

LOK SABHA DEBATES

(Ninth Session)



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LOK SABHA

Thursday, November 20, 1969/Kartika 29,
1891 (Saka)

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The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

OBITUARY REFERENCE

(Death of Shrimati Violet Alva)

THE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF FINANCE, MINISTER OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND MINISTER OF PLANNING (SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the news of Shrimati Violet Alva's sudden death this morning came to me, as I am sure it did to all of us here as a great shock. It has caused us deep sorrow

It was only the day before yesterday when, in the other House, the leaders of the different parties had occasion to felicitate her for the exemplary manner in which she had presided over the deliberations of the Rajya Sabha for eight years. By the dignity which she brought to bear upon that high—and, if I may say so—difficult office, and by the fairness, firmness and conspicuous success with which she conducted its proceedings, she shed new lustre on the Chair, enhanced the dignity of the House and made a notable contribution to the growth of our parliamentary democracy.

Sir, Shrimati Alva has not been a stranger to this House either, for she had the privilege to serve as a member of Government for some years. She was one of our leading parliamentarians, with long and distinguished experience. Before becoming the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, she served in its panel of Chairmen for many years. She was in the Public Account Committee for two years. She has represented this great Parliament abroad

more than once as a member of the Indian Delegations to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences.

But, Sir, she was one of those outstanding figures of our public life for whom politics was by no means the sole preoccupation. She had the distinction of being one of the pioneering lady advocates and jurists of this country. She has been president of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, and earlier its regional Vice-President and member for a number of years. This association took her abroad to a number of international conferences. She has also represented this international forum of women lawyers in the UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation.

She was a champion of human rights and in 1959 has served as India's sole representative to the UN seminar on human rights held in Ceylon, and as a delegate at the UN seminar in New Zealand in 1961. She has also been a leading journalist along with her distinguished husband.

Apart from politics and the profession of law, many causes of wider cultural and social importance claimed her interests. She dealt with the entire gamut of social welfare as a Deputy Minister in the Home Ministry. She took particularly keen interest in the problem of juvenile delinquency and related aspects of social welfare.

She was not merely a prominent representative of the great Christian community of this nation, and one of the best representatives of Indian womanhood, but an example of a public worker interested in the wider affairs of society as a whole.

In the Rajya Sabha she was always calm, firm, impartial and just to all sections of the House. To me, apart from being a political colleague, she was a personal friend. We shall greatly miss her in our work and in many of the plans which we had in the future. Sir, may we request you to convey our sincere condolences to Shrimati Alva's distinguished husband, who happens to be our colleague in the other House.

DR. RAM SUBHAG SINGH (Buxar) : Sir, it was a very shocking and tragic news to hear about the sudden passing away of Shrimati Violet Alva who was one of our most distinguished colleagues. As I have seen her work as a member of the Rajya Sabha, as a Deputy Minister and recently as Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, I found her as an outstanding member of the Rajya Sabha, who was dauntless in her work. No pressure could work on her.

As the Deputy Minister also she was a very successful Deputy Minister. As the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha she conducted the House with great ability and everybody felt satisfied. Under her care, the Rajya Sabha conducted its business so efficiently and so effectively that it brought laurels to her. She was a journalist of great repute and had written articles in weekly and monthly magazines. As a lawyer of the High Court and the Supreme Court she was very much respected. Over and above all these things, she was one of the greatest social workers of our country. I had the privilege of working with her.

On behalf of my party and on my own behalf, I request you to convey our sincere sense of sorrow to Mr. Alva and to the bereaved family.

SHRI RANGA (Srikakulam) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we associate ourselves with the sentiments expressed by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Congress Party to my right.

When I went to pay my respects this morning, I found Mrs. Violet Alva asleep and in peace with herself. I could not reconcile myself with the thought that life might not be there. In the same way, she passed through life peace and with love and happiness towards everybody. She was one of the noble daughters of our country. As has been said by the Prime Minister and my friend to my right, she had achieved great distinction not only for herself, not only for her family, but also for the Parliament and the country.

I had the privilege of working with her in the other House for a number of years and also in joining those friends who were pleased with the proposal made to her that she should accept the Deputy Chairmanship of the other House when she had already

been the Deputy Minister and she was going to be the Minister of State. We felt that a mere State Ministership would not give her such opportunities as the Deputy Chairmanship of the other House. She did prove to one and all that she was able to contribute very much more to the development of our parliamentary traditions, conventions and deencies than what she could have done as a mere Minister of State.

In other countries, wherever she had gone, she brought lustre to our country and to our womenfolk in the country.

The last testament of hers is a comment on the way in which the country is moving, not so fortunate, and yet it is a testimony to her sense of self-respect. It was that high sense of self-respect that she had displayed in everything that she did and every institution that she had served. She had set a very high example of noble service, of self-respect and of decency and decorum and what is more, love for everybody. One could not meet her without going away with the impression, "Here is a person who has only love for everyone and no other feeling for anybody." And such a good soul has joined God. I wish her peace. I request you, Sir, to convey our condolences to her devoted husband who is also one of the good sons of our country and to her bereaved family.

श्री प्रदल बिहारी वाजपेयी (बलरामपुर) :
 ब्रह्म क्ष महोदय, आज हम गदरी शोक की छाया में एकत्र हुए हैं। जीवन कितना क्षणिक है, शरीर कितना नश्वर है और मानव कितना मर्त्य है यह कटुसत्य आज फिर हमारे सामने अपनी संपूर्ण भयकरता के साथ खड़ा हो गया है। कल तक श्रीमती प्राल्वा हमारे बीच में थीं, परमों राज्य सभा में हमारे साथियों ने उनकी भूरि-भूरि प्रशंसा की थी और आज हम अपनी विनम्र श्रद्धांजलि उन की स्मृति में अर्पित करने के लिये एकत्रित हुए हैं। किसी ने नहीं सोचा था कि यह वज्रपान हो जायगा। जब सबर मिनी तो सहसा विश्वास नहीं हुआ और जब उनके घर पर गये, उन्हें देखा तो ऐसा लगता था—अभी वह बोनने लगेगी। लेकिन होनी को कोई टाल नहीं सकता, वे हम से बिछड़ गईं।

उनका सारा जी-न राष्ट्र के लिये, मान-वत्ता के लिये समर्पित जीवन था। 1942 के छान्दोलन में 5 साल का बच्चा गोद में लेकर उन्होंने कारावास की यात्रा की थी। स्वाधीनता के संघर्ष में उनका महान योगदान था। वे प्रथम महिला एडवोकेट थीं, जिन्होंने हाई-कोर्ट में सफलता के साथ कोई मामला लड़ा था। फिर वह बम्बई बारपरीशद की सदस्य रही। बम्बई विधान सभा पद में उनकी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका रही और समद की सदस्यता के नाते संसदीय लोकनियंत्रण के उद्देश्य में उन्होंने अनेक स्थान बनाया। मुझे राज्य सभा में उनके माय और उनकी उपाध्यक्षता में काम करने का मौका मिला था। नारी के नाते वे बड़ी कोमल थीं लेकिन आवश्यकता पड़ने पर कठोरी भी हो सकती थीं। सन में अनुशासन बनाये रखना वह जानती थीं। सबके माय मानना का व्यवहार कर के अपने विरोधियों को भी जीतना उन्हें आना था और इनलिये जब उन्होंने निर्णय किया कि उप सभापति नहीं रहेगी तो उस मदन ने तो खेद प्रकट किया ही लेकिन उस मदन में बैठनेवाले हम लोगों को भी अनुभव हुआ कि शायद श्रीमती प्रान्वा के माथ हम न्याय नही कर सके। घम में वह डगई थी, मगर भर्त्सना-यता उनमें कूट-कूट कर भरी थी साही में सवा हुआ उनका कलेवर माथ पर सुहाग की बिन्दी हाथों में खनकती हुई चूड़ियाँ-प्राज प्रात. कान जब हम उनके निवास स्थान पर गये और श्री प्रान्वा को हमने आसू बहाते हुए देखा तो एक क्षण के लिये हृदय का आवेग रोकना असम्भव हो गया।

हम प्रार्थना करें उनकी आत्मा की शान्ति के लिये और प्रार्थना करें परमात्मा से कि उन जैसी नारियाँ हमारे देश में और भी पैदा हों जो सार्वजनिक जीवन में नया प्रतिमान स्थापित कर सकें और व्यक्तिगत जीवन के साथ उसका खेल बैठाते हुए घर और ससार दोनों की शोभा बढ़ा सकें।

इन शब्दों के साथ मैं अपनी और अपने दल की श्रद्धांजलि समर्पित करना हूँ।

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE (Calcutta North-East): Mr. Speaker, Sir, we meet today under the shadow of a terrible grief and for me it came as a most extraordinary shock because I did not know till I reached this House about three-quarters of an hour ago that Shrimati Violet Alva has passed away. This kind of happening reminds us, as my friend, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee has already said, that in the midst of life we are in death. There is no accounting why death overtakes a person, but when it happens in the case of an individual like Shrimati Violet Alva one feels like sensing a spirit of revolt against the dispensation of whatever Providence is behind things.

Sir, there is no need for us to detail an inventory of Shrimati Violet Alva's qualities; they were shining qualities for all to see; but she had a quality of simplicity and lack of ostentation. She had a quality which shone because it was so genuine. She had convictions which she did not hesitate to proclaim to the world in every manner that was legitimately open to her and she had a way of dealing with people and making friends which was really remarkable. She had held some of the highest offices in the country, but there was no side about her, and with everybody she would meet and talk on terms which suggested a kind of humanity which is becoming rarer and rarer in our public life. I do not wish, Sir, to amplify on this subject, but I only wish to give vent to the feeling of genuine sorrow which is overtaking us all. There are no words to console our dear friend and colleague Joachim, whom we had in this House for 15 years. Even so, sorrow shared is perhaps sorrow soothed. And I would like, Sir, on behalf of my party and myself, to say this to you that you please convey our condolences and our deepest sympathies to Joachim and to the children.

SHRI SEZHIYAN (Kumbakonam): Mr. Speaker, Sir, none of us who come to Parliament this morning was prepared to hear the shocking news that Mrs. Alva is no more. Though some of us may not have worked with her in other House, we have come across her in many meetings and committee which she conducted with great

gentleness. Sir, yesterday itself many of us were able to meet her but today she is no more. There is a couplet by sage Tiruvalluvar in Tamil that the world is noted for its abruptness, that a person alive yesterday is no more today. Some such sense of despair and frustration creeps into our heart when we hear such a sad and shocking news that Mrs. Alva is dead.

Sir, when she resigned from her Deputy Chairmanship in the other House, when encomiums were paid for the creditable work done by her in the House and in the committees, it was thought by many of us that she was destined to occupy a position of higher and nobler stature and importance, but alas, it was not to be.

Sir, to all the positions that she occupied, she brought a gentleness, clarity and a purpose.

She was a great patriot, an astute statesman, enthusiastic and active politician and a sober and kind-hearted woman who moved with all parties, irrespective of the political labels and religious aspects. She was cosmopolitan in outlook and democratic in her approach and her very gentleness she brought to adorn the offices that she occupied.

On behalf of my party and myself, I associate myself with the sentiments expressed here. I want you to convey our genuine heart-felt condolences to the bereaved family and her husband, Mr. Joachim Alva.

SHRI A. K. GOPALAN (Kasergod) :

The sudden death of Mrs. Alva was a great shock to us. I do not want to repeat the noble and fine sentiments that have been expressed here by my friends. She was a selfless worker in the national movement. As the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, she had been able to win the affection and love of sections of people and all sections in the House.

I would only request you to send our condolences to Shri Joachim Alva who was our colleague here and to her family.

SHRI SURENDRANATH DWIVEDI

(Kendrapara) : The sudden demise of Mrs. Alva this morning is the most shocking and sad news. It is really pathetic and tragic that she should die today which was her

wedding anniversary day; they were married this day thirty-two years ago.

When I received this news, I went to her house. Our friend Shri Joachim Alva was in tears. It was very difficult for him to stand this separation. He said that at three o'clock in the night, she complained of some pain, and immediately a doctor was called for, and the doctor wanted to give her an injection, but she refused to take the injection, and at six o'clock she expired.

As regards her achievements in public life, everybody knows how creditably she worked wherever she was called upon to hold any responsible position. She was a public figure all right, well-known in public life, as a social worker, as a lawyer, as an educationist, as a journalist, as a lawyer and as an able parliamentarian. She really brought dignity and prestige to the office of Deputy Chairmanship which she occupied for more than, I believe, about nine years.

I had the opportunity to know her intimately, not only while she was a Member of the Rajya Sabha, not the Deputy Chairman, but when we went together in a parliamentary delegation and spent about one and a half months abroad. I know how on every occasion, while in the foreign country, wherever she was called upon to speak, she was received by the audience with great warmth and respect. In international conferences, wherever she had represented us either as an official or as a non-official, she had brought great prestige to this country.

We all mourn her death, and I hope you will convey our sympathies to Shri Joachim Alva and the other members of her bereaved family.

श्री रवि राय (पुरी) : अध्यक्ष महोदय मेरे लिए यह विश्वास करना मुश्किल हो जाता है, कि श्रीमती अलवा हमारे बीच में नहीं हैं। यह कल की बात है थाप श्री उस सभा में थे। 17 नारीक्ष को रूस से हमारे जो मेहमान आए थे उनके स्वागतार्थ जो सभा हुई थी उसमें मिसेज अलवा शारीक हुई थी और सभा में शारीक होने के बाद उनके साथ हमारी बात हुई थी। वह जब रूस

गई थीं तो रूस में उन्होंने क्या-क्या देखा और किस तरह का उनका अनुभव हुआ! इस बारे में भी बात हुई। यह तीन दिन पहले की बात है और इसलिए हमारे लिए विश्वास करना मुश्किल हो जाता है कि आज सुबह से वह हमारे बीच से चली गई। एक साल पहले एक कमेटी की वह अध्यक्ष थी जिसमें राज्य सभा और लोक सभा के सदस्य मौजूद थे। वह मोनोपली एन्वयारी कमीशन पर जो सेलेक्ट कमेटी थी लगातार जिस तरीके से उसके कार्य को वह करती थी उससे हम को लगता था कि यह हिन्दुस्तान की नारी नेतृओं में से है और जो भी राजनैतिक जिम्मेदारी उनसे दी जायगी उसको वह अच्छी तरह से संभाल सकती है। आज मैं आपके साथ और सदन की नेतृ के साथ सहमत हूँ कि हिन्दुस्तान ने आज एक महान महिना नेतृ को खो दिया है और मैं चाहूँगा कि हमारी तरफ से और हमारे दल की तरफ से आप हमारी श्रद्धांजलि मिस्टर प्रल्हा के पास भेज देंगे।

SHRI N. C. CHATERJEE (Burdwan) :
The tragic demise of Mrs. Alva this morning has come as a shock to all members of Parliament.

We were in a meeting this morning at halfpast nine that was called by the Home Minister to decide something about Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Shri Alva Bibari Vajpayce came there and broke this news. It was such a shock to all Members, both of this House and of the Rajya Sabha, that we all decided that we should not carry on with our work but we must stop and adjourn, and that was what we did.

She was very well known as the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. The success, adroitness and competence with which she worked there was really remarkable. She played a great part in the freedom movement. But more than that, she was the first lady graduate and lady advocate in India who argued a case before a Full Bench with forensic ability of the first rate, and that was a great success. I had the privilege to work with her in a big international

conference, namely the Third Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, which was held at Sydney in Australia. And I ought to tell you that the adroit manner in which she impressed her personality upon big judges and jurists and lawyers was really remarkable.

Our friend who was with us for many years in this House, Shri Joachim Alva, has suffered a great bereavement. On my behalf and on behalf of my group, I join the Prime Minister and all my friends who have spoken before me, in the offering of tribute and condolences to the bereaved family. It is a great loss. That loss is irreparable.

May her soul rest in peace !

श्री प्रकाशवीर शास्त्री (हापुड़) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, धर्म-निरपेक्षता की प्रतीक, राज्य सभा की कुशल उप-सभापति, उदात्त और सदा विचारों वाली प्रादशं भद्र महिला श्रीवती वायलेट प्रल्हा को मैं अपनी और अपने सहयोगियों की ओर से भाव भरी श्रद्धांजलि प्रेषित करता हूँ।

श्री यशवंत सिंह कुशाबाह (भिड़) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, दिवंगत आत्मा के प्रति मैं अपनी और अपनी साथी निर्दलीय संगठन के सदस्यों की ओर से हार्दिक श्रद्धांजलि प्रेषित करता हूँ और आप से प्रार्थना करता हूँ कि हमारी ओर हमारे साथियों की समवेदना उनके परिवार तक पहुंचा दी जाय।

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Kozhikode) : Mr. Speaker, I was very much shocked this morning to hear of the very sad demise of Shrimati Violet Alva.

She was a lady of great qualities of head and heart with charm, integrity and ability. She was a great daughter of this country and her passing away is an irreparable loss.

I had the honour and privilege of working with her when I was in the Rajya Sabha. The admirable manner in which she conducted the proceedings of the House as Deputy Chairman is on record when she did it without any fear or favour.

I would only request you to convey to Shri Joachim Alva and the other members of the bereaved family our deep feelings of condolence. I conclude with an Urdu couplet which says :

ऐ बागबां गुलशने हस्ती यह क्या किया
जाने चमन का गुल वही जो तू ने चुन लिया ।

MR. SPEAKER : I fully associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the Leader of the House, the leaders of various Parties and Groups and other members on the passing away of Shrinati Violet Alva.

It was only yesterday we saw her moving amongst us hale and hearty. We could never imagine that death would snatch her away from us so suddenly.

She had distinguished herself in the legal profession. At the same time, she was a very prominent journalist.

Shrimati Alva was closely associated with various activities of this House in her capacity first as a member of the Public Accounts Committee during the years 1954 to 1956, then as Deputy Minister of Home Affairs during the years 1957 to 1962. In 1962, she was elected as Deputy Chairman of Rajy Sabha and had been holding that office with dignity for the last seven years. She resigned that office only a few days

back. As a Presiding Officer of the other House, she acquainted herself with the procedures and practices of Parliament and had made a great mark in that field. She participated in a number of Conferences of Presiding Officers held from time to time and also in many parliamentary delegations, some of which she had the honour to lead.

We deeply mourn the loss of this great lady, and I am sure the House will join me in conveying our condolences to her husband, Shri Joachim Alva, who is also a Member of Parliament, and the other members of the bereaved family.

The House may stand in silence for a short while to express its sorrow.

The Members then stood in silence for a short while.

MR. SPEAKER : As a mark of respect to the departed soul, the House stands adjourned for the rest of the day and will reassemble tomorrow at 11 A.M.

11.34 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, November 21, 1969/Kartika 30, 1891 (Saka).