

cannot find Krishnas to come to our aid. Though our food production has increased three-fold, and though we have got the Green Revolution, we are not able to feed our people, because we are producing as many people as possible.

I want to ask Mr. Banatwalla: is it your intention that anybody can produce any number of children and then throw them as a burden on the Government and thus give an opportunity to the Opposition to tell the Government that it is not able to remove poverty?

In view of all these reasons, it is quite necessary to introduce this Bill, if we want to control the increase in population. This will benefit our country and enable it to prosper.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for measures to restrict the growth of population in the country."

The Motion was adopted.

SHRI P. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: I introduce the Bill.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shri Virdhi Chander Jain is not here. Prof. Madhu Dandavate is not here. Now Dr. Vasant Kumar Pandit.

15.20 hrs.

COMPULSORY REGISTRATION OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS BILL*

DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT (Rajgarh) I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to provide for compulsory registration of religious conversions in India.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for compulsory registration of religious conversions in India."

Mr. Eduardo Faleiro.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO (Mormugao): It seems to be a day where religious things are on the forefront. I am a person who does not dwell much on religion. If religion were to play a lesser role in our society, all of us would have gained a lot. I do not doubt the intentions or good motives of the mover of this Bill. But it will create a very bad feeling among our people, among large sections of the people and the citizenry, when such registration of conversions is made compulsory. Off hand one can only recall one precedent of similar legislation by the dictator, Hitler. In the Nazi Germany Hitler had passed a law that the Jews must prominently display the Star of David. This might have looked innocent, but it did humiliate persons and it looked like, in fact, being a Jew was considered a crime. Actually, this will thus be the impression, that it is a crime to follow a particular religion. Now, we have a horror of faction personage if I may say so, in this Bill, the Registrar of Conversions! I would request the hon. Member, to withdraw this Bill keeping in mind that religion is a very personal matter and the State should not interfere. The less religion is allowed to play a part in our life, the better, it will be for society.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr. G.M. BANATWALLA.

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani): Mr. Deputy speaker, we should be honest and also true to the Member who has brought the Bill. He has very clearly stated that he is not trying to put any ban on conversions. He has

* Published in Gazette of India Extraordinary, Part II, Section 2, dated 11-12-81.

[Shri G. M. Banatwalla]

very clearly stated this. He has accepted that as a right of a person, that if he, so wishes he may be converted from one religion to another. His main concern is that there should be no coercion or under influence or such undesirable things as far as the conversions are concerned. Further, and for that, he has suggested registration of conversions. The remedy which he suggests will unfortunately aggravate the whole situation. It will create a serious law and order situation also. He wants that when a person wants to be converted, memorandum of prior intimation must be filed with the Registrar, and then a month or one and a half months' notice has to be communicated to the priest of that community, or the religious institution of that community from which the person wants to be converted into another community. In other words, there is an open, general invitation to that community to come up and an open general invitation I should say to the anti-social elements of that community to create all sorts of problems. Let us therefore face the reality and I have therefore to oppose the introduction of this measure. It is an undue interference with a person's right to practise any belief or any faith or profess any belief or faith that he desires. It will have a very undesirable effect.

Now I must also say that as far as the element of coercion, undue influence, malpractices etc., are concerned, there are enough provisions in the Indian Penal Code and such laws which can take care of this situation. It is most unfortunate that at present with respect to the conversions that took place in Tamil Nadu, unfortunate impressions have been created of the role, of the so-called role of foreign money. There was paper Daily from Bombay, which in its issue dated 17th November says:

"There is a report with the Union Home Ministry that conversions are

taking place as a result of massive foreign money and that there is a foreign plan for purposes of bringing about these conversions."

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is only a newspaper report.

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA: We know it very well and we do not place our faith in such newspaper reports, but a certain impression is being created. The Home Ministry several times has said that there is no role of foreign money and there are statements of the Ministers, which I can read out, but not at this stage. But a well-orchestrated propaganda is going on about the so-called role of foreign money, about massive conversions that are taking place, some foreign conspiracy and so on. Unfortunately, in this Bill also, the hon. member speaks about the same thing, about the so-called role of foreign money and all the doubtful conversions that have taken place. All such types of Bills with such statements of objects and reasons appended to the and the plea to introduce such Bills are only adding to the tensions that are unnecessarily there. The Bill is not at all necessary. It will be a serious intervention in a person's right to profess and practise his own religion. As I said, it will give an open and general invitation to confrontations and create law and order situations. I, therefore, oppose the introduction of this Bill.

DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT: I have listened to the objections raised by both my colleagues to the introduction of this Bill. I think they have not gone through the statement of objects for this Bill. I do not want at all to interfere with the basic right of any person to change his faith or religion. We have a registrar of births, marriages and a registrar of deaths. The change of faith means almost a re-birth of a person. I do not know why so much objection is being taken. I think the question of law and order will arise—and it has arise—when

there arise doubts that the conversions were not of free conscience but were made through compulsion or enticement. The hon. member himself read from Daily newspaper which also suggests the same thing. In recent years, particularly from the new census figures, we do see that large number of people are changing their faith. By this Bill I merely want to give the person a full chance to think over the whole thing, because mass conversions are now taking place. If it is a question of one or two individuals, I do not mind. But when mass conversions take place, it definitely leaves a doubt whether it is really the result of true change of faith. There should be some method in our social life and in our religious behaviour. Change of religion is not an ordinary thing. You embrace a different religion out of your own faith and conviction, not out of compulsion or enticement. Therefore, I have merely suggested registration, giving the person concerned sufficient time to think it over. I have not at all tried to curtail the right of a particular person to change his religion. These arguments themselves show how sensitive this matter is. Even a method to organise the whole thing, upsets the sentimentality of certain minority people. These figures of conversion would be useful for historians and research people and for national statistics. We give definite benefits to minorities. One will just say that I was converted on such and such date, so, please give me the benefit. Therefore, in spite of all the arguments put forward, I do not see any reason why they should oppose the introduction of this Bill.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for compulsory registration of religious conversions in India."

Those in favour say 'Ayes'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: 'Ayes.'

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Those in favour say 'Noes'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Noes.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think, Ayes have it.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: Noes have it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let the lobbies be cleared.

The lobbies have been cleared. Dr. Vasant Kumar Pandit has sought leave to introduce a Bill to provide for compulsory registration of religious conversions in India. This has been opposed by Shri G. M. Banatwalla and Shri Eduardo faleiro. I will now put it to the vote.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS AND EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN): Sir, we do not want to violate the normal tradition or convention established here. So, from this side we will not press for a division.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for compulsory registration of religious conversions in India."

The motion was adopted.

DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT: I introduce the Bill.

15.39 hrs.

SALARY, ALLOWANCES AND PENSION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL (AMENDMENT OF SECTIONS 3, 6B ETC.,)—Contd.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House will now take up further consideration of the motion moved by