



Greetings  
and Good  
wishes for  
Holi to ALL  
the members  
of the  
Bhavan's  
Family  
Worldwide.



## SYAMAPRASAD MOOKERJEE-1

□ R. VENKATARAMAN

**S**ri R. Venkataraman, former President of India and present President of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan unveiled the Bust of Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee at the ancestral home of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee in Bhowanipore, Kolkata on Friday February 23, 2001. The function was jointly organized by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Asutosh Mookerjee Memorial Institute which has graciously made available to the Bhavan to house its Kolkata Kendra, since the last few years. The Bhavan is beholden to Justice Chittatosh Mookerjee, Chairman of Sri Asutosh Mookerjee Memorial Institute for the touching gesture. Below is given the text of Sri R. Venkataraman's address on the occasion. - Editor

Greetings and Good wishes for Holi to ALL the members of the Bhavan's Family Worldwide.

Syamaprasad Mookerjee, second son of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee and Smt. Jogamaya Devi, was born on July 6, 1901, in Kolkata at 77, Russa Road (now renamed Asutosh Mookerjee Road).

Bengal had during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century and in modern times produced a galaxy of talented men and women who had carried



Jogomaya Devi  
Wife of Sri Asutosh

forward the torch of renaissance, lighting the path to the rest of India. Hindu reformers like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterji, who gave us the immortal national song, *Vandemataram*, which is resounding in every nook and corner of India; renowned poet and Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, political activists like Surendranath Banerji, Chittaranjan Das, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose that peerless prince among patriots of undaunted courage who challenged the mighty British Empire in an armed conflict; eminent scientists like Jagadish Chandra Bose, Acharya P. C. Roy and Megnad Saha, champions of emancipation of women like Renuka Roy, Phulrenu Guha and Renu Chakravarti – all of whom were my colleagues in Parliament, and finally that versatile scholar and educationist, the maker of modern India Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, to name only a few of the galaxy of leaders who have been immortalized in the annals of our nation.

It is often said that Newton's son was no mathematician nor Milton's son a poet. But



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Britain itself  
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elder Earl of  
Chatham was  
succeeded by his  
illustrious son  
Pitt the younger,  
as Prime  
Minister of  
England.

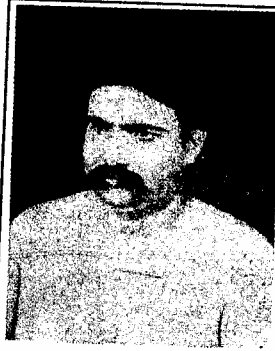




**Though the Bar was a very lucrative profession, Syamaprasadji's interest was more in education. He got himself elected successively to the Senate and the Syndicate of the University and from there to the Bengal Legislative Council at the age of 29.**



Britain itself disproved it when Pitt the elder Earl of Chatham was succeeded by his illustrious son Pitt the younger, as Prime Minister of England. The nearest parallel to the renowned Pitts of England is Sir Asutosh and Syamaprasad of India. Sir Asutosh was an eminent Judge of the High Court, and a great educationist who as Vice Chancellor of the Kolkata University, kindled the creative force of education and research and aimed at achieving parity with the West. Above all he was a great reformer who tried to synthesize the ancient culture of India with modern science and research.

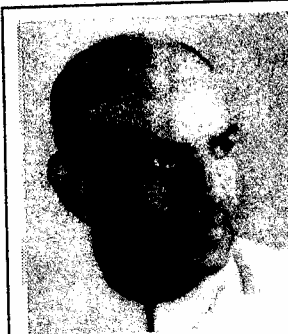


Asutosh Mookerjee at the age of 22 years.

Syamaprasadji imbibed all the great qualities of his father and became as great a success as his illustrious father, - a great son of a great father. He was a brilliant student securing a first class and first rank in his Arts and Law degree examinations of the biggest university, the Kolkata University. He later went to England for higher studies in Law and was called to the Bar in England. Though the Bar was a very lucrative profession, Syamaprasadji's interest was more in education. He got himself elected successively to the Senate and the Syndicate of the University and from there to the Bengal Legislative Council at the age of 29.



**It is the qualities of Syamaprasadji that had attracted the whole nation. A man of dauntless courage and firm conviction, Syamaprasadji while a minister defied the ban on the Hindu Maha Sabha session in Bhagalpur in 1942 and courted arrest.**



Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee

At the age of 33 he became the Vice-Chancellor of the prestigious Kolkata University—the youngest Vice Chancellor ever. He became Finance Minister of undivided

Bengal, a member of the Constituent Assembly and Minister for Industries and Supplies in the national Cabinet of 1947. He resigned from the Union Government in 1950, owing to differences on the Nehru-Liaquat Pact and functioned as the Leader of Opposition both in the Provisional Parliament and in the Lok Sabha after the general election until the cruel hand of destiny snatched him away prematurely. He strode on the political firmament of the nation like a colossus, shedding light and luster, steadfastly upholding the Cause of Indian nationalism. Under his inspiration the Hindu Maha Sabha adopted in 1939, complete Independence as its political goal. Gandhiji himself welcomed Syamaprasadji, joining Hindu Maha Sabha, saying, "somebody had to lead the Hindus after Malaviyaji".

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Bhagalpur in 1942 and courted arrest. It was the most sensational news in all India and abroad. Several ministers had courted imprisonment after resigning from the ministry but the action of Syamaprasadji was unparalleled.

Again when he was in Fiazlul Haque ministry, he found the governor's interference intolerable and it was making a mockery of the much advertised provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act 1935, he tendered his resignation. This enhanced his reputation as a person who cared more for principles than for office.

During the fierce repression let loose by the British against the Quit India movement launched by the Congress, Syamaprasad wrote strong letters to the Viceroy and Governor condemning such brutality. His differences with the Congress did not stand in the way of his burning patriotism for the country.

When more than 3 million people died in the Bengal famine 1943, he was one of those who exposed the misery of the starving people braving the wrath of the then masters. He organized relief in a manner that elicited the admiration, not only of Bengal, but of the entire nation.

(to be continued)

*R. Venkataraman*

(R. Venkataraman)

March 15, 2001  
New Delhi

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