

of Shram Parishad, a constituent of Asom Gana Parishad, staged a Dharna at the Boat Club yesterday and submitted a charter of demands to the Prime Minister. They also demanded that the Assam Accord be implemented at the earliest. The demands included therein are mostly for the welfare of labour and working class.

I, therefore, request the Union Government to consider the charter of demands and have the labour laws amended accordingly, particularly the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, so that the prevailing discontentment among the labour class is removed.

- (vii) Need to provide adequate financial assistance to Mohini Mills Ltd. to save it from closure

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Jadavpur): Mohini Mills Limited of Belgharia, West Bengal, of which Kabiguru Rabindra Nath Tagore was the Founder Director and which had the blessing and inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi also in the wake of non-cooperation movement is being liquidated by the Government of India only for non-repayment of bank loan. This loan was taken by the private management before its take-over by the National Textile Corporation.

One thousand seven hundred workers will be unemployed and they will have to face starvation and misery along with their family members without any fault of theirs. It is well-known that the mill's performance was very good in comparison to other mills managed by NTC in West Bengal. Moreover it enjoys traditional reputation and goodwill for its products throughout Eastern India. I urge upon the Government to save this mill by providing adequate financial support to make it viable.

13.06 hrs.

**STATUTORY RESOLUTION RE :
DISAPPROVAL OF RELIGIOUS
INSTITUTIONS (PREVENTION OF
MISUSE) ORDINANCE, 1988
AND
RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS (PRE-
VENTION OF MISUSE) BILL—
Contd.**

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The House will now take up items 9 and 10 together and further discussion on the Statutory Resolution moved by Shri Vijoy Kumar Yadav on the 10th August, 1988 and further consideration of the motion moved by Shri Buta Singh on the 10th August, 1988. Shri G.M. Banatwalla to continue.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani) : Mr. Deputy-Speker, it is tragic that today this House has been called upon to consider the Bill for the Prevention of Misuse of Religious Places. It was these very religious places which had made a significant contribution to the nationalist movement during the freedom struggle.

Sir, the Anti-British Sikh Movement was based in gurudwaras. That was the role of gurudwaras during those days. Institutions of higher Islamic learning of world repute like Deoband and others were citadels of nationalist movement. From those days when these religious institutions made a significant contribution to the nationalist movement to the present Bill which seeks to prevent misuse of religious institutions, is a sad commentary on the management of the political affairs of our country by the powers that be.

This new law states that no religious place can be used for harbouring any criminals, for storing arms and ammunition and goods in contravention of any law for carrying on of any unlawful, subversive activities for acts which promote disharmony, enmity etc., for any act prejudicial to sovereignty, unity and integrity of India and so on. But we already have a comprehensive and sufficient legal code for all

[Shri G.M. Banatwalla]

this purpose. There are already sufficient laws to deal with all these activities. We have, for example, Section 153 (a) and Section 153 (b) of the Indian Penal Code. We have the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 to deal with both the associations and the individuals indulging in all these unlawful activities. We have punishment for corrupt practice under the People's Representation Act, Section 123. As far as Indian Penal Code is concerned, it was amended in the year 1969 to add Section 153 (a), sub-section (2) which is specially about the misuse of religious places.

I must point out that there are not only sufficient laws to deal with all these purposes but the existing laws are even more stringent than the provisions of the Bill that are today being discussed by this House.

Under Clause 7 of the Bill which we are discussing a guilty is punishable for a term up to five years and a fine up to Rs. 10,000. But what do the existing laws say? Under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 under Section 5 : "a guilty is punishable for a term up to seven years and liable to a fine without any maximum limit.

What are then we doing? We are watering down the provisions. If I make a speech and incite communal frenzy I may go in for a term of seven years; but if I as a manager of any religious institution indulge in the same act, the punishment under this Bill will be reduced and it will be five years! And the claim here being made is that the Government wants to deal with all these activities with an iron hand. I therefore submit that the Bill is not only redundant in these matters, but it is also retrograde in nature.

No religious institution today is above all those existing laws which I have just enumerated. What is lacking is the political will. There are several laws against incitement of communal frenzy. But the communal history of our country knows of no

occasion when these laws have been effectively invoked. Such is the state of affairs.

The Bill is not only redundant and retrograde in character, but I submit that the Bill is highly deceptive and a fraud on the people. The mischief of the Bill travels far beyond the mere prevention of criminal and illegal acts, which acts are already punishable with more stringent provisions under the existing laws. It travels far beyond this.

Clause 3 seeks to prohibit the use of religious institutions for political activity. In the definition of the expression 'political activity', the definitional net is cast far too wide leaving several unresolved questions on hand. Clause 2 (d) defines the political activity to include not only activity promoting the objects of a political party and election activity, but also activity promoting any cause, issue or question of a political nature. What do you mean by this word 'political nature'? The expression 'political issue' is highly vague and breeds confusion. The ambit of political activity is therefore extremely and highly flexible and the rights of citizens are put at the mercy of the policemen and the judges whose notions may vary according to their whims and fancies. Even a reference to an Islamic teaching that the strength of *iman* inter-alia lies on raising voice against the tyranny of an autocrat, even such a reference may be deemed a political issue and may come within the clutches of the Bill. I therefore say that the expressions 'political nature or issue of a political nature' is too vague to be enforced and is therefore unconstitutional.

I may refer to AIR 1940 Bombay 76 in *Subhas Chandra Bose versus Goardhandas*. The court not only reiterated the principle that a matter must be expressed in sufficiently clear language so that the courts may be able to enforce it, but also held that the term 'political uplift' was vague and unenforceable.

Take another aspect of the whole thing. The provisions are also violative of Article 25 (2) of the Constitution. The Article allows regulation or restriction of secular or

political activity which may be associated with religious practice. But what is allowed? You are allowed to regulate or restrict but there cannot be a total ban. A total ban on expression of opinion in a religious institution on a question of political nature cannot, therefore, be imposed. There may be some regulations or restrictions but not a total ban in the manner in which this vague definition comes before us and we are asked to pass this Bill. I, therefore, submit the Bill is not only redundant and retrograde in character but it is highly deceptive.

We are told the Bill is brought in the context of separation of religion and politics. A lot of hullabaloo is being made on this particular count. The hon. Home Minister in his statement also says that the law is in the context of separation of religion and politics. Gandhiji said that those who talk of separation of religion and politics do not know what religion is. Gandhiji further said that religion must guide politics otherwise politics may turn immoral. Society needs religion. Religion ennobles and enriches our lives. Religion is the preserver of moral values and the teacher of wisdom. Without religion and the restraints of the moral values enshrined in the religion man turns a beast. Religion holds an exalted position in our lives. Even in the USA each House of the Congress starts with the prayer through its Chaplain: So help me God. The Supreme Court there opens with the prayer: God save the court. The motto 'In God we trust' is inscribed on currency, public documents and public buildings. It is, therefore, those who may want their desires to be fulfilled without restraint and those who may want to corrupt society want to separate religion from politics.

I may submit that both religion and politics deal with the conduct of man. Now where the sphere of one ends and the sphere of the other begins cannot be precisely laid down. In Islam life is an indivisible unity in which the spiritual and the mundane are not sundered. I must say here that Islam gives a complete code of conduct. Now to say that one is a Muslim in a mosque and must not remain a Muslim in a market-place

or in his dealings with other people, to say so is nothing but apostasy in disguise.

I must, in deference to your restlessness and ringing of the bell conclude and submit that the form in which the Bill has been presented, the form which the Bill assumes is a fatal camouflaged assault on the right to propagate, profess and protect religion as religion may be understood by the people belonging to the various denominations. With these words I strongly oppose the Bill.

(Translation)

SHRI RAM BHAGAT PASWAN (Ravera) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Bill, 1988, which has been brought forward by the hon. Minister. Sant Vinoba Bhave during his discourse on Geeta had said that committing a sin was not that much dangerous as it was danger to indulge in hypocrisy in the matter of religion. If fanaticism and hypocrisy enter religion, it will definitely prove fatal to the human society.

The hon. Minister has concentrated his attention on the religious institutions which have been misused by the terrorists in Punjab. Obviously, those religious institutions in Punjab, where bombs, rockets and various kinds of arms and ammunition had been kept and where innocent people were killed have proved fatal to the human society. Under these circumstances effective control must be exercised on those religious institutions from where serious blows are given to humanity in the name of religion, atrocities are committed and innocent people are killed. Labourers who had gone to Punjab from Bihar for earning livelihood were killed brutally. Today their widows and other members of their family are facing starvation and are begging alms. As such these religious institutions where hypocrisy and arrogance have become the practice of the day must be abolished.

Sir, Puri seer, the Shankaracharya is giving a serious blow to 25 crore Harijans and 12 crore Adivasis in the name of religion. Sir, no scripture, be it the Bible,

[Shri Ram Bhagat Paswan]

the Quaran, the Ramayan or the Geeta has any sanction to this affect. All great saints raised their voice for love to humanity and for mutual love and harmony. But today Niranjn Dev is giving a serious blow to the unity and integrity of our country. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the present Bill will prevent him from his pursuit? Will it be equally applicable to him also? A large number of amendments and acts are being passed in this House, but practically, these are not being implemented properly. We should, therefore, find some way out to ensure that laws passed in this House are properly used.

I would like to tell the hon. Minister that one-third of the country's population consists of Harijans and Adivasis and they are the backbone of this country. They are doing very important work. They are building sky rising buildings. But today Niranjn Dev Maharaj is committing atrocities on them. He is spreading hatred against them in the society. I, therefore, request you to bring an amendment which would provide action against those who spread hatred in the society in the name of religion and who are giving serious blows to the unity and integrity of the country. Religious fundamentalism, casteism, untouchability, discrimination and hypocrisy are giving serious blows to the unity and integrity of the country. I request you to exercise strict control over these people.

Now-a-days very serious assaults are being made on the people of the country in the name of religion. Large number of temples have been built. These temples have been built in the name of religion. There are large number of temples in Bihar where Harijans and Adivasis are not allowed entry even today. They are prohibited to enter the temples. When Dr. Krishna was the Chief Minister of Bihar, he had entered the Baijnath temple alongwith Harijans. But the temple authorities misbehaved with women when they entered the temple alongwith them. Is it religion? Such institutions which give serious blows to the society in the name of religion should be closed forthwith. These

hypocrites should be awarded stringent punishment so that they may not create hatred among men and men and hurt the unity and integrity of the country in any way.

Today the females and the Harijans are the worst victims. Females have been termed as weaker sex and today both the females and the Harijans are being humiliated in the society. It is learnt that a temple is got constructed at the site of 'sati' in Rajasthan and the money received as offerings in that temple is given away to the family of that female who has been burnt there. You may find out the facts in this regard. I feel that great injustice is being permeated in the name of religion. So all the structures which have been built up in the name of 'sati', should be demolished. Those persons who have ardent faith in the human values abhor such practices and only a few hypocrites in the society support them. But the masses in India look down at it with abhorrence. Today even after 40 years of independence, humanity is being struck at its root in the name of religion. I would request the hon. Minister that most stringent action should be taken in the cases of attack on humanity, atrocities on Harijans, and in the cases of widow and bride burnings which are being made in the name of casteism and religion so that such incidents may not be repeated in future. You have enacted a number of laws such as the Arms Act under which offenders can be given deterrent punishment but a lot of people are still in possession of unlicensed arms and unauthorised people have illegal possession on the land rendered surplus under the Land Ceiling Act and distributed among the landless poor and these poor people are annihilated by them. The Government have enacted a number of laws but these are hardly implemented. I hope that this Bill on Religious Institutions will be implemented in the letter and spirit and will satisfy the people and there will be no more killing of human beings in the name of religion.

[English]

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI (Guwahati):
Mr. Deputy-Speaker Sir, I have no objection

to the Bill though I have got my reservations about a particular provision to which I will make a reference later on. But I feel that a wrong impression is sought to be given to the country through this Bill. An impression is sought to be given that this Bill makes an attempt to separate politics from religion or religion from politics. Nothing is further from the truth. This Bill does not make any attempt to separate politics from religion or religion from politics. The Bill primarily seeks to prevent misuse of religious institutions to which we have no objection. In fact, this question has agitated the minds of Members and of the Chair and observations have been made from time to time that we should enter into a serious discussion about segregating politics from religion or religion from politics. I do not know whether that separation is possible in a democratic country and particularly in a country like India. If we look at the other countries in the world, we find, whether we like it or not, religion has played an important role in the politics of the nation. Even in America, an advanced democratic country, whether a person comes from the Roman Catholic or Protestant, to a great extent, have an effect on the elections. Even in England, religion has its own impact. A country like India where religion dominates our life but more or less in every moment and when politics also has become a pastime of everyone, I do not know whether an effective separation between religion and politics is possible? But I am fully in agreement that use of religious sentiments in the determination of political ends should be minimised as far as possible and before any attempt is made to bring a law in that direction, it is necessary that we should have an all-round discussion because any hasty law may be counter-productive and may not result in fulfilling the objectives for which such an enactment may be made. This Act tries to prevent and punish harbouring of all persons accused or convicted of political offence or storing of arms.

I have no objection for the offences which have been enumerated in Clause 3, from (b) to (i), though I have got reservation about clause (a), where the Act also wants to touch any activity which is for the promotion or propagation of a political

activity. But we must remember that in this country, we are always tempted to bring a law; we are very capable of drafting incompetent laws, we draft a law, we pass a law and the law requires an amendment before it is implemented, and we are more competent in ignoring or in not at all taking action under the law. If we really want to prevent misuse of religion for political activities, what is required more than a law is the political will. Because if we are serious about the misuse of the religious institutions, even today under the existing law, we can do it. I do not mind this law being passed in order to show the urgency or to focus before the people the grave urgency of the situation arising out of the happenings in Punjab. But if this law remains only a law on paper, then no purpose will be served. We are all guilty, maybe some of us, who are very lucky, may not be, but we have always, almost all of us, at some point of time or the other, have used religious feelings for our political purposes. I have strong objections today that we call ourselves secular, but as Shri Shahabuddin, with whom I have great disagreement on many occasions, said even in official functions, religious ceremonies are performed on TV. It shows the Prime Minister going to a particular temple or *masjid*. I do not mind; I am not saying that the Prime Minister may not follow a particular religion; he may do, but that is a private matter. He may decide to pray in a *mandir* or may go and visit a mosque or a church, but that must be kept as a private activity and must not be shown to the people as a public activity. Why is it that this type of visits to *masjids* and *mandirs* are focussed on TV. This gives an impression that the State is not separating its activities from religion and unless we decide to separate the activities of the State from religion, such type of Act is not going to fulfil its objectives.

A reference has been made as to what was done in the last elections. I am not saying in order to score a debating point, but I believe great disservice was done to the Congress Party itself when Arun Govil was projected in Allahabad, or Dara Singh was projected, because they could touch and exploit the religious sentiments. I am not

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against an actor canvassing for a particular political party. I know in this House we have got actors and actresses, who are playing an important role. We have got Sunil Dutt, who had undertaken a peace march. I heartily welcome this act on his part. Shrimati Vyjayanthimala Bali is there. I had the privilege of sitting with Nargis Dutt in the other House. Prithvi Raj Kapoor was a Member. It is not that I am trying to prevent an actor to hold his political convictions, but if we try not to utilize his political convictions but try to exploit his image as a religious person or as *Ram* or *Hanuman* you cross the limit and there I believe, what is more required than the law is the political will.

In fact, some sort of a political code of conduct has become necessary today for all the political personalities. If we can arrive at such a political code of conduct that such religious feelings will never be exploited for purposes of political activity, that would be more effective. It is not only Gurudwaras—I hope Shri Banatwalla will not dispute me—but even masjids are also used for discussions on politics. We know, this is a practice in my own State also. Whenever we go for electioneering, we are taken to a prayer house and we are asked to pray. Somehow a code of conduct has become necessary so that this type of use of religious institutions for the narrow political ends of electioneering and political purposes could be prevented.

And, therefore, to the extent of Clauses (b) to (i), which aim to prevent the offences, I have got no objection but I feel that clause (a) is very widely framed. I am in agreement with Mr. Banatwalla when he says that this clause has the possibility of being misused. This Act aims to prevent any premises being used for the promotional or propagation of a political activity and promotional or propagation of political activity means that it will include any meeting of a political nature.

No, in this country and for that matter anywhere, the borderline between social activity and political activity is very very thin.

For me something may be of a social nature but at the same time to an other person it may be of a political nature. Suppose the peoples' hardship because of price rise is discussed in a temple and a voice is raised that there is a lot of hardship, how do you improve the condition of these people? Now for some it may appear a social cause but this will also come under the definition of a political activity. Therefore, if we have the limited purpose of preventing only those offences which come under clauses (b) to (i) then I do not know why clause (a) has been brought into this Act. In fact, I would urge upon the Home Minister that by incorporating the clause (a) room for possibility of misuse has been kept without any purpose being served. So, I urge upon him to delete clause (a). If you are serious, for an honest effort to separate religion from politics. As I said, a total divorce is never possible—it has never been possible in any country—but an attempt must be made. Gandhiji was a very religious man. He followed certain religious principle. Nobody in this country can ever accuse him that he tried to exploit his religious or his religious feelings for political purposes. It depends upon the man; it depends upon ourselves. Unfortunately we have not been able to live up to the standard and the objectives which we proclaim. We issue homilies and the next moment we break them. Therefore, I feel that the purpose of this Act should be limited only from clause (b) to (i).

If the hon. Home Minister is serious enough to see that an honest effort must be made to separate religion and politics and that the religious institutions should not be used for political purposes and for electioneering, what I feel is that he should have a debate, not in this House, but in some committee where we can discuss about it and try to evolve a code of conduct which could be implemented. It has been pointed out that we have a number of laws and the existing laws can take care of the situation. But we have failed to do so not because we do not have laws but because we do not have the political will and determination to do so. We often thought that a particular activity may help at a point of time and thus decided to encourage it but later on

we found ourselves that a Frankenstein monster has been created which we are unable to control.

This Bill has been widely supported by all sections except perhaps a dissenting voice of one or two. I would, therefore, suggest that all of us should come together and try to evolve a code of conduct after careful deliberation and if we can translate this code of conduct into legislation—provided legislation can be made operative—I have no objection. But I will still urge that clause (a) should be deleted. I feel that if clause (a) is deleted then this Bill will get the unanimous approval of the House. There is a fear that there is the possibility of misuse of clause (a) and whatever objective the Government are trying to achieve by bringing this Bill can be achieved even if the Clause (a) is deleted. Therefore, my own view will be, let us for the time being delete clause (a) and pass the Act as it is and then address ourselves as to how we can come to the proper question of religion and politics and then to the extent possible try to evolve a code of conduct. Even I don't object if a law is made but I urge upon the Home Minister that clause (a) should be deleted as it has the possibility of being misused. Subject to this observation I support this Bill.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I rise to support this Bill—the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Bill, 1988—which will replace the ordinance promulgated some time back, i.e. on the 26th May 1988.

This Bill is a first step in separating religion from politics or *vice versa*, viz. politics from religion. It is not an end in itself. There was, as you know, a commitment given to the House earlier, about bringing in such a legislative measures in this House. This is thus the fulfilment of a commitment made earlier. It represents the sentiments expressed by members of the National Integration Council who had called from time to time for such a legislation.

Definitely, when we discuss this Bill, we have the background of what is happening

in Punjab. Actually, that background has expedited the promulgation of the ordinance. When the ordinance was promulgated, although it had been the object of some criticism here by some learned Members of the House from the other side, it was welcomed by different political parties—rightist and leftist, both. The Communist parties—CPI(M) and CPI—and BJP had welcomed this ordinance. But now when it has come to the House, there is some amount of criticism on some plea or the other—e.g. why did Government bring the ordinance, and why did they not have the Bill itself in the last Budget Session etc.

As you know, in the process of the Black Thunder operation, it was found that the gurudwaras, particularly the Golden Temple was harbouring hardened criminals. They had to be flushed out. In that background, we wholeheartedly welcome this Bill.

The learned Member who spoke prior to me, Mr. Goswami, had some reservations. He opposed the Bill; he not merely had reservations about Clause 3(a) of the Bill which says:

“for the promotion or propagation of any political activity ;...”

He pleads that it should be deleted. But why? If you take out this Clause 3(a) from the Bill, will the purpose of the Bill be served? He has referred to the difficulty in its implementation; but the Government should take care to see that it is implemented properly. If Clause 3(a) is not there, naturally in the gurudwaras, political meetings can be held, and some decisions can be taken. Is that the purpose underlying this Bill? The Bill provides that religious shrines should, for no reason at all, be used for political purpose. The funds of the religious institutions should not be used for political activity. Do you want that religious funds, funds meant for religious activities, should be diverted thus?

And, as you know, politics is controversial. Is it not? I wish Mr. Goswami was here. Politics is controversial. It is never unanimous. Then there are certain political parties which claim to represent the entire

[Shri Sriballav Panigrahi]

sentiments of one community. More specifically, the Akali Dal they claim to represent the sentiments of the Sikhs and all those things. Then there is controversy. There are different political parties. Even the Akali Dal, they are divided, sub-divided. So, politics is controversial, and when politics is controversial, no political party is above controversy. If you allow some political party to sit in some religious institution, in their premises, to decide, to deliberate, will it remain pious? But I strongly plead that everything under Section 3(a) to (i) should remain as it is. Funds should not be diverted. After the Bill is passed it should be the sincere endeavour, the responsibility of all the managements of such institutions to maintain the sanctity of the places and the sanctity that is intended to be maintained by this law. Because the sanctity was not maintained, because the religious institutions were used in such a way, they have lost their sanctity. That is why there was concern everywhere, throughout the country and the necessity for this Bill was felt. And hence this Bill which is before the House, after the Ordinance was issued. Therefore, there should not be any reservation.

There is some opposition, some resistance from some sides. Who are those people, who are those groups or parties? They definitely believe in communalism, and who want to benefit out of that? Otherwise, nobody else, no group, political parties, individuals will oppose this Bill. There is no scope for that. I very emphatically say this. There should not be any misgivings. The Act will not apply particularly to one community or to one type of shrine. It will apply in equal measures to Gurudwaras, Mosques, Temples and Churches. Gurudwaras in Punjab, as you know, have been misused by terrorists. But there have been instances also in the past when religious places of other communities in the rest of the country have been misused, are being misused during communal violence. Should we allow lethal arms and ammunition to be stored in religious places?

There is a reference to Gandhiji. Gan-

dhiji's words, his very famous words, that he believes in religion, he was deeply religious and he could not conceive politics without religion. True. But what sort of politics, was he thinking, was he referring to? As you know, in one sentence, I will say and conclude :

"Ishwar Allaha tere naam sab ko
Sammati de Bhagwan"

Gandhiji used to believe in this. He used to see all in one person. Ishwar, Allah, Jesus Christ, Mohammad—all in one person. How many of us are taking the name of religion and Gandhiji now, while participating in this debate believe in this? Are we not dividing the people and are we not using religion, for non-religious purposes to create disharmony, to spread violence, to spread bitterness instead of spreading this message of friendship, the message of brotherhood? And, as you know, universal brotherhood that is the spirit of Indian culture "Vasudhev Kutumbkam" that is the essence of Indian culture. Are we aware of that? Only for our narrow political purposes we are using religion and we are also taking Gandhiji's name. It is unfortunate that we do not understand Gandhiji. We do not understand his statement that he cannot separate politics from religion, in the right perspective and we go and give such references.

With these words, I give my support to this Bill.

Sir, this is a commendable step, but a beginning only. A comprehensible Bill should be brought forward. As I said, it is not an end itself and so many things are required to be done in really effecting separation of religion from politics.

Sir, the office-bearers of different religious institutions and organisations should be debarred from contesting election either by law or the political parties should agree to a code of conduct. Such restrictions should be there. Otherwise, religion will indirectly come to have its play in politics and spoil the atmosphere in the country.

[Translation]

SHRI NARESH CHANDRA CHATURVEDI (Kanpur) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I rise to support this Bill presented by the hon. Home Minister. My submission is that it is appropriate when we say that in India, all the political activities will be secular but some people use this term in such a way that it reflects that India is a religionless State. I feel that it is not even possible to think of India without religion. It is not at all possible because such are the high ideals of religion established by the builders of modern India. Mahakavi Tulsidas also has defined religion in the following words in the Ram-charitmanas :

Parhit saris dharam nahin bhai
 Par peera sam nahin adhmai.

It means that there is no sin like torturing others and there is no virtue like showering of pleasures on the fellow beings. Similarly, the Tenth guru of Sikhs has said :

Deh shiva var mohe yhen.
 Shubh karman se kabhun na tarun.

that is, such a blessing has been sought from God by virtue of which I may not deviate from the path of good deeds. Such was the religion envisaged by Guru Gobind Singh. Similarly, Iqbal also had recited the following wonderful lines :

Mazhab nahin sikhata apas mein
 vair rakhna
 Hindi hein ham vatan hai,
 hindostan hamara

Thus there is not a single person who has said anything against it. Some of my friends have also quoted Mahatma Gandhi. Even Maulana Azad who used to go for Namaaz five times a day and was a highly religious person, always supported it. Our martyrs also happily went to gallows with a book of Gita, Quran, Bible with them. Therefore, an India without religion is not going to be discussed in this Bill. This Bill, which has been presented by the Home Minister, Government of India clearly mentions it that it is being brought to stop the misuse of

religious places, and this is very appropriate.

The religious places can not be given the licence to disturb the mutual harmony, endanger the future of the nation and its unity and integrity by allowing the murderers to take shelter in the gurudwaras, and bury there the dead bodies of the assassinated people, or the stockpiling of arms and ammunitions in the mosques or else by providing shelter to the anti-social elements in the temples. This is precisely what has been mentioned in this Bill of Government of India.

The separation of religion and politics is one such question because India is a multi-religious country. It is not a country of any particular religion but the people following different religions, cultures and speaking different languages live here. If unity is to be maintained amidst all these things, then we shall have to stop such things and the Government of India has taken an appropriate step in this direction. I feel that the people who oppose it, do so because their communal feelings get a setback due to this bill. This is not right. We have to keep our nation united and in order to maintain the mutual harmony amidst all the religions, we will have to follow a particular code of conduct.

If the followers of a particular religion misuse their religion, it will incite the people of other religions to follow suit. I agree that religion has never been misused in this way in our country so far. Some Members of the Opposition have drawn the attention of the House to certain points. I admit that if we have done a mistake, we will try to rectify it. We do not like to act against the teachings of our leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and others. The previous speaker said it just now in his speech that we will have to separate religion from politics in this manner and this can be done by stopping the misuse of religious places as well as by changing our apparent behaviour. It is not a hidden secret that there are such people in different political parties who create communal frenzy. They may say anything in their official capacity in the name of politics but the truth is that

[Shri Naresh Chandra Chaturvedi]

they create separatist tendencies by infusing discontentment among the masses. Such tendencies will have to be stopped. How can unity be maintained in the country unless we have mutual harmony in every field, be it elections in the field of politics or other festivals etc. In a meeting convened by Shri Buta Singh, I had requested him to get all such parties which smack of communalism declared disqualified by the Election Commission. They should not be allowed to contest elections because if that is done, it will vitiate the atmosphere. There is nothing wrong with the religion. It is communalism which creates disharmony. Communalism and religion are not one and the same thing. Many people have a wrong impression that religion is another name for communalism whereas communalism is that which has certain symbols for which the people are prepared to struggle and sacrifice their lives. On the contrary, religion is a code of conduct which elevates us and constantly promotes our spiritual life and noble ideals. In Hinduism, there is a saying "Dharayati—dharmah", that is, whatever we practise is religion. What is to be practised? The highest norms of civilization are to be assimilated. A man may take birth in a high family but he becomes educated and civilised only when he attains spiritual and moral sublimation. My submission is that people should cast aside their communal feelings and narrow mindedness and march forward on the path of religion. With these words, I support the Bill.

[English]

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN (Cooch Behar): I welcome the very spirit of the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Bill and the philosophy behind it.

It is our long standing demand that religion should be separated from politics. Politics should not enter into the arena of religious institutions. Religion is a very personal affair. One may be a Hindu, a Christian, a Muslim, a Sikh. Whether one goes to a mosque, a temple, a church, a gurdwara, but that should not be mixed up

with politics. But at the present moment, it is clear that in the name of religion, religious fundamentalists and communalists are raising their ugly heads in order to destroy not only our national unity but the entire mankind also. So, I support this Bill.

I think, merely bringing and passing of this Bill is not enough. We should start immediately a nation-wide mass campaign against religious fundamentalists and communalists. Otherwise, the purpose of this Bill will not be achieved.

14.00 hrs.

Before I go to the Bill, I would like to ask one question from the hon. Minister that why he was in so much hurry to issue this Ordinance. Can he tell us how many cases have been initiated from the date of the issue of the Ordinance up-till now? Secondly, why did he not consult the Opposition Members before bringing this Bill to the House? Previously they have been consulting the Opposition—at the time of Anti-Defection Bill they had consulted the Opposition, at the time of Sati Bill they had consulted the Opposition. Then why did they not consult the Opposition Members this time?

I do not agree with Shri Banatwalla and Shri Shahabuddin that this Bill has been drafted in such a manner that it will encroach upon our right to religious freedom enshrined under article 25 (2) of the Constitution, but I do agree with them that the term 'political activity' mentioned in clause 3 (a) is very vague and full of ambiguity. I think whosoever has drafted this Bill, whether Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev or Shri Buta Singh, he has not taken note of the earlier judgements.

14.02 hrs.

[SHRI SHARAD DIGHE *in the Chair*]

One such judgement was passed by the Bombay High Court in 1940. This was mentioned by Shri Banatwalla also. Vithal-bhai Patel made a will giving a residuary bequest to Subhas Chandra Bose to be spent on the "political uplift of India". The

Bombay High Court ruled that the bequest was void. Another case was decided by the Supreme Court in 1962. That case was concerning Lokmanya Tilak's will executed in 1918. He had set up a trust for two newspapers, *The Kesari* and *The Mahratta*... This trust was liable to be registered under the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1950. It was said in the will that it was for 'political awareness'. Whether it is for the 'political uplift' of India or whether it is for 'political awareness', both have been declared void by the Courts. So, I think they should have devoted more time to the definition of the expression 'political activity'.

Under Clause 3 of the Bill, there should have been another sub-clause. I congratulate the Minister that he has come out with such a Bill which seeks to stop the inflow of arms and ammunitions into the temples or mosques or gurudwaras or churches. But why did he not make provision so that the inflow of foreign money into the religious institutions could also be stopped. There is no such provision in this Bill. The foreign money that comes to the religious institutions in the country is roughly Rs. 200 crores. From Sweden we are getting not only Bofors guns but along with the guns, they are giving money also to our religious institutions. Sweden, USA, France, Switzerland, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, all these countries are sending money to our religious institutions and this amounts to roughly Rs. 200 crores.

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Manjeri) : Israel also.

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN : Yes, Israel also is sending money, Italy also is sending money. Let the Minister make note of it.

Sir, we are talking of delinking the religion from politics. But really speaking, Mr. Chairman, it is very very difficult to delink the religion from politics. It is a very tough job. But if we all unite and put concerted effort, we will be able to delink religion from politics. Religion is very much with our politics and culture. The religious sentiments we express in our day-to-day life must be avoided. But Sir, when

we are taking oath here, you are taking oath in the name of God, in the name of 'Allah' or in the name of 'Bhagwan' and so on. I would plead with the Government that this kind of oath-taking should be avoided. Now, I would give an example how you bring in religion into politics. Sir, what they did in Allahabad in the recent bye-election ? Shri Arun Govil who played 'Ram' part in 'Ramayana' TV serial, was invited to the public meeting of the party to rouse the Hindu fanaticism.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : What about your new 'Guru', national 'Guru' ?

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN : I do not know whom you are referring to. Under the religious fanaticism, the history of our country is going to be distorted. It breeds abject superstitious faith in divine miracle and cannot do anything in solving personal problems. It distorts the history in a poisonous manner which hits Hindus, Muslim, Sikh and Christian and followers of all religion against one another instead of uniting them. The issue of 'Babri Masjid' and 'Ram Janam Bhoomi' has been there for a long time. Why are you not trying to solve this problem ? It disrupts the class solidarity of the toiling masses, the working class people.

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT : Can you explain what is fundamentalism and what is fanaticism ? (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let him explain in his own way.

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN : Sir, if you go back to Gujarat riot, we find how Textile barons worked behind. It disrupts democratic patriotic national unity and hence the very basis of the national integration is put in jeopardy. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : You may ignore the interruptions. Please continue. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN: So, Sir, in the end I would like to say that let us all come forward and do mass campaign against religious fundamentalism. I support the Bill.

[Translation]

DR. CHANDRA SHEKHAR TRIPATHI (Khalilabad): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Bill presented by the hon. Minister in the House is commendable. Although the hon. Members have expressed their views on this Bill, yet no one can deny that religion and politics have their own significance. As regards religion, I can say it with full confidence that if there was no religion on this earth, then perhaps man would have become beast. It has been said:

'Ahar nidra bhay mathunanch
Samanyametat pashubhirnaranam,

Dharmo hi teshamadhiko vishesho
Dharmoviheena pashubhi samana.'

Only religion can tell us what is right and what is wrong. It is not even possible to become a person of high moral without religion. No religion of any community has ever supported oppression, dishonesty, criminal activities or the crimes like rape which are still a slur on the name of society.

Sir, the scholars have expressed their views on religion. There is a sloka in Sanskrit in this regard—

Matratvat pardareshu, par draveshu
loshatvat

Atamvat sarva bhuteshu yah
pashyati sah panditah.

The religious leaders have said that only that person who considers other beings like his own self is the true man, a learned person or a Gyani in the real sense of the term.

But an unfortunate chapter was opened when religion was compounded with politics. Politics and religion are two separate things. Whenever politics is associated with religion, religion will certainly degenerate and politics

too will slide down its path. That is why the Government has felt it after 40 years of independence, and the society too had to think that when religion is being misused by the religious leaders, pandits, maulvis and scholars who call themselves the custodians of religion, these things will not be conducive for the development of society and will continue to be a constant threat to law and order. I would appreciate the hon. Minister for presenting this Bill.

Sir, just now, Shri Amar Roypradhan of the Forward Block, who is not present at the moment in the House, said that there should be a ban on the foreign assistance for the development or managing the affairs of the religious institutions. Sir, I would like to quote an Urdu couplet on religion:

"Mazhab nahin sikhata apas mein
vair rakhna,

Hindi hein hum, vatan hai
hindostan hamara."

Why has there been a schism in what the religious preceptors have said regarding national unity, integrity and feelings of brotherhood. It was because politics has been mixed with religion. It is because religion which builds up the inner qualities of man is mixed with politics negating the very purpose of religion. That is why it became necessary for the Government to frame this law. Sir, in this bill religious institution has been defined as "any place or premises used as a place of public religious worship, by whatever name or designation known". But the words 'public religious worship' are such that it can be used by religious preceptors, institutions, and persons connected with religion for getting the benefit of doubt and bring politics into it. For example, if a person constructs a temple, mosque, church or a gurudwara on his private land and if political activity goes on inside that place, he will perhaps, not be covered under the provisions of this law. Therefore, attention has to be paid to it because this will not come within the purview of the definition of place of public worship. Religious institutions can be established even within the premises of a private house and if political activity takes

place there, it will not come within the purview of this bill. Hence, it is essential to make the definition more comprehensive. If political activity goes on in a religious place established inside someone's privately owned house that should also be punishable. Therefore, I want to request that the scope left in this bill to escape the clutches of law by taking the advantage of the benefit of doubt should be rectified and the bill should be made so comprehensive as to include everyone under its purview.

Sir, similarly, in clause 6 of this Bill, such provisions should be incorporated by which persons connected with religious institutions are not permitted to allow the setting up of any office of any other organisation or people within the premises of that institution.

As our hon. Member Shri Ramoowalia is present here, I want to submit that if the officials of a religious place wants to open its office within the premises of that institution, and discourses are delivered then there cannot be any objection. But if it is converted into a Damdami Taksal, then that will not do. Hence, this sub-clause has to be made more comprehensive and provisions for strict laws have to be made to ensure that apart from the office of the religious institutions itself, no other organisation can establish its office there.

Similarly, in sub-clause (b) of clause 4 of this Bill, it has been provided that nothing in this section shall apply to "any arms which are used as part of any religious ceremony or ritual of the institution as established by custom or usage." But it can be interpreted differently. One person can interpret it according to his religious customs and another can do it according to another custom and the two interpretations may be contradictory which may result in a communal flare-up and create tension and can cause danger to life and property of the people.

I regret to submit that one of our colleagues staged a walk-out yesterday in opposition to this Bill. I could not understand it. In this bill the intention of Government is

clear and it is to separate religion from politics. Restrictions are not being imposed on any religion or in following its customs. But if religious institutions which are established to humanise people and to reform society and build up an atmosphere of amity and brotherhood, are occupied by killers, gunda elements, hooligans, criminals and other undesirable and anti-social elements and make them into places of shelter and centre of their activities, I think no citizen of this country will be able to tolerate such a situation.

I want to humbly submit that if these institutions are utilised for political purposes and for narrow political ends and for grabbing power, then peace cannot prevail in society, law and order will be disturbed and the country will disintegrate.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, there are other shortcomings also in this Bill. I have drawn your attention to only two or three points. I want to submit that it should be studied carefully and a more comprehensive Bill should be brought so that there is no possibility left of its misuse. With these words, I support this bill.

SHRI RAM NAGINA MISHRA (Salem-pur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to you for having given me an opportunity to speak on this Bill. I heartily support it. This Bill should have been introduced much earlier.

India is the only country where people belonging to all religious of the world viz. Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian, Parsi, Jain etc. etc. co-exist. Our country has been declared as a 'Secular State' in our Constitution. You will not find another country like ours in the whole world, where people enjoy full freedom to follow any religion and practise it in whatever way they like.

I want to draw your attention to our neighbours—Pakistan and Bangladesh which were once parts of India. But none of these countries have adopted secularism. They are Islamic States. There are temples in those States also but is it not a fact that the equality of opportunity which the minorities are enjoying in our country does not exist in

[Shri Ram Nagina Mishra]

these adjoining States? This is because of our Governments policy and we should thank it umpteen times for it.

So far as the misuse of religious institutions is concerned, two points have come to light. It is the opinion of some of our colleagues that religion has been mixed with politics. I have a difference of opinion in this regard. I think that every religion aims at the welfare of the whole mankind and is against causing injury to anyone. Religion does not create problems for anybody, rather it teaches human values. Religion even guides Government and teaches several good things. As Goswami Tulsidas has said and I quote,

“Jasu raj priya praja dukhari,
So narip avashya narak adhikari.”

Religion directs the ruler to govern in a way which would make the people happy. I mean that religion is not to be blamed. It is only the politicians who make use of religion but religion never takes recourse to it.

When partition took place, Muslim League was a political party of the Muslims. It had demanded a separate State. Unfortunately its demand was accepted. A party with this name is still existing in India. What I have said may have hurt some people and I want to apologise for it. This party has also been recognised. Yet you plead that it is a secular party. You should say that it will not effect others. This is improbable.

Today arms are being stock-piled in the Gurudwaras and terrorists are in control of them. Sikh religion has never preached oppression of humanity. It rather preaches brotherhood and sharing of other people's grief. The terrorists who are killing the innocent people are not real Sikhs. The anti-social elements have their own community. The followers of the religion have nothing to do with them. The terrorists have consolidated their hold to such an extent in the religious institutions that they sit inside and use fire-arms. You should make arrangements to prevent people from taking shelter

there. I mean that this bill should have been introduced much earlier. Still, I thank the hon. Minister for having brought forward this bill and I whole heartedly support it.

I want to draw the attention of the Government in this direction also that Maulana Bukhari issues 'fatwas' or decrees from the Jama Masjid. Why the Government remains so silent in this matter. The Maulana while on his visit to Kashmir declared that the people of Kashmir have the right to decide their fate. It is upto them whether to opt for Pakistan or to stay on in India. Why is the Government silent on this matter? You say that religion should not be brought into politics. But there is inconsistency between your action and words. I want to know from the Government as to why it is silent on this matter? As you have put restrictions in the Gurudwaras, why don't you do the same in respect of Jama Masjid as well?

We remember the day when a huge crowd had swelled up at the call given by Maulana Bukhari. He had challenged all the highly placed people and made several provocative speeches. But even then, Government remained silent. You impose restrictions on one and give freedom to the other. Now Maulana has given a call to the people to march to Ayodhya and offer prayers inside the Ramjanam Bhumi. Will it not raise religious disputes? The situation has arisen out of a verdict of the court. You get the matter decided by court or hold negotiations in this regard. The Hindus and Muslims are brothers and the matter should be sorted out across the table. I thank those Muslims who are called Auliyas or Pirs and who have issued a decree that holding such a march would be against the Shariat and Islam.

You say that they are not the leaders. Then who are the leaders? Those who are engaged in active politics. If you go through history, you will find that Babri-Masjid—Ram Janam Bhumi temple dispute has not been created by any true leader of the Muslims. The politicians are behind it and those who are after votes are struggling for it. The religious Mollahs and Maulvis are not a party to it.

I want to demand from the Government to pay attention here as well. If attention is not paid here then what will happen? If restrictions are not put on religion based parties like Akali Dal, Muslim League etc., then why impose restrictions on the religious institutions. You should make an amendment in the law so that the religious parties are barred from contesting the elections... (Interruptions)

If this is the observation of the Government then it will not be able to check fanaticism by mere statutes. I would request that Government should implement its policy of secularism in letter and spirit and any political party which is based on religion should not be permitted to contest the elections. If this step is taken, fanaticism will be rooted out for ever. I thank the hon. Minister umpteen times for moving such a bill which will at least benefit Punjab and curb terrorism. Attention should be paid to my suggestions as well. With these words, I support the bill.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Dr. S. Jagathrakshakan.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI (Ghosi) : Sir, I have also given my name. I also want to express my views on this subject. I request you to give me a few minutes to speak. Politics is being mixed up with religion. We also need an opportunity to express our views.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have not called his name.

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Can't you permit me, Sir? Am I not a Member of this House?

MR. CHAIRMAN : I will see.

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Will you consider my request?

MR. CHAIRMAN : I will see. I don't commit myself.

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : But there must be some commitment on behalf of the Chair. You must commit yourself. I am also a Member of this House. (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Rai, you must come through your party.

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : I have given it.

MR. CHAIRMAN : That is all. Let the slip come from the Whip. I will take your name.

(Interruptions)

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : It is your sole discretion. Your hands are not fettered. It is not the sole discretion of the Party.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have heard you.

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : But you have not give your verdict and judgment.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I told you that your name must come through your Party Whip.

(Interruptions)

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Sir, I am on a point of order.

[Translation]

Please let me express the feelings prevailing in my constituency. Sir, you are empowered to call anyone if the situation so demands.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : I will see. I have heard you.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : If the name does not come through the Party Whip, does it mean that you cannot allow me? You can

[Shri Raj Kumar Rai]

call a person if you feel that he needs a chance to convey the feelings of his constituents. I want your ruling in this matter. *(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record hereinafter.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Rai, please don't disturb the proceedings.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : That is enough. Dr. Jagathrakshakan, please continue.

[Translation]

SHRI CHARANJIT SINGH WALIA (Patiala) : The quorum is in the Central Hall. The House should continue its proceedings only if there is a quorum. Quorum is a must.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : All right. Please ring the bell for quorum.

Now there is quorum. Dr. Jagathrakshakan.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Mr. Chairman Sir, please allow me two minutes time to speak.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Kindly sit down. I have called Dr. Jagathrakshakan.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Mr. Chairman Sir, please give me an opportunity to

speak. The House will be benefited if I am allowed to convey the feelings prevailing in my constituency.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : I will see. I do not commit myself.

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Sir, I think, you will consider.

[Translation]

*DR. S. JAGATHRAKSHAKAN (Chinglepet) : Hon. Chairman, Sir, I rise to express my views on the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Bill, 1988.

We are justified in taking pride in the fact that India is a secular country. But I feel this measure, which seeks to ensure secularism in this country, is a belated measure. This must have been brought some 10 years before. Had this measure been brought before this House some 10 years before, I am sure we could have avoided many communal riots from occurring and thus prevented the loss of hundreds of innocent lives in this country. We could have particularly prevented the loss of unarmed lives in Punjab and could have saved thousands of our invaluable soldiers. We could have also averted military operations like Operation Bluestar and Operation Thunderbolt in the Golden Temple. To go a step further and say, we could have saved the precious life of our Late Prime Minister Madame Gandhi. This is, therefore, a delayed measure.

The Enlightened Anna rightly said : I do not oppose the existence of temples. I humbly desire that these should not become the havens of unrighteous people.

*SHRI N.V.N. SOMU : That was said by Dr. Kalaingar Karunanidhi.

*DR. S. JAGATHRAKSHAKAN : These words are still ringing in our minds. The people of Tamil Nadu do not have

*Not recorded.

*The speech was originally delivered in Tamil.

divisions on the basis of caste or religion. In Tamil Nadu all religions are equal. Only in Tamil Nadu, the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi, Periyar and Anna have come true. We are proud of it. Our ancient Tamil Poet Thirumular gave the unique teaching 'One God, One Society' to the people of Tamil Nadu, why, to the whole world. Such teachings are not there even in the Sanskrit language. Hon. Dr. Siddhu, who hails from Delhi praised Tamil Nadu as the only State in India which is free from communal tensions.

This was all due to the long-standing efforts of the Dravidian Movement. It was the Dravidian Movement that preached equality of man and created the awareness in the minds of Tamil people that all religions are equal. It was the Dravidian Movement which ensured an egalitarian society for the Tamils. The Movement shines still as a model Movement for all the peoples of India.

I would like to charge the Government for bringing this Bill with a purpose to muzzle the voice of the opposition. This is a black law. On the one hand, you propose this law. On the other hand, you using Ramayana TV stars like Arun Govil and Dara Singh for election campaigns. You incite the communal passions of the people and instigate them to take to riots. But still bring before this House this type of Bill. You are therefore absolutely going to misuse the Bill. There is no guarantee in the Bill that it would not be misused. You must, therefore, first frame guidelines for application of this law and thereafter seek our approval.

This Government is an adept in enacting laws. Again, this Government is an adept in misusing the provisions of the laws of this country and its Constitution. You are ever-ready to topple a State Government by misusing the Constitutional provision. More than 75 times this Government has toppled the State Governments so far misusing article 356, against all democratic norms.

You are so sacrosanct about preventing

the misuse of religious places. But your actions do not stand proof of it. The hon. Minister is sitting before me. Hon. Minister Shri P. Chidambaram is laughing at us. They have postponed the elections in Tamil Nadu on the ostensible plea of Vanniya problem. The Government which is bringing this Bill is seeking postponement of elections on this communal ground when the State is otherwise free from any communal tension. I also belong to Vanniya community. There is no such Vanniya problem in the State. But this so called noble Government is arousing the communal passions in the State. This Government is unfit to rule this country, they are no more in a position to lead this country and they are seeking the postponement on some lame excuse. The people of Tamil Nadu, why, the whole of India laugh at you for inventing this non-existent communal reason for postponing elections in Tamil Nadu.

Communal riots continue to rage in other parts of the country. The Government is sitting pretty quiet. The dreams of Mahatma Gandhi lie shattered. The Government is misusing the Government machinery and the provisions of the Constitution for strengthening the party, for preparing for elections and for taming Opposition parties. Government machinery and the Constitution are not being used in the service of the people.

The Punjab problem could have been solved years before. So far how many lives have been lost in that State? So far how many laws have been brought to prevent the loss of life in that State? Numberless. Were you able to ensure peace and order in that State after so many years of your so called efforts? No. You can bring hundreds of laws like this but you cannot bring peace and order to that State because you lack political will. Your purpose of enacting such laws is to shut the mouths of Opposition from criticizing the Government. By this, you are not doing any service to the nation and the people.

With these words, I conclude.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : He did not say whether he is supporting it or opposing it. He says : "ten years ago, I would have supported it." But he doesn't say whether he is supporting it or opposing it.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Mr. Chairman Sir, you had assured me that you would listen to me.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : After the names in the list are over and if the time permits, I will consider your name.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJ KUMAR RAI : Sir, the discussion may be over, not the time.

(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please don't disturb the proceedings, please resume your seat...(Interruptions)...Please resume your seat, otherwise I will have to ask you to withdraw from the House.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Jadavpur) : Mr. Chairman Sir, I shall suggest Shri Raj Kumar Rai to first resign from the Congress (1) and then ask permission to speak. I am sure he shall not find any difficulty in it. (Interruptions)

Mr. Chairman Sir, I whole-heartedly support this Bill introduced by the hon. Minister. Although a Bill as important as this is should have been introduced much

earlier, but better Late than never. I congratulate the hon. Minister for having introduced this Bill.

The hon. Member of AIADMK who spoke earlier to me called this a 'Black Bill'. It is difficult to understand how this is a 'Black Bill'. The objective of this Bill is to break the nexus between religion and politics, to ensure that religion is not made a means to gain political ends. But this fact was not touched upon by the hon. Member in his speech. He limited himself to speculating on the reasons behind postponement of elections and to such other related topics. I believe that this Bill has been introduced because the country urgently needs it. I am of the view that : "Jat par na paat par, desh chalega ekta par". Hence the necessity of introducing this Bill.

Mr. Chairman Sir, many Bills are introduced and passed here but they should also be effectively implemented. A clause in this Bill provides :

[English]

Prohibition of religious forum for propagating political ideas. With regard to penalty it is mentioned that :

"Where any religious institution or manager thereof contravenes the provisions of section 3, section 4, section 5 or section 6, the manager and every person connected with such contravention shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and with fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees".

[Translation]

This implies that a manager is liable to punishment if he uses a religious institution for political purposes. We know that a number of laws are framed in our country. But the kind of judgements that are given undermine the very importance of these laws. It is said that—Good money, Good Barrister, Good Money. Good Law. In this country, money can buy justice, can buy an acquittal. So I suggest that a special court

be set up for this purpose so that the guilty are punished at the earliest.

The Government can punish managers for misuse of religious institutions but what of prominent leaders who do the same? Our country has produced great men like the Buddha, Hazarat Mohd. was also born here, Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Imam Bukhari of Jama Masjid. Leaders of our country use the religious forums to propagate their views. There are leaders who do not hesitate to speak from the mosque for the election campaigns. The Babri Masjid controversy is the creation of such leaders. We deeply respect the Imam of Jama Masjid. But what is the Government's reaction to an Imam who exploits his office for political purposes and organises public meetings to criticize the Government?

May I know the reaction of the Government to the anti-national statements of Imam Bukhari? What steps the Government has taken in this regard? When the Government is ineffective in dealing with the Imam of such a prominent mosque how can the Imams of minor mosques be controlled? Minor functionaries of a religious community are bound to be swayed away by the actions of their high-profile leaders. Parties like the R.S.S. and Shiv Sena fight electoral battles using religion as a weapon. The Government's political intentions should be clear while dealing with such situations. Hon. Shri Dinesh Goswami said that a Prime Minister cannot frequent religious institutions. India is a secular country. Our Prime Minister is free to visit any temple, mosque, gurudwara or church. Hon. Shri Dinesh Goswami further said that the Congress (I) used Shri Arun Govil in the Allahabad by-election. My answer to that is the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Shri N.T. Rama Rao is projecting himself as Lord Rama to gain political mileage. The Government should disqualify a political leader who uses religion as a tool to contest elections. Politicians should be restrained from misusing religion. Nothing much can be achieved by punishing the managers of temples, mosques or gurudwaras. Political leaders should also be sincere. Hon. Shri

Shahabuddin gave an interesting speech. His speeches are quite interesting but are full of communal overtones. There are some parties which do not even hoist the national flag on Independence day. Such parties should be identified. A party indulging in anti-national politics should first keep in mind the independent status of the country. A solution should be found to the Ram Janmabhoomi—Babri Masjid problem as soon as possible.

Dinesh Goswamiji has mentioned the name of Shri Arun Govil. I want to know how the Babri Masjid Committee supported the Janmorcha candidate directly. What is this? I would like to stress that religion should have no connection with politics. Those leaders who believe in their mixing, should be disqualified from contesting elections. If you make this Bill comprehensive, it will be implemented soon. Big people fight elections in the name of religion and utilise every situation in the name of religion. A comprehensive Bill should be brought forward to disqualify them. Then only it will be implemented, otherwise not. This Bill is essential for the unity and integrity of the country. We know it is a fact that in various small gurudwaras in Punjab Khalistan Movement is being launched in the name of religion. The Government should have found out from where they get the money for purchasing arms and carrying on political propaganda. We should find out the source from where this money comes. Does it come from outside or from inside the country. Today we find that this money is being utilised for purchasing arms for temples, mosques and gurudwaras. If you pay attention to all these things, then this Bill will be implemented, otherwise not.

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM (Gaya) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I support the Bill wholeheartedly which has been brought forward about religious institutions. This Bill should have been enacted earlier because politics based on religion is posing a great obstruction in the maintenance of the integrity of the country. It has been envisaged in our Constitution that we will not allow any religion to play any role in politics but

[Shri Ramswaroop Ram]

today I find that the people are posing a danger to the integrity and unity of the country in the name of religion which is wrong. I do not oppose any religion. Religion has its own importance and it should not be mixed with politics. All religions preach to love other religions. We are religious only outwardly because if we go into depth, we find what we are doing to break the social fabric.

We put on a different mask but indulge in certain acts in the name of religion and politics just to harm the national integrity saying that it is our religion congregation. Iqbal said, no religion teaches mutual enmity. I want to ask Seth Saheb to remember Iqbal Sahab who said "Mazhab Nahin Sikhata aapas Men Bair Rakhna". We believe it in principle but we forget it as soon as we reach home...

(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIMAN : All this will not go on record.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : Iqbal had told the citizens of the country that religion does not teach mutual enmity. I was talking about the principle. I do not know why you are raising an objection to it. I want to say that religion is a personal property, no matter, whether it is a Sikh, Hindu, Muslim or Christian religion, its demonstration should not be permitted at public places. You must have seen that Shahabuddin Saheb had assembled people at the Boat Club after taking out a procession in the name of Babri Masjid. I want to ask the Government through you whether the Boat Club lawns are meant for taking out political processions or holding meetings, where you can collect Muslims. It is my request that holding of religious demonstrations at places like Boat Club, Ramlila

grounds etc. should be permanently banned.

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Manjeri) : There is religious independence in this country...(Interruptions)

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : Freedom does not mean that conspiracies should be hatched in the name of religion. Freedom does not mean that we should break our own social fabric. Freedom does not mean that we should endanger the unity and integrity of our country...(Interruptions) Freedom does not mean that fanatic Hindu organisations like Shiva Sena should be raised in this country. I condemn the Shiva Sena. I condemn the Akali Dal people. I condemn the Muslim League people. The people who wants to break the integrity and unity of the country in the name of religion, are traitors and none else no matter to which community they belong...(Interruptions). The population of the community of Harijans and Adivasis to which I represent, is about 25 crores in this country. They have nothing to do with any religion but their entry into the Nathdwara temple is banned, they are not permitted to enter any temple.

SHRI TEJA SINGH DARDI (Bhatinda) : The hon. Member has just talked about Akalis, I want to tell them that Akalis have neither talked about breaking of nor broken the country. On the contrary, they made 90 per cent sacrifices to build the country. Out of the 100 people who laid down their lives throughout the country, 90 were Akalis. Sikhs are true patriots...(Interruptions)...

(English)

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is no point of order. Please sit down.

[Translation]

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOO-WALIA (Sangrur) : The hon. Member has just talked about Akalis breaking the country, we will not let it go on record.

SHRI CHARANJIT SINGH ATHWAL : In the name of religion...(Interruptions)...you

have brought down the Punjab Government and you are trying to break Punjab by sending Sushil Muni there...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOO-WALIA : You do not have full information. You may kindly change some of your words, rest is all right...*(Interruptions)*...

[*English*]

SHRI C. MADHAV REDDI (Adilabad) : These objectionable words need to be expunged from the record...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN : No interruptions please. You will get your turn to speak. You may clarify and say whatever you want to say.

[*Translation*]

SHRI TEJA SINGH DARDI : Akalis have never attempted to break the country but Akalis have made sacrifices to safeguard the integrity of the country. *(Interruptions)*...

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT : This country is not the monopoly of any one. Everybody loves the country. Nobody wants to break the country. Therefore, wrong things should not be said in the House. Nobody will tolerate the wrong allegations...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I want to say that the country will not tolerate it, if the Akali Dal, the Muslim league or any other organisation wants to indulge in politics in the name of religion.

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT : Who wants to indulge in...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : If you keep religion away from politics and talk about pure politics, then the people of India will be ready to own you. But the day you start indulging in politics in the name of religion or language, the people of India from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and Bengal to Punjab will not tolerate it...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please wind up. Your time is over.

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : Sir, I am not being allowed to speak. I have not been able to have my say, so please grant me some more time, I was saying that the population of Harijan community to which I represent, is about 25 crore in this country.

15.00 hrs.

Mr. Chairman, today, the doors of temples are closed for up at one place or the other. At times the Shankaracharya of Puri says that untouchability should be practised in the country while somewhere the Chief Mahant of the Nathdwara Temple proclaims that the doors of the temple are closed for us. I am not a religious man. My religion is the Constitution and not the Geeta, the Ramayana, the Kuran, the Guru Granth Sabeer or the Bible. I am talking about myself, I am talking about the Harijans of India whose entry into the Devi's temple in villages is still banned. Today all these things are being done in the name of religion. I have, therefore, developed hatred for the religion. The very name of religion pricks me so much that I cannot describe it here. I feel that it is the religion which creates divisions between Hindus and Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims and Christians. We are not in need of such a religion. Let such a religion remain locked in temples, Churches and Gurudwaras. Otherwise this country will break in the name of the religion and the unity of India will end. If the unity of the country is not safeguarded, we will lose our independence and become slaves. Our ancestors struggled for centuries to gain independence.

With these words, I support the Bill whole-heartedly and want to tell my Sikh brethren, Muslims brethren and other brethren that they should do away with such a politics which they have been practising by mixing religion with politics. Otherwise the country will break. Therefore, the country be saved.

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOO-WALIA (Sangrur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the people belonging to different parties have expressed their views on the Bill which has been brought forward in this House. I have observed one thing and it is regrettable that while expressing their views on the Bill, the hon. Members have neither been able to understand the importance of the Bill nor they have realised the consequences of the words, the wrong words they have uttered in the House. They have not given any thought to these words and Gurudwaras have been mentioned in this connection again and again. It is regrettable that Gurudwaras are being misunderstood. There are about 50 thousand Gurudwaras in the country and out of these, only 10 or 20 have been misused. I do not talk of temples, mosques or churches, I want to say about gurudwaras only. There was and is the tradition of Lunger in the Gurudwaras. There is a tradition of providing free accommodation in Gurudwaras for 15 or 20 days. So in the tradition of Gurudwaras, institutions are being run in Delhi alone, where 80 thousand to 1 lakh students are receiving education. Employment opportunities are there. There is a tradition in Gurudwaras at Patna Sahib, Hazoor Sahib, Delhi, Amritsar, etc. that if somebody having faith in any religion comes and says that his pocket has been picked and he has no money to go home, he is given a sum of Rs. Rs. 251 according to the Rules of Gurudwaras to enable him to go home. I myself say that it is not right to make fortifications, bring arms, guns, rifles and ammunition into the Darbar Sahib, the Golden Temple.

I do agree that the portion of the complex where people were looted, killed and their corpses piled up, was misused. For that, if you try to stigmatise the last 500 years' history, it will be treated as an act of treason against the country, the religion and all.

I may make one thing clear that I have no intention to attack anybody again and again. What great achievement we have made so far? We have failed on every front; we have failed on the price front; we have failed in providing employment and we have failed in bringing about rapid develop-

ment in the country. When we fail on one front, we talk of religion and such other things just to divert the attention of the people.

Our colleague made an assault on the Akali Dal and the Muslim League. So much injustice should have not been meted out to them. Our colleague has since left the House. According to the record, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and hon. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya were imprisoned for their participation in the Akali movement. The members of the Akali Dal used to be members of the Congress and the members of the Congress used to be the members of the Akali Dal. Sardar Buta Singh used to be a member of the Akali Dal. Making a massacre of some one by uttering just one word as a he-goat is killed with an axe in one stroke amounts to a great injustice to your ability as well as the dignity of this House. I would like to say that the Shiv Sena,...

AN. HON. MEMBER : Sardar Buta Singh has since come.

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOO-WALIA : I said that he has served the country and he is in the Congress. But if somebody joins the Akali Dal, even he is not against the service of the country.

I was submitting that actually we have lost our objective. Since Shri Buta Singh has come, I would like to repeat and say that the members of the Akali Dal used to be the members of the Congress. It is our history that when the campaign to free the Gurudwaras has been won, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi has sent a telegram in 1923-24 that a part of freedom struggle of India has been won.

As a matter of fact the hon. Member has expressed his views abruptly. I request him that whatever he wants to say, he should say very cautiously and thoughtfully.

We have lost our aim. Our aim was against some fundamentalists as our Prime Minister during the course of his tour abroad has said that a handful of Sikh terrorists and

a handful of abettors of Sikh terrorists sitting in countries like Pakistan are responsible for these sad acts in this country. It will be a great blunder if all the Gurudwaras and all the Sikhs are held responsible for these acts. Our aim should have actually been against such people.

As a matter of fact basically every Sikh believes in non-violence. But some people have taken the law into their hands which has disturbed all of us in the country. I strongly emphasise and assure the people of my country that the Sikhs in conformity with their principle of non-violence will not indulge in violence, murder, highhandedness, looting, rioting and killing of innocent people. It is a temporary phase and it will come to an end soon. According to the Sikh ideology the feelings of brotherhood, love and patriotism will prevail among us all. After sacrificing his four sons, Guru Gobind Singh said :

Is Desh ke Waste War Diye Sut
 Char
 Char Muye to Kya Hua Jivat Kai
 Hazar

That is why that ideology, the ideology of brotherhood will flourish here.

What I mean to say is that those who commit mistakes, are themselves isolated. It all happened due to the mistake of the present Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee who are looking after the management of the Gurudwaras. When Barnalaji and we people were looking after the management of the Gurudwaras, we had deployed a task force. Then this law was not there. I, therefore, urge you not to bring forward this legislation, otherwise, the Sikhs will have to confront the religion. During the 14 month period when the task force was there, not a single person could enter the Gurudwara to indulge in any wrong act. We had deployed 200 armedmen there. But as soon as our colleagues took over the management, they dissolved the task force. What I want to point out is that when a large number of objectionable items were seized after the operation black thunder from inside the

complex, the so called bold terrorists defecated and urinated inside the Darbar Saheb. The Shiromani Committee begged pardon and admitted that it was a mistake on their part. Today I would like to congratulate all the Sikhs in the country who express their utmost hatred to those elements who misused the Gurudwaras and spoiled their sanctity. I, therefore, request the Government and urge them that today we should strengthen this thought.

Barnalaji said that religion should not interfere in politics and he advocated for a single united party. He has been fighting for this cause. On the other hand Sushil Muni, a friend of the terrorists is deputed for holding talks without consulting Barnalaji. Now where should we go? What will be our position? I do not say as to who sends him?

You talk of providing protection to religious institutions so that religion is not misused. In this connection I say emphatically that no true devotee in the country will like that his place of worship should be misused. This sort of feelings should be spread among the people.

Yesterday Guptaji said that the Government of Punjab does not issue licences to those people who want to fight the terrorists in their individual capacity. I, therefore, urge the Government to strengthen the hands of those religious people who want to fight these evils themselves.

I would like to refer to one more point that complaints about the religious issue must be removed early. Why is it not being done so? Please listen to what I am saying. Not bringing the religious forces on the line deliberately, involving these forces in a clash deliberately, providing them opportunities to involve themselves in a clash, instigating the followers of a particular religion for having a confrontation, casting aspersions on them, creating a situation and drifting it for a long time, provoking the people belonging to the majority community to ensure their support with an ulterior motive of gaining more votes also amount to misuse of religion.

[Shri Balwant Singh Ramoowalia]

I would like to say further that of late a large number of people were massacred in Delhi, Kanpur and Bokaro. Which religion did they misuse? Why are the culprits not being prosecuted? I am coming to the earlier point again that there were gurudwaras and temples for the last 500 years and none of them was ever misused. Misuse started when a particular person, a great personality in our country retired. He is the person who provided strength to Bhindranwale and then, that great personality harassed all, this is what everybody is saying.

I would like to submit to Sardar Buta Singh who is a good and religious man and warn the whole nation that I am quite sure that the Government will suppress the religions of minorities in the name of separation of politics and religion. You will have, therefore, to assure that this law will not be misused. We do not at all want that religious places should be misused. At the same time we also do not want that the Government should misuse this law to suppress others. Misuse should be checked from both the sides.

I cannot support this bill as I am apprehensive of the intentions of the Government that they will not use this law properly. They will rather, use the law to suppress others. I, therefore, request the Government to try to act on my request.

SHRI MOHD. AYUB KHAN (Jhunjhunu): Mr. Chairman, Sir, first of all, I rise to support the Bill which has been brought today before the House.

It is the history of our country that religion and culture have played a very important role here. Caravans after caravans of foreigners arrived in this country and the people of this country provided them land for shelter and opportunity to develop and flourish in this country. This is the same Hindustan where the people of all religions have lived together with a feeling of brotherhood for one another. The religion never teaches us enmity with our fellow beings.

The religion also does not teach us disloyalty to the country to which we belong. Instead it teaches us to be loyal to our motherland and to safeguard and serve it. Anybody, to whatever religion he may belong may not prosper in this world, nor he may get solace in the other world, if he betrays his motherland. It is a tragic fact that the history did not forgive the persons who betrayed their motherland. Names of the persons like Mir Zafar and Jai Chand who enslaved their motherland will never be forgotten. We get this lesson from the religion.

We rarely distinguish anybody on the basis of his religion in armed forces. General Sahib is sitting here who knows more about it. These people go to the battle field as real brothers and leave behind all such prejudices. If somebody sustains an injury, it becomes the duty of other soldiers to come to his rescue and assist him. These people attend prayers in temples or mosques with their absolute faith in the Almighty. They embrace one another with love and affection. The God entrusts a responsibility on such people. It is his duty to respect other religions. But the person who is not bound by the principles of his own religion, cannot be called a loyal person. While living in the country if one does not do something for the freedom of the country, he cannot be called a loyal citizen. It is not a fact that the people of this country believing in different religions did preach and practice the ideals like "Swarjya is my birth right", "you give me blood, I will give you freedom", "inquilab zindabad", "Vande Mataram" etc. Ashfaq-ulla Khan Sahib was one of such followers of religions. He was awarded death sentence. While moving forwards the gallows, he had prayed "O God! Will there be a day when India will see the dawn of her freedom..." Were these words uttered by the follower of a particular religion. Religion never preaches enmity and to have malice against others. Islam preaches that if your neighbour is starving and you have a full meal, then it is improper. If you want to go on pilgrimage leaving your neighbour in distress, your prayers offered at the place of pilgrimage will not be accepted. Religion does not prompt us to destroy temples. The religion does not

teach to disrespect the temples and gurdwaras. Instead it teaches us to respect all religions and live with love and amity. The history of our motherland testifies that in every age people were tolerant of one another's religion. During the Mughal period Hindus were appointed as generals and during the days of Hindu kings, Muslims were appointed as generals, but none of them betrayed the country. He, who betrays the country does not belong to any religion. It is our duty to love our motherland, work for our motherland and live unitedly.

Some of our hon. Members of Parliament complained that our Prime Minister goes to temples and puts a sacred mark on his forehead and also visits mosques. Our religion teaches us that as a Muslim it is my first duty to offer my prayers to God and Rasool and thereafter, comply with the orders of our authorities provided they do not say anything against God and the Rasool. Today the Prime Minister is our boss. If anybody say anything against him, it is our duty not to tolerate such utterances. He is an ideal person who respects every religion. He has regards for every religion. We should apprise our new generation of the difficulties under which we achieved our independence and advise them not to lose it again, and let our country be enslaved just because of our inter-religious feuds. The history will not pardon us if any such things take place. We will forego this opportunity. One, who purchases guns for the security of the country, is defamed by the persons, who are activated by their selfish ends to grab power. Does it not prick their conscience? Are these people not convinced that they should not indulge in false propaganda of a thing which has been purchased for the security of our country. Does their religion allow them to indulge in such things. Our soldiers sacrifice their lives defending every inch of the country's territory. On the other hand these people defame the country for their selfish ends to get it shattered into pieces. Our religion teaches us to live with the feelings of brotherhood and respect for one another. We should so educate our coming generation to ensure that our country does not fall into the fetters of slavery.

We should serve this country. I would like to request the respected maulavis, who are present here, to recall the Ayat No. 80 of Surah Yasin in the Holy Quran which says "who hath appointed for you fire from the green tree and behold! Ye kindle from it." If you have seen the T.V. serial 'Ramayana', you might have seen that Hanuman also produced fire by rubbing two branches of a tree. If we confine the knowledge of our religion to ourselves, it will be difficult for the people of other religions to know what is being taught to the people in our religious institutions. If we make everything known to all, nobody will foster any doubt in his mind about religion. In this connection, I would like to cite the words of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. He used to say—"I am a Muslim, I am proud of that. We have inherited traditions of the last 1600 years. I will protect this legacy. This, I want from the depth of my heart and soul. He rose above it and said that it was his bounden duty to serve his country and that duty was his religion. That is the ideal our religion preaches us. Our temples and mosques are the places of worship. We should use them only for the purpose of worship. Nowhere in the mosques it has been written that we should use them for materialistic pursuits. Nobody has a right to use the religious places for worldly purposes and cause harm to the country. To-day, this very thing is causing harm to us. We should create an example by setting up the temples and mosques side by side. We should infuse such feeling among the masses that may make it a strong country.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, I request the hon. Minister to reply because a considerable time has been taken on this Bill. I regret that I cannot allow other Members to speak.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (S. BUTA SINGH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Members who took the Bill seriously, sensed the gravity of the subject and expressed their views accordingly.

[S. Buta Singh]

There is no doubt that there is nothing as sacred as religion. As Shri Banatwala pointed out, religion gives strength to our conscience and mind. Similarly it would not be an exaggeration to state that every Indian is basically a religious man. Therefore, it would be essential to keep religion apart from politics in the interest of national unity. The Government would initiate a dialogue with all political parties to persuade them to sit together and discuss it in the House.

A number of hon. Members have tried to link it with two things. They have their doubts that the Bill is meant to separate religion from politics, but that is not the case. A separate legislation would be brought forward to separate religion from politics and to ensure that politicians do not misuse religion for furthering their political interests. This bill has a limited objective. The objective is to protect the religious institutions or establishments from the political influence. I have clarified in my opening remark what led the Government to bring forward this Bill. The hon. Members are very well aware of the fact how religious places and institutions have been misused. Whenever any mishapening took place, a cross section of the people who suffered the loss demanded to take appropriate measures against the misuse of religious places in order to check the feelings of hatred from spreading and to ensure that the unity of the nation is not attacked. It would help us in maintaining the sanctity of the religious places and would also preserve the basic principles of religion which these institutions propagate. I would like to dwell in brief on the issues raised by the hon. Members. As I stated at the outset, various political parties have all along been demanding to take appropriate measures in order to ensure that religion is not misused for politics and the religious symbols are not used to endanger the unity and integrity of the nation. The character of our Constitution is secular and people define secularism in their own different ways. But, today, these people know it very well that the concept of secularism means equal respect towards all

religions. No religion should be considered inferior. Every religion is supposed to be worthy of equal respect. The Government should avoid any action which is likely to create feelings of discrimination. No religion should be propagated at the cost of other. We believe in secularism and "Sarv Dharam Savabhav" which means giving equal respect to all religions. No religion is big or small. I think this is what every religion teaches. I have tried to follow some of teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. I had also the opportunity to listen to some of the great leaders, saints and Faqirs of Sufi sect. The basic concept of all religions has always been one "Eko dharam dridh sach hoi" i.e., to strengthen the truth and follow the path of truth. This is the only basic concept of every religion though we may render some different names according to the geographical features or a particular language. Religion is based on truth. It may have different names and forms. There may be different means to religion, but that makes no difference. Just now when Shri Khan quoted a verse from Quran and translated it, I felt that Guru Granth Sahib also carried a similar verse. He said that there was fire in every piece of wood. Similarly it has been written in Guru Granth Sahib "Sagal Vanaspat maye hai santra"—there is fire in every piece of wood and "Sagal doodh mein ghee"—ghee is found in milk irrespective of the living being to which the milk belongs.

A person churning milk will get nothing but ghee out of it. "Sagal banaspat maye bhai santra", "Sagal doodh mein ghee, ghat-ghat antar jot samahi". The light of God is present in every human-being. The foundation of religion is truth and the truth can never alter. Our clothing, language, way of living and expression may differ. But the truth can never alter. The concept of secularism given by our forefathers like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi lies in it. As truth is the basis of every religion, equal respect should be given to all religions. The citizens of India attribute equal regard to every religion. Every religion is Indian. No religion is alien to us. The various religions being followed by the people of India are our own

religions. We do not believe in picking up quarrels and making propoganda against such things. We also do not believe in instigating the feelings of the people in the name of fundamentalism or language. Every individual has his own way of worshipping. Some people worship fire, some others worship idol, image, shabad (word), book etc. These are the varicus means to attaining the truth.

15.35 hrs

[SHRI ZAINUL BASHER *in the Chair*]

Therefore, it is sinful to spread hatred in the name of religion. No religion has such a sanction. Shri Indrajit will himself realise this when a comprehensive bill is introduced. He does not believe in religion. But truth cannot be hidden. He too has accepted the truth....

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat) :
 Man is the religion.

[*English*]

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY (Katwa) : What is that the Marxism believes in, do you know that ?

S. BUTA SINGH : Yes, I have read it. You accept the reality.

[*Translation*]

You accept the reality. If you try to get at the bottom, you would find the truth.

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOO-WALIA : You seem to be infused with religious sentiments.

S BUTA SINGH : Politics is a sacred thing and it deals with everyday life. There can be ups and downs in politics. We feel a state of peace when we see God in Brahma Swaroop and get agitated to see him in 'Mayavi roop'. So we should avoid the latter. The purpose of the bill is to prevent wrong doings in the religious places which are meant for attaining purity and truth. Some of the hon. Members became sentimental during the course of their speeches and that

is why they said such things. One of the hon. Members presented the Sikh history in a distorted form and said that the bill was against the religion. I do not want to go in details. I would say one thing. I fact, the main cause of Punjab problem is the misconception created in the minds of innocent masses. They have been forced to develop a complex that they are not a part of India. However, the fact remains that their contribution to patriotism, development and science and technology is unmatch- ing. To conceive a notion that religion and politics are same is a folly. I would like to give a small example as I do not want to go into the details right now. Whenever I get an opportunity, I shall discuss all aspects threadware. They referred to Shri Guru Hargobind, the sixth of the Sikh Gurus and said that he too did not separate religion from politics. They tried to say that first five of them did not even think about it. In a way, these Members have issued a wrong statement against these Gurus. It is not good, I would like to prove it. When Shri Hargobindji found that the circumstances had worsened—Guru Arjun Dev Ji, the Fifth Guru had already sacrificed his life, the social conditions were not conducive and people had started discussing politics in Harmandir Sahib—he advised not to discuss those matters in the holy place. He instructed the people that it was a sacred place, no activity should be carried out which could spoil its sanctity and disturb spiritual concentration of the devotees. He told his followers that they should come out of the temple to discuss such things lest it should tell upon the spiritual strength of the people. He used to rest outside the temple—the place which is called Akal Takhat now-a-days. All discussions also used to be held there. This proves that the Sixth Guru himself separated religion from politics instead of combining them. Guru Nanak Devji served the society and inspired the people to understand the actual meaning of religion. The people of the society had become cowards and he inspired them to gain self-confidence and to develop the feelings of love for their fellow-beings. The Sikh history is replete with such instances. I agree with Shri Ramoowalia. We should be proud of our Gurus who laid down their lives for the

[S. Buta Singh]

people. They are the foundation of our lives. Guru Teg Bahadur had openly challenged King Alamgir of Delhi that forcible conversion of the people was wrong and advised him to follow the path of love. He told him that nobody would be allowed to be converted forcibly. When the 'Badshah' asked him to pay the price, he offered his own life. Many saints like Farid, Baba of Sarhind, Nizamuddin Sahib and Gurib Nawaz Sahib of Meerut carried out the campaign for Islam but with love. Even today a number of Indian pay reverence to God. They have never raised voice against it. Violence, tyranny, hatred should be strongly opposed, be it in Islam, Hinduism or Sikhism. It is a matter of courage and confidence to raise one's voice against oppression. No religion teaches us to hate other religions. Every religion teaches the unity of the nation.

Coming to what Shri Ramoowalia said about Shri Harmandir Sahib, I would like to say that a day had come in the political life of Punjab before Independence when all distinctions between a Congressman and an Akali had disappeared. Shri Dhillon, who is not present in the House, had tried to portray the Sikh history nicely and some other hon. Members had also referred to that by-gone era. They were one so far as the fight for Independence was concerned. The same people were in the Congress Party and in the Akali Dal at different times. I am not supporting a particular party; do not misunderstand me Indrajitji, but in 1956 a situation emerged and it was felt that there was no need to run political activities from religious places. Thereupon an agreement was reached whereby one group was known as Congress Party and the other went by the name of Akali Dal because the latter considered itself a religious party. They were of the view that their constitution provided for only the service of religion. Following that agreement, it was decided that they would not take part in politics any more and that they would only service the society. Election were fought on the basis of that agreement. But a few selfish politician breached the agreement and the political

programmes of Akali Dal started receiving recognition as was the case previously. That was also a critical stage.

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA : Did Sardar Prakash Singh also contest on a Congress ticket ?

S. BUTA SINGH : Yes, Sardar Prakash Singh contested on a Congress ticket. Sardar Hukum Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh and Gyan Singh Rajwade and many other leaders also contested on Congress ticket. But I want to imply that at that time also it was felt that religion should have no connection with politics. They thought it was better to join a big party if they want to remain on the political scene. The Akali Dal confined itself to the social and religious activities. Thereafter in 1978, an extraordinary turn took place in Punjab politics, particularly Akali politics. The 1924 constitution of Akali Dal was radically amended to give it a fundamentalist orientation and efforts were made to create such feelings among people and mislead them. I have just mentioned about it. Consequently, there were incidents of gruesome violence in Punjab and I cannot forget the Baisakhi day of 1978, when the ruling party aided the spread of violence in an organised manner and it is since then that the Punjab problem began. Violence started since then and the persons who were involved in the killings are being honoured with 'Saropas' inside the Harmandir Sahib. These things strengthen these tendencies even more. The youth are being misled and they consider it as the mission of their life. This should be curbed at the earliest. It will end only when the respectability which has been bestowed to it and violence from within the institution is checked. It will end only when we make such efforts. When directions of this type are issued from this august House which is the Supreme body of the nation, it is only then that this problem will come to an end. We should approach this matter with an attitude of understanding and not of confrontation. This bill is not against any particular religion but a particular situation that is existing in Punjab. It is for protecting the sanctity of all religious institutions.

Shri Ramoowalia had said that volunteers

had been engaged there and I too remember that they had done quite a good job. But what happened subsequently? The Sikhs started saying that the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, (SGPC) which is a statutory body, is not bound by any law. I would like to oppose this view. SGPC has been constituted under an Act of the Parliament and therefore, all the rules are applicable and there are Government agencies for enforcing it. But when the Government takes action it is said that it is intervening in the religious affairs. In case of election to the SGPC for the posts of the President and other office bearers, the Deputy Commissioner can preside over it but he cannot go inside the complex. It is very strange. The District Commissioner can preside on this body, he can garland its President but cannot go inside to ask them to vacate. If he does so, it will be termed as Government intervention. I really cannot understand it. If we do not put an end to such practices, the institution only will suffer. Shri Ramoowalia knows what has happened. Subsequently, the regular staff of 200—300 who were in service for the last 20—25 years were ousted and 300 to 400 terrorists occupied the office and later it was closed down. The salaries were no longer given and the money which was donated by the pilgrims in the various Gurudwaras was seized and distributed among themselves. Thus, the institution—which was a duly elected body suffered and its very purpose was defeated. Now under these circumstances, there was no other way out. Because this body was created by an Act of Parliament, it had to be given protection. But the most unfortunate thing is that they want all the powers that are granted under an Act of the Parliament but insofar as the responsibilities are concerned, nobody wants to shoulder them. Who is responsible for it? Is it the Government? True, it is the responsibility of the Government. In order to discharge its responsibilities, Government has to go inside. But this is not allowed. If the Government wants to enter the complex they treat it as intervention in their religious affairs. Then how can we save them in such a situation? Who is going to suffer? It is the religious institutions which are going to suffer. We have seen the

extent of damage to the Golden Temple. The pilgrims could not even offer prayers there. Neither the political leaders, nor the common man could go inside the Temple complex.

Shri Dhillon described in detail as to what was actually happening in different rooms of the Temple. I do not want to go in that. It is an old story and is very unfortunate.

We have brought this Bill after giving it a serious thought and with a sense of responsibility. We have no intention of intervening in any religion nor do we want to intervene. We only want that the elected or nominated managers/office bearers of every religious institution—whether it is a Mosque, Temple, Gurudwara or a Church—should have the required power to maintain its sanctity. In case anyone wants to defile the sanctity of a religious institution the Government has no other alternative but to deal with him under the provisions of law and flush him out from there. If that is not possible the Government should punish him.

It is with this intention that this Bill has been brought. It is neither against any particular religion nor against any particular place. The intention is that the institutions and organisations which have been entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the sanctity of our religious places whether under law, traditions and conventions should be protected. There are several things which are not provided under law but are traditionally recognised and are well established convention or practises which are unique to every religion. We do not want to destroy them. It is better for the Government to have as few laws as possible. But what is happening today. You must have come across that horrible incident recently when about 40—50 dead bodies are recovered from the debris in a religious place. I think such a thing has never happened in a religious place nor do I feel would any hon. Member approve of it. That is why Government has made this effort to curb these things.

As regards the question of religion and

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politics, we feel that politics is for the service of people and religion is for their spiritual upliftment and progress. Religion should give directions to politics and politics should follow those religious principles. But here it is contrary. Here politics is trying to run religion.

The hon. Members may forgive me for saying that it is not proper to mesmerise people and incite them when they go to attend a religious festival at a religious place. They go to these places leaving behind all their narrow considerations to offer prayers. Ours is an open society and we offer equal opportunities to all to organise political meetings and give lectures and there is freedom in our democratic set up to propagate different ideologies within the framework of the Constitution. But if any temple, mosque or Gurudwara is utilised for this purpose, I think it will not only prove damaging to that religion but also to that particular God, Guru or Prophet. Is it proper to raise slogans in a place of worship where we go to offer prayers? It is an insult not only to that religion but also to that particular God, Guru or Prophet to whom we go to pay obeisance. The earlier these things are curbed, the more it will enable us in maintaining the sanctity, unity and integrity of our country.

Therefore, we think that this attempt made by us is a limited one. If the House passes it unanimously then it will strengthen us paving the way for bringing another comprehensive Bill with support of all of us and efforts will be made to reach an unanimous decision that the political activities are not carried out from the religious institutions and the ideology of the political parties is so shaped that instead of exploiting the religious sentiments of the people a feeling in the minds of the people is inculcated to bring the country forward. This will bring good for the country.

You know that our Communist Colleagues do not have faith in attending temples and mosques and yet they are influenced by their policies and maintain

contacts with them. Ours is an open society. We want all the Political Parties should come ahead with their ideologies, policies and programmes and a healthy political atmosphere may be created in which people are convinced by sound reasoning. Democracy has not yet been flourished wherever religion has been given upper hand over State. We do not have to go very far off to find an example. If we attentively see what is happening in the East and the West, we find that hypocrisy is being practised in the name of elections, religion is being imposed on the State, people are revolting against it, students have come out on the roads in protest and people are creating a hue and cry that they should get democracy of their kind. Today everyone wants that our religious places should be separated from politics and people are not exploited. If all such happenings are brought to an end then our country will prosper and its unity and integrity will be strengthened.

With these words I would like to request the hon. Members that this Bill should be passed unanimously in the interest of the nation.

SHRI SHAMINDER SINGH (Faridkot) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I want to submit whether you have thought about the consequences of the politics of the kind proposed to be played? I feel that Lord Rama will be edged out leaving Ravana in the arena have a free play and if you want to corner Rama then...*(Interruptions)*.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You put your questions. Please do not deliver a speech.

(Interruptions)

S. BUTA SINGH : Sir, the whole country knows and even the world has come to know that the Government has thrown Ravana out of Harmandir Sahib and Rama is making worship there today.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : I find Shri Vijoy Kumar Yadav, mover of the Statutory Resolution, is not present in the House. So, I shall put the Resolution first to the vote of the House.

The question is :

“That this House disapproves of the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Ordinance, 1988 (Ordinance No. 3 of 1988) promulgated by the President on the 26th May, 1988.”

The motion was negatived.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, I shall put the motion for consideration of the Bill to the vote of the House.

The question is :

“That the Bill to prevent the misuse of religious institutions for political and other purposes, be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House will now take up Clause-by-Clause consideration.

Clause 2

(Definitions)

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani) :
 Sir, I beg to move :

Page 2, lines 5 and 6,—

omit “or any cause, issue or question of a political nature” (1)

Page 2, lines 4 to 6,—

for “includes any activity promoting or propagating the aims or objects of a political party or any cause, issue or question of a political nature”

Substitute “means any activity in support of a political party” (12)

S. BUTA SINGH : Sir, I beg to move :

Page 2,—

for lines 23 to 25, *substitute—*

“(f) “religious institution means an institution for the promotion of any

religion or persuasion, and includes any place or premises used as a place of public religious worship, by whatever name or designation known.” (16)

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN (Kishanganj) : Sir, I beg to move :

Page 2, lines 4 and 5,—

for “promotion or propagating the aims or objects”

substitute—

“in support” (17)

16.00 hrs.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I shall now put the Amendment moved by Shri Buta Singh to the vote of the House.

The question is :

“Page 2,—

for lines 23 to 25, *substitute—*

“(f) “religious institution” means an institution for the promotion of any religion or persuasion, and includes any place or premises used as a place of public religious worship, by whatever name or designation known.” (16)

The motion was adopted.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I shall now put all other Amendments to the vote of the House.

Amendments Nos. 1, 12 and 17 were put and negatived.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

“That Clause 2, as amended, stand part of the Bill.”

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2, as amended, was added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : It is now 4 O' Clock. Mr. Indrajit Gupta has to initiate a discussion under Rule 193...

S. BUTA SINGH : This can be finished....

MR. CHAIRMAN : If the House agrees, we can.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Let it be finished and then the discussion can be taken up.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS (Mavelikara) : Let this Bill be finished.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House will now take up Clause 3 of the Bill.

Clause 3

(Prohibition of use of religious institutions for certain purposes)

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN : Sir, I beg to move :

Page 2, line 27,—

for "any premises belonging to, or under the control of, the institution—"

substitute "its premises" (2)

Page 2,—

(i) omit lines 29 to 36

(ii) line 37, for "(f)" substitute "(b)"

(iii) omit lines 40 to 47 (3)

MR. CHAIRMAN : I shall now put Amendments 2 and 3 moved by Shri Syed Shahabuddin to the vote of the House.

Amendments Nos. 2 and 3 were put and negatived.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

— "That Clause 3 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 3 was added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. D.B. Patil is not present. Mr. Indrajit Gupta. Now Clause 4.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : I am not moving my Amendment No. 21.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That Clause 4 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 4 was added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That Clause 5 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 5 was added to the Bill.

Clause 6

(Prohibition of religious fora for propagating political ideas)

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Sir, I beg move :

Page 3, (i) line 14,—

for "6." substitute "6. (1)"

(ii) after line 16, insert—

"(2) No political, religious or other organisation apart from the persons entrusted with management of the religious institution, shall be allowed to run an office within the premises of the institution."(22)

I would like to know why they object to this. I have already explained in my speech that no organisation except the Committee in charge of that institution should be permitted to have an office inside the premises. Have they any objection to this? I do not know why they are objecting to this.

S. BUTA SINGH : The idea is quite

421 *St. Resl. re. Disapp. of Rel. Ins. (Prev. of Misuse) Ord. & Rel. Ins. (Prev. of Misuse) Bill* SRAVANA 20, 1910 (SAKA) *St. Resl. re. Disapp. of Rel. Ins. (Prev. of Misuse) Ord. & Rel. Ins. (Prev. of Misuse) Bill* 422

good. As I have promised, we are coming forward with a comprehensive Bill when all these things can be considered.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I shall now put the Amendment moved by Shri Indrajit Gupta to the vote of the House.

Amendment No. 22 was put and negatived.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That Clause 6 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 6 was added to the Bill.

Clause 7

(Penalties)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now Clause 7.

Shri D.B. Patil—Not present.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA : I beg to move :

Page 3, line 17,—

after "contravenes" insert—

"knowingly and wilfully" (13)

Let us not to be so harsh upon the poor managers of the religious institutions. He would be helpless in various situations and in spite of helplessness, he will be so punished. Therefore, this is a safeguard that is added that only when the manager wilfully, intentionally, knowingly allows to these things, only then he can be punished. But unless he is wilfully, knowingly a party to the act, how are you going to haul him up? By asking him to inform the police and making him an informer, in that case, he he will risk his life. I am saying this in the context of what is happening in Punjab. There is no such thing as far as Masjids or Mosques are concerned. But think of that also. If he thinks of informing the police over there, he risks his life. So, don't come so harshly upon the poor employee, an ordinary employee of the religious insti-

tution.

S. BUTA SINGH : The hon. Member is a very eminent lawyer. Unless the responsibility is fixed, how can you leave it to him. If there is a genuine case where wrong has been done, the person can come to the court and express his side of the picture. The court will take care of him.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now I put amendment number 13 to Clause 7 to vote.

Amendment No. 13 was put and negatived.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That Clause 7 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 7 was added to the Bill.

Clause 8

(Disqualifications of persons convicted or charge-sheeted under this Act.)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now Clause 8.

Shri D.B. Patil—Not present.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA : I beg to move :

Page 3,—

(i) *Omit* lines 28 to 34

(ii) Page 3, line 36,—

Omit "or restrained under subsection (2)" (14)

Page 3, line 37,—

Omit "or restraint" (15)

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN : I beg to move :

Page 3,—

Omit lines 28 to 34. (18)

Page 3, line 36,—

Omit "or restrained under subsection (2)," (19)

MR. CHAIRMAN : You cannot move Amendment number 20 as it has been moved by Mr. Banatwalla as Amendment number 15.

SHRI SHANKARLAL (Pali) : I beg to move :

Page 3, line 26,—

Omit "for a period of six years" (24)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Should I put all the amendments together? Now I put amendments number 14, 15, 18, 19 and 24 to Clause 8 to vote.

Amendments Nos. 14, 15, 18, 19 and 24 were put and negatived.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That Clause 8 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 8 was added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now Clause 9.

Shri D.B. Patil—Not present.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That Clause 9 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 9 was added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That Clause 10 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 10 was added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That Clause 1, the Enacting For-

mula and Long Title stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title were added to the Bill.

S. BUTA SINGH : I beg to move :

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is :

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed."

The motion was adopted.

Sarvashri Ebrahim Sulaiman Salt and G.M. Banatwalla then left the House.

16.10 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

[English]

Accident to 26 DN Bangalore-Trivandrum Express between Sasthankotta and Perinad stations of Southern Railway on 8th July, 1988.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House will now take up discussion under Rule 193 regarding the accident to 26 DN. Bangalore-Trivandrum Express on 8th July, 1988. Shri Indrajit Gupta will initiate the debate.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat) : Mr. Chairman, it is my painful responsibility to have to initiate this debate which concerns one of the worst railway disasters in history. And what is more tragic is the fact that—I am not blaming anybody for it—after such a major disaster the Lok Sabha has got round to discuss it more than one month after the accident took place. During this one month the inquiry which has been set-up as usual by the Railway Administration—the statutory inquiry—must be proceeding. We do not get any news