

I am wrong. I think, it was only Rs. 600 crores. But this amount of Rs. 600 crores is the initial value of the project cost. Total estimated value today being Rs. 1500 crores. A peculiar thing has happened. This LCA was under development in HAL first and they could not get anywhere because of the fact that the design engineer there, rather the Managing Director of the Desing Department, was found to be a person who was not a person he claimed himself to be in the sense that he was a person who did not have the Degree which he claimed to have. This has all come out in the Rajya Sabha question-answer. Of course, Mr. Rao has said that he has the Degree that he claims to have. But I have with me a copy of the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.'s list of officers whee the Degrees are given. One of the qualification claimed is Diploma from Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, in aeronautics and there is also copy of a letter with me—I will lay it on the Table of the House—which says that there was no such person by that name. I am not naming him now because I have not given notice. But by that name, they say, there was no such preson. Therefore, this was a fraud and because of that there has been no development. And the person who could develop and who worked under him has been suppressed all along. An advanced Jet trainer aircraft has been designed and its documentations submitted to Government in July, 1984. This trainer aircraft is what our capability will allow us to manufacture. I am laying a photostat of the model on the Table of the House. But, since it will overshadow the LCA, it has not been allowed to be manufactured. On the other hand, this person—I am not naming him—this fraudulent person, is being kept associated. A new agency has been created called the Aeronautical Development Agency registered as an autonomous society. It is that Society which will now oversee the entire project; whatever the HAL and other combinations which come into it do will all be supervised by this Agency.

The Defence Minister has stated in the Rajya Sabha that there is no such person associated with ADA. It is not correct. The Defence Minister will kindly make an inquiry. I am laying this on the Table of the House which show the person's name—it is marked

here—and says that he has no degree or diploma from the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, that there was no such student on their rolls. But he is still kept associated with HAL. In HAL's latest telephone directory his name is there to show that he is in that project; he sits in HAL, he has his office there. I am also laying a copy on the Table of the House. So, it was not correct to deny that he is not associated with this project. Look at the way people are going about and shopping around in the world trying to buy an engine from here, and

18.00 hrs.

a radar from here and avionics from there and then combine them. This will never go through. Ultimately what will happen? We will get a collaboration. Already we have spent Rs. 2 crores for getting the feasibility report from abroad and we shall end up by buying this like we end up by buying everything else during the last few years. This has to be stopped. There must be self-reliance in our defence. R and D is not only a question of money. It is a question of recruiting the right people and getting rid of the coterie which to-day rules the R and D. You must get rid of the coterie. Otherwise this country is in for trouble. We cannot go on spending crores of rupees in importing know-how. Foreign exchange is precious. Therefore, we must build up our capability through proper R and D.

18.01 hrs.

DISCUSSION RE: PROGRESS OF INDIAN WOMEN IN SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FIELDS IN THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DECADE

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now we take up the discussion under Rule 193.

Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : First of all I thank the House for co-operating with the women in getting this motion in to-day's agenda. I hope that those non-women members who are here present now in the House would support and give us more encouragement in our struggle.

Now, as you know this International Women's Decade was declared by the UNO in 1975 with the slogans of equality, development and peace. Now 1985 is the year which will mark the culmination of this decade and at the end a conference will be held at Nairobi, to assess the achievements and also the short comings remaining in this decade. So naturally it is an occasion for review of the position of the women in the beginning of the decade and at the end and this also an occasion for pledging for further action. Therefore, while assessing, I will first point out that the most important and positive achievement of this decade perhaps is the greater awareness among women's organisations and advanced sections of women on the needs of women themselves and also in that direction being able to create some impact—this 'some' I will explain later—on the society and also in the thinking of the Government. Now women's problems have come to the public attention and search for alternative strategies for women development has started. This, in my opinion, is the most positive achievement of the decade. But, unfortunately, I cannot say that on all the slogans we have really made positive achievements worth mentioning. In this very decade horrifying tales of torture and cruelty on women, dowry deaths, practice of dowry in a brutal manner—all these are in evidence marking the inferior status of women in our society. In this very decade also equal opportunity of gainful labour, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, higher mortality rate even of female children, lesser health care for women—all these factors are still plaguing the lives of millions and millions of women, particularly those belonging to the poorer strata. The old feudal customs and traditions still persist and on those are superimposed all the evils and immoralities of the capitalist system. Together they go on contributing to the continuation of women's inequality.

Naturally, for a review we should have a quick glance at the situation prevailing in various spheres as far as women are concerned; for example, the situation prevailing in the sphere of education, employment, health, social life, legal sphere, etc. It is not my contention that no advance at all has been made in these spheres but still that is marginal and the cumulative effect does not make the quality of life better for the millions

belonging to the fair sex. I will give a few examples, otherwise I will be accused of misrepresentation.

Let us look at education. Unfortunately, the exact corresponding figures of the years are not available. So, I have taken approximate figures as are available in the Census report. In 1971 the number of illiterate women was 215.3 million which in 1981 their number has risen to 241.6 million. In absolute numbers it has increased. I am sure after the mid-decade it has increased even more. The situation is this. In 1971 per 1000 men there were 1248 illiterate women. In 1983 per 1000 men there are 1322 illiterate women. As far as enrolment in schools is concerned in 1974-75—beginning of the year of the decade—for boys 6-11 age group the enrolment was 101 per cent and for girls it was 65.9 per cent. In the 11-14 age group for boys it was 47.5 per cent and for girls it was 23 per cent. In the mid decade 1981-82 for girls 6-11 age group it has come to 16 per cent. In the age group 11-14 for boys it is 54.2 per cent and for girls it is 29.1 per cent. Although there is a marginal rise in respect of girls, yet it leaves a very uneven situation between girls and boys. About drop-out, naturally nobody knows.

If this is the situation with regard to education, let us look at employment. From the Census report, Sample Survey and other sources what I can collect is that in the year 1971 the work participation rate of women was 12.06 per cent. In 1981 it has risen to 13.99 per cent. That means there is 2 per cent increase in the work participation rate.

PROF. N. G. RANGA : Work participation refers to women in professional jobs only. It does not include agriculture.

About some other spheres of employment, I would like to point out certain figures given are for 1975 to 1980, women in the organised sectors. In 1975, it is only 11.3 per cent of the entire work force. In 1980, it is 12.1 per cent. Regarding women in public and private sector industries, in 1975, it was 1.13 per cent. In 1980 what is the rise? It was 1.43 per cent. That means, a paltry rise of 0.3 per cent in the mid decade in the public sector.

In the private sector the rise is 1 per cent only. We have got the latest figure

from the Pocket Book of Labour Statistics. It is very interesting. In the factories, in 1978, women were 10 per cent 1981, women were 9 per cent. In plantations, women were 47 per cent. In 1981 they are 45 per cent. In the mines, in 1978, they were 11 per cent. In 1981 they are 10 per cent.

Regarding agricultural women, I wish to point out certain figures. Ranga ji, I have worked among rural women for almost half of my life. What is happening there? From the Census figures, what do we find? We find that in 1971 the number of cultivator women was more. But what happened in 1981? In 1981, the number of cultivator women has become less. Which number has grown? It is agricultural labour women. This number has grown. They are now 48 per cent of the total labour force. What does it really mean now? It show this: Gradually the women are no more taken as the owners of land. They are taken less and less as owners of land. They are being driven to the poorer and poorer strata of society. This is the condition of women and this is how they are treated.

There are certain jobs which are reserved for women. For example, plough is reserved for men. Transplantation is a thing reserved for women. Why? Transplantation job is taken to be an inferior kind of job because of less wages. Only such jobs are being given to women, such job which fetch less and less emolument.

In the last Parliament we raised the question of retrenchment of women in BCCL. This BCCL is a Government concern. They are asking women, 'If you take voluntary retirement, then your son or your husband or your relation somebody-else, will be taken in.' They are not asking women: 'Well, you need not work underground; so many open-cut mines are coming up; you will not loss your job; the axe will not fall on you. Either you or your daughter will be accommodated. No, they don't say such a thing. What is the late of the petition which I presented? Mr. A. K.. Roy is not here to give support to me. This is the situation with regard to employment to women. As you would know. up to now in the year 1981, for 1,000 male population in our country, there are only 935 women. What does it signify? Women have more sustain-

ing power and it is admitted by all. Even then, why are they less? It is because the infant mortality rate among female children is much higher. Also, women are the last as far as nutritional value is concerned according to a survey conducted on nutrition. Not only that, Sir. It is also true that there are lesser number of beds reserved for women even in the hospitals. Now, in the beginning itself, I have made it clear that it is not a fight between men and women, but it is to recognise that this is the position still going on, despite the fact that some improvement from the point of view of thinking has started in several quarters.

18-16 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Let us come to social problems. What should I say? Before the declaration of the decade and after the declaration of the decade as well, we have been saying so much about dowry deaths. But it seems that between 1975 and 1985, dowry has crossed all proportions and has spread even to such quarters where it was not there earlier. These dowry deaths are because of the greed of the capitalist society and really, women are the worst sufferers in this. Sir, here I must say that our Parliament has passed several laws. Among those, this Dowry Prohibition Act is the most useless. Even the Criminal Amendment Act is not so useless because it deals with cruelty to women. It is really a good law passed through the cooperation of all. But what is the result? Let me tell you one fact. I cannot go into great details due to this limited time factor. Of late, a gentleman came to me with a harrowing tale of his daughter dying under very suspicious circumstances. Police, as usual, said that it was a suicide. He is a government servant in Delhi. Then he made a special representation to our hon. Prime Minister. It seems the hon. Prime Minister referred that case for quick investigation. Sir, a whole month has passed. Then he came to me saying that nothing has happened despite the hon. Prime Minister's directive. There is no tangible result as far as he is concerned. Then, I have a letter to the Hon. Speaker thinking that since I am a poor soul, my word may not prevail and let the Hon. Speaker give it to the Home Department. But till now nothing has happened. Only

three or four days back. Mr. Dhir, this gentleman telephoned me asking what has happened. I said that the Hon. Speaker has sent his letter to the Home Ministry. Up till now he has heard nothing from the police, through circumstances are very very suspicious. What I want to say is this. Though all these laws are there, the implementation machinery is so very weak that up to now, the law has not been able to really benefit a large number of women for whom it is intended. Sir, this remains the problem with all the social laws which we have passed.

In this very decade, has the situation improved with regard to presentation of women in the media? What is appearing in the advertisements? If I sit with a young girl, I feel abashed to look at the TV. But I do not know what happens to my male colleagues. This is what is being projected. If the sexy protection is not there, then it is a dull woman, some very submissive soul, always sacrificing, not making her point, a miserable thing. Really, the media projection of women, even by Government media, is not what it should be, *viz.* indicating that women are equal partners. No serious, conscious efforts have been made in this direction.

Given this situation, I would like to submit that though the Decade, as I said, advanced us to some extent, given us the gusto to fight—that is our biggest asset—we have not, alas, yet been able to move, as we expected to move, the society and in many respects, even the Government. Therefore when the Decade is coming to a close, I would suggest some steps so be taken for further action. Let women not be forgotten, with the end of the Decade. This is what I appeal to the whole House.

Naturally, while making some suggestions, it is not possible to make elaborate suggestion on all points. Even then, it is my bounden duty to place before you some suggestions. Recently, there were consultations between various non-Governmental women's organizations in Delhi, on the 3rd and 4th of this very month, where important all-India women's organisations like the All-India women's Conference, National Federation of Indian women, All India Democratic Women's Association, Young women's

Christian Association, Centre for Development Studies and very many local *i.e.* Delhi groups also participated. They have worked out a whole series of suggestion which I would like not only our hon. Minister for Women's Welfare but also all other Ministers to consider.

My organization, *viz.* the National Federation of Indian Women was also a participant. Several important recommendations were made for future action, I will quickly go over them, for the consideration of the ministers, and for consideration by the whole House, for the purpose of evolving our future plan of action.

In the sphere of education, I would demand the highest priority for eradication of illiteracy and universalization of elementary education; and besides this bigger supportive programmes for greater child care, day-care services, provision of mid-day meals, financial incentives to retain girls in schools etc.

Mr. Education Minister, 100% of the total is meant for Education.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (SHRI K. C. PANT) : I thought you were speaking only to Prof. Ranga.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE ; No, to you Mr. Pant. Prof. Ranga is a senior Member. So, I can talk to him also.

Out of that 10% or whatever percentage you may be able to manage, 50% must be earmarked for promoting girls' and women's education, since their backlog is to be covered.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Are you going to take more time? There are others also to speak.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Naturally, I will take some time, because I am the mover of the motion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You have to give chance to others also.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Surely, I would like others to participate; but you will agree that I have not made a single irrelevant point.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I agree it is all relevant,

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE :
Then there should be a monitoring machinery also for monitoring the position with regard to education. In respect of employment, there should be a machinery for ensuring women's access to development resources through ear-marked funds within the allocations in different fields like agriculture, rural development, industry, science, technical education etc. There are also certain other points. But I particularly raise one, viz. relaxation of the age limit for women for recruitment in government services, by raising the age for women. About laws I believe it is necessary to have a review of laws; wherever bias is there against women, those laws should be reviewed. For that a working group in the Ministry should be set up.

About media: I feel that really a very serious examination of the media question is to be taken up so that the women's equality from all points of view should be taken up. It is very good to call the Minister of Social Welfare as the Minister for Women's Welfare as well. But unless our Minister of Women's welfare is given really the powers to monitor over other Ministries which deal with women's questions, it will only be a name. Like the S.C. and S.T. Welfare Committee of Parliament, I propose and very much insist that a Committee of Parliament for examining the programmes of women's welfare be formed. With these words, I think that the whole House will help us, the women in going forward.

PROF. N. G. RANGA (Guntur) : I have chosen to rise at this stage not to come in the way of my sisters who would like to speak on this subject, but to demonstrate how our Congress Party is indeed as serious as our hon. friend Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee has been in order to promote the interest of women.

We have had the honour of having a woman as our Prime Minister, as the leader of our party for 15 years and more, a unique achievement in the whole world, because in none of the other democratic countries were they able to have such a distinction. Secondly, it was Mahatma Gandhi who gave a filip to the awakening of our women especially in public life and helping them to come into public life, not only in the way in which we

are carrying on in public life like candidates coming to be legislatures and becoming Ministers; but in order to fight imperialism also, in order to fight social evils in our country. It was because of that tremendous dynamism that he introduced into our social life in our country that we are in a position today to think of measures which would promote the advancement of women in all spheres of life including media.

My hon. friend, Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee has made constructive suggestions at the end of her speech that there should be a commission like SC and ST Commission, Minorities Commission; there should be a commission for promoting and monitoring the welfare measures that are taken by the government from time to time. Another suggestion that she has made is to empower the Minister in charge of social welfare to ensure that all the concerned Ministries in the Government should carry out their duties towards women in the manner in which government decides upon and also Parliament in their wisdom. We are all in favour of doing our utmost to promote the welfare of women.

Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee will bear witness to the fact that like herself so many of our own women members in this House, including our friend Shrimati Mohsina Kidwai, our Minister for Social and Women's Welfare Smt. M. Chandra Sekhar, Shrimati Krishna Sahi, Miss. Dandavate, Vidya and so many other Members also on the Congress side had done immense amount of work during the last five years in the Parliament and they were responsible for getting very useful legislation on the statute book, to mention only the dowry legislation that we have enacted recently.

We all agree with her that when it comes to enforcement of this legislation we have not been so very successful. This is nothing special with regard to women alone. In regard to our various social matters our performance has not been as enthusiastic, as dynamic as Parliament would like it to be. Therefore, I appeal to the Members of our bureaucracy and very soon we would be having more and more women also in the bureaucracy and with the help and cooperation of these women who will be joining our bureaucracy. we appeal to them and I appeal to them, to do their best to give satisfaction to Members

of Parliament as a whole and to the Government also in enforcing this legislation and ensuring that all the protection that we have decided to provide for them would really be afforded to our women.

On this occasion I would be failing in my duty as a Member of Parliament and also as a veteran Member of the Congress Party, if I fail to mention the contribution made—the enormous contribution made—to the women's movement in our country by the late Shrimati Sarojini Naidu. We claim her as an Andhra because she married an Andhra; they claim her in Bengal and all social welfare bodies claim her also as one of their own order. She was a multi-faceted personality, she gave us so much of encouragement in our national movement, she became one of our great national leaders. More than anything else she was a genuine follower of Mahatma Gandhi and looked after him when he was in jail, when he needed help and he lost his health and needed encouragement. She looked after him personally especially as I said during the period when Lord Linlithgow got him in jail in such a cruel manner, without any access to or association with his colleagues in the Congress Working Committee. From those days onwards in the women's movement has been making great strides.

My hon. friend Geeta has now enlightened us by giving the statistics to show how inferior is the status that has been so far accorded to women, when compared to women in various spheres of life. All this is true. But we have made, as she has said in several speeches tremendous lot of progress. There were times even in my own childhood when people used to think that it was not necessary for women to be educated at all, be literate. Indeed we had a great social revolutionary, Veeresalingam. He had to fight the prejudice of our people that if women came to be educated they would be failing in *Streedharma*.

From that stage onwards right up to now, we have reached the stage when a wife can haul her own husband up before the court of law for inflicting cruelty upon his wife. It is a great progress India has made especially after achieving freedom. True we must go further and more quickly and we should make greater provision in our Budget

in order to be able to achieve so much more progress than we have been able to achieve and we are projecting to achieve. We have got to enlighten our people. Such a discussion such debates in Parliament and State Legislatures would be extremely useful. Therefore, I wish to express on behalf of my party as well as myself our sense of gratitude towards Mrs. Geeta Mukherjee and her colleagues, the women MPs in Parliament. I take pride in the fact that there are in our Parliament so many women MPs. Excepting England I do not think there is any other country in the world where women have been accorded a higher place through the general elections than in India. So, I am not a pessimist. In the name of my leader I consider her my leader even today though she is with her God. Indiraji, it is a great pleasure for this Parliament to express the nation's urge, nation's wish, nation's faith in the progress of our women, in their rapid progress and ever greater strides in the future as well as the present.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI (Begusarai) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, today when we are discussing in the House the subject of the progress and development of women towards the close of the International Women's Decade my heart is full of joy as well as sorrow. I am happy because today we are discussing this important subject in Parliament and I am sad because we are feeling the absence of our late Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi. The void created by her demise can never be filled.

The year 1975 was observed as the Women's Year and it proved to be a milestone the development and progress of women. The primary aim of that was to draw the attention of society towards the backwardness of women and various other problems pertaining to women and also to compel the Central Government and the State Governments to enact strong measures and to formulate various schemes to end the exploitation of women. This would enable them to understand themselves and their capacities better and would generate self-confidence in them so that they are able to contribute to national reconstruction and development. Various schemes have been formulated and implemented at both the national and international

levels for women where in priority has been given to their education, health and employment. Many national and international symposia, seminars and conferences were held in our country and discussions were held in this House also on this subject. In this context a national committee was set up under the chairmanship of the late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi, in 1974. This committee's functions were broad based and it had its wings at the State as well as district levels and even women at the village level participated in its activities. Thus, public consciousness was aroused, public opinion was created and so much enthusiasm was generated that a comprehensive national Scheme was prepared for the progress and development of women. Thus, new opportunities were provided to women and schemes were initiated for destitute women. A chapter on the development of women was added to the Sixth Plan for the first time. Condensed courses were introduced for adult women. Is this not a sign of progress? Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee has just now said that there is no politics in the issue under discussion at present, but whatever she said smacked of politics. India is a democracy and I am proud of my country, and the entire womanhood of the country was proud of the fact that under the leadership of the late Shrimati Gandhi, our nation has risen on the international horizon and has become the centre of attraction for other countries as far as women are concerned. Similarly, right from 1966, when Shrimati Gandhi became the Prime Minister, women have progressed in all walks of life constantly. I do not want to say that we have achieved much. But, at least something has happened which has made India the envy of other countries. If we look at India's past, women have always been held in high esteem. The worship of Goddess Mother has been in vogue from the earliest times. In our ancient scriptures there are references to the special regard and Status of women would also have read about the *Mahadevis*. They are Lakshmi Saraswati and Durga. Respect, regard and devotion has been shown towards them at all times and everywhere. According to the Puranas, Goddess Saraswati is considered to be the source and essence of all knowledge and sciences. Lakshmi is considered to be instrumental in removing all hurdles and obstacles. Similarly, Durga is worshipped as incarnation of power. Despite

all this, I have to draw the attention of the House to the fact that though women were so powerful in the past in the *Manusmriti* women were relegated to the position of second grade citizens and they have been mentioned as dependent on men and hence the need for their security had been felt. This was so because that was the need of the hour. But that system wherein women remained dependent upon men had continued down the centuries and it continues even now as an evil practice in society. Now, these evils have become a course because their roots were very deep in the society. During the 19th and 20th centuries although great philosophers, politicians and authors have made great efforts to end these evils, yet the results are not forthcoming in proper measure. I want to cite an example in this connection. A judge in Calcutta has observed :

[English]

"One cannot keep a car of society in the neutral gear and press the accelerator of legislation. However, the importance of legislation in giving proper direction for securing the necessary changes in social attitudes and for controlling excesses cannot be underestimated."

[Translation]

The importance of law cannot be denied but we can awaken the womenfolk only through the propagation of social laws. We can also bring about a new awakening in our country. Under the leadership of Shrimati Gandhi, Parliament has passed many an important law and amended many important Acts during the Women's Decade. To cite a few, one is the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. Shrimati Geetaji knows that this law was passed in 1976. The second is the Child Marriage Restraint Amendment Act, 1978. Although it was passed by Parliament during the Janata regime, it had been introduced only a year when our party was in power. Then, there is the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983 and the Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act, 1983 and the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, as amended in 1964 and, lastly, the Family Courts Act, 1984. I do not want to say much about these laws as it would take much time of the House but everyone is aware that all these laws were passed for the emancipation of women and to ensure their all-round development. History will record this fact that

never before had Parliament done what was done under the leadership of the late Shrimati Indira Gandhi.

It appears that despite all efforts at governmental and non-governmental levels for the social and economic upliftment of women the results have been far from satisfactory, because in Mexico when the UNO session was in progress, a statement was made on behalf of India wherein it was stated :

[English]

“Women are more hungry than men. Unemployment is higher. In the rural sector, educationally, socially and economically, women are more backward.”

[Translation]

Therefore, it is true that despite having done so much, our progress has been significant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker : Sir, I want to add that nobody knows whether thousands of widows and destitute women living in Kashi would get salvation or not, but at present they are living a hellish life. All the women's homes in our country both in the public and the private sectors—for women refugees and destitutes are the centres of their exploitation by the organisers and functionaries of those homes. I would like the hon. Minister to pay attention towards this and take steps to curb the undesirable activities in these homes. I would also like to add that there are thousands of destitute women who remain confined to their homes and are being treated like animals. We should do something for them also. Some women become old even before enjoying the youth; they are subjected to rape, persecution and other evils. Their condition is deteriorating and it appears that the more the attention we pay towards them, the worse becomes their plight. We read about atrocities on such women everyday in the newspapers. In the 8th report of the National Commission on Police which was presented to Parliament in 1983, much concern was expressed because the number of women offenders had risen by 75.4 per cent from 1971 to 1977. According to this report, there were more cases of atrocities on women as compared to crimes committed by women.

According to a survey conducted by the Social Welfare Department in villages, there

were about 1.5 lakh women in different jails in 1981. I want the hon. Minister to tell us whether most of the women among them were undertrial prisoners or whether they were put behind the bars because of their questionable character. If they are not criminals, why are they being treated as criminals? This is an atrocity on them. We have got conclusive evidence of such cases. I want that the problems faced by the women in our society should be solved. They should be given a place of honour in society and this cannot be achieved by merely enacting legislations. For that, we would have to ensure proper implementation of all such laws. For this, the Government would have to put curbs on the administration, because whatever Government do for the betterment of women for providing them with all opportunities, the benefits thereof do not reach them and that is why the condition of women in the rural areas is not sound. Therefore, camps should be organised to acquaint them with the legal provisions and this movement should be taken up as part of a campaign for arousing public consciousness. This should be done in each and every village in our country. It is of paramount importance that efforts be made to change the social and economic environment as far as women are concerned and the Process of Social Change' should be given the top most priority. In all such efforts, education is of topmost importance because it is only education which is of the root of all revolutionary changes.

Only with qualitative changes in the educational system can we make women come forward and ensure their all-round development. But, as far as education is concerned, it abounds in contradictions. On the one hand, according to the Reports of the Ministry of Social Welfare from 1975 to 1985, illiteracy among women has increased during the Women's Decade. What I am saying is based on the report of the Ministry. On the other hand, the number of girls admitted in schools for primary and secondary education has significantly increased. My information is based on the mid-term review of the Sixth Five Year Plan, 1980-85. Even then the number of girl students is far less than that of boys. A major factor is regional imbalance also. Nine States that is Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, West

Bengal, etc., are significantly backward in the progress of education. Progress has been registered in the matter of higher education. Therefore, I would like to reiterate that only if we forge ahead with qualitative changes in education, can we move forward in all other spheres.

To conclude, I want to submit that during the Non-Aligned meet held recently, wherein many women leaders of the developing countries took part, our Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, while inaugurating the Conference, had said that the role of women in the development of any society was very vital but still women in this world remained deprived of vital facilities. He has put forward very concrete suggestions for their planned development and for raising their status in society. I welcome the announcement of our Prime Minister make education upto High School free for women. This would encourage women to go in for education. It is a matter of great pleasure that, during his Prime Ministership, women are anxious to enter politics and their number has gone up. Therefore, I want to say with all emphasis that the voice of women during the Women's Decade has become very powerful, loud and effective and I hope that under the leadership of Shri Rajiv Gandhi our society will definitely develop.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Before calling the next speaker, I want to request hon. Members to be very brief. Don't think I am obstructing their freedom of speech on women since you are talking on the topic of women. But because of the time factor, I have to say like that. Therefore, I request all other Members to speak to the point and conclude their speech within five minutes. There are many Members to speak. If I give more time to each Member in the beginning, I cannot give the same time to others later on. In that context I may be obstructing other Members.

I now request Shrimati Vidyawati Chaturvedi to speak.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI VIDYAWATI CHATURVEDI : Sir, I have been given only five minutes and since there are many speakers,

will the time of the House be extended to accommodate all lady Members ?

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I hope you understand me. Your other colleagues also would like to speak.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI VIDYAWATI CHATURVEDI (Khajuraho) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the discussion initiated by the hon. lady Member is welcome. There is no doubt that much work remains to be done for the upliftment of women because women have been ignored for centuries and have, therefore, remained backward. However much we may do for them would be inadequate and would be like a few drops in the bucket. But, at the same time it is not correct to say that after independence, Government have not done anything for raising their status.

As the hon. Member Shrimati Sahi has stated, we feel avoid whenever we look at the seat which used to be occupied by our late Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi who used to be with us and was a source of inspiration for all of us. She belonged not only to this country, but to the entire world and we feel her loss very badly. When she was amongst us, every women felt proud but today her absence is very much felt. I share the sentiments expressed by Shrimati Sahi but at the same time I congratulate our Prime Minister for creating a separate Department for Womens Welfare apart from the Department of Social Welfare. This clearly shows that our Government are going to pay special attention towards the welfare and progress of women.

In our scriptures, Manu has said :

Yatra naaryastu pujoyante,

Ramante tatra Devta.

Yatrastu na pujoyante,

Tatra Sarvafalkriya.

The place where women are worshipped and honoured is the abode of Gods and at the place where women are subjected to contempt everything comes to naught.

Women were equal partners with men in our struggle for independence and they

faught in all the spheres, whether it be prohibition, offering dharna or going to jails. The 'Quit India' moment launched by Mahatma Gandhi saw women in the forefront everywhere.

Although women have less opportunities in the field of education today, yet in all, the spheres, be it education health, politics, or social welfare they have discharged their responsibilities with the utmost sincerity and have set examples for others. They have done remarkably well as engineers, collectors and social workers. Despite all that it is a matter of regret to see the plight of women today. Instead of their status as mother, they have been reduced to mere show-pieces.

In the films, scenes of rape are depicted, in posters seminude women are shown. It is a disgrace to her status as mother. Our society enjoy such depiction. Today, in all sorts of advertisements the depiction of women is a must and it is taken undue advantage of. It is not only a matter of great sorrow but a matter of shame for us. I would request the hon. Minister to pay attention towards this and see that her status as mother is given due regard and her prestige is re-established.

I want to give a few suggestions in this regard. This is the tenth year of the Women's Decade and during this period much has been done for the progress of women but we have not so far been able to reach those women who live in villages, work in the fields and help in the construction of roads and buildings. They continue to be socially expected. Women are being exploited politically also. As labourers also they are being exploited because when a man, who does a particular work is paid Rs. 20-25 per day a women doing the same work is paid only Rs. 10-12. In the field of agriculture, women work hand in hand with men and if men till the field, women do the sowing but the men are paid more than the women. Thus, in the matter of payment of wages also they are being exploited.

Similarly, if we go to the offices, we meet many young girls and they tell us that their bosses look at them with evil intentions. I wish it is not true but may do say that their bosses induce them to take to wrong ways of life on the allurements of promotion. If they do not fall in line, they are

frequently harassed. Who will look into all this? Although women have made great progress and we see some ladies in Parliament also, the plight of our common women-folk is really pitiable and needs to be improved.

I would like to submit that in the field of education, only lady teachers should be appointed from primary to middle school level instead of male teachers. Similarly, in offices for the posts of typists and similar other posts women should be given the highest preference.

Recently, the ladies of Non-Aligned Nations held an important conference in our country and it is a matter of pride for us that the foundation of all these programmes was laid by the late Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi. It was her guidance and influence which have prompted the women of Non-Aligned countries and the entire world to raise their voice in support of peace and disarmament to save posterity.

As regards jobs for women, teaching work, is the most suitable for them. The post of clerk is also suitable for them. However, they are extending their cooperation in hospitals and all other fields also be it engineering or administration. But in the field of industry much remains still to be done for them. In order to enable them to earn their livelihood as industrial workers, they should be imported proper training and provided with jobs there.

I agree that in our country, much progress has been made in the matter of emancipation of women but it does not mean that everything has been done and nothing more needs to be done. If you see the daily newspapers, it is a common thing to find reports of bride-burning, suicide and rape. We find Full-page reports of such cases in the newspapers. The responsibility of eradicating these evils does not lie entirely with the women. Men have to do a lot in this regard. It is the responsibility of men to create a healthy atmosphere in society so that such tragic incidents do not recur and women and young girls can live in society freely and earn their livelihood.

[English]

SHRI V. SOBHANADREESWARA RAO (Vijayawada) : Sir, The hon. Members have mentioned several things regarding the progress of women in India in social, educa-

tional, political and economic fields. I would like to add only a few words.

I am very sorry to say that even now it is the hard reality that women are not enjoying the same status with men. Now in the Constitution, we have stated that women also will be given the same status and equality of opportunity. But it is only on paper but not in practice. And though in the Vedic age, women were given a higher respect, status and position in society and they were having the right to learn Vedas and perform sacrifices but, unfortunately, during the subsequent period of Hinduism, women were degraded to inferior position when compared to men. It is mainly because of the importance given to the male member and in spite of the best efforts, even today, we cannot say, that women are enjoying the same status especially in the Hindu society.

Though in the Muslim faith, women were given the right in the property of father, but even there, because of the illiteracy and the ignorance, the female members are not in a position to demand their right and so, though this Dowry Prohibition Act is there in force, it is common knowledge that at least once in three or four days when we go through newspapers, we find very terrifying news of very heart-rending cases where young women are committing suicides because of the failure of their parents in giving dowry demanded by her in-laws.

The only remedy for this will be that a women member, that is the daughter, should have an equal right along with her brother, in her father's property. Then only, the evil of this dowry system will be minimised and in our State of Andhra Pradesh, our Government headed by Shri N. T. Rama Rao introduced legislation in our Andhra Pradesh Assembly stating that women members should have an equal right with the male members of a Hindu Joint Family.

I request the Government of India to consider and introduce the legislation in this august House creating and giving equal right to women along with men.

I hope the recent decision of the hon. Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, in announcing that this Government is going to provide free education to girls upto intermediate level will certainly go a long way in

increasing the literacy percentage among women in their total population.

In the political field, both on the Treasury Benches and on the Opposition Benches, you find very few lady Members, though their total population is a little higher than the total male population, the number of female Members of Parliament is far less. That only shows that, in spite of the tall talks by all the Parties, we are not prepared to field more candidates from the fair sex in the election arena. At least in the local body institutions, women should be included in a greater number. Our Government in Andhra Pradesh is intending to provide more reservations for women, more representation to women, in the coming *mandal* set-up which is going to be started soon.

In the economic field, exploitation is going on, especially in the bidi industry and cigarette industry where women work in large numbers. There, Government's minimum wages are not implemented. Also the Supreme Court in one judgment delivered by Chief Justice Ray has said that even to the ladies working in the bidi industry, the maternity benefits should be extended. But this is not being implemented. I suggest to the Government that they should set up the necessary machinery to implement this judgement, this direction from the Supreme Court, in order to improve the economic condition of the women workers working in the bidi industry.

With these words, I conclude. I thank you very much for having given me this opportunity to speak.

SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK (Cuttack) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Women's Year was stretched to a decade which is now coming to a close. Hence, this is the time for stock-taking of the decade's achievements in relation to the status and condition of women. We are here to debate the recognition given to women's rights which emerged during the freedom struggle and which was expressed in the Constitution. Of course, attainment of equality of status for women in the wake of heterogeneous nature of the Indian society with its basic pattern of economic and social inequalities and the inequalities inherent in the traditional social structure is a slow process. Yet we are advancing towards that objective. There is no doubt.

Speaking of the International Women's Decade i.e. 1975-1985, I feel it is expected of the planners to formulate policies, programmes and envisage most important I feel, separate financial outlays right from the beginning of the International Women's Decade. However, in 1975 a National Committee on Status of Women was formed and in the middle of the decade an attempt was made when a chapter on women and development was added to the Sixth Plan document for the first time. It recognised three sectors—education, employment and health, which were also included in the 20 point programme and they became important in formulating a strategy for women.

This Decade has made women's issue a concern for the society, for the government and for the legislators and for the researchers to assess women's problems.

I come to the first point. I would like to present here the facts. Of course many of the factors have been presented by Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee. Firstly, the number of females is decreasing from the beginning of the century. In 1981 it was 933. In 1901 it was 972 per 1000 males. In 1971 it became 930 and as I earlier said, in 1981 it was 933. The life expectancy is 52.6 for male and 51.6 for female. In India more boys are born than girls but more girls die than boys and the expectation of life at birth is lower for girls. The death rate of females particularly in the age group of 0 to 4 is much higher even to-day. I do not have the recent figure, but in 1970 it was 70.2 for female and 58.3 for males. Upto the age group of 30-34 the female death rates are higher than males. But in the peak reproductive age group of 15 to 29 the female death rate is consistently higher.

Then there is the social attitude towards women. The discrimination process in the Indian society starts at birth. Then, Sir, nutritional studies indicate inferior feeding and nutrition of girls as compared to boys.

In most Indian homes the largest, the most nutritious of food is given to the breadwinner, then the boys and then last of all to the girls and women. Consequently, what happens? Instances of childhood disability due to nutritional deficiencies such as anaemia and night-blindness are higher among girls.

Statistics also show that women receive less and much inferior quality of medical care. We have got indirect evidence to indicate the unequal health care they receive. We note that in Safdarjang Hospital for instance, 65% of the admissions are boys and 35% are girls. It is also found in the nutritional clinic that malnutrition is much more prevalent among girls—here the figures are 54% for girls and 46% for boys.

All these show that the neglect of women in India is a persistent phenomenon. According to an expert group every second woman in her third trimester of pregnancy is anaemic.

There is also a persisting imbalance in the provision and access to medical services for women, such as maternity, ante-natal and post-natal services. The number of hospital wards and beds reserved for women is far fewer than for men. It is reported that for every three men who avail of health services only one woman does so yet the percentage of sick women appears to be higher at any given time. Moreover clinics are often not open at times convenient to women and generally a woman does not seek treatment unless severely ill.

As regards work participation although Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee has given the statistics yet according to FAO statistics women produce at least half of the world's food and constitute one-third of world's official labour force. Further women receive only one-tenth of world earned income and hold less than one per cent of total property and thus neglected in development planning. This is very much prevalent in our country.

Equality with men means equal pay for equal work. When even in many developed countries according to ILO women face discrimination then what to say about India! In matters of employment the disturbing trend in women's participation in agriculture during the past decade is the shift from the cultivator to labourer status. The rise in the ranks of women agriculture labourers from less than one-third of the female work force in two decades to more than half points to shrinking employment opportunities in family farms. They are forced to work as wage labourers under exploitive conditions.

It is on paper only that women are at par with men as far as wage scales go. But what

exists is a sex-based division of labour in which women are generally denied access to higher paid jobs that require more skill. This is specially true of the unorganised sector. In agriculture for example women are made to undertake weeding and transplanting that can fetch them half the pay that men get for skilled work like manuring and ploughing.

In industry like brick industry it is women who do the heavier work like the carrying of the wet clay on their head and unloading it at the kiln. But they earn only half as much as the men who are entrusted lighter and more skilled work of moulding and firing. Since most of the said jobs are in the unorganised sector the fate of 80 per cent of the working women in our country is that they have little or no collective clout.

Now I come to education. On the education side 75 per cent of illiterate are women. Worse still is the situation of women from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. At the level of higher education the gap between men and women going in for university education is narrower. But when constitute a larger part of the agricultural work force why more and more women are being pushed out of agricultural development in teaching of the subject. The issues pertaining to women should be incorporated in the existing compulsory papers at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. But despite all the recommendations on the subject from expert group specially appointed by UGC or by ICSSR Advisory Committee and Committee on women's status or by working group on Women's development for the 7th Plan have recommended.

But Government's will to implement all these has been sadly lacking.

Sir, I must say that a major step to be taken to promote female employment would therefore be to expand and to diversify the education and training programme for women.

Sir, I must say that in regard to self-employment and setting up of vocational training programme for women, especially for the training of the rural women, and the setting up of more regional institution should get priority. The present scheme of TRYSEM should cover a large number of rural women. Appropriate technologies, services and public

policies need to be introduced in the field of welfare of women for their economic uplift.

Sir, I will now say about rural development.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : No, Madam; please wind up.

SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK : About rural development, there is the IRDP programme. Of course the planners have assumed that the benefits of the developments will automatically go to the women, but what I say is this. In IRDP suppose the beneficiary has taken up the dairy scheme or industry, whatever it is. It is the women who also does most of the work. In the dairy scheme also the women do the work. In cottage industry also she does the work. But there is no mention of her name, no recognition of her work. What I feel is that before the asset is created, the point title of the male and female should be there so that at least there should be a recognition of that, so that there cannot be any mis-utilisation of the asset on the part of the male.

I would like to emphasise here that as recommended by the Committee on Status of Women we should have statutory autonomous commissions in the Centre and States so that all the programmes can be taken up and implemented.

Discrimination and cruelty against women can be traced to the inexplicable attitude of social apathy on the part of society. Though Constitution provides for equality between the sexes with special protection for women and children, Indians in their family lives, have been governed by personal laws and religious laws which fail women to give their due. Among Hindus, various laws are there. In spite of these laws we see that women still continue to live under stresses and strains. Many forms of cruelties are inflicted upon them. Though the Dowry Prohibition Act has been amended, it has been ineffective to curb the social evil of giving and taking dowry in marriages. We all know that crimes against women are generally social perversions on the part of men. Therefore such cases must be dealt with immediately with enough provisions for the rehabilitation of the victims, which has not been looked into so far. . .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : This is enough. Nothing will go on record. Mr. Hannan Mollah. You please start.

SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK : **

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH (Uluberia) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, after a few months, the International Women's decade is going to be closed.

Before the curtain comes down on the decade, it will leave behind in the people of the world in general and in women in particular, some awareness of the lives of the women and their problems and the ways and means we can think of to better their lot in the future. That is an achievement of the decade. But when we discuss in this august House in concrete terms, what have we achieved in this decade ? I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the problems that the women of our country are still facing, so that she can pay more attention to solve these problems. One thing we should remember. Only discussion and mere talks and ideas will not give much proof until we are able to associate women with the production process. When they join in the process of economic production more and more in number, then they will acquire the right and authority and they will be able to have their say in the system and they will be able to stand on their legs to fight the injustice with the help of the other section of the population. I say this because we have seen the two extremes, on the one side male chauvinism trying to dominate and as a reaction some sort of feminism developing in the western world. But our effort is not like that. Our Party believes that it is a question of the total population of our country and women comprise half of the population. But in our country, as Mrs. Mukherjee has presented the case, they have been reduced to become the largest minority of our country. And now, per thousand male population, there are only 933 women. So, in totality, they are becoming the largest minority.

Time is very short and I want to mention a point on the question of employment of women in the last decade. They form

20.85 per cent only in the working force and 1981 Census mentions that 75 per cent of the women population are non-working women. So, such a large number of our population lies idle. They are not associated with the production process.

Now the question of women who are working in traditional industries like coir, cashew, tobacco, bidi, matches, mines, tea, plantation and so on, comes. In all these industries, the number of women workers is decreasing every year. So, we should take this factor also into consideration and look into it. In the other sectors of industry, like handlooms, powerlooms, textiles, etc. lakhs of women are being displaced. In jute and textile industry 30 to 60 per cent of women workers were displaced. So, gradually women are being thrown out of the production process. They are not able to gain their real position. This is the real situation. We may see some elite and very vocal section of women in front of us but that will not prove that there is much advancement among the women of our country. So, we have to see how much of this development has reached the lower strata, viz. the maximum number of women population. You know that because of mechanization, the services of about 2 lakh women in the tobacco industry in Andhra and Karnataka are in danger.

Take the electronics industry. Because of the new policy of the Government regarding import liberalization, we do not know what will be the fate of the cooperatives where hundreds and thousands of women work in assembling and other work. If those are closed, what will be their fate ? So, such things will have to be considered, because women are always the last to be hired, and the first to be fired. When there is no compulsion, they will be recruited at the last stage, and when there is no requirement, they will be dismissed first. That is the situation, because in the capitalist system they want profit. If you employ women, you have to provide some more facilities, e.g. you have to give maternity benefits etc. So, they want to eliminate women workers. We have to think over how we can stop the attack of the capitalistic system on women and on their employment.

Secondly, we think that those minimum

** Not recorded.

facilities like Creches Rest Rooms, toilet facilities and maternity benefits are essential ones. They are not welfare measures. These are essential; whether we accept them as essential or as welfare measures, we have to provide them. That is an important question before women who are employed.

Then comes the question of agricultural sector. You know already—the figure has been mentioned—that the number of women cultivators has come down from about 55% in 1961 to about 33% in 1981. So, this is the situation. Among agricultural labourers, the number of women agricultural labourers is increasing. They are losing land. When Government distributed the surplus land, the question of titles came. We repeatedly that if they distributed land not to men but to men and women together, there will be joint ownership. But that was also not done. Because of that, women are evicted and thrown out of land also. We have to take up this question also, so that women can get rights on lands.

Then we have the question of land reform, giving joint titles, and development of agro-industries in villages for rural women where they can get jobs.

Now about ear-marking of resources of sectoral plans and programmes. to give employment and training to women. At the same time, expansion of, and provision of training opportunities for women in agriculture, and in agro-based industries in rural areas should also be done. At the same time, we have to extend facilities like child care centres and maternity benefits for women in the unorganized sector also.

For working women, we have to consider providing these things. Many things have been said about their education also. We have seen that the number of uneducated women has increased. It was 215 million in 1971. whereas in 1983 it was has 250 million. The Prime Minister has announced free education up to the 12th Class. And the Education Minister allocated for that purpose only Rs. 10 crores. 50 lakh girl students are in the age group of 8 to 12 years. So, this allocation will not be sufficient to give them opportunities for education. When you announce one thing and make provision, there are differences. You have see how you can make up this gap.

Women every day say something about West Bengal. But we have to agree that in the girls' education this year, 1984-85, West Bengal has come first and got a prize of Rs. 1 crore from the Central Government.

The rate of education for women in U.P., Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar is less than 20 per cent. You have to lay special stress on education there; if necessary, you give them some incentives, material or otherwise so that girls come to the schools. Where the rate is less than 20 per cent, you should take some other measures.

There are health problems like Malnutrition caused by poverty, overwork, repeated pregnancies, low educational level and social status. Lack of access to health care services and sex differential even when facilities are available; Inadequate development of primary health care and preventive health services especially in the rural areas. Lack of maternity and child health centres. Low number of women health personnel especially in the rural areas. You have to look into them and see how you can solve them. Female mortality, both in the urban and rural areas, is higher throughout the decades. In cases of maternal mortality, there was an increase in the percentage of deaths due to abortion during 1975-85 from 9.7 per cent to 13.7 per cent in 1986. So, you have to look into the matter and see what are the reasons and how we can combat this problem.

The grim reality of such adverse health conditions is indicated by the decline in the age composition in the percentage of the population below ten years from 14.5 per cent in 1971 to 12.6 per cent in 1981. In that field we suggest that you must earmark more funds for maternal and child health facilities and extension of such facilities to the rural areas in particular. There should be ban on sex based amniocentiasis and such amniocentiasis should be allowed only in medical colleges and genetic research centres.

Regarding legal status, some members mentioned that there are so many laws, but I may tell you that only laws will not change the fate of the women if they are not implemented. So, you have to plug the loopholes in the laws. The main problem is that there many laws but women are dominated not by secular laws, not by uniform civil laws but by religious laws. Where is

the secular law for women? There are Muslim personal laws; there are Christian personal laws; certain sections of the Sikhs are fighting for their personal laws. They are standing in the way of women's emancipation. So, if we cannot secularise laws regarding women, women will not be liberated from this dredgery of the bondage.

So, all these things you should consider and if we can do that, then we will be able to give some benefit to them.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Shrimati Kishori Sinha.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : Family courts also should be established so that every dispute regarding women or cases concerning women can be taken in those courts only. Unless we are able to change the situation and the present system nothing happens. As long as this system continues all the problems concerning women will be there.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You please sit down now. Shrimati Kishori Sinha.

SHRIMATI KISHORI SINHA (Vaishali) : It is a matter of gratification that we are discussing this subject during the U. N. Decade for Women. This is as it should be. Our leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Shrimati Indira Gandhi had played a dominant role in the women's movement. In this country, our political parties, our Government moreover, particularly our successive Prime Ministers have shown their great concern for and took active interest in helping the women's condition and in solving their problems. I would say that the women's movement in India ran parallel to the freedom struggle. It was at the bidding of Mahatma Gandhi that the women in large numbers threw up their veil and came out to participate in the freedom struggle. Alongside with it, the movement for improving the condition and status of women also gained momentum and to infuse a sense of confidence in the women their representatives were accorded important positions in public and administrative functions.

Gandhiji made it an essential requisite

for his programme to liberate the country when he said in the *Hind Swaraj*, "Tear down the Pardah" the veil of centuries of civilisation that had reduced women to second class human beings, condemned to suffer malnutrition, diseases, hunger and illiteracy. Look at any nation today and it becomes evident that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was speaking for humanity when he said, "Women in a sense represent the social conscience of a country."

The question, therefore, before us is how far has this Decade for women helped transform their status and socio-economic position. How far has it even helped permeate the social conscience of nations so that they at least express concern even if they fail to be moved into action by the pathos of it.

To count first, the achievements because they are few, let me quote the U.N. spokesman Mr. Leticia Sahani, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations in charge of the Decade programme :

"This campaign has helped stimulate a long, slow, quiet revolution."

The achievements include a significant rise in the lifespan of women and about one hundred governments have set up ministries or departments dealing with women's affairs.

Panditji had once said : "We talk of revolution, political, and economic. And yet the greatest revolution in a country is the one that affects the status and living conditions of its women."

We may not consider this achievement as a kind of revolution which Panditji wanted. Yet, some achievements in this regard have been made if we consider the age-old prejudices, religious bigotry, superstition, etc.

In the next few months, a conference to take stock of the situation and achievements during the Decade for Women will be held in Nairobi and there will be no acrimony in stock taking. Let it not be forgotten that during this Decade in some countries *pardah* has been enforced still and in the matter of appointments in the Home and Foreign Services women are being discriminated against, and all this is being done in the name of religion. I am sorry that this issue was not discussed during the recent Women's

Conference of the Third World Countries held in Delhi.

I must congratulate the Supreme Court for its recent judgment enforcing the supremacy of our Criminal Law and also interpreting Personal Law of Muslims in a most rational and human manner to uphold the right of a divorced women to maintenance.

Similarly, the Supreme Court has upheld the unlimited right of a woman over her 'Stridhan' which will go a long way in securing economic independence.

Within our country the U. N. Decade has had mixed results. For the first time in this country the fall in sex ratio has been arrested. But I must add with regret that this improvement has not been uniform. In Bihar this ratio is still falling—showing the backwardness of the State. There has been some narrowing of the rural urban ratio in women's education. India has also registered a decline in child marriage but its proportion is still as high as 43.5 per cent. The distressing practices like infanticide have been curbed but child mortality rates for female children continue to be higher than for male children. We must hope that the Prime Minister's programmes of providing free education to girls will make a dent in those. But I would urge that the Government should also provide school uniform and mid-day meals to make the programme effective.

Despite legislations, we have cases of bride burning for non-payment of dowry, harassment of and atrocities on girls. Almost every day we come across news of such incidents which show a major area of weakness. Malnutrition of girls by guardians of law and order are matters of great concern.

We also saw in the press that thousands of people gathered the other day witness *sati* which had been forbidden by law in the last century. I am referring to these incidents to show how in the minds of men change has not yet taken place in their thinking and attitude. Rightly has the Prime Minister said: "The feeling of giving women their due place in society should permeate the whole consciousness of the community." I take the opportunity to appeal to hon. Members here to convey this plea of the Prime Minister to the countryside and urban homes to combat the prejudices,

to light the dark corners of superstition and to release the elevating forces of a renaissance India so that women will be treated on a footing of equality with men.

It is very distressing that girls continue to suffer from malnutrition and neglect. They are not sent to schools. All this means that not only this generation of women but the next generation of women will remain under-nourished, impoverished and prone to diseases and therefore vulnerable to perpetual exploitation. Therefore, let us at last start with a programme of higher enrolment of girls, greater stress on the delivery system of health care to the girls, and at least promise two sets of uniforms to each girl who gets into school and remains there till the end of her schooling. Let us have a new slogan 'take care of the girls and you will have taken care of the nation.'

While dealing with this Decade, let us also not ignore some recent trends. The process of development itself has certain built-in disadvantages to women. At the report on the world status of women prepared by the Carnegie Corporation shows, the influx of women into the paid labour force has not significantly narrowed the gap between men's and women's pay nor has it stemmed the rising tide of poverty among women. It is also our experience that women do not get equal pay with men for the same job. This is so in regard to work in field, in factories and in homes. This is notwithstanding the fact that women officers in the I.A.S., I.P.S. Income Tax and other Services have distinguished themselves.

My next query is addressed to the Planning Commission. Is the Planning Commission aware of the fact that the commercialisation of agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries, driving women out of jobs and depriving them of locally available nutrition? The *Financial Express* carried an article by social researcher Devaki Jain which said, "In India, studies are showing the link between commercialisation of agriculture and nutrition deprivation of females. With mechanisation, several lakh women have been thrown out of jobs in fisheries, tobacco industry, handlooms, etc. Development policies have to take into account the impact on women."

If development policies are women-oriented, Seventh Plan will give greater

emphasis to improved chullahs and bio-gas plants. Releasing women from drudgery is a major plank of our policy. We have even a Division for this in the Department of Science and Technology but we are yet to see a women-orientation in planning for permeation of consciousness that our Prime Minister speaks of in the administration.

I hope the Minister will assure the House that in the terminal year of the decade our planning and development process will become women-oriented.

SHRIMATI INDUMATI BHATTACHARYYA (Hooghly) : Mr, Deputy Speaker, Sir, I begin by quoting a few lines from the writings of our beloved late Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi. "Family planning is the key to every individual's and every family's betterment. It is also part of the right of women to be in full health and to use their gifts to bring up healthier, better looked after children, to have more attractive homes, to develop their personalities and find deeper fulfilment in their lives." With these words, our beloved late Prime Minister Indira Ji pointed out in a nutshell the net outcome of family planning.

Family planning is necessary not only for controlling the ever increasing growth of population which is a menace to a welfare State but also for the health and survival of the mother and the child since the high rate of mortality of both is alarming.

Mothers and children have additional needs for reproductive growth and development and they are biologically more vulnerable to environmental influences. So, special programmes are required in pregnancy, child-birth and childhood, in addition to the general health measures.

It is gratifying that during 1984-85, Special emphasis was laid on the health status of mothers and children in the context of the 20-Point Programme which stipulates acceleration of programmes of welfare of women and children and nutrition programme for pregnant women and nursing mothers and children. The national Health Policy has also attached great importance to the Maternal and Child Health Programme, both in rural and urban areas, by the setting up of primary health centres, rural family welfare centres and sub-centres, urban family welfare centres and postpartum centres.

In addition, the Department of Family Welfare has sponsored for expectant mothers various protective measures against infection and immunisation of children against various diseases. But we should keep in mind that the success of such programmes largely depends upon the active participation and involvement of the people at large.

20.00 hrs.

Moreover, health and education are the two essentials for the development of man for the improvement of the quality of life. The various roles of women at home and society can be properly played if they are educated in the strict sense of the term.

Education strengthens aspirations for economic and social advancement.

Raising the status of women in the family and society is very important to bring social changes and to cultivate a better planned family which leads to the attaining of a healthy and decent standard of living.

[Translation]

PROF. CHANDRA BHANU DEVI (Balija) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to speak on the Women's Decade. Women had been given special importance in the glorious history of India. In our oldest scripture, the Rigveda, a number of references can be found which indicate the progress that women had made in that era. The most prominent example is that at that time there was no restriction on women to attain spiritual knowledge. The great sage Manu while mentioning the importance of women has said in the *Mani Smriti* that that place honoured, 'where women are becomes the abode of Gods and where they are subjected to contempt, there everything comes to naught'. In the sacred land of India, women have always been worshipped and have been given proper respect. Of course, for some centuries they went into oblivion in society, but as and when they got an opportunity, they again became active on the social and political scene. Right from freedom struggle to the framing of the Constitution and till this day, courageous and able women have contributed their might in all the spheres. In India's history, the names of Razia Sultana, Rani Laxmibai, Rani Durgawati, Sarojini Naidu and many others have been written in golden letters. There is another name

without which the history of not only India but of the entire world would remain incomplete and that is the name of our late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The heights of progress that our country has attained is all due to her. But in spite of so many opportunities having been provided to women, they are still facing so many problems. They have not only to do the entire household work, they have also to bring up their children and side by side work in the fields in order to meet the financial requirements of their families. In order to make both ends meet, they have to do many odd jobs. The problems of dowry, child marriage and deprivation plague women throughout their lives. Although Government have taken many steps for the upliftment of women after independence, yet the number of working women is only 14 per cent as against 53% per cent working men. In the field of education also women have been lagging far behind. As against the literacy rate of 48 per cent among men, this rate is only 25 per cent among women. As regards health and nutrition, women lag behind men. Keeping all these factors in view, we would have to make fresh efforts in this direction. Unfortunately, more attention is paid towards women in the urban areas as against those in the rural areas. Therefore, the women in the rural areas would have to be made the focal point of all the developmental schemes so as to achieve real progress of women. Women will get due regard as mother, sister and wife only when they can stand on their own feet. The need of the hour is not only to liberate them from deprivation and exploitation, they should also be provide with maximum opportunities for employment so that they could play a vital role in regard to taking a decision about their own future. Women remain far behind men in participating in the progress of the country and in enjoying the various services being provided to the people. Therefore, further concrete steps are needed to speed up the pace of social and economic development of women. Our young Prime Minister has taken some revolutionary steps in this regard. It is a matter of pride that he gave tickets to a large number of women candidates for the Eight Lok Sabha elections and today their number in Lok Sabha is the highest so far. In the Assembly elections also he earmarked 20 per cent of the total number of seats for women candidates and this has increased their representation to a very

large extent.

Our Prime Minister, while reorganising the Ministries, has raised the status of the Social Welfare Department to that of a full-fledged Ministry by renaming it as the Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare. All this proves that our Prime Minister wants to give a new direction to the development of women and we are thankful to him for this initiative.

1985 is the last year of the Women's Decade. In this connection, I want to give some suggestions for women's welfare. First of all, I am of the view that in the States also there should be a separate Ministry on the lines of the Ministry at the Centre for women's welfare. Secondly, women should be considered a separate group for all the developmental programmes in view of the importance of women's progress and for that there should be a separate sub-plan in the Seventh Five Year Plan. Thirdly, keeping in view the rapid increase in population family planning needs to be made more efficient and effective in order to improve the economic condition and health of women. Fourthly, the women's welfare corporation, as proposed by the Central Government is a revolutionary step for the upliftment of women. I would suggest that the Central Government should issue instructions to all the State Governments to set up such corporations in their respective states as soon as possible.

No programme for the upliftments of women could be sustained only through governmental efforts. In this regard, voluntary organisations should also play an important role.

I not only hope but I am sure that the new direction given to women's welfare under the dynamic leadership of our young Prime Minister would lead to their rapid progress and development.

[English]

SHRIMATI PHULRENU GUHA (Contai) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are discussing the progress of women in the social, educational, political and economic field in the International Women's Decade. Women are nearly half the population, but women suffer from social, economic, educational and political disadvantages. Sir, you

can see that when the question of discussion on women comes, the time is limited, it is so little. (*Interruptions*). Excuse me, we have to say that the time is very limited because we are discussing the issues of half the population of the country.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : There are so many demands of the women that we are discussing.

SHRIMATI PHULRENU GUHA : In 1972 the Committee on the Status of Women in India has been appointed by the Government of India with the initiative of our beloved Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, to undertake all the questions relating to the right and status of women in the context of changing social and economic condition in the country and solving new problems relating to the advancement of women.

The value of gender equality had been accepted in India more than half a century earlier through the Fundamental Rights Resolution adopted by the Indian National Congress in 1931 and then built into the Constitution of the Indian Republic.

The legal reforms, education and political rights—the three instruments designed by Free India to realise women's right to equality had failed to benefit to large masses of women affected by the problem of poverty, powerlessness, over-work and illiteracy.

The Committee on Status of Women submitted the Report on 1st January 1975.

In 1975 the Parliament adopted a unanimous resolution urging the Prime Minister to 'initiate a comprehensive programme of legislation and administration measures aimed at removing as far as possible the economic and social injustice, disabilities and discrimination to which Indian women continue to be subjugated.'

During the discussion on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Education, we have noticed the condition of women's education in India. We noted the massive number of women illiteracy, the widening gap in men and women enrolment in all types of education, the increased imbalance and inequality created in between men and women in rural areas, the failure of educational system to promote the value of sex equality etc.

The health data shows that between 1970 and 1980, the infant mortality rate declined from 129 to 114 but female infant mortality rate increased in rural areas from 139 in 1970 to 142 in 1979.

Unlike most of the Western countries, the number of males exceeds the number of females in India. There has been a continuous decline in sex ratio ever since 1901. There is a welcome feature in 1981 census as there is a slight increase in the sex ratio. In 1981, the number of females per thousand male was 933 as compared to 930 in 1971.

The first legislation on women introduced during the decade was the ordinance promulgated in 1975 on equal remuneration for men and women. Later, it was converted into equal Remuneration Act in 1976. Another recognition is reflected in the Sixth Five Year Plan which contains, for the first time, a Chapter on Women and development. In this connection, I would like to mention that it is no use of only having a Chapter in the Plan or the allotment of money. There should be a continuous monitoring on the implementation and there should be continuous report as to how far the allotment of money helps the women to develop. In this connection, I would like to suggest that there should be a cell in the Planning Commission where all the reports from all over India should come and it should be processed and follow-up action taken in due course.

I am not discussing about employment of women as our friends have already discussed, and we have very limited time. In the Chapter of Women and Development in 1980, the main drawbacks in women development were identified as follows :

- (1) pre-occupation with repeated pregnancy;
- (2) physical work load;
- (3) lack of education; and
- (4) lack of independent economic status.

During the last 10 years, women's organisations multiplied and the significant feature is their increased degree of protest against rising incidence of crimes and violence against women. There is a degree of improvement of women's overall status in the family.

That is one very significant thing which we find during the last decade.

In 1984 General Elections, the number of women representatives in Parliament increased substantially. But what is their percentage, you can see. The need for establishment and strengthening the grass root level organisations of women, particularly in rural areas has been acknowledged. It is also necessary to enforce recognition of women's responsibility on different levels of Government personnel. It is no use only recognised in the voluntary sector. In the Government sector also, this should be done. Now, issues have been identified that make women equality and development a far more complex than has been understood before. Since the Committee on Status of women gave the Report, the things have become more complex. The success for achieving status for women depends upon the removal of all constraints and to empower women to assert their views and demands on the development process. I would point out that the Committee on Status of women have recommended a continuous and a permanent Commission on Women.

We have advanced no doubt but we have to work very hard to reach our goal.

I welcome the judgment of the Supreme Court on giving maintenance allowance to divorced women. Why not have a law on maintenance allowance to divorced women who are not able to maintain themselves?

I would further suggest that a common Civil code should be formulated. I request the Government to at least have a discussion in this session on the common Civil code.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that unless social attitude is changed by the majority of our people, by both men and women, not only women but also men, no real justice can be expected in our society.

I would also suggest that in the syllabus of our schools and colleges, a subject of fundamental social justice for all students be introduced.

Lastly, I would say that we are happy that a Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare has been formed. But I tell you that unless a policy resolution is formulated, it will not be possible to go much ahead. So, I suggest that a policy resolution on women

should be formulated and placed before the House as soon as possible.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Jadavpur) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very important Discussion and I welcome it. Our Party is trying to do something for the welfare of women.

Women have a great role to play in our country. I remember our late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, because she was not only the brightest son of India but she was the brightest son of the world. Being a lady member of Parliament, I am very proud of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's activities. We all know that she is known for her activities and achievements.

Our late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, is no more. We will not be able to hear her voice as before. But it is a fact that for generations to come, the people will read in history that such a woman had ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's philosophy to me has a meaning and significance beyond the confines of our country in our times.

Our late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, told the All India Science Conference held at Bangalore last year to play an effective role in furtherance of disarmament and world peace. Unless there is a freeze on the production of nuclear arms, the development and progress of peace-loving countries will be hampered.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi asked women to fight not only for getting a fair deal but also for securing world peace and eradicating poverty.

Before Mrs. Gandhi, towards the rather sad end of his otherwise remarkable career, Jawaharlal Nehru was asked what he regarded as his greatest achievement as Prime Minister of independent India. He paused for a moment and then said "women's education".

We find from past history, some educated and knowledgeable ladies like Gargi, Maitreyi, Khana, Selabati, Saita, Seleitri, Sita and Arundhati.

If we observe the medieval India, we will see the active part women took at that time. Women were not only intelligent but the ladies of the Mughal harem played quiet a significant role in the State policy of India,

But unfortunately no systematic attempt has been so far made to assess their role in the affairs of the State and policy. The ladies of the Mughal harem were not only enlightened but most of them took delightful interest in public affairs.

And if we observe our present history of India, we find that a lot of ladies like Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Nehru, Matangini Hazra and Basanti Das have taken the initiative and encouraged the independence movement.

And our late Prime Minister Indiraji is now a history of the world. She sacrificed her life for the sake of our country and for national integration.

We are grateful to Indiraji because she has ratified the ILO Convention No. 100 for the rights of equal wages for women. I am proud, as a lady Member of Parliament, to say that we the Indian women are really proud of Mrs. Gandhi and that we are the blind followers of Mrs. Gandhi and her philosophy.

We know that in 1975, the U.N. Conference at Mexico celebrated International Women's Year and adopted equality, development and peace as the goals of the women's decade.

It was precisely to serve the purpose of presenting easy to read overview of this important subject that the Geneva based feminist Group: 1819 published in 1983 "resource guide for organisation and action" entitled Women in Development.

Briefly, the 1819 Guide covers the following areas : some development was done and not done for women; women in relation to food production, health, communication and education and the impact on women of income-generating comes including those controlled by the multi-nationals.

We must congratulate our present Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi because he is the leader who has taken the oath to waive the obstacles in the path of women. First of all, Shri Rajiv Gandhi changed the name of the Ministry of Social Welfare into the Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare in order to establish the rights of women and their development.

Secondly, Shri Rajiv Gandhi has

announced free Higher Secondary Education for women and compulsory education up to Class VIII.

Thirdly, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, our Prime Minister has given lot of chances to his Ministry also. We are grateful to Shri Rajiv Gandhi because he has taken many lady Members into his Cabinet and also into the Ministry. Being a lady Member, I am proud of this act of Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : The Ministry is also headed by a women.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Shri Rajiv Gandhi has changed the name of the Ministry from Social Welfare into Social and Women's Welfare, for the first time.

As General Secretary of the West Bengal Mahila Congress, I have done a lot of work to develop women's activities, to develop their educational system and to develop them economically and socially. I have also attended a lot of international Women's Seminars to observe and find out the actual needs of women. I would like to make the following suggestions for improving the condition of women in India :

I do not believe in a quota system like reservation for women. I think it is our legitimate right to get equal facilities for women.

Naijru, a famous Bengali poet, says : "I am in a mind of socialism; I have no differences between men and women, which is the best creation in the world; men and women have done it equally".

Swami Vivekananda says :

*Na jagile Bharat lalana, ai Bharat bujhi
jagena jagena.*

If we cannot awaken the Indian ladies, India will not improve.

Women are sincere, honest, serious, dynamic and dedicated. Their active performance can be seen everywhere in India.

Hon. Member Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee has said that we are not improving. We are improving. For example, in respect of my State of West Bengal I can say this :

[Translation]

In Bengal five ladies contested the election and all the five have win.

[English]

I demand of the hon. Minister : please allow women equal right in employment opportunities. According to their status, according to their capability, women should get more and more chances in schools, colleges, hospitals, government services, etc.

Vocational training for women should be job-oriented. Economic independence for women would help eradicate social evils like dowry and bride-burning and would have a salutary effect on family planning efforts. There is need for re-examination of the entire planning and educational system.

Government should guarantee adequate representation to women in decision-making bodies like the Planning Commission, Public Service Commission, Planning and Recruitment Boards and statutory bodies at the State and Central levels.

Government should take a bold step to educate the rural people, specially the Adivasis. At present only 25 per cent of women are educated. Therefore, illiteracy among women should be wiped out.

Working women's hotels are very few in our country. Government should build more and more hostels and creche for working women.

Government should formulate a policy to organize women working in the unorganized sectors like agricultural labourers, bidi workers, brick workers, etc., and effective steps should be taken to prevent exploitation of such women by the management. Women are working mostly as agricultural labour doing manual work and in cottage industries, In these areas, new techniques are being introduced and mechanisation is also taking place. And where retrenchment is to be done, only women are removed...

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please conclude.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Under the law, women and men are entitled to equal wages, but the practice is different...

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : please conclude.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Anti-dowry steps which can be taken under law should be implemented.

There are some loopholes which need to be plugged. Government should implement at least whatever legal steps can be taken under law.

Some public sector concerns are not allowing the married women maternity benefits. This discriminatory attitude should stop.

Government should take a bold step to create public opinion against dowry. Here they should employ all forms of the media—the TV, radio and newspapers.

They should also set up a high power legal committee for this purpose. Until we create a strong public opinion in this regard, we cannot do anything. Realisation is the main thing. So, I request the Government to please set up an active Women's Committee drawing from the Lady members of Parliament which should chalk out the programme as to how to proceed for the all round development of women. Then only we can solve the women's problems. Women's education should be given greater attention and they should be economically uplifted.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI PREMALABAI CHAVAN (Karad) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am thankful for the opportunity given to me to participate in this important discussion. Today, when we are discussing this issue, I can say that our Government have done a lot for women. We cannot forget that after independence ample progress has been made by women and in the field of education also much progress has been made by them.

Although our society is male-oriented, yet efforts have all along been made to protect and uplift the women. The woman of India has held the highest position in the world.

Women in India participate in all walks of life. Right from a farm labourer to the office of the Prime Minister, she has performed all the roles efficiently. This proves that women are no less efficient than men. Our women have earned a name as judges, collectors, lawyers and doctors.

Our leaders used to say that Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, had told

them that independence could not be achieved by begging for it. Similarly, we believe that women are not going to get anything by begging for it. Rather, we shall have to struggle for it. We cannot achieve deliverance by begging for it.

It has been observed that right from the Vedic period, woman has enjoyed a very high position. That period saw women like Gargi, Maitreyi and others. This proves that our women were also intellectually brilliant and they also had genius just like men.

Thereafter, in the Puranic era also, we saw women like Sita, Draupadi and Tara-mati.

Indian women faced their downfall only when there were foreign invasions on India. During the rule of foreign invaders, we lost our independence and *Purdah* System can be quoted as an example. When the Mughals came to India and ruled our country, we lost independence completely and women were confined to their homes and they were deprived of education.

Then started the British era. During that period the condition of our women became worse. The British rule gave a new turn to our educational system and even men were given such type of education which generated a slave mentality and schools and colleges became mere factories for turning out clerks. Even in that period we had women like Rani of Jhansi and Ahilya Bai who fought battles for independence and became immortal.

After independence, the prominent leaders of our country like Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadher Tilak, Mahatma Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others started making efforts for the emancipation of women and much progress was made in this direction. Many law were passed for the upliftment of the women and emphasis was laid on women's education. The result is that today women has come to occupy high positions in society. Our late Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, made her name immortal in the world and there in no parallel in history for the last 5000 years nor will there be even in the times to come. This is the glorious culture of India which will not only protect itself but the entire mankind also.

Our Government have made many efforts during the Women's Decade and our young Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi has, by creating a separate Ministry, tried to remove the shortcomings in these efforts so that special attention could be paid to women's problems.

The 20-Point Programme has been of much help to women. But, today we see that the benefits of these programmes are not reaching rural women, although all efforts are being made to do so and I hope that our Government would definitely succeed in their objective. The most important factor is to improve the economic condition of women. Only then can they become really independent. Unless equal wages are ensured and equal opportunities are provided for education, we cannot ensure their progress or improvement in their status. Women would have to make efforts themselves to see that atrocities are not committed on them. I am confident that our Prime Minister Rajivji, would definitely succeed in his efforts. The incidence of such atrocities has definitely come down and he has taken steps to make facilities available to women and we hope that during his Prime Ministership, even after the Women's Decade, efforts would continue to be made for women's progress and he would continue his endeavour to see that our country forges ahead and the shortcomings, if any, are removed.

[English]

SHRI A. CHARLES (Trivandrum) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is with a great sense of pride that I stand here to speak a few words about the progress of Indian women in the International Women Decade. I feel proud that I belong to a country which produced the greatest lady or rather the greatest leader of the century, Shrimati Indira Gandhi. The hon. Kumari Mamata Banerjee has said that the whole women are proud of the great leadership given by Indira Gandhi. I want to correct her. Not only the whole women but the whole nation is proud of the great leadership given by our late Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi.

When we discuss about the role of women we often pay glowing tributes to the contribution made by our women in various capacities but we often fail to recognise them as equal partners. So, the questions is

whether we are willing to accept them as equal partners. In the Bible a great place of honour is given to women. The Bible says that a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband. Consider the condition of a King who loses his crown. If a man loses the confidence and fellowship of woman who is his partner in life he will be nothing in life. We are all experiencing in our homes, the love, affection and care of our mothers. Whenever we discuss the role of women, whenever we consider about the legislation to be brought forward to improve their condition, etc., we have to think of our mothers. Lots of things have been said about the condition of women. Very often, from the Press, we come to hear of the great atrocities committed on women. One of the main reason is the very dangerous system of Dowry. Dowry system is the greatest evil which stands in the way of liberation of women. We should consider the possibility of having a uniform legislation all over the country to ban Dowry and to ensure equal right for women along with men. It will go a long way in liberating the women from their present bondage.

We are very happy that our dynamic Prime Minister has brought forward a legislation for ensuring free education for girls all over the country upto the 11th standard. But mere free education, I am afraid, will not improve the condition of women. In rural homes little girls are given too much work and responsibility to care for the younger children when the parents go for work. Social Organisations, Voluntary Agencies etc., along with the Government agencies, must come forward to see that girls are given all facilities so that they may be able to pursue their education at a higher level.

In some of the development countries, opportunities exist for women to get employment at a comparatively later age. Here we have got age restriction both for men and women. After a certain age, they cannot get employment. But women are in a difficult position because in their early age they have to look after the children and so they cannot go for employment.

I would like to suggest that a way or a method should be found or some rule should be framed so that they can be made eligible for employment at a later age. There should

be relaxation in age for them. Somebody has suggested that there should be Commission appointed to study the present condition of women and to bring forward necessary proposals to improve their condition. I wish to say that that Commission should be given a time-limit to bring their report and suggestions. I suggest that that this Commission should include men who have a real concern to upliftment of women, so that good results may come out of their deliberations.

I congratulate Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee for bringing forward this Discussion under Rule 193 on the role of women which has given an opportunity to the hon. Members to say how to improve the condition of women. On so many important subjects, very often, in her political arguments, she used to excel men. But when she was speaking for the women, she was very soft as is usual of women, expressing their charm and love. This again shows that women always have a place in our society and in our hearts. With these words I conclude. Thank you.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND WOMEN'S WELFARE (SHRIMATI M. CHANDRASEKHAR) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very grateful to the hon. members for bringing forth this discussion, to focus attention on the development of women during the decade. It very gratifying to find that among the 14 members who took part in this discussion, there were also a few male members. Of course this time the ratio is in the reverse. There were more women and men were a few only.

AN HON. MEMBER : Actually we all are interested in participating in the debate. But there was no time.

SHRIMATI M. CHANDRASEKHAR : I am happy that at least on this occasion, women were given preference to men, because it is a subject concerning more to women. All the members who took part made very valuable suggestions and they also expressed their happiness about certain advancement and awareness that has taken place in the development of women and before I reply to specific points raised by the hon. members, I would like to give a brief review of the achievements during the International Women's Decade in India, because that is the subject on which the discussion started.

Based on the guidelines contained in the United Nations World Plan of Action, the recommendations of the Mexico Conference, the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India and the Declaration of the International Women's Year in 1975, the Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare had prepared a National Plan of Action for Women in 1976. In this context I must say here that the hon. member Dr. Phulrenu Guha was the chairperson of the Status of Women Committee and within about two and a half years, along with the other members had brought out a very valuable document. It identified the areas of Employment, Education, Health, Family Planning, Legislative Measures, Nutrition and Social Welfare Strategies and Measures for improving women's position in these areas.

The National Plan of Action was circulated to all of the State Governments and Union Territories and they were requested to form their own Plan of Action on the basis of the National Plan of Action, which provided the broad guidelines.

For the purpose of implementation of the Action Points contained in the National Plan of Action, State Level Coordination Committees were constituted in almost all the States. The implementation of the Action Points contained in the National Plan of Action, the report of the Committee on Status of Women in India and various other plans, is a continuing process. Considerable achievements have, however, been made in various fields such as health, education, employment legislation etc. during the Decade, as mentioned by various hon. members. I will briefly refer of these achievements.

All the existing laws were reviewed to ensure equality and social justice to women.

The Equal Remuneration Act was passed in 1976 to provide for the payment of equal remuneration to men and women for the same type of work and to prevent discrimination on the ground of sex against women in the matter of employment.

Secondly, the Factory Act was amended in 1976 which made it obligatory for the employer employing 30 or more women to provide for creches for the children of women employees.

The Maternity Benefit Act was amended in 1976 to cover women who were not entitled to maternity benefits under the Employees State Insurance Act, 1958.

I am however aware that these legislations pertaining to working women are not being implemented to the extent desired because of lack of adequate enforcement machinery. The Ministry of Labour has looked into this problem and has proposed a separate implementing machinery for all labour laws pertaining to women and children in the States and Union Territories as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme in the Seventh Plan. This machinery will take care of the Acts pertaining to working women. In this context I would like to say that the suggestion made by the hon. Member, Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee, to coordinate the women welfare work, is being taken up by the Ministry. I am happy about that suggestion. I hope, as a nodal Ministry we will be able to evolve that.

Mutual consent as a ground for divorce is recognised in the Special Marriage Act, 1976. The Committee on the Status of Women in India had recommended the recognition of this principal law in all personal laws. It was incorporated into the Hindu Law by the Marriage Law (Amendment) Act, 1976. Necessary amendments in other systems of personal law have not yet been introduced as the Government is keen that the initiative for reform of personal laws should come from the community itself. So, the point raised by some hon. Members can be met by this.

The right to exercise 'option of puberty' to obtain a divorce was available earlier only to Muslim women, who were married while still minors. This has been extended to Hindu women. Cruelty as a ground for divorce has also been added to Hindu Law. The period of waiting after a decree of judicial separation or restitution of conjugal rights, has been reduced from two years to one year. Cruelty has been added to the grounds for divorce. Since the Legislature did not enumerate situations that would constitute cruelty, the judiciary has stepped in and interpreted cruelty to include mental cruelty as well. The High Courts have consistently held that a false allegation of adultery by the husband or wife should be construed as mental cruelty.

Much has been talked of having a uniform civil code in India. The Government is keen on enacting a uniform civil code, but we also feel that, in the first place, to being about any changes in the minority groups' personal laws, a right climate is to be created. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Central Social Welfare Board, State Social Welfare Advisory Boards and State Governments, and UT Administrations were asked to generate attitudinal changes among members of minority communities with the help of voluntary agencies in the field. Action has been initiated by these agencies through various campaigns and publicity drives.

Two Criminal Laws (Amendment) Acts were enacted by Parliament in 1983, which seek to amend the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act and the Criminal Procedure Code to make the offence of rape and such crimes against women much more stringent and effective. It also introduces a new provision in the Indian Penal Code to make cruelty against women by the husband and other relations punishable. The onus of proof of innocence would rest on the accused in such cases.

The Dowry Prohibition Act was amended in 1984. The Committee on this Bill was chaired by the hon. Member, Shrimati Krishna Sahi. She brought out the report in a short time after touring the country and collecting evidences. This Act was amended to make the offence cognizable, to enhance the punishment of both fine and imprisonment and to widen the scope of the Act to make it more effective.

The Amended Act of 1984 has defined dowry by substituting "In connection with the marriage" for "in consideration of the marriage" because it used to be difficult to prove the gifts were given "in consideration of the marriage" and not "out of love and affection". You are all aware that recently the Supreme Court held in a landmark judgment that gifts given to a bride at the time of marriage and thereafter were her absolute property and the husband or in-laws could be prosecuted if they refused to part with these items.

The Dowry Prohibition Act will be further reviewed from time to time if the circumstances so warrant and other recommendations of the Joint Committee of the

Parliament can be considered by us at the appropriate time. I want to assure the hon. members that further reform of the Dowry Act will be considered. We have an open mind on the subject and that I can say that the last word has not been said on the subject.

The Law Ministry are framing the Rules under the Act after consulting the State Governments, and we hope implementation of the new amendments will start very soon.

The Family Courts Act was passed by the Parliament in 1984 to set up Family Courts in every area in the State comprising a city or town, whose population exceeds one million. These family courts are to be set up by the State Governments and the Law Ministry will be taking up the matter with them. After studying the working of the Courts a decision can be taken to extend them to smaller towns.

The jurisdiction of the Courts will be in respect of proceedings regarding marriage disputes and also maintenance and guardianship disputes.

The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act was amended in 1978 to make it more effective and stringent. Under this amendment the definition of both 'Prostitution' and 'Brothels' has been widened. Search witnesses need not now be from the same locality. This requirement was one of the major difficulties in the investigation and prosecution of such cases. Special emphasis was laid on the provision of rehabilitation services for the prostitutes. Inspectors of police are now authorised to investigate cases under this clause.

Now we turn to the main aspects of education, health and employment about which most of the members made very valuable suggestions and they have also placed certain statistics about which I would also like to add that some may be modified. In the field of health life expectancy of women has gone up from 31.7 years in 1951, 45.6 in 1971 to 55.1 in 1981. The trend of declining sex ratio for women has been reversed in 1981, it has actually gone up from 930 in 1971 to 939 in 1981. To improve the health status of women special programmes are being implemented to provide nutrition to them. The infrastructure of

child and maternal health services has been expended both in the urban and in the rural areas by setting up of primary health centres, rural family welfare centres and sub-centres.

In addition, the Department of Family Welfare has sponsored a number of schemes for the immunisation of expectant mothers against tetanus and to prevent nutritional anaemia among mothers.

During 1982-83 alone 39.03 lakh expectant mothers were immunised against tetanus. Similarly, 75.42 lakh women were covered by the Scheme of Prophylaxis against nutritional anaemia; 501.63 lakh women are getting supplementary nutrition and 309.82 lakh women are attending functional literacy classes in the various Integrated Child Development Scheme projects. The ICDS projects have also created employment for women by way of jobs like Anganwadi workers, Supervisors and Child Development Officers. Here, the mothers along with the children are getting prophylaxis and also non-formal education.

In the field of employment, the work participation rate has risen from 14.15 per cent in 1971 to 19.76 per cent in 1981. Financial assistance is being provided for training and employment through various schemes of the Central Social Welfare Board under this Ministry and divisions of the other related Ministries such as the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Industry, etc.

The Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare has started a programme in 1982-83 to assist the projects sponsored by public undertakings/corporations and autonomous bodies for setting up training-cum-employment-cum production units, which benefit the women.

There are certain other programmes which will benefit the women, through the ICDS programmes. And they provide, mainly, as I mentioned, immunisation to children, health check-up to mothers etc. The mothers will be given supplementary nutrition and also non-formal education.

All pregnant and nursing mothers within the ICDS project areas are eligible for immunisation against tetanus, health check-up, referral services and health and nutrition education. Besides, supplementary nutrition is also given to women belonging to the

following categories :

- (i) Landless agricultural labourers;
- (ii) Marginal farmers holding land not exceeding one hectare;
- (iii) Scheduled Castes;
- (iv) Scheduled Tribes; and
- (v) Other poor sections of the community with a total monthly income not exceeding Rs. 500 p.m.

Women in the age group of 15-45 years are given health and nutrition education in the Anganwadi centres.

Coming to certain points that have been mentioned, apart from what I have said, the point raised by Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee, about girls in schools, more girls are in school in 1981 as compared to 1971. As I have stated in my statement, the gender gap is decreasing. The main reason for low enrolment of girls in schools is that there is a great demand for female labour in poor households. That is why if mothers are given income generating programmes which we have already taken up through the IRDP and also the RLEGP programme we provide work for the women so they will be able to help the family and girls are allowed to get education. They will also be provided supporting services such as creches, for the women, day-care centres etc., so that children of working women can be left in those centres and the girls of those ladies can go to schools.

Our Prime Minister in the new Government has allowed the girls to have free education up to the Higher Secondary stage. This sort of supportive services will enable the girls to go to schools and prosecute their studies. Our Ministry will, therefore, emphasise the importance of supportive services. The Central Social Welfare Board is implementing schemes of creches, balwadis and day care centres. Education Ministry has special schemes in educationally backward States to increase girls' enrolment in schools.

About lack of equal wages in agriculture, the Labour Ministry is proposing to set up a separate enforcement machinery for maternity and various other labour laws in the unorganised sector. Since most of the women are not taken in the organised sector they are

being denied the maternity benefits and certain other supportive services for the children.

Mrs. Vidyawati Chaturvedi mentioned about employment of women in rural areas. Khadi and Village Industries absorb a very high number of women. Figures for 1981-82 reveal that 45 per cent of the total employment in this sector goes to women. 14.59 lakhs of women are employed in this sector.

Regarding obscene advertisements, we are equally concerned about it. Our Ministry took up the matter with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. In two cases the advertisements in which woman was shown as sex objects were withdrawn.

Regarding Working Women's hostels, on date we have given assistance for 34 working women's hostels and nearly 22151 inmates are to be housed in these hostels. These

hostels have been asked to have day care centres also in the same building so that we can economise and also provide at the same place facilities for other working women who can leave children in the day care centres before they return home. Rs. 219 lakhs have been spent for that.

If there are any other points left, the Demands of the Ministry are also coming for discussion shortly. Then I will be able to cover all of them.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The House is now adjourned to meet tomorrow at 11 A.M.

21.10 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till
Eleven of the Clock on Thursday,
April 25, 1985/Vaisakha 5, 1907
(Saka)*
