

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER Rather seek his protection

SHRI D K PANDA I do not want to make a speech **

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER This would not go on record I have declared that the motion is lost and still he is rising to speak He should have done it before I have declared already that the motion is lost It would be irregular if he speaks now

16 14 hours.

CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

(Amendment of articles 19 and 326) by Dr Laxminaran Pandeya

डा० लक्ष्मी नारायण पांडेय: (मदमौर) मैं प्रस्ताव* करता हूँ कि भारत के संविधान का और संशोधन करने वाले विधेयक पर विचार किया जाये। उपाध्यक्ष महोदय मेरे प्रस्तुत विधेयक के द्वारा संविधान में संशोधन करते हुए वर्तमान मतदान की आयु को 21 वर्ष से घटा कर 18 वर्ष करने का प्रावधान किया गया है। इसी सदन में संविधान के अनुच्छेद 19 और अनुच्छेद 326 में संशोधन प्रस्तुत किये गये हैं।

16 15 hrs.

[DR HENRY AUSTIN in the Chair]

वर्तमान कानूनी प्रावधानों के अनुसार हम ने वयस्क मताधिकार के सिद्धान्त को स्वीकार किया है और उस के आधार पर हम अपनी चुनाव प्रणाली को चलाते चले आ रहे हैं

लेकिन आज ऐसी परिस्थिति पैदा हो गई है जिसकी वजह से इस सम्बन्ध में संशोधन करना आवश्यक हो गया है। केवल भारत में ही नहीं बल्कि सत्तर के विभिन्न देशों में आज चुनाव प्रणाली में एक मतदान की आयु में परिवर्तन की मांग की गई और विभिन्न देशों में इसी सदन में मताधिकार की आयु 21 वर्ष से घटा कर 18 वर्ष करने का प्रावधान किया है। हमारे देश में भी समय समय पर इस प्रकार की मांग उठती रही है जिस की इस सदन में भी चर्चा हुई है। लेकिन मैं समझता हूँ कि सरकार ने इस बारे में अभी तक गम्भीरता से विचार नहीं किया है।

आज हमारे युवा-वर्ग में असंतोष है जिसके कई कारण हो सकते हैं किन्तु मनदान में उन्हें हिस्सेदार न बनाना भी एक कारण है। वे भी मतदान के अधिकारी और शासनतंत्र में भागी होना चाहते हैं। लेकिन शायद वर्तमान शासन में बैठे लोग यह पसन्द नहीं करते कि युवा लोग आकर यहाँ स्थान ग्रहण करें और हम लिए यह मांग बार-बार टाली जाती रही है, यद्यपि चर्चा के दौरान शासन की ओर से यह जरूर स्वीकार किया गया है कि हम इस विषय पर विचार कर रहे हैं, हम इस पर साचेगे आदि।

मेरा निवेदन है कि इस बारे में ज्यादा सोच-विचार की कोई आवश्यकता नहीं है, किसी लम्बे-चौड़े निर्णय की भी आवश्यकता नहीं है। स्वयं मंत्री महोदय ने इसी सदन में एक चर्चा के उत्तर में कहा कि हमें किसी प्रकार के बहुत बड़े संशोधन लाने की आवश्यकता

**Not concluded

Moved with the roommendation of the President.

कता नहीं होगी और इस में कोई कठिनाई नहीं होगी, हमें केवल संविधान के अनुच्छेद 326 में संशोधन करना पड़ेगा। मैं स्मरण दिलाना चाहता हूँ कि उस के बाद दो वर्ष की अवधि बीत गई है। मैं समझता था कि सरकारी पक्ष की ओर से इस आशय का संशोधन प्रस्तुत किया जायेगा, लेकिन ऐसा नहीं किया गया और यही कारण है कि मुझे यह विधेयक प्रस्तुत करना पडा।

आज स्थिति यह है कि 18 वर्ष की आयु का व्यक्ति कानूनी तौर पर राजस्व या सम्पत्ति के लेन देन के मामले में बालिग समझा जाता है। यहा तक कि 18 वर्ष की आयु का व्यक्ति पराये घर की लड़की को ला सकता है अर्थात् शादी कर सकता है उसे जीवन भर का साथी बना सकता है। पूरा भविष्य उस पर निर्भर कर सकता है। लेकिन उस को केवल पाच वर्ष के लिये प्रतिनिधि बनाने के लिए वोट का अधिकार प्राप्त नहीं है। जहा तक विदेशों का सम्बन्ध है, वहा मतदान की आयु और मैजिस्ट्री की आयु में अन्तर नहीं है जबकि हमारे यहां जो व्यवस्था है उम के अनुसार मतदान की आयु और मैजिस्ट्री की आयु में अन्तर रखा गया है। यह अन्तर अस्वाभाविक और कृत्रिम है और इस लिए मैं समझता हूँ कि इस अन्तर को दूर करना आवश्यक है।

हमारे विभिन्न कानूनों में जैसे इंडियन मैजिस्ट्री एक्ट, कान्ट्रेक्ट एक्ट एक्टिविसेस एक्ट, गार्डियनज एंड वाइज एक्ट, और सिनेमेटोग्राफ एक्ट में, एडल्ट या मेजर की परिभाषा के

अन्तर्गत 18 वर्ष की आयु के व्यक्ति को बालिग समझा या माना गया है। फिर मेरी समझ में नहीं आता है कि 18 वर्ष की आयु के व्यक्ति को वोट का अधिकार क्यों नहीं दिया जाता है। जो व्यक्ति 18 वर्ष की आयु प्राप्त कर चुका है उस को शारीरिक और मानसिक दृष्टि से सक्षम माना जाता है। वह अपने हित-अहित का विचार कर के मभी प्रकार के लेन देन कर सकता है और अदालत में उस की गवाही समर्थवान या प्रामाणिक समझी जाती है। लेकिन उस को वोट का अधिकार पाने के अयोग्य समझा जाता है। मैं समझता हूँ कि आज की परिस्थिति में यह उचित नहीं है। यह असंगत ठीक होना जरूरी है।

मैं विभिन्न कानूनों के प्रावधानों में कुछ को उद्घृत करना चाहता हूँ। इंडियन मैजिस्ट्री एक्ट में कहा गया है :

"Subject as aforesaid, every other person domiciled in India shall be deemed to have attained his majority when he shall have completed his age of 18 years and not before."

हिन्दू मैरिज एक्ट में कहा गया है कि :

"The bridegroom has completed the age of eighteen years"

सिनेमेटोग्राफ एक्ट में "एडल्ट" की परिभाषा इस प्रकार की गई है

"An adult is a person who has completed 18 years of age."

हिन्दू मैरिज एक्ट में इसी प्रकार की परिभाषा है और बम्बई के हिन्दू मैरिज एक्ट में तो 18 वर्ष से भी नीचे जा कर 16 वर्ष कर दिया गया है। हम परिस्थिति में सरकार को

[डा० लक्ष्मी नारायण पांडेय]

इस प्रश्न पर गम्भीरता से पुनर्विचार करना चाहिए। जब 18 वर्ष के व्यक्ति को कानूनी तौर पर मेजर माना जाता है तो मैं पुनः दोहराना चाहता हूँ कि उस को मतदान के अधिकार से वंचित करने का कोई योग्य कारण नहीं प्रस्तुत होता है।

हमारी पेटिशनर कमेटी ने भी इस प्रश्न पर गम्भीरता से विचार किया है और इस बारे में एक सिफारिश भी की है। मैं उस की सिफारिश के एक अग्र को उद्धृत करना चाहता हूँ। पेटिशनर कमेटी, फोर्थ लोक सभा, की नवी रिपोर्ट 1970, के पृष्ठ 84 पर रिकमेंडेशन 3.21 कहा गया है :

"The Committee have given earnest consideration to the demand of the petitioners for lowering the voting age from 21 years to 18 years. Although there are strong arguments against the proposal such as immaturity of youth at that age and financial implications involved in handling a vastly increased electorate thereby, the Committee feel that there are no valid reasons for denying the right of vote to persons above the age of 18 years, particularly when for all other purposes of law, they are treated as majors and deemed competent to handle their affairs. The Committee, therefore recommend that art 326 of the Constitution should be amended and voting age reduced from 21 years to 18 years".

यह पेटिशनर कमेटी की रिपोर्ट है जो अपने ही सदन की एक कमेटी है। उस में माननीय सदस्यों ने अपने विचार इस प्रकार व्यक्त किए हैं। इसमें किसी का नोट आफ

डिस्टेंस भी नहीं है। सर्वसम्मत विचार आया है और यह रेकमेंड किया है, यह एक प्रकार का निर्देश है मति का कि सरकार इस रेकमेंडेशन को लागू करे तथा आर्टिकल 326 को अन्दर संशोधन करे। मैं सरकार से जानना चाहूँगा कि आखिर कमेटी की रिपोर्ट के बारे में उसने क्या विचार किया? इसको भ्रम तक अमल में क्यों नहीं लाया गया? कौन से ऐसे कारण थे कि इस को अमल में नहीं लाया गया? सरकार कुछ बहाने बताती है कि हमारे मामले कुछ कठिनाइयाँ हैं, कुछ ऐसी कठिनाइयाँ आ सकती हैं कि एलेक्शन कमीशन के ऊपर भारी बोझ पड़ेगा, एलेक्शन कमीशन इसके लिये तैयार होगा, अर्थवा नहीं? हमारे यहाँ वोटरो की परसेंटेज बढ़ जायगी, वोटरो की संख्या बढ़ जायगी। हम मानते हैं कि हो सकता है कि वोटरो की संख्या 28 करोड़ से बढ़ कर 38 करोड़ हो सकती है। दस करोड़ की संख्या बढ़ सकती है। वर्तमान में हमारे मतदान केंद्रों की संख्या लगभग तीन सठे तीन लाख है, वह बढ़ कर के 5 लाख हो जायगी। इसमें लगने वाले कर्मचारी इस समय 20 लाख की संख्या में हैं वे बढ़ कर 25 लाख कर्मचारी लग सकते हैं। लेकिन ये भारी व्यवस्थायें हो सकती हैं। हमने हर चुनाव के बाद में किसी न किसी प्रकार से पोलिंग बूथ्स की संख्या बढ़ाई है, कर्मचारियों की संख्या बढ़ाई है। हमारे यहाँ का एलेक्टोरेट भी बढ़ा है। इसलिये केवल इस आधार पर कि हमारे वोटर्स की संख्या बढ़ जायगी, हम कठिनाई में पड़ जाएंगे, इस को न मानना उचित नहीं होगा और न इस प्रकार की दलीलों में कोई वजन ही है।

मैं मंत्री महोदय का ध्यान यहां के जो चीफ एलेक्शन कमिश्नर रह चुके हैं श्री सेन वर्मा उन की एक बात की तरफ आकृष्ट करना चाहता हूँ

"The retiring Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. Sen Verma is confident that the Election Commission can cope with the increase in the electorate if the voting age was reduced to 18".

उन्होंने भी इस बात को साफ कहा है, एलेक्शन कमिशन का भी इसमें कोई दो मत नहीं है, उन की कोई भिन्न राय इस बारे में नहीं है। उन्होंने आर भी कहा है।

"He maintained that the lowering of voting age might create a vicious circle although the proposal was administratively feasible."

उन्होंने जोर देकर कहा है कि यह ऐडमिनिस्ट्रेंटिवली फीजिबल है। नान-फीजिबल नहीं कहा। उन्होंने यह नहीं कहा कि हम यह कर नगे सकते। जो कुछ अभी कहा है वह आपके एलेक्शन कमिश्नर की कही हुई बात है। उन्होंने साफ कहा है कि वोटर्स की एज कम कर दी जाती है तो सरकार को कोई प्रशासनिक कठिनाई नहीं है। एलेक्शन कमीशन पूरी तरह तैयार है।

इसी प्रकार से देश के विभिन्न विद्वानों की जो इसके बारे में राय है उस की तरफ भी मैं मंत्री महोदय का ध्यान आकृषित करना चाहता हूँ। दिल्ली यूनिवर्सिटी के वाइस-चांसलर डा० स्वरूप सिंह ने कहा है स्पष्ट रूप से कि अगर वोटर्स की एज कम कर दी

जाये तो इसमें सरकार का कोई बाधा नहीं होनी चाहिए। आज की परिस्थिति की मांग है और उन्होंने कहा है कि किसी प्रकार से युवा अमन्तोष को कम करना है तो उसको कम करने की दिशा में भी यह एक बहुत बड़ा कदम होगा। मंत्री महोदय ज वहाँ है कि आखिर गुजरात के अन्दर क्या हुआ? गुजरात के अन्दर हमने देखा कुछ दिन पहले कि सरकार की दुर्नीतियों के परिणामस्वरूप, सरकार की गलत आर्थिक योजनाओं के परिणामस्वरूप युवा-मन में अमन्तोष उभरा। आज का युवक अपने अधिकारों के प्रति सामाजिक क्रान्ति के लिए काफी सजग है। केवल गुजरात ही नहीं सभी स्थानों पर आज के युवा वर्ग के मन में काफी अमन्तोष है, बहुत काफी बेचैनी है, परेशानी है। वे चाहते हैं कि इस शासन तंत्र के अन्दर अपने आप को भागीदार बनाना। आजकल का युवक जो पढ़ लिख कर तैयार होता है कोई वकील तैयार होता है, कोई बैरिस्टर तैयार होता है, कोई इंजीनियर बन कर निकलता है, कोई डाक्टर बनता है। वे सारे ऐसे लोग हैं जो वैज्ञानिक हैं, डाक्टर हैं, इंजीनियर हैं जो प्रबुद्ध होकर निकलते हैं और हमारे देश की निधि है, देश की सम्पत्ति है। उनके अन्दर अमन्तोष है, उनके लिये कोई योग्य स्थान नहीं जिसमें वह अच्छी तरह से अपना जीविका निर्वाह कर सकें। इस प्रकार का उनके लिये कोई काम नहीं और इसके कारण देश का युवा वर्ग, देश का मस्तिष्क, देश का ज्ञान विदेशों में जा रहा है वे विदेशों में व्यापार प्राप्त कर रहे हैं। लेकिन हमारे देश के अन्दर जो परिस्थिति खड़ी हो गई है

[डा० लक्ष्मीनारायण पांडेय]

उसमें आज का युवा सड़को पर दर दर की ठोकरे खाता फिरता है। समाज के अन्दर उसके लिए कोई उचित स्थान नहीं, न हमारी सरकार उसको कोई स्थान देना चाहती है। और यही कारण है कि युवा-मन के अन्दर एक असन्तोष है। उस असन्तोष की लहर हमने गुजरात के अन्दर देखी है। गुजरात के अन्दर युवा वर्ग ने एक दिशा दी, एक क्रान्ति की लहर बहा आई। वही क्रान्ति की लहर बिहार से आज दिखाई दे रही है और उसके कारण भले ही आप जयप्रकाश नारायण को फासिस्टो के चगुल में फसा हुआ वह दे, थोड़ी देर के लिए उन को मतिभ्रम कह दे, लेकिन इपसे काम बनता नहीं है उनकी देशभक्ति निर्विवाद है। यह माग वा मारा वातावरण जो आज खड़ा हुआ है यह युवा मन के अन्दर जो असन्तोष है उसके कारण एक विद्रोह की भावना खड़ी हो गई है। वह इसलिए खड़ी हुई है कि आपन जो समाज के बीच में, जनता के बीच में जाकर आपके शब्दों में समाजवाद, अर्थ-व्यवस्था का लाने का, ममानता के अधिपत्य को देने का, रोटी रोजी के प्रश्न को हल करने का, वैज्ञानिकों को, इंजीनियरों को उचित स्थान देने का जो वादा किया आज उसे करन में आप असफल रहे हैं और इसी कारण आज उनके अन्दर एक असन्तोष है। यह असन्तोष की लहर केवल गुजरात तक ही नहीं देश के अनेक भागों में आज फैली है। गुजरात में रक्तपात हुआ, गुजरात में लोग शहीद हुए, वह शहादत बेकार नहीं जायगी, आपकी खूनी बोलिया और आपकी पुलिस के डंडे

बिहार की क्रान्ति को रोक नहीं सकते। बिहार में क्रान्ति आएगी और इस देश में क्रान्ति आएगी। युवा-वर्ग के साथ मैं इस प्रकार का काम, इसी प्रकार का खिलवाड़ आपने किया तो निश्चित रूप से इस देश के अन्दर इसी प्रकार की क्रान्ति आएगी। प्रदेश प्रदेश उठ कर खड़ा होगा और कहेगा कि हमें अधिकार दीजिए। उन्हीं कुछ अधिकारों में से एक अधिकार है जिसके बारे में मैं कह रहा हूँ। उनको आयु की माग के अनुसार वे 18 वर्ष जब पूरे कर लेते हैं तो उन्हें मतदान का अधिकार होना चाहिए। यह आज के युवा वर्ग की माग है। उस माग के सम्बन्ध में डायरेक्टर टाटा इस्टीमेट आफ सोशल साइंसेज ने अपने विचार व्यक्त करते हुए कहा था कि युवा वर्ग के इस अधिकार को राका नहीं जाना चाहिए। उनका यह अधिकार देना चाहिए। इसी प्रकार डायरेक्टर आफ इस्टीमेट आफ कास्टीट्यूशनल एन्ड पार्लियामेन्टरी स्टडीज है डा० सुभाष कश्यप उन्होंने भी कहा है कि 18 वर्ष के युवकों को मनाधिकार देना जरूरी है और दूसरें जा बड़े बड़े विद्वान हैं उन्होंने भी अपना परामर्श देते हुए साफ तौर से यहाँ कहा है। युवा फंडेशन जितने हैं उन्होंने भी इस बात की माग की है और आप के ही कांग्रेस दल के एक व्यक्ति ने ए आई सी सी में इस प्रकार का प्रस्ताव लाने का प्रयत्न किया था। नान आफिशियल रेजाल्यूशन था, भले ही वह विचारार्थ नहीं आया लेकिन अभी जो आपका सेशन हुआ उसमें इस प्रकार का प्रस्ताव आने वाला था कि मतदान की आयु 21 वर्ष से बढ़ा कर

18 वर्ष की आयु। इस बारे में कांग्रेस की तरफ से, कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी की तरफ से सोशलिस्ट पार्टी की तरफ से, सभी राजनीतिक दलों की तरफ से इस तरह की मांग आ रही है और जनसभ तो प्रारम्भ से ही इस प्रकार की मांग कर रहा है कि युवा वर्ग को इस प्रकारके अधिकार में बाधित नहीं करना चाहिए तथा इन अधिकार को मौलिक अधिकार में सम्मिलित किया जाना चाहिए।

हमारे देश के प्रसिद्ध अर्थ-शास्त्री श्री मो० डी० देशमुख ने भी अपने विचार पूना यूनिवर्सिटी के अन्दर विद्यार्थी समूह के मध्य दीक्षान्त समारोह के अवसर पर इसी प्रकार प्रकट किए हैं। उन्होंने कहा है

“Let me take the earliest opportunity of saying publicly that I am for the proposal to enfranchise all adults of 18 years and above”

मैं यह इसलिए उद्धृत कर रहा हूँ कि हमारे देश के जो प्रबुद्ध कहे जाने वाले लोग हैं जो निर्विवाद गृहे जा सकते हैं, जो प्रत्यक्ष राजनीति में सम्बन्ध नहीं रखते हैं या जो दलगत राजनीति से किसी प्रकार का सम्बन्ध नहीं रखते व भी आज इसी प्रकार का विचार रखते हैं कि मरी परिस्थितियाँ को देखते हुए उन्हें यह अधिकार दिया जाना चाहिए। तमिल नाडु के मुख्य मंत्री ने भी इसी प्रकार के विचार प्रकट किये हैं।

मैं आपको यह भी बताऊँ कि अनेक देशों में अपने-अपने यहाँ मतदान की आयु को घटाया है। हाल ही में फ्रांस ने ताँग सप्ताह पहले अपने यहाँ यह किया है। कैनाडा में हुआ है आस्ट्रिया में हुआ है नीडरलैंड में हुआ है। इन सभी देशों में मतदान की आयु को काफी कम किया है और इसलिए कम किया है कि वहाँ इस के लिए काफी माँग थी।

उन्होंने मतदान की आयु को घटा कर उन्होंने जनता की माँग को स्वीकार किया है। अपने यहाँ भी आज इस प्रकार की माँग है और मैं समझता हूँ कि मंत्री महोदय इस माँग को स्वीकार करने में हिचकिचाएँगे नहीं।

मैं मंत्री महोदय का ध्यान ज्वःइट सेलेक्ट कमेटी और एनेक्शन ला अमेडेमेंट की रेकमेडेशन की तरफ भी ले जाना चाहता हूँ। उनकी रेकमेडेशन भी इस प्रकार की है। यह कमेटी की रिपोर्ट पार्ट 2 पेज 4, पैरा 8, 9, तथा 10 में पढ़ना चाहता हूँ :

“Under the existing provision of Article 326 of the Constitution, a person who is not less than 21 years of age and is otherwise qualified is entitled to be registered as a voter

The question of voting age has in recent years assumed considerable significance. It is well known that in Western democracies, the expansion of the franchise was slow, gradual and progressive. Great Britain, for example, took almost a century to arrive at universal adult franchise.”

इसके बारे में मंत्री महोदय ने भी एक बार मतदान में वयस्कता के उम्र उतार देना यह बात कही थी। लेकिन वहाँ की परिस्थितियाँ भिन्न थी। अपने देश की परिस्थितियाँ भिन्न हैं। आज जो 18 वर्ष की आयु पार करने वाला व्यक्ति है वह ज्यादा मक्षम है। मतदान की दृष्टि में उम्र देश को अपेक्षा। मैं आपका ध्यान इस ओर भी आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ कि वहाँ पर मतदान की आयु में और उसके बलिग होने की आयु में प्रारम्भ से ही काट करना नहीं रहा है, लेकिन यहाँ अलग रहा है। यह बड़ा विचारणीय प्रश्न है कि हमारा यहाँ सभी प्रकार का व्यवहार वह 18 वर्ष की आयु में कर सकता है लेकिन वह वाटिंग नहीं कर

[डा० लक्ष्मण नारायण पांडेय]

सकता। अन्त में मैं इन शब्दों की ओर आपका ध्यान आकर्षित करूंगा :

"Other members of the Committee felt that this measure would provide to the younger generation a sense of participation in the democratic process."

कमेटी ने यह साफ तौर से कहा है और आगे कहा है :

"In their view, there are no valid reasons for denying the right of vote to the age group of 18-21 years, particularly when for all purposes of law they are treated as majors and deemed competent to handle their affairs."

यह कमेटी ने कहा है —

"The Minister of Law and Justice stated that Government had not taken any decision in regard to this."

यह मिनिस्टर ने कहा है। लेकिन कमेटी की जो रिफ्लेक्शन है वह इस प्रकार है :—

"Having considered both the above viewpoints. . ."

The Minister's point and the Committee Members' point.

"... the Committee decided that the voting age should be reduced from 21 to 18 years. The Committee, therefore, recommend that article 326 of the Constitution might be amended accordingly."

माननीय सभापति महोदय, जैसा कि मैं निवेदन कर रहा था हमारा पड़ोसी देश, जिसका अभी अभी अशुभदय हुआ है—बंगला देश—उस ने भी 18 वर्ष की आयु मतदान के लिए रखी है। छोटे छोटे देश जैसे जांबिया, बर्मुडा, कांगो, बल्यारिया,

हंगरी, इंडोनेशिया, लाओस, सौरिया, आस्ट्रिया, पोलैंड आदि अब अपने वहाँ 18 वर्ष की आयु मतदान के लिए करते हैं और इनको इसमें किसी प्रकार की हिचक नहीं हुई तो हमारे यहाँ क्या काठनाई है? ये नवीं महोदय भा प्रधान उनके अपने शब्दों की ओर आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ जो उन्होंने एक उत्तर में 15 मार्च, 1974 को कहे थे

"It would not be proper for me to make the commitment, but I say that the Government are actively considering this matter and a decision would be taken as soon as the difficulties are solved."

मुझे समझ में नहीं आता कि वे कन से डिफायल्टीज हैं जो दो वर्ष के बाद भी साल्व नहीं हो सको हैं। सरकार के सामने क्या बन्धन हैं जो मतदान की आयु घटाने के लिये अभी भी विचार कर रही है। फेडरल रिपब्लिक आफ जर्मनी में भी कुछ समय पूर्व ही यह आयु घटाई गई है, कोरिया में तो इसे घटा कर 17 वर्ष कर दिया गया है। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि सरकार इस को घटाने में क्या हिचक रही है—क्या आप यह समझते हैं कि यदि युवक आ गये तो जिम् रूप में आज आप बैठे हुए हैं उस रूप में बैठे नहीं रह सकेंगे। सारे देश में बदलती हुई परिस्थिति को देखते हुए सरकार को चाहिए कि स्वयं आगे आ कर कहे कि हम बदलती हुई परिस्थिति को देखते हुए कहे कि हम इसे स्वीकार करते हैं। मैंने सदन की समितियों का हवाला दे कर बताया है कि सब ने इस की सिफारिश की है। याचिका समिति ने भी सर्व सम्मति से सिफारिश की है। निर्वाचन सम्बन्धी बिल पर संयुक्त प्रवर समिति बनी थी। उसने भी सिफारिश की थी। इन समितियों की सिफारिशों को देखते हुए तथा आज के अर्थशास्त्रियों, राजनीतिज्ञों, युवा संघों तथा समाज शास्त्रियों, विधिवेत्ताओं की सिफारिशों को देखते हुए मैं समझता हूँ कि मतदान की आयु को घटाने में सरकार को किसी प्रकार की हिचक नहीं होनी चाहिये

और यह अधिकार मौलिक अधिकार माना जाना चाहिए ।

मन्त्री महोदय ने स्वयं भी इस बात को स्वीकार किया था, मनें उन का ध्यान इस ओर आकर्षित किया है । हो सकता है कि ऐसा करने से थोड़ी बहुत वोट्स का संख्या बढ़ेगी—वह तो बढ़ेगी ही, लेकिन वर्तमान सदर्थ आज जिस प्रकार की परिस्थिति देश में है, जिस का सक्षिप्त विवेचन मैं ने पहले किया है, उस को देखते हुए, मैं समझता हूँ कि किसी भी पक्ष को विरोधी पक्ष या काँग्रेस पक्ष को इस वा विरोध नहीं करना चाहिये । जब जब यह विषय यहाँ आया है, काँग्रेस पक्ष के सदस्यों ने भी इस को स्वीकार किया है ।

माननीय सदस्य श्री मूल चन्द डागा के शब्दों को मैं आप के सामने उद्धृत करना चाहता हूँ—उन्होंने ये शब्द 2 मितम्बर 1972 को यहाँ पढ़े एक चर्चा में कहे थे । यह दूसरी बात है कि जब मन्त्र-विभाजन का प्रश्न आयेगा तो शायद डागा जी भी यहाँ से भाग खड़े होंगे, वे शायद इस के पक्ष में मत देने को तैयार नहीं होंगे मैं चाहता हूँ कि उन्होंने जो भाग की है उम पर दृढ़ रहे और उम के पक्ष में मत दे और सरकार से जोरदार शब्दों में कहें कि इस बिल को स्वीकार किया जाना चाहिये । मैं उन के शब्दों को उद्धृत कर रहा हूँ

“Shri M. C. Daga: Whenever the leaders of the country go to the young people, they are told that they are the people of the future and they should come forward. In view of this, the voting age should be reduced to 18 years, so that young people could contribute towards the development of the country. Moreover, the new generation is more educated and mature.

They should, therefore, be given opportunities to establish new values of life.”

यदि नु बँलूज आफ लाइफ हम को स्थापित करना है तो हमें इस बिल को बिना किसी विरोध के स्वीकार कर लेना चाहिए । यदि हम देश में कुछ नहीं बाने लाना चाहते हैं, कुछ नए परिवर्तन लाना चाहते हैं, नई मान्यताये लाना चाहते हैं, यदि हम युवकों के बँठने हुए भ्रमन्तोष को खत्म करना चाहते हैं, उस को भीमित करना चाहते हैं, उन के ऊपर किसी न किसी प्रकार की जवाबदेही और उत्तरदायित्व सौपना चाहते हैं तो आवश्यक है कि हम उन को इस प्रकार के अधिकार से वंचित न करे । जैसा मैं ने पहले निवेदन किया है कि इस प्रकार की भाग सभी वर्गों की ओर से बार बार आई है, सरकार यह कह कर कि आज विद्यार्थियों से भ्रमन्तोष है, विद्यार्थी बिहार में गड़बड़ कर रहे हैं, मध्य प्रदेश और गुजरात में गड़बड़ करते हैं, यह सही विचार धारा नहीं है । उन के मूल कारणों में जाना चाहिये । क्या सरकार न इम पर गम्भीरता से विचार किया है ? यदि सरकार गंभारता से विचार करती तो इस पक्ष में ही फैसला करती और उन से स्वयं कहती कि आप को वॉटिंग राइट दिया जाता है, मतदान का अधिकार दिया जाता है, आप को भी शासनतन्त्र में परिवर्तन लाने का अधिकार है, भले ही इस परिवर्तन से सरकार में बैठे हुए पक्ष को कम वोट मिले । सभी भी क्या स्थिति है—उत्तर प्रदेश में आप को 32 प्रतिशत वोट मिले हैं, केन्द्र के चुनावों में 40-42 प्रतिशत मत मिले थे, लेकिन बहुमत में कइलाते हैं । सभी भी

कांग्रेस को 50 प्रतिशत से ऊपर मत नहीं मिले और वह अल्पमत में रही किन्तु हमेशा अल्पमत की सरकार बहुमत की सरकार रही है, इसलिये कि करोड़ों लोगों को मजदुराने में बचित किया गया है। आज हमारे युवकों की मांग केवल मतदान के लिये आमु घटाने की ही नहीं है, चुनाव पद्धति को बदलने की मांग भी है। सामाजिक व्यवस्था में परिवर्तन की मांग है। शिक्षा पद्धति बदलने की मांग है। आज की चुनाव विधि में सशोधन करना बहुत आवश्यक है, अन्यथा ये बहुमत में बैठने वाले लोग भी जो वास्तव में जनता का विश्वास खो कर भाये हैं, जनता में बहुमत के आधार पर उन को विश्वास नहीं दिया है, काबिज रहेंगे। इसीलिये बिहार के अन्दर असन्तोष प्रकट हुआ, गुजरात ने अपना असन्तोष प्रकट किया और देश के अन्य भागों में भी असन्तोष प्रकट हो रहा है। सरकार इसी मदर्भ में इस पर गम्भीरता से विचार करे। यह आरोप-प्रत्या-रोपों की बात नहीं है। जैसा मैं ने पहले कहा है यहाँ के युवकों ने एक दिशा दी है, मैं चाहता हूँ कि माननीय मंत्री जी इस को गम्भीरता से लें। इस सदन के सभी मसद्स्यों से मेरा अनुरोध है कि आज का युवक अपने अधिकारों के लिये उठ खड़ा हुआ है, वह अपने अधिकारों के लिये लडाई लड़ रहा है मडक पर आ गया है कल आप के मामले भी आ कर खड़ा होगा, तब ज्यादा चिन्ता और कठिनाई होगी। मैं चाहता हूँ कि देश में वह स्थिति पैदा न हो, अराजकता न आये, प्रजातान्त्रिक पद्धति के आधार पर प्रजातन्त्र कायम रहे। लोकतन्त्र की मर्यादा कायम रहे, समाज के

सब अंगों को समाज में उचित स्थान मिले, नये जीवन मूल्यों को प्रतिष्ठा हो। इस हेतु से मैं माननीय सख्तियों से आग्रह करता हूँ कि वे इसको स्वीकार करें। आज का युवक देश को नई दिशा दे सकता है, वह भाग आया है, उस की इस मांग को ठुकराने का कोई औचित्य नहीं है इसलिये मैं बार बार आग्रह कर रहा हूँ कि सरकार मेरे विधेयक को स्वीकार करे।

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI NITIRAJ SINGH CHAUDHARY)
The Bill raises two points one—the voting age should be reduced to 18 and another—it should be made a fundamental right. He talked about lowering the age but he did not say anything about making it a fundamental right.

डा० लक्ष्मी नारायण पाण्डेय मैंने पहले ही निवेदन किया है कि एट्टिकल 326 में सशोधन करते हुए एट्टिकल 19 में भी सशोधन किया जाय। मैं चाहता हूँ कि एट्टिकल 19 में भी सशोधन किया जाय।

श्री नीतिराज सिंह चौधरी आप ने पहले ऐसा कहा नहीं था इसलिये मैं न याद दिलाया।

मैंने इस के बारे में याद दी दियारा है कि आप ने एट्टिकल 19 का जिक्र नहीं किया और याद आप उस का सशोधन नहीं चाहते हैं।

डा० लक्ष्मी नारायण पाण्डेय मैं आप को धन्यवाद देना हूँ और आप का कृतज्ञ हूँ कि आप ने मुझे इस की याद दिलाई है। अपने सशोधन में मैंने एट्टिकल 19 और एट्टिकल 326 के सशोधनों की मांग की है। बिल प्रस्तुत करते हुए अन्त में मैंने जो कुछ कहा

है, उस को धाप देवें। जहां जहां संशोधनों की आवश्यकता है वे होने चाहिये।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill further to amend the Constitution of India, be taken into consideration."

*SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER (Ausgram): Mr. Chairman, Sir, on behalf of my Party the Communist Party of India (Marxists) I wholeheartedly welcome the Bill introduced by Dr. Laxminarain Pandey. Before I discuss the provisions of this Bill I would like to draw your attention Sir, to the reference which has just now been made by the hon. Minister. A little while ago the hon. Minister referring to the observation of Dr. Pandey said: "Aap jhoot bole raha hai"—you are telling lies. I would like to know from you Sir, whether in Parliamentary parlance the word "lies" is parliamentary or not and if not whether it behoves a Minister to use it. I would request the Minister to withdraw the word and only after that I will commence my speech.

SHRI NITIRAJ SINGH CHAUDHARY: I did not use the word to anything that Mr. Pandeya had said. Since he had not referred to Article 19, I pointedly drew his attention to that. And when Mr. Kachwai said that he had said that, I said: Mr. Kachwai, don't speak lie. I did not say a word that Mr. Pandeya had said anything wrong.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER: With respects to the Minister, what I would say is this. You Mr. Chairman, may kindly go through the tape-record and you will find that he used the word *jhoot*—that means, lie. That is unparliamentary. Although do not believe in Parliamentary democracy, I must say that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us straighten out the matter now. The hon. Minister said that he did not deliberately use the word lie to anything that Mr. Pandeya had said.

SHRI NITIRAJ SINGH CHAUDHARY: He did not refer to Article 19. When Mr. Kachwai said he referred, I said no. He had not referred to it.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER: You said, lie.

SHRI NITIRAJ SINGH CHAUDHARY: I want the debate to be complete. Therefore I got up and drew his attention to it. Mr. Kachwai intervened and said something. I said, don't say like this. Mr. Pandeya had not referred to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The point is, whether you have said the word lie. I understand the position of the Minister that he did not mean that. He only drew the attention of the Member to the fact that he had not referred to Article 19, although it is very relevant for purposes of discussion.

Now, I just want to take the sense of the House whether they accept this view.

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR (Ahmedabad): He used the word "lie" when he wanted to say "wrong". Let us leave it at that. I am sure he does not mean that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of course, the word lie is unparliamentary. The Minister says he did not mean that. He meant it as 'wrong.'

श्री पी० जी० मावलंकर : अगर यह कहते "मही नहीं है" तब तो पार्लियामेंटरी था, लेकिन उन्होंने ने कहा है—"झूठ है" जो कि अनपार्लियामेंटरी है।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we accept this explanation?

*The original speech was delivered in Bengali.

SHRI B. V. NAIK (Kanara): It is a question of translation. Are you going to consider *jhoot* as unparliamentary or parliamentary? You will reserve your ruling.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If it is used as 'lie' in the sense in which it is normally understood, I think that is unparliamentary. But the Minister says he has not used that in that sense. And as Prof. Mavalankar said he used the word '*jhoot*' for 'wrong' So, let us accept that. Mr. Halder has also agreed to this. Mr. Halder, now you go on with your speech.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have already stated that on behalf of my Party I welcome the Constitution Amendment Bill which has been introduced by Dr. Pandey. Even after 27 years of independence the authorities in power are afraid of giving the right of vote to the boys of 18 and they are reluctant to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18. They have no courage and they don't trust the youth of this country. But I would like to remind the gentlemen opposite who are occupying the seat of power that during the days of British imperialism in West Bengal hundreds and thousands of young men below the age of 21 had not only come forward to participate in the non-cooperation movement but they had shed their blood and given their lives in revolutionary activities in their earnest bid to end the British rule and to free mother India from the shackles of slavery. We cannot forget the Chittangong, Armoury raid case. In this historic event a boy of 17—Shri Tagore Ball fought bravely and laid down his life fighting against the British rulers. Day before yesterday, this august House paid its homage to Shri Hare Krishna Konar. Shri Konar had participated in non-cooperation movement at the age 14 and at the age of 17 he joined the revolutionaries to bring about a fall of the British imperialistic power in the country.

As a result he was deported to Andaman as given life imprisonment. This is only to cite a few examples and there are many such incidents in other States also where youngmen had gladly given their lives for the cause of freedom of our country. It is indeed very strange Sir, that having won the freedom which was possible because of the contributions of youngmen below the age of 21, today we refuse to consider them as responsible and are utterly reluctant to give them the right of vote. It is an irony that those who are enjoying the fruits of freedom and are installed in power conveniently forget the sacrifices made by the youngmen of our country and they are trying to perpetually debar the 10 crores youngmen of India from their legitimate right to vote under flimsy grounds of their not being responsible. Sir, we talk hoarse about students unrest in the country. No doubt our youngmen of our country today, under the circumstances created by this country are beoming more and more restive. They are suffering from frustration and the only way out, to my mind, is that they have to be given a share of the responsibility which is hitherto been denied to them. We have to consider the inclusion of students representatives in the University Councils. What is the contribution of these youngmen of our country to the country's economy? Can you really deny that these young men below 31 are contributing their head labour in fields and factories and are trying their best to take the country ahead towards prosperity? Can we deny that these young men in other essential spheres of life are equally important and they have been acknowledged by law to be important and if it is so, how can you possibly deny them their precious right to vote. I do not want to repeat the arguments put forward by Dr. Pandey, though all of them are very good but I would only refer to the fact that Joint Committee of this Parliament on Election Law Amendment Bill had presented

its report on 18th March, 1972 through its Chairman Shri Jagannath Rao, had you unanimously recommended that the voting age should be reduced from 21 to 18. The Joint Committee was a representative body of all the political parties in Parliament and hence it was the unanimous opinion of all the political parties. What would be the consequence if we concede this right to the young men of our country? Ten crores more young men will be on the voters list. How much are you going to spend extra for these extra voters? It is true that we have to set up a few more polling booths and it may be that we have to spend a little more in conducting the elections. But is it not a fact that whether we include them or not the voters list is even otherwise inflating and is it also not tragically true that crores of rupees are going down the drain through the Government exchequer. If it be so why should we not give our young men a right which legitimately belonging to them. But I am afraid Sir, that the political party in power today is hesitant, reluctant and adamant not to give this power to the 10 crores young men of our country because in that case they cannot remain any longer in power and the complexion of this House will change. Those in power today may not be there tomorrow and this is the precise reason why during the last 3-4 years despite repeated efforts made in this House, the Government have refused to give this right to the young men of our country who are 18 years of age. Before independence we had given a call to the young men to make sacrifices to the freedom. They came forward, they struggled for the freedom suffered harassment, torture, and even many laid down their lives in the progress of the struggle and today we refuse to acknowledge their role and give them their share of right. When the independence actually came and even 27 years thereafter. It is equally strange that when all the youth organisations of the different political parties in the coun-

try are one in their demand for reducing the age to 18, it is really inconceivable rather lamentable that the Government should remain impervious and try to flout the common will. What is that unsurmountable difficulty? What is that prevents the Government to act in the face of such unanimous demand. Very often in this House we refer to British Parliament whenever there is any controversy about any parliamentary procedure. We have taken that Parliament as our model even though personally I subscribe to the view that we cannot bring about a change in our social order through to parliamentary institution. Yet I must say that even that country has given a right to vote to young men of 18. In U.S.A., the leader of all capitalist countries, young men of 18 have a right to vote. In USSR and in other Socialist countries this has right has also been given and of late even Bangladesh has given this right to their young men of 18. If it be so how and on what moral grounds can we deprive our young men of the right. Very often we talk of our young men in hyperbolic terms and we call them the future citizens of India. We look forward to them as the future about saviour of our democracy but when the question franchise is raised we forget them totally. A right to vote will instill in them a greater sense of responsibility and with this added responsibility they would be better able to contribute their mite for the development of the country. It has another advantage, Sir, the ruling party, is in habit of manipulating bogus names in the Voters Lists and this chronic menace will to an extent be mitigated if we give the right to vote to our youngmen of 18. Many of the social ills and social unrests can be remedied if the young men are given this right to vote. Sir, I have come across a news item in Hindustan Times dated 1st October, 1972 wherein the former Election Commissioner Shri S. P. Sen Verma is reported to have stated that there will be no administrative diff-

[Shri Krishna Chandra Halder]

culty if the voting age is lowered to 18. This further proves that the demand is not only legitimate but it is also administratively feasible.

It is therefore my earnest request to the Government that when it has been recommended by a Parliamentary Committee and when there is unanimity on this issue among the youth organisations of all political parties there is no reason why it should be withheld any longer and I will hope that the Government will accept the amendment to articles 19 and 326 as suggested by Dr. Pandey and confer this right to our youngmen in this very session. If we refuse to do it we shall be doing it only at our own cost. The country is sliding from crisis to crisis. The Plan has failed and the economic policies of Government have failed to mitigate the difficulties of the people and already the country is witnessing agitations in Gujarat, Bihar and in West Bengal. We are sitting on a volcano and the time is not far off when it will erupt and engulf us all. If we deny this right to young men of our country even today we cannot withhold it for ever. They will rise in revolt and will earn their own right in their own way. They will struggle for it and lead the country to the path of a struggle.

I once again support the Bill and conclude my speech.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, Mr. B. V. Naik. Before he begins his speech, I would like to inform hon. Members who would like to participate in this debate that there are 11 more speakers left in this list, and we have to close this discussion at 5.30 p.m. when we have to take up the half-an-hour discussion. So, I would like hon. Members to co-operate with me and make brief speeches and take only five to seven minutes each.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: I rise to oppose this Bill. One of the most essential factors of youth which is not connected essentially with this is a frame of mind which is not hypocritical. With Dr. Laxminarain Pandeya, I would like to confess that I have no doubt at all in my mind that this Bill coming at this time is inopportune. If what we call as eligibility to vote or participate in the political processes of this country has got something to do with what is called as maturity of mind, I do not think that the previous speaker, Shri K. C. Halder is having much to do with that, because you witnessed that he got absolutely upset over the use of a word which was made inadvertently when the hon. Minister concerned was trying to be helpful to the Mover of the Bill.

17 hrs.

That, I do not think by any stretch of imagination, could be called as a mature outlook. If this is at the age at which we are, if we cannot be mature in our outlook, I wonder, with due deference to the hon. members as well as the Mover, how we can expect our younger generation to be so mature.

Time being limited, the other point I would urge this House and the Mover to consider is whether we are moving this reduction in the voting age after consultation with the members of that group. If you go to any person within the age group of 18-21 and ask him in all sincerity and honesty 'What is it that you want as item number one in your list of demands with the society in which you are brought up?' he will not ask you for reduction in the voting age.

श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र (इलाहाबाद) : वहु
रसगुल्ला मांगें तो क्या करें ?

श्री बी० बी० नायक : वह हम मांगते थे पर छाजकल के नीजवान जो है they will ask for something better. At our age, we used to ask for *ragulla* but the younger generation of today is much more capable than what we were. What I would tell our new hon. member for Allahabad is that if he can wait patiently, he will learn much more. If we were to ask this younger generation, they will say: 'First and foremost, give us a job as soon as we come out of schools, colleges and universities'. This the party to which Dr. L. N. Pandeya belongs may not like wedded as it is to the *chaturvarna dharma* of this country. I think the *varnashrama dharma* did not permit the young below 25 any process in the life of society including marriage. Now we have got it done. Where is the *varhashrama dharma* of the Jan Sangh? Is it motivated by anything? Reinforced and armed with the power of the RSS which now flaunts its power and shows its fangs in the university campuses and the colleges, they think that the entire younger generation is with them, the currently fashionable fascist forces in this country.

डा० लक्ष्मी नारायण पांडेय : आप के कानूनो मे सब जगह 18 वर्ष लिखा है । आर० एम० एम० जैमी देशभक्त सस्था को इसके बीच क्यों ला रहे है ?

श्री बी० बी० नायक : इस के पीछे तो आर० एम० एम० का हिंडेन हैड जरूर है जो कि हम अच्छे तरह से जानते है ।

The hand of this fascist organisation is seen there.

Now I would say: give them definitely this voting age of 18, but first let us ban these quasi-fascist and fascist organisations in this country which are holding the freedom of this country to ransom. Let us ban the RSS, the Anand Margis and such other fascist organisations which are fomenting trouble in university campuses. They are behind the food riots, they are behind the agitation in Gujarat. Now they have got a very respectable...

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR: Without going into the merits of the question whether we should brand the RSS etc., as fascist or not, may I know whether the hon. member is seriously suggesting and arguing that the demand for reduction of the voting age is being made only by the RSS and such other bodies and parties? Why should he bring political organisations into his argument? Let him say that the age of 18 for voting is not valid.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: He asked me if I am serious. I am deadly serious. We have seen this marriage of convenience in Bihar and other places between the extreme right and extreme left. Because an hon. member from a rightist faction and another hon member from the leftist faction join together under a common plank with a common programme of demands that does not mean that these demands have got any ideological backing. What is it that the youth of the country want today? Do they need jobs, social security, a productive part in the country's economy or do they need the right to put their votes in the ballot box? On the basis of the competing priorities before the youth today, what is it that they need immediately? I wish Dr. Pandeya had gone to the youth in recent months. If in all sincerity we go to the youth and ask them they will say, voting is a hypothetical right, one vote among the millions दरिया में बसबस ।

श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र : ठीक है, इस पर बिल्ट करा लिया जाय 18 साल और 20 साल की उम्र वालों का ।

श्री बी० बी० नायक : मगर प्लेबिसाइट हर बात पर करा कर दुनिया चलाना चाहते हैं तो at a particular point of time, you can get a plebiscite in favour of anything and against anything. It is possible to manipulate. We politicians, are capable of all the trickery that the human mind is capable of....

If we see article 56, we see that the President of India should have a minimum age of 35. Why do not give that right to a person who is 21? (Interruptions.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude now.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: I am only urging that although it is well-intentioned, whatever is fashionable for the rich countries which he has referred to, Australia, Canada and others, it is not relevant here. We have other priorities. I think we should be able to depoliticise the minds of our younger generation to the extent possible and put it on constructive lines and see that they are not seduced or abused by unscrupulous political organisations.

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR (Ahmedabad): Sir, I welcome and support this Bill moved by Dr. Laxminarain Pandeya. In fact, I was myself thinking on those lines. But then I found that a Bill on this subject was already on the anvil and only it had not received priority in the ballot so far. That is why I myself did not introduce a new Bill on this subject.

I would perhaps only say at the onset that the age could have been 19 instead of 18, because from 13 to 19—Winston Churchill once said: "13 to 19, these are the years!"—one is supposed to be in one's teens when one is

in the high school or college. By the time one reaches 19 one is fit for exercising the right of voting. In any case, I feel that the age of voting has to be lowered. What are the objections of Government to that? But before I come to those, may I say this, Mr. Chairman, Sir? On a debate like this, as a matter of fact, on any debate in Private Members' Business, do you not think, Mr. Chairman that it would be right and proper for the Ministers concerned to be present, instead of leaving the matters to their colleagues or deputies? I have the greatest respect of Shri Nitiraj Singh Chaudhuri. But if the Private Members' Business is to be given sanctity and respectability, then a full-fledged member of the Cabinet should be present when such matters are being discussed. Sir, I am making this point for your consideration.

Now, let us see what can be the objections of Government to this Bill? One would be that the expenses would go up because there would be more voters and the other would be that the number of voters would go up. Both these objections can be ruled out by saying that even without the lowering of the voting age, the expenses are going up and the number of voters will also go up. But the real difficulty, and it is true not only of this Government but of many other governments which of late have accepted this amendment and reduced the age from 21 to 18, is that they are afraid of youth organisations and youth power. They feel that if the youth at 18 are given their right to vote, they will not vote for the established government of the day. That is why there is an inherent, almost built in, fear or complex on the part of various governments in democratic countries as well as non-democratic countries against giving the right of vote to the younger people at the age of 18.

Moreover, there may be the question or a debate whether adulthood

and responsibility are possible at the age of 18. My hon. friend, Shri Nayak, at least at the end of his speech made some valid point that in the Indian climate our youth at the age of 18 are not so better off compared to the youth of western countries, so far as their intellectual and mental development is concerned.

I do concede the point that what is happening in our colleges and universities today shows a certain amount of immaturity in the young boys and girls. But it is not their fault. Today the colleges and universities are such that the boys and girls are not able to think independently, stand on their own legs and solve their own problems. There is too much of security in our society. Parents are afraid that their children may go wrong, if they are given more freedom. Therefore, they prohibit them from doing many things. In the foreign countries, on the other hand the youth are given the freedom to commit mistakes. The youth in foreign countries psychologically, intellectually and mentally are more active, responsible and advanced. But, then, that is not to suggest that because the Indian students or youth lag behind, so they should be denied this privilege. They should be given the right to get involved in the democratic set up at the age of 18.

It is very difficult to say whether a person becomes an adult at 18 or 21. But there should be some place where to draw the line. I personally believe that 18 years is good. If at this age one could join the army, or decide to marry and choose one's life's partner, or achieve majority for handling financial transactions, I do not know why the age of 18 is not good for choosing as to who will be the elected representative, M.L.A., or M.P.

SHRI NIMBALKAR (Kolhapur): There is no difference between choosing a wife and choosing an M.P.

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR: Both require a delicate judgment. In the case of choosing the wife or the husband perhaps there is no remedy. But in the case of choosing an MLA or MP, there is a remedy at the end of five year.

Now, Sir, Dr. Pandeya has given several examples of countries like U.K., U.S.A., Canada and other western European countries and also of countries in the developing world where the voting age has been reduced from 21 to 18 years. If some of the countries in the developing world can take the experiment boldly, I do not know why we in India cannot take this experiment and do it boldly. I must say that, if you do not give this right to vote at the age of 18, it means that you are denying a large number of young men and women of this country the rightful privilege that they have got for involvement and participation in the democratic set-up of this country. If the right to vote is given at the age of 18. I am sure the intellectual climate and the mental make-up, about which I have made a reference a little while ago, will eventually go up. After all, it is a question of which must come first. Should you first make the young people more mature at the age of 18 than at the age of 21 and then give them the right to vote or should you give them first the right to vote at the age of 18, thereby automatically and simultaneously giving them the facility of better equipment in terms of mental make-up, better equipment in terms of intellectual ability? Obviously, I prefer the latter.

I want to conclude by suggesting that the young must be able to participate meaningfully in all the activities of our country. Today, Sir, the tragedy is this: Before Independence, people of my generation had the privilege of actively participating in freedom movement, in public life, in public affairs, but I find, of late, particularly from the beginning of

[Shri P. G. Mavalankar.]

our Independence till at least 1970 or 1971, a large number of our youth, boys and girls and men and women of this country, shun politics, shun public life; they despise any kind of involvement in public life and try to keep aloof from it. If, however, we want them to be involved fully and meaningfully in the public and political life of our democratic Republic, the starting point is giving them the right to vote at the age of 18. It is good that Dr. Pandeya has not mentioned that the age in respect of MLA or MP should also be reduced to 18 years. He has not mentioned it. Therefore, I take it that he wants that the age in respect of MLA to remain at 21 and above, in respect of the Member of Lok Sabha at 25 and above, in respect of the Member of Rajya Sabha at 30 and above, in respect of the President of India at 35 and above. Ours is a country of young people. Majority of the people of new India are young people, vibrant with youthfulness and enthusiasm, and denying them the right to involvement and participation in the democratic set-up is neither just nor fair nor equitable nor decent nor right.

In conclusion, I would say that this House, by a large majority, should support this valuable measure. I hope Government themselves will come forward with the proposal to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18 years, so that the younger people who feel frustrated, who do not feel like joining the public and political life, will have a chance and opportunity to make themselves active to express themselves both through the ballot-box and otherwise. Only this, can the country's democratic set-up be further strengthened.

DR V. K. R. VARADARAJA RAO (Bellary): I rise to support this Bill. I am sorry I have to disagree from my colleague in Parliament from my own State, but I have some experience with the student community. I have

started teaching first in the year 1929 and I know that the students to-day are in a state of great ferment and all sorts of things are being done by them and all sorts of things are being attributed to them.

I do not think the question of Gujarat or Bihar is relevant in the context of the particular proposition that we are discussing, whether the voting age should be lowered from 21 to 18 or not. Nor must I say is there any relevance in the speculation on the possibility of whom will these 18—21 vote for if they are given the vote, whether they will vote for Congress or Communists or Jana Sangh or Swatantra or whether they will abstain from voting. It is a question of whether we should lower the voting age from 21 to 18 or not. I am not impressed by the question of expenses and so on. Elections are expensive and elections are bound to be more and more expensive in future unless you find some other way of curbing the cost of elections. I am not also wanting to bring in the fact that so many countries have done it. If so many countries have done it, it is a good thing. If so many other countries have not done it, that also does not bother us. This is a question on which we have to take a decision ourselves.

This country took a very historic decision when we decided to confer adult franchise on all men and women of the age of 21. But at that time there had been arguments about it. Many people could have said: the vast majority of this country are illiterate, they are superstitious, they are living in the medieval ages and it would not be possible to have anything like a parliamentary democracy in this country. But what have we found in actual fact? As a matter of fact, almost in the first elections, if I am not mistaken, in the 1952 elections, there was an organization called Hindu Mahasabha which put up candidates. Hindu Mahasabha obviously

should have appealed to the illiterate, superstitious and medieval masses of this country and yet what did we find then? The Hindu Mahasabha was represented in this House by one or two Members while the vast majority of the electorate voted for people who did not go and talk only in the name of Hindus or Hindu Maha Sabha.

So, maturity is not something that is linked with literacy or, if I may say so, with the age of 21 or the age of 18. If the people of 18 are immature, then I would say people of the age of 21 are also immature and I would go further and say that the people of the age of 60 and above are also immature. If you are going to have a limit of 21 for voting age, I think there is some logic in also saying that people over a particular age should also be denied the right to vote.

SHRI MOINUL HAQUE CHOU-DHURY (Dhubri): Professor, don't be afraid.

DR. V. K. R. VARADARAJA RAO: I am not afraid. It is Mr. Choudhury who should be afraid because he wants to stay longer in the Parliament. Therefore, let us not go into all these irrelevant questions.

The real question to-day seems to me that the students are being politicalised. No question of their not being politicalised. They are being politicalised by the back door. They are being politicalised by the Parties not openly expressing themselves. You have organization amount the students which are not branches of the political parties. They have different names and affiliations and connections. What kind of the connections—I do not know. Politicalisation is something which cannot be avoided and it seems to me that in terms of the growth of the students community in this country, whatever may be the resort they may be taking recently to

violence—there are many reasons and this is not the time to talk about them. I would say this that the younger generation of to-day know more than the younger generation of my age or even of subsequent ages. It is so not only in this country, it is so all over the world. I would say that if we give them the vote, then they can become properly political. Political does not mean in the sense that they spend all their time in politics. As a matter of fact, those who have got their vote at the age of 21 and above are not spending all their time in politics. Some of them are in business, some of them are in teaching, some of them are farmers and some of them are agricultural labourers. They are not spending all their time in politics but they have a sense of participation and responsibility in the governance of the country. They can take an intelligent, rational interest in what is happening in the country and come to informed judgments on the basis of their own evaluation and analysis as to what should be done as far as the country's problems are concerned.

It seems to me that 18 is a good age. I do not know why our friend, Professor Mavalankar should be so apologetic and why he wanted it to be 19 and he gave some reasons. Actually, 18 means college-going population. 18 divides the Higher Secondary School and the so-called Junior College. It is really the dividing line from the regular college. Students of the colleges are interested in politics. They do not get opportunity to get political education by getting speeches from active political workers and having the opportunity to Cross-examine them. It happens in Oxford and Cambridge. I went from Bombay to Cambridge for my further education. In Cambridge there is the Cambridge Labour Club, the Cambridge Conservative Association, the Cambridge Liberal Association and the Cambridge Marxist Club. Members of those

(Dr. V. K. R. Varadaraja Rao)

parties including Ministers would come to their functions and they will be cross-examined by the students. Thus the students are enabled to cultivate political judgment instead of merely being taken in by political propaganda. And incidentally it gave them good training and it was a good training ground for those who went later on to take part in active public services and so on.

Sir, I do not want to take more time because, I understand that there is one more speaker before 5-30. So, I would like to conclude by saying this. I do not say that this is going to solve the students' problem; not at all. I am not saying that. I am not saying that giving vote to the students will solve the problem of unemployment. Well, what happens is this. You have to give the vote to the people of the age of 21 and over. I do not want to reel out before you the statistics of unemployment. But I can assure you that the vast majority of literate registered unemployed in this country are voters. They are over the age of 21. Therefore, having the vote and being unemployed has no connection at all. I think, Sir, if we give the right to vote to students, to young men of 18 and over, it will bring a little greater measure of political responsibility among the younger generation. Rightly or wrongly, the younger generation are taking part in politics. They did take part in the Gujarat agitation; they are taking part in the Bihar agitation. It is no good-sitting in this House and making speeches is not going to stop them. One should go to Bihar if one wants to stop them or argue with them.

So, what I want to say is this. It is not merely a question of taking part in agitations or not. Students are political. They are being politicalised. But they are not being politicalised on right lines. And I suggest that if

they are made voters, then, the political parties will take more serious interest in them, more responsible interest in them, more open interest in them, and we will have better informed political judgment on the part of the students. Therefore, whole-heartedly support the intention behind this Bill that speedier action should be taken to lower the voting age in this country from twenty-one to eighteen. Thank you.

17.29 hrs.

[MR. SPEAKER—in the Chair].

MOTION RE CONTEMPT OF THE HOUSE

MR. SPEAKER. Hon. Members, please excuse me for a brief interruption. I have to inform the House that today at about 11.05, a visitor calling himself Bipalab Basu attempted to enter the Visitor's Gallery of Lok Sabha after getting his pass checked at the checking post. The Senior Watch and Ward Assistant of the Lok Sabha Secretariat who was on duty near the Visitors' Gallery gate found a spring dagger hidden on his person tied on his right leg under his trousers. The said Bipalab Basu gave a severe kick to the Senior Watch and Ward Assistant and it was very serious. Our officer rolled and was almost semi-conscious, in a very bad state. He was taken into custody immediately by the Watch and Ward Officer. This is a serious matter. I bring it to the notice of the House for such action as the House may deem fit.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI K RAGHU RAMAIAH): Sir I beg to move:

'This House resolves that the person calling himself Bipalab Basu who at 11.05 hours today attempted to enter the Visitors' Gallery of Lok Sabha with a dagger hidden on his