

15.34 hrs.

**PUBLIC GRIEVANCES BILL, 1986\***

[English]

**SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK (Panaji) :** I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Directorate General of Public Grievances for redressal of public grievances and for matters connected therewith.

**MR. CHAIRMAN :** The question is :

“The leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Directorate General of Public Grievances for redressal of public grievances and for matters connected therewith.”

*The motion was adopted*

**SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK :** I introduce the Bill.

15.35 hrs.

**CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE  
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 1986\***

(Amendment of section 113 etc.)

[English]

**SHRI SOMNATH RATH (Aska) :** Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill further to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

**MR. CHAIRMAN :** The question is :

“That leave be granted to introduce a Bill further to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.”

*The motion was adopted*

**SHRI SOMNATH RATH :** I introduce the Bill.

15.36 hrs.

**WIDOWS' PENSION BILL, 1985—**

*Contd.*

[English]

**MR. CHAIRMAN :** The House will now take up further consideration of the following motion moved by Shri Viridhi Chander Jain on the 1st August, 1986, namely :

“That the Bill to provide for payment of pension to destitute widows, be taken into consideration.”

Shrimati N. P. Jhansi Lakshmi to continue her speech.

[Translation]

\***SHRIMATI N. P. JHANSI LAKSHMI (Chittoor) :** Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Bill introduced by Shri V. C. Jain is a very good Bill and deserves the unanimous approval of the House. As I said earlier, this country had the distinction of having a woman Prime Minister for 17 long years. But no justice was done to women particularly widows during her tenure.

On the contrary, the Telugu Desam Government under the stewardship of our beloved leader Shri N. T. Rama Rao, has taken several steps for bettering the lot of women. Within a short span of time since he took over, the Telugu Desam Government in Andhra Pradesh has introduced a scheme of providing pension to the destitute widows. In addition to pension, all necessary help is also being extended to them for setting up their own cottage or small scale industries. This step taken by the AP Government has given an opportunity to all the destitute widows to stand on their own feet and support their families.

Another major step taken by Shri N. T. Rama Rao Government is to provide equal rights over the ancestral property.

Yet another yeomen service rendered by the Telugu Desam Government is that the

\* Published in the Gazette of India extraordinary Pt. II Section 2 dated 14.8.86.

\*The speech was originally delivered in Telugu.

[Smt. N. P. Jhansi Lakshmi]

pattas etc. which are distributed to the poor, are being given in the name of wives only. Even if the husband falls a prey to the bad habits, or unfortunately if he happen to die a woman will have the means and courage to stand on her own feet and feed the family.

Thus the Government under the leadership of Shri N. T. Rama Rao has taken all the steps to see that the conditions of women are improved.

The Central Government should try to emulate the example of Shri N. T. Rama Rao.

Sir, as the destitute widows have no means of any livelihood, the Central Government should come forward to help them in all possible ways. They should be given pension. Loans for setting up cottage industries or small scale industries should be extended to them on liberal terms. The Central Government also should see that women have equal rights on par with men over ancestral property.

The Bhopal tragedy shook the entire nation. Many women have become widows. Their health was affected. They have lost their health and wealth. Many of the victims are destitute widows. They have nothing to fall back on for their survival. These women deserve the sympathy of one and all. The Government should take all the necessary steps to come to their aid. The Government should help in setting up small scale or cottage industries. They should be given pension. So far no step has been taken by the Government to provide them livelihood. Hence I request the Government to initiate all steps to save them.

Sir, the women were held in higher esteem in our country once upon a time. We call our country as "Mother India". Parents in the South fondly call their daughters as "amma". It shows the high esteem the women enjoyed in our society. Mother was conferred Godhood. But the situation is different today. The widows who have no support whatsoever, are struggling for their existence. They are finding it

increasingly difficult to feed them and their kids. Their children suffer from innumerable diseases since they are not fed well. These children slowly develop hatred towards society which could not provide them food or health. They turn out to be thieves or anti-social elements in later days. The poor widows, in addition to their poverty will have to suffer the agony of seeing their offspring becoming thieves and antisocial elements. Hence, in order to save the society, it is necessary for the Government to provide livelihood to the widows who have no support whatsoever. Sir, the fate of a Private Member Bill is well known to us. The Government while applauding the intention of the Bill will politely request the mover of the Bill to withdraw it. At least in the present case, the Government should depart from the practice of asking the mover to withdraw the bill. The Government should respect the wishes and sentiments expressed by the Members belonging to all parties. The Government should not hesitate to accept a Bill, though a private one, if it is well intended one. What is good must be accepted by all. I request the Government to treat this well intended Bill as a Government sponsored Bill and pass it. I hope the Government would do so.

Sir, once again, I request the Government to provide all necessary help to the widows, I also request to confer equal rights on women on par with men over ancestral property.

Hoping that the Government would accept, the Bill, I conclude my speech.

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA (Pali) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, a perusal of the Bill reveals that it reflects the sentiments of Shri Viridhi Chander Jain. But I am not sure whether the Bill is in consonance with the provisions of the Constitution. I want to draw his attention to the following.

[English]

Any widow who has become destitute, having no son who has attained the age of twenty years or is having a son who has attained such age but who is incapable of earning his livelihood due to his physical or mental disability and infirmity, shall be eligible for a pension.

Pension for what? Pension is the payment made in consideration if his past services.

[*Translation*]

If a woman becomes widow at the age of 20, should she be given pension?

**SHRI HARISH RAWAT:** She must have served her country to some extent during those 20 years, Shri Daga, I do not know from where you get such definitions.

(*Interruptions*)

**SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA:** The age is mentioned here. I can tell you about the age...(*Interruptions*).

[*English*]

Any widow who has become destitute, having no son who has attained the age of twenty years or is having a son who has attained such age but who is incapable of earning.

[*Translation*]

**SHRI HARISH RAWAT:** Do not oppose the Bill otherwise they will curse you.

**SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA:** If the widow does not earn anything upto the age of twenty years, she should be sent to the Vidhwa Ashram. The Constitution of India confers equal rights on men and women. If a widow cannot earn, will it be proper for the country to sustain her on pension. The women these days are working more than men.

**SHRI HARISH RAWAT:** Do not oppose it. They will curse you.

**SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA:** They should be provided with work.

**SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA:** What you have said is right. The issue is which widow should be provided with pension and in what circumstances should it be given

to her. You have proposed pension from Rs. 75 to Rs. 125 for the widow (*Interruptions*).

At present, a person with a monthly income of Rs. 107 is regarded below the poverty line. In Delhi if one gets Rs. 125 as pension, he cannot get a room on rent for Rs. 200. By bringing such a Bill what are you going to do for the widows of India? (*Interruptions*). The Constitution provides equal rights for men and women. We should have provided them jobs but we have not done anything for them. We expect them to make both ends meet with this meagre amount of Rs. 125. Is it possible in this age? Have you ever thought at the time of bringing the Bill how a widow will sustain herself with a pension of Rs. 125. She will not be able to pay exorbitant rent of a house in Delhi. You kindly tell us after examining the matter what you intend to do. Article 41 says :

[*English*]

The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

[*Translation*]

You tell us how it is covered under Article 41. Now you see Article 39.

[*English*]

The State shall in particular direct its policy towards securing :

- (a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;
- (b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;
- (c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the

[Shri Mool Chand Daga]

concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;

- (d) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

[*Translation*]

It is neither in Article 39 nor in Article 41. You please re-examine the objective with which the Bill has been brought forward. A poor woman living in a village will be selected under IRDP. The bank will provide her loan. This is what happens under I. R. D. P. A group of villages select the poor persons who are indigent. You should provide job to a widow in indigent condition and without any means of livelihood. If you start paying her pension, she would become indolent. God has given her hands. You should impart training to those who are willing to do work. You have done nothing for the uplift of women. So you should start doing something for them. The Department of Social Welfare is supposed to provide training to those women who are unemployed and who do not know any trade, so that they may become self dependent and earn their livelihood. If you propose to give them pension, I shall oppose that measure because I am not in favour of payment of pension to them in this condition. Pension is not given in that condition. If one has become old and his age has reached more than 60 years ...(*Interruptions*). We have a commentator. He gives good commentary. He represents Andaman and Nicobar. You should also allow him to speak. He says that Department of Social Welfare must work for the uplift and development of women. I would like to know what is the status of the women in our Constitution and what status they have been given. All men and women are equal. Our Constitution does not discriminate between sexes. But we have raised a wall between men and women. Tomorrow man may also make a demand that he is a widower or is not married or his wife has left him or he is not keeping good health, so pension should be paid to him. After all with what objective have you brought this Bill here. You have said in the Bill that they may take to prostitution and they will be exploited.

You have said in the Statement of objects and reasons of the Bill that tomorrow she may become a courtesan. But I would like to know for what purpose this Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act was enacted and why you do not insist upon implementing it. Does it not show the weakness of the administration that it is not allowing the Act to be implemented and the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act has become meaningless. I have got the opportunity to give good suggestions through this Bill. Daily there are press reports that Adivasi girls from remote areas indulge in flesh trade. Will you call it exploitation. Then you say that exploitation of widows takes place, But I would like to say that this is not the way. The best way to end it is that we should say this in the way I have given my amendment and have drawn your attention to important things. You have written :

[*English*]

"She owns movable and immovable property including residential house worth such amount as may be prescribed from time to time."

[*Translation*]

You have not mentioned anywhere how much capital a woman should possess. What is mentioned is, 'as may be prescribed'. You should lay down these things in the Parliament. But now the position is that Bills are being passed in haste and at a fast pace in Parliament and no one is being given sufficient time to speak on them. The Department of Parliamentary Affairs prescribes the time limit within which the Bill should be passed and the Members are asked to express their views in two minutes on a Bill. In this way you will not do justice to the cause. The way you are passing the Bills in haste, without giving proper consideration, you will be forced to bring amendments thereto in the House time and again.

He has said that—

[*English*]

She is employed in service.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please conclude.

[Translation]

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA : I have not started yet, Sir. It has been mentioned :

[English]

"She owns movable and immovable property including a residential house worth such amount as may be prescribed from time to time. She has a regular income of more than Rs. 1200 either in kind or cash."

[Translation]

This is also not sufficient. You should think over it. The objective behind bringing this Bill was that a man or a woman may live with dignity. I would like to ask one thing. What will happen in a case where payment of pension is made to a woman, who belong to a society where there is no bar to widow marriage or to a spinster, who marries later on ? What is the law in the Muslim Society ? Will it be applicable to Muslims. A Muslim will say to his wife that he has given here talaq and in this way she has become eligible to pension which the Government proposes to provide. Now you say that this law should be implemented.

[English]

"The competent authority may grant the monthly pension of an amount which shall not be less than Rs. 75."

[Translation]

Now, you can see the value of Rs. 75 at present. I have told you that the value of rupee has fallen down to fifteen paise. We are saying to them to maintain themselves with this amount when the value of a rupee is not more than fifteen paise. The Hon. Minister had said yesterday that the value of a rupee is ten paise. How will they be able to maintain themselves with this amount.

[English]

"Whenever it is found that any widow has remarried after the sanction of pension....."

[Translation]

What will happen after she gets married. If she marries, it will be said.

[English]

She is in a position to earn her livelihood ?

[Translation]

What is the meaning of this clause ? Sir, I have followed the intention of the Bill. The intention of the Bill is to provide pension to the widows for their maintenance. In my view, it would be much better if you had put in some more labour while drafting this Bill. Under the old age pension law, Rs. 40 is paid to a destitute man or a widow above the age of 60 years. Therefore, I would like to suggest that this amount of Rs. 40 per month is very meagre and the Government should increase it at least to Rs. 100 per month. It appears to me from the drafting of the Bill that it is not going to be passed.

I have moved some amendments to the Bill and I shall speak on the Bill at the time of discussion on the amendments. At present I would like to say only this much that the spirit of the Bill does not enhance the dignity of the woman. Hence I oppose it.

[English]

SHRI UTTAM RATHOD (Hingoli) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I support the spirit of the Bill, the widows Pension Bill, introduced by Shri virdhi Chander Jain.

Sir, you are aware that we had the joint family system in our country which is slowly breaking. The socio-economic problems are there which have split the joint family. You are aware that in the olden days... (Interruptions). During the joint family

16.00 hrs.

system, the widows, the old parents and the younger people were looked after by the whole family. But when the joint family concept was given up, it became difficult for the parents as well as the young widows to live. I have come across certain cases even in rural areas where the children

[Shri Uttam Rathod]

are drawing good salaries but they do not look after their parents. Much worse is the condition of the widows. It is not possible for them, to make a living. Maybe, they are not willing to help their own sisters and, in these circumstances, it becomes a necessity in a Welfare State to help these women to live a good life. It was all right for Mr. Mool Chand Daga who is always critical of any scheme was whether it is a Government scheme or whether it is a Private Members, Bill. I am sure if some day we discuss the poverty alleviation programme like the IRDP, he will criticise and ask how many a people have been benefited from it. But today he has just contradicted himself. He is just speaking in the other way. It may be he is trying to be in the good looks of agencies not favourable to pension. Unfortunately, if the women are not protected and given proper shelter, by the family or some people or by the Government, they have to accept the profession which is supposed to be the oldest profession and that is prostitution. If you want to save these women from humiliation bad things, then, we will have to provide them pension in addition to their source of livelihood.

In Maharashtra, you are aware, that we have employment guarantee scheme. There work is assured and if anybody does not get work, he can approach the court. But will Mr. Mool Chand Daga tell me if IRDP or any other scheme is enforceable in the court of law? It cannot be. So, Mr. Virdhi Chander Jain rightfully thought of bringing this Bill.

The education, the social system and the environment have made us more individualistic and our own kith and kin discounting old parents and widows. The love and affection that we had in our olden days is dying out and in these circumstances, I would urge, and I would support this Bill, and expect the Government to give some sort of pension to the widows and help them from going astray.

[Translation]

SHRI SHANTI DHARIWAL (Kota) :  
Mr. Chairman, Sir, I welcome the Widow

Pension Bill introduced by Shri Virdhi Chander Jain. I also commend the spirit with which the Bill has been brought. But he has drafted the Bill in haste. I have certain doubts about it as to who should be considered a widow? We have so many laws in our country, whether they relate of Family Planning or the Hindu Marriage Act. But it is necessary to observe all of them. As per the law, a girl should not be married before attaining the age of 18 years, but if a girl is married at an early age and her husband dies in an accident, can such girl get the benefit of this law or not? I would like to move an amendment to this Bill to the effect that widow pension should be granted to only those who are married after attaining the age of 18 and have two children only. I think that those who are having 3 to 4 children should not be granted widow pension to discourage the tendency of having more children.

The widows having sons who have attained the age of 20 years or above and are physically and mentally capable of earning their livelihood, should not be considered widows and they should be left to the care of their sons. But jobs should be provided to their sons.

Shri Jain has provided in this Bill that those who are having an annual income of less than Rs. 1200 should be deemed as widows for the purpose of granting pension. But Rs. 1200 is quite a meagre sum in these days of high prices, and as such, this limit should be increased to Rs. 3600 and those who have an annual income of less than Rs. 3600 should be granted widow pension.

In view of these things, I am grateful to Shri Jain that he has paid attention towards widows and has taken steps to improve their economic condition so that they may lead a decent life. With these words, I thank you and request that the Bill be passed.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT (Almora) :  
Mr. Chairman, Sir, I fully support this Bill. I would appeal to Shri Daga who is sitting here that he should not oppose a good measure.

At present about 50 to 75 lakh widows are there in our country who have no one to support them. Various welfare programmes have been started to provide pension to such destitute women. Under these programmes, about 28 lakh such women are being paid pension. But still there are a large number of women in our country who are in need of Government assistance. Here, I am not talking about the women who are already getting some assistance. There are some women who are neither having any support from their in-laws nor from their parents. They have also not inherited any property through which they may sustain themselves. Therefore, Government should accept their responsibility.

We are living in a welfare State. Taking these difficulties into consideration, our Hon. Prime Minister has formed a separate Ministry of Women development. But I think the Ministry has yet to do a lot to fulfil the objectives for which it has been formed. Now a days Shrimati Alva is looking after this Ministry. Therefore, I request the Hon. Minister to ask the State Government to supply a list of such widows who are in need of pension and arrangement should be made to pay pension to them. If we do not undertake these measures, I think we shall leaving them to their fate.

Shri Jain has also prescribed the amount of the pension in his Bill. But I think the amount is inadequate. She cannot maintain her family with such a meagre amount in these days of high prices. Many widows have small children to look after and have no other source of income. Hence they should at least get Rs. 250 per moth. In addition, arrangement should also be made for the education of their children.

This Bill has been prepared with limited objectives. There may be some drawbacks in the Bill. The Government should, therefore, bring forward a legislation of its own to clear its intention, and the State Governments should also be taken into confidence. Besides, necessary allocations should be made for this purpose so as to benefit all the widows within a specified period.

Similarly, there are some women who are not widows but are otherwise destitutes. They are kept in destitute homes. The condition of these destitute homes is so deplorable, due to paucity of funds that proper care is not taken of these destitute women. There is need to improve their condition.

Besides, I would also like to say that some welfare programmes for handicapped women should also be formulated. Though Shri Daga has opposed this Bill yet he has made a very useful point. There are so many programmes on which we are spending huge amounts. Some provision should be made in these programmes to benefit the widows, destitute and handicapped women also. We are spending huge amounts under IRDP but it is the men who are mostly benefited by it. The reason is that on the one hand women are reticent to come forward and on the other hand we also fail to motivate them because our social agencies are not so well organised in the rural areas as they are in the urban areas. The women should be organised in rural areas and they should be encouraged to get benefit from the programmes like IRDP so that they can apply for sewing machines, knitting machines or to work in the field of animal husbandry. In this way we can engage a large number of women in productive employment. But you have to start a programme for payment of pension to those women who are unable to do work. Hence, I support the Bill.

I would request the Hon. Minister that as she is also a women, she can understand the difficulties of the women very well. In view thereof, even if she has to approach the Ministry of Finance or the Planning Commission through Hon. Prime Minister, she should ensure that adequate provision is made to benefit all the widows and destitute women under a specific programme.

\*SHRI A. C. SHANMUGAM (Vellore) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, on behalf of A.I.A.D.M.K. I rise to support the Widow's Pension Bill that is being discussed in this House and I would like to place my views before this august House. Sir, it is a very

\*The speech was originally delivered in Tamil.

[Shri A. C. Shanmugam]

good Bill and the suggestions made by my previous speakers are worth consideration. At the same time, I feel that it would be more appropriate if a majority of the male Members of this House take part in this debate.

Sir, I may remind the Members of this House that the culture, civilisation and advancement in every field could be known through the treatment and an honourable place that the women get in a particular country. Not only they should be given equal opportunities in all walks of life but they should also be given equal justice before law. Educated and working women would, if they became widow, continue to work in their offices and work place. But such women who live in villages, who are also mostly uneducated, would be forced to lead a very miserable life and it always happens that they become destitutes. It is therefore all the more necessary that in all the villages importance should be given for women's education so that whenever occasion demands they may be gainfully employed. At present, Government is giving free education upto plus 12 stage. But I would demand that free education should be extended to college level, whether it is on medical side or on engineering, the education should be free of cost. In countries like the USSR, whenever a widow applies for a job in any organisation, such applicant is given priority and given employment. In the same way, in our country, widows should be given preference in employment, if they are qualified and eligible for the post, whether it is in Government or public sector organisation or any other organisation. In this noble cause, the society should also come forward to help these women.

Sir, now the widows are treated as though they belong to a depressed community. They do not get any preference or any place of honour in the society. This position should be changed. The Hon. Members are perhaps aware that in European countries, both aged men and women get pension and protection from the Government so that they need not depend on anybody in old age. Though ours is not economically and industrially so advanced as those countries in Europe to

declare old age pension in our country, I would definitely plead with the Government that they should consider giving pension, at least a certain amount of pension, to the widows. The Government may even not consider giving old-age pension benefits to men or the married women living with their husbands, but the Government should bring forward a measure so that all educated and uneducated widows all over India may get pension. This House should consider this proposal right earnest. In our country, out of 78 crores of people, only about one crore people are employed in Government and other public sector organisations. At present, pension is given to war widows and the wives of the Government servants. But what will happen to those widows who are living in villages? They will not get any pension from any Government or any organisation. What does the Government propose to do for these widows?

Sir in this connection, I would to appeal to the Government that the applications of the widows should be given priority for offer of job by the Employment Exchanges and the State Public Service Commissions. While considering the applications of the widows, age-limit should not be fixed and there should be relaxation on this limit because it is quite possible the women may become widow at 30 years or 32 years or 35 years. Government should consider changing this rule immediately. Sir, about 90 per cent of the women in villages have not got any education at all. In case of widows in the villages, Government should come forward to give IRDP loan on voluntary basis. These women should be given all encouragement for engaging themselves in small and cottage industries. If a widow is given a loan of Rs. 1000 to purchase a cow, she can earn her livelihood and take care of her children. So also, if 4 or 5 widows together come forward and start a cooperative unit, they should be given all facilities. I may bring to the notice of the Government that because of their being in a miserable condition, the widows' children are forced to work in factories and other places and in this way they are exploited by their employers.

Sir, it is difficult for widows to take care of their children. Under the circumstances, it is still more difficult to educate their



children. I would therefore request the Government that free education to these children should be given, whether it is in medical line, engineering line or in I.A.S. line. These children should also be given free books and other amenities.

Another suggestion I would like to mention here, in this august House, is that a woman, whether she is a widow nor not, should not be confined in a room in Police Station for any sort of crime committed by her. In Tamil Nadu, the Chief Minister Dr. M.G. Ramachandran, has issued instructions to all the Police officials not to keep any women in Police custody even for a day. They should be produced directly in the Court for proceeding with their case. I want that this practice should be followed all over the country.

Sir, in Tamil Nadu, about 85 to 90 lakhs of children are getting nutritious food under the scheme introduced by the Tamil Nadu Government. In this about 8 or 9 lakh children are the sons and daughters of widows. These children could join the schools because of availability of food at the Government's cost. In this scheme, about 16,000 women are engaged in Tamil Nadu and a maximum number of widows are engaged in this work.

Sir, for those who come forward to re-marry the widows the Tamil Nadu Government is giving Rs. 5,000 as an incentive and their children's education will be completely taken care of by the Government. The widows of the Government servants or the public sector employees should be employed within a month or at least two months after the death of their husbands. There should not be any delay in providing job to these women. Sir, those who are deserted by their husbands should also be included in this category so that they may also get all the facilities.

Now, under the rule, if a widow re-marries, the pension is stopped. But my plea with the Government is that the pension should not be dispensed with because a young man is coming forward by doing a great sacrifice, to marry a widow. I would

also like to suggest to the Government that such young men should be considered for a grant of Rs. 25,000 so that thousands of widows in our country can get into a new life.

Sir, inspite of the existence of law against the child marriage, it is most unfortunate that child marriages are going on in the country side. This practice should be stopped immediately. This is one of the contributing factors for increase in the number of widows in the villages.

Sir, in our country, there are so many hostels for widows run by some philanthropic organisations as also private organisations. But my request is that the Government should also run many such hostels for widows and these hostels should be manned and managed by women only. The Government should also come forward in giving training to the educated widows so that they may be employed in schools as teachers and in hospitals as nurses. Sir, as the Government is giving reservation quota in government jobs for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other backward communities as also war widows, reservation quota should also be allotted for all the widows in government jobs.

Due to huge demands by way of dowry by many husbands, young house-wives go to extreme step of taking their life. Some deserted women also taken this extreme step. We read in the newspapers about the death of young housewives due to bursting of stove in the kitchen and other accidents. But in this, about 80 per cent to 90 per cent deaths are due to buring by their own husbands and mother-in-laws. These deaths do not at all occur due to accident. They are burnt by their husbands and mother-in-laws. We should therefore take stringent measures to remove the dowry system completely. Therefore, my sincere request to all the women in our country is that they should never think of going to the extreme step of taking their life for not being able to fulfil huge dowry demand or for any reason. They should be bold enough to face any sort of situation at the hands of their husbands and mothers-in-laws and in the event of positive danger to their life. I would like to

[Shri A. C. Shanmugam]

export these young women try to save their life even by going to the extent of attempting their life. When such a situation demands for these young women to resort to this extreme step, the provisions contained in Section 302 IPC should be changed to cover this kind of action. With these words, I thank you, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak on this subject.

**SHRIMATI PRABHAVATI GUPTA** (Motihari) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity given to me to speak on the Bill.

Shri Virdhi Chand Jain has introduced this Bill in the House and it is very important Bill. This Bill is a well thought out Bill and amply presents the agonies and the stigma widows have to face in the society. One thing pains me much. Half of the population consists of women and they have made a great contribution to the building of society. Woman is mother, wife, sister and a friend. She takes the society forward in all respects. It is such an important Bill but has been introduced by a private Member. You can see for yourself how many Hon. Members are taking interest in it. Hon. Members do not want to express their views on this subject. I have tried a cursory glance on the Bill. Shri Daga has said it correctly. His views seem to be timely because today's women are not the women of the bygone era. She is not even that woman about whom the poet Prasad had said in 'Kamayani' :—

*Naari tum keval shradha ho,  
jivan ke antastha mein  
Tum piyush srot si baha karo...*

At present she is self reliant and is contributing her mite in our own country as well as abroad she is making contribution by working shoulder to shoulder with men. In the freedom struggle also, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Shrimati Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Shrimati Aruna Asaf Ali, Shrimati Kamala Nehru and wife of Shri Jai Prakash Narayan and other women have made great contribution. In that era when people liked imported clothes and khadi was not that fine—saree

used to weigh 2 kgs—my mother used to wear a khadi saree. The women at that time boycotted the imported clothes. During the Swaraj Movement, people made bonfire of the imported clothes. Earlier, Rani Laxmi Bai had given the call in the battlefiled and contributed to the country's freedom. Shrimati Subhadra Kumari Chauhan has written :-

*Sinhasan hil uthe,  
rajavanshon ne bhrikuti taani thi,  
Budhe Bharat mein aai  
phir se nai jawani thi,  
Khub ladi mardani veh to  
jhansi vaali raani thi.*

In this way women have been making great contribution earlier also. If we look at the ancient times we find that in the battlefiled queen Kaikayee had actively assisted king Dashratha and had accompanied him there. If we go even earlier we find that during the Vedic period women had been contributing much in the building of the society. In the performance of 'yajnas' etc. women used to participate along with saints and sages in 'aashramas'. It has been written in the Vedas :

*Sam gachhdhvam, sam vadham,  
sam vo manansi jaantaam*

It has been said in the Vedas that we shall walk together, speak together, eat together, work together and take the society forward together. But there came a time before independence, which was a transitional period for women, in which 'purdah' system was in vogue and atrocities were committed on women and even wars were fought over them. Every one knows that for queen Padmini, Chitor was attacked. A poem has been written on that episode :-

*Chittor champak hi raha,  
lakhon Yaman ali ho gaye,  
Dharmarth Haldi Ghati mein,  
kitne suman bali ho gaye.*

All these stories remind us how important has been the contribution of the women. But today we wonder that in the independent India, out of the total population of 75 crores, half the population consists of women and of that 80 per cent women are such who

remain confined to their homes. They are born in a village, are married in the next village, bear the children like a child producing machine, become prematurely old and pass their remaining life in rearing their children. Several women have not seen even a train. They call a bus, which serves even remote areas, as 'hawa garhi'. The condition of the women is very bad and that of widows is still worse. It has been said in the bill that if a woman becomes a widow at the age of 18 and is without any support or a widow has no earning son of 20, then the Government should provide her pension. But why should we not demand that the widows who are not old and are physically fit to work should be provided Government jobs on priority basis in every field and this is my demand.

6.30 hrs.

[SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI  
in the Chair]

Madam Chairman, our Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi has paid more attention towards women's plight and he has constituted a separate Ministry to solve the problems of women. We hope that under his leadership the women will march forward and they are marching forward. We are happy and feel proud that the Hon. Prime Minister has inducted 8 women Ministers in his Council of Ministers and all these women Ministers are competent in their own way and are working efficiently. But at the same time we face different types of problems. For example, take the 20 Point Programme. Will you tell us as to how many women have been provided loans under RDP? The Minister in charge of this Department is also a woman. In addition to this, I am a Member of a Parliamentary Committee also. I get chances to go to far off areas of the country to attend important meetings and to elicit information from senior Government officers. On the basis of all these things I have come to know that the women have got only negligible benefit from our Plans and Schemes. Incidentally, the Rural Development Secretary too is a woman and when once I asked her whether her Department had issued instructions that women should be included in the list of beneficiaries in due proportion, she replied in

affirmative and said that they have issued instructions that at least 30 per cent women should be included in the list of beneficiaries. But we have nowthere seen these instructions being implemented. I do not know about the other States but I know about Bihar where the percentage of women in the list of beneficiaries is just 3 per cent. Therefore, I would suggest that this Bill may be adopted. If it is not possible, then a Bill should be introduced from the Government side which may provide that handicapped, weak and old women will get a minimum pension of Rs. 100 because Rs. 75 per month is quite less and inadequate. This much provision must be made for the destitute women. Our girls even after passing M.A. or getting some training remain unemployed. They do not get any priority in the matter of employment by the State Governments. I suggest that the Central Government should issue directions to all the State Governments that the women who are at par with men in all respects in the matter of eligibility and qualification should be given priority in all types of employments. This provision should be applicable in the case of widows also. In the end, I would conclude with the follows couplet :

*Naari ka tan muam ka tan hai,  
jaati desh ke liya vlnirmit,  
Naari deh shikha hai  
jo navdevon ke navdeep sanjoti hai.*

With these words I wholeheartedly support this Bill. I not only hope but am fully confident and wish that the Minister of State will pay attention to these problems. If you are not in a position to accept Shri Jain's Bill, you can bring a Bill from the Government side for the upliftment of women to provide them employment and to bring them at par with men so that they may get an important place in the society and are benefited in every respect. Otherwise, the Government has done a lot of work for women for which I am grateful, particularly to the Hon. Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

SHRI ANOOPCHAND SHAH (Bombay North) : Madam Chairman, I rise to support the Bill presented by the Hon. Member Shri Viridhi Chander Jain in regard to pension to widows. While supporting it, my attention goes to the speech of our elderly Member,

[Shri Anoopchand Shah]

Shri Mool Chand Daga in which he pointed out two or three things. I have seen his amendments also. I concede that before introducing this Bill in the House, Shri Jain must have drafted it himself. Its drafting has not been done at Government level. Therefore, there can be certain shortcomings and mistakes in this Bill. But the spirit with which Shri Jain introduced this Bill and respect and goodwill he has towards the widows, is commendable and I thank him for that.

In some of the States of our country, provision of pension to the destitute widows already exists. In Maharashtra, a monthly pension of Rs. 60/- is paid to those destitutes and widows who have no other source of income.

So far as widows are concerned, you have prescribed an age limit of 18 years in the Bill, the reason therefore appears to be that legally the age of consent for women is 18 years, and you want the Government to take the responsibility of only those widows who were married according to law.

As Hon. Shri Dagaji has already mentioned, I would also say that I want a clarification regarding this issue, and I think that perhaps you have prescribed the age limit of 18 years for the same reason.

Shrimati Prabhawati Gupta has given a very good description of the position of women in our country. But even today, we restrict ourselves to merely singing eulogies in their name and delivering long lectures, in their support. Do we want that the widows should approach the influential people of our society and beg them to pay attention to their plight and provide them succour from some trust? Do not such people exist in our society even today who would stoop to any level to make demands from those women in return for their help. We are all aware of it. There is a need for providing certain kinds of facilities to the destitute widows so that they can lead their life decently. If some women have been widowed in their youth, then there can be two or three solutions of their problems. If these women want to start their industry or business and contribute to the development of the country, then such women must be

encouraged to do so, and the Government should provide them with the necessary loan on a priority basis to enable them to make both ends meet. Pension must be awarded to only those widows who are physically handicapped to do any work.

When today we talk about the welfare State and about the welfare of our women, then we should also consider our widows and the circumstances in which they are surviving. We are only talking in terms of big cities like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras etc. when we claim that women have made much progress and that payment of pension to women tanta-mounts to insult to the society. But the situation is not the same in our small villages and towns. You should see the plight of widows there and how many of them approach the influential persons of the society or the managers of the trusts in order to seek help from them? Do we want that even after so many years of independence, our widowed sisters should approach influential people with a begging bowl in order to seek a pittance for their subsistence? If we do not want it and if the Government thinks that the spirit with which the Bill has been introduced by Shri Virdhi Chand Jain is right then it should itself bring a Bill just as it had introduced the Muslim Women Protection Bill earlier. That Bill was first introduced by a Private Member and was then withdrawn.

The Bill introduced by Virdhi Chander Jain in the House reminds us that it is the responsibility of all of us to take some steps for the welfare of our widowed sisters.

If we do not fulfil our responsibility, then the people of the country will never forgive us. They will say that the Government of this country has not done anything for them. Therefore, I would request the Hon. Minister that the House should be assured that necessary efforts will be made in this direction with the same spirit with which the Bill was introduced. Therefore, after adequate deliberations, the Government must bring a comprehensive Bill on this subject.

I greatly value the Bill presented by Hon. Shri Virdhi Chander Jain. I also hope that the Government will assure us in this regard, and after considering the matter, it would

bring a comprehensive Bill in the House. With these words, I conclude.

SHRI C. JANGA REDDY (Hanamkonda): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to support the Bill introduced by my friend, Shri Virdhi Chander Jain.

You are aware that in Andhra Pradesh some new laws have been passed to uplift the women in the State including a pension for widows. The amount of this pension has been fixed between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100. Although this is a negligible amount, yet it should be welcomed because it has been allotted for the amelioration of women.

Again, under the Hindu Succession Act, women do not have the right to property of their ancestors. But the Government of Andhra Pradesh is going to give equal rights to women in this respect. In the State services, there should also be a reservation of 30 per cent for women. In this way the Government of Andhra Pradesh is making much efforts to improve the lot of women. The Centre should also take steps to make women self reliant.

I feel that under the Widow Pension Bill, the Government must prescribe some age limit as a criterion for providing pension to the widows. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Prakasam Pantullu had made significant contribution for the upliftment of women. Therefore, I feel that the Government should encourage remarriage of those widows, who are between 18 and 35 years of age. I want that the Government should bring a Bill to provide pension to widows but there must be some age limit. It is important that the Government must bring this kind of legislation. We are proud of the fact that we had a woman Prime Minister and as the same lady's son is the Prime Minister today, the Government must consider the issues regarding women seriously and take up the work in its own hands.

Just now our friend had informed us that in the State of Tamil Nadu, the women are neither arrested nor produced in police stations; they receive the summon direct from the court. This practice should be followed everywhere. In Andhra Pradesh, we have

seen that if women go to a Police Station to lodge a complaint, there have been instances where they have been molested or even raped. This question has been raised several times in the State Assembly. During Shri Chenna Reddy's tenure as chief Minister, there was a strong agitation because a woman was raped inside a Police Station. The police had also fired at the crowd which had gathered to agitate and some people were also killed. The matter was taken to court and a judgement was given. But no action has yet been taken on that judgement so far. Similar cases have occurred in other areas as well, and are still continuing. The Police personnel themselves rape the women. The Tamil Nadu Government has issued orders prohibiting the arrest of women holding them in the police custody. The Centre should also take similar steps and award severe punishment to the culprits. Deterrent punishment should be given in cases where the custodians of law themselves turn criminals when people come to them to seek justice.

Along with this, I would request that the women should be encouraged to start cottage industries under the IRDP and under other Self-employment Schemes for the rural areas. The Government should open animal husbandry Centres to provide employment to women. The Government should also encourage the widows by purchasing their products. The widows may be provided with work like making of files paper bags etc. In this way we can provide security to women by providing them means of livelihood.

In the rural areas, the widows can find work in the fields only for a period of 6 months in a year. They are not able to get any work during the summer months. In the olden days, women—whether widows or housewives—used to earn Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 everyday by spinning khadi yarn. But today, very few people wear khadi. Some of our friends were saying that even the Congressmen have stopped wearing khadi. Industries like khadi, handlooms should be encouraged and some reservation should be made for women in the matter of employment in these units. It is important to make reservations for women in jobs like spindle threading, spinning and similar jobs. The

[Shri C. Janga Reddy]

women in the rural areas provide great help in agricultural production. We must do something for the old and infirm women and other women in the age group 35-50 years who cannot work. Just now my friend told that women do domestic chores such as dish washing, cleaning. They should be trained in cottage industries to prevent them from doing this type of work. They should be engaged in such industries like readymade garments which can be carried on in their homes. It is correct that the Government cannot pay pension to such a large number but this provision is necessary for the infirm and handicapped women. The Government should bear the full expenditure on the education of the minor children whose mothers' own no property and have no source of income. The Government should take such steps to provide security to women.

I support the Bill introduced by the Hon. Member for the consideration of the House. I would request the Government to formulate a Bill for the protection, progress and welfare of women just as there is one in Andhra Pradesh. If a comprehensive Bill on the same pattern is passed by the House then it can lead to the progress of women.

DR. G. S. RAJHANS (Jhanjharpur). Madam Chairman, the plight of women and particularly that of the poor and the destitute in the society is so miserable that it cannot be described in words. The widows in the Western India and specially in Delhi, Punjab and neighbouring areas are remarried in most of the cases. But in the eastern region, no widow is remarried. If some woman is widowed in the prime of her youth then her rest of the life proves to be a curse. The society shuns them in the belief that she must have committed some sin in her previous life and as a result of which she has become a widow at such an early age. Many women have to undergo mental torture of the worst order. She faces difficulties in her house, society and everywhere. She finds no place in her husband's house because of the superstition that she has caused the death of her husband. The financial condition of her parents does not allow them to sustain her. Even if the father makes some arrangement for his widowed daughter during his

life time, the brothers do not want to keep her with them after his death. The result is that she has to lead a life of a destitute. We vehemently criticise apartheid but it is present even in our own society. No one pays attention to the apartheid being practised in our own homes. This problem has been continuing for centuries and will continue in future also. Perhaps we shall not be able to grant the widows the right to a decent life in the society despite all our propagation of socialism and equal opportunity to all. Raja Ram Mohan Roy made efforts and since then efforts have been made in this direction but during the last 100 years we could not make any headway. What to speak of the 20th century, I think the condition of the widows in the villages will not improve even up to the 22nd century and will remain the same as was 100 years ago. I want to say this much that we can at least mitigate their difficulties if not remove them completely. We should give them the right to lead a decent life. A widow from an affluent family cannot work in the fields and young widows in particular have to face the taunts of the people. They are not allowed even to spin cotton or work in some cottage industry. The Bill presented by Shri Jain is really commendable. The helpless widows have been granted pension in Bihar but there is large scale corruption in the matter of granting pensions. In fact the deserving ones do not get it and other persons grab the pension by forging signatures. Besides, the amount of pension is so small i.e. about Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 per month that it is hardly sufficient to sustain life. Even this small amount of Rs. 20 or Rs. 25 is not paid regularly. So I ask the Central Government to take some bold and courageous step to allow a respectable life to the widows who are looked down upon by the society. They should be granted some substantial pension so that they are not turned out of their houses. It is well known that when an old man retires, his sons take great care of him because of his provident fund and gratuity. But as soon as they know about the absence of this amount they turn him out and hope for his early demise. If a widow also is paid a pension of Rs. 250 to Rs. 300, she would be welcomed both by her in-laws as well as parents and in this manner she can lead a respectable life. I would say that some radical changes are called for in our society. I repeat my comment in the House that this country is

divided into two parts. One part is India inhabited by the elite and the second is Bharat inhabited by poor people like us. This Bharat lives in villages. The residents of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras cannot think of the plight of women in villages. The people there lead a sub human existence. The people in the foothills of Nepal shiver in the winter without any clothes. They do not have any clothes to cover their bodies. This is the condition of the men there and the condition of women is still worse. A widow there has only two options. Either she should commit suicide or tread a wrong path. Some years back Sharat Chandra and Bankim Chandra, the great novelist of Bengal depicted the true picture of widows in their novels,

17.00 hrs.

Sharat Chandra has portrayed the society in its true form and has depicted how a widow dies a slow and tortuous death. You go to Brindavan and you will find how very young widows of 16 to 25 years of age from eastern India are leading a subhuman existence. The widows from good families visit temples in the morning and beg for the rest of the day. There is a superstition that they have become widows in such a young age because they must have sinned in their previous life. Who has seen his previous life. This theory of previous life is the creation of the so called custodians of the society. We shall not be fair to women if we heed the advice of these custodians of the society and tell these women that it is their fate to suffer and beg. I urge the Hon. Minister that it is a very serious problem and the Government should bring some comprehensive Bill. Everyone in the country is praising the progressive steps of the Government and the Government should, therefore, bring a comprehensive Bill to grant the right of a respectable life to women. The problems of the widows and the destitute women are very serious. It is a very big social evil and collective efforts can only remove it. Our discussions and speeches will not solve this problem. Therefore, I fully support the Bill presented by Shri Jain and I want that the minimum pension of the destitute widows should be Rs. 500 per month.

(English)

SHRI GADADHAR SAHA (Birbhum) :  
rise to support Hon. Member Shri V. C.

Jain's Bill and the spirit and the intention of this Bill. Today there is no specific proposal before the Government for Widows' pension. There is no special, separate allotment of fund by the Central Government for this purpose. So, the Hon. Member has brought forward this Bill before the House to draw the attention of this Parliament and the Government to this serious problem. The care of the aged and their moral and economic support was not a serious problem in the past. Because, in the past, the joint family system was there. And it was the main source of care and material and moral support for the aged people. But that very system which provided social material and moral values, has been pushed out of its existence due to the present economic pressures, abject poverty among the masses of the people and quick industrialisation and urbanisation in India. And, as a result, we have got concentration of economic power in a few hands and the poverty of our masses due to Government's wrong policy, which is the direct result of this industrialisation and concentration of economic power. So, the care for the aged assumed great importance and therefore, the question of importance of social security measures and welfare measures for the old destitute persons and specially for the destitute widows is recognised. And the argument that is here is very clear because the poor destitute woman who has lost her husband, has lost her only support. One thing is, as a social security measure there is an old age destitute pension scheme throughout the country except in the Indian Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh. This old age pension includes pension to the old destitute widows aged to and above but the problem is that it excludes all those destitute helpless widows who lost their husbands in tender age, and now the legally recognised age of marriage is 18. So, the question is very important in the background that many women who have lost their husbands have no source of income, which involves helplessness, loneliness, and destitution. In this background the State should provide this pension. But so long there is no proposal for payment of pension to the widows except the destitute old widows. So the question to cover the destitute widows who are not aged 60 and above assumes importance.

The second argument is that it is based on suggestions of Social Welfare Ministers'

[Shri Gadadhar Saha]

Conference. The Conference of Social Welfare Ministers two years ago suggested that the eligibility age in the case of destitute widows be reduced to 50 and oldage Pension Scheme be extended and linked to cost of living. But what will happen to those widows below 50, who have income, no relatives adult children to depend upon for their livelihood? That is why the mover of the Bill comes before the House with this Bill.

This third provision is for increasing the rate of pension. You all know that old age destitute pension is in operation throughout India except in one Union Territory, viz, Arunachal Pradesh. But the existing rate of pension is and varies between 14.30 and 60. In these days of high inflation and high cost of living, this amount is too meagre and too small. So, the mover of the Bill makes a provision in the Bill for payment of Rs. 75 to Rs. 125 per month to destitute widow, above the age of 18. And this minimum amount should reasonably be paid to them.

The VII Finance Commission allowed provision for each State from 1979-84 to enable it to pay Rs. 60/- per head by way of old age pension, to approximately 0.1 per cent of population, on the basis of 1971 census. And the old age pension that is in operation to cover this population involves an expenditure of Rs. 264.8 crores for 5 years.

The Ministry of Social Welfare submitted to the VIII Finance Commission a memorandum requesting that adequate funds be provided to the State Governments for implementing the schemes of social security and social welfare including old age pension in which old destitute widows, who are 60 and above are covered. The intention of the Bill is to cover all destitute widows above 18. Therefore, a comprehensive Bill may be brought forward so that the problem of all destitute widows might be solved. Introduction of this scheme on All India basis on uniform pattern is possible. All the destitute widows above the age of 18 should get sufficient relief employment assistance under the provision. There is

every reason to support all the provisions of the Bill. So, I think that the Government should come forward with a comprehensive Bill so that all the destitute widows get this relief and the incidence of prostitution that is growing in the society can have no place in our society.

[*Translation*]

SHRI P. NAMGYAL (Ladakh) :  
Madam Chairman, I support the Widows Pension Bill introduced by Shri Viridhi Chander Jain. We have different communities and regions in our country and the customs vary from place to place. This problem is particularly acute in the majority community of our country. If a young woman is widowed, her remarriage poses a number of problems.

There are some social reasons also. As some of the Members had said, a stigma is also attached to widowhood and as a result she cannot get remarried. I hail from a very backward area from educational point of view and otherwise also but these evils are not in Ladakh. The social evils of dowry and restraint on widow remarriage are not there in our area. In my area, no demand is made for dowry from the girl's parents. The dowry seekers are socially boycotted. I think we are much advanced in relation to some matters. If at all there is an instance where dowry is demanded, it is looked down upon and we try to know why he is demanding dowry.

I believe that Shri Jain has done a commendable job by presenting this Widow Pension Bill. But I have not been able to understand the provision in section 3 about sons. The widow may also have a daughter and the problem will be more serious in case of a girl. If she has a son then after a certain period the widow can easily sustain herself. I would like to know from Shri Jain about his views in this regard.

The amount of pension under section 6 is Rs. 75 to Rs. 125. I believe that it is very difficult to live on such a small amount in this period of inflation.



[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Because the time is over, we have to extend the time. Is it the opinion of the House to extend the time of the House? There are three or four Members to speak. Shall I extend the time?

MANY HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The time is extended up to 6 O'clock.

[Translation]

SHRI P. NAMGYAL : In my opinion the proposed amount of pension is on the lower side. It should be somewhat more because in this time of high prices the amount of Rs. 75 is a pittance. Besides, the clause that a widow having an income of more than Rs. 1200 will not be eligible should be deleted. This Bill would, of course, be withdrawn but the Government must keep it in mind so that they may bring a comprehensive Bill in this regard.

I consider that the amount of the pension which has been fixed is less. The limit should also be increased. Other Hon. Members have spoken on it. I conclude my speech and convey my thanks to you for giving me time.

SHRI M. L. JHIKRAM (Mandla) : Madan Chairman, I convey my gratitude to you for giving me an opportunity to speak on the Widows' Pension Bill. I also convey my gratitude to Shri Jain for introducing such a commendable Bill. I respect his sentiments.

In the Indian society, women have always been respected. The people have always held them in high esteem, so much so that it has been said that Gods dwell where women are honoured. In this way, from days gone by women have always been respected and honoured and are honoured even now. They have a respectable place in our society. But now some evils have crept into our society that the respect towards women is waning gradually. Women made a great contribution to the freedom struggle and also

contributed to the progress of the society. In every field they worked shoulder to shoulder with others and have remained in the forefront. So, they have a right to expect that the Government should provide them with employment just as they feel it to be their responsibility to provide employment to men. The Government has also kept this in mind. I would not say much on the subject because many Hon. Members have expressed their opinion on this subject.

Madam Chairman, I would like to express my views in regard to the plight of women of villages because I represent a backward area which is known as an Adivasi area. Women have, of course, a respectable place in our society but in the Adivasi society they enjoy a still better place because there is no dowry practice there. They are backward and belong to the backward area but their ideas are praiseworthy. No one can think of accepting money from the parents of the girl who is to be married. On the other hand the people try to help them with food-grains, money and other things.

There is no restriction by Government on production of alcohol in the Adivasi areas and this has ruined men there. They neither work nor go for any job. The women looks after her house, family and fends for her children as long as her body allows. But when she becomes old and is not capable of doing any work, her children desert her. Under such circumstances the condition of the poor widow becomes deplorable.

17.25 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The proposed pension of Rs. 60 is too meagre to meet any requirement in the present time. This amount should be at least Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 so that she may be able to fend for herself in these days of high prices.

The Hon. Members have raised a number of points. I would like that the rate of pension be increased. I think the Hon. Member, Shri Virdhi Chander Jain has expressed his feelings through the Bill. The Government should introduce a Bill on this issue so as provide maximum possible benefit to the widows.

**SHRI BANWARI LAL BAIRWA** (Tonk) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate Shri Jain that he has expressed his sentiments in regard to the welfare of the widows through this Bill. He has expressed his views in regard to that section of the society which is steeped in outdated customs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the Government take steps for those children who have become mentally retarded, handicapped and infirm, it is for the welfare of the people. The Government should do something for them so that they may lead their lives comfortably. When a woman is widowed, it is a bolt from the blue and it is difficult to describe in words the shock she has received. When a woman becomes a widow, there is a change in the attitude and behaviour of the people towards her. In such a situation the Government should do something to retrieve her from this position. She should be given the same place in society as is due to a human being.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, however in the history of the world a lot has been said about women. But after this moment when she becomes a widow, her condition becomes so pitiable that it is beyond words. She becomes helpless and destitute. It would be a right step if the Government does something for them. Shri Jain has done the right thing by bringing such a Bill in the House. I think he has drafted this Bill in haste. I would request the Government to introduce the Bill on their own which may be a comprehensive one.

The Bill, which has been brought here pertains to the grant of pension to widows. I think it is not proper to lay down condition as to which widow should be granted pension and which should not or in which condition or to which section should it be granted. Secondly, it is not proper to lay down condition that if the widow has a twenty year old boy, she should not be granted pension. A twenty year old boy is a child when he is supposed to pursue his studies. If she has two more children besides the twenty year old boy, what will she do and how will she be able to provide them education. It is the policy of the Government to propagate literacy and check the

dropout rate. The boy who is twenty years of age may be pursuing his studies and if the pension is stopped when he is twenty years of age, the education of that boy will have to be discontinued. He will have to discontinue his education so that he may look after his mother. So I would suggest that the pension to the widow should be continued so that he may complete his education. As such this condition should not be there.

Secondly, if that woman is a working lady, she has social obligations to fulfil too. So to meet such obligations, pension should be continued. It will help her to a great extent. I would like to say one more thing. Widowhood itself lowers the status of a woman in the society and the pension is being paid to her to compensate her. She should, therefore, be granted pension unconditionally. You can put a restriction that pension should not be granted to those widows who are income tax payers. Those widows, who are well off will not come forward to draw pension but you should keep the option open for them. If they want, they may draw the pension. Pension should be given to everyone irrespective of the caste, community to which they belong so that they may be able to look after themselves and meet their responsibilities. The proviso given in it is redundant; pension once given should be continued.

In the Bill, it is proposed to give pension ranging from Rs. 75 to Rs. 125. This is not sufficient. Taking into consideration the present conditions and rising prices, this amount should be increased so that she may be in a position to meet her needs regarding food and clothes and may be able live honourably in the society. If her economic condition is sound, she will not come in person to draw her pension. I would also like to say that in the matter of granting pension all should be treated equally and no discrimination should be made in this respect and the quantum of pension should be sufficient to enable her to meet her needs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has been said that the customs and traditions in affluent families are quite different from the customs in the adivasi areas, rural areas and among scheduled castes. But in this respect,

I would like to say that the plight of all the widows is the same. The conservative outlook of the people in the society applies to all women whether they belong to rural areas, Harijan or Adivasis families and all of them are treated in the same manner. I would, therefore, like to say that all the widows should be granted pension so that they may lead their lives with honour.

With these words, I express my thanks to Shri Jain who introduced this Bill. The Hon. Minister is present here. I would request him to bring a Comprehensive Bill which may incorporate all these points. With these words, I conclude.

**SHRI RAM PYARE PANIKA** (Robests-ganj) : I wholeheartedly support the Widows Pension Bill presented by Shri Virldhi Chander Jain. I also thank him because he has brought the Bill moved by the plight of the widows in our country and with this Bill he has drawn the attention of the entire country towards their miserable condition.

Sir, it is an irony that in a country where place of women has been quite high not only now but from time immemorial in the Vedas, Upnishads, Puranas and Mahabharata, there have been contradictions also, particularly in Ram Charit Manas where Tulsidas has depicted them in a humiliating way at several places. At three or four places he has written :

*Dhol, ganwar, shudra, pashu, naari*

Not only this, he has also written :

*Avgun aath sada ur rah-hin*

Further,

*Jimi swantantra hoi bigrahin naari*

You can see the contradiction in the matter of women. On the one hand they have been placed on a very high pedestal, on the other hand they have been humiliated at various places. Not only this, superstition has reached a stage when the widows are not allowed to enter a place where any auspicious work is being done. During marriage ceremonies, they are isolated and confined to

a separate cellar. They are not permitted to go to a place where worshipping is done. In nutshell, the life of the widows is full of insult and humiliation.

Regarding the Bill, I want to say that here mention has been made of 18 year old widows. In a country where we live, six months' old children are married in certain communities of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and they are not remarried even if they become widows at a tender age. Just imagine the plight of such people. Even after 40 years of independence we have not paid attention to this aspect. The year of the women was celebrated but during that year also no attention was paid towards them. In certain States like U.P. there is provision of pension of Rs. 70 for them but such conditions are imposed that not even 10 per cent women are not getting the pension. Therefore, I want that provision should be made in the Bill that every widow shall be entitled to pension. Earlier, when there used to be joint family system there was not much to worry. Therefore, the condition that you are putting in regard to the son being 20 years old, is also not right. Nowadays immediately after marriage the children start living separately. If the daughter-in-law is quarrelsome, she cares a fig for her mother-in-law. Therefore, there should not be any condition. The only condition should be that a widow who has no means of livelihood will get the pension. Rs. 125 is a pittance these days. She should get a pension of Rs. 500 so that she is not a burden. The widows who are young, can do work and can join service should be taken into service. If they are not much educated or are illiterate, they can be recruited as class IV employees. They should be given one per cent reservation in the services like the reservation given to the dependents of freedom fighters, ex-servicemen, and the handicapped. The women who are provided employment need not be given the pension. Similarly, under the poverty eradication programmes at least 10 per cent benefit should go to them as has been fixed for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. On the same lines, in the Development programmes, those women who can be benefited from that should have a reservation of 5 to 10 per cent. In this way they will be able to become self-reliant. Not only this, minor children of the widows should get scholarships, books, dresses etc.

[Shri Ram Pyare Panika]

for their education so that those women have not be face humiliation in the society.

Their humaliation is not confined to religious bigotry or superstition; certain anti-social elements in the country also take undue advantage of their condition. It is a very difficult problem and we should resolve this problem.

Not taking much time I support the Bill presented by Shri Jain and want that the Government should definitely bring a Bill, if not in this session, during the next Budget session so that the widows are able to lead a respectable life and they may get a place in the society and also the humiliating behaviour being meted out to them for centuries is stopped.

**SHRI MOHD. AYUB KHAN** (Jhunjhunu) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I fully support the Bill presented by Shri Viridhi Chander Jain. At the same time I do not agree to his proposal of only the pension to the widows. He should have proposed that there should be a law to ensure that the widows do not remain widows. Only that woman should remain a widow who is quite old. Every widow should have the right to marry. I come from Rajasthan. At the place where I was born even today widows are not remarried. I would request that there should be a law under which a provision should be made that a person who marries a widow will be amply rewarded so that people may come forward to marry widows and the society may give them respect. Our gods and 'peers' married widows. The first wife of respected Muhammadur Rasulallah Sallalah Sleh Vasilam was a widow, whose name was Khatija Rajiallah Tayalla Anho. Marriage to a widow is a sacred act which takes one to heaven. We have given respect to women in every age. People think that even the shadow of a widow should not fall on their house. The parents think that if they marry their widowed daughter it will be dishonourable for them. A law should be enacted to ensure that they are not looked down upon. If such a law is enacted then there is no reason why people should not come forward for marrying the widows and our country

should not make progress. We should show respect to our mothers, sisters and other women not in words but in deeds so that no religion comes in our way. The amount proposed by Shri Jain for pension is very less. It should be at least Rs. 1000. Shri Jain is talking of giving Rs. 160 only. Nowadays, what can you do with Rs. 160, I request that if not one thousand, it should at least be Rs. 500. The country is going to enter the 21st century. They should feel that they are in fact living in a free country. The sacrifice made by the people of this country during the freedom struggle is unique in the history of the world. Even at the gallows the martyres raised their voice against the foreign rule and slavery. Such were the people who had attained freedom for us. Will not the women of that free country get a place of respect there. I am sorry that Shri Jain has proposed the amount of pension as Rs. 160 only. It is our duty that we should encourage such women by giving their children free education, by providing them houses and pension of at least Rs. 500. What these words I conclude.

**\*SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI** (Bellary) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wholeheartedly support the Bill introduced by Shri Jain which seeks to provide for payment of pension to destitute widows.

Even today many cruel customs are in vogue in our country. Dowry system, Devadasi system and many other age old and blind customs have deteriorated the position of women in our society. Even now, in several parts of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh women are dragged into the cruel practice of prostitution in the name of God. We have tried through several ways to root out this heinous custom from our society. Women from very poor families are the main victims of this custom. I want to know from the Hon. Minister the various steps taken by her Ministry to wipe out this custom. In Karantaka there are laws to abolish this practice completely. The State has also taken several measures to look after the children of devadasis and other destitute children.

---

\*The speech was originally delivered in Kannda

Unfortunately, inspite of all these measures exploitation of women has not stopped. Dowry, child marriage and other traditional customs are still continuing. There is a law prohibiting child marriage. There is punishment also for child marriage. Expenditure on marriage has also gone sky high. Even then the child marriage is going on unabated especially in rural areas. There cannot be any progress among women unless these evil customs are put to halt. If we want to respect our women and if we are serious about the women's emancipation then first of all we have to demolish all these cruel practices.

Recently I have come across an article in 'India Today' According to that article about 60,000 female children have been killed so far in one of areas of Madurai district of Tamilnadu. The people of this area somehow tolerate the first female child. If the second and subsequent children are also females then they plan immediately to kill those children. Some kind of hay or cloth will be put in the mouth of the child to make it impossible to breathe. Naturally the child dies immediately. The other method adopted to kill the children is to give poison. It is reliably learnt that the horror of dowry system and the costly affair of marriage have forced the people of that area to adopt this method to do away with the female children. The Government must be knowing about this strange and the most cruel practice. If the information has not reached the Government I request the Hon. Minister to get all the information from that area and to take suitable and immediate action in this regard.

Our Hon. Prime Minister has made special arrangements for the development of women. There are several relief measures for the destitute women. This is not at all sufficient. The emancipation of women in our country depends upon the liberation of women from the clutches of these traditional and cruel practices.

Various States have various measures to help the suffering women. Widow pension, relief to the pregnant women and relief to the handicapped women are provided in some States. The Amount that is provided for relief is very meagre. In my opinion

these measures have not helped many of the needy women. How many rural women have received the full amount for adopting I.U.C. There is large scale misappropriation of money. Therefore, the Government should find out the misappropriation and appropriate action must be taken. Arrangement must be made to see that the amount reaches the person directly. Misappropriation has to be completely removed, with regard to payment to old age pensioners, handicapped persons etc. The Government should ask the Banks to make the payment compulsorily to the needy persons. At the same time I request the Hon. Minister to increase the relief amount of rupees 60/- to at least rupees 100/-.

Many Widows have lost their lands after the implementation of land reforms Act. Tenancy act is there but according to law she cannot take up cultivation. In such cases she should be allowed to lease the land. The unfortunate widows who have lost their lands must get relief directly. In fact this system is in vogue in some of the States.

I am happy that our Central Government is encouraging inter-State and Widow marriages. I request the Hon. Minister to conduct a comprehensive survey about the Widows throughout the country. On the basis of the statistics of educated, uneducated, very poor widows the rehabilitation programme must be taken up. At present in rural areas educated widows are rehabilitated through NREP, primary schools etc. to improve their financial position. Another very important problem is to rehabilitate the uneducated widows. Our Government is trying its best to expand and improve the public distribution system. Therefore I suggest that these destitute widows must be engaged in public distribution system and in the primary educational institutions. This will not only improve the efficiency and popularise our public distribution system but will also serve as a better rehabilitation programme.

I request the Hon. Minister Shrimati Margaret Alva to take more interest about the rehabilitation of destitute women and to work very hard for the emancipation of destitute women during her term as the Minister. Due to the influence of urbanisa-

[Shrimati Basavarajeswari]

tion, modernisation and foreign culture our joint families have been broken into very small families. Therefore there is great need to rescue destitute women from collapse. I hope our Government would do the needful in this regard and protect the poor women of this country.

I welcome and support Shri Jain's bill. I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak and with these words I conclude my speech.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS AND WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Bill has been discussed. I am just beginning to intervene. I don't think there is enough time for me to say what I would like to say. The Bill, as envisaged by the Hon. member, would require an outlay of Rs. 600 crores a year and I am just telling him that the total budget of the Department of Women and Child Welfare for the entire 7th Plan period is Rs. 738 crores. If you want me to give Rs. 600 out of this only for widow pension, I would like to know what kind of developmental activities one could work out with the balance of the Rs. 118 crores which has been given to us. I would like to say that the new thrusts as far as women programmes are concerned are now shifting from welfare measures to developmental activities. I am certainly one who realises the conditions in which Indian women as a whole, not only widows are placed. There is a big gap that exists between urban women and the rural women, which members have spoken about, the big gap between educated and the uneducated, and the general lack of awareness among women even about the basic rights which they are entitled to, and therefore while we are talking about helping women I think one has got to take a long range view of women development itself. Unless we can educate our women, give them equal opportunities and opportunities for employment which we have to create, there is no point in believing that just giving a pension of Rs. 125/- to live or to carry on with her family in the sense of looking after children, herself and everything, is something to expect, I think the impossible. Secondly, the Bill says about the pension to

the widows from the age of 18. Now, if you think of giving pension to every able-bodied woman from the age of 18 onwards, I think it is a wrong approach to raising the very status of women. I can understand and many State Governments do have programmes for pension for the persons above 60. I would say that even above 55 for women is something which the State Governments are doing now, and which is helping very many women because they have no one to look after them and because they are too old to work. But to say that even women, girls 18, 20, 25 should be told that because they have lost their husbands, they are now useless, they cannot do anything, they must begin welfare, they must be given pension and that sort of a thing is, I think, to completely negate the very concept of treating women as human resource which is our new sort of approach to women development programmes. I would like to say that we have from the Ministry introduced very many new programmes which members have been suggesting. Probably they are not aware of many of the programmes which we have introduced for women. But you yourself have pointed out about the problems which exist. Most of these programmes have to be implemented through the State Governments. We give money; we give programmes; but the programme implementation machinery is with the State Governments. Therefore, to say that we have done this in Andhra Pradesh and we have done this in Tamilnadu and you are not doing anything is I think being rather unfair to us. I can tell you that many of the programmes which you have talked about are actually Central schemes which are funded by us, but we do not have the machinery to carry out all the programmes. We have the Central Social Welfare Board; we have the State Social Welfare Board; and through the State Board, Central Social Welfare Board, which is totally funded by my Ministry, gives schemes and programmes to voluntary organisation, to local bodies, to State Governments to implement programmes. I can give you details of what we have. But for lack of time I am not doing that ..

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I think, you can continue your speech next time.

18.01 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, August 20, 1986/Sravana 29, 1908 (Saka)*