

## LOK SABHA DEBATES

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Tuesday, September 17, 1991 / Bhadra  
26, 1913 (Saka)

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*The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the  
Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER *In The Chair*]

[English]

SHRI BUTA SINGH (Jalora): Mr. Speaker Sir, with your permission I want to raise this issue. There is a category of workers known as Safai Karmacharis all over the country. Their living condition is so horrible that they live in inhuman conditions. They live almost on the drains in cities and they are neglected people in their villages also. Their main occupation is sweeping, scavenging and clearing the dead animals in the countryside. This occupation is very low paid and it is hereditary also. Their living conditions are full of health hazards and they carry the social stigma of degradation also.

Over the years many concessions have been given to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But none of these concessions have trickled down to the poor Safai Karmacharis living all over the country. They are considered untouchables even by the so called SC and ST people. They do not have an approach to the drinking water in the Bastis of SC people.

The service conditions of these people are governed by the local bodies. They are

not paid for six month or one year. In the rural areas they are not paid in cash; they are paid in kind-50 kilograms of grains in six months. How can a family be maintained under these circumstances in today's life with 50 kilograms of grains in villages? Many municipalities in the country do not have budget for Safai Karmacharis. They have budget for engineers, doctors, everybody; but the Safai Karmacharis are the lot which is being neglected over the years. They are kept on temporary and dally work basis for ten or fifteen years. A Safai Karmachari starts his life as a Safai Karmachari and ends it as Safai Karmachari. They have no shelter, no house.

In Delhi, the NDMC increased their emoluments by 66%, DESU increased it; but the Delhi Municipal Corporation has not done so. There is a big agitation. But nothing has so far been done.

Therefore I request through you this august House and the Government that a National Commission to study the sauceconomic conditions of the poor Safai Karmacharis who are working day in and day out, who are living in almost unhygienic conditions, be set up.

When they are pushed down in the gutters they die instantly. There is no protection given to them. There is no medical cover. There is no educational cover. They come on their own bicycles from ten to fifteen kilometers to do their job. There is no transportation system. Their children get neglected. At six or seven o'clock, their parents go on the job and the children start playing in the streets with all kinds of urchins and things like that.

They belong to all religions. They are

from Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and they are all over the country. Therefore, my humble submission to this august House is to direct the Government to appoint a National Commission to study the socio-economic conditions of these Safai Karmacharis all over the country, so that they can also live a respectable life. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI KALKA DAS (Karol Bagh): I also demand that a Special Commission should be set up for these Safai Karmacharis. Even after 40 years of independence, their condition is not good.....(Interruptions).....

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolgpur): We emphatically associate ourselves with this demand.

SHRIBASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankurra): We all support this. There should be a National Commission on Safai Karmacharis and their grievances and demands should be looked into. Their living conditions should be improved upon. It is very important. There should be a National Commission on Safai Karmacharis.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPYEE (Lucknow): In the social hierarchy, the Safai Karmacharis are at the bottom. As their number is small, no party is interested to give them tickets for contesting elections to the Lok Sabha or the State Legislatures.

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV (Nalanda): Not even your party?

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPYEE: Yes, it is true in our case also. ON this point, there is not much difference between you and me, Comrade. We have, at least, one Balmiki with us where as your party has none.

SHRI VIJOY KUMAR YADAV: Our number is also less.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPYEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I fully agree with Shri Buta Singh. During my tours, I have myself seen that Safai Karmacharis are appointed on daily wages basis. I came across a Safai Karmachari who earns only Rs. 50 per month.

Please excuse me to point out it. How can he feed his family on this paltry amount? How far the problem could be solved through setting up a Commission .....

SHRI BUTA SINGH: I agree that by merely setting up a Commission the problem would not be solved. I have demanded its constitution so that at least the socio-economic conditions under which they are living could be studied and an assessment made about their living conditions.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPYEE: But I would like to submit here that as long as the Commission is constituted and it makes its recommendations, there is no reason why effective steps should not be taken to improve the lot of these Safai Karmacharis. What the Central Government is doing in this regard, that is more important. Shri Buta Singh used to be the Home Minister of the country and also a kingmaker. What happens is that when we come to power, we forget many things we had said when we were in the opposition. It could be true in our case also.

[English]

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum): He has very short memory. He does not remember that he was a Minister.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum): Naturally, he feels ashamed of non-functioning.

[Translation]

SHRI BUTA SINGH: No, it is not like that. Let me give an account of my performances. When I was the Home Minister, I had convened a meeting of the Delhi Administration Officials and it was decided that these employees in all the

Departments would be given a uniform salary. We had sanctioned about 20,000 houses for them. But unfortunately, all those files were misplaced. The position today is that the salary of these employees is different. in NDMC, DESU, MCD. The DDA do not keep Safal Karmacharis. They have transferred this work to the MCD on contract basis. Therefore, I claim full responsibility of what Shri Vajpayee is saying and would like to beg an apology from the august House for not doing it.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: As this House and the hon. Members are aware, Bangladesh Biman was operating in this country from Calcutta to Dhaka and other places. It had an office in Calcutta and 28 employees were there. In 1989 they decided to wind up their office and give over their functioning to Air India which has been looking after their jobs. But what happened is that, about these 28 employees who have been retrenched by Bangladesh Biman, there was a clear understanding that they would be taken over by Air India because Air India was discharging their functions. Sir, at a meeting held in Calcutta, which is a meeting of the Joint Committee on Station Performance Improvement on 4th of August 1988, it was recorded that by taking over the function of Bangladesh Biman, Air India will be earning a revenue of about 70 to 80 lakhs of rupees per year and they said that we were agreeable and we could easily accommodate these 28 employees who have been retrenched by Bangladesh Biman. For the last two years, they are sitting on *dharna*; repeated representations have been made to earlier Governments and to this Government also. They are receiving sympathetic approach in the sense that everybody says that we shall sympathetically consider, but nothing is happening. Probably two or three persons have already died because of starvation; no arrangement is being made; we are told of one crore of employment per year, according to your manifesto, Shree Buta Singh. In the last few months at least 25 lakhs could have been

employed. Instead of 25 lakhs employment, we are pleading for employing these 27 people. They are experts, they have expertise in this line. Therefore, I am strongly requesting and imploring the Government. I do not know; the Minister probably is in Goa—nice weather, nice place. But what is happening to these people who are sitting on *dharna*? So, the Minister of Civil Aviation should immediately respond to this by giving appointment to these people, for which there is almost a commitment. This I am reading from the minutes of the meeting in which it was not the representatives of the workers who were present; but the high officials of Air India and the National Airports Authority, etc., were present; and they took a decision which is not being implemented. It is a human problem. I am requesting the Government to take at least compassionate attitude. Not very large number of people are involved. Out of 27 people two have died or probably three have died already. If you are relying on natural wastage, then it is different. But, if you are trying to solve the problem by forcing the people to go on starvation, that is a different problem. We appeal to them. We want to avoid the future spread of the agitation and demonstration. We do not want that the Calcutta Airport should be disturbed. So, we are requesting the Government to respond favourably to this human problem that is there. For no fault of theirs, they are suffering, it is a profitable undertaking whose office was abolished and was made over to Air India, which is making profits by not engaging the workers. Therefore, I strongly demand that the job may be given to these people immediately.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: Sir, Calcutta Airport falls in my Constituency; I am associated with this problem; I have met the Minister repeatedly. So, let me recount a few facts about it. The fact is that their number now is 25. The system of work is such that everyday between 40 and 50 contract labourers had to be given jobs in order to undertake that kind of job. We have repeatedly requested the Minister Shri Madhav Rao Scindia that since they require them to do that job, you re-employ them. But