

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: I need not read out the other part of the quotation.

If I had been present on the 8th December in the House, I would have certainly protested against these accusations, with the permission of the Chair. It is absolutely incorrect to allege that I had ever defended Mr. Haridas Mundhra in the Supreme Court in any case relating to evasion of taxes or that I had ever helped private industrialists in evasion of taxes. Of course, I submit that nobody can take away my right as a professional lawyer to appear for such client as I wish to appear for. But I want to have it kept on record of the House that the allegations that Shrimati Maya Ray made personally against me, which were unbecoming of the dignity of a Member of the House and wholly irrelevant to the subject-matter of the debate, were totally unfounded and false.

If I may add, Sir, with your permission, the case in which I had appeared for Mr. Haridas Mundhra in the Supreme Court related to certain shares of Messrs. Turner Morrison Co., and had nothing to do with evasion of taxes at all, and in that very case, when it was in the High Court, I had the honour of being led by no less a person than Shri Siddhartha Shankar Ray and a very near relation of Shri Siddhartha Shankar Ray had appeared as my junior—I do not want to bring in the name of that person. Therefore, sitting in a glass house, I should have thought that persons belonging to the same profession would not have made such allegations. How can a professional lawyer's right to appear to defend any person be challenged?

SHRIMATI MAYA RAY (Raiganj): Mr. Speaker, Sir. May I just have a word? I am very sorry to see that Shri Somnath Chatterjee is so terribly sensitive. It is the hard lot of lawyers and professional persons like us when we join politics to have such allegations hurled at us. Unfortunately, we have to bear them. But the only thing is that as soon as one has made up one's mind about this conflict, which is always there, the agitation of

Shri Somnath Chatterjee will evaporate because he has not yet made up his mind. We have already made up our minds and therefore there is no conflict. There is no hesitation in saying that once one enters this area and comes to the cross-roads, one has to choose. Once Shri Somnath Chatterjee chooses, his agitation will certainly disappear.

As far as decorum and dignity are concerned, Shri Somnath Chatterjee is my senior in the profession, and my senior in Parliament also, as such I am perfectly prepared to take lessons from him in dignity at any time. The only thing is that the word 'dignity' is a relative term and the standards of dignity are comparative.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: It is certainly something less than dignity to make a statement which is factually wrong.

SHRIMATI MAYA RAY: Surely, Shri Somnath Chatterjee has appeared for tax assesses in his career being a successful lawyer.

MR. SPEAKER: Normally, we do not have this practice that when a Member gives a personal explanation or something of that sort or refutes the statement made by some other Member, we do not allow the other Member to give a counter-explanation. But, anyway, this has happened. It would have been much better if Shrimati Maya Ray also would have written to me like that. Anyway, she has said what she has wanted to say on the floor of the House.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore): She does not know the practice of the House. She is not conversant with the procedure of the House.

**RE: QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE
(QUERY)**

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Alipore): I had written to you about a matter relating to the motion of privilege which is pending before the Privileges Committee. I had sought your permission to mention that. It is a very serious matter which has come to light. If you would permit

[Shri Indrajit Gupta]

me a minute or two, I shall just mention it.

MR. SPEAKER: The other day you had an appointment with me at 10 O'clock. I was exactly at 10 in my chamber and waiting.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: I was told you were having some meeting at your house.

MR. SPEAKER: That meeting was over and I came at 10 O'clock. I will enquire how it came to be written in my diary. I am really surprised at the new information that you have given to me. I would like to discuss it with you, but in my opinion since the privileges committee is already seized of it, they should also consider this new information along with it.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Since it concerns the privilege of the House, I think the House should be informed about it.

MR. SPEAKER: This is about the Thakru Commission—the Pipeline Enquiry Commission. The privileges committee is already considering it. In the meanwhile, there comes a letter written by Mr. Nayak to Mr. S. S. Khara, I.C.S. (Retd), former Cabinet Secretary. On that basis, there is an affidavit dated 1st July, 1972 filed by Mr. Khara, where he quotes a letter from Mr. Nayak in which Mr. Nayak mentions that the parliamentary committee is being persuaded by others.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Please read out these two sentences he has quoted.

MR. SPEAKER: You can read it out.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Yes, Sir. Mr. Khara's affidavit says *inter alias*;

"I received a letter from Shri Nayak, dated 27th February, 1971 as follows:

"I am grateful to you for your ready response to my request today. Certain persons had joined together to induce

the parliamentary committee on Public Undertakings to write a report in April 1970 questioning the decisions and *bonafides* of Government... ", etc.

You were at that time the Chairman of this committee and this accusation is made that you and the committee were induced by certain persons to write that famous 66th report Mr. P. R. Nayak is the main persons against whom charges are pending before the enquiry. I only request you to see that this matter is referred to the privileges committee, who are already seized of the matter. Let them go into this also. This also constitutes a breach of privilege.

MR. SPEAKER: As I told you earlier, the committee is already seized of this matter. This new information also will go to them. Should I send the letter you have written to me along with that?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: I would be much obliged. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: At that time, when he refers to that, I had already taken over as Speaker. But in 1968 or 1969 I had examined the whole case about this undertaking. Everything came before the committee. This is really very sad that he should write so. I do not want to make any further observation on it.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Gautai): I have written a letter to you about a calling attention

MR. SPEAKER: I did not allow any other motion except Mr. Jha.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: About the other part of the letter, I have not been informed anything. You asked me to put a question and that was not replied to by Mr. L. N. Mishra.

MR. SPEAKER: The information will come to you. I have spoken to the Secretary.