

12 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

EROSION BY GANGA OF SAMADHI OF GURUDEV RABINDRANATH TAGORE

SHRI AMIYANATH BOSE (Arambagh) : Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Home Affairs to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon :

"The reported erosion and threat of immediate destruction by river Ganga of the Samadhi of Gurudev Rabintranath Tagore at Nimtola Burning Ghat, Calcutta."

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA) : Mr. Speaker Sir, Facts regarding the reported erosion by river Ganges and consequent threat to the Samadhi of Gurudev Rabintra Nath Tagore are being ascertained. The Government would be most anxious to ensure that safety of the Samadhi of the Gurudev is not in any manner threatened.

SHRI AMIYANTHA BOSE : Full details of the danger with which the Samadhi of Gurudev is threatened today has been published in the Bengali paper *Jugantar* of 8th May. I may shortly tell you that Nimtola Burning Ghat area is perpetually threatened by erosion from the river Ganges. In view of the uncertain foundation of the Samadhi, no suitable memorial also has been erected at the place. That place is not only a place of pilgrimage for the people of India, but those of us who live in Calcutta know that people from different parts of the world visit that place. I would like to put two questions to the minister and I hope I shall get positive answers. Firstly, is the Government of India going to treat that samadhi as a national shrine— I emphasise the words "national shrine"— and secondly, is the Government of India going to take full responsibility and initiative in constructing a suitable memorial at

that place in cooperation with the local authorities ?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA : We are grateful to the hon. member for having raised the question and drawn the attention of Parliament to this important question. We do and we will treat this important question. We do and we will treat this samadhi as a national shrine. Whatever action and responsibility is taken by the Union Government to protect or to look after the national shrines will also be taken as far as this national shrine is concerned.

SHRI S. C. SAMANTA (Tamluk) : What facts are being ascertained by the Central Government ? Who is responsible for the preservation of the Samadhi— Calcutta Corporation or West Bengal Government or Central Government—and what are they doing to preserve it ?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA : This is a very pertinent question. When this Calling Attention Notice was received by us we tried to find out who is looking after this national shrine. According to the Allotment of Business Rules of the Government of India the Ministry of Works, Housing and Urban Development is supposed to look after the national shrines in the country. Now this particular area falls in the jurisdiction of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. Therefore, it is not very certain who would have the authority to maintain that area. As I indicated earlier, the Government of India would take it up as a national shrine and the Ministry concerned would look after it.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY (Cooch-Bihar) : The Statement of the Minister is very short. I am really sorry to find that the Government of India have not yet made up their mind whether this particular place, the last resting place of Gurudev Rabintranath Tagore will be taken up by the Government of India under its own name as a national shrine. In the statement it has simply been stated "the facts are being ascertained". The Government have probably forgotten this fact that the author of *Jana-gana-mana*, the national anthem, Gurudev Rabintranath Tagore, was the only person to

[Shri B. K. Daschowdhury]

conjure within the comity of national even when we were in bondage. We are not going to deal with the other aspects of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore but it is enough to say that he was the only person who was the real Ambassador of India, even when we were in bondage, though without any accreditation. We are really sorry that this government have come out with the statement "we will look into the matter whether a national shrine has to be made in that place" I charge this government of not being quick enough in taking a decision. And what do we find today? Within nine years of the centenary of Gurudev Tagore, his resting place is threatened to be eroded away by the river Ganga, and the Minister says that the responsibility is with the Port Commissioner Calcutta, we have seen that press statement. The Port Commissioner is taking certain steps to protect and preserve at least the western wall of this building by putting certain boulders and stones each and every year. It is really a matter of regret that this government did not try to find out in the past 23 years, as to what happened about this last resting place of Gurudev Rabindrath Tagore. So, I would like to know from the government within which time this government will finally decide this matter and whether along with the scheme of the national shrine this government would construct a ghat along the river Ganges by the side of the Nimtola Burning ghat where the present Samadhi exists, like that exists of the Gandhi ghat at Barrackpore and make it more beautiful so that it can attract visitors from foreign countries.

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA :

I have already indicated that the facts regarding the erosion are being collected. I did refer to facts about other things. If there was any neglect, it is neglect by all parties—local parties, people living there plus the Government of India. I am not trying to apportion blame. All I am saying is that this national shrine so far, unfortunately did not attract the attention that it deserved. But I am very grateful to the hon. Member Shri Bose, for having raised this matter here. I hope that whatever deficiencies remained in the past would be made up, rather more than made up in the future and that we will be able to make a national shrine which really be in accordance with the glory of Gurudev Tagore.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contal) :

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore is not only for India but for the whole of humanity and an immortal emblem of the supreme expression of excellence of beauty and grandeur of the great soul. His samadhi is a place of pilgrimage not only for the Indian people but, as I have said, for the whole humanity. It is almost thirty years since Gurudev passed away. The late Sureshchandra Majumdar of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, who formed a committee, tried his best to draw the attention of the Calcutta Corporation, the Government of West Bengal and the Central Government to the preservation of the *samadhi* of Gurudev Rabindranath because it was being threatened almost every monsoon by the erosion of the Ganga. He also tried to draw the attention of the Central Government as well as other agencies to building up a suitable memorial or a national shrine, as my hon. friend has said, on that *samadhi*.

Let us not forget that Mahatmajl and Panditji used to address him not as Rabindranath but always as Gurudev. I thought, our Prime Minister would be emotionally impelled today either to associate herself with this or to reply to this question because she had her learning in her younger days at the feet of Gurudev at Shanti Niketan. How affectionately she was treated by Gurudev. It was Gurudev who used to call her Priyadarshini Indra by which name she is known. I thought that the Priyadarshini of Rabindranath should have been present in the House and she herself should have offered all possible help and assistance for his *samadhi*.

Now this is the month of May. After June and July the Ganga will be furious with the onset of the monsoon, with the result that in every probability this year the *samadhi* of Rabindranath will be threatened and washed away, as it happened in the case of Swami Vivekananda on the Ganga. To our shame, it were the international disciples of Swami Vivekananda who contributed lakhs of rupees to preserve that *samadhi* and within a year it was done. I want to know whether Government will take it very seriously and without losing any time, because there is no time, send a team to devise ways and means, either by

putting up stone slabs or concrete slabs or by erecting a spur, to protect the *samadhi*. The first thing to be done is that the *samadhi* will have to be proved and it will have to be seen that this year's monsoon does not threaten the *samadhi* of Gurudev Rabindranath. Secondly, what steps will Government take to build a suitable memorial, a national shrine, on that place of pilgrimage not only for the Indian people but for humanity at large ?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA :

The hon. Member has made very valuable suggestions and we shall definitely take steps—I am sure, the Port Commissioner, Calcutta, under whose jurisdiction this area comes will take immediate steps—to see that the threat of erosion from the River Ganga does not in any way threaten the *somadhi* of Gurudev.

About steps that would have to be taken to create a *samadhi*, that would be handled by the Ministry of Works, Housing and Urban Development, which is in charge of national shrinal shrines and national monuments. I am sure, this work will be done with due expedition.

SARI SAMAR GUHA : Will the Central Government take over the responsibility ?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA : As I said, it will have to be done by one of the ministries of the Central Government.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

ANNUAL REPORTS OF UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION AND OF INDIAN SCHOOL OF MINES, DHANBAD AND AUDIT REPORT OF I.I.T., BOMBAY

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES (DR. V.K.R.V. RAO) : I beg to lay on the Table:—

- (1) A copy of the Annual Report of the University Grants Commission for the year 1968-69, under Section

18 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-3519/70]

- (2) A copy of the Annual Report of the Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad for the year 1968-69. [Placed in Library See No. LT-3520/70]

- (3) (i) A copy of the Certified Accounts of the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, for the year 1967-68 along with the Audit Report thereon, under sub-section (4) of section 23 of the Institutes of Technology Act, 1961.

- (ii) A statement showing reasons for delay in laying the above document. [Placed in Library See No. LT-3521/70]

REPORT OF CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH HYDERABAD FOR 1968-69

शिक्षा तथा युवक सेवा मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री भक्त वरानन) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं केन्द्रीय अंग्रेजी संस्थान, हैदराबाद के वर्ष 1968-69 की गतिविधियों सम्बन्धी प्रतिवेदन की एक प्रति तथा लेखापरीक्षित लेखे सभा पटल पर रखता हूँ। [Placed in Library. See No. LT-3522/70]

UNION PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (EXEMPTION FROM CONSULTATION) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS, 1970 AND NOTIFICATION UNDER ALL INDIA SERVICES ACT

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA) : I beg to lay on the Table:—

- (1) A copy of the Union Public Service Commission (Exemption from Consultation) Amendment Regulations, 1970 (Hindi and English