

LOK SABHA DEB. **(English Version)**

Third Session
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(Death of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal)

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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LOK SABHA

*Wednesday, August 21, 1985/
Sravana 30, 1907 (Saka)*

*The Lok Sabha met at
Eleven of the Clock.*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

OBITUARY REFERENCE

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER : The Prime Minister.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI) : Mr. Speaker Sir, yesterday with this heinous act, the assassination of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, the nation has suffered a great loss. This loss is shared by every member of this House and by every citizen of our country.

I had first met Santji many years ago and I have found him a man of faith, transparent sincerity, dedicated to national unity and the development of Punjab. Santji stood for communal harmony and brotherhood in Punjab. With his ultimate sacrifice, Santji joins the long line of martyrs from Sikhs and from Punjab, who have given their lives for India, for India's unity, for India's integrity, for strengthening our country.

Santji showed tremendous courage and guts when he came forward and signed the Memorandum of settlement with the Government. This settlement was welcomed by all Sikhs, by Hindus and by other religious groups in Punjab and outside Punjab in India. All sane elements welcomed this settlement.

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But still there are forces for their own motives working against the integrity and unity of our country. These anti-national forces, with his loss, the heinous act, have proved that they are not only anti-national, they are also anti-Sikh.

India will not yield to terror or terrorists' tactics. We will stand firm and fight against these forces with all the strength that is available to us.

To-day all sections in our country must rally together and rise for Santji's cause which is basically communal harmony, unity and integrity of our country. Let us all unite for brotherhood, for peace, for trust and unity of India. This will be the only true tribute to Santji's martyrdom.

SHRI C. MADHAV REDDI (Adilabad): I express my sense of sorrow on behalf of the Telugu Desam Party at the assassination of the great Sant, Sant Longowal.

I share the sentiments of the Leader of the House when he said that he was a man who was devoted and dedicated to the cause of peace and Sikh-Hindu unity. He was a great soul and a great patriot and we have lost a great man. It is a pity that while we were making laws in this House to fight terrorism, terrorism is taking a very heavy toll and we are losing precious lives.

I express my deep sense of sorrow and I send my condolences to the Akali Dal. Let the soul of Sant Longowal rest in peace.

SHRI AMAL DATTA (Diamond Harbour) : I and my Party express our deep sorrow at the assassination of Sant Harchand Longowal. We condemn the acts of terrorism as we have always done

[Shri Amal Datta]

in the past which have led to his martyrdom today.

Sant Longowal started as a priest and became a religious leader. Forces beyond his control drew him into politics and he became a political leader at the time of emergency when other leaders were not available and he donned the mantle of leadership and easily he became the supreme leader of the Akali party in 1980.

There was a time when people did not understand the Sant correctly because of the happenings in Punjab which started from 1981. But after the trauma Punjab has suffered, the Sant showed an exemplary courage in signing the accord which ushered in an era of hope for peace and stability in Punjab. But, unfortunately, the forces of destabilisation which had not been dealt with enough early have struck their roots deep in the body politic of Punjab and it would be difficult as it now appears to root them out completely and to have the stability desired in that part of India which has given leadership to the rest for the last two decades or more.

After the accord was signed, some of us in the Opposition Parties have expressed our apprehension that if the elections are called for immediately, there may be destabilisation. We are again urging that under the circumstances and in view of the tragic incident that has taken place now you may please reconsider..

SHRI KAMAL NATH (Chhindwara) : This is an obituary reference. Are you allowing a debate, Sir ?..

(Interruptions)

SHRI AMAL DATTA : I am not entering into any controversy..

MR. SPEAKER : Please don't do it.

SHRI AMAL DATTA : I am sorry if it has given rise to any controversy whatsoever. That was far from my intention.

Our position is stated already in the paper. So that is not the point. But in the wake of this tragic incident I think we all have to search our souls and see whether the nation having suffered the trauma can move so fast as obviously the Prime Minister and the Party want.

Sir, I now end by expressing our condolences to the bereaved family of Shri Longowal, the entire Akali Dal and his followers.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU (Gobichettipalayam) : Sir, it is a sorrowful day. In this Session it is for the second time that I am making an obituary reference for a political and religious leader devoted to the cause of peace, brotherhood and goodwill among men. Actually, Sir, this heinous act should be condemned vehemently. I would even go to the extent of saying that Mr. Longowal made the *Magna Carta* in the history of Punjab by bringing a peace settlement with the help of our hon. Prime Minister. Actually the best award for peace should be granted to him. I would suggest to the Government of India that at least for this year the best award for peace that is to be awarded should be awarded to Mr. Longowal.

Sir, on behalf of All India Anna DMK we express our deep regret and sorrow to the bereaved family.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, one more martyr has fallen in the great traditions of India. It is not a new experience for this country to find that those who strive and struggle for peace do it at the altar of martyrdom. If the greatest man of this country like Gandhiji could not be spared by the assassin's bullet in his striving for peace, no wonder others like Longowal who struggled and strived for peace had to pay the same heavy price.

Sir, Longowal had a great courage and boldness to sign the Punjab Agreement because he was dedicated to peace, communal amity and also he wanted the solution of the problem within the framework of India's Constitution.

Sir, on this occasion just for the record of future history I would like to quote one reminiscence about the work of Longowal. The Prime Minister may recall that on 29th April, 1985 some of us in the Opposition Parties had the privilege to meet Mr. Longowal in an effort to find a new path of dialogue and the end of chapter of confrontation. I want to go on record, Sir, that immediately after that, the Prime Minister had convened a meeting of the Opposition Parties to settle the problem and he asked us the question as to what according to Longowalji and others were the road-blocks in the solution of Punjab problem. I had then told the Prime Minister—he may recall—that Longowalji had said that there were only three road-blocks in the path of negotiated settlement of Punjab and if they were removed the problem would be solved. He said that those three road-blocks were :

1. Excepting those who are guilty of violence, release others who are detained ;
2. Instead of cases being tried in the Special Courts let them be tried in the ordinary courts with due process of law ; and
3. As far as deserters are concerned, take a more compassionate attitude.

When I quoted this to the Prime Minister in the Opposition meeting he asked "Will they stand by the commitment ?" Sir, today I want to tell this House that Longowal died because he stood by his commitment. In the Punjab agreement these three points were accepted by the Prime Minister during the talks. But more than that at the risk of his life, Longowal stood by his commitment that he had given to us and the commitment that he gave to the Prime Minister. He did it at the risk of his life. When he signed the agreement some extremists told him that he had signed his death warrant. All that they did was that they executed that warrant. But in history many such warrants are executed and those who are executed become immortal and those who try to exe-

cute them go down in the dust-bin of history ? That is the experience of history. The same way history will go.

Therefore, I want to pay a tribute to Longowalji. He kept up to his commitment, he stood by peace, he stood by amity and he wanted the entire country to mourn. When this agreement was signed by Longowalji and the Prime Minister, I have said that the signing of the agreement means the end of agony of Punjab and the end of anxiety of India. Both Punjab and India are interested in solving the problem. Longowalji tried to do it.

Sir, in the end, I must say that whatever be your security arrangements, those who are in public life and particularly in mass movements, it is an occupational hazard for them, if anyone wants to kill us, no security guards can save us : those of us who are with the masses shall die in the midst of the masses. That is how Longowalji died. Therefore, I do not shed a tear because no tear is shed for a martyr. Only songs are sung for a martyr. I once more sing that song and in the words of Byron "he never fails who dies in a great cause". He died in a great cause. He shall never fail. He will continue to lead the State.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat) : Sir, the House meets in very sorrowful circumstances today which we could not have imagined at this time yesterday, for example. I think in the history of the Parliament within such a relatively short period of time, we have not been called upon to mourn the death of so many prominent people at the hands of terrorists as we have been doing during the last one year. I fear and apprehend that this may not be the last occasion. Sir, there have been many instances of terrorism in history, in many countries including our own country during the independence movement. There were people who employed terrorist methods, but they had some sense of idealism. Maybe, they were misguided in the methods they used, but everybody pays respect to the ideals which motivated them. But in this case, we fail to understand what is the ideal which motivated these people who had gunned

[Shri Indrajit Gupta]

down an old man within the precincts of the place of worship, inside the Gurdwara. What can possibly be motivating them except the most heinous of all ideas and motives. I express my party's deep sense of shock and sorrow at what has happened, because we have been trying so long, all of us in this House and outside too, to spread the ideas that places of worship should, at least, not be misused for the use of arms and for violence. But once again all the hopes that we have had have been dashed to the ground, at least for the time being.

Sir, now, in retrospect, it is perhaps easier to understand many of Sant Longowal's erstwhile actions and statements which some times did strike us as being rather equivocal, not as categorical as we would have liked them to be and so on. But, no doubt, he also understood that he was in grave risk of his life, he was on the hit list of these terrorists for a long time. Perhaps he was also aware of the fact, as I am painfully aware, of today that the security arrangements are totally inadequate to counter-act this kind of evil and without adequate security and protection one can understand that in the very complicated and difficult circumstances through which the country had to pass and Longowalji himself had to pass there were times when perhaps he could not take such a firm and unequivocal stand as people would have liked him to do.

But after the accord was signed—and the signing itself, as my colleagues have said was an act of great courage on his part, because there were so many people who were opposed to it—he has been firm and steadfast in all his efforts to see that the spirit of that accord spreads throughout Punjab and throughout the country, and that it is loyally carried out and implemented. But, I cannot forget that only a few days ago—I hope, my friends here will not take umbrage, but it is a fact which should be recalled—Sant Longowal himself did issue a public statement in which he also expressed his apprehensions about holding elections so early. It was he who said that the situation was not yet perhaps quite ripe for an election. Any way, he has paid for it; we are not paying

for it yet, we are still alive and kicking here; he has paid for it with his life. I do not think, anybody can make a bigger payment than that. For all that he did in his own way and particularly in the last days of his life for strengthening the forces of unity, peace and communal amity and all that, he will always be remembered, that would be the biggest monument to him. All of us unitedly should pledge also that we would spare no efforts to see that the task of restoring, on a stable basis, harmony, peace and communal unity in the Punjab would be given the highest priority by all of us.

With those words, I pay my homage to the memory of Sant Longowal on behalf of my party.

SHRI K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN (Badagara). Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to associate myself and my group with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Leader of the House and my esteemed leaders of opposition here.

Sant Longowal, in whose memory we are paying humble homage and tribute, was not an ordinary man. I had the privilege of knowing him for the last few years and that has left a very deep imprint of his extraordinary personality. He was a man who had very little formal education, but he was a man who in the tradition of saint philosophers of this great country had immense wisdom and tremendous moral courage to face issues. I must say that I have been greatly benefited by this association. He was not an ordinary *Sant*, who wore an honorific title; he was a *Sant* who lived the life of a *Sant* and worked in the true traditions of the great founders of Sikh religion. If he felt that they were alienated, he was willing to take it up and fight for their cause, but with no malice and ill-will. It is another remarkable trait which he shared with the real *Sants*, that he bore no malice and ill-will towards anyone. I only wish if he had been given the support and sustenance by some of his colleagues, probably the history of this country itself would have been different even two-three years ago.

He has fallen a victim to secessionist violence and undoubtedly there can be no

quarter given to secessionist violence and terrorism of a kind that we have witnessed in this country for the past few years. It must be stamped out and rooted out and we must be united in our resolve. But may I say that it is not enough for us to use the instruments of the State, which are important instruments of security, which are undoubtedly of great importance. Unless we are prepared to work with political conviction and moral courage, we cannot put out this violence. It is my firm belief that Sant Longowal would have provided that leadership, and which he wanted to, to promote the cause of Hindu-Sikh unity and national unity. Violence breeds in the minds of men, may be mad, may be misled, and unless we adopt the approach of Mahatma Gandhi and the great tradition to which Sant Longowal also belonged, we will be failing in our duty in achieving the real task of national unity.

Sir, I wish to pay my humble tribute to this great son of India, who till his last breath insisted on certain values which have been held dear in this country and worked dedicatedly and sincerely for national unity.

[Translation]

BEGUM ABDULLAH (Anantnag) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I express my deep sorrow at the assassination of Sant Longowal at the hands of the terrorists. The Sant's death is not only a loss to the Punjab but to the entire country.

I strongly condemn this assassination on my behalf and on behalf of my party, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. We share the grief of the country and the people. The peaceful atmosphere that Santji had created by reaching an accord with the Hon. Prime Minister will have to be maintained.

We should not yield unto the terrorists, instead we should continue fighting against them with all our might, for the country's unity and integrity.

SHRI MOHD. MAHFOOJ ALI KHAN (Etah) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to read out an Urdu couplet :

*Jinki naubat ki sada se georjta tha nasmaath
Dam baqhud hain makbaron mein hun na
han kuchh bhi nahin.*

I felt very sad to learn this news today. On my behalf and on behalf of my party, the Lok Dal, I would like to say that the goal of Santji was a noble one. I feel that if anyone has sacrificed his life for the cause of peace after Mahatma Gandhi it was Santji. He played a great role in solving the Punjab problem. He sacrificed his life for it. A champion of peace is no more among us.

I would not say much but pray on my behalf and on behalf of my party that his soul may rest in peace.

[English]

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Manjeri) : I rise to express my deep sense of sorrow and anguish at the passing away of Sant Longowal. He was shot dead, he was assassinated. It was a great tragedy and it has shaken the entire nation. Why was Sant Longowal assassinated ? What was his crime ? Some misguided people feel that his crime was that he loved the country, his crime was that he wanted peace, his crime was that he wanted harmony among the Sikhs and Hindus, his crime was that he signed the Accord. For this he suffered and by standing for his principles and dying for his principles he really became a martyr and a great son of India. The entire nation mourns this great loss. I am just reminded of a Urdu couplet. It says :

*Mat sahil ise samajh phirta hai falak barson,
Tab khaak ke parde se insaan nikalta hai.*

He was 'insaan', a 'man', and a man who is no more with us. We mourn his death and I not only convey my feelings to the entire nation, not only to the Sikh community, but to his family also. I am very sorry that terrorism is still alive in our country. All of us have to come together to fight this terrorism and save our country from violence and disaster.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN (Cooch Behar) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are shocked

[Shri Amar Roy Pradhan]

to hear the news that Sant Longowal, a man of peace and a man who signed this accord has been shot dead. The whole nation is shocked and we have lost a true patriot.

Sir, on behalf of my Party, Forward Bloc, I would like to join the Leader of the House and other leaders to pay my respects and homage to the memory of Sant Longowal. Let us all hope, and let us all be united for complete peace and harmony in our country. For this the Sant has laid down his life.

SHRI N.V.N. SOMU (Madras North) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also share the sentiments expressed by the leaders. It is a great loss to the country. The late lamented Longowalji tried for peace and an amicable settlement. After a settlement was arrived at and the elections were announced, such a sad thing has happened. Longowalji has sacrificed his life for the country.

On behalf of our D.M.K. Party and my leader Dr. Karunanidhi, I express my heart-felt condolences to the bereaved family.

DR. A. K. PATEL (Mehsana) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of my Party and personally I express my sense of great sorrow on the assassination of Sant Longowal. Yesterday evening, when we heard the news of assassination, it was really a matter of great shock. A few days back when on Punjab he signed the agreement, people were expecting that in Punjab and in the nation, peace would be established, but unluckily, as we have seen yesterday, he had to pay the price for signing the accord. I strongly condemn this type of an act, and again I express our sense of sorrow on behalf of my Party.

SHRIMATI D. K. BHANDARI (Sikkim) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the people of our country were immensely happy to hear the news of Punjab accord at the instance of the hon. Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. Today, we are shocked and

grieved to hear the sad news that the person who wanted to initiate peace, in that effort had to sacrifice his life at the hands of the terrorists. No words are enough to condemn this heinous crime. Let me, on behalf of my Party, Sikkim Sangram Parishad, strongly express our sorrow and condolences to the bereaved family of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and to the Akali Dal.

With these words, I wish to pay my humble tribute and homage to the great son of India.

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY (Alipurduars) : Sir, I join the House to pay homage to the departed soldier of this great country of India—Sant Longowal. Religion and politics have taken many valuable lives of our country. This great son of India is no more, but the nation will remember him and his great sacrifice with respect and honour. I express my condolences on behalf of my party, RSP, and myself.

MR. SPEAKER : There is a couplet in Urdu.

*Yun to hazaron baras se hoi aadmi ka vajud
Magar Aankh aaj bhi tarasti hai aadmi ke liye*

So that is the way we remember and will remember Sant Longowalji.

Hon. Members, once again we meet in a moment of anguish and sorrow. The nation is aghast at yet another abominable and cowardly act of violence. Sant Harchand Singh Longowal has fallen to the assassins' bullets. A planned and pernicious campaign to promote hatred and communal disharmony and to disturb and destabilise the democratic process and the peaceful advance of the nation has given birth to the detestable cult of violence—something entirely unknown to Indian culture.

Sant Harchand Singh Longowalji was murdered in a place of worship, where he addressed a gathering and was shot while bowing to seek the blessings of the Almighty.

This will go down in history as perhaps the worst case of intolerance and fanaticism.

The bullets of the terrorists have silenced yet another voice of sanity in the country. No words are adequate to condemn the dastardly murder of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal last evening. Punjab has lost an outstanding leader, and the country a brave fighter for the cause of communal harmony and peace. Sant Longowalji has laid down his life for the noblest of cause, *i.e.* the unity and integrity of this great land.

The 53-year old Santji was a simple, sober and soft-spoken Sikh leader. He worked for goodwill, amity and communal harmony, and had openly come out to denounce subversive activities. He stood for unity and national integrity of the country.

The assassins may have silenced his voice, but this House is sure that it will further strengthen our resolve to fight the separatist forces with all our might. It is our earnest hope that the sacrifice will not go in vain, and that the settlement signed by the Prime Minister and Shri Longowalji would be implemented without delay in letter and spirit, for that would be the most befitting tribute to the departed leader.

We must go ahead on our chosen path of peace and progress through mutual harmony. We must re-dedicate ourselves to the solemn resolve to keep India united,

and to ensure that our independent, democratic and secular polity shall never yield to coercion, violence or blackmail by anti-national elements.

The acts of hooligans and criminals cannot bend the will of this great nation. The values of freedom, democracy, peace and brotherhood shall never die, and this country will ever remain a dear and sweet home to all of us—a home worth living and dying for.

I am sure the House will join me in paying our respectful homage to the departed soul, and in conveying our deepest sense of sorrow to the bereaved family.

The House may now stand in silence for a short while in memory of Sant Longowalji.

11.36 hrs.

*(The Members then stood in silence
for a short while)*

MR. SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned this day, as a mark of respect for Sant Longowalji. We will meet tomorrow at 11 a.m.

11.38 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, August 22, 1985/ Sravana 31, 1907 (Saka).

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