

LOK SABHA

Monday, September 20, 1965/Bhadra
29, 1887 (Saka).

The Lok Sabha met at Ten of the
Clock.

[Mr. SPEAKER in the Chair]

OBITUARY REFERENCE

DEATH OF SHRI BALWANTRAI MEHTA

The Prime Minister and Minister of Atomic Energy (Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri): Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are deeply shocked to learn the sad news of the passing away of one of our very dear colleagues, Shri Balwantrai Mehta. That he and his wife should have passed away in such tragic circumstances is most painful. We cannot finally come to a conclusion of the cause of this accident. But there are reports and the Gujarat Government has also said that the plane was shot down by our enemy. Anyhow further investigation will be made and we will come to the final conclusion soon. If it is so, he has died in harness and—I would not say so, but perhaps it should be the wish of all of us that in fighting our enemy, if it comes to that, we should all be prepared to face this kind of death.

Balwantraiji was an old, old worker since 1919 or 1920. He entered public life in a very young age and he distinguished himself in the field of the States' freedom movement. He became one of its top leaders and carried on his activities with great determination. He was a member of the Servants of the People Society and he served and worked in the political field on a very small allowance, an honorarium which he used to get from the Society. It was a life of suffering and dedication throughout.

He was a member of this Parliament for two terms and he made an invaluable contribution in different committees over which he presided. As Chairman of the Estimates Committee, he made substantial contribution in suggesting reforms in different departments and ministries of the Government. He made many novel suggestions. His contribution in the decentralised sector, of course, was very substantial and we all know the great contribution he made in that regard. He served in many capacities in Gujarat. But exactly two years back he took office on the 19th September, 1963 as Chief Minister and he passed away also exactly on the 19th.

These two years of his term of office will always be remembered as a very successful term in which he was able to carry the whole of Gujarat with him. There might have been differences yet he was a quiet, sober and sound leader. He was elected unanimously the leader and the Chief Minister of Gujarat. During the most difficult times—as I have said earlier, even during the Kutch trouble and the Kutch difficulties—he was a composed leader a man who never budged or deviated from the duties he was discharging. He was one of our most able and efficient Chief Ministers. And, I must say, Sir, that his passing away has come as a rude shock to all of us. It is a great loss to our country and I know you all deeply mourn this loss. May I, Sir, request you to convey our condolences on the death of Balwantraiji and his wife to the members of his family.

Shri Banga (Chittoor): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with all that Lal Bahadurji has said about Balwantraiji who was so dear to us all. As he said he rendered great services to the State people by championing their cause for a long number

[Shri Ranga]

of years and holding the key position of General Secretary of the State People's Conference under the leadership of Jawaharlalji, Dr. Pattabhi and Sheikh Sahib. As the Chairman of the Estimates Committee, the previous Speaker as well as yourself, Sir, have had the opportunity of seeing—and the House also—through his reports the unique service he rendered to the development of democratic conventions in toning up the administration and advising the ministries how best to keep down expenses and reorganise their own administration. Then, also, Sir, as the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress he endeared himself to a large number of us. Many times we could not agree with each other, but he did his duty in carrying out the instructions and advice of Jawaharlalji in such a quiet and pleasing manner that even on those occasions, though whatever he had to do was not so very pleasant to those affected, he was able to retain their goodwill, and that is how he served his great organisation and party. Opinions may differ as to the results of Panchayat Raj administration and its present impact upon the village life, but he certainly wished well of our rural folk when he thought of suggesting the kind of re-organisation that he had embodied in his recommendations. Therefore, Sir, in the end as the Chief Minister, I am informed by my hon. friend, Shri Himmatsinhji, he succeeded to a great extent in meeting more than half way the view points and criticisms made by the Opposition.

He proved himself as a responsible democratic leader when he yielded in such a handsome and right manner to the satyagraha that was organised over the orders that his Government had passed in regard to groundnut and groundnut oil production, distribution and exports. In that way he made great contribution to the nascent Indian democracy.

I know, how much his death must be affecting our own Prime Minister because both of them had been asso-

ciated with each other for a much longer period than I had the honour of working with him because they happened to belong to that great society which was founded by the revered Lala Lajpat Rai.

So, I want to extend my sympathy and condolence; and want you to convey our condolences and sympathy to the members of the bereaved family, our Prime Minister here and also to the people of Gujarat. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Supreme Being for having conferred His grace, as we in India consider it to be, that when he thought it fit to take him away he took away his wife also so that she could have the satisfaction of going to him with her *sindur* on her forehead.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta Central): Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was a shock, as the Prime Minister has said, for us to learn this morning of the passing away of Shri Balwantraj Mehta. If you will permit me to say so, it was an even greater shock to learn from the Prime Minister the suspected circumstances of his death. If it is true—and I fear, it is true—that an unidentified plane, which means an enemy plane, shot down the plane in which Shri Mehta, his wife and his companions were travelling, this is an instance of barbaric, and tardy desperation which is almost without parallel in the annals of international relations.

Shri Balwantraj Mehta has died, as the Prime Minister said, in harness and the circumstances of his death make us say that it has been a martyr's death. Greater love than this hath no man that he lays down his life for his country and Shri Balwantraj Mehta along with his companions has laid down his life for his country. That was in keeping with the story of his career with which the Prime Minister is more familiar than I am. But I have known sufficiently of the character of Shri Balwantraj Mehta to be able to tell you what I feel about him.

He was a leader of the struggle of our States' peoples at a time when it was a terribly difficult job to carry on the democratic movement in the so-called Indian States. But he kept up the banner of freedom in those States and he shared with the rest of our people the glory of having achieved the freedom of our country in the so-called Indian States as well as in, what we would call to our shame, British India.

We have seen him in this House as a member from 1952 onwards and perhaps a most distinguished period in the history of the Estimates Committee was the period when Shri Balwantrai Mehta was its Chairman. I saw him at about the time when the Kutch disturbances were going on and I noticed in him again that quality which struck me most and to which the Prime Minister also made reference—an equanimity of temper which nothing could ruffle. I am sure that it was in that kind of equanimity of mind and soul that he faced the death which was so brutally imposed upon him.

I do not want to go into any elaboration of the contribution which he has made to Indian politics. But I am sure that if India has any contribution to make, originally speaking, to the solution of problems of social development, the concept of panchayati raj surely is one of those ideas and it was in order to popularise and to implement successfully the concepts of panchayati raj and democratic decentralisation that Shri Balwantrai Mehta devoted most of his endeavours and perhaps for that he would be remembered for very long in India's history.

I associate myself with the sentiments and condolences which have already been expressed and I request you to convey, on behalf of our Party as well as others, our feelings of profound sorrow at the passing away of a great patriot.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy (Kendrapara): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I could

hardly believe when I heard on the radio at 10.30 P.M. last night about this sad news. I had met him two months back at the Bubhaneshwar aerodrome and I had a chance to ask him about the Kutch situation and, of course, he told me this much, "Do you think Kutch is the last word? Probably, this is the beginning of our hostile relations with Pakistan." And the irony of the situation is that his plane has been shot down by some unidentified plane, maybe Pakistan plane.

I knew him in the year, 1935-36 when he was associated with the Orissa State Enquiry Committee and the Committee which first recommended that all the States should be integrated into the Indian Union. As the leader of the Indian States movement, he carried on the struggle till the end to see that India is one and the States are merged with India as a whole.

As a Member of Parliament and as a public worker, we knew him and we were very familiar with him. He had a very amiable character; he was a valiant fighter, a constructive thinker and a great patriot. We deeply mourn his loss and I think the country has become poorer today by his sudden death.

Shri U. M. Trivedi (Mandsaur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was indeed a shock to read this morning in the press that Mr. Balwantrai Mehta and his wife have died in a plane accident. But the news that was conveyed by the Prime Minister that this dastrardly crime was committed by an unidentified plane reflects very sadly on our war efforts and keeping its secrecy. It was indeed after attending the rally of the N.C.C. that the Chief Minister left and it is all the more regrettable that such an accident should have taken place just after the performance in the direction of war effort. The loss of Gujarat is indeed very great.

I should like you, Sir, to convey the deep sense of loss that I and my

[Shri U. M. Trivedi]

Party feel over the sad demise of this brave son of the soil along with his wife. I hope the Prime Minister will convey our condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

Dr. L. M. Singhal (Jodhpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, as one who hails from a former princely State, I should like to associate myself with the tributes paid to the valiant and veteran soldier, Shri Balwantrai Mehta, whose noble services to the cause of the States people's struggle for responsible and popular Government along with his dear colleague, Shri Dina Raj Vyas, were notable and would always be cherished and enshrined in letters of gold. If it is true, as we have every reason to believe that it is true, that this plane was shot by the enemy, it was a most dastardly act of cowardice on the part of Pakistan which would stand self-condemned with shame.

It is given only to a fortunate few to have such a boon to die in the cause of the motherland. It was granted to him as indeed he was one of those who deserved such a martyr's and hero's death.

We have lost in him a great leader of men, a great administrator, a great parliamentarian, a great man dedicated to the cause of service.

I should like to join with the hon. Leader of the House and the leaders of the various parties who have condoleed on the death of Shri Balwantrai Mehta.

Shri A. C. Guha (Barasat): I associate myself fully with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Prime Minister, and on behalf of the Estimates Committee and on my own behalf, I pay my deep tribute to the memory of Shri Mehta and to the services rendered by him for India's independence and even in the post-independence period, for the reconstruction of India.

His services as one of the organisers and general secretaries of the States' People's Conference are well known to the people. After Independence, he functioned in various capacities, for constructive work and for developing the country, as general secretary of the Congress Party, as the general secretary of AICC and lastly as the Chairman of the Estimates Committee.

As you also know, Sir, that the Estimates Committee previously functioned with the Deputy-Speaker as its Chairman. But it was from Shri Balwantrai Mehta onwards that the Estimates Committee had its own elected Chairman. In the five years of the formative period of the Estimates Committee, he contributed much to the proper development of the Estimates Committee as the instrument of this House for guiding Government policies and for proper utilisation of the money allotted to Government. In five years' period he submitted as many as 120 reports, all animated with and full of constructive ideas; it was not only a case of destructive ideas but he helped the Government by giving many constructive suggestions.

Another important report of his was on decentralised democracy. That has helped Government in the implementation of one of the important Directive Principles of the Constitution and the setting up of panchayat raj as instrument and unit of village administration.

Lastly, it has been stated that this was not a mere plane accident. It was perhaps due to the enemy activities. Nothing could be unexpected from an enemy who could bomb a hospital or a gurudwara or a church or even a mosque. We only hope that the world conscience will take notice of this.

In his death, India has lost a great leader, a good administrator and an organiser. But the loss is much deeper for Gujarat which is a border

State and a sensitive area. I hope the people of Gujarat will rise to the occasion and fill up the gap and carry on the struggle to its victorious end.

Shri P. R. Chakraverti (Dhanbad): It is a national loss, and we can appreciate the poignant feelings of the Prime Minister, his life-long associate.

I had the privilege to work with him in the All India Congress Organisation, and I found in him a man of unblemished integrity of mind, unruffled temperament, a lovable disposition and an affable character tempered by sobriety, maturity and a balance of mind.

I am reminded of Mahatma Gandhi's words about his political guru, Gokhale. He said 'I found in him what a political worker should be, clear as a crystal, gentle as a lamb, brave as a lion and chivalrous to a fault'. And that was what was represented by Shri Balwantraj Mehta, a devoted disciple of Mahatma Gandhi.

We mourn his loss. We know that he was a soldier, and so, I would say just as the greatest poet of Germany said 'If you honour me, lay a sword and not a wreath on my coffin, because first of all I was a soldier in the fight for the liberation of man'.

Shri Oza (Surendranagar): All of us were rudely shocked and stunned to hear of the extremely sad incident which had taken a heavy toll from us yesterday.

Balwantbhai, as he was endearingly called by all his friends, has laid down his life in active service of the nation for which he had renounced everything in life even while he was a student, at a very young age. He was attracted to Gandhiji when he came to India from South Africa, and since then as his trusted colleague, was closely associated with him not only in the freedom struggle but also in all his constructive activities.

He hailed from a princely State. He was one of the pioneers of the All India States People's Conference and worked for the emancipation of the States people also. Many friends perhaps do not know about the keen interest he took in the constructive activities of Gandhiji, particularly Harijan uplift and female education.

After the attainment of freedom, he applied himself with equal zeal and sense of dedication to the new task of developing the country socially and economically. In office, he was known as a great administrator, but even when he was not in office for nearly 15 years he did not allow his enthusiasm to abate, and showed a greater sense of dedication, discipline and steadfastness in whatever assignment, however high or humble, he was given. He never indulged in any petty thinking in any walk of life. He kept the cause of the people always nearest to his heart.

Sarojben Mehta on her own was also a great worker and had contributed to the cause of the nation. But as an ideal Hindu wife she stood by Balwantbhai through thick and thin and was a source of great inspiration to him.

I join in paying my humble homage to them. In these days of great stress and strain to the nation, the loss will be the greater. But he will continue to be our guiding light in performing the duties which are entrusted to us.

श्री यशपाल सिंह (कैराना): प्रध्यक्ष महोदय, माननीय मेहता जी इस भारत के निर्माताओं में से एक थे। वे कर्म करते करते एक सच्चे देश भक्त की तरह मे घोर हम देश की सच्ची सेवा करते हुए अपने प्राणों का बलिदान कर के गए हैं। इससे बड़ कर कोई मौत धर्म में नहीं मिल सकती, घोर बह पत्नी भी शब्द है, जिसने अपने पति देव के साथ देश भक्ति करते करते प्राणों का

[श्री यशपाल सिंह]

उत्सर्ग किया। मैं प्रधान मंत्री के साथ अपनी समवेदना और शोक को जोड़ता हूँ। संतप्त परिवार के लिए हमारी ओर से समवेदना के सन्देश भेजे जाएँ। भगवान उनकी आत्मा को अवश्यमेव ऊँची से ऊँची गति देंगे क्योंकि हिन्दू धर्म में इस से बढ़कर कोई मौत नहीं हो सकती।

यं यज्ञ संयैस्तपसा च विप्राः

स्वर्गेष्विवो यन्न ययैव यान्ति ।

सब से बढ़ कर वीरगति को वही लोग प्राप्त होते हैं जो परम पिता परमेश्वर को प्यारे होते हैं। जो काम उन्होंने छोड़ा है उस को पूरा करना हमारा कर्तव्य है। उन के लिए रोना घोना हमारे धर्म में मना लिखा है। गीता माता कहती है :

देहिनोस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा,
तथा देहान्तर प्राप्तिर्धौरस्त्रत न मुह्यति

उन्होंने जो काम छोड़ा है उस को पूरा करना हमारा कर्तव्य है, जिस उद्देश्य का पालन करते करते उन्होंने प्राणों का उत्सर्ग किया है उसको पूरा करना हमारा कर्तव्य है। उन्होंने देश के लिए प्राण दिये हैं। उन को परमेश्वर ऊँची से ऊँची गति प्रदान करेंगे, उनको मोक्ष मिलेगी, स्वर्ग मिलेगा और राज्य सुख मिलेगा। हम लोग उन के धादश का पालन करेंगे।

श्री प्रकाशचौर शास्त्री (बिजौर) :
अध्यक्ष महोदय, श्री बलवन्त राय मेहता की मृत्यु से केवल गुजरात राज्य की क्षति ही नहीं हुई अपितु सारे देश की क्षति हुई है। मैं अपने सहयोगी सदस्यों की इस राय से सहमत हूँ कि बलवन्त भाई की मृत्यु से प्रधान मंत्री जी की अपनी निजी क्षति हुई है। बलवन्त भाई प्रधान मंत्री जी के केवल राजनीतिक साथी ही नहीं थे अपितु लाला लाजपतराय के लोक सेवक मंडल के प्रमुख सदस्य होने के नाते वे उनके सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक कार्यों के साथी भी थे और प्रधान मंत्री

जी के वह प्रमुख सलाहकार भी थे। बलवन्त भाई ने कच्छ आक्रमण के सम्बन्ध में जो सेवा का सराहनीय कार्य किया आज इन संकट की घड़ियों में उनकी और भी अधिक अपेक्षा अनुभव इस देश को हो रही है। परन्तु वे गांधी जी के प्रमुख अनुयायी थे और जैसे गुजरात राज्य की परम्परा रही है गांधी जी ने जैसे शहीद की एक मृत्यु प्राप्त की बलवन्त भाई ने भी एक शहीद की मृत्यु प्राप्त की। व्यक्तिगत जीवन की उन की पवित्रता का स्मरण करते हुए लोग बलवन्त भाई को सफ़ेद कपड़ों में साधू कहा करते थे। परमात्मा उनकी दिवंगत आत्मा को सदगति प्रदान करे और उन के अर्घूरे कार्य को पूरा करने की शक्ति हम सब में दे।

Mr. Speaker: On behalf of all Members, particularly on behalf of those who have not had the opportunity of speaking at this moment, I associate myself with all the sentiments that have been expressed here.

It is a great loss that our country has suffered. Shri Balwantrao Mehta was a Member of the Constituent Assembly. He has died at the age of 66. He was about six miles from Bhuj in Kutch when this accident took place. What we have learnt as to how this crash occurred is most shocking.

He was Chairman of the Estimates Committee as has been observed, and I had occasion to watch him do his job so conscientiously and so laboriously. As has been mentioned by Shri Guha, he produced more than 120 reports during his time, which is a record figure. He brought his administrative experience to bear in his researches and enquiries, and that gave a new shape to all the work that was being done. I remember one or two occasions when it was considered by the Government that probably he was going further than the limits prescribed for the Estimates Committee, but ultimately it was found that he was right, and

he has set down traditions for the Estimates Committee and raised the prestige and the standard of the Committee. The officials also recognised that Shri Balwantraj Mehta was correct in that attitude, and since then there has been complete co-operation between the officials and the Members of the Estimates Committee. That remains a record for the service and devotion that he showed towards that work.

As Chief Minister also, he has done a very wonderful job, and by all standards we can say that he was a great success in that. He will be remembered for a very long time as a true son of India who had much experience, who was very unassuming but very devoted to his duties. Certainly we deplore deeply the loss of this friend. I am sure the House will now stand for a while to mourn his loss.

(The Members then stood in silence for a while.)

I will convey the condolences of the House to the members of his family as has been the desire of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Questions.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: I hope we will get one hour for questions.

Mr. Speaker: Only whatever is left.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: No, Sir, one full hour.

Mr. Speaker: That was decided last time.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

पाक-अधिकृत काश्मीर में सांख्यिक परिवर्तन

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* 720. श्री प्रकाशवीर शास्त्री :

श्री जगदेव सिंह सिद्धान्ती :

क्या संवैशिक-कार्य मंत्री 19 अप्रैल, 1965 के तारकित प्रश्न संख्या 903 के

उत्तर के सम्बन्ध में यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या पाक-अधिकृत तथा-कथित आजाद काश्मीर में पाकिस्तान सरकार द्वारा किये गये सांख्यिक परिवर्तनों के बारे में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ को भेजे गये पत्र का उत्तर प्राप्त हो चुका है ;

(ख) यदि नहीं, तो इस मामले में सरकार का क्या कार्यवाही करने का विचार है ; और

(ग) क्या पाकिस्तान सरकार ने, उस को श्री संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ को यह पत्र भेजे जाने के पश्चात्, उक्त राज्य-क्षेत्र में और अधिक परिवर्तन किये हैं ?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (Shrimati Lakshmi Menon): (a) and (b). Yes, Sir. A copy each of Pakistan's reply and our counter-reply is placed on the Table of the House. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-4891/65].

(c) Government have seen reports to the effect that martial law has been declared in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

श्री प्रकाशवीर शास्त्री : जब यह प्रश्न दिया गया था उस समय श्री भाज की परिस्थिति में पर्याप्त परिवर्तन हो गया है इसलिए इस में तथाकथित आजाद काश्मीर शब्द लिखे हुए थे, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ जैसा कि प्रधान मंत्री जी ने, संरक्षण मंत्री जी ने और हमारे विदेश मंत्री जी ने अब यह मान लिया है कि पाकिस्तान द्वारा इस प्राक्रमण के बाद अब काश्मीर में युद्ध-विराम रेखा नाम की कोई चीज ही बाकी नहीं रह गयी है और पूरा काश्मीर भारत का अभिन्न अंग है और काश्मीर का प्रश्न दुनिया के कहीं किसी संगठन में चर्चा का विषय अब नहीं बन सकेगा इस सम्बन्ध में क्या आप देश को आश्वासन दे सकेंगे ?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : जैसा आपने खुद अभी कहा कि जब यह सवाल आप ने दिया था