

[Prof. D. P. Chattopadhyaya]

technological elements, providing protection in the face of possible foreign competition. Since these organisations have now come into being and have been rendering a good account of themselves and in view of these new developments, Government have come to the conclusion that it is no longer necessary to continue the Tariff Commission.

Another criticism made was that the Tariff Commission served only the big business houses' interests. It is not quite correct because, over the years, as many as 50 industries had been receiving protection. Under the umbrella of this protection, not only the big industries but some small-scale industries also enjoyed protection. The Tariff Commission was a professional organisation with experts which looked into the matters referred to them not only by the Commerce Ministry but other Ministries also. So, it is not correct that it was heavily biased towards the big business houses. With these words, I commend the Bill to the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill to repeal the Tariff Commission Act, 1951, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration"

The motion was adopted

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, clause by clause consideration. There are no amendments to clauses 2 and 3. I shall put them together. The question is:

"That clauses 2 and 3 stand part of the Bill"

The motion was adopted

Clauses 2 and 3 were added to the Bill

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, clause 4. There are amendments by Mr. Joarder and Mr. Naik. Since they are not

there, the amendments are not moved. The question is:

"That clause 4, clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title stand part of the Bill"

The motion was adopted

Clause 4, clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA: I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed"

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed"

The motion was adopted

16.32 hrs.

MOTION RE. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE AND CULTURE (PROF. S. NURUL HASAN): I beg to move:

"That this House do consider the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, laid on the Table of the House on the 18th February, 1975"

Although more than a year has passed since this Report was placed on the Table of the House, this year has been very fruitfully spent and is in many respects a very important landmark in the cause of the removal of discrimination against women in India. This was, as the House would recall, the international women's year. On 25th of April, 1975, the House discussed this general matter on a motion moved by my hon. friend, Shri Indrajit Gupta and on that occasion, this House was

pleased to adopt the following resolution:

"On the occasion of the declaration by the United Nations of 1975 as International Women's Year, this House urge upon the Prime Minister to initiate a comprehensive programme of specific legislative and administrative measures aimed at removing as far as possible, the economic and social injustices, disparities and discriminations to which Indian women continue to be subjected."

This resolution and almost a similar resolution passed by the other House have guided the action of the Government not only during the International Women's Year but continue to be the corner stone of the Government's policy. But what is declared by the United Nations as Women's Decade in which a time bound programme is to be formulated and mid-term plan appraisal in 1980 of the actual achievement is to take place. Sir, soon after this report was submitted to the Government on the 1st January 1975, a National Committee was formed under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister herself, with representatives from the various voluntary organizations, Parliament, State Governments and with other social workers, to guide the celebrations of the International Women's Year. A delegation was sponsored by this Government to the United Nations Conference on the International Women's Year held at Mexico wherein, I am happy to report, the delegation of our country distinguished itself by the valuable contributions made by it.

The recommendations of the International Women's Conference held at Mexico were substantially accepted by the UN General Assembly later during the year, which decided that a time-bound programme be adopted. In addition to this, the Government assisted the various delegations to go to different conferences held in different parts of the world in connection with

the International Women's Year. The most notable of these conferences was held in East Berlin in the month of October.

During the year itself, in our own country, various programmes in collaboration and cooperation with the Indian Committee for the Celebration of the International Women's Year—which itself comprised representatives of various women's organizations—were taken up; and some important achievements can be recorded, particularly in bringing about an awareness among the population in general about the need to remove the discrimination that unfortunately has continued against women in our country.

On the whole, I would like to submit that in this work of creating consciousness, a great deal of success has been achieved. But this consciousness only heightens the importance of the problem and the urgent necessity for the Government, State Governments, voluntary organizations, representatives of the people, political parties and social workers—all of them—to make a determined effort to ensure that what the Parliament has desired is put into practice.

Coming back to this report, the House must have observed that it is a very comprehensive report, and that it has made extremely valuable recommendations on different aspects of the welfare of women, particularly the removal of discrimination against women. It has made recommendations for legal changes in educational, social, economic, health and other fields. The Government therefore immediately constituted a group, an inter-Ministerial group, to examine the various recommendations; and without waiting for a final decision to be taken, our approach was: let us start taking action on as many things as we can implement immediately, or by stages.

Later, a committee of officers was appointed which we called "The Empowered Committee" so that in inter-Ministerial discussion delays may

[Prof. S. Nurul Hasan]

be avoided. And many important decisions have already been taken, many actions have been placed for the consideration of this Hon. House, the most important of which is the Equal Remuneration Act 1976, providing for equal pay for equal work among men, women and to ensure prevention of discrimination against women in employment and in industry.

This humble opinion is the landmark in the history of our country. Whereas we had been saying that there should be equal remuneration for equal work, in fact, this particular matter had not been fully implemented in innumerable industries. And the House would recall the instances which were given by hon. Members that women were being subjected to exploitation and low wages.

The National Committee had decided about it also in its valedictory function held on the 17th February this year under the Chairmanship of our Prime Minister. It adopted what was called a "blue-print of action". This blue-print of action made proposals for various legislative measures and administrative measures in regard to education, employment facilities for working women, care for the socially disadvantaged women, promotion of voluntary efforts in the field of women's welfare and the setting up of a machinery for implementation.

My Ministry has set up, in the meantime, a proper unit in the Department of Social Welfare to pursue all these programmes and to see that—different important recommendations which have been made by the Committee on "The Status of Women in India", which we can possibly implement either through an executive action or through a legislative action in accordance with the wishes of this Hon. House, action is taken on them as early as possible. Obviously, many of the recommendations fall within the purview of the State

Governments, and my Ministry will be continuously in touch with the State Governments, urging upon them to take an appropriate action, whatever is accepted as a nationally accepted policy.

At the instance of my Ministry, The Institute of Applied Man-Power Research prepared what they called "A National Plan of Action" which contains some very positive and concrete measures. This National Plan of Action proposed by them is also under the consideration of the Government, and we hope that, taking into account all these different concrete measures that have been suggested, we will be coming out, one after another, with a series of measures, and will also be urging upon the State Governments to take action as and when necessary.

In this connection, I would be presumptuous enough to seek your indulgence to refer to the Report of the Department of Social Welfare which has been circulated to all the hon. Members of the House, which contains many details of facts about the action that has been taken by the Government in regard to the recommendations of the Committee on "The Status of Women in India." I would, therefore, not take the time of the House at this stage by repeating and giving a detailed account of all the steps that have been taken. I assume, already the attention of the hon. Members has been drawn to the material that has been furnished.

I am very much looking forward to this debate because the guidance provided by this House will be of immense value to my Ministry, to myself, to the Central Government and, I dare say, even to the State Governments and, I hope, the debate here will rouse the conscience of our people to take urgent and energetic measures. Already, many social organisations have taken up many important programmes, including the programme regarding dowry, the programme which this House has blessed

regarding the facilities to be provided in the case of divorce for Hindu women and a large number of other measures.

My colleague, the Minister of Health, in connection with population policy has made an announcement that the Government will be ensuring that the minimum age of marriage for girls is raised from 15 to 18 years. Although he has said that in the context of population control and family planning, this is also one of the recommendations for the welfare of women. One of the incidental facts thereto which would also receive due consideration of the Government is the registration of marriages.

These are the various schemes. Some financial allocations have already been approved by this House for working women's hostels, for looking after the babies of working women, for providing creches, mobile creches and so on. All these measures have been listed here. I would not take much of the time of the House in repeating all this. I would now request the House to give us the benefit of its advice and guidance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That this House do consider the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, laid on the Table of the House on the 18th February, 1975."

*SHRIMATI BIBHA GHOSH GO-SWAMI (Nabadwip): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I welcome the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India as it is the first effort to consider in depth about the status of women in our society in totality. The sincerity and efforts that were made by the Members of the Committee in drafting this report is also praiseworthy and all of them deserve our congratulations. However, I think

that this report of the Committee will be only useful to the sociologists, politicians and academicians and beyond that it would have no real impact on the conditions of women in our country because if we really want to have emancipation of women in our country the entire social structure of our society has to be changed and I am afraid that this Government cannot be relied upon to bring about this social change. This change cannot be brought about until and unless there is a political will behind it and I do not think that this Government would ever make a serious attempt in bringing about this desired change.

The Constitution of India has provided equal rights and opportunities for women but this provision of the Constitution is denied to a vast majority of women and only a small minority of our total women folk are able to enjoy this benefit.

The position of women in our society depends on factors like religion, culture, traditions, customs etc. From the facts that have been highlighted in the Committee's report it is very clear that there has been no substantial change in the outlook of the society towards the women folk of the country. For centuries the women in India have suffered social injustice, exploitation and torture and they have lived all through a self-erasing life and I regret to say, Sir, despite all brave and loud talk the society's outlook towards women and their treatment has not changed basically. The hon. Members present here know much about the prevailing conditions about the Hindu women and therefore I need not dilate on that issue. The customs of *talak*, polygamy and *parda* system, are working against the status of muslim women in India. Not only this such customs are creating serious impediments in regard to their right to property also. So far as Christianity is concerned the mutual responsibilities of husband and wife

*The original speech was delivered in Bengali.

[Shrimati Bibha Ghosh Goswami]

have been recognised. But even among them the feeling that prevails is that the wife is a property of the husband which is so among almost all other communities in India. Still however, comparatively speaking the Christian women in India enjoy slightly better position and they enjoy little better respect than the women of different communities in India. The Report also confirms that by and large irrespective of religion as compared to the status of men the women have been relegated to an inferior position. Not only this the prevailing discrimination between the boy and the girl in our country is all too well known.

In regard to this discrimination the Committee report says:

"Discrimination between sexes for the allocation of scarce resources in various fields such as nutrition, medical care, and education is directly related to the greater desirability and transferability of the daughter. In most families girls are taught to see that brothers get more and better food. This attitude is internalised by girls often without being conscious of it"

Still today many humiliating practices are performed and women have to undergo it, the daughter is shown to the groom as a marketable commodity for marriage negotiations and they are sold or purchased right in the same fashion as any other commodity in the market. Despite legislation and propaganda both the systems of dowry bride-price are widely practised. Mr. Chairman Sir, you must have read in the newspaper about the fact that agricultural workers of Uttar Kasi have to send their wives temporarily to city brothels because they have no other way to pay off the debt of the money lender incurred for offering bride price. Far from abating, the rigours of dowry is increasing in every part of the country. The Committee has rightly pointed out that an IAS and

IFS candidate can safely demand a dowry worth nearly one lakh of rupees both in cash and kind. Close to this category of candidates comes the doctors, engineers and they too have their price for marriage also. Today, many educated young girls of middle class families are working with a view to earn their own dowry for better marriage. There are even instances where girls have to commit suicide to save their parents paying impossibly heavy dowry. As I have just now said, Sir, that dowry is becoming more and more atrocious in our country and even though an Anti Dowry Act has been passed it is a totally ineffective legislation because of its loopholes. I would, therefore, like to know from the hon. Minister what immediate steps the Government is going to take to plug these loopholes of the Act. I hope the hon. Minister while replying to the debate would kindly enlighten this House about the Government's mind in regard to this matter.

The pitiable conditions of the widows in our country which had evoked sympathy of the great sons of India like Ram Mohan Roy, Ravinder Nath Thakur, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, in the 19th century has shown no improvement whatsoever even though we claim to have made progress in this 20th century. Widow marriage is still an unacceptable proposition to many in our society. At page 79 of the Report the Committee has presented a graphic picture of the suffering of the widows of Varanasi. While fully agreeing with the views of the Committee I would like to tell this House, Sir, that the lot of the widows in other holy places like Virindaban is equally pitiable and tragic. Out of the 5000 destitute widows of Varanasi a great majority of them comprise of Bengalis and it may be equally true about the widows of Virindaban. At page 80, the Committee has stated:

"We have recorded our impressions of this group as a symbol of status that our society allots to widows."

While the national leaders are shouting hoarse to claim that they are taking the country towards a socialistic goal and when it is also being claimed that the International Women's Year is being celebrated with great fanfare and grave seriousness to elevate the position of women in our country, it sounds as a tragic joke when we remember that in the back drop of this tall claim prostitution which is the worst degradation of womanhood is increasing in our country without any let or hinderance. It is because of the dire economic necessity that women are being compelled to take to this profession. So long mostly those women of the middle class who were deserted by their husbands and society and had no ostensible means of livelihood were forced either to take to prostitution or to commit suicide to end their miserable existence. But of late even unmarried young girls—from middle class families are forced to fall in the queue to support their helpless families. Adverting to the later phenomena the Committee at page 93 has said "according to the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, a large number of middle class families are surviving on income from prostitution, in the absence of alternative avenues of income. A large number of these women are educated and quite a few are even graduates." From our personal experience I can inform this House that the women of rural Bengal are flocking to the cities to take to this profession as they have no other means to fall back upon. I wonder how a Government which cannot offer a decent life or a decent living to the women folk of the country to save them from leading a life of abject shame, can claim that they have honest intentions of bringing about socialism in our country. The number of cases of physical torture on women is increasing. There are cases of physical torture on women even under police custody in West Bengal and Kerala. There are cases everywhere in cities and villages, hospital, and office premises. While immoral trafficking in

women has been banned through legislation it thrives in hotels, and massage baths through the call girls before the very eyes of this Government. In this connection, Sir, I cannot but compare the situation of our own country with conditions prevailing in South Vietnam. Prior to liberation, the South Vietnamese girls were traded as luxury items for earning foreign exchange but immediately after liberation prostitution has been banned and the prostitutes have been rehabilitated.

They are now fully participating in the economic development of their own country. There is no socialist State in the world where women have to lead this accursed life for their existence.

The level of economic development of a society is indicated by the economic rights enjoyed by its women. The Committee has quoted Marx at page 148. "Thus the emancipation of women and their equality with man are impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to house work, which is private." On elimination of discrimination against women, the U.N. declaration says:

"The Orientation of society as a whole regarding the desirability that women should play an equal part in the country's Development was taken as very important precondition for the advancement not only of the women but of the country as well."

Equal participation of women is not only conducive to the growth and development of the nation but it is a must for the development of womanhood in the country. Apart from the conservation outlook, chronic unemployment is creating a serious impediment and a negative outlook for equal conservative outlook, chronic unemployment sphere. The theory of women's marginal role in the economy is one example of such an attitude. This

[Shrimati Bibha Ghosh Goswami] theory is anti-women and as such I will demand that it should be discarded totally. Women had a distinct role to play in the traditional economy but the modern technology has struck a blow to it. Nearly 81 per cent of the working women numbering about 2 crore depend on agriculture and out of this, a large section comprise of poor cultivators and agricultural labour. Hon. Members are fully aware of the exploitation to which the Indian cultivators were subjected to during the British regime but even after independence some factors have increased the pauperisation of the cultivators. Eviction from land, concentration of land in a few hands, low price for agricultural products, exploitation by money lenders, patwaries etc. and exploitation by big traders have completely impoverished the cultivators. Low wages of the agricultural labourers is another factor which has made them paupers. The State Governments have fixed the wages no doubt but the agricultural labourers do not get them. It is worthwhile to note that the wages of the women agricultural workers as compared to men have been fixed lower. The women workers are given only a few items of work in the field and whenever machine is introduced in the field, as has been done in many "green revolution" areas, the women are axed first.

In this connection, the All India Conference on Women, held in Trivandrum during December last stated, "Thus, the entire process of so-called land reform, tenancy legislation, agricultural credit policy, price policy and wage policy of the Government have resulted in increasing deterioration of the condition of women in the countryside in general and in agriculture in particular."

The Status Committee in their report (pp. 168-69) has stated:

"The increase in the number of agriculture labourers from 12.6 million in 1951 to 15.7 millions in 1971, a shift from less than one third to

more than half of the total women work force is the greatest indicator of increasing poverty and reduction in the level of employment and not of improving rights and opportunities for economic participation."

In regard to land problem the Committee have stated at page 168, as follows:—

"Our review makes it clear that the main disabilities and source of exploitation of agricultural workers are rooted in their landlessness, lack of organisation, and inequality of status. The basic solution to these problems obviously lies in redistribution of land to reduce inequalities and concentration of excessive economic power in the hands of a few."

x x x

17 hrs.

then,

"It also brought home the futility of attempts to scratch at the problem of rural poverty without the one measure that can help this destitute class—and reform."

x x x

then again,

"In our opinion, so substantial improvement in the condition of women agricultural workers is possible without effective steps to redistribute land."

So many task-force, Committee and Commission reports, Sir, including the reports of the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, have stressed this point, but this Government will do nothing regarding drastic changes in the economy.

The Committee have noted that since 1921 the share of women participation in the economic activities of the country has been declining continuously. The percentage of women

workers in relation to total number of women and the percentage of women workers in comparison to the total number of workers, on both these counts, the curb has been showing a downward trend. In the unorganised sector an unrestrained exploitation and fall in employment for women continue unabated. It is there in the cashew industry, coir in Kerala and in the bidi industry in the country as a whole.

In the organised sector only 6 per cent women are provided with employment. During 1962—1973 the number of women workers in this sector has of course increased but still the ratio of women workers vis-a-vis the total workers continues to remain unchanged and sticks to 11 per cent. In the industrial sector there is a continuous fall in the number of women workers. A large number of women workers have been retrenched in the mines, jute mills, and textile mills. During 1951—71 the number of woman worker in the factories have gone down by 20.37 per cent. Only in plantations, their number has not decreased because it is a well accepted fact that the work of plucking leaves is best done by women only. In white collar jobs, like teaching, nursing, office work, etc., the number of women worker has increased but it is well-known that education, health and social services, where employment of women has been highest, are the sectors that receive the first impact of our economy drive and therefore, here also the future is grim.

Sir, even in these white-collar jobs there is discrimination. The country has referred to the occasion where during Shri Charan Singh's Chief Ministership in Uttar Pradesh and under his instructions, the U.P. Government sent a letter to the Union Government stating that women should not be allowed in the I.A.S. or at best they should not be sent to U.P. The Committee also felt that

barring a few Ministries, namely, Education, Social Welfare and Health many of the Union Ministries are practising subtle forms of discrimination against employment and promotion of women. If this is the attitude in Government circle we may imagine where we are Sir, industry in this country is run not for the welfare of the mankind but to multiply profits. This has led to modernisation and rationalisation of the industry without first ensuring full employment to the people. In the Capitalist economy, in order to inflate profit, labour intensive methods are replaced by capital intensive methods and this leads to retrenchment. It is a well known fact that whenever there is retrenchment the axe first falls on the unskilled labour. Because by and large the women workers are unskilled labour, they are retrenched first. This practice is going on, and under present conditions, will continue in future too. Therefore, we find that in the field of agriculture the monopoly owners of land are at the root of the exploitation of women workers. Similarly in the sphere of industry mines etc., the monopoly capitalists are the root cause for their exploitation.

I would now deal with education. According to 1971 census, only 18.7 per cent of women in India are literate as against 39.5 per cent for men. Between the age group 6—11, only one out of five girls reaches class V. In the rural areas the per centage of women's literacy is only 13.2. Out of the 352 districts of India in 83 districts the rural literacy rate for women is less than 5 per cent and in 113 districts it is between 5 per cent and 10 per cent. This is the dismal picture of women's education in our country and for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the position may be imagined. Out of the literate women 40 per cent have a literary standard. They are semi-literates. 7.8 per cent are articulate and only 1.4 per cent are graduates and above. The Committee has observed that the great majority of Indian women are illiterate and only an insignificant fraction of it is edu-

[Shrimati Bibha Ghosh Goswami] cated. The image of the Indian women created by a few women holding high position of academic qualification is only that of a small elite group and does not in any way, reflect the actual position."

Sir, very often I am confronted with the question that when the Prime Minister of the country is a woman, why should one agitate for raising the status of women. This I must say, is a totally misleading notion.

Sir, it is well known that the primary education in country suffers heavily from the evils of drop out especially in case of girls. In order to check the trend the Government had envisaged a plan to give mid-day meals to primary students. I would like to know what precisely is the position in this regard and whether the Government, if it is in earnest is going to introduce mid-day meals for all primary students from session 1977. There is still another point of discrimination and this pertains to curriculum. As at present there is one curricular for the boys and another for girls. I think this gives rise to a sense of discrimination between boys and girls. This needs to be eliminated. I would support the Committee recommendation that Home Science should not be restricted for girls only and that after the end of Secondary stage, the curriculum for both boys and girls, should be the same. Sir, the educational system of the country should aim at replacing the feeling of traditional inequality by a healthy feeling of equality. This is, in my opinion, a basic responsibility of education but the Committee at page 282 has rightly pointed out that the educational system today "has not even attempted to undertake this responsibility."

I would now refer to another important aspect of the matter which affects the Indian women most. These days we are hearing a lot about family planning programmes. Family Planning is being treated as a preventive measure against popu-

lation explosion and to avert food crisis. But the whole matter is not being viewed from the angle of women's status and rights. This should be the correct and the real approach, which should have been adopted by Government but unfortunately it has not been done so. The Committee has also concurred with this view when at page 321, they have stated:

"If the masses of Indian women are to be freed from their status as expendable assets some of the obvious and immediate answers lies in releasing them from the bondage of repetitive and frequent child birth providing them with some choice in the size of their families and ensuring adequate medical facilities to protect them during and against maternity."

Instead of viewing the problem from the angle of the health of the mother and the child, the Government as I have already stated is treating the entire programme as merely a preventive measure against population explosion. Reports are being received that family planning measures are being forcibly applied on people. It is my sincere feeling that force or compulsion must be wholly eliminated in this regard. From the facts gathered by the operation Research Group of the Health Ministry and the National Sample Survey we find that the role of education in implementing the family planning programme is paramount. It has been pointed out by these studies that "Generally the level of education and fertility are inversely related."

To try to implement the family planning programme without education would amount to placing the cart before the horse.

Poor destitute people who constitute a great part of the population have no other wealth than their own children. No security has been provided by the State for their health. Whenever epidemic, floods or famine spreads in the country, the children of the

poor persons are always the first victims and as long as the Government is not able to provide social and health security to the poor and their children, they would naturally feel against family planning. The Committee is also against any type of compulsion. At page 345 of the report, the Committee has said, "we disapprove the denial of maternity benefits to women in Government service after three children, as adopted by some State Government, and recommend rescinding of such orders."

In conclusion, I must say, Sir, that as long as the leaders of the movement for women emancipation do not realise that their movement is an integral part of the agitation to liberate the exploited masses as a whole their efforts to raise the status of women will remain an utopian idea. The Committee at page 8 has rightly pointed out:

"Disabilities and inequalities against all women have to be seen in the total context of a society where large sections of the population—male and female, adults and children, suffer under the operation of an exploitive system. It is not possible to remove these inequalities for women only. Any policy or movement for the emancipation and development of women has to form a part of total movement for removal of inequalities and oppressive social institutions, if the benefits and privileges won by such actions are to be shared by the entire women population and not by monopolised by a small minority."

Our party is trying their best to organise and educate women so that they may be able to take their part in bringing about the revolutionary social change.

It is wholly absurd to think of women liberation ignoring the liberation of the exploited masses. As long as the exploitative system continues in the country, there will be no remedy

to the exploitation and harassment of women because in a society where the majority of men enjoy no status, it is natural that women, who are doubly exploited, would have none. We can truly lay the foundation of women emancipation in our country, when instead of mouthing slogans we are able to uproot the exploiters from the society and bring about a revolutionary change in the social and economic structure of the society and establish a new socialist society where women would start feeling as human beings and not mere female species, where women would be freed from the drudgery of daily household routine and where women would be made equal partners with men in the national life of the country. But for this the women of India have to unite and struggle. The prevailing emergency is a stumbling block and prevents even legitimate women's movement and organising activities. I therefore demand that the emergency should be revoked and on behalf of my party I invite all women of our country to come forward, unite and work for their own emancipation together with and as a vital part of the toiling and oppressed masses of the country. In the meantime, Sir, any relief for them is welcome and I support the Committees' recommendations in general.

श्रीमती गंगा देवी (मोहनलालगंज) :

वेयरमेंन महोदय, आज मुझे बड़ी खुशी हुई यह जान कर कि इस सदन में महिलाओं के सम्बन्ध में व उनके स्टेटस के सम्बन्ध में चर्चा होगी। मैं बहुत लम्बा भाषण न करते हुए सदन का बहुत कम समय लूगी।

मैं दो तीन बातें कहना बहुत जरूरी समझती हूँ। हिन्दुस्तान भर में महिलाओं का वर्ष मनाया गया, और इसी विषय पर केन्द्र में एक कमेटी का गठन भी हुआ था। उस कमेटी का जब गठन हुआ था, तो मैं भी वहाँ मौजूद थी। उस वक्त मैंने कहा था कि इस कमेटी में कम से कम उत समाज की, जो समाज सब से ज्यादा पिछड़ा हुआ है, तथा

[श्रीमती गंगादेवी]

पिछड़े क्षेत्रों से जो महिला चुनकर आई हैं होनी चाहिए। इसका मुझे उत्तर नहीं मिला। मेरे कहने का तात्पर्य यह है कि हिन्दुस्तान में देहातों की संख्या बहुत ज्यादा है, और शहर बहुत कम हैं। हमें बड़ी खुशी हुई थी कि हमारे यहां अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय महिला वर्ष मनाया जा रहा है इसके 170 महिलाओं को काफी लाभ हुआ। इसके लिए जो कमेटियां बनी, उनकी मीटिंगें हुईं। लेकिन मुझे बड़े अकसोस के साथ कहना पड़ता है कि आज उस अनसंख्या को बिल्कुल भुला दिया है जो देहातों में बनी हुई है और जिन्हें अगर हमारे देश का भविष्य निर्भर करता है। हमारे देश की संख्या 60 करोड़ है और उसमें 60 परसेंट से ज्यादा महिलाएँ हैं। तो क्या जो औरतें, जो बहनें देहातों में बसी हुई हैं, उनको ऐसे समय में बिल्कुल भुला देना उचित है?

हमारे यहां की महिलाओं की बहुत बड़ी संख्या विदेशों में गई और विदेशों की औरतों से उनका सम्पर्क हुआ लेकिन अपने देश के देहातों की औरतों को भूल नहीं पता चला कि आज ऐसा वर्ष हमारे देश में मनाया जा रहा है। अभी जो श्रीमती विभा घोष गोस्वामी ने कहा है मैं उसका समर्थन करती हूँ। हमारे यहां ऐसी गरीब औरतें हैं, हर वर्ष में, जो दोनों बक्त अपने बच्चों को अस्पेट खाना नहीं दे सकती हैं। उनको यहाँ तक पना नहीं चलता है कि हमारे केन्द्र में क्या हो रहा है और हमारी सरकार क्या कर रही है। हम लोगों को उनके पास तक पहुंचाना चाहिए। हम लोग दूसरे देशों में तो हों भाये हैं और वहाँ पर जाते रहने हैं लेकिन यहाँ के देहातों में नहीं जाना चाहते। मैंने यह देखा है कि यहाँ की औरतों की आर्थिक और सामाजिक परिस्थिति बहुत गिरी हुई है और जब तक हम उसका हल नहीं निकालेंगे, जब तक उनकी समस्याओं का हल नहीं करेंगे, तब तक हमारा यह महिला वर्ष कामयाब नहीं कहा जा सकता

है। मेरा निवेदन यह है कि, देश के हर वर्ग, हर स्थान, चाहे वह देहात हो और चाहे शहर हो, की हर महिला का उत्तम ही अधिकार है जितना कि हम लोगों का अधिकार है। शहरों की रहने वाली पढ़ी लिखी और बहुत एडवान्स्ड महिला को जो अधिकार प्राप्त हैं, वही अधिकार उनकी भी मिलने चाहिए। यह भुला देने की बात नहीं है।

इसी प्रकार से समाज कल्याण के सम्बन्ध में मैं कहती हूँ कि समाज कल्याण में बहुत पया खर्च हो रहा है और बड़ी भारी एक्टिविटीज दिखाई देती हैं लेकिन जहाँ इस कार्य की जरूरत है वहाँ कोई भी काम नहीं हो रहा है। लड़कियों में शिक्षा की बहुत कमी है। हमारे यहां देहातों में बहुत से ऐसे परिवार हैं जो चाहते हैं कि उनकी लड़कियां भी शिक्षा पान करें लेकिन उनके लिये ऐसे साधन उपलब्ध नहीं हैं। समाज कल्याण के काम से हमें जरा भी संतुष्टी नहीं है। मैंने इसी सदन में कई बार इस बात को कहा है कि समाज कल्याण विभाग का कार्य उस जगह जरूर होना चाहिए जो बहुत पिछड़े क्षेत्र हैं, जहाँ बहुत ही पिछड़े हुए लोग रहते हैं, जहाँ कोई भी विकास कार्य आज तक नहीं हुआ है। मैंने अपने यहां लखनऊ शहर में देखा है कि मुसलमान औरतें पदों के अन्दर बैठी हुई चिकन का काम कर रही हैं। सारा दिन वह चिकन का काम करने में अपनी छाबे फोड़ती हैं और उससे उनको कोई खास फायदा नहीं होता है। उनके काम से दूसरे लोग फायदा उठाते हैं। तो ऐसी बहुत सारी बातें हैं जिनको मैं विस्तार से नहीं कहना चाहती लेकिन यह जरूर चाहती हूँ कि हमारा समाज कल्याण विभाग इन सब को देखे और पिछड़े क्षेत्रों की गरीब और अत्याचारों व अन्याय से पीड़ित महिलाओं के लिए काम ईमानदारी व सहानुभूति पूर्ण करें।

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN (Coimbatore): Sir, it is quite significant that we are taking up this Report for discussion just after the discussion that we have had on the amendment of the Marriage Acts. During that discussion we had pointed out that some of the limited recommendations made by the Committee on the Status of Women had been ignored by the Law Ministry and particularly on the question such as the compulsory registration of marriage.

Therefore, I was rather surprised when the Minister made no reference to that in his speech. He was rather complacent and felt that everything was going well. I was surprised he did not deal with this Report as such. He was very busy giving us the whole lot of details on what he and his ministry have achieved: such as the delegation to the Mexico Conference and so on and so forth.

In practical life what do we see? There is hardly any reflection of real practical steps being taken on this Report. I take rather a serious view of the fact that the Minister thought that it was enough first to have inter-departmental Committee when you had a major committee like this going into great details as to the various problems that face our country in regard to women and that he does not think it was necessary to have this discussion in a wider field and in a more democratic manner in order to see as to what are the propositions that are possible today and what more fundamental needs be done to which Mrs. Goswami was also referring, namely, a structural transformation in our country both economic and social.

I do not in the least deny that some achievements are there. But to what extent those achievements are really going to change the position of women in our country is something which is a very moot point. Because basically the position of women will not be really assured, or ensured, unless and until we see that the economic and social problems that face our country

today are dealt with in a more dynamic manner.

For instance, Sir, the Minister referred to the Equal Remuneration Act. I do not think that credit goes to his Ministry because we have had our organisations and the trade unions campaigning for this principle for a very long time. For many years we have had the matter taken up with the Labour Ministry and the Standing Labour Committee. I think, the Minister knows little about labour because he is an educationist. I would have been happy if he had talked more about education. Women organisations have been campaigning for it. It has been discussed on the Floor of the Parliament.

In 1976 as a result of the compulsion of the Emergency and compulsion of the 20-point programme with a new atmosphere in this country, this Ordinance comes forward and the Minister stands in pontifical manner telling us this is an achievement of his Ministry. This I am not prepared to accept.

Secondly, Sir, all right let us drop that point. But is it the way of achieving the 20-point economic programme? You are having the wages notified for agricultural labour. And you know that the majority of the women employed in our country are in agricultural sector and there is no equal pay in this sector. Is there equal pay? Not at all. You have got men and women agricultural labour for which you have got two different grades. Is this the way the Ministry is being a watch-dog? Is this the way the Inter-Ministerial Committee is functioning? Can't the Social Welfare Ministry representative say to the other Ministries "please inform your departments"? But I know you will say that that is a matter for the State Governments to look into and "we cannot interfere with it" and so on. You know there is always an escape route. Something is reserved for the State Government to decide and

[Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan]

something else is for the Central Ministries to decide and so on. But have you drawn the attention of the various State Governments to the fact that here are women and men agricultural labourers, why don't you put them in terms of one category, one grade? I can understand if it is an occupational wage, because in agriculture there are different forms of occupation. One knows that there are some occupations for which women are no doubt best suited. Of course, there are some States—I cannot mention them because Mr. Chandrappan is sitting here—where women are mostly engaged in agricultural work and considering that they will be doing 80 per cent of that work, you are condemning them to having a lower wage. Why? Is this the way you have been keeping your principle implemented? Is this the manner in which you are being the watch-dog of the women workers? It is high time you should give serious attention to this problem.

Therefore, this whole question of the position of women in our country really relates to the question of changing of attitudes and to the question of equality of opportunity for women in every sphere of work, in every sphere of employment and in every sphere of life which does not exist today. For instance, apart from the fact that in some industries the employment of women has gone down—I do not want to repeat the figures as Mrs. Goswami has already related them—since independence have we seen any change of attitude, have we seen, for example women engineers being encouraged? Is there any increase of women in the engineering profession? Is there an increase of women in those professions that have been reserved exclusively for men?

The Minister was talking about the Mexico Congress to which a top delegation was sent from our country and where it made a good showing. Sir,

in Mexico one of the major points that was made was that unless and until there was a revolutionary transformation, all the plans of action that were being discussed were not going to become a reality in the world.

Another factor which came up for discussion was that mere laws, mere political statements, mere philosophy were not going to give equality to women. In fact, the delegates of the various countries such as Sweden—which is considered to be a very advanced country by many Members of this House—the U.K., the U.S.A. etc. had pointed out that mere laws did not help. The laws are there and yet woman from the time she is born, is born to an inferior position in society. In straight direct contrast to this, was the confidence with which the delegates of Socialist countries spoke. They did not claim that everything was done for them, they claimed that the opportunity was there, a changed atmosphere was there and laws were in the process of being implemented, because there was a total transformation of society in economic, social and cultural terms. Therefore, there is a lesson for us to learn. It was in that context that in Mexico, a resolution was adopted where they said that this revolutionary transformation was necessary. The President of Mexico, Mr. Eccheverria had emphasised this point very much.

That is why I was most disappointed that our Education Minister, who is so well read and who has attended so many international conferences, could not reflect this new thinking that has come into the international arena with regard to the problems of equality of women and oppression of women. That is why I took some time of the House to point out that this has happened.

What they have said of Mexico about employment opportunities etc. is very pertinent in relation to our

own country. In the World Plan of Action, it is said:

"Further, the occupations in which most women workers are concentrated are not the same as those in which most men are employed. The vast majority of women are concentrated in a limited number of occupations at lower levels of skill, responsibility and remuneration. Women frequently experience discrimination in pay, promotion, working conditions and hiring practices. Cultural constraints and family responsibilities further restrict their employment opportunities. Where job opportunities are severely limited and widespread unemployment exists, women's chances of obtaining wage-earning employment are in practice further reduced, even where policies of non-discrimination have been laid down."

Sir, I want to emphasise the last sentence. This is very important. It is no good saying we have laid down these policies. So long as "job opportunities are severely limited and widespread unemployment, women's chances of obtaining wage-earning employment are in practice further reduced, even where policies of non-discrimination have been laid down." I want to emphasise it and that is why I have read it a second time. Then, in the World Plan of Action, they further say:

"Government should formulate policies and action programmes expressly directed towards equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers and the guarantee of their right to equal pay for equal work."

This is another statement that is there. It is now a year since the conference at Mexico took place and the Indian delegation voted for this World Plan of Action. I would have been happy if the Minister had indicated in his speech how far he and his min-

istry have progressed in evolving a plan to achieve this target. I do not say it can be done in a day or a week. But he made no reference at all to it. I was really amazed that his speech did not give any opening for a debate or discussion on the report itself. I hope at least when he replies to the debate, he will take the House into confidence as to what they propose to do about this whole question of equality of opportunity in employment for women, because today again and again we find that in various employments where women are already working, their number is going down. We are told that this is because of maternity benefits, women not being allowed to do night work, etc. Most of those who wish to cover their reactionary outlook or backward thinking take shelter behind this sort of thing saying, "There is this kind of legislation. What can we do? We are helpless" and so on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are entitled to take 14 minutes. You have already taken 15 minutes.

SHRIMATI PARVATI KRISHNAN: I want more time for two reasons. Firstly, there is no time-limit fixed for this debate. Secondly, the problem is very wide. It is not a small report which we can deal with in 14 minutes. The Minister also has not touched upon many important aspects and I have to refer to them. I hope you will be more tolerant and give me a few more minutes.

Although we have been demanding that the Report should be discussed in Parliament, it is coming up at this stage, two years or one and a half years after it was presented. I hope, at least now the Minister will take it more seriously.

With regard to employment, the Women's Committee has also pointed out the same thing that by and large women are really relegated to the less paid employments and lesser skilled employments. That is why,

[Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan]

they have said that there should be some provision whereby women are given in-training while they are in employment. Today, men can have refresher courses and so on, but it is almost impossible for the women to do it. For the simple reason that they are at work and then they have to go and look after their children and, therefore, in this intervening period, they cannot go for this training. That is why, they have recommended that the women should be given special facilities for in-training during working hours. What have you done about it? That is what we would like to know. That is, of course, for the Labour Ministry and I do not expect a reply from you. Since, you claimed that you have got the monopoly of looking after the interests of women in this country, that is why, I put this question to you. It would be a sad day if it was left just to the Education and Social Welfare Ministry because it is not only a question of social welfare but it is not a patronising attitude but a change of attitudes.

When I asked the Minister some weeks ago as to what was being done about going through all these textbooks and curricula in order to see that new motivation was there from childhood onwards for boys and girls—at least for the future generation to grow up with a sense of equality of man and woman—he said: "It is being examined and there is a Committee and so on and so forth." When is it going to finish, I would like to know? We are in the year of 1976. The Report of the Committee on the status of women was submitted in December, 1974. We are again and again being told that the change of attitude is necessary. Where and how does the change of attitude start?

I have no illusion after hearing the discussion on the Marriage laws (Amendment) Bill that the change of attitude is not going to start in our generation. If you start at least at the school level, maybe my grand children will grow in a India where

there will be no discrimination between man and woman. Therefore, today the most urgent task for the Education Ministry is to take up the whole question of education and the attitudes that are there. To do away with the age old conception of Savitri-Satyavan outlook and purity of Sita and that women being that type, are a special class by themselves. We do not want to be a special class. We are content with the equality. In fact, even Mr. Naik suffers from this. The other day, he called me a mythological Parvathi forgetting that I am a revolutionary Parvathi who rejected Shiva but married Krishna. All the parallels are being drawn from mythology. All lessons are to be given from mythology. Why from mythology? Why don't you generate in your girls self-confidence and create an atmosphere where they will become future Valentina Tereshkovas of India flying into the space. Why is it that you cannot generate amongst the young boys in the schools the idea that women are their equals and they should also be allowed to participate in decision making? What happens in our country today? If a girl says to her mother—because she has read the modern literature that comes from socialist countries and abroad—"Mother, I have decided to be an engineer". The mother replies: "Don't be silly". Father comes home from work. What does the mother tell him?

"देखिये, प्राप को बेटी क्या कहती है।

वह इंजीनियर बनना चाहती है।"

Immediately, what does the father say?

ठीक है, ठीक है।

She is young now. When she gets older, she will get wiser". "Wiser" means what? Does he mean that she will realize that she is unfit to become an engineer. This is the atmosphere in our homes. Among our Members of Parliament, may I know how many men do not have that sort of an attitude? That is why it is extremely important to start from Education itself, to change this whole philosophy sex-typing in employment.

To-day, in the Soviet Union, you would be interested no doubt in knowing as to how many are there in the supervisory jobs in factories. How many do we have in our country, after 28 years of independence? When we had Mahatma Gandhi—I am not going into mythology; I am going into the period of our national freedom movement—Mahatmaji and Nehru said that unless and until women also participated on equal terms in the fight for national freedom, we would not be able to achieve it. That is how thousands and lakhs of women came forward to join that struggle. What did we do to those women who became martyrs? Are we going to build a martyrs' memorial, namely a society, where women will be given equality of opportunity in all spheres of life? Nothing has been done till now.

What I would like to emphasise is that it is extremely necessary that we change these attitudes, we change also the provisions that exist in the various laws to enable our women to enter all the spheres of employment

To-day there is not a single engine driver in our country. Is there a woman railway employee in any category other than those who sell tickets or those who work in offices? Is it at all possible for women to enter other fields? Not at all. We are told it is not as if there is discrimination; if they wish to, they can enter any field of employment. It is a question of attitude, not only among the employers, but also amongst those who are seeking employment.

Usually, Sir, when the bell rings, five minutes are there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the various memoranda presented by the Young Women's Committee of the All-India Youth Federation where they have laid specific stress on this question of

equality of opportunity, and also to the fact that we have to bring about a total change in our educational syllabi, so that we make the women and men understand that satisfying employment should replace the primitive, repetitive, ill-paid activity which is called domestic work, which is where the majority of our women are to-day being imprisoned.

In conclusion, I would say that the recommendations of the Committee on the Status of Women are far-reaching, but if these recommendations are to be implemented, the Minister should see to it that there is a wide enough, short enough, brief enough discussion—brief enough in the sense that a time-bound discussion is there—with the women's organizations and progressive organizations as well. First and foremost let us understand that the question of equality of women is not the sole preserve of women alone. Unless and until, as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidya Sagar and so many of our earlier social reformers had said, men are also drawn into it and they understand that the society as a whole has to take up the problem, the future is very bleak for the women of our country. To-day we find that there are people who are very smug and satisfied because we have a large number of women working in different jobs and because we have a very able woman Prime Minister. But she symbolizes the fact that given the opportunity, women can prove that they are equals of men, equally able if not more able, and more capable than men. That is the point which I would like to bring to the notice of the House.

Therefore, I would appeal to the Minister not to take this in the light-hearted manner in which he did not to tell us things such as how many delegates went to Mexico or the inter-Ministerial Committees that have been set up, but let him take us into confidence as to what he has to do in order to bring home to our people, our country and our Parliament—what exactly is the problem that we

[Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan]

are facing today. How exactly is he going to bring it home to the various State Governments and the Ministries? Why should all avenues of employment not be open for women? How exactly is he going to see that the Labour Ministry takes up this issue of national minimum wage so that our women in future will not be in the lower-paid industries such as coir, cashew and others? He should see that women must find their place in all industries, in all the offices, in education and in every sphere of our social and national life on an equal footing with the men.

SHRI B. V. NAIK (Kanara): I would be failing in my duty if I do not compliment the distinguished Lady Member of the House Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan for her excellent way in which she has advocated the cause of the women, sisters and mothers of this country.

Without adding to the points which she has already made, I would like to draw your attention to some of the statements regarding the direction in which we have been progressing. Speaking on the 25th of April, 1975, on the resolution of Shri Indrajit Gupta, the Prime Minister had stated:

"In affluent societies also, she is exploited. She is often regarded as an object to play with or to decorate and display the husband's wealth and status."

If we see some of our periodicals and magazines in this country—"The Femina" and the "Eve's Weekly"—we will come to know about them. (Interruptions) I cannot help seeing those photographs. If we see these things, we will come to know the way in which our elite leadership of the women movement—not the political one, but the socio-economic class—is going. If we see the people at the forefront or the various beauty contests that are being held—there was one in Bombay also—we will

come to know the direction in which our women and their leadership is going. (Interruptions) But, unfortunately, I do not belong to that privileged class.

What is the direction in which the leadership of our country, particularly the most articulate section of our society—there are women who can really be the pillars of our society, who can help in the advancement of our women folk—is going?

After all, a large number of people in our country got themselves educated imperceptibly through emulation and through understanding. I am not against a certain amount of taste, refinement and culture, but the vulgarisation of the women advancement that is taking place by the commercial Press in this country for exploitation, for sales promotion, for selling tooth paste or vanishing cream, has got to be stopped. This is not the direction in which the founding fathers of the Constitution thought that the women folk should go or the socialistic pattern of society has got to be ushered in.

That much in regard to the negative aspect of the advancement of women...

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR (Ahmedabad): What is the remedy?

SHRI B. V. NAIK: As a remedy, the high heritage and the cultural inheritance which this country has got—that is what I was coming to if you kindly bear with me for some time.

Not that we are against aesthetic sense in life. What I see from the valuable document that has been placed before us, we seem to have come a long long way since 1804 when some Regulation was made for declaring infanticide as illegal and to remove that blot on Indian culture and Indian heritage that it was in

1829, nearly 150 years ago, when the Bengal Sati Regulation Act declaring Sati or self-immolation of widows as illegal was enacted in this country. After all, this varied culture of ours had also come at a particular time when we had a sort of perverse social system, a cruel system, a sadistic system.

From that point of view, since in the history of a nation, one hundred years or two hundred years or two centuries are but a fraction, I think, the Indian womanhood, by and large, has definitely come a long way if we see it in that historical perspective....

SHRIMATI T. LAKSHMIKANTHAMMA (Khammam): Not far enough.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: I agree; not far enough. Discontentment is at the root and it is a motivating factor for us to progress.

What is it that we would like our Indian womanhood to be? I think, most of the Western societies, all those so-called advanced societies, have also reached the limits of their disillusionment with their own advancement. When we say, we should try to modernise the Indian womanhood, we do not want her to ape or adopt the postures of modernised, Westernised womanhood, what we see elsewhere in affluent societies. We want the Indian woman-

hood, at least as a man I can say, or the Indian culture to be retained by female section, at the same time absorbing that which is scientific, that which is modern and that which is efficient so that we can progress on the right lines.

Leaving aside rare examples of leadership, the question comes up: Have we got an Indian contingent of feminists, native type, who have got a clear-cut idea of leadership? I think, as far as my knowledge goes, leaving aside those great women, like, Sarojini Naidu and others who came at the dawn of Independence, we do not have as yet a task force which can take up the leadership of women's movement in this country....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Naik, will you be able to finish your speech within five minutes?

SHRI B. V. NAIK: I think, it will be difficult. If you were to permit me to continue my speech tomorrow, it will be very kind of you.

सभापति महोदय : अब हम उठते हैं,

यह हाउस कल 11 बजे फिर मिलेगा ।

18 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, May 27, 1976/Jyaistha 6, 1898 (Saka).