to proceed along the same path now looks like permitting history to repeat itself. It might mean a fresh call to disruptive elements in India to break its unity and integrity which has been achieved at such tremendous cost."

The resolution also called upon the people of India to observe June 29, 1952, as the Kashmir Day and to hold public meetings and demonstrations in support of the stand taken by Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

On the 26th of June, that is, three days before the appointed All India Kashmir Day, Dr. Mookerji made the first of his series of great speeches on Kashmir in the Parliament. Earlier

on the same day, the people of Delhi staged a huge demonstration before the Parliament to condemn Sheikh Abdullah's separatist policies.

In the course of this speech, Dr. Mookerji dealt one by one with the question of separate flag, elected constitutional head of the State in the place of hereditary Maharaja, and Article 370 of the Indian Constitution on the basis of which Sheikh Abdullah wanted a separate constitution for the State, and shattered completely the case of Sheikh Abdullah and his supporters in the central cabinet.

Referring to the question of flag he pointed out: "You cannot have divided loyalty. Sheikh Abdullah has said: 'We will treat both flags equally.' "You cannot do it. It is not a question of fifty, fifty. It is not a question of parity. It is a question of using one flag for the whole of India—India that includes Kashmir. There is no question of having a separate Republic of Kashmir having a separate flag."

Referring to the move to replace the hereditary Maharaja by an elected head of the State he declared: "The Maharaja is gone. There is no question of the continuance of his autocratic administration. He functions as the constitutional head of Kashmir with his hands completely bound—a dignified rubber stamp. But if you want that no Maharaja should remain in any part of India even as a constitutional head over a particular unit let it be done soberly, properly and constitutionally. If the Parliament of India considers that the Constitution of India should be amended and there should be no Maharaja's rule, no Rajpramukh in any part of India, let us discuss it."

He also drew attention to the inconsistency between the attitudes of the Congress party towards Article 370 when it was placed in the Constitution by late Shri Gopala Swamy Aiyanger, and its present attitude of defending Sheikh Abdullah on the basis of the same Article. He also referred in detail, duly supported by facts, figures and documents, to the suppression of civil rights; elimination of Hindi; vivisection of Jammu province on communal lines; expropriation of 'Dharamarth' property and funds; communalism in services, discrimination against Jammu, the double standards made use of by Sheikh Abdullah in giving versions of his speeches to the press and

people of India different from the one meant for consumption in the State, and the "iron curtain" he had drawn around the State to prevent true facts from reaching those outside. He made a passionate plea for clarity "in our own minds as to what we want" and added prophetically, "if you just want to play with the winds and say 'We are helpless and let Sheikh Abdullah do what he likes' then Kashmir will be lost. I say this with great deliberation that Kashmir will be lost."

On 29th of June, the Kashmir Day was observed all over the country with great enthusiasm. Dr. Mookerji addressed a mammoth public meeting in Delhi.

The reactions of the Press and the people of all shades of opinion to Sheikh Abdullah's utterances and the tremendous popular response to the Jana Sangh's call for observance of Kashmir Day made even Pandit Nehru a bit restive. He summoned Sheikh Abdullah to New Delhi to persuade him to stop his fire eating. But Sheikh Abdullah evaded compliance with his instructions on one pretext or the other. On the other hand he sent a team of his constitutional advisers to negotiate with the Government of India an agreement to give recognition to his decisions about separate flag and separate constitution for the State. He himself came down to Delhi on the 16th of July, to extract more concessions from the Government of India and give final touches to the deal his agents had negotiated. It was placed before the Indian Parliament by Pandit Nehru on the 24th of July, and has since come to be known as the July Agreement.

This agreement was a victory for Sheikh Abdullah's policies of separatism. It conceded to him the right to have separate citizenship, separate flag, an elected head of the State in the place of the hereditary Maharaja and a separate Constitution. The concessions he made to the Indian view point were all hedged in by so many 'ifs' and 'buts' that they could be nullified by any dishonest man without much ingenuity.

Dr. Mookerji disapproved of this Agreement. The very idea of an agreement which sought to limit the applicability of the Indian Constitution and over-ride the sovereignty of India in respect of one of its constituents, was repelling to him because he felt that it would be the first step towards constitutional disintegration of India, which could as well be exploited by

the disruptive forces elsewhere.

He got an opportunity to give vent to his feelings and ideas on this agreement in the Parliament on the 7th of August, 1952. He put two straight questions to Pandit Nehru—the first about the areas of the State forcibly occupied by Pakistan and the second about the areas ruled by Sheikh Abdullah. Regarding the first he asked: "Is there any possibility of our getting back this territory? We shall not get it," he added, "though the efforts of U.N.O.; we shall not get it through peaceful methods, by negotiations with Pakistan. That means we lose it unless we use force and the Prime Minister is unwilling to do it. Let us face facts—are we prepared to lose it?"

Regarding the second part his question was: "May I ask—was not Sheikh Abdullah a party to this constitution of India. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly; but today he is asking for special treatment. Did he not agree to accept this Constitution in relation to the rest of India including 497 States. If it is good enough for all of them, why should it not be good enough for him in Kashmir?"

Pandit Nehru had no replies to these questions. He evaded them and instead talked about the special status of Jammu and Kashmir State. He convinced none—not even his own party men. But his outright condemnation of the Praja Parishad as an organisation which had no following or locus standi among the people, did mislead many who knew little, if anything at all, about Jammu and Kashmir other than what was doled out to the Indian Press by the Kashmir Government or by Pandit Nehru himself.

The Praja Parishad had by this time announced its decision to hold a convention of its workers at Jammu on the 9th and 10th of August, to give its authoritative views on the July Agreement and decide upon its future course of action. It had invited a number of members of Parliament and leaders of public opinion in India to attend that convention and judge for themselves the following the Praja Parishad had amongst the masses and the feelings of the people of Jammu in general. Dr. Mookerji was also one of the invitees and he gladly accepted the invitation. He announced his decision in the Parliament to go to Jammu to see things for himself on the same day.

This made some of those Congress leaders and Members of Parliament who knew the real situation, nervous. They tried to persuade Dr. Mookerji to drop the idea of going to Jammu. Some of them told him: "Why are you lowering your position Doctor Sahib? You will not find even five hundred people to receive you. Praja Parishad has no following at all."

An unknown astrologer also visited his house and pressed him not to visit Jammu. He warned him that there was a grave danger of his losing his life as a result of an accident. But Dr. Mookerji was not the man to be dissuaded by fear of danger. He had already planned to leave on the eighth night by Kashmir Mail. Shri U. M. Trivedi, Babu Ram Narain Singh—both Members of the Parliament—a good number of Press representatives, and the author were to accompany him. But to his utter disappointment he learnt at about 6 P.M. on the day of departure that the Defence Ministry had not till then issued to him and his party the permits necessary for entry into the State. He immediately contacted the Home Minister and the Defence Minister on telephone and was able to obtain permits which he received just when he was leaving for the railway Station.

On reaching the Railway Station, the pressmen who were to accompany him were greatly surprised to find that he was to travel in the third class along with the rest of the party. One of them could not hide his amazement and asked: "You must be travelling in the third class for the first time in your life?" "No, I travel third quite often" was the prompt reply. "You know, ours is a poor organisation", he added, "the saving made in this way helps us to meet other necessary charges."

Dr. Mookerji's travelling kit consisted of only one suite case which contained one small pillow, two bed sheets and a few clothes. He spread one sheet on the wooden seat of the third class coach and used the other for covering his body. That was the kit that he normally carried with him except that during winter months one cotton sheet was replaced by a warm blanket. When asked as to why he had not brought his bedding with him he smiled and said, "I believe in travelling light". The Indian ideal of simple living and high thinking was truly personified in the person of Dr. Mookerji.

The journey from Delhi to Jammu was a memorable event

of his life. Up to Dasuya on the Jullundur-Pathankot line, where the train reached at about 6 A.M. next morning he was not disturbed at any wayside stations because instructions to that effect had been specifically sent by the Jana Sangh headquarters to enable Dr. Mookerji to enjoy sound sleep. But from Dasuya onwards, every station saw thousands of people waiting to greet their hero. They invariably insisted upon his saying a few words to them. Dr. Mookerji was not the man to disappoint them. So the first speech of the day was delivered by him at 6 A.M. At Pathankot where the train reached at about 9 A.M. a huge crowd had assembled on the platform to welcome him. It included Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, who had come all the way from Jammu to receive him and welcome him into the State. Dr. Mookerji was deeply impressed by the devotion and earnestness of Pandit Dogra who at the ripe age of 70 appeared as active as a youngman.

Dr. Mookerji had to address a huge public meeting just outside the Pathankot railway station before proceeding to the house of his host, Mr. Gopal Krishan Mahajan, the son of Justice Mehar Chand Mahajan, whose interest in the welfare of Jammu and Kashmir and its people continued unabated till his death in 1968. He had to go through a crowded programme which included a talk to pressmen, meeting a deputation of citizens besides taking his lunch during the three hours he stayed at Pathankot. At about 1 P.M. he and his party left for Jammu on a jeep. The press reporters followed him in a station-wagon.

He crossed Madhopur bridge on the Ravi at about 3 P.M. No sooner he set his foot on the territory of Jammu and Kashmir State, he was greeted by three resounding slogans:

- (1) Bharat Mata Ki Jai (Victory to India),
- (2) Kashmir Bharat Ka Ang Hai (Kashmir is part of India),
- (3) Ek Desh Men Do Vidhan (Two constitutions in one country),

Ek Desh Men Do Nishan (Two flags in one country),

Ek Desh Men do Pradhan (Two Presidents in one country),

Nahin Challenge Nahin Challenge (Will not be tolerated), which kept ringing in his ears till the last days of his life.

The first town of the State, its gateway, to which he was

first taken, was Kathua—the headquarters of the district of the same name. It is just about four miles from the Ravi Bridge and then had a population of about 3 thousands. But more than ten thousand people, men and women, had assembled there on that historic day to receive Dr. Mookerji who was taken to the meeting place in a procession through the tastefully decorated streets of the town.

The great enthusiasm, the earnestness and the grim determination that Dr. Mookerji saw there on the faces of the hardy Dogras, removed the doubts that had been assailing him till then because of what he had been told by his Congress friends, who claimed to know more about Jammu and Kashmir than he. What impressed him most was the universal respect in which Pandit Prem Nath Dogra was held and the hold of Praja Parishad over the masses. He gave vent to his feelings in a short speech he delivered there. He said :

"Before I left Delhi many Congress friends had told me that I should not visit Jammu because Praja Parishad has no following among the people. I would ask them to come here and see whether Praja Parishad has any following or not". Referring to the slogans that he had been hearing and which were prominently displayed at the meeting place he declared :

"You want Indian constitution, you want Indian flag, you want Indian President to be your President. These are just and patriotic demands. They will have to be met. So far as I am concerned I can only assure you that I will do all I can". And then he uttered words that proved prophetic :

"Ham Vidhan Lenge Ya Balidan Denge—I will secure for you the Constitution of India or lay down my life for it".

Seventy miles journey from Kathua to Jammu was a continuous procession. All along the route people, sturdy men and women, from remote villages, were waiting to greet the one Indian leader who had responded to their appeals and had come to understand their feelings and sentiments, their woes and problems. They had put up welcome arches on the roads with photos of Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, the "State Kesri" prominently displayed on them. After every mile or two, Dr. Mookerji had to stop and say a few words. At Hiranagar and Samba, two tehsil places on the way side, he had to address mammoth meetings.

He was scheduled to reach Jammu by 6 P.M. But he could not leave Samba, a distance of 25 miles from Jammu, before 7.15 P.M. The unprecedented enthusiasm of the people who had travelled long distances to have a glimpse of Dr. Mookerji had delayed him.

The people of the villages lying between Samba and Jammu had been waiting by the road side to have a glimpse of him for long hours. As night fell many of them returned to their homes disappointed but many others persisted and continued to wait for him with torches or 'Mashals' in their hands. It was a sight to be seen. Beautiful arches and welcome gates surrounded by young and old people alike with flower garlands in their hands waiting to have a glimpse of their hero for hours on end in pitch darkness. Shri Jagdish Abrol, a co-worker who had been driving the jeep, in trying to race against time to reach Jammu early just escaped a serious accident. The jeep was almost at the verge of a steep fall at a hair pin bend when he, with great presence of mind, pulled it up with a sharp jerk at the steering wheel.

As the flower-bedecked jeep carrying Dr. Mookerji reached the Twai Bridge, the outpost for the city of Jammu, a surging sea of humanity greeted him with loud and resounding "Jais". They had been waiting to receive him since 5 P.M. The two and a half miles route from the Tawi bridge to the house of Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, his host, was tastefully decorated and the whole city had turned out to have a glimpse of their saviour.

As he reached his destination at about 11 P.M., tired and exhausted after a long day's strenuous journey, in the course of which he had delivered no less than twenty speeches, he had become fully convinced of the popularity and strength of Pandit Prem Nath Dogra and of the organisation he headed. He had also become fully aware of the extent of the strong feelings and sentiments of the people about Sheikh Abdullah's move to have a separate flag and constitution for the State.

Within a few minutes of his arrival, the Deputy Commissioner of Jammu came to him to invite him on behalf of Sheikh Abdullah to visit Srinagar the next day and have talks with him. Sheikh Abdullah, it appeared, had been informed by his officers about the charged atmosphere in Jammu and he

(Abdullah) wanted to place his point of view before Dr. Mookerji before he (Dr. Mookerji) gave his advice and guidance to the Praja Parishad convention.

To Dr. Mookerji this invitation was something he had neither expected nor foreseen. The people of Jammu, including his hosts, did not want to be deprived of his company even for an hour. But Dr. Mookerji, the democrat that he was, considered it his duty to hear the other side also before arriving at any conclusions. He accepted the invitation on the condition that he would be sent back to Jammu the same day in order to enable him to keep his other engagements there.

He left by plane for Srinagar at 11 A.M. on the 10th of August, and reached there by noon. Directly from the aerodrome he was taken to Sheikh Abdullah's residence where he had talks lasting about 6 hours with him and his deputy, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. The plane had to return to Delhi in the evening. It waited for him for some time but the talks continued longer than expected and therefore Sheikh Abdullah decided to send him back to Jammu by car at night. Before leaving Srinagar he also had a long talk with Yuvraj Karan Singh, who was then being pressed to become the Sadr-i-Riyast—President of the State—much against his wish.

Dr. Mookerji left Srinagar at about 8 P.M. by car, slept for a few hours at Batote where he reached at about 2 A.M. and again continued his journey in the morning so as to reach Jammu by 9 A.M. He was scheduled to leave Jammu the same afternoon.

What exactly transpired in those talks between him and Sheikh Abdullah is difficult to say. But this much is known that at one stage during the course of the talks Sheikh Abdullah began to talk loudly and imperiously of his rights and powers as was his wont. However, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed interrupted him by saying that that was not the way of making one's standpoint understood by the other. Dr. Mookerji, as was clear from the speech he delivered at Jammu after his return from Srinagar, appreciated the difficulties of Sheikh Abdullah in carrying the Muslims of Kashmir with him. But he was not convinced of the advisability of the ways and means he had adopted to placate the communalist Muslims. He told Abdullah on his face that his policies and utterances made him

look more like Mr. Jinnah, who refused to accept a strong centre or even a weak centre on the plea that it would be controlled by Hindus, who, taken as a whole, happened to be in majority in the country, than like Mahatma Gandhi whose path he claimed to have been following in Kashmir. He particularly advised him not to take any hasty steps about a separate flag for the State—a subject on which the people of Jammu had very strong feelings.

Immediately after his arrival he was closeted with Pandit Prem Nath Dogra and some other top leaders of the Praja Parishad whom he gave a gist of his talks with Sheikh Abdullah. He advised them to have patience for some time more. Pandit Dogra reminded him of the temper of the people he had met and informed him how all the delegates at the Convention had been demanding some sort of direct action. Dr. Mookerji's reply was characteristic of a man of peace. Satyagraha, he said, was an extreme step and it must be resorted to only after all other means have been exhausted. He was, he added, going to meet Prime Minister Nehru, and place before him the true facts about the situation as he had seen them for himself. Within the State, he advised them to concentrate on organising and educating the people. He hoped that better counsel would prevail upon Sheikh Abdullah. However, in spite of all this he remained adamant in pursuit of his separatist policies, he assured them, he would lend his support to any action they might take.

He spoke in the same strain to about fifty thousand people who had assembled in the scorching sun in the Parade ground to listen to him. Some of them were disappointed at his call to exercise restraint while the sober amongst them appreciated his stand.

The Special Correspondents of the "Statesman" and the "Hindustan Standard", who had gone there with him to study the situation, writing about his visit said that he had pacified the people whose impatience had touched the point of no return and had thereby done a great service to the cause of mutual understanding and peaceful settlement of the vexed question.

Immediately after his return to Delhi, Dr. Mookerji had a long interview with Pandit Nehru. He told him that it was

no use minimising the gravity of the situation. The Praja Parishad, he informed him, was not the organisation of a few disgruntled and expropriated landlords as he would have liked people to believe. It was a democratic political organisation, with capable leadership and mass following. It was a force to reckon with in Jammu and Kashmir, he told him, and it would be impolitic and dangerous to force decisions, which, besides going against the unity and integrity of the country, were totally unacceptable to the Parishad. He advised him to take Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, whose integrity and patriotism was beyond doubt, in his confidence so that the Dogras, who happened to be the one dependable factor in the Kashmir situation, be harnessed for fortifying the unity of that State with the rest of India.

His advice went unheard both by Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Nehru. Secure in their respective seats of power, they failed to properly assess the strength of feeling in Jammu against their policies and the growing awakening of the Indian public opinion on the subject.

Sheikh Abdullah got the concessions extended to him by the July Agreement including those relating to the elected head in the place of the Maharaja and the flag implemented by his Constituent Assembly with indecent haste and postponed taking any decision about extension of citizenship, fundamental rights and the jurisdiction of the Indian Supreme Court to the State. On the other hand, the Constitution Drafting Committee appointed by him prepared a draft constitution which virtually made Jammu and Kashmir an independent State with its own National Assembly, Supreme Court and flag. The Praja Parishad leaders were able to secure a copy of this draft constitution. This made them all the more restive about the future of the State. The efforts made by Pandit Dogra to draw the attention of the Indian authorities through a memorandum to the President, a deputation to the Minister of States and through other democratic means open to him failed miserably. So the feeling began to grow in Jammu that they would have to go through the sacrament of sacrifices to awaken the conscience of the leaders and people of India to their pitiable condition and the patriotic nature of their stand which had its importance for India as a whole. However, they decided to

consult Dr. Mookerji once again before taking any final decision.

Accordingly, Pandit Premnath Dogra met Dr. Mookerji at Jullundur on the 8th of November, where the latter had gone in connection with the Punjab Provincial Jana Sangh conference. Pandit Dogra placed before him the full facts of the deteriorating situation and the growing feeling in the people that things could not be set right without a struggle.

Dr. Mookerji had seen how all his own efforts to make the authorities in Delhi see the light of reason had failed. A conviction had begun to grow in him that Pandit Nehru was not susceptible to democratic pressure, that arguments, logic and public opinion had no meaning for him. As a man who had been agitator all his life, Pandit Nehru, he felt, had developed a complex for agitational methods. He would bow before force and agitation but not before right or reason unless backed by might. He considered this to be a most unfortunate thing as it undermined the people's faith in democratic methods. Unfortunate though it was, he had to see things as they were. He, therefore, informed Pandit Dogra that he had tried his best to secure justice for them but had failed. So he had no right to bind their hands any longer. But he added, whatever decision is taken by Praja Parishad, must come after careful and full consideration of its own resources and strength. The Jana Sangh, he assured him, would stand by them and do everything possible to mobilise public opinion in the country because it was convinced that the cause of the Praja Parishad was the cause of the whole of India.

Pandit Prem Nath Dogra took leave from Dr. Mookerji at Jullundur with a heavy heart. He knew that he would have to lead the people of Jammu in the struggle and he was prepared for the worst. Dr. Mookerji was deeply impressed by the nobility of character, courage of conviction and winning manners and behaviour of that old man. He had developed sincere respect for him.

Soon after Pandit Dogra's return to Jammu, the Kashmir Government announced its decision to ceremoniously hoist the National Conference Party flag, which had since been adopted with a minor alteration as the State flag, on the State Secretariat at Jammu on the 17th of November. It was a direct challenge

and provocation to the people of Jammu. They decided to take up the challenge. Pandit Premnath Dogra declared that none but the Indian National Flag shall fly over Jammu and gave a clarion call to the people to prepare and get ready for making sacrifices for the vindication of their right to be one with their motherland—India.

The National Conference flag, now also the State flag, was not hoisted on the State Secretariat on the appointed day. The Government was aware of weakness of its position and, therefore, they decided to remedy it by the mobilisation of force. The ever obliging Pandit Nehru lent battalions of Central Armed Reserve Police and, at his behest, the Punjab Government followed suit with the supply of tear gas squads. Having thus equipped itself, Sheikh Abdullah's government began its policy of repression of which the people of Jammu were to be the victims. Pandit Prem Nath Dogra and Shri Shyam Lal Sharma, the President and the organising Secretary respectively of the Praja Parishad, were arrested on the 26th of November when they addressed a public meeting and hoisted the Indian tri-colour in the main square of Jammu city. This was the signal for the start of the Praja Parishad Satyagraha.

Though not so intended, this also became a signal for Dr. Mookerji to do whatever he could to secure justice for the people of Jammu and save India from yet another partition and ultimate disintegration.

CHAPTER XVII

JOINT FRONT ON EAST BENGAL

THE plight of the Hindu minority in East Pakistan and the indifferent attitude of the Government of India towards it, which impelled him to kick at his cabinet post in 1950, continued to be a matter of deep concern for Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji as long as he lived. His interest in the welfare and security of the Hindu compatriots of East Bengal, who had been deserted and thrown at the mercy of Pakistan much against their wishes, grew out of highest patriotic and humanitarian considerations and not by any means out of narrow, parochial or communal considerations. The condition of Hindus in East Pakistan was, he held, the acid test of that State's right to separate existence. The partition of the country had been accepted on the clear understanding that the minority communities in both the new dominions shall be guaranteed security of life and property and equal rights and treatment before the law. This was the argument advanced by the Congress leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel against the exchange of populations as suggested by the representative Hindus of East Bengal as also by Dr. Ambedkar, who had worked out a detailed scheme for the purpose, in his book—"Thoughts on Pakistan". Dr. Mookerji had also his doubts about the fate of Hindus in Pakistan and he supported the idea of planned exchange of populations. But on the basis of assurances given to him by the Congress leaders he changed his views and took steps to convey these assurances to the Hindus of East Bengal, which region he toured extensively on the eve of Partition.

The subsequent developments made it clear that Pakistan was not at all sincere about her professions regarding the treatment of minorities in Pakistan. Time and again the Government of India reminded her of the obligations that Partition Agreement had placed on her about the treatment of minorities and entered into a number of pacts to ensure that these noble

professions were put into practice. The Delhi Pact between Pandit Nehru and Mr. Liaqat Ali of April, 1950, for example, was the third of such agreements between the two Dominions.

Dr. Mookerji had lost all faith in pious agreements with Pakistan which were honoured by her only in their breach. He had also opposed the Nehru-Liaqat Pact because he was convinced that its fate would be no better than that of the earlier agreements. In his statement of his resignation he had given convincing reasons, based on irrefutable facts, as to why he thought that Pakistan would not honour the Agreement and as to why the process of extermination or squeezing out the Hindus would continue unabated.

The actual happening in Pakistan after the Delhi Pact proved his fears to be too true. Mr. Liaqat Ali had come down to Delhi in April, 1950, only to save Pakistan from the nemesis which his policy of extermination of Hindus was drawing upon her. But Pandit Nehru once again fell in his trap and the only realistic way of settling the problem once for all, for which Sardar Patel had prepared the country, fell through. Having thus outwitted Pandit Nehru, Liaqat Ali Khan returned to Karachi only to carry on unabated his policy of exterminating or squeezing out all Hindus from Pakistan by the use of new and more subtle techniques.

They included a secret circular asking all the thana officers to report on the "extent, nature and source of influence wielded by particular individuals of the minority (Hindu) community and the forces and parties that might work against them".

This was followed sometime later by another circular to all heads of commercial firms in East Pakistan to obtain the previous permission of the District Magistrates before giving employment to any non-Muslims. It was clear that no commercial firm would like to incur the displeasure of the government and undergo the botheration of securing permission from District Magistrates for giving employment to any Hindu.

Sometime later, another fourteen page long secret circular to all the District Magistrates, which was later produced before the Pakistan Constituent Assembly by Shri Bhupendra Kumar Datt, a member of that Assembly from East Bengal, instructed them not to return the lands and properties of the returning

Hindu migrants but to distribute them among the Muslim refugees. An unending list of similar Statutes, orders and legal bars followed one after the other. The District Magistrates were instructed to "talk sweetly to minorities and their representatives, even with a smile on your lips". "You have", it significantly added, "earned the compliments of persons like the honourable Mr. C. C. Biswas who have stated that it was only some subordinate officials who were responsible for the troubles; try by all means to maintain your reputation." It concluded with the advice, "Keep this instruction secret. Do not trust other officers. They sometimes mismanage and mishandle things."

No wonder, therefore, that Nehru-Liaquat Pact which was signed so ceremoniously at Delhi became a dead letter even before the ink had dried. Pakistan continued its policy of squeezing out the Hindus, but now she took precautions to ensure that they were not driven out in very large numbers at a time because she had learnt by experience that, besides creating sharp reaction in India which disturbed the equanimity of the mind of their friend Pandit Nehru, this also led to counter-action by the people of India even against the express wishes of their Government.

Consequently, in spite of the agreement, a steady influx of refugees from East Bengal continued to pour into India throughout 1950 and 1951. But, after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan at Rawalpindi at the end of 1951, which event was exploited by Pakistani Press to malign the enemies of Pakistan by which they meant India and Hindus, attempts began to be made to repeat the performance of February-March, 1950. Therefore, the killing and looting of Hindus and dishonouring of their womenfolk was resumed on a large scale in different parts of East Bengal. As a result the sense of insecurity in the minds of East Bengal Hindus, which Delhi Pact had failed to remove, became intense once again and the Hindus began to leave their hearths and homes in large numbers to save their life and honour.

During the course of his speech on the President's address in the opening session of the newly elected Parliament in May, 1952, Dr. Mookerji drew pointed attention of the Prime Minister to this increasing exodus from East Bengal. But, as

stated before, it not only failed to evoke any response from Pandit Nehru but, what was worse, led to some angry exchanges between the two. Pandit Nehru in his reply to the debate not only minimised the gravity of the situation but also gave a handle to Pakistan for counter propaganda against India by making the absolutely baseless charge that minorities were being ill-treated in India as well.

Pakistan was quick to exploit this attitude of India's Prime Minister towards the critics of their policy in India. Their campaign of intimidation and humiliation of Hindus with a view to convert them to Islam or to squeeze them out of Pakistan was, therefore, intensified. It also helped the rulers of Pakistan to divert the attention of Bengali Muslims from the growing demand for autonomy in East Bengal. To prevent young Hindu girls from being sent away to West Bengal for the safety of their honour and to make the humiliation of the Hindus complete, a "Girls Release Duty" was imposed on all Hindu girls leaving Pakistan. Their hopeless guardians had either to pay this undignified tax or leave their sisters and daughters to the mercy of Pakistani goondas.

To make things worse preparations were started for the introduction of passport and visa system for movements between East Pakistan and India. The idea of Pakistan in doing so was to avoid sudden large scale exodus which, they feared, would create sharp reaction in India. Their policy by now well-settled was to squeeze but not to flood Hindus out of Pakistan. She also wanted to create a sense of helplessness among the lower classes of Hindus, mostly artisans, whose stay in Pakistan was considered necessary for the maintenance of already shattered economy of East Bengal and also as a prerequisite to their ultimate conversion to Islam.

But to begin with, it had the opposite effect. The Hindus in East Bengal felt that the passport system was being devised to seal the only door open to them and thereby prevent their escape to India to save their life and honour. So many of them decided to escape to India before the passport system came into actual operation. Increased harassment by Ansars and other Pakistanis, with the active connivance of the Pakistan Government, further aggravated the situation. As a result lakhs of Hindus left their hearths and homes and began their

trek towards the Indo-Pakistan border. The situation became similar to that created by the planned killings prior to Nehru-Liaquat Pact.

As these hungry and exhausted refugees poured into Calcutta in large numbers carrying nothing with them except their tales of woe, a stir was created in West Bengal as also in the rest of India. Naturally Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji was very perturbed over the situation. He immediately took up the matter with the Government of India. He urged upon the Government to oppose the introduction of passport system, to adopt a definite and firm policy towards Pakistan and exert pressure on her to behave as a civilised government towards the Hindu minority. He also appealed to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to visit West Bengal and see for himself the situation created by the exodus from East Pakistan.

In the beginning no heed was paid to his appeals and the passport system came into operation on the 15th of October, 1952. This created a new problem for lakhs of Hindus who had left their homes in distant parts of East Bengal and who were on their way towards the border. They were completely stranded, and thousands of them lay helpless on rail and ferry heads on the Pakistan side not knowing what to do. They lay there exposed not only to rain and sun but also to the depredations of Pakistani goondas who preyed on their meagre possessions and their women-folk. To add to their harrassment, the rules for the issue of passports were made so difficult and complicated that for the common man it became a problem to secure one. For the unscrupulous amongst Pakistanis, the miserable plight of the Hindus became an opportunity to extract from the refugees their last penny. The price of post-card photographs, for example, needed for appending to the application for Passport, shot up to Rs. 40 apiece.

This situation forced even the Congress government of West Bengal to reinforce the appeals of public leaders like Dr. Mookerji to Pandit Nehru urging him to visit West Bengal and take some effective steps against Pakistan.

As a result, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru paid a hurried visit to Calcutta on his way to Assam on the 18th and 19th of October, 1952. Dr. Mookerji submitted to him a memorandum critically analysing the problem and suggesting that effective pressure

must be put on Pakistan if the problem of Hindus of East Bengal was to be settled. The gravity of the problem, he emphasized, should be judged not so much from the number of refugees, though that in itself was a big and serious problem, but from the conditions then prevailing in East Bengal which forced them to become refugees. He suggested that as a first step economic sanctions should be imposed against Pakistan and if that failed to produce the desired result, other plans and methods, previously contemplated by Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru himself, should be resorted to. But all his reasoning and appeals to Pandit Nehru went unheeded.

However, he was not the man to lose heart easily. Immediately he set himself the task of awakening the country to the gravity of the situation and of mobilising public opinion in support of his stand. He had always looked upon this problem not so much as a provincial or communal problem as a political problem of the national importance. It was, therefore, his endeavour that it should be treated as a national problem towards the solution of which all parties should extend their co-operation. That is why he had been appealing to Pandit Nehru, as Prime Minister and president of the biggest political party in the country, to take initiative in the matter.

But the attitude adopted by Pandit Nehru towards his appeals convinced him that he was either not amenable to appeals and reason or was incapable of taking any initiative. Therefore, he decided to take the initiative himself.

He approached the leaders of all the non-Congress and non-Communist parties working in West Bengal and held an all-parties conference for evolving a joint front and a common policy towards East Bengal Hindus. As a party the Congress would not come into his joint front for obvious reasons. The Communists, true to their anti-national character adopted the opposite policy of defending Pakistan in the creation of which they themselves had played a big part. They suggested that a good-will mission should be sent to Pakistan and started a campaign of vilification against Dr. Mookerji and those who co-operated with him.

In spite of this opposition Dr. Mookerji was able to bring all the other Opposition parties on a common platform. Huge joint all-party public meetings, excepting the Communists and

the Congress, were held at Calcutta Maidan on the 16th of October, and at Gandhi Grounds, Delhi, on the 26th of October, in which Government of India's policy towards Pakistan and its indifference towards the lot of Hindu minority there was severely criticised by leaders like Acharya J. B. Kripalani, Chairman of the Praja Socialist Party, and Shri N. C. Chatterji, President Hindu Mahasabha, besides, of course, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji.

During the course of his speech at Calcutta Meeting, over which he presided, Dr. Mookerji referred to the fundamental issues involved in the treatment of minorities in Pakistan. India, he said, was not partitioned as a result of war. It was an agreed act, intended for solving communal bitterness; but the basic condition was that people belonging to minority communities would continue to live in both countries and would receive the protection of their respective governments as indeed they would from any civilised government.

He declared that Pakistan Government's persistent and deliberate failure in guaranteeing the safety and protection to the Hindu and other minority people in Pakistan entitled India "to examine the whole problem of Partition *de novo* and proceed to act as any self respecting nation would do. It was not the misery of the suffering migrants alone that called for redress; if this exodus was unchecked it would give a blow to the safety and security not only of North Eastern India but of the entire country."

Pakistan, he declared, had been emboldened to behave in this scandalous fashion because of the weakness and vacillations of our own government. If only the government of India would take up a firm attitude the Pakistan government would know that its acts of omission and commission would lead to consequences which would hit the vital interests of that country both economically and politically. That was the only way to stop Pakistan government from acting as at present.

The Delhi Pact, he declared, was dead and buried. One Pact after the other between India and Pakistan had been entered into only to be repudiated by the latter country in practice. He demanded that this policy of appeasement, of pacts, of wait and see, be reversed.

He followed it up by organising an East Bengal Minorities

Convention on an all India basis at Calcutta on the 1st and 2nd of November 1952. The Convention, which was held at the University Institute Hall under the Presidentship of Smt. Sucheta Kripalani, was an eloquent testimony to the statesmanship, constructive mind, and organising ability of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji. He was the moving spirit behind the whole show. It was his stature as a national leader, the faith people had in his integrity and his constructive and realistic approach to the problem which had brought such varied, and even mutually hostile, elements as the Praja Socialists, the Revolutionary Socialists and the Hindu Maha Sabha on a common platform for a national purpose. It also demonstrated the growing strength and influence of his own party, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, whose nationalistic and realistic approach to the problems of the country and capacity to act was slowly being recognised even by its erstwhile critics.

The all-parties Convention unanimously demanded that economic sanctions be imposed on Pakistan and that the supply of essential goods to her be stopped as a first step to put effective pressure on her to make her behave as a responsible government. It also demanded withdrawal of passport and visa system between the two Bengals which, it declared, had been causing incalculable hardship to the people on both sides of the border.

The Convention also appointed a small sub-committee consisting, among others, of Dr. Mookerji and Smt. Sucheta Kripalani to draw plans and take necessary action for the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Convention.

The Convention concluded its deliberations with a huge public meeting at Willingdon Square, on the 2nd of November, where Dr. Mookerji, as also the spokesmen of other parties, laid stress on the urgency of the problem and called upon the people to be prepared even for making sacrifices to secure justice to their compatriots in Pakistan.

Addressing another huge meeting a few days later at Park Circus Maidan, which was attended by a large number of Muslims, he appealed to them to support the stand taken by all-parties Convention. The Pakistan government, he told them, had turned out to be an enemy of humanity and it

was the duty of every man, be he a Hindu or a Muslim, to raise his voice of protest wherever humanity was oppressed.

To educate and mobilise public opinion all over the country the Sub-Committee issued an appeal under the signatures of leaders of all the non-Congress and non-Communist Parties of the country including Dr. Mookerji, Acharya and Mrs. Kripalani, Shri N. C. Chatterji, Master Tara Singh, General Mohan Singh, Shri R. S. Ruiker (of the Forward Bloc), Shri S. S. More (of the Peasants and Workers Party) and Shri Rajbhoj (of the Scheduled Castes Federation) to observe November 23rd, as the All-India East Bengal Minority Rights Day all over the country under the combined auspices of all the parties.

Before this, Dr. Mookerji once again placed before the Parliament on the 15th of November, the case of East Bengal Hindus, in one of his most forceful speeches which was listened to with rapt attention by the Chief Justice, Mr. Patanjali Sastri and other judges of the Supreme Court, Secretaries of the various departments of the Central Government and a number of foreign diplomats including Sir Shuaib Qureshi, the High Commissioner of Pakistan in India, besides a full house and crowded visitors and galleries.

In the course of that speech, which proved to be his last in the Parliament on the question of East Bengal—a problem, which had been uppermost in his mind since the partition of India—he appealed to the members of Parliament, “to make up their mind once for all whether under the existing circumstances it is possible for the minority to live in East Pakistan. That is the fundamental issue. And if they say that it is not, then to make up their minds whether it is possible for the government of free India to take any effective steps for their protection”.

He reminded Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru of the pledges and assurances that he, along with other Congress leaders, had given to Hindus of East Bengal on the eve of partition and he also recalled Nehru's speech on the 15th of August, 1947, in the course of which he had said: “We think also of our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by the political boundaries and who, unhappily, cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and

will remain of us, whatever may happen in future, and we shall be sharers in good and ill fortune alike."

And then he called upon Pandit Nehru, "who is now Prime Minister of India, to fulfil this pledge which he had given in such noble words to those who had suffered with him and others like him for the liberation of their motherland".

He recalled his own experiences of meetings with the leaders of Pakistan like Mr. Ghulam Mohammed and Khwaja Nazimuddin as a minister in the central cabinet. He described his experiences of failure as bitter and tragic which had, unfortunately, continued all these five years and reminded Pandit Nehru of his own statement of February 1950, when he had said: "When peaceful methods fail other methods will be adopted by the Government", and asked him to "tell us whether time has not come to adopt other methods".

He put to the government the fundamental question: "Do you believe that you have any responsibility for the protection of the minorities?" "Panditji" he went on, "had said on that occasion (February 1950) that they are our concern: the protection of minorities is a matter which he will have to take in hand. They will be rehabilitated in their homes, if possible, or elsewhere if necessary".

Referring to the question of rehabilitation of those who had come out of Pakistan he quoted some representative Harijans of East Bengal who had come over to India to save their honour and religion but had gone back disappointed to Pakistan. They had told him, "We came to India for rehabilitation; we have not got it. Our children have died. We are going back. What is the crime we have committed? We did not want Pakistan. You asked us to live there and it is only because we are Hindu we are facing this crisis. We will embrace Islam, we will surrender ourselves". And he asked: "Will it bring credit to India? Will it be something of which India can be proud?"

Explaining his own approach to the problem he said: "I look at this problem from two points of view. One rehabilitation and the other the future of people who are still in Pakistan. Rehabilitation," he added, "must naturally be continued. But it is not an easy task. And if more continue to come, your rehabilitation plans will never be successful.

Where will be your planning schemes? What are you going to do if another fifty or sixty lakhs of people are pushed out of Pakistan and they come over here?"

This, he declared, went against the very basic presumptions of the partition agreement: "We accepted Pakistan under certain basic conditions. When that basic condition is not observed by Pakistan, then the very basis of partition disappears. From that point of view the Partition stands annulled and India is not bound by her commitments. It is not my wording alone. The Prime Minister himself has declared from that very place that the basic condition is that minorities must be protected by Pakistan. We have done our duty. India has protected its minorities".

He was opposed to any communal or parochial approach to the problem. "It is a national problem," he declared, "we must find a national solution for it. The killing of some innocent Muslims because Hindus are butchered in Pakistan will be a vicious circle and is most inhuman. The true interpretation of Hinduism is that if a man goes wrong you should punish him, but if a man is innocent and you go and cut his throat that simply poisons the atmosphere. It does not save people".

He narrated before the Parliament a few of the hundreds of cases of cold-blooded butchery of Hindus and barbarous crimes committed against their women folk that had been reported to him. The narration brought tears even to the eyes of Congress members. He made a pathetic appeal to Pandit Nehru not to under-estimate the woes of Hindus by making such statements as "everything is all right except some insecurity." "He may declare his helplessness," he added, "but for heaven's sake do not say things which are not true. That would be like throwing salt into the gaping wound. You may not be able to protect them, you may not be able to help them but do not minimise the gravity of the situation".

"Unfortunately," he continued, "the statements which the Prime Minister made during the last few days will form part of Pakistan propaganda against India".

Coming to the remedies, he made it absolutely clear that he wanted an immediate solution of the problem and was prepared to give his fullest co-operation to the government for

the purpose. "We do not want that people should be killed by inches. If they have to die let them die all at once" he declared. "This is a chain of terrible humiliation and misery which affects not individuals alone but which humiliates the status and stature of the nation".

"We have given some remedies," he added, "other remedies may be suggested. Economic sanctions is one. Naturally demand for land is one. It was Sardar Patel's remedy. If one-third of the population who happen to be Hindus are pushed out, Pakistan must give one-third of the land. We cannot ruin the whole country of India for misdeeds of Pakistan. There must be a re-partition of the territory of Pakistan and these people must be settled there".

Then he referred to a remedy suggested by no less a man than Gandhiji with whom he had once discussed the problem along with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Gandhiji, he revealed, had told them, "Let India play her part; you protect the minorities, let not one man be turned out of here; then turn towards Pakistan and say: we have fulfilled our part, but you have not; it becomes a world problem, it becomes a moral problem. And if Pakistan fails to do so, if there is no other remedy, you must take charge of East Bengal, let the Government take charge and protect the people".

"I am not advocating war" he explained, "but if there is no other way of protecting the minorities of East Pakistan except to take charge of that territory, Government of India someday will have to consider it". He thought that even such an eventuality could be completely avoided if the Prime Minister were only to declare that his Government would act firmly and not adopt a policy of weakness and appeasement because, "goondaism does not wish to face war. They want to gain something without sacrifice".

He denounced the policy of appeasement adopted by Pandit Nehru towards Pakistan and ridiculed his defence of that policy. "I am amazed at it" he declared. "He (Pandit Nehru) may say, I cannot find a solution; I can sympathise with that. But he glorifies the appeasement and goes on appeasing. At whose cost? If he does it at his own cost, I do not mind, though I shall be sorry. But what right has he to appease at the cost of the nation? It is a question

of the honour and self-respect of India. Something has to be done to prevent a major catastrophe."

It was, he held, primarily the task of the Government to find a remedy. The Opposition could only make suggestions and offer its co-operation. "Find out an effective solution," he therefore asked the Government, "by which these people can be enabled to live exercising their elementary rights without being ruined as refugees or beggars or slaves".

Referring to the healing touch theory of Pandit Nehru he said: "The Prime Minister very often says he believes in a healing process. Undoubtedly. Healing by what means? Healing by curing the disease? If there is a cancerous growth, will you put sandal oil on the cancer and heal it? You will have to go to the root of it. You will have to appreciate what the disease is."

What pained him most, he declared, was that the "Government are running away from the real problem. They just say there is no problem, people are not coming. But coming or not coming the disease is there". And then he repeated the suggestion that he had also made in 1950. "Until you can go and settle there with your wives and daughters, you cannot realise the agony of millions."

Finally he appealed to the Government not to talk of Gandhian ideology because "whatever Gandhiji was, cowardice was not within his ideology. Inaction was not within his ideology. He would have never sat quiet and helpless. Resist non-violently if possible, violently if necessary, but never submit to a wrong", was his philosophy. "I ask the Government," he pleaded, "to accept that as policy. Resist this national wrong."

He wound up this great oration, a most pathetic, eloquent and convincing advocacy of the cause of millions of Hindus of East Bengal, by an exhortation which needs to be harked even today. "Peace undoubtedly is wanted, but peace with honour. Let us follow the path of peace. If we can lay out the scheme whereby we can finally solve this problem peacefully, then let us do it. But if not, do not submit to wrong things."

As scheduled, the 23rd of November was observed as All-India East Bengal Minority Rights Day throughout India. As was

expected, Bharatiya Jana Sangh played the leading role and all other parties co-operated. Dr. Mookerji himself addressed a mammoth meeting at the Ramlila Ground in New Delhi, which was presided over by General Mohan Singh and was addressed by all the leaders of the Opposition parties and groups in the Parliament excepting the Communist Party.

The mass enthusiasm for the cause of East Bengal Hindus generated by the observance of this day had some effect on the minds of the rulers both at New Delhi and Karachi. The gods of Karachi realised that they had over-played their hand. Therefore they began to take steps which were no other than a repetition of the old tactics. Some reassuring speeches were made by Khwaja Nazimuddin, who also started correspondence with Pandit Nehru for yet another meeting, apparently to be followed by a Pact on the lines of earlier Nehru-Liaquat Pact. But he was thrown over-board even before he could come to Delhi and re-enact the drama of "friendly" talks with Nehru. However, his part was performed for him by his successor, Mr. Mohammed Ali.

In New Delhi, Pandit Nehru was getting restive over this unholy alliance of "nationalist" parties like the P.S.P., the Revolutionary Socialist Party, and the Forward Bloc with the "Communal" parties like Jana Sangh, under the leadership of "communalist" Mookerji. The scheming mind of Pandit Nehru, therefore, began correspondence with Shri J. P. Narain, the P.S.P. leader, for a Congress-P.S.P. coalition so that the latter could be weaned away from the growing influence of Dr. Mookerji.

So far as the condition of Hindus in East Bengal was concerned, it remained what it was. Pakistan continued to be as insincere as ever and Pandit Nehru's international heart was too full with the miseries of the people of Tunisia, Morocco and Korea to have any feeling for the miserable plight of his own compatriots in East Pakistan.

Therefore a conviction began to grow in the mind of Dr. Mookerji—which conviction, no doubt, was also confirmed by the failure of his efforts to persuade Pandit Nehru to, at least, meet Pandit Premnath Dogra to discuss the Jammu issue—that the Prime Minister was not amenable to reason and that his unlimited powers had made him too arrogant and

puffed up to take into consideration any view point which was different from his, unless it was backed by power or couched in threats of agitation. He was thus being gradually driven by circumstances much against his wishes to the path of Satyagraha, as the only means of making the "democratic" government to do anything in the matter.

Before, however, he could do something further for East Bengal, the Kashmir issue came to a head and it assumed such urgency that he had to throw himself completely into it. He never for a moment became oblivious of East Bengal and of the plight of the Hindus there. In his Presidential address at the Kanpur Session of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in December 1952, he drew specific attention to the problem of East Bengal along with that of Kashmir. In view of the special circumstances in Kashmir it was his intention to take up the issue of East Bengal and do everything possible to force the hands of the Government of India to settle it in an amicable manner, as soon as his hands were free from Kashmir. Unfortunately, Kashmir freed him from his mortal bonds, bequeathing the great burden of East Bengal on his heart to his followers.

It is painful to think as to what he would have thought of and done about the developments taking place in Pakistan, which culminated in adoption of a constitution which declared Pakistan to be an Islamic State whose laws are to be in conformity with the Holy Quran and the 'Sunnah'. Furthermore, it contained a provision about a State sponsored missionary organisation for the propagation of Islam which is obviously meant to convert those Hindus in East Bengal who have either not been squeezed out or whose continuance in Pakistan is considered essential for her economy.

INDIA'S CULTURAL AMBASSADOR

IN SPITE of his total preoccupation with politics, which began to absorb most of his time and energy during the later years of his life, Dr. Mookerji was never completely lost to education, literature and Indian culture—the Bharatiya Sanskriti—for which he had developed keen interest and devotion from his early youth. The great culture and ideals of India and the moral and spiritual values for which they stood had always had a special appeal and fascination for him. He was no idle devotee of them. He imbibed them in his own life and tried to live up to them.

He took a very comprehensive view of the term 'culture' or 'Sanskriti'. He considered it to mean the sum total of the highest achievements of a people in the realm of thought and action which imperceptibly mould the mind and influences the conduct of that people, individually as well as collectively.

History, literature, lives of great men and national festivals, he held, play a great part in this process of influencing the conduct of the race. In India all these are essentially Hindu. Therefore, he considered Indian culture to be in essence Hindu culture which has come down in a continuous flow right from the Vedic times, absorbing and assimilating the contributions of a number of new elements which, in the course of History, got merged into the Hindu or Bharatiya society. Some basic features of this Bharatiya Culture according to him, are :

1. Concept of a Universal God which is 'Satyam' (truth), 'Shivam' (bliss) and 'Sundaram' (beauty) as distinct from sectarian gods of some of the semitic religions.
2. Philosophy of rebirth.
3. Philosophy of 'Karma'.
4. Equal rights for all.
5. Equal opportunities for all.
6. Respect and reverence for the learned and the pious as distinct from the rich.

7. Balance between the rights of the individual and the society.
8. Concept of live and let live.
9. Freedom of thought—Tolerance.
10. Emphasis on character.

It is the historic mission of Bharat, he held, to give her cultural message to the world and help restore the balance between the moral and the material aspects of man's life.

He, therefore, was of the opinion that the Indian missions abroad should try to interpret India's culture and ideals through their own lives and conduct instead of trying to emulate their western counter-parts in pomp and show and external luxury.

He believed that men like Swami Vivekananda and Lala Hardayal had done more to raise the stock of India in the eyes of the West than all the political missions that India had sent out since her freedom because, they lack that faith in the ultimate destiny of India and proper understanding of her ideals and culture which distinguished those unofficial cultural ambassadors of the India in bondage.

It was his keen desire that their work of interpreting real India and her thought and culture to the people of the West as also of the East should be continued and he himself had a strong urge from within to go on a lecturing tour of the U.S.A. and Britain for the purpose. He had actually received an invitation from the U.S.A. for such a tour and it was his intention to fulfil this mission after suitably settling the pressing Kashmir issue.

Though the cruel hand of death snatched him and did not permit him to play the role of India's cultural ambassador to the West—a role for which he was so eminently suited—he did play the role in the countries of South-East Asia when he visited them as President of Mahabodhi Society of India in 1952.

Dr. Mookerji's interest in the Mahabodhi Society of India and Buddhism was born out of his conviction that Buddhist thought and culture, which is essentially Indian or Hindu in its inspiration and essence, could act as a great unifying factor to bind together the Buddhist world, particularly the South Asian countries, with India. Awareness of such a community

of thought and culture, he felt, could create an abiding unity between these countries and India transcending any differences in the economic or political sphere and enabling Bharat to play her ancient role of the world teacher—the "Jagat Guru".

He looked upon Mahatma Buddha as a world teacher who gave the best of Indian thought and culture to the world through his life and teachings. According to him it was wrong to suggest that Buddhism had disappeared from the soil of India. Buddhism as taught by Mahatma Buddha, he thought, had been assimilated by the age old current of Hindu culture of which, to start with, it was a constituent. The fact that Mahatma Buddha has been accepted as one of the ten 'Avtars', or incarnations of God, by the Indian people, he stressed, was the most convincing refutation of the belief that India had rejected Buddhism. What she rejected was not the essence of Buddhism which Mahatma Buddha propounded, but the overcoating given to it many centuries later, which transformed it from a reformist movement, which essentially it was, into a religion with separate rituals and dogmas. India rejected the over-coating but assimilated the essential spirit within it.

Dr. Mookerji was attracted by that spirit. He did not mind what rituals and dogmas were adopted or developed by different sects of Buddhism so long as they did not lose sight of the essential spirit which was common between them and all the other sects constituting the commonwealth of Hindu Dharma. He tried to emphasise and popularise that common spirit among the Buddhists and thereby rendered a very great service to the cause of cultural unity of India and the countries of South-East Asia whose geographical position, economic interests and demands of security, point to the need of closer understanding amongst them in the political sphere as well.

An opportunity to demonstrate this unity of thought and culture between India and the Buddhist countries of South-East Asia, was provided by his visits to Burma and Indo-China along with the sacred relics of Sari-Putta and Maha-Moggallana, the two chief disciples of Mahatma Buddha, prior to their re-enshrinement in the new Vihara at Sanchi on November 30, 1952.

These relics had been taken out of the ancient Stupa of

Sanchi by General Cunningham in 1851. They were then sent to England and were kept there in the British Museum. After the attainment of freedom they were returned to India and as President of the Maha-Bodhi Society of India, were handed over to Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, by the Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, on the 14th of January 1949, at Calcutta amidst great ceremonial fanfare.

This was followed by requests from different Buddhist countries like Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia and Tibet for an opportunity to worship the relics in their own lands before they were re-enshrined at Sanchi. On their invitation Dr. Mookerji visited Burma in March and Cambodia and Indo-China in October 1952, along with the sacred relics.

He visited Burma at a time when the Communist guerillas were making the life miserable both for the Government as also for the common people. Even Rangoon, the capital of Burma, was not safe from their depredations. The whole of Burma was in turmoil.

The visit of Dr. Mookerji with the relics and the mass enthusiasm and devotion they aroused in the people's minds changed the situation. The people of Burma who had been torn between different political factions and loyalties rediscovered their cultural unity in the common reverence for the gospel of the Buddha. It created a reaction in their minds against the Communist irreligiosity and cult of violence. Ever since then the situation in Burma has been improving and the Communists guerillas have been liquidated.

"You do not know how great a service you have rendered to my country," said Thakin Nu, the Premier of Burma, to Dr. Mookerji at Sanchi in November, 1952 when he visited that place to take part in the ceremonies connected with the re-enshrinement of the relics. "Your visit with the relics brought about a wonderful change in my people. They have found their soul."

The Indian community in Burma also gave him a royal reception. The volunteers of Bharatiya Swayam Sewak Sangh, a cultural and social organisation working among Indians overseas, gave him a guard of honour at the airport; the Burmese Indian Congress gave him a reception in the Congress hall; and he addressed a mass meeting of the Burmese and

Indians at the Bandula Square.

He created a tremendous impact on the minds of the Burmese who heard from his mouth the message of the Buddha, whose memory closely binds them to India as no economic and political pacts can. They began to think of him as one of them, a sage who had come to re-awaken in them the faith that had been shaken by the stresses, the strains, the confusion and the turmoil in the wake of the violent overthrow of the British rule in Burma by the Japanese. While talking to the premier of Burma before enplaning for Calcutta, a Burmese lady standing nearby remarked in her own tongue, "He looks to be a Burman". It drew loud laughter from everyone standing nearby. On being explained the reason for peels of laughter all around him, Dr. Mookerji felt elated because he could appreciate the undercurrents of oneness which must have prompted that remark from the lady.

On the 6th of October of the same year he visited, at the invitation of the Cambodian Government, Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, with the sacred relics. The scenes of pious revotion that he witnessed there had deep effect on his mind. Over a million monks and laymen lined the route from the aerodrome to the Silver Pagoda where the relics were kept for worship. He addressed half a million Cambodians in the main square of the city about the message of Mahatma Buddha and the cultural ties that bound India and the Buddhist countries. As his speech was translated into the Cambodian language by an interpreter, thousands of them actually shed tears of joy and devotion. They prostrated before him as if he were a Messiah who had come to re-awaken them on behalf of their spiritual mother—India.

He also visited the ruins of the world famous Hindu temples and palaces at Angkor Vat, which still preserve hundreds of exquisite images of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as 'Trimurti' and on the walls of which are preserved scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in exquisite carvings in stone that remind the visitor of the glory that was India.

From Phnom Penh he visited Saigon, then capital of Indo-China. There too he witnessed similar scenes of devotion and reverence for India.

On his way back, his plane halted at Bangkok for a few

hours to enable thousands of Siamese who had collected there to worship the relics. Indian diplomats at the Thai capital also met him there and had brief talks with him. From the talks he came to know, to his great disappointment, that the reports of pro-India sentiments of those people, which pointed to the advisability of developing closer cultural relations with them, were usually not sent to Indian Foreign Office at New Delhi, because they were not liked there.

He had been extended an invitation by the Government of Ceylon as well. He intended to visit that country where economic and political developments had unfortunately given rise to an antipathy between the Indian settlers and the Ceylonese. Had he visited that country, he might have brought about a transformation in the hearts of the people there which no political pacts can.

The last activity, and a memorable one, of Dr. Mookerji as the cultural leader of South-East Asia came towards the end of November 1952, when the New Vihara at Sanchi was opened and the sacred relics were re-enshrined in it. An International Cultural Conference was also held to mark the occasion. It was attended by statesmen, ministers and religious leaders from all Buddhist countries of the world except Communist China.

In his welcome address to the Cultural Conference, which was presided over by India's Vice-President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Dr. Mookerji pointed out the great utility of the genuine cultural contacts such as that conference had provided. "Many of these countries in South-East Asia" Dr. Mookerji said, "after attaining independence, are striving hard to receive the highest elements of Buddhist cultural and religious thought. In this respect India occupies the role of their spiritual mother".

"With a true sense of humility and responsibility," he added, "India can re-establish bonds of friendship and understanding with them so that this fraternity will not only be welcomed by the peoples of the countries concerned but will also create a mighty source of strength and solidarity which can worthily contribute to the maintenance of world peace and freedom".

On the following day, the doors of the new 'Vihar' were opened with full religious rights. Speaking on that occasion,

Dr. Mookerji dilated upon the role of cultural centres like Sanchi. "Such centres," he said, "must not remain confined to the educated few; but from them must flow currents of thought and service so that the poorer people suffering from ignorance, disease, poverty and superstition might receive their due inspiration and be helped to raise themselves socially and economically so as to become worthy citizens of free India".

It was his plan to open schools and dispensaries in the villages around Sanchi, to be maintained and manned by the monks of the Sanchi Vihar, so that the common people of the region could feel the presence of the great soul whose memory was preserved for posterity by the stupas of Sanchi.

Paying his tributes to the memory of Mahatma Buddha, he said, "Gautam Buddha was not born on the soil of India by accident. The genius of India from time immemorial has been reflected through the words and deeds of mighty men, sages and savants, who gave to their country and to the world the benefits of their wisdom and guidance consistent with the changing needs and aspirations of society. When stagnation came, when the external manifestations of religious rites destroyed the life blood of true religion, these savants appeared on the scene and served to maintain her soul from destruction. Gautam Buddha represented, 2,500 years ago, a unique challenge of the scientific spirit of man when he declared his unwillingness to accept anything as true without full and searching analysis and self-satisfaction".

Referring to the desirability of world peace and the path shown by Mahatma Buddha to achieve it, he said: "Buddha showed the path of peace, peace not of the grave but of the living, peace born out of deep understanding and proper appreciation of the realities of life. Peace can only be permanent if it conquers evil and brings about a true harmony between spiritual and material impulses of man so that both by his preaching and practice he may prove himself the image of his Maker."

The celebrations at Sanchi, incidentally, were the last occasion when Dr. Mookerji and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru met face to face outside the Parliament to talk about culture and peace in the whole world.

Besides the Mahabodhi Society of India, and the Asiatic

society of Bengal, he continued to take active interest in education and literature in the midst of his multifarious political and parliamentary work.

The last public recognition of his distinguished position as an educationist came in December 1952, when he was invited to address the thirtieth annual convocation of the University of Delhi. The address he delivered on the occasion proved to be the last public expression of his views on education and, therefore, has a special significance for the proper understanding of his approach to the problem of education.

Like his distinguished father, who jealously and successfully guarded the academic freedom and autonomy of the Calcutta University against official encroachment, even when it came from such stalwarts of Pax Britannica as Lord Lytton, Dr. Mookerji was very anxious to preserve the autonomy of the Indian Universities. He was particularly disturbed by the growing interference of the Ministry of Education of the Government of India, presided over as it was by a man like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who happened to be completely ignorant of the ideals and problems of university education in general and of the universities directly under his control in particular. He, therefore, warned the Delhi University that "Proximity of a University to the seat of Central Government is sometimes fraught with the danger of unnecessary and irritating state interference which it is to be earnestly hoped will be avoided."

All necessary reforms in the Universities, he held, should primarily be carried out by the respective universities themselves who should balance regional requirements against national progress and interests. The Inter-University Board and the Universities Grants Commission could also guide the Universities by developing healthy conventions, whereby their considered opinions could not be easily flouted by the University concerned. Well informed deliberations in the State Legislatures and the Parliament at the time of voting for grants could also, he held, help the universities in the matter.

He stressed the need for developing a comprehensive national system to cater to the needs of various stages of education. "There need not be," he said, "any conflict amongst primary, secondary and university stages nor amongst

literary, scientific, technical, vocational and agricultural courses of study. A national system of education", he pleaded, "must conceive of a balanced structure where due and proper emphases will be laid on every section so as to maintain its harmony, its strength and solidarity".

Regarding the medium of instruction he advocated the use of mother tongue, and where it was not fully developed of the regional language upto the higher secondary stage. "But while Indian languages," he said, "must be fostered and developed in the widest possible manner, they must not take a hostile attitude towards English".

He also strongly advocated publication under State patronage of the selected works from different Indian languages in the Nagri script to facilitate comparative study of the different regional languages and to enable the people to comprehend the essential unity between the different languages of India.

A planned exchange of University teachers and teams of students between different universities, he held, could go a long way towards developing unity of outlook and proper appreciation of the problems and peculiarities of different regions of the country.

He suggested re-orientation of the policy of awarding scholarships for studies abroad. Such scholarships, he held, should be given for those subjects only in which specialised facilities were not available in India.

To provide facilities for higher training in science and technology within the country speedily, he suggested that different universities should specialise in particular branches of science and technology and that they must be open to advanced students of the subject from all over the country.

He laid special emphasis on the fact that the education given to the youth of the country should be purposeful. "It is a supreme task for university administrators and teachers," he said, "to read into the minds of the youth of re-awakened India and to place before them not only well regulated courses of study and well thought out programmes for extra-curricular activities but also rousing in them a true scientific spirit and a deep impulse for devoted service to the cause of national well-being. A compulsory provision for three months of intensive social work for at least every intending

graduate may narrow the gulf that divides the so-called educated class from the illiterate masses."

It was his considered opinion that the ideal to be achieved in the educational sphere should be free elementary education for all and higher education only for those who deserved it instead of only for those who can afford but do not deserve it. It was, he held, the duty of the State to arrange for the higher education of brilliant but poor students. For the ordinary students, avenues of technical education and training must be provided after a minimum basic education. The number of students for different trades and professions should also be related to the needs of the respective trades to avoid glut and unemployment.

A week later as the President of All-India Bengali Literary Conference—Nikhil Bharat Banga Sahitya Sammelan—he was called upon to give his views on the important question of language and literature at the Conference held at Cuttack on the 24th and 25th of December 1952.

The vernacular languages of India, particularly the Bengali language, and their literature, always had special fascination for him. It was to demonstrate the importance he attached to these languages of the country that he had taken up Indian vernaculars for his M.A. His interest in Bengali literature continued all his life. It was in recognition of his deep understandings of the literary trends in the Indian languages and the services he had rendered to Bengali languages, that he was elected to preside over the Twenty-Eighth Annual Session of the Sammelan.

During the course of his Presidential address at the Sammelan, he dwelt upon the role and position of regional languages of India *vis-a-vis* Hindi, the national language of the country. He stood for paying full attention to the development of all the regional languages. He was opposed to any kind of imposed uniformity and considered it contrary to the Indian tradition. "Achievement of unity amidst adversity," he said, "has always been India's aim. Bearing this cardinal fact in mind, we should give full scope to the different regional languages to further enrich themselves and discountenance any move to further the cause of one language at the cost of the other".

Devnagri being the script of Sanskrit, he held, should be adopted as the script for all Indian languages. He attached greater importance to common script as a contributory factor for national unity than to the unity of language itself.

He regarded Hindi as the natural *lingua franca* of the country and he wanted it to be developed and encouraged to such an extent that it could become an effective medium of expression in all provinces of the country. But to give Hindi a really Indian character and make it easily understandable by all, he thought it desirable that appropriate words and expressions used in different regional languages should be incorporated therein. He thought that an authoritative Hindi dictionary which should contain special words and phrases of all regional languages could go a long way in developing a common vocabulary and bringing all the regional languages closer to one another and to Hindi.

His own experience of speaking in Hindi proved the practicability of the above suggestion. His Hindi was none too good when he became the President of Bharatiya Jana Sangh. But realising that he would have to address common people in Hindi, he thought of learning Hindi with the help of an English-Hindi dictionary. But he did not have the time for it. Pandit Mauli Chandra Sharma, thereupon, advised him not to bother unnecessarily about learning Hindi words and expressions. "Use your Bengali words and expressions whenever you cannot remember an appropriate Hindi word or expression," he told him, "and you will be perfectly understood by Hindi-speaking audiences". He tried it and found it a success beyond his imagination. Within an year he became as effective a speaker in Hindi as he was in English and Bengali.

This deep insight into the cultural and educational life of the country coupled with his academic attainments and literary taste gave a quality and tone to his politics which was lacking in most other political leaders of the day. He would never take anything on its face value. He had developed a historical perspective and analytical mind which made him go into the origin and development of all problems before the country with an open mind and rare objectivity. That enabled him

to take a long range view of things, which is essential in a statesman.

It also enabled him to gather a galaxy of learned men, teachers, professors and advocates, around him to whom he became the guide and model. He wanted them to take active interest in public affairs but warned him against making politics their profession. It was because of his advice and guidance that the author, having resigned his job of a lecturer in the Punjab University Camp College, New Delhi, on being elected Secretary of the Jana Sangh in 1951, rejoined the College in 1952.

Politics, he used to say, is not the game of dullards and dunces. A politician must remain in touch with books and must make a deep study of the problems and issues before the country. This would raise the quality of his performance inside and outside the legislatures. It was his considered view that no politician could take a really independent stand on public issues unless he was independent economically. Bossism in political parties, according to him, was mainly the result of political workers' dependence on party bosses for their living. He, therefore, wanted political workers to have their independent means of living. He was against any bar on teachers taking part in politics. He rather encouraged teachers to take to political and social work. That is why he had maximum number of teacher politicians as his colleagues and co-workers in the political life.

Even when he became totally engrossed in politics, he did not lose touch with education. His interest in academic and cultural life of the country and his eminence as an intellectual won him the admiration of even those who did not see eye to eye with his politics. His views on academic and cultural matters continued to be sought with respect even by his political opponents till the end of his life.

CHAPTER XIX

A MOMENTOUS DECISION

THE last and most momentous phase of Dr. Mookerji's career as a political leader began with his re-election as President of Bharatiya Jana Sangh followed by the first plenary Session of the Sangh at Kanpur in the last week of December, 1952. The tumultuous welcome he received from the people of Kanpur when he arrived there to preside over the Session and the momentous decisions that Jana Sangh took there under his leadership marked the pinnacle of his political career.

Reports had been constantly reaching Dr. Mookerji about the heroic and patriotic struggle of the people of Jammu for the integration of their State with the rest of India and the terrible repression that Sheikh Abdullah's Government had let loose on them with the connivance and support of the Pandit Nehru's Government at New Delhi. He had already expressed his full sympathy for and solidarity with the Praja Parishad by giving a call for the observance of December 14 as Jammu and Kashmir Day all over the country. It was therefore clear to him as also to one thousand delegates that had assembled at Kanpur from all over India that a decision would have to be taken to extend the active support of the Jana Sangh to the struggle being waged by the Praja Parishad for the cause of Indian unity. For Dr. Mookerji it was a challenge and an opportunity to galvanise Bharatiya Jana Sangh and make it an effective instrument for the protection of the rights and liberties of the Indian people. It also provided him the occasion to make his considered views on national and international problems known to the rank and file of his young organisation and establish a close personal touch with its workers.

The Presidential Address and other utterances of Dr. Mookerji during the three-day session laid down the guidelines for the Jana Sangh and gave a clear and bold lead to the whole country. His personal conduct which was watched by

the workers from close quarters endeared him to all of them and established that rapport between him and the organisation which proved to be the biggest asset of the Jana Sangh in the difficult days ahead.

Referring to the character of Bharatiya Jana Sangh in his Presidential address which he delivered in his forceful Bengali Hindi, he said that "It will be a fatal mistake to confine the membership of any political party in free India to sections of the people based on caste, community or religion. But while extending its hand of equality to all citizens, Jana Sangh", he declared, "does not feel ashamed to urge for the consolidation of Hindu society nor does it suffer from an inferiority complex to acknowledge proudly that the great edifice of Indian culture and civilisation which has stood the test of thousands of years has been built most of all by the labour, wisdom and sacrifice of Hindu sages, savants and patriots throughout the chequered history of our Motherland".

"If India's freedom is to be purposeful" he continued, "a correct appreciation of the fundamental features of Indian culture is highly essential. A nation that fails to take pride in its past achievements or take inspiration therefrom can never build up the present or plan for the future. A weak nation can never attain greatness".

Referring to the First Five-Year Plan that had just been made public he pointed out: "India today needs a big psychological shake up and the plan unfortunately does not fulfil this essential requirement." But he recognised the "laborious and intelligent" activity that had gone into the making of the plan and declared, "there is no question of opposing the plan even if it does not fulfil our expectations".

He dealt at length with the problems of Kashmir, East Bengal and rehabilitation of refugees. Regarding Kashmir, where the Praja Parishad satyagraha was daily gaining momentum, he pleaded for sympathetic understanding of the fears and doubts of the people of Jammu. "Even at this late stage," he said, "I would appeal to Mr. Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah to cry a halt and not to stand on false prestige. They must open negotiations with the Parishad leaders and arrive at a settlement which will be fair and just to all. Meanwhile", he declared, "our active sympathy must be extended to all those

in Jammu who are facing bravely the wrath of the authorities and silently suffering for a noble cause".

Referring to the plight of Hindus in East Pakistan who "if they live there as at present will live as serfs or converts", he deplored the spirit of helplessness shown by India. "It is tragic," he said, "that our stock should be so low in the eyes of Pakistan that it dares humiliate us in season and out of season and our Government should stand by as helpless spectator incapable of taking any effective action". He also warned that activities of fifth columnists within India were steadily on the increase. "If this state of affairs," he declared, "continued, our freedom may become short lived and we will be heading towards a grave catastrophe". Regarding rehabilitation he demanded that an independent commission be appointed to consider the nature and extent of rehabilitation already effected and to suggest lines of action for the future.

Deprecating the tendency to over-emphasise internationalism to the neglect of the basic problem of national solidarity, he said, "Internationalism can thrive only if there is a sound base of national solidarity. We should, therefore, strive hard to keep our home front safe and sound. It is not armies or navies or air forces or arms or ammunitions that ultimately constitute the strength of a nation. Real strength of a nation emanates from the people themselves. If they are contented, if they are united, if they are determined to retain their freedom at any cost or to face any sacrifice or suffering for building up their national life, there is no power on earth that can destroy such a nation. We have attained our freedom after nearly a thousand years. Whatever differences there may be among political parties, whatever may be the hopes and fears of sections of our people, we must learn the lesson of history and not allow disunity in our ranks to be a cause of our ruination in future".

"India with her past traditions and with immense possibilities of her future development," he declared "could play a very large part in creating an atmosphere for peace. But a distorted conception of secularism along with grave economic disabilities is arresting the natural growth of country's manpower and material resources". He concluded this historic speech with the prayer that the organisation he was leading

may succeed in fulfilling the mission of rebuilding India on right and progressive lines. "There is no hope for India," he said, "unless she worthily develops herself taking firm root in her culture and civilisation, advancing with the changing needs of the times and marching ahead with the torch of equality, progress and righteousness in hand. In this mighty task of national reconstruction may Jana Sangh play its part with the goodwill and support of the people throughout the country".

But more important than his able enunciation and presentation of the policies to be pursued by Jana Sangh, was the contribution he made towards revitalising Jana Sangh through his personal contacts with the workers at various levels, proper and correct appraisal of men and situations, and the momentous decisions the party took under his guidance.

The pandal for the session as also "Deep Nagar", the village of tents for the delegates to stay, were constructed in the spacious grounds of Phhol Bagh. But, the Reception Committee had arranged for Dr. Mookerji to stay at the house of Shri Narendrajit Singh, Barrister-at-Law, where he could have all the comforts of home. But Dr. Mookerji insisted that he must stay amongst the delegates in a tent and share their daily life. This little incident shows the great quality of leadership that he possessed. He never liked "leaders" and "workers" to be treated as two separate classes. All leaders, he held, must be workers first. He who cannot be a worker cannot be a leader.

He also preferred to take his daily meals together with the delegates in the common mess. One day a Harijan worker found himself seated next to him. He was deeply impressed and said in an apologetic tone, "I am an untouchable".

"We are all untouchables here," replied Dr. Mookerji, "I am political untouchable number one in this country". This sent all those present into peels of laughter.

The busy schedule of Dr. Mookerji included an address to a rally of the R. S. S. volunteers early in the morning on the 31st of December. He had gone to bed very late the previous night and his sleep had been disturbed by heavy rain that continued the whole night. Yet he was ready in the morning for going to the rally at 6 a.m. As he was addressing the

Swayamsewaks, rain started once again. A worker rushed to him with an umbrella. But he would have none of it. "Why cannot I stand this rain when so many hundreds of Swayam-sevaks are sitting in rain. Do you not consider me a Swayam-sevak?"

It was little things like this that endeared him to the workers who began to look upon him as one of them. Again it was this mutual trust and understanding which enabled Dr. Mookerji to get the best out of them.

On another occasion some unscrupulous persons, taking advantage of their personal relations with him and his simplicity of heart, tried to rush him into taking a decision that might have proved very harmful to the growth of the young organisation. But they had misunderstood Dr. Mookerji who always held his duty and interests of the cause for which he stood above all personal considerations. He gave them a rebuff and took the correct decision and thereby saved an awkward situation.

The most momentous decision taken by Jana Sangh at Kanpur was to actively support the Satyagraha movement of the Praja Parishad in Jammu for the integration of Jammu and Kashmir State with the rest of India. The younger delegates in their over-enthusiasm wanted Jana Sangh to give an ultimatum to the Government of India either to take concrete steps to meet the patriotic demands of the Parishad within a fixed period or face the Jana Sangh Satyagraha in its support in the rest of India as well. But Dr. Mookerji counselled patience. He was not the man to take a hasty decision in a fit of emotion. He wanted to explore all avenues of a peaceful settlement and an honourable compromise, before taking the extreme step of Satyagraha. It was, therefore, resolved that he should write to Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah in a final bid to find a solution.

It was in pursuance of this resolution of his Working Committee that Dr. Mookerji started correspondence with Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah which, like his correspondence with Sir John Herbert before his resignation from Bengal Cabinet, has become a historic record of his fearless and well reasoned advocacy of what he considered was a righteous cause.

THE MAN OF REASON

THE protracted correspondence between Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji and Pandit Nehru on the one hand and between Dr. Mookerji and Sheikh Abdullah on the other, which began with Dr. Mookerji's letter to Pandit Nehru on the 9th of January 1953 and concluded with his letter to Sheikh Abdullah on the 23rd of February, throws a flood of light on all aspects of the Kashmir problem including its origin, the circumstances which forced the Praja Parishad to resort to Satyagraha, the patience and persistence exercised by Dr. Mookerji in his efforts to find a peaceful solution of the impasse and equally persistent refusal of Pandit Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah to review the authoritarian stand they had taken, and even to discuss the matter in person with Dr. Mookerji and the leaders of the Praja Parishad. In all eleven letters were exchanged between Dr. Mookerji and Pandit Nehru and six between him and Sheikh Abdullah. The whole correspondence reveals Dr. Mookerji as a man of reason.

I

"May I take the liberty of addressing you on the situation in Jammu" wrote Dr. Mookerji in his first letter from Calcutta to Pandit Nehru dated 9th January, 1953. "We discussed this matter at Kanpur session of Jana Sangh and it was the unanimous wish of every one that I should directly approach you and Sheikh Abdullah on the subject. I know you do not see eye to eye with many of us on this issue. Yet I am writing to you in the hope that you will keep an open mind and try to appreciate the view point of those who may differ from you on this matter. It is vitally important that the circumstances that have led to the present movement should be impartially reviewed and effort made to arrive at a speedy and peaceful settlement which will be fair and just to all concerned".

Pointing out that in the Praja Parishad satyagraha movement was not on the wane but was in fact spreading, and at the same time refuting the allegation that it had been instigated from outside, he recounted the circumstances leading to the movement. "Repeated efforts were made by Praja Parishad leaders and others," he wrote, "to have an amicable settlement by constitutional means. Representations were sent to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, to yourself, to the Minister of States and to Sheikh Abdullah. Interviews were sought for with some of them, but such requests on most occasions were not granted. Conferences were held from time to time and after mature deliberations the view points of the Praja Parishad and others supporting it were publicly expressed. Apparently the authorities concerned paid no heed to such manifestations of public opinion and even treated them with contempt. On the other hand some of the matters regarding which acute controversy had been raised were proceeded with by the authorities themselves with undue haste, thus precipitating a crisis".

After referring to the extent of repression that was going on unabated in Jammu he pleaded: "It is high time that both you and Sheikh Abdullah should realise that this movement will not be suppressed by force or repression. In some of your recent utterances you have laid great stress on the need for appreciating each other's point of view, on tolerance, on carrying people with Government not by force but by goodwill and understanding. Yet when it comes to actual administration, it appears that the same old methods which used to disfigure British administration are still in operation, sometimes, with even greater vehemence than before. The problem of Jammu and Kashmir should not be treated as a party issue. It is a national problem and every effort should be made to present a united front."

"Very often," he continued, "the issues are sought to be clouded by referring to the alleged past activities of Praja Parishad. For obvious reasons it will be better to deal with the actual issues on their merits. I would earnestly urge upon you to consider the effect of the movement on the rest of India. The State of Jammu and Kashmir is a part of the Indian Union and as such it is perfectly open to the people of the rest of India to interest themselves in the affairs of the State".

Analysing the causes underlying unrest amongst the people of Jammu he wrote that people of Jammu "are not prepared to sever their connection with India under any circumstances, plebiscite or no plebiscite. The greater the delay in having this moot question (of accession) decided once for all the greater will be complications and possibilities of unrest.

"Once it is settled that a final decision has been taken on the question of accession, two matters will have to be taken up. One relates to recovery of one-third territory of Jammu and Kashmir which is now in occupation of Pakistan. How are we going to get this back? You have always evaded this question. The time has come when we should know what exactly you propose to do about this matter. It will be a sort of national disgrace and humiliation if we fail to regain this lost portion of territory.

"The other question relates to the extent of accession of Jammu and Kashmir State with India. If the people of Jammu demand that the accession should be on the same lines as in the case of other States, they do not say anything that is arbitrary or extraordinary. This is their natural wish and they are guided by patriotic and national motives."

"Repression," he added, "will be no answer to the fundamental question that the people of Jammu are asking, namely, have they not the inherent right to demand that they should be governed by the same constitution as has been made applicable to the rest of India? Ek Nishan, Ek Vidhan, Ek Pradhan—one flag, one constitution, one president—represents a highly patriotic and emotional slogan with which people are carrying on their struggle."

"People who are facing sacrifices and suffering cheerfully," he further wrote, "are not enemies of India or of Jammu and Kashmir. It is absurd to dub them as friends of Pakistan".

He concluded his letter with an appeal: "Prey do not stand on false prestige or imitate methods followed by British administrators who thought that by ruthless suppression they could solve any matter affecting the rights and liberties of the people". He wound up the letter with a request: "If you want me to discuss the matter personally with you and Sheikh Abdullah, you may let me know and I shall gladly abide by your wish."

II

He sent a copy of this letter to Sheikh Abdullah also with a covering letter which said: "The issues at stake affect not only your State but the whole of India and I hope you will move before the situation further deteriorates."

III

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his reply dated New Delhi, January 10, 1953, said, "I am quite prepared and I am sure that Sheikh Abdullah is prepared, to consider any grievances of the Jammu people and try to rectify them where this is possible. But the demands of the Praja Parishad are basic constitutional issues which cannot be given effect to for obvious reasons. They are trying to decide a very difficult and complicated constitutional question by methods of war. It does not require much thought to demonstrate that this method cannot yield those results, whatever the merits may be".

"You should know," he continued, "how anxious I am to settle finally the whole of Jammu and Kashmir State issue. That is not only because of the State itself but also because of its larger repercussions in India. But this issue has got tremendously complicated and there is no magic way of solving it by decree or Act of Parliament as some people seem to imagine".

"The right way to approach Jammu question," he concluded, "is to stop the agitation completely and then deal with any grievances that may exist. I hope you will exercise your influence with the Praja Parishad in this direction".

Regarding Dr. Mookerji's request for a personal discussion he did not show any enthusiasm. "I shall gladly meet you if you wish" he wrote. "But I am going away to Bombay and Hyderabad and shall be away for about ten days or so".

IV

Dr. Mookerji again wrote to Pandit Nehru from Calcutta on the 3rd of February. He began with a reference to Pandit Nehru's reply to his first letter and to the speeches he and Sheikh Abdullah had been making since then and said, "I have no desire to carry on a protracted correspondence with you in this matter. But the issues involved are so serious that

I am taking the liberty of writing to you again. One common feature of (your) speeches", he wrote, "has been an abundance of abuses and vituperation which you have poured forth on those who differ from you. You have ascribed to us all sorts of base motives and have even dubbed us as betrayers of the country's interests. I have no desire to emulate you in this respect. Our bursts of anger and passion will not help us in solving any big problem. It is obvious that we do not see eye to eye on this momentous issue. Let us, however, try to argue with each other and proceed logically and see whether any solution can be reached.

"I have read your speeches and those of Sheikh Abdullah with considerable care, but unfortunately they evade the real issues."

Referring to Nehru's oft-repeated charge of communalism he wrote: "This is a most unfair charge and unconsciously you have been recently indulging in such attacks only to hide the weakness of your case. Our approach to the problem is actuated by the highest national and patriotic considerations. The solution that we are asking for is far from communal, nor does it seek to disunite or disintegrate India. I would beg of you," he appealed to him, "to think in your cool moments how in your life's history your failure to stand against Muslim communalism in India has resulted in disastrous consequences".

Reiterating his views regarding Kashmir, he asked him to keep in mind and settle the following points:

1. "That Parishad has considerable popular backing. As one who knows mass mind, you will realise that no popular movement can be crushed by force."

2. "The first question raised is when and how will the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India be finally settled? My own suggestion has been that the Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir, which has been elected on adult franchise, may accept a resolution accepting final accession and the matter may be considered as irrevocably decided so far as India is concerned. Please, be specific on this issue and let us know that if this suggestion is not acceptable what is your alternative proposal for finalising accession."

3. "We do not want partition of the State. But you seem

to forget that Jammu and Kashmir has already been partitioned by Pakistan and the real question is whether you and Sheikh Abdullah propose to acquiesce in this partition. You have always evaded this question. Please do not side-track the issue and let the public of India know when, if at all, we are going to get back this part of our cherished territory."

4. "The third point relates to the subject in respect of which accession will take place. The Praja Parishad wants, and we wholeheartedly agree, that the entire State of Jammu and Kashmir should be governed in accordance with the same constitution that applies to the rest of India. Is there anything communal or reactionary or anti-national about it? It is amazing, how the move of separatism pursued by Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues is being applauded by you as national and patriotic; and the genuine desire on the part of Praja Parishad to secure the fundamental unity and integrity of India and to be governed as common Indian citizens is being dubbed as treacherous conduct. Your letter and your speeches give no satisfactory answer to these basic points raised by the Praja Parishad."

5. "There are many grievances of the people of Jammu regarding internal administration. Delay in dealing with them is intensifying the agitation."

6. "It is undoubtedly true that we should do nothing which may weaken India's position or strengthen the hand of our enemy. This aspect you, of all persons, must bear in mind as Prime Minister of India."

He concluded this well reasoned letter with the suggestion that the only way to bring Jammu movement to an end is "to release all those who have been arrested and to call a conference where all the problems can be discussed in an atmosphere of calmness and with the sole desire to arrive at decisions which will be fair and just to all concerned. Repression, imprisonment, lathi-charge and bullets", he added, "will never crush this movement. In fact it will spread, go deeper and affect India as well".

In the end he informed Pandit Nehru that his Working Committee was meeting in Delhi on the 6th of February to discuss the Kashmir situation and he asked him, "If you feel that it will be better for me to come and have a talk with

you on the morning of 6th, you may kindly send me a message at my Delhi address".

V

Like his previous letter addressed to Pandit Nehru, he forwarded a copy of this letter also to Sheikh Abdullah with a covering letter in which he said: "It is tragic you shall completely misunderstand those who are differing from you and are proceeding in a manner which may be disastrous to India including the State of Jammu and Kashmir. I still hope you will be able to rise equal to the occasion and find a way for peaceful settlement."

VI

Sheikh Abdullah sent Dr. Mookerji a reply on the 4th of February, from Jammu Tawi. He also sent a number of pamphlets issued by his government to justify his policies and his stand regarding full accession of the State to India. He laid special emphasis on Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which, he held, gave special position to the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

VII

Pandit Nehru replied to Dr. Mookerji's letter of 3rd February on the 5th of February. He wrote:

"According to my thinking the agitation of the Praja Parishad is not only communal but is supported by communal and narrow-minded elements in India. Believing this as I do, the only course that I can follow is to resist this utterly mis-conceived agitation. That is our Government's opinion and they propose to adhere to it and pursue that policy."

"You suggest," he further wrote, "the release of those who have been arrested and a conference, presumably with them. What you suggest means, at the present juncture, the Government of India as also of the State ceasing to function and handing over authority to those who have challenged them on these basic constitutional issues by an agitation which has become increasingly violent and subversive. . . . If indeed the agitation continues it will be for us to consider what other and further steps Government take in the matter".

Referring to Dr. Mookerji's request for a personal meeting he wrote, "I regret that tomorrow and for the next day or two I am completely occupied. I confess also that, reading your letter, I find it a little difficult to discover any common ground for a talk".

VIII

Pandit Nehru's letter referred to above left little scope for further exchange of correspondence. The arrest of a number of members of the Jana Sangh Working Committee from Punjab on the eve of its meeting at Delhi under Preventive Detention Act also showed that the Government had closed the door on a negotiated settlement of the issue. But Dr. Mookerji had an inexhaustible store of patience. He was also aware that some influential people had been using their good offices with Pandit Nehru to prevail upon him to rise above his prejudices and help in finding a way out of the impasse. So he wrote to him another letter on the 8th of February. Referring to his (Nehru's) reply to his earlier letter he wrote: "Apparently you are not in a mood even to understand the views of those who differ from you, far less to talk to them. I am sure in your cooler moments you yourself will regret that you could not reply to arguments with arguments but had only to cast motives and aspersions against those who differed from your official policy."

"I and many others," he continued, "honestly feel that demand on the part of a section of our countrymen living in the State of Jammu and Kashmir to see that their State is finally integrated with India and is governed according to the constitution of free India is not an unpatriotic or disintegrating or communal move".

Referring to Pandit Nehru's warning about his government talking "other and further steps", which apparently meant further repression. Dr. Mookerji wrote: "Let me assure you we were ready to face the consequences of your wrath and fury. The arrest of a number of our workers in the Punjab yesterday under the Preventive Detention Act is an indication of the things that are to come. It reflects a strange functioning of democracy in our country where Preventive Detention Act has to be made use of for curbing legitimate political opposition."

Referring to Pandit Nehru's fears about international complications, he added: "You will forgive me if I fail to appreciate your repeated reference to possible international complications as a result of Jammu movement. No one today will claim that your handling of the Kashmir problem has enhanced our international prestige or has won for us wide international support and sympathy. On the other hand your policy in this behalf has added to complications both at home and abroad. Statesmanship requires that you should examine the whole matter dispassionately and instead of being haunted by false internationalism, firmly create conditions for national solidarity based on a fair adjustment of different view points and interests. If you succeed in this it will give you greater strength and prestige even in international dealings."

He concluded this letter with another fervent appeal to Pandit Nehru to rise above partisan spirit and take the initiative for settling the issue. "I only wish," Dr. Mookerji wrote, "to close this correspondence with my deep regret that your replies have a painful resemblance with similar communications which Heads of British Government in India, carried away by a sense of power and prestige, used to address while refusing to take note of the manifestations of the will of the people. The only difference is that while we disagree on some vital matters, we are children of the same Mother, and with a little goodwill and tolerance on both sides we should have been able to avoid a serious cleavage. If you feel in the country's paramount interest that you should set aside questions of prestige and partisanship and explore the possibilities of a peaceful settlement, our wholehearted co-operation will be always at your disposal. Even at this late hour I firmly believe this is possible and it is you who can take the initiative".

IX

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's reply to the above letter, which he sent on the 10th of February, was couched in restrained language and even showed some desire to find a way out of the impasse. "I have no doubt," he wrote, "that you wish well to India, but the fact remains that our conceptions of what is well for India appear to differ. Because of this our

past lives have moved largely in different spheres. Neither of us can wipe out or ignore that past which has produced the present. I consider the communal approach as inherently bad, narrow and injurious to the individual, the group and the nation. You object to my using the word communal and deny my charge. Obviously we think differently and our actions are presumably the result of our thinking".

"However," he continued, "all this does not help much in the present situation. I can assure you that I want peace in India with all my heart. That is pre-requisite for any work to be done. If I could venture to advise you, I would suggest that you exercise your influence to put an end to this agitation in Jammu".

X

Dr. Mookerji welcomed this change of tone and in his letter of the 12th of February, he suggested to Pandit Nehru a concrete procedure for settling the issue.

"It is my belief," he wrote, "that there is and there should be much in common between you and me regarding the real needs of the country. We may, however, honestly agree to differ in respect of some vital matters. But even in this sphere, there is no reason why we should not try to understand each other's view point without taking recourse to mutual recrimination or imputing base motives to each other.

"You have been good enough" he continued "to ask me to exercise my influence to put an end to this agitation. I am prepared to do so provided you and Sheikh Abdullah create suitable conditions for giving effect to it."

"The only way this can be done is to make the sponsors of the movement appreciate that you and Sheikh Abdullah are prepared to discuss all matters with them with an open mind and arrive at decisions which would meet their legitimate demands. I would suggest that you and Sheikh Abdullah should meet some of the leaders preferably in Delhi. If this offer is communicated to them they will, I hope, agree to suspend the movement. If on the other hand you feel that this procedure may create some complications unless some understanding is previously reached regarding the possibilities of ultimate agreement on the main issues and withdrawal of

the movement, we may have a discussion on the several points raised and see what should be a fair approach to their solution. Naturally I cannot commit the Praja Parishad, but knowing as I do their minds to some extent, I can make some suggestions for your consideration. If there is a general agreement, I may send a communication to Pandit Prem Nath Dogra giving him my advice."

"The points for consideration are as follows :

1. "Finality of accession to India through a resolution to be adopted by the Constituent Assembly of the State."

2. "Adoption by the State of the provisions of Indian Constitution regarding such matters as Fundamental Rights, Citizenship, Financial integration, Abolition of Customs duty, Supreme Court, Emergency Powers of President and conduct of elections. These are to be implemented within a stated time."

3. "In respect of the rest of the Indian Constitution. Sheikh Abdullah should indicate what deviations, if any, he desires to be made. These are to be considered on their merits."

4. "Jammu and Kashmir Constitution as finally agreed will be a part of the Indian Constitution."

5. "Provincial autonomy to Jammu and Ladakh without changes of boundaries."

6. "Acceptance of supremacy of the Indian flag."

7. "Policy regarding liberation and occupation of the Pakistan-held territory."

8. "Commission of Enquiry with a majority of judges from outside the State to go into all grievances including Dharmartha Trust, excesses committed by police and compensation to the families of sufferers, especially who have been shot dead."

9. "Restoration of pensions, properties, etc., to people against whom confiscation orders might have been passed."

"None of the matters mentioned above is incapable of reasonable solution if both sides proceed with an open mind. If you feel that my approach is correct we can have a detailed discussion and decide what course should be taken in the best interests of Kashmir and the country as a whole."

"You and Sheikh Abdullah", he concluded, "can well rise equal to the occasion without standing on false prestige and

create an atmosphere which will make it possible for all parties irrespective of other differences to put forward our national demand on Kashmir issue. I hope you will appreciate the spirit in which the letter is written and take action to bring the impasse to an end."

XI

Pandit Nehru sent a non-committal reply on the 12th of February, to Dr. Mookerji's above letter. He took shelter under the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir State which alone, he said, could settle the problem.

"Even in States other than Jammu and Kashmir", he wrote, "we have to respect Provincial autonomy and though we give advice to our colleagues there, we do not interfere. No State Government can carry on if it is over-ridden by the Central authority".

However, he did not slam the door. "I am sure" he added, "that the right course is for this agitation to be withdrawn and an attempt made on all sides to bring about normality and goodwill. That is the basis of any progress and removal of grievances or disabilities."

XII

Realising that Pandit Nehru would make no move in the matter except with the approval of Sheikh Abdullah, Dr. Mookerji addressed another letter to Sheikh Abdullah on the 13th of February. He appealed to him not to drag in the present discussion what the Praja Parishad or its leaders might have done in the past because "it is not safe to base one's present attitude towards grave political issues solely on past relationship with one's opponents", and added, "I do not know intimately about your past but, I have seen some papers and documents. You yourself started as a leader of a communal party." (Dr. Mookerji was here referring to secret correspondence between Sheikh Abdullah on the one hand and the Khalifa of Ahmedia Sect and some officers of the Political Department on the other, during 1930-35 which throws lurid light on Sheikh Abdullah's role as a stooge of the British in early years of his political career.) "And yet", he added, "it would be highly improper to judge your present aims by making

elaborate researches into your past history starting from Aligarh."

He pointed out to him that India had unfortunately been torn into two by the two nation theory. "You are now developing a three nation theory, the third being the Kashmiri nation. These are dangerous symptoms and are not good for your state or for the whole of India."

He once again appealed to him to rise up to the occasion and take initiative to settle the issue. "I would beg of you" he wrote, "not to stand on false prestige but to agree to discuss all disputes with the leaders of the Praja Parishad even at this late stage."

XIII

At the same time he addressed another letter to Pandit Nehru in reply to his letter of the 12th of February, in which he specifically told him, "What you and Sheikh Abdullah have to decide first is whether you are willing to talk to the Praja Parishad leaders. I would implore you to do so."

"Both of you should agree to meet some selected representatives of Praja Parishad and this should be followed by an immediate suspension of the movement. The process of bringing about normality and goodwill, I trust, will then automatically follow. If their view points are met in a fair and just manner, there is no reason why they should not reciprocate."

Referring to finality of accession about which Pandit Nehru had said that no public declaration could be made in view of the talks then going on in Geneva, he suggested that if assurance was given to them about it he would himself ask them "not to press for any open declaration at this stage". But at the same time he pointed out to him that "really speaking accession was not the issue on which we went to the U.N.O."

Referring to liberation and re-occupation of Pakistan-held Kashmir territory, he said, "no public declaration need be made, but a fuller appreciation of the situation can be made as a result of your discussion with the people concerned."

Regarding the applicability of the provisions of the Indian constitution to Kashmir he suggested that they should set aside all technicalities and agree to proceed in a practical manner.

"I do not think", he wrote, "we will have any difficulty in agreeing to the minimum number of subjects which will be immediately applied to J and K. As regards the rest we may postpone consideration till we know what specific proposals the State authorities have to make for the purpose".

He concluded his letter by repeating the suggestion for a personal discussion, "I am leaving for Calcutta early tomorrow morning and shall be back here on Monday afternoon. I am willing to come and see you sometime today, if you feel that at this stage a personal discussion may be helpful. I shall be glad to come and see you any time today that suits your convenience except between 6 and 7.30 P.M."

XIV

The optimistic turn that the correspondence was taking was not to continue. Pandit Nehru in his reply of the 15th February informed Dr. Mookerji that he did not read his letter till late at night and so could not make use of his suggestion about a personal meeting. This was, probably, a subtle way of saying no, because if he had wished to meet Dr. Mookerji he could have done so on the latter's return from Calcutta. In the meanwhile, it appears, Sheikh Abdullah had torpedoed the entire basis of talks. He was not prepared to meet Praja Parishad leaders across a table and Pandit Nehru did not have the courage to displease him or go against his wishes. He again emphasised the basic differences between his approach and that of Dr. Mookerji. "Between these two basic approaches" he wrote, "there is no common ground. Subject to our holding fast to the principles which have guided us, and to the policies which we have pursued, the Government will gladly do all in its power to bring about normality and peaceful cooperation in the Jammu and Kashmir State. But this agitation was not of our seeking and the first step should be to withdraw the agitation completely."

XV

This letter of Pandit Nehru made it clear that he was once again reverting to the realm of recrimination and getting lost amongst his abstract theories from which Dr. Mookerji had been trying to pull him out. Dr. Mookerji was not the man

to lose heart so long as there was a ray of hope, howsoever faint. He addressed to him yet another letter, his last of the series on the 17th of February, in a final bid to pin him down to something concrete towards the settlement of the issue.

"When we start talking about mental approach", he wrote, "unrelated to specific matters, discussion takes an abstract turn and imaginary charges are hurled. When a movement continues for several weeks," he added, "resulting in loss of lives and various kinds of alleged oppression and excesses, it cannot be withdrawn unless there is some basis for appreciating that the objectives for which the struggle had been launched would be properly considered by the authorities. You will also realise that it is not for me, or for anybody else in India, to withdraw the movement. This must be done by the persons who have started it and many of them are now behind the prison bars. They have to be approached on the subject and some idea has to be communicated to them of what is to happen in future.

"After considering the matter fully and also your determination that the movement must be withdrawn completely as a first step, may I suggest the following procedure for your consideration :

- "1. The movement is withdrawn.
- "2. Order for release of prisoners is given and there will be no victimisation.
- "3. You and Sheikh Abdullah call a conference say, after a fortnight, where all political and constitutional matters are discussed with an open mind.
- "4. Both parties reiterate that the unity of the State of J and K will be maintained and that the principle of autonomy will apply to the province of Jammu as a whole and of course also to Ladakh and Kashmir Valley.
- "5. The new constitution to come into force as soon as possible and elections to take place within, say, six months.
- "6. The question of flag is to be clarified and the Indian flag should be in use every day just as is done in all other parts of India.
- "7. Implementation of the July agreement will be made at the next session of Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly

after the issues left vague have been properly clarified. In respect of fundamental rights, citizenship, Supreme Court, President's powers, financial integration and conduct of elections provisions of the Indian constitution will apply. Exception however may be made with regard to conditions for acquisition of land.

"8. The terms of reference of the commission of enquiry will be widened and all grievances will be examined by it.

"9. The Commission now included 4 persons, Chief Justice, Accountant General, Chief Conservator of Forests and the Revenue Commissioner. The last three gentlemen are administrative officers under J and K Government and they can hardly inspire confidence. The Commission should be reconstituted with 2 Judges from India and Chief Justice of J and K, so that its impartiality and representative character may not be questioned.

"10. Regarding finality of accession and other political matters, the conference will consider these points from every aspect and agreement ought to be reached which will be to the best interest of India including J and K."

"If there is some agreement as regards the general approach to the problem, contact will have to be made with Pandit Prem Nath Dogra. It will be for him to take the ultimate decision. Of course we will advise him what in our opinion should be done for a peaceful and speedy solution. I am sure he and others will not take up an obstructive attitude and will be ready to cooperate in every possible way."

He concluded his letter with the appeal. "If you feel that the above suggestions are worthy of your serious consideration and they should be discussed personally, I shall be glad to come to see you at any time convenient to you. If, however," he added, "you have finally decided that the movement is to be withdrawn unconditionally and there can be no understanding regarding any other point then I shall have to conclude with deep regret that I have failed in my efforts".

XVI

He received no reply to this letter nor was there any response to his appeal for a personal meeting. This sudden change of

attitude became obvious to him from the letter of Sheikh Abdullah dated February 18, addressed to him.

Sheikh Abdullah explicitly said: "I will frankly state that the present leadership of the Praja Parishad is avowedly disruptive and communal in its aim and purpose. Consequently, it will not be possible for us to have any common meeting ground with them."

XVII

Dr. Mookerji wrote to Sheikh Abdullah a letter, the last of the series addressed to him, on the 23rd of February in which he explained the constitutional position of the State, vis-a-vis India, as also of Sheikh Abdullah, vis-a-vis the Maharaja, as it had developed since the accession of the State to India, and warned him of the dangers inherent in the path he was following. "I have been unable to understand", he wrote "your refusal even to talk to the representatives of the Praja Parishad. If you, who represent the dominant political party in the State and in whose hands the powers of Government rest today, feel determined to crush a particular political party that may be opposing you, and to adopt force and other methods for the purpose, then you cease to be a democratic leader. You then become a fascist. But even then your success is doubtful, for in all such cases history has proved that the movement goes underground and ultimately the mighty dictator loses the battle of true freedom".

The correspondence clearly shows that the sweet reasonableness of Dr. Mookerji had failed to have any effect on Pandit Nehru and more so on his conscience keepers in New Delhi and Srinagar. Pandit Nehru was perhaps ill-informed about the popular base of the Praja Parishad movement and the wide-spread sympathy it had evoked in the whole of India. Moreover, perhaps, he and his advisers had erroneously thought that Dr. Mookerji was a man of words and not of action. Conscious of their steam-roller majority, they thought that they could safely turn a deaf ear to his words of reason. But they were soon to realise that he was even better at action than he was at words for the causes dear to his heart.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MAN OF ACTION

THE failure of the protracted correspondence to bring about change of heart in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah, without which no fair and just settlement of the Jammu impasse was possible, created genuine regret in all patriotic hearts. Some distinguished people like Shri S. Radhakrishnan, the Vice-President of India, who had high regard for Dr. Mookerji, tried to act as intermediaries. But unlike the British Viceroys who, with all their authoritarian and bureaucratic outlook, had had training in democracy in their own homeland and therefore could be amenable to reason and sober counsels if they came from people for whom they had respect, Pandit Nehru lived in the atmosphere of the Mughal Court and only psychopants could catch his ears. Moreover, there was no escape from the veto that he had given to Sheikh Abdullah. So his efforts failed. And where Radhakrishnan failed no one else could hope to succeed.

But Dr. Mookerji was not the man to sit on his oars because he had failed to persuade Pandit Nehru to see reason. The reports of the reign of terror that had been let loose in Jammu were daily reaching him. He sincerely believed the cause of the Praja Parishad to be the cause of Indian unity. It was his own cause and the cause of every patriotic Indian. Right was on the side of the Parishad, might on the side of the Government. The path of duty was clear before him. As a 'Karma-Yogi' he had tried what Samarth Ram Das called "Dharma Shakti" and "Niti Shakti", but in vain.

The "Rajya Shakti", the argument of power, which Samarth Ram Das advocated as the last measure to achieve a noble end, he did not possess. But he was a democrat. He knew that the power which had intoxicated the Congress rulers of the country as also the monster they had raised in Kashmir, came from the common people who were the ultimate masters of the country. So he decided to make a direct appeal to

them so that such a strong public opinion in the country might be created as would make it impossible for the Government to persist in its high handed policy towards the people of Jammu.

But the Government would not allow him to do even that. They had already taken steps to deprive Bharatiya Jana Sangh and its allied parties of their democratic right to educate and organise public opinion on an admittedly vital national problem. The Punjab government in its over anxiety to prove its loyalty to Pandit Nehru, had already struck at the Jana Sangh and detained most of its top leaders under Preventive Detention Act. It had promulgated Section 144 in almost all districts which, in practice, was meant for Jana Sangh only. The spokesmen of the Congress and the hired agents of Sheikh Abdullah were allowed to carry on their propaganda against the Praja Parishad and Jana Sangh without let or hindrance. The metropolis was not to lag behind. Soon after meetings and processions were banned in Delhi as well and there too the ban was meant mainly for Jana Sangh and its supporters.

This created a new situation. Preservation and protection of civil liberties had been one of the main tasks set before himself by Dr. Mookerji from the day of his entry into public life. He had fought for civil liberties of his people in Bengal even when he himself was a member of Bengal government. It was his firm conviction that democracy could not function without civil liberties. He, therefore, looked upon ban on peaceful public meetings and processions in Delhi and elsewhere as a challenge to democracy. The motivation for the move, namely, the defence of government's un-national and repressive policy towards the Praja Parishad only added insult to injury.

To protest against the growing repression in Jammu and to demonstrate people's will to protect their democratic right of free association and free expression of their views on national problems, he gave a call to observe March 5, 1953 as Jammu and Kashmir Day all over the country. The Programme of the Day was to include public meetings and peaceful processions for explaining to the people the stand of Jana Sangh and allied parties on Kashmir.

That the public opinion was appreciating the view point

represented by Dr. Mookerji was proved by the results of four bye-elections to Delhi State Assembly which were held just when Pandit Nehru was spurning the appeals of Dr. Mookerji and saying: "We have no intention of abdicating and running away from the duty that has been entrusted to us by the people and the Parliament."

Jana Sangh-Mahasabha combine captured three seats while it lost the fourth by only a few votes to a millionaire sitting Congress member. Kashmir policy had been made the main issue of the election by both the parties and the Congress had, besides making full use of official machinery and patronage, brought a number of Kashmir Ministers and M.Ps. to confuse the electorate.

Had the Congress rulers been responsive to public opinion they should have realised that the people had begun to disapprove the policy they had been following in regard to Jammu and Kashmir and they should have adopted a more realistic attitude towards the Parishad and its supporters in India. But that was not to be.

In the meantime Dr. Mookerji undertook a tour of western districts of U.P. to explain Jana Sangh stand on Kashmir. He visited Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur, Hardwar and Dehra Dun. At Dehra Dun he also performed the opening ceremony of a four mile long irrigation canal built by Jana Sangh workers with the help of the local people. Everywhere lakhs of people heard him and assured him of their support.

As fifth of March approached, the authorities in Delhi became nervous. They had been watching the rising tempo of public opinion in favour of Jana Sangh and they realised that the meeting announced for the day was going to take place in spite of the ban. So they thought discretion to be the better part of valour and lifted the ban just before the meeting was scheduled to begin.

The meeting was held in the Queens Garden. It was presided over by Swami Karpatriji and was addressed by Shri N. C. Chatterji and Pandit Mauli Chandra Sharma besides Dr. Mookerji. The atmosphere was tense. Few among the half a lakh people who had assembled there knew that the ban on the meetings had been lifted and that the meeting they were attending was a lawful one. They had come with

the determination to suffer for their convictions. Many had brought with them wet pieces of cloth to protect their eyes against the effects of tear gas.

Dr. Mookerji made one of the most powerful speeches of his life that evening. Every word seemed to come from the depth of his heart. He explained his efforts to place the cause of the Praja Parishad which, in its ultimate analysis, was the cause of the whole of India before the powers that be. He wanted them to call the leaders of the Parishad and explain to them their point of view if they could not do anything else just then. He had implored them not to treat the patriots of Jammu as untouchables. But all his efforts had failed. It was now for the democratic people of India, he told his audience, to assert their right to be heard in the interest of the nation as a whole.

Other speakers compared the role played by Dr. Mookerji to that of Lord Krishna who had gone to the extreme length to persuade the ruling "Kurus" to do justice to the 'Pandavas'. That was a correct appraisal of the situation. Dr. Mookerji's advocacy of the cause of the Praja Parishad had been no less sincere than that of the Pandavas by Lord Krishna, and the patience and tact he had shown could not be surpassed.

The only path open to him then was to give to the people, who looked to him for lead and guidance, a call to share the suffering of the people of Jammu by starting a peaceful and non-violent struggle in the rest of India also in the hope that that might change the heart of Pandit Nehru some day or, failing that, awaken the conscience of the nation to the wrong his mistaken policies were doing to the country as a whole. The fighter in him urged him to give this call. But the democrat in him wanted to avoid it, as far as possible, because he thought that it would be an abnormal thing in a democratic set up where normally the authorities should be amenable to the pressure of public opinion.

But a pre-requisite for that was that the democratic government should allow the public opinion to be expressed and mobilised. Dr. Mookerji still had some hope that the democrat in Nehru may assert itself against the Fascist that he was fast becoming. So he decided to test him once again much against the wishes of the people who were looking for a call of action.

It was announced that the ashes of some of the victims of the Police firing in Jammu shall be taken out in procession on the next day, the 6th of March, from the Railway Station and that the procession would be led by Dr. Mookerji, Shri N. C. Chatterji and Shri Nand Lal Sastri, M.P. The idea was to inform the people of the extent and nature of repression that was going on in Jammu.

But just before the procession was going to be taken out the next day, ban was re-imposed. Dr. Mookerji and his companions, however, reached Chandni Chowk from where they were to lead the procession at 4 P.M., the appointed time. But as soon as they reached there they were taken into custody under section 188 of the I.P.C., on the charge of contravening the order against public meetings and processions.

The news of his arrest created a stir in the country. Crowded protest meetings and Hartals were observed all over India. In Delhi large crowds paraded the streets. They were lathi-charged and tear-gassed a number of times.

His arrest became a signal for the start of a peaceful and non-violent struggle which was as much in sympathy with the struggle of the Praja Parishad in Jammu as in protest against the suppression of civil liberties in the rest of India.

Unfortunately for the Government, the Magistrate who arrested Dr. Mookerji in his over-zeal failed to fulfil the elementary requirements of law regarding the presentation of his august prisoners before the Court of Law within the specified period. Babu Ram Narain Singh, M.P., therefore, filed a habeas corpus petition before the Supreme Court which set Dr. Mookerji and his companions at liberty on the 11th of March.

However, charges under Section 188 were framed against them and a case was filed. Dr. Mookerji did not wish to defend himself because he asserted that freedom of association and expression was his fundamental right and that he had committed no offence by attempting to join the procession. But Shri N. C. Chatterji wanted the defence to be put up. His counsel also raised some technical law points which had to be referred to the High Court and which unnecessarily prolonged the court proceedings.

At the time of his release by the Supreme Court, Dr. Mookerji

agreed to execute a personal bond for Rs. 100 in respect of the cause under section 188. He had thought that the trial would be soon completed and he would get the usual sentence for which he was prepared. But the prolongation of trial made him uneasy. He wanted to be with his younger companions who had been taken into custody along with him and who were then in jail as under-trials. The reports of repression from Jammu as also from different parts of India pained him. He wanted to share the suffering of the Satyagrahis by being with them in jail. He, therefore, tried a number of times to surrender his bail and go back to jail. But the government wanted to avoid his return to jail because that would have created a stir in and outside the parliament. So Dr. Mookerji had to remain out of prison much against his will.

He made the best use of this enforced liberty to educate his countrymen about his stand on Kashmir and the circumstances which had forced first the Praja Parishad and then the Jana Sangh and its allied parties to take resort to the path of suffering and self sacrifice. He visited Gwalior, Indore, Jaipur, Calcutta, Bombay, Bangalore, Patiala and Patna during the months of March and April. Everywhere literally lakhs of people turned out to listen to his voice of reason and call for action. The people had begun to appreciate the stand he had taken on Kashmir and had begun to see in him the alternative leadership that the country so badly needed to save it from megalomaniac dictatorship of one man.

Everywhere he received assurances of cooperation from the big and small, the rich and poor.

A popular slogan of those days was :

नेहरु ज्यों-ज्यों गरजेगा ।

जनसंघ त्यों-त्यों बरसेगा ॥

(The more Nehru will shout at us, the stronger Jana Sangh will grow.) At Bombay more than a lakh of people assembled at Chawpatty sands to listen to him within a few hours of his unexpected arrival there. At Patiala he thrilled the people by his unequivocal declaration that he looked upon Sikhs as a part and parcel of Hindu Society. Therefore, he added, their unity with other Hindus could not be made a matter for bargaining. He asked them to talk as Hindus and decide

among themselves as to what was best for them, for Punjab and for the country as a whole.

A distinctive feature of this movement was that the rank and file that joined it came from educated and politically conscious sections of the society. It was estimated that out of about ten thousand Satyagrahis who courted arrest all over the country about a thousand were professional men, graduates, doctors, lawyers, teachers and professors and about three hundred of them paid income tax. Quite a large number of Satyagrahis came from villages and rural areas. A number of batches of Satyagrahis came on foot right from Indore and such other distant places. Batches of Satyagrahis came from Maharashtra, Bombay, Andhra and Karnatak as well. This fact gave a lie direct to the Congress propaganda that it was a localised affair in which the people of the country in general were not interested.

As the movement gained momentum in Punjab, Delhi, U.P. and other parts of India, Sheikh Abdullah's Government intensified the repression in Jammu where a no tax campaign had also begun. The Dogra police was replaced by Kashmiri Police and Militia, which were predominantly Muslim. They let loose a region of terror in the countryside of Jammu. The villagers were hounded out of their homes, their properties were looted and their women insulted. This sent a wave of indignation throughout Jammu. The patience of the warlike people, many of whom were ex-servicemen, came to a breaking point. They began to press the underground secretary of Praja Parishad, Durga Das Verma, to allow them to meet violence with violence. "We are soldiers", a number of them wrote to him, "and have seen fighting in different parts of the world. We have been so far obeying your instruction to remain non-violent in face of all provocations. But we cannot remain non-violent spectators when our women are insulted before our very eyes."

The statement issued by a number of retired civilians including an ex-Inspector General of Police, who visited the scenes of such occurrences on their own, confirmed these reports.

These developments in Jammu very much perturbed Dr. Mookerji. He wanted to prevent break out of violence at any cost. He, therefore, decided to send two of his colleagues, Shri

U. M. Trivedi, Bar-at-Law, M.P., and Shri V. G. Deshpande, M.P., to Jammu to see things for themselves and console the people. But the Ministry of Defence refused to issue permits to them for entry into the State. When they proceeded without permits, they were arrested under Preventive Detention Act at Jullundur in mid-April.

Soon after a delegation of some retired ministers and high dignitaries of the State visited Delhi. They again drew the attention of the people and Government of India to the fast deteriorating situation in Jammu. The situation there demanded immediate attention. The Government seemed impervious even to the appeals of their friends and their false sense of prestige prevented them from taking any initiative in the matter. In view of this situation Dr. Mookerji began to think of his own going to Jammu to see things for himself and to meet people there including Sheikh Abdullah, if possible, in an attempt to find a solution of the impasse.

But the continuous hearing of the case under section 188 in the court of the A.D.M., Delhi, stood in his way. He needed recess of at least a week to be able to visit Jammu. Before that he wanted to tour the Punjab for a couple of days because of the pressing and persistent requests from the workers of that State.

In the meanwhile he made his last appeal to Pandit Nehru in the course of his speech in Parliament on the 26th of April, to rise to the occasion and take the initiative to settle the question. He told him that he would be satisfied if Pandit Nehru invited Pandit Premnath Dogra and explained to him his view point and difficulties instead of talking about them to him. But it had no effect on him. He appeared to be determined to crush Praja Parishad and the Jana Sangh for they had dared to challenge his authority as no one else had done. Just about that time the author brought to his notice a prophecy published in "Film India", a popular weekly of Bombay, which said that he would replace Pandit Nehru towards the end of 1953. Dr. Mookerji felt perturbed over it. "It will further harden him (Pandit Nehru)" he remarked, "and make a solution more difficult".

Dr. Mookerji had seen how permit to visit Jammu had been refused to Shri Trivedi and Deshpande and prior to them to

the fact finding mission consisting of a number of legislators, including the Deputy Speaker of Rajasthan, which he wanted to send to Jammu in January. He was also aware of the fact that permit system had been, in reality, introduced to prevent Pakistani agents and spies from entering Kashmir and it could not be lawfully used to deny entry to responsible men, like members of Parliament, into that State. He, therefore, wrote a letter to the Defence Minister asking him the legal position about the Permit System. The Minister gave him no reply.

Before starting on what was to prove his last journey, he paid a hurried visit to Calcutta to pay his respects to his aged mother. On his way back he stopped for a day at Patna. There he expressed his intention of going to Jammu to his host, Shri Thakur Prasad Advocate. This came as a surprise to him. His aged father who had served as Dewan in a number of Muslim States tried to dissuade Dr. Mookerji from going to Jammu. "I will never advise you", he pleaded, "to put yourself on the mercy of Sheikh Abdullah. My experience has taught me never to trust men of his tribe."

But Dr. Mookerji dismissed his suggestion with a laugh. He was not the man to change his plan for fear. Thereupon the old man entreated: "Go, if you must. But please see that you do not take anything there unless it is first tasted by one whom you trust. One does not know the ways of Muslim rulers. They are capable of anything." Dr. Mookerji agreed to abide by his advice, as far as possible.

Just a day before he left Prof. Johnson, Personal Secretary of Mr. Adlai Stevenson, the defeated Democratic candidate for American Presidency, who was then on a short visit to India, met him at his residence to fix an appointment for his chief. It was fixed for 13th of May, by which time Dr. Mookerji was expected to be back in Delhi after spending two days in Jammu. But he had a premonition that he might not be able to keep the engagement. So he told Prof. Johnson while he was leaving him, "It is possible that I may not be able to keep the engagement. Anything may happen." His premonition proved correct. The 13th of May saw him a prisoner in the jail of Sheikh Abdullah.

CHAPTER XXII

ON A MISSION OF PEACE

THOUSANDS of full throated Jais to Bharat Mata and Bharat Kesri Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji rent the air as the passenger train carrying Dr. Mookerji to Punjab on his way to Jammu steamed out of Delhi Railway Station at 6.30 A.M. on the 8th of May, 1953. The compartment in which he sat had been decorated with flowers and Jana Sangh flags. Vaidya Guru Datt, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Shri Tek Chand and the author accompanied him in the same compartment. A few pressmen also joined us.

Just before his departure, he issued a statement explaining his purpose of going to Jammu. "The Satyagraha movement has been continuing in Jammu," he stated, "for nearly six months leading to the arrest of about 2,500 persons and to the killing of more than 30 satyagrahis by police firing. In Delhi and Punjab the movement has been going on for more than two months and has led to the arrest of more than 1,700 satyagrahis in these two and other adjoining States. In spite of all provocations and various types of repression and terrorisation reminiscent of the British regime, the movement has remained non-violent and free from any communal bias".

"Although the movement has remained confined to Delhi and some parts of the Punjab," the statement continued, "yet a large number of satyagrahis are pouring into the capital of India from various parts of the country giving the movement an all-India character. They are bringing with them the support and blessings of large sections of people living in the areas concerned. In Jammu, in spite of the iron curtain, people have not succumbed to fear and are ready to face the wrath and fury of the authorities whose repressive measures continue unabated".

Referring to the success that the movement had achieved the statement said: "During the last few weeks I have visited many parts of India and I have tried to place our view point

before our country. I have found that slowly and steadily even those who did not fully support our movement are realising the grave implications of the mistaken policy of Nehru towards Jammu and Kashmir. From that point of view our movement has been successful. It has aroused wide spread public support in favour of the basic objective of the movement."

Explaining as to why he had not applied for entry permit, the statement said: "Mr. Nehru has repeatedly declared that the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India has been hundred per cent complete. Yet it is strange to find that one cannot enter the State without a previous permit from the Government of India. This permit is granted even to Communists who are playing their usual role in Jammu and Kashmir. But entry is barred to those who think or act in terms of Indian unity and nationhood. I do not think Government of India is entitled to prevent entry into any part of the Indian Union which according to Mr. Nehru himself, includes Jammu and Kashmir. Of course if anyone violates the law, he will have to face the consequences."

Regarding his object in going to Jammu the statement said: "My object is going to Jammu is solely to acquaint myself with what exactly had happened there and the present state of affairs. I would also come into contact with available local leaders representing various interests, outside the Praja Parishad. It will be my endeavour to ascertain what the intention of the people of Jammu is, and to find out if at all there is any possibility of the movement being brought to a peaceful and honourable end, which will be fair and just not only to the people of the State but also to the whole of India. I confidently hope I shall receive the full co-operation and sympathy of all concerned when I proceed to discharge this difficult responsibility. If I am allowed to enter the State, I for my sake do not rule out the possibility of even meeting Sheikh Abdullah and have a personal discussion with him."

It is thus clear that he was proceeding to Jammu on a mission of peace.

The journey from Delhi to Ambala Cantonment, his first halt in the Punjab, was a continuous ovation from literally thousands of people, both rich and poor townsmen and

villagers, who assembled even on small wayside stations in hundreds to express their solidarity with and support to his mission. At bigger stations like Ghaziabad, Modinagar, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur and Jagadhri the number of those who gathered ran to four and even to five figures.

During intervals between the various railway stations in that journey of about 8 hours, informal talks with Dr. Mookerji revealed the thoughts uppermost in his mind at what was to prove the fag end of his life.

"Did you read my statement, I was waiting for your suggestions till evening," he asked when I gave a copy of it to an accompanying pressman.

"I did read it but there was no time to discuss it as it had to be duplicated immediately to enable you to realise it this morning", I replied.

"Why did you get it so late," he said in surprise. "I sent it to you at 10 A.M. I wanted you to sit down with Gurudattji and other colleagues and suggest any changes in it if necessary."

The statement was so well drafted that even if it and his message had been delivered in time, no improvement could have been suggested. But this small incident revealed his democratic mind, his humility and keen sense of responsibility as President of a democratic organisation.

After some time he remembered that he had promised to send some literature on Jana Sangh particularly about its stand on Kashmir, to Prof. Johnson. While reminding me about it he began to comment on what he called 'different standards' by which Americans judged Indians. "I asked Johnson," he told us, "just to think what U.S.A. would have been today if Abraham Lincoln had surrendered to the demand of Southern State to secede. Lincoln waged war to preserve the artificial unity of U.S.A. and you hail him as your greatest statesman and hero. But when we talk of re-uniting India, which has been one geographically, culturally and historically all through the ages, you dub us as war-mongers. I told him", he added, "that U.S.A. had weakened the democratic forces by partitioning India and her policy of bolstering up Pakistan will defeat the very object she has in view".

His thoughts then turned to the circumstances leading to

the partition of India. He recounted his discussions with Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942, and with Gandhiji and Sardar Patel on the eve of the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Poona where the Congress implicitly accepted the principle of partition of the motherland.

"Why do you not write a book on this topic to explain your stand about Akhand Bharat," I asked him after listening to his revealing talk. "You can remove many of the prevailing misconceptions about the causes leading to the partition of the country."

"I do want to write one. But how to get time for it. Why don't you collect material and do some preliminary work. We can sit down after my return for some days and complete it," was his suggestive reply. The true story of this betrayal of the motherland shall perhaps never be revealed now that he is no more.

On the eve of his departure some Indian merchants from West Indies met him. They had requested him to keep an eye on the lot of Indians who were overseas. He had developed interest in their fate after his visits to Burma, Cambodia and Indo-China where a large number of them had met him. He thought that an organisation like the British Overseas League should be set up in Delhi to collect and disseminate information about the overseas Indians and generally watch their interests. He wanted a beginning to be made in that direction. That wish of his also remains to be fulfilled.

As we were nearing Ambala Cantonment, it struck him that he should inform Sheikh Abdullah of his visit. So as soon as he reached there he sent the following telegram to Sheikh Abdullah :

"I am proceeding to Jammu. My object in going there is to study situation myself and to explore the possibilities of creating conditions leading to peaceful settlement. I will like to see you also if possible."

A copy of this telegram was sent to Pandit Nehru in New Delhi.

Because of the promulgation of Section 144, Dr. Mookerji could only address a private meeting of workers in Ambala Cantonment. Later while talking to some pressmen, he

stated: "Permit System is meant to prevent foreigners and particularly Pakistani agents from entering Kashmir and obtaining military secrets and not to prevent respectable citizens from moving in the country. As a member of the Indian Parliament I have a right to go to every place within India to study the situation there. It is why I did not apply for a permit."

"Do you think Sheikh Abdullah will meet you?" A press-man asked.

"Why not?" replied Dr. Mookerji, "It is my wish that I should meet him. I see no reason why he should refuse".

From Ambala Cantonment Dr. Mookerji motored to Karnal where he had to address a public meeting and stay for the night. He was stopped on the way by the enthusiastic crowds of thousands at Shahabad and Nilokheri. He made brief speeches at both the places.

He reached Karnal at about 8 P.M. and proceeded straight to the venue of the meeting where over ten thousand people were awaiting for him. As he returned to the house of his popular host, L. Sita Ram, he was dead tired. He wanted to go to sleep immediately after taking his dinner. But workers of the district had assembled there to meet him. They wanted him to speak to them for some time. He turned round to me and said in an appealing voice, "Why don't you help me. You talk to them and let me sleep. I am tired".

I knew his condition and had no mind to be cruel to him. But the workers wanted him to say something. I had to submit. "They have assembled to hear you Dr. Sahib and not to me," I submitted apologetically.

Without another word he sat up in the chair and spoke to the workers and answered their queries for more than half an hour. He could not disappoint them.

From Karnal he went to the historic city of Panipat early next morning and addressed another huge meeting there. From there he entrained Bombay Express and arrived at Phagwara, his next halt, at about 4 P.M. In the way thousands greeted him on all stations as on the previous day.

Dr. Mookerji received Sheikh Abdullah's reply to his telegram of the previous day at Phagwara. The telegram read, "Thanks your telegram. I am afraid your proposed

visit to the State at the present juncture inopportune and will not serve any useful purpose".

On being asked as to what he proposed to do in view of Abdullah's reply, he said: "I want to visit Jammu to study the situation there. Therefore, I know its usefulness. If Sheikh Abdullah does not think that it will serve any useful purpose, he may not meet me and may utilise his time for any other useful work."

Pandit Nehru did not care to reply to his telegram.

From Phagwara he motored to Jullundur where he addressed a Press Conference. Replying to a question regarding the stand of U.N.O. *vis-a-vis* Kashmir he said: "India had taken the issue of Jammu and Kashmir to U.N.O. for stopping Pakistani aggression and for getting her armies out of the State and not to settle how and when plebiscite was to be held there. Pandit Nehru should have protested against this deflection from the main issue and should have withdrawn from U.N.O. if it had failed to accept this."

As he entrained at Jullundur for Amritsar an elderly person who was sitting in the same compartment introduced himself as Deputy Commissioner of Gurdaspur. He disclosed to him that the Punjab Government had decided not to allow him to reach Pathankot. "I am expecting instructions from my Government as to where you should be put under arrest," he added.

It now became clear that he would be arrested. Vaidya Gurudatta, the well-known Ayurvedic physician and author who was then President of Delhi State Jana Sangh, had been sent specifically to keep him company in case he was arrested. He wanted a younger companion also who could look to his personal comforts. Shri Tek Chank, an energetic worker from Dehra Dun, was selected for that purpose.

A huge crowd of over twenty thousands received him at the Amritsar railway station where he halted for the night. He met the local workers and told them about his plan. He also mentioned that Sheikh Abdullah's reply to him was analogous to the reply sent by Maharaja's Government to Pandit Nehru in 1946, when the latter wanted to visit Srinagar to study the situation created by the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. He was emphatic that he had decided to go to Jammu whether Sheikh

Abdullah liked it or not.

Journey from Amritsar to Pathankot on the 11th of May was yet another triumphant march. Thousands of people greeted him at every station. However, to his great surprise, he was not arrested.

Soon after his arrival at Pathankot, the Deputy Commissioner of Gurdaspur, who seemed to have preceded him, sought an interview with him. He informed Dr. Mookerji that he had been instructed by his Government to allow him and his companions to proceed without permit and added, "though no limit has been put on the number of companions you can take with you, I will advise you to take only a few".

This information intrigued Dr. Mookerji because it contradicted the information that had been given to him by the same officer at Jullundur. He could not understand why the Government had changed their plan. He, of course, could not know that a conspiracy had been hatched to push him into the Jammu and Kashmir State where he would be out of reach of the protecting hand of the Indian Supreme Court.

Pathankot gave him a right royal send off. Thousands of people with folded hands stood on both sides of the bazar through which his jeep passed. Just before his departure a ninety-year old lady blessed him in Punjabi with the following words :

("We Putra ! Jit ke avin, aiwan na avin")—My Son ! Do not return until you are victorious.

Dr. Mookerji and his companions reached the Madhopur Check Post on the Ravi bridge at 4 P.M. The Deputy Commissioner and other officers present there saw him off and wished him an enjoyable journey. But as soon as his jeep reached the centre of the bridge, he found the road blocked by a posse of the Kashmir police. The jeep stopped and a police officer handed over to him an order of the Chief Secretary of the State dated May 10, 1953, banning his entry into the State.

Dr. Mookerji read the order and said : "I have been permitted by the Government of India to proceed. What is it now." "I am Superintendent of Police, Kathua," the police officer replied, "I have been instructed to hand over this order to you".

"But I intend to go to Jammu," Dr. Mookerji declared.

Thereupon the police officer took out an order of arrest under Public Safety Act of the State issued by the Inspector-General of Police, Jammu and Kashmir State dated May, the 11th. It stated that Dr. Mookerji "has acted, is acting and is about to act in a manner prejudicial to public safety and peace".

"All right," said Dr. Mookerji on reading the order and got down from the jeep. Vaidya Gurudatt and Shri Tek Chand also got down and were put under arrest. The rest of the group were sent back. Dr. Mookerji then told his returning companions that he felt that it was a conspiracy between the Government of India and Jammu and Kashmir. He also sent the following last message for his countrymen through them: "I have entered Jammu and Kashmir State, though as a prisoner."

After a halt of about an hour at Lakhanpur, Dr. Mookerji and his companions were put in a jeep which rushed towards Srinagar. The people of Jammu who had not got the news of his arrest had assembled in their thousands at Tawi bridge to receive their hero. They waited for him till night. But they failed to notice him as the closed jeep carrying him passed the bridge at dusk.

He reached Udhampur at about 10 P.M. He was dead tired by the strenuous and uncomfortable journey in the jeep and wanted to spend the night there. But the officer escorting him informed him that night was to be spent at Batot. They reached there at about 2 A.M., slept for the remaining hours of the night there, and were rushed again next morning towards Srinagar Central Jail where he reached at about 3 P.M. From there he and his two companions were escorted by the Superintendent of the Jail, Pandit Siri Kanth Sapru, to a small cottage near Nishat garden where he was to spend the last forty days of his life as a prisoner.

The news of his arrest created a stir all over the country. Protest demonstrations and hartals took place at Delhi and other places. This gave a new impetus and direction to the satyagraha. Satyagrahis began to proceed to Jammu without entry permit instead of courting arrest at Delhi or Pathankot. "Jammu Chalo" became their new slogan.

On the 13th of May, Shri N. C. Chatterji raised the question of Dr. Mookerji's arrest by the Kashmir Government after he had been allowed to proceed to Jammu without permit by the Government of India as per information given by the Deputy Commissioner of Gurdaspur to him. But to the amazement of all, Pandit Nehru flatly denied the fact of the Deputy Commissioner having met Dr. Mookerji at all. "Does Pandit Nehru think," commented a Hindi daily of the capital on this denial, "that Dr. Mookerji is not to return to take him to task for this flagrant lie?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MARTYRDOM

THE story of the last forty days of Dr. Mookerji's life in detention at Srinagar culminating in his martyrdom on the 23rd of June, 1953, will go down in history as one of the most tragic and poignant episodes in the political life of free India. It is a sad commentary on democracy as it functioned in India under Pandit Nehru and on the character and behaviour of men who masqueraded as democratic rulers of the country in the most formative period of her life as a free nation.

The house which was converted into a sub-jail for Dr. Mookerji was a small cottage on the slope of the mountain range which flanks the Dal Lake. It had one main room about 10' x 12', in which Dr. Mookerji was lodged and two small side rooms which accommodated his co-detainees. There was no room in this "bungalow" for a fourth cot. When Pandit Prem Nath Dogra was brought there on the 19th of June, a tent had to be pitched outside to accommodate him.

The whole compound was covered with fruit trees and vegetable beds leaving only a small lawn, smaller than a tennis court, for the detenus to move about. It was at a distance of about eight miles from the city. There was also no arrangement for adequate medical aid. Doctor could come from the city only when requisitioned. About hundred yards away from the cottage there was a canal and a sub-section of the water-works department, which had a telephone. That telephone served this improvised jail in the wilderness as well.

Only one newspaper—*The Hindustan Times*—was supplied to him though later he was permitted to receive the *Hindustan Standard* also. But they seldom reached him in time. Usually two or three days elapsed before he got the next consignment of newspapers which, along with his mail, were brought to him by the Superintendent of the jail personally. The authorities were most callous in respect of his mail. On average it took about a week for a letter, particularly if written

in Bengali, after it had reached Srinagar, to be delivered to him. Some letters that were posted from Calcutta on the 10th of June and which bore Srinagar post mark of the 12th and 13th of June, were returned undelivered only after his death. On his protest at this inordinate delay in delivering his mail to him, he was told that the person who censored his dak written in Bengali was not always available. Thereupon Dr. Mookerji suggested that, to avoid delay, he could supply the authorities with the English rendering of the letters written in Bengali, which came only from his family members and contained no politics, for the purpose of censor. But no heed was paid to this suggestion. What was still worse, many letters to and from him were completely suppressed. It presumably included one written by the author, because it was not mentioned in the catalogue of letters received and sent by Dr. Mookerji, given in the statement issued by the Kashmir Minister for Prisons after his death.

He was not supplied with books and other necessities of life that he required as is clear from his various letters addressed to his friends like 'Homa' of the *Hindustan Standard* and to his daughter in Delhi which *inter alia* included requests for sending him books, a tin of biscuits, Nescaffe coffee, a muffler, some merocalized wax, a tin of ovaltine, a bottle of hair oil, lemon drop lozenges, a khatta and a writing pad.

Dr. Mookerji was in the habit of taking long walks in the morning and evening. That was, in fact, the only exercise he took to keep his body fit and healthy. He needed his exercise all the more in jail where there was no other activity to exercise his limbs. The narrow and short garden path failed to serve his purpose. Therefore, he began to lose appetite soon after he arrived there. The bracing climate of the valley had no use for him because he suffered from high blood pressure and the rarified atmosphere at high altitude was harmful for him. It was medically ill-advised to keep him in Kashmir. He should have been kept in some jail in Jammu province.

The natural scenery that the cottage commanded was of course good. But it could not give his limbs that exercise they needed or to his soul the buoyancy which natural beauty can give to a free man alone. The feelings of Dr. Mookerji about

the place of his confinement are best expressed by him in the following letters to his family members.

Letter: Dated 18-5-1953

"I am staying in a small bungalow. The bungalow is situated in a small but lovely garden. I walk on the narrow garden path. When you read this, you will feel how happy I must be. Alas, that is not possible. What physical comforts, what charms of nature, can bring you joy if your freedom is not yours. . . . Send me a long reply full of news and stories—but not politics of course! For, I am a prisoner here."

Letter in Bengali: Dated 25-5-1953

"Permission is limited only to a walk along the garden path. It takes 2 or 3 minutes to cover the distance. It is there only and in the open space that lies ahead of it that I take my stroll. This house is very small."

Letter in Bengali: Dated 25-5-1953

"Permission could not be had for stroll outside the garden in the morning and in the afternoon. I take a walk in the narrow path inside the garden. The garden is not large. There are ten or twelve policemen who keep guard—lest there be loss of prestige."

That he was refused permission to take a stroll, under guard of course, outside the compound throws a lurid light on the working of the mind of Sheikh Abdullah. Colonel R. N. Chopra, the Inspector-General of Prisons visited Dr. Mookerji in jail a few days after his arrival at Srinagar. On being asked if he could do anything for him, Dr. Mookerji told him that he was missing his morning walk very much.

"That is a small thing," replied Colonel Chopra, "You can take stroll on the canal bank. Police guard will accompany you."

Colonel Chopra instructed the Superintendent accordingly and he instructed the Inspector of Police on duty. But when Dr. Mookerji got ready for walk the next morning, the Inspector of Police informed him:

"I have not received written order so far. I am waiting for it." He did not get written permission till 20th of June, when

Dr. Mookerji had become physically unfit even to move.

It was later discovered that Sheikh Abdullah had ordered that Dr. Mookerji be given no additional facilities without his express orders.

None of his friends or relatives were allowed to interview him while he was in jail. His eldest son applied for permit to visit Srinagar to see him. But he was informed by the permit issuing authority in New Delhi that he could not be allowed to visit Kashmir to see his father. Some of his relatives were in Srinagar at that time. They too sought an interview with him but were refused. The only person from outside who was taken to him for the purpose of interview, except S. Hukam Singh, M.P. whose visit was purely political and U. M. Trivedi, Barrister, M.P., who met him as his counsel, was a half mad sadhu who was inflicted upon him to hear his nonsense. It was probably done to tell the world after his death that interviews were allowed to him.

Dr. Mookerji spent his time in jail in reading, writing, meditation and occasional chats with his co-detenus over the cup of afternoon tea which covered a wide range of subjects, from culture and spiritualism to politics and his assessment of men and events. It was his long cherished desire to write a biography of his father, Sir Ashutosh Mookerji. He began writing it there. He also used to write his diary regularly. He took it with him to the hospital as well when he was removed there on the 22nd of June. It would have been the most authentic source of information about his life and work, thoughts and ideals and above all of his own feelings and assessment of the events that culminated in his tragic death. But it was kept back by Kashmir Government after his death and has still not been returned in spite of repeated requests. This betrays a guilty conscience.

One of the books that Dr. Mookerji read in jail was *Raj Tarangini*, Kalhan's *Chronicle of Kings of Kashmir*. This great book gives a pathetic account of the intrigues and treachery that have characterised the rulers of Kashmir, with a few honourable exceptions, all through history. It is difficult to say for a contemporary whether the present day rulers of and from Kashmir come within the exceptions or not. The revelations about Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made by Shri

N. V. Gadgil and Dr. K. M. Munshi, in their latest writings as also the effects of his policies on the integrity and security of India have made him a doubtful exception in the matter. So far as Sheikh Abdullah is concerned, he has left nobody in doubt about himself.

Some idea of the sublimity of Dr. Mookerji's thoughts and ideas about himself and the world around can be formed from the following last portion of the letter that he wrote on June 6th, to his sister-in-law, wife of his elder brother, Justice Rama Prasad Mookerji.

"I do meditate, not simply over the days and years that are past, but also the events which happened then. And when they are mingled with sorrow and happiness, how could I afford to forget them. With them I brood over the present men and events. They flash in my mind like pictures—the place one is staying at, the work one is busy with or the how and why of events which are taking place—they crowd into my mind in different ways. Then again, when I ponder over the uncertain and distant future, a different set of ideas prop up in a different fashion. Then, I have a vision of light in the midst of darkness—victory in the midst of defeat. I experience what is good in everybody. I have felt very much during these few days, how small and trifling, yet how proud and power drunk we are, and yet how little conscious we are about it. We do not realise that this universe is moving like a machine, nor do we think of Him whose kindness has caused the birth of this creation, and is even causing its growth and destruction. I am at the 'fag end' of my life, yet am not sure what I have done in my life. I just think how I have spent my time in trifling and absurd words and deeds, how many errors and wrongs I have committed.

You know I like books. At present I am going through works on various subjects—new and old—but learning things anew all the same. There is the ardent desire to write but somehow that does not seem to be possible. Even in the past thirty years, a biography of father could not be written. This is a thing which I sorely regret. Even if an endeavour was now made many stories and writings of his time could be discovered.

For the past few days I feel moved with a desire to wield

the pen for it. My mind also intends to write down the none too small experience that I have gathered during my life time. I do bother myself about you, the children, the grandchildren and the thousands of boys who have been kept confined behind the prison bars. I am not sure how long will I remain in this State. Nor am I sure about my future programme. But I know it for certain that there is neither sorrow nor worry in my mind. Rather, I have been able to keep up, during these few days, that unceasing confidence which I used to place in myself and I could maintain my faith in that Unknown Supreme Power without whose guidance we cannot move or survive. This really cheers up and gives strength to the mind. This much for the day. Please reply."

Your Mejothakurpo

His lively and elegant humour continued to enliven the drab atmosphere of the jail till the end. He was in the habit of seeing the bright side of everything, animate and inanimate. His self-confidence was superb and his optimism was catching. But he never failed to note the inconsistencies and hypocrisies that often go with life and he used both his humour and satire to expose them. The letter written by him on the 7th of June to the columnist "Homa", paying his tribute to Norkay Tensing, is a brilliant example of his humour and satire:

"We are having mixed weather here," he wrote, "like our mixed economy, or if you like, my mixed health or my mixed feelings in detention. The conquest of Everest gave us unmixed pleasure, but Tensing although he reached first and was the real guide, got a mixed world reception. The Calcutta reception will of course be one of unmixed pride and admiration. The real discoverer of this proud and lofty mountain was a Bengali surveyor, Sikdar, I believe, was his name. But the Burra Sahib Everest, got an unmixed dedication. Such is life".

Dr. Mookerji, as said above, began to lose appetite soon after the detention at Srinagar. He also developed acute pain in his right leg accompanied by temperature on the 18th of May. He never regained his full health after that.

On the 24th of May Pandit Nehru and Dr. Katju visited Srinagar for "rest". They had not the courtesy and decency

to visit their august prisoner and see how he was being treated there.

The pain in his leg reappeared on the 3rd of June, with greater intensity. In a letter dated June the 6th, he wrote : "I was on the whole keeping well, but the pain in the right leg has again increased during the last two days. Moreover for some days I have been running temperature in the evening. There is burning sensation in the eyes and face. I am taking medicine."

On the receipt of this letter at Calcutta on or about June the 12th Dr. Mookerji's brother saw Dr. B. C. Roy, apprised him of his health and requested him to contact Kashmir.

This pain in the leg accompanied by fever was a new malady which Dr. Mookerji had never had before. Because of loss of appetite he was getting weak everyday. Barrister U. M. Trivedi, who had gone to Srinagar to argue his *habeas corpus* before Kashmir High Court and who had refused to take instructions from him on the 12th of June in the presence of the District Magistrate, interviewed him for 3 hours on the 18th of June, after the Kashmir High Court had directed the Kashmir Government to allow him to take instructions in private. He found Dr. Mookerji weak and cheerless.

Pandit Prem Nath Dogra who was taken from Jammu to Srinagar on the 19th of June, to meet him was also struck by his poor state of health and low appetite. He asked him the reason and was informed that it might be due to lack of exercise.

The same night he developed pain in chest and high temperature. On the 20th morning the authorities were informed about it. Thereupon doctors Ali Mohammed and Nath Raina reached the sub-jail at 11.30 A.M. Dr. Ali Mohammed diagnosed the trouble as Dry Pleurisy and prescribed streptomycin injections. Dr. Mookerji protested that his family physician had advised him not to take streptomycin as that did not suit his system. But no heed was paid to it. Dr. Mookerji, according to Vaidya Gurudatt, requested the Superintendent of Jail on that day that news of his illness should be sent to his relatives. But no such intimation was sent nor any bulletin issued by the Government till after his death.

Next day, the 21st of June, excepting the jail doctor, a sub-assistant surgeon, no other doctor, not even Dr. Ali Mohammed, visited him. His temperature rose and pain increased during the day.

Because of this sudden relapse he could not have much talk with Pandit Prem Nath Dogra who had been brought to Srinagar for consultations with him regarding withdrawal of the movement, especially in view of the internal developments in the State, which had divided the State cabinet into two camps—Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg on one side and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Pandit Shyam Lal Saraf and Mr. Girdhari Lal Dogra on the other. The latter wanted an understanding with the Praja Parishad to checkmate the designs of the former. Pandit Dogra had been brought to Srinagar to meet Dr. Mookerji in spite of the opposition of Sheikh Abdullah. Dr. Mookerji, a democrat as he was, was then thinking of drawing up proposals in consultation with Pandit Dogra for the consideration of Jana Sangh and Praja Parishad colleagues outside who, he held, must be consulted before any decision was taken.

At about 4 A.M. on the 22nd of June, he had a severe heart attack. His temperature went down to 97° and he began to perspire profusely. Vaidya Guru Datt administered him some hot cardamom and clove water which gave him some relief.

At 5.15 A.M. the Superintendent of Jail was informed about Dr. Mookerji's health and was requested to come with the doctor immediately. Dr. Ali Mohammed reached there at 7.30 A.M. He suggested to the Superintendent that Dr. Mookerji should be immediately removed to the State Nursing Home. The Superintendent asked him to get orders from the District Magistrate. Thereupon both the co-detenus requested him to get permission for them also to move with him to the nursing home. But Dr. Ali Mohammed refused to do so and remarked: "I understand your anxiety, but you don't worry. He will be in better hands there."

How one wishes that they had then insisted to be with him in the nursing home.

At about 11.30 A.M. the Jail Superintendent reached there with a taxi car in which Dr. Mookerji was removed to the nursing home in the State Hospital stipulated at a distance of

about 10 miles. He was kept in a room in the first floor.

This removal to the distant hospital, of a patient suffering from acute heart attack was itself wrong from the medical point of view because of the exertion it involved.

What took place in the nursing home is still shrouded in mystery. Barrister Trivedi met him at 5.30 P.M. after completing his arguments in the Court. He was confident that he would be set at liberty the next day when the judgment was to be delivered.

He left Dr. Mookerji at about 7.30 P.M., weak but cheerful. Dr. Mookerji himself felt better. Doctors on attendance told Shri Trivedi that the worst had passed and that he would be X-rayed next morning and would be all right in two or three days.

But on the 23rd of June at about 3.45 A.M. Shri Trivedi was picked up from his hotel to go to the hospital. Pandit Premnath Dogra and the two co-detenus of Dr. Mookerji in the sub-jail were also asked about the same time to get ready to go to the hospital. They reached there at about 4.30 A.M. and were informed that Dr. Mookerji had breathed his last at 3.40 A.M.

The communique issued after his death by the Kashmir Government on June 23rd, gave the report of Doctors Ali Mohammed and Ram Nath Parihar, M.D., who were declared as having been attending upon him. The report said that his general condition was fairly good at 4 P.M. Oxygen was given to him at 11 P.M. to allay restlessness which started at that time, that he got pain in the heart area at 1 A.M. and became restless, and that his pulse stopped at 3.40 A.M.

Apart from the criminal negligence in the treatment meted out to Dr. Mookerji, who had been detained without trial and was, therefore, a national trust in the hands of the Governments of Kashmir and India, there is much circumstantial evidence which goes to suggest something worse.

In the first place the time of his death as given in the official communique is not correct. According to all accounts coming from other patients in the nursing home at that time as also from a hospital official, he died at about 2.30 A.M. and not at 3.40 A.M. as given out by the Government.

Secondly according to a very reliable information, oxygen

was not given to him at all. In fact only vain effort was made to get it from the military hospital at the spur of the moment.

The name of Dr. Parihar was probably associated with Dr. Ali Mohammed as the physician attending upon him only to lend weight to the official version. He had never examined Dr. Mookerji since his arrival in Srinagar.

These discrepancies in the official version and the known and uncontradicted facts go to prove that there was something to hide.

Enquiries made on the spot by some very responsible persons later revealed even more damaging facts which called for further investigation. It was, for example, found that it was not a fact that Dr. Mookerji's condition took a turn for the worse at 11 P.M., as given out in the official communique. He was rather feeling better at that time. His condition suddenly worsened only after a particular doctor gave him an injection at 1 A.M. "as a precautionary measure". The same doctor is known to have refused to come and attend upon him after that, even though he was repeatedly summoned on the telephone by nurses on duty to do so in view of the fast deteriorating condition of Dr. Mookerji.

The suspicions, aroused by these stray pieces of information, are further strengthened by the popular belief in Srinagar, and the ominous warnings that some respectable man gave to Shri Trivedi when he went there. When, on being refused permission to take instructions from Dr. Mookerji in private, Shri Trivedi was planning to return to New Delhi, an important citizen of Srinagar dropped into his hotel room and pleaded with him not to go till he had got Dr. Mookerji released. He warned him that "Dr. Mookerji will be killed", if he was not got released early. The same man met him on the 24th morning outside the hospital and reminded him of his earlier warning.

A police superintendent who came to Shri Trivedi before he left his hotel for Delhi was so agitated that he took out his pistol and cried aloud: "They have killed him. I will shoot them."

What is more important, every one in Srinagar instinctively felt that there has been some foul play. The facts about the internal rift in the Kashmir Government, the fact that the

Kashmir High Court gave permission to Shri Trivedi to interview Dr. Mookerji much against the wishes of Sheikh Abdullah and the general belief, and Shri Trivedi's own conviction, that Dr. Mookerji's petition would have been granted and he would have been set at liberty on the 24th of June, point to the same conclusion. *Vox populi* they say is *Vox Dei*.

In view of these facts and circumstantial evidence it was quite natural for the people in India to suspect foul play. That explains the universal demand for an open and impartial enquiry into the circumstances leading to his death. All political parties and even some leading Congress men joined in making this demand on the Government of India. But the Government of India turned down this demand for reasons best known to them.

A NATION'S HOMAGE

THE news of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji's death came as a bolt from the blue to his countrymen who, including his family members, had no information about his illness till then. It stunned the whole of India.

There was spontaneous and unprecedented mourning throughout the length and breadth of the country. Hartal was observed and condolence meetings held in every major town and city of the country. Poignancy was added to the tragedy by the mysterious circumstances in which he had passed away. It intrigued people's minds and created the suspicion of foul play. It added indignation against the Government of Kashmir as also of India, to the grief.

In Jammu people went mad with rage and grief. Every one of them felt that Dr. Mookerji had become a martyr to their cause—the cause of Kashmir's integration with the rest of India, the cause of Indian unity.

In Delhi people demanded revenge, blood for blood, for they believed that their beloved leader had been murdered. But for the patriotic restraint exercised by the Jana Sangh leaders, the people's rage might have taken a violent form.

The people of Bengal naturally felt the tragedy most. They were moved to the core of their hearts. The whole of Calcutta, where his body was flown from Srinagar, kept a night long vigil to pay homage and have the last glimpse of the departed leader. Over a million people lined the 14-mile long route from the aerodrome, from where the cortege started at 10 P.M., to his house in South Calcutta where it reached at five in the morning. A million followed it when it started on its last earthly journey to Keortala burning Ghat at noon. All along the route lakhs of people showered flowers and shed tears from balconies and house tops. It was something unprecedented even in the history of that city of big things.

The Parliament, the State Legislatures and other corporate

bodies, the Press and the leaders of Public opinion irrespective of party affiliations, as also the leaders and rulers of the Buddhist countries of South-East Asia mourned his death as a great loss and paid glowing tributes and homage to his dedicated life of service to his motherland. His achievements as an educationist and a patriot were recalled by all. But the dominating note in the nation-wide tributes was his service to the cause of unity of the motherland and to the democratic freedom of the common people.

"As a true fighter for his motherland, Dr. Mookerji died in the forefront of the battle for integration of Kashmir, which is and which ought to be immediately declared an undivided and indivisible part of Bharat", said Shri M. S. Golwalkar, the leader of the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh.

"India has suffered an irreparable loss in Shyama Prasad's martyrdom for United India" bewailed Tarak Nath Das, the veteran revolutionary leader.

His colleagues in the Parliament and lovers of democracy emphasised the loss to democratic forces in the country.

"Dr. Mookerji was the only person before whom the Prime Minister bowed and with him Shri Nehru lost many a battle in the Parliament," said Dr. Lankasundaram.

"His ability and fearlessness were powerful brakes on the growing arrogance of Treasury benches", said Shri Frank Anthony.

"He was the best Parliamentarian and made his dominating personality felt all the time", said Smt. Sucheta Kripalani.

His colleagues in the field of education, in cabinet and in political life recalled his great qualities of head and heart.

"Public life in India in recent years has not known a more courageous and gifted leader", said Dr. John Mathai, his colleague in the first Union Cabinet.

"Country is definitely the poorer for him. Great things were expected of him", said Shri Purshottam Das Tandon.

"He was a great patriot, a great fighter for the causes he considered right and held dear", said Acharya Kripalani.

"In Dr. Mookerji Bharat has lost one of the foremost patriots and a born Parliamentarian", said Shri V. D. Savarkar.

To his colleagues and co-workers of the National Democratic party in the Parliament, Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya

Parishad and Praja Parishad, and above all, to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, which he led so boldly and successfully that it became the most formidable challenge to Congress misrule within two years of its inception, his death came as a cruel blow and an irreparable loss.

The only tribute that the Jana Sangh could pay to his memory was to re-dedicate itself to complete his unfinished work. That it did.

His friend and colleague in Parliament, Shri Harendra Nath Chattopadhyay, a gifted poet as he was, paid his tribute by writing a memorable poem. It read :

"A giant has departed . . . lo' the sun
Of a colossal intellect has set,
The giants are departing one by one
To whom our mourning nation owes a debt.
Incalculable debt that shall be paid
With understanding in the waging strife—
We dare not rest until our hands have made
A mighty structure of our nation's life.
He gave us the impression of a tree
With thoughts about him like to foliage packed—
How often we agreed to disagree
Yet kept our merry friendship all intact.
We laughed and jested, at each other sent
Ironic repartee like arrows hurled
When we discussed affairs of Parliament
And several sorry problems of the world.
We saw not eye to eye in many things
And yet we were the very best of friends—
Yes, mighty eagle ! now fold up your wings
Since suddenly your weary journey ends.
How swiftly you have gone out of our reach,
The sudden cancellation of a peak—
Friend ! we shall miss your presence, and your speech
Which thundered every time you rose to speak.
How shall our grief in language be expressed
And how shall we forget this mournful day ?
"The jail is an ideal place for rest"
Is what you said before you went away . . .

Now shall you rest for centuries to come,
High Oratory, packed with lightning flashes,
Shall, like a secret statue, cold and dumb,
Sit on the monument which hides your ashes."

The most touching and telling tribute came from Dr. M. R. Jaykar the famous Jurist and Privy Councillor who said: "To die in a prison house, locked there by his country's Swadeshi Government by persons with whom he shared power as a colleague, is a fitting termination of a warring life. Let us hope that this incident will make the Government of India realise, in their self complacent enjoyment of the chits of American visitors, the enormity of their behaviour, which ignored all the canons of fairness and justice accepted by civilised Governments".

His was a warring life no doubt. All his life he fought valiantly for his country's freedom both social and economic as well as political, for civil liberties of the people, for the unity of the motherland and, after the dawn of independence, for upholding democracy against growing fascism of the men in power. He ultimately laid down his life for these. He truly became a martyr to civil liberties, to democracy and to the unity of India. Like a true Karma Yogi, he lived as a soldier, and died a martyr. He was great in life, greater in death.



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