

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Question is:

"That leave be granted to withdraw the Bill further to amend the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1996 (Omission of article 44, etc.)"

The motion was adopted.

SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT: I withdraw the Bill.

17.02 hours

[English]

ABOLITION OF BEGGING BILL-CONTD.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we move on to the next item, i.e., item no. 37. Abolition of Begging Bill, 1996. Dr. T. Subarami Reddy was on his legs. As he is not present in the House now, I think, we should call the next speaker. Shri Prithviraj D. Chavan, please.

SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN (KARAD): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir, My friend Dr. Reddy has brought the Private Member's Bill seeking to abolish the begging which actually comes from poverty. It is a well-intented Bill, will meaning Bill. But it is very difficult to implement. What the hon. Member has suggested is that certain funds be created and that begging can be removed by law, I disagree with him.

As I said, it is a well-intented Bill but it is very difficult to practically implement it. What will have to be done to abolish poverty, will be to abolish the causes which cause beggary. When you analyse the causes of extreme poverty, causes which force people, young children, women to beg to the street, particularly in the metropolitan cities, it is obvious that the main reason is the extreme poverty that exists in this country, even 50 years after independence.

Sir, there are statistics by the Planning Commission which say that nearly 40 per cent of the population is living below the poverty line. People are poor, they are not able to even have two square meals a day. The second reason is that there is huge unemployment; huge underemployment. It is primarily because 50 per cent of our population is today illiterate.

Again, it is a very sorry state of affairs that this country has not been able to abolish or eradicate illiteracy even fifty years after independence.

With no education, it is difficult to develop any skills which can be marketed. A person cannot be a part of the labour market without education. Whatever little seasonal employment he can get in rural areas, he manages. But, most of the time, he has to do without any job, without any employment. He has to starve.

There is another reason for such extreme deprivation: natural calamities. Failure of monsoons, extreme conditions of drought and havoc caused by floods cause migration of a lot of people in search of jobs, in search of food and in search of shelter. We can see hundreds of people crowding near railway stations migrating from areas where there have been flood havocs, where there have been droughts, where monsoons have failed and where no agricultural labour is required. These people who go to nearby metropolitan cities have no other recourse to survive, but to feed themselves, by begging.

There are also some social causes. I we look at the religious ethos of the country, in the Hindu religion, the concept of fate, the *karma* imposes that a person has to suffer for his past sins. There is no incentive to improve one's position; a person resigns himself to his fate, to his poverty, to his extreme deprivation. There are also parts of the country where begging—surviving by going door to door—has been glorified in certain religious texts.

There is also the status of women, particularly widows. We all know what happens to them. In order to survive, they have to beg and try to get two square meals. Also, it has been mentioned in the objectives of the Bill that there are organised gangs which are exploiting children, particularly in cities. Children are kidnapped; sometimes they are maimed and they are made to beg in the city streets. It is a serious problem.

The census indicates that there are probably over ten lakh beggars but the reality could be even worse. It is very difficult to accurately determine how many people have to beg, perhaps not habitually but because of extreme circumstances, because there is no alternative. Therefore, if we want to really get rid of this abhorrent practice of begging, the causes which make people to beg have to be eliminated.

First of all, we have to pay sufficient attention to education in this country. we will have to reach full, cent per cent literacy level as soon as possible. Only when we get to a point where there is no illiteracy can we then begin to improve the quality of education. Then, we can think of imparting some skills which can be marketed. We can give them some vocational training with which they can either start their small enterprises or offer themselves for organised sector jobs. It is unfortunate that even after fifty years of independence, we have not been able to eradicate illiteracy.

Commissions after Commissions and experts after experts have given their exports, important among them being the Kothari Commission which has submitted its Report in 1964 stating that this country should spend at least six per cent of its Gross National Product on education. But even today we have not gone beyond 3.5 per cent. The 'Education For All' summit which took place in this country a few years back has committed that India will after the end of Ninth Plan period be able to spend that kind of money on education.

When we are considering this Bill when we want to abolish beggary, when we want to abolish poverty, when we want to abolish extreme deprivation and when we want our people to live like decent human beings, as a nation we will have to resolve to eradicate illiteracy within a short time, if possible before the end of this century. Many schemes like adult illiteracy schemes, National Literacy Mission are working well in some parts of the country. Particularly, Mr. Chairman, in your own State the schemes have made a great impact. But in many other States, particularly in the BIMARU States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the schemes have not made any significant impact. The literacy levels are very low, particularly the literacy levels of females. That is the important reason for extreme poverty. We will have to completely overhaul our system of education which is degree based and not knowledge based. We will have to vocationalise the system totally so that people do not run after degrees like B.A., B. Com and other degrees in humanities which do not give them any marketable skill but only a piece of paper which has no worth in the job market. If we change our education system drastically, orient it towards vocational education, I am sure the problem of extreme poverty could be alleviated to a great extent.

The next point is empowerment of women. During the last ten years there has been a great awareness that unless women are made economically independent, unless they are involved in political decision making, unless power is devolved to women, unless they are made literate, unless their burdens are removed, this society cannot progress. The country cannot economically progress. We have in this Parliament taken steps to empower women. The late Rajiv Gandhi had a great idea when he had introduced 33 per cent of reservation for women in Panchayati Raj system. This Parliament enacted a Constitutional Amendment and we are beginning to see some impact at the grassroots level. With empowerment of women, with the improvement in their economic conditions, the problem of extreme poverty, which ultimately results in people having to beg, would be reduced.

My next submission is that we will have to ban child labour. The Constitution has promised that children between the age group of 6 and 14 will be given compulsory free education within ten years of the framing of the Constitution. But we are nowhere near achieving that goal. There is an initiative by this Government that they want to bring the education of children between the ages of 6 and 14 as a fundamental right. I congratulate this Government on that. But it will not be suffice just to speak about lofty ideals. In practical terms, we will have to see that every child gets compulsory education at primary and secondary stage so that they are not forced to enter into child labour or child beggary whether it is by organised gangs or by parents, who need their children to beg to survive.

Sir, the country has also to create a social safety net so that when the people get old and are not able to earn their living, they get the benefit of some old-age pension,

some safety and some security.

In the organised sector and in the industrial sector, there is a concept of a safety net. There are pension schemes, gratuities, provident funds, but what about the agricultural workers? As it is, they do not have sufficient employment throughout the year. But when they become old, there is absolutely no security for them. There is absolutely no way by which they can even survive. So, this country will have to create a safety net. It will cost a lot of money; it will need great political will power to create a safety net or some kind of a social insurance scheme or some kind of an old age insurance scheme which is all encompassing—it includes everybody—people in rural areas, people in backward areas, people in *adivasi* areas and not only in the urban areas. If we are able to create, say—old people's homes—then, I am sure the need to beg, when people become old or when their children do not look after them, when they are driven out of home and forced to beg, would not be there. This will need a substantial political will power and it will need money; only wishful thinking that we should abolish beggary will not yield the results that the Mover of this Bill wants to achieve.

Therefore, while I compliment Dr. Subbarami Reddy for bringing this Private Member's Bill whose objectives are laudable, it is quite impractical to abolish beggary by enacting a legislation. Beggary cannot be outlawed; poverty will have to be outlawed. We have to conquer poverty; we have to eliminate poverty; only then the evil practice of begging, whether it is organised by gangs, whether it is the case of children begging in the streets, whether it is an urban or rural people or agricultural labour, can be abolished. They indulge in beggary for survival, to get two square meals a day because they cannot get work. There is no social safety net. This can only be eliminated when this country gets rid of extreme abject poverty which is existing today.

I, therefore, support the Bill, but I request the Mover of this Bill to thoroughly change it. The only provisions in this Bill are not themselves sufficient to achieve the objectives. At the same time, I congratulate Dr. Reddy for having focussed the addition or the focus of the country on the problem of beggary. I also urge upon the Government to take up certain issues like that of social safety net for rural workers. The Government is bringing in a Bill for agricultural labour. It is a welcome step. They will have to give this rural population some kind of a semblance of a social safety net or some security; only then can we go into the 21st century with our heads held high. I support the Bill.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): Sir, by chance I am here now. My friend has made a reference regarding the Agricultural Workers' Bill. I welcome his suggestions. We have been, as a matter of fact, addressing ourselves to this issue for some time now.

It is a sad comment, on the Indian political system, if I may say so, that fortunately or unfortunately, as yet, the State Governments have not responded. We have

[Shri I.K. Gujral]

them twice. I must assure you that so far as the Central Government is concerned, we do understand and appreciate the agony of the agricultural workers, as you have rightly pointed out. It is by chance that I am here in this House at this particular moment, when I heard my friend saying this. I do feel that ultimately the poorer sections of our society are the agricultural workers and landless labourers. They are the people who need a network of security and they should be given. The Central Government is considering this matter—it is under our consideration. I would urge all my fellow-Members in this House to try to persuade the State Governments and also to respond, primarily because ultimately whatever laws we make here in this context will have to be implemented by the State Governments.

And I think since all of us are feeling concerned about it, both that side and this side, if we exert our influence on our respective State Government—I am not trying to blame any party, I am not trying to run down any party. That is not the issue. These are issues on which national consensus should build and national consensus should be there. I can only assure you that Government of India will be very responsive and very sensitive to this issue.

[Translation]

SHRI VIJAY GOEL (SADAR DELHI): Apart from security, what other assistance will be given.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is about Agricultural Workers Bill. We should be thankful to the Prime Minister for his intervention. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

Shri Rasa Singh Rawat.

[Translation]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (AJMER): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I support the Abolition of Begging Bill, 1966 moved by Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy as it seeks to focus our attention to a great social evil of begging. The socio-economic disparities and prevalence of begging in our society has given rise to organized gangs which kidnap children, maim them and at times throw acidic solutions over them leaving them handicapped so as to put them on four wheeled carts begging throughout the day and the sum collected is kept by the gangleader. Men, Women children can be seen begging at bus stands, railway stations and at the points where the cars and buses stop before the redlights. May be they have been pushed to begging due to famine conditions as social disparities or they have been befallen on bad days as they could not get any employment. Our society is responsible for all this. We call ourselves a welfare state then it is the responsibility of the Government to check such evils in the society. But unfortunately some people have opted for begging as a profession. When the death of beggars is reported in the newspapers he come to know that they had thousands of rupees which they collected by way of begging but did not spend on themselves. The begging is a social evil and should be removed.

Any form of begging is a curse to society. But unfortunately there is a wide gap between the poor and the rich and people living in rural areas and J.J. colonies are pushed to begging on which a poet has aptly remarked.

*"Swano ko milta doodh, bhukhe balak akulate hein,
maan ki chhati se chipak, sisak sisak reh jate hein"*

On the one hand dogs are getting milk, getting cake to eat and on the other hand children are weeping with hunger. When parents cannot tolerate their hunger then they are compelled to handover them to someone for begging or themselves go for begging to feed them. They are compelled to live with their mother with empty stomach. Such sort of disorders crop up in the society.

"Vubhukshit kim no karoti papam"

a hungry man can commit any sin. Hunger compels a man to beg. How the situation of hunger arises, we must go in that in detail. So that economic disparity is removed, social disparity is removed, every individual gets work, every piece of land gets water, every one gets food, if we can provide all this and if we can provide food, clothing and housing to all Indians then perhaps this begging will not be there. Begging problem is everywhere ...*(Interruptions)* Hon'ble Pilot saheb is saying something, he knows this. There are certain castes, I don't want to raise fingers towards castes but begging becomes their profession. On each morning they go to villages for the purpose of begging, they can be called 'Jaralmpesha', earlier they were called criminal tribes etc. or there are some such castes, I don't want to name them, but begging becomes their profession. In our villages they are called 'Kanjar' caste or 'Sansi' caste, I am sorry to name them but this is social evil. This social evil must be eradicated and that is why I support the Bill presented by Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy.

This Bill has three-four features. In this Bill very big responsibility comes on government being a welfare Government, welfare state. On the one hand there will be receiving centres in every district, where this type of begging children are there, whether they are old aged or of any other age group, handicapped or lame, wherever they are found begging, they all will be arrested by the police. Police will have the right to arrest them or the social service people will take them to those receiving centres where they will be kept. They will be kept in some sort of arrest. Conditions and arrangements will be made at those receiving centres for their rehabilitation according to the works which can be done by them and this will be the arrangement of the government. The Government will frame such schemes, in every district, will introduce such work, profession through which beggars may make efforts to become self-dependent, they must learn a particular work, profession, employment and earn as per their requirements. Therefore efforts will be made for making them self-dependent in those receiving centres.

There is one more provision in this Bill if someone compels for begging as I have said in the beginning that

such gangs have cropped up in the society, which compel children for begging ...*(Interruptions)* I am saying the something. Chennithala saheb is saying something.

SHRI RAMESH CHANNITHALA (KOTTAYAM): Cut it short, there is next Bill also.

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT: I am cutting short but I must complete my point, which is there in this Bill. All points of this Bill must be there.

Such begging gangs which after kidnapping the children, exploit their compulsions compel them for begging. Punishment for such persons has also been provided there, which I consider is a very good effort, such criminal gangs, playing with the lives of human beings, must be dealt with sternly. There is provision of a fine of rupees 500 also. First they will be given a warning that they must not indulge in such acts and after that this penalty will be imposed on them.

Besides there is provision of arrest by the police also and welfare fund will be setup for the beggars. Government will make its contribution in beggar welfare fund from consolidated fund and state governments will also make their contribution. Provision will be made for the welfare of beggars, for the education of their children, for construction of houses for them, for their food from the Beggar Welfare Fund. In this regard rules etc. will also be framed, rules will also be framed for rehabilitation.

In addition to this, arrangements would also be made for providing foodgrain items, support and safety to the old, handicapped, destitutes and helpless persons so that these people do not fall prey to beggary.

Our heads bow with shame when we see poor mothers, children, sisters, daughters carrying small kids in their arms and begging at the major cross roads when the motor vehicles stop at red light even in the capital Delhi. It is not a matter of pride for any country any society and for all of us. Therefore, for eradication of begging a provision has been made for setting up a welfare fund and I think that this is a good provision and this would not cost more. A census was conducted in 1971 to assess the number of beggars in the country and nearly ten lakh beggars were identified. Efforts have also been made to reform them by admitting in the Beggars Welfare Centres run by the Social Welfare Department. But as the saying is in urdu 'Maale Muft-Dile Beraham' which means if one gets anything free of cost, then a tendency to get more and more with labour will develop. There is also a saying in Rajasthani 'Muft ka mile Rey Maal, Koon kamave laal. It means that if one gets anything free of cost, then who would like to toil hard. Therefore, in such a situation there is a need to enact a legislation to check such tendency as the number of beggars is increasing rapidly.

It is the duty of a Welfare State, society, competent people, social welfare institutions, donors and on humanitarian ground it is also our duty to make efforts to check the social evil of begging so that it is not spread in the society.

With these words, while supporting this Bill I would like to make one more point. Our poets have also written on the subject of begging:

*Maangan Maran Samaan Hai, Mat Kol Maange Bheekh
Maangan sey Maran Bhaia, Yeh satguru ki seekh.*

It means begging is like attaining death. Hence, no one should beg. It is better to die than to beg. That is what a guru preaches. The society and our sages also have always made efforts to check begging but we should note that in ancient times basically it was connected with religion. To inculcate a sense of sacrifice among the people and to avoid a sense of egotism in them, a brahmachari had to undergo Yagyopaveet Sanskar and after that the person used to go out for begging. The society had to look after his food and education requirements as available in Gurukul system of education. But today the crisis has cropped-up in another way.

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI (HOWRAH): Even then you people have used filthy language against Dharendra Brahmachari.

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT: It is not like that. Now it has turned into an evil. A Sanyasi, Saint, Sage comes to our house for begging. He renounces his desires, materialistic world, children wealth and everything, whether he becomes a clergy or sage and he starts working for the welfare of the society. He shows right path to the society, he leads the society towards the path of 'Dharma' and he preaches shastras in the society. If any Saint or Sage comes for begging, it is his 'dharma'.

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI: That is why Chandraawami was harassed so much.

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT: You people know more about it as he was very close to you people. The main objectives were good. Kabir has written—

Virah kamandal Kar Liya, Vairaagi Do Nain

Maange Daras Madhukari Chhake Rahe Din-rain.

It means he has attained freedom from worldly desires and delusion and always want to remain engrossed in darshan of Parampita Parmatma, God. The union of Atma-Parmatma was altogether a different matter but today's version of begging is a social evil and an economic imbalance and hence a provision has been made in this Bill to eradicate begging and it will hardly cost Rs. one-two crores.

With these words, I congratulate Subbarami Raddyji for introducing this Bill aimed at removing the social evil. The Welfare Minister has come now. I would also like to request him to contemplate on eradication of begging and to take necessary steps to punish those professional beggars who kidnap children and throw acid on their faces to that they look in pathetic condition end to make them start begging and to set up beggars Welfare Fund and beggars Welfare Centre.

[English]

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (KOTTAYAM): Chairman, Sir, at the outset I would like to congratulate Dr. Reddy for having brought this very important Bill before the nation through this august House. We would be celebrating the 50th year of our independence. It is heartening to note that during these 50 years we could not achieve the goals that we had set at the time of our Freedom Movement. Giving food, cloth and shelter to all was the slogan. It attracted crores and crores of Indian youth in our country. Today we are on the threshold of the twenty-first century. We could not achieve these objectives because of many reasons. I do not wish to go into all of them but I would say that the basic reason is the practice of begging.

Begging is a universal phenomenon even in the Western countries. Even in the developed countries, this practice is prevalent. As a developing country we definitely have to attend to this problem. As a civilized society we would have to try our level best to curb the practice of begging. My hon. colleague Shri Chavan has rightly pointed out that first of all we would have to address to this problem. We would have to find out as to why people take to begging.

I think poverty is the root cause of it. When a person has no other way of livelihood and he is in utter poverty, he takes to begging. So, the practice of begging can be abolished by abolishing poverty. We have a number of programmes for the eradication of poverty. Every year we are spending about Rs. 8000 crore on JRY. Through the Public Accounts Committee meeting we came to know that the money is not going to the people and the schemes are not achieving the desired objective. No employment generation is taking place through these schemes in the villages. Can a poor country like India afford Rs. 8000 going waste every year? The middle man is taking away the money from this *Yojana*.

We have a number of problems. Unemployment is one of the burning problems of our society. Have we given a serious thought to solve this problem of unemployment? Under-employment is another problem. These problems are the root cause of the practice of begging. If we wish to stop the practice of begging we would have to address to this problem. A self-respecting man would never go for begging. A person would go for begging as a last resort. So, I would say that the circumstances force people to go for begging. If there is a devastating flood, people would migrate to other places. Similarly, in case of drought people would migrate to other place. If in a particular year the crop is bad and the farmer has no other means of livelihood, he would go to other place in search of work and if he does not get enough employment opportunity there, definitely he would go for begging. This is the practice that we witness in some of our villages.

It is all the more important to note that there are organised gangs which take away children, make them blind and use them for taking alms from people. These organised gangs are exploiting our children and forcing them to collect

money. As per the census of 1971, there are 10 lakh beggars in our country. There should be some mechanism to rehabilitate them. As rightly pointed out by my esteemed colleagues, the root cause of begging should be found out and attended to. At the same time, those who are practising begging should be rehabilitated. Some kind of mechanism for that should be evolved so that people who are engaged in these activities are rehabilitated. We should create awareness. Education is the most important activity for creating awareness among people.

In the fiftieth year of our independence, half the population of our country is still deprived of proper education. Illiteracy is one of the main hindrances in our development. Illiteracy among women is a very serious problem and it should be attended to immediately. The National Literacy Mission is spending crores and crores of rupees. I would like to know whether this money is being utilised properly in eradicating illiteracy from our country. I would like to know whether we are involving our non-governmental organisations effectively and seriously in attending to these problems, giving proper education to our people, raising the literacy rate in our country, eradicating poverty and creating awareness in our country so that we are able to stop this kind of uncivilised practice of begging.

I would like to conclude by saying a few words about child labour which is evident in different parts of the country. We can see that children employed in carpet industry and in match factories are exploited unscrupulous people. This should be stopped. This is also a type of exploitation which we can see in our country. No country can afford to have its younger generation begging. No civilised country can allow this. No civilised society can tolerate this.

I congratulate Dr. Subbarami Reddy for bringing this very serious issue before this august House.

[Translation]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY (MANDSAUR): Mr. Chairman Sir, the hon. Welfare Minister of a Welfare State was here; he might have gone somewhere.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is coming in a few minutes. He took my permission before leaving.

[Translation]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY: Sir, this Bill is directly related to the poor and have-nots of the society but some persons have made it their business to exploit their poverty. Their innocent children are lifted from their houses and are maimed or blinded after inhuman torture. After that, they are forced to adopt begging as an occupation. It is a social evil and social crime. All possible measures should be taken to check this evil and for this purpose a machinery should be set up. The State Governments should also share responsibility alongwith the Union Government. No doubt, several measures have been taken to uproot such evil but these measures are ineffective unless a proper and powerful machinery is set up for this purpose.

Sir, my colleague Shri Ramesh Chennithala was stating that the illiteracy is one of the basic reasons for begging. The daughters of illiterate women are also illiterate and unemployed. Today, when we are celebrating Golden Jubilee of our independence, about 60 per cent of our people are living below the poverty line. Imagine as to how we are going to meet the common necessities of the people of our society! Unless the people are made socially aware, we shall not be able to meet those requirements under any scheme. We should launch some sort of assured employment scheme or any other scheme for this purpose, but unless there is awareness in the society, we shall not be able to fulfil them. Unless the society has participation in such schemes, no scheme can be successful.

As Shri Rasa Singh Rawat has stated, in old days, the people had good feelings for begging because begging was not for begging's sake then, it was a means to fulfil one's responsibility. People thought that they should help a disabled and destitute. There was a social feeling behind it. But today, it is taken otherwise. People of criminal background are conducting begging as an organised trade. There are two types of people involved in it. The first type of people are involved in criminal activities and the second type of people are those who run the trade of begging. Both are indulging in these practices. I want that the Union Government as well as the State Governments should be alert in this regard. In financial memorandum of the Bill, some suggestions have been extended for the State Government as to what they should do in this regard, how they should spend money and the amount they should spend from their respective consolidated funds.

Sir, you are well aware that the State Governments have taken some steps in this direction. Besides, as per the provisions made, a fixed share obtained from the sale proceeds of farmers' goods in the market is contributed for beggars and shelterless. But that amount is also not utilised properly and it does not reach the intended beneficiaries who want to utilise it. We would like this evil to be uprooted. Action should also be taken to bust the rackets operating in this field.

I would not like to speak on clauses mentioned by Shri Rasa Singh Rawat. Sir, hon. Welfare Minister is sitting here. If there is any shortcoming, he should remove it and pass it unanimously. We have to uproot this evil either by constructing shelter homes for shelterless, by constructing juvenile homes or setting up centres in districts for them. We have to identify persons also who are involved in this evil and operate through rackets. We have to punish them but we should help those who deserve our help.

We are the citizens of a Welfare State and we have to face many hurdles. We should make progress by removing these hurdles. We should discharge our responsibilities if we have not done so in the past. If we want to differentiate human beings from animals, we should help those who want to lead a better life and be instrumental in their endeavour, otherwise there are many people who

are bound to lead a beastly life. Some people are involved in criminal activities and lift babies and train them for begging. They should be punished. I would like the Government to set up an effective machinery for this purpose. I would also not like to repeat the points already made.

If there is any shortcoming in this Bill, this evil can be uprooted by bringing forward a comprehensive Bill. Uprooting this evil is very necessary. With these words, I support this Bill and conclude my speech.

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (DEOGARH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on this Bill. There are some Bills which sound very nice, very good but in practice, they are really difficult from the point of view of implementation. In fact, they are not capable of being implemented in our situation. I think this Bill comes under that category. This is not for the first time we are talking of a provision like this. In fact, as I come to know, in at least, 18 States and Union Territories, there are legislations available; there are legislations in force for abolishing beggary. But what is the net result? Has in any part of India, actually, beggary disappeared? In no part of our country, beggary has disappeared. Whatever might be these legislations already passed, they are in our statute books. But in reality, they are not being implemented, in fact, they are not implementable.

When I talk of begging, I am reminded of one thing. Gandhiji once visited Puri. Puri is famous for two things. The world famous Jagannath temple is there. There are also very beautiful sea beaches. In Puri, before the Jagannath temple, there are a large number of beggars. They are always there. You know, our beggars generally choose all religious places for their begging, for their livelihood.

There is an appeal to their religious sentiments. Those who visit temples, shrines, religious places, etc., immediately after *darshan*, etc., give some alms to them.

Gandhiji was so much touched by the poverty and that was also one reason for his decision to go in for the loin cloth he used to put on. In Puri, looking at the beggars before the temple, he thought that in a country like India where when adject poverty like this is there, when people are not getting even one meal a day, what is the use of putting on this type of dress? This is the background for his decision.

Sir, that is not today, but as back as in 1920, even the British Government tried to enact a legislation for abolishing beggary in Mumbai. They also thought that this gave a very bad scene and sight where foreign tourists were coming. It does not present a good picture. Even during the time of British India, it happened.

As a matter of fact, by and large, as it is existing today,

[Shri Sriballav Panigrahi]

It does not give any pleasure for them to resort to begging. Of course, begging is the outcome of offshoot of abject poverty. About 90-95 per cent of the total beggars take to begging under circumstances created by poverty. Sometimes, it is because of very old age. Parents do not take care of them. They are very, very poor people. Agricultural labourer, this and that do not have any property to fall back upon any income. Their sons and daughters do not take care of them. Hence they are driven to begging. Further, some children are also coming from very, very poor families.

[Translation]

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH (MEERUT): Mr. Chairman, Sir, time prescribed for this Bill is over now. Please allow me to move my resolution since only five minutes are left.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We cannot do that. We have to complete this Bill.

[Translation]

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH: Hon'ble Chairman, Sir, only five minutes are left. My Bill can be moved. Discussion on this Bill can also continue.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for this Bill is two hours. We have not taken even half of the time. So, we should allow them to speak.

(Interruptions)

17.55 hrs.

(MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*)

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (DEOGARH): The children belong to very poor families and the parents also cannot feed them. In many cases, they are also forced to go for begging. In some cases, there are middlemen, touts and undesirable people, I would say, anti-social people who are also encouraging these things. They are sending these children to foreign countries particularly to Saudi Arabia during the Haj period, etc. They leave them behind.

I have come across some very frightening reports. There are some gangs whose income is about Rs. 20 crore from this profession. The hon. Minister can look into it. For example, in West Bengal, there is a big gang. ... (Interruptions)

[Translation]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (AJMER): I request that he may please be given two minutes time.

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI: This is something that has to be seen very carefully. ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Without disposing of this Bill how can we do it?

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH: I shall be grateful to you if you get my Bill moved otherwise it will lapse. I requested for it in the morning also.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: It will not lapse. It will be there. You do not worry about that.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: It has come in the ballot for 8th August.

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI: Sir, I was saying that these gangsters are earning about Rs. 20 crore a year from these child beggars.

I would like to mention about the article in the *Hindustan Times* dated 20th March, 1997, titled "New Delhi child operators earning." This is very frightening and very disturbing. Please see that a racket is at work and they are sending children abroad. This business is going on.

There is no purpose in enacting a number of Bills. We have so many beautiful legislations. India is not lacking in legislations. But, in fact, due to the situation prevailing sometimes the implementation is very tardy. What about child labour? What about the Anti-dowry Act, etc.? The Government of India in the Ministry of Social Welfare has a scheme to control this begging. But what is the financial provision? Three or four years back Rs. 20 lakh was given annually. This money is given to some States for arranging some vocational training, etc. Now, Rs. one crore is allotted in one year. But even that amount has not been spent. This amount has not been given to some States. However, some States have taken the money, but they have not fully utilised this amount. There is a half-hearted approach. There should be a sincerity and seriousness in talking this problem.

I do not like to make a long speech. So, naturally tackling this problem amounts to tackling the problem of poverty.

18.00 hrs.

So, that can be done. Also, social awareness should be created. There should also be educational facilities made available for children of all groups belonging to all types of families. Why I say that is because these poor families cannot send their children or wards to schools unless there are arrangements made for their boarding, lodging, etc. So, that should also be taken care of.

Secondly, if we give the benefit of irrigation in rural areas and if round the year we have crops one after another, that also keeps a large number of people engaged. The uneducated youth can then find employment near their homes in their own areas.

Thirdly, due to poverty, the people in their old age are not taken care of by their children. So, there should be old-age homes for these poor people and also orphanages for the children. For that, adequate financial provision should be made and some assistance should be given to the States ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Are you concluding or will you take some more time?

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI: I am concluding, Sir ...(*Interruptions*). I have to bring about some more points but for today I conclude here.

18.01 hrs.

[*English*]

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

NAGALAND PEACE TALKS

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): Sir, this august House is aware of the history of insurgency in Nagaland.

The fratricidal confrontations amongst the various Naga groups and the State authorities have led to loss of life, seriously disturbed the public order and thwarted the economic development of the State. The people are fed up with the violence and yearn for peace.

Soon after assuming office, I had visited Nagaland and other States in the North-East. I had reiterated Government's willingness to hold talks without any prior conditions with the underground elements.

In talks with the Isaac-Muivah group of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, it has now been agreed to cease fire for three months with effect from 1st August, 1997 and initiate discussions at political levels.

Government are also in touch with the other insurgent Naga groups which also have committed to suspend their activities.

MR. SPEAKER: Let me congratulate the Prime Minister, The Government of India, the Government of Nagaland and also the leadership of the NSCN for the positive steps being taken for restoring permanent peace in Nagaland and the North-East.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT (DAUSA): Sir, let me share your feelings that you have conveyed to the hon. Prime Minister but let me also put on record that such channels had been open earlier also. Whatever channels we had to be in touch with some of these people, they had a feeling that there is no sincerity in the follow up action ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I think we need not discuss it now. It is a positive thing and I think let us not...

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: So, I request the Prime Minister to do it with sincerity. I congratulate the Prime Minister for a very positive step.

There are two special things that have happened, hon. Prime Minister, during your regime today. First, a very good news that you have given about Nagaland and, second, a very hurting news. At six o'clock, the Bihar Government is being sworn in, which is very hurting for a democracy. I think it has hurt every democratic person. So, this also I thought I should point out here.

[*Translation*]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY (MANDSAUR): The Statement given by Hon'ble Prime Minister is very encouraging and it will definitely go a long way in solving this problem. The Nagas considered themselves alienated due to the feelings of mistrust. I had an occasion to go there. They say that you are Indians. They think that we are Indians and they are different. I think that there are many problems, the study of these show that they are not ready for infrastructure even. We said that if rail lines were laid, there would be development. They said that they did not require these and that they were all right without them, in their present condition. I think that the Prime Minister had himself gone there and after that an agreement was signed. That is good for us. I thank the Prime Minister for that.

[*English*]

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR (MUMBAI NORTH-WEST): Sir, I thank you very much for giving the opportunity. I congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for having initiated the talks with the Naga people. I hope that whatever arrangements that have been made by the hon. Prime Minister will continue and whatever understanding that has been reached will be honoured by all concerned and peace will prevail out of this understanding. Thank you.

SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR (DIBRUGARH): I congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for the step he has taken for bringing back peace in the North Eastern region. In Assam also there are lots of killings in the recent weeks. There are so many killings of military and paramilitary personnel and civilians also. I will request and urge upon the hon. Prime Minister to initiate the same thing in Assam also so that peace and tranquillity come and people can breathe peacefully.

MR. SPEAKER: The House now stands adjourned till 11 A.M. on Monday, July 28, 1997.

18.06 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, July 28, 1997/Sharavana 6, 1919 (Saka)