

Title: Need to reform the Christian Personal Laws and bring related bills in the current session of Parliament.

DR. BEATRIX D'SOUZA (NOMINATED): I would like to draw the attention of the Government to proposals made by a consensus of the Christian people of India, through the Christian Churches and Church-related organizations and recommended by the National Minorities Commission, to reform and update the Christian Personal Law, pertaining to four specific Bills -- the Christian Marriage Bill, 1997, the Christian Divorce Bill, 1997, the Christian Succession Amendment Bill, 1994 and the Christian Adoption and Maintenance Bill, 1997.

Some of the provisions of the archaic, century-old Christian Marriage Act, 1872 and the Indian Divorce Act, 1869, enacted by the British have been struck down by the Supreme Court and various High Courts as being discriminatory, particularly against women. Also, the said Acts do not meet the requirements of the social realities that exist today. The provisions of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 seem to be largely discriminatory against the Christian community, particularly against women. A void was also seen in the Law relating to adoption and maintenance.

These four Bills were presented to the Government in 1994 and again in 1997. Since the climate for the enactment of a Uniform Civil Code may never be favourable, the Government should welcome the initiative of a minority community to update their Personal Law. The Christian Church is not presenting new Bills for legislation but assisting Government to make them more meaningful and effective for the Christian community in India.

I, therefore, request that the Government introduce these four Bills in the current Session of Parliament.
