

Title: Need to discuss the various issues before codifying the Christian marriage and divorce laws.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Sir, the Christian marriage laws and laws regarding divorce are going to be codified, and the Government is going to bring a legislation in this regard. The draft legislation which has been prepared by the Government with regard to Christians' marriages

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Thomas, please be brief. I have to accommodate everybody.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS: Sir, I am ready to speak within a minute, but I am not allowed by other Members to speak.

Sir, the draft, which has been circulated, shows that there are so many infirmities which are to be very seriously discussed amongst different denominations as well as between different denominations of the Christians. Sir, there are so many customary ways of solemnising the marriages and also other aspects relating to marriage. So, I would submit that some serious discussion should be further ensued before the law is presented before Parliament. I would quote one example. The priest who is to conduct the marriage can be punished up to 10 years for a small flaw on his part. That is seen in the draft legislation. Again, the Christian, who wants to marry in the Church, can marry only when both the persons are Christians. That is also a very serious infirmity on which the Christians have got a lot of opinions. I would submit that this is a matter relating to personal law and so, further discussions must be held with different denominations and also the customary aspects have to be considered, before the legislation is brought here. I am happy that the codification is going to come. I would like to have some response from the Government in this regard so that any apprehension in the minds of the community can be taken away.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Sir, the hon. Member gave every information except a small one, which I would like to share with the House, that the hon. Law Minister is already holding discussions with various Christian organisations and only after the discussions, the Government will come out with the legislation. The Government has no intention to take away rights or traditions of any minority belonging to different religions and communities in this country. So, after a full discussion, it will come here and then, we will also have a discussion thereon.

SHRI K. FRANCIS GEORGE (IDUKKI): What about suitable changes to be made in the law itself?

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: As I said, the discussions are on and based on the discussions, we will make suitable changes. Even during the debate in Parliament, everybody will have an opportunity to express his views. But I have said that the Government has no intention to take away any rights of minority groups, religious, linguistic or otherwise. So, a full discussion will take place. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You cannot dictate the Chair.

...*(Interruptions)*