

[Dr. L. M. Singhvi]

on the LIC may be postponed till the next week.

The Minister of Planning (Shri B. R. Bhagat): I have no objection.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The Speaker has already agreed to this request; I hope, the House will agree to the postponement.

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It is postponed.

The Minister of Communications and Parliamentary Affairs (Shri Satya Narayan Sinha): Because the LIC business is not to be taken up tomorrow as the House has decided and you have already agreed on the request of my hon. friend in whose name the Motion stands, items meant for the 19th may be taken up tomorrow instead of the day after.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is for the Government to arrange the Business of the House. (*Interruption*).

श्री रामसेवक यादव (बाराबंकी) :
श्री यशपाल सिंह जी का जो मोशन चल रहा है और जो खत्म नहीं हुआ है, उसको आप ले लें ।

श्री मधु लिमये : (मुंजर) : इनके प्रस्ताव के स्थान पर आप कोई दूसरा प्रस्ताव ले लें, जैसे सूती मिलों का सवाल है । इसमें बहुत बड़ा संकट पैदा हो गया है और हजारों मजदूर बेकार हो गये हैं ।

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We now take the Half-an-Hour Discussion to be raised by Shri Kapur Singh.

17.06 hrs.

FORCIBLE CAPTURE OF SIKH GIRLS AND WOMEN BY PAKISTAN ARMY PERSONNEL*

Shri Kapur Singh (Ludhiana): Mr. Deputy-Speaker. Sir, I will be as brief as possible over this painful incident which I wish to place before the House and I expect that you will also bear with me when I am narrating these facts.

Sometime ago, when I paid a visit to my constituency, I came into possession of certain facts to the following effect that, during this Indo-Pakistan conflict, in the first week of September, the Pakistani armed personnel pierced into certain villages of India inhabited by Sikhs exclusively and carried away about 70 to 80 young girls and women in their trucks. The Army did not make any attempt to rescue them. Some of these women were selected on the way by a Pakistani post where 8 Pakistani soldiers were staying and they detained 8 young girls for the night while other women were taken to Pakistan. The next morning, some of our Army planes flew over that area and out of fear, the occupants of this Pakistani post hid themselves into trenches and taking advantage of that, those Sikh girls tried to run away out of their clutches. This was noticed by our aeroplane and they tried to give shelter to these 8 young girls. They started encircling around them so that the Pakistanis could not pursue them. These girls ran for about 6 miles, and they crossed through the river, Sutlej. One of them was drowned and other 7 girls came back into Indian territory safe and sound.

I was also told, through the enquiries that I made from the people, that the Government of Punjab had instructions to suppress these facts. I was also told that the Army had given orders not to take any steps

*Half-an-Hour Discussion.

to rescue the women who had thus been captured and taken away by Pakistan. Thereupon, I asked a responsible person of my constituency, Dr. Gurbachan Singh, a retired Assistant Surgeon, to make further enquiries in the case, when I left the constituency, and to let me know what the true facts were. Dr. Gurbachan Singh is a public man and a retired Government servant and he is a man of highest integrity and probity. I read from the letter which he has written to me. I quote:

"Pakistan carried away women, about 70 or 80 in number from the following villages, Chooriwala, Beriwal, Jhangra, Pakka of Tehsil Fazilka. There was a post on the way belonging to Pakistan, a few miles beyond those villages, and they removed 8 girls, one for each man manning that post from that lot and kept them for the night. Next morning our Air Force planes happened to go that side and the men on the post hid themselves in the trenches. The girls escaped in the meantime. Our planes spotted the girls and gave them shelter by encircling round and round till they were out of danger zone. All the girls swam the river and saved themselves but one got drowned."

I am placing this letter along with the cover on the Table of the House.

Now, on the basis of this I wanted to raise a discussion in this House by way of giving a Calling Attention Notice. But a Starred Question was admitted which was not answered on the floor of the House and a written reply had been sent to me which is as follows:

"According to inquiries made by the Government of Punjab a number of families (I want the House to mark the words "a number of families") of villages, Jhangar and Puccu Chishti, situated close to the Indo-Pakistan border in the Fazilka sector, are missing since 6th September,

when the villages were attacked by the Pakistan army. Inquiries are being made by the Government of Punjab to ascertain whether they were killed or captured by the Pakistanis or whether they were able to move to other places in India."

On the basis of this, I want to raise a discussion on three specific points:

(1) Equivocation and evasiveness of the Government of India and their agents in the Punjab in this matter of grave concern to the entire country, including the Sikh people.

(2) Responsibility of the Defence Minister of India arising out of failure to take necessary military action to save these unfortunate women.

(3) Jural and criminal liability of Pakistan authorities in the matter.

About the first point, I merely say that it is either gross incompetence or criminal equivocation on the part of the Punjab Government and the Government of India to take up the position they have taken, as evidenced by the reply given to my question on the 15th November. Surely, they know what is known to thousands of persons in the Punjab as true; if they do not, they are not fit to govern and if they do and are anxious to conceal it from the people, then they are worse than cowards.

Recently at Amritsar and Ludhiana, our dynamic Minister of Home Affairs went out of his way to make a statement to the effect that creation of a Sikh State in North India was inconceivable. I do not know whom he tried to disillusion or reassure, but I say on the floor of this House with the utmost sense of responsibility at my command that there is not a single Sikh who wants to create a Sikh State either in the North or elsewhere. I shall disclose here what the Sikhs desire. What they desire is a State governed by honest and decent men and not by cowardly spivs and incompetent opportunists.

The facts of the case, now under discussion, should make it clear to all

[Shri Kapur Singh]

level-headed patriots as to what the real grievance of the Sikh people is and why they have been crying all these years without being heard or being understood by the country or this House. I say nothing more on this point.

Coming to the second point relating to responsibility of the Defence Minister, *Mahabharata* should be so well known to him that I need hardly recapitulate as what was the basic cause of that fearful holocaust, sanctioned by the God-man, Krishna himself. This war took place to avenge a woman wantonly dishonoured.

I would remind him, without going to *Mahabharata*, of modern times, of the Third battle of Panipat, the dust of which battlefield our Defence Minister put on his forehead last year when he visited that place. It was 14th January, 1761, when Marathas faced the Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Abdali, from which battle the Rajputs stood aloof, the Jats were insulted out and to which the Sikhs were never invited.

Nevertheless, the Sikhs arranged supplies to Marathas as best as they could, but they also did something more, to which I draw particular attention of our Defence Minister.

When this battle was lost, it was one of the most unfortunate events of Indian history. When this battle was lost, as the historians tell us, about 5,000 Maratha women of the highest Brahmin class and of Princely classes fell into the hands of the Abdali. He stayed there at Panipat for many weeks and he made this specific offer that, if proper ransom could be given to rescue those women, he was prepared to let them go. Nobody came forward with ransom. And then these women were taken by the invader to Afghanistan. When the Sikhs came to know of it, and although they were not well organized, they fell upon the invader at the river crossing at Goidwal and

rescued as many as 2,200 women. The Khalsa horsemen delivered each sister safely in her home in Maharashtra, thousand miles away. The women ride all the way while the Sikhs were content to walk along side.

In European equivalences it means Germans rescuing Russian women from Saracens in Paris and restoring them in Moscow.

Cunningham, in his "History", calls it as "the greatest act of chivalry in the East". Perhaps, it is the greatest act of chivalry in the world's History. I shall now quote authorities in support of what I have said, briefly, so that any Member who wants to check up these facts may know them from original authority.

ਜੀ ਕਪੂਰੇ (ਭਾਰਗੋਨ) : 2200 ਮਹਾਰਾਸ਼ਟਰ ਦੀ ਘੋਰਵੇਂ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਕਰ ਗਈ ਥੀਂ ।

Shri Kapur Singh: The authorities are as follows: James Brown's *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs*, London, published in 1788, Vol. II, p. 22; Kanhaiya Lal's *Tarikh-i-Punjab* (Urdu), Lahore, published in 1881, pp. 102-13; Gyani Gyan Singh's *Shamshiri Khalsa* (Punjabi), published in Amritsar, in 1911, p. 145. This is my answer to the objections which have been raised by my hon. friend as to how these things could happen. If all these people are lying, then I am lying also.

Now, I ask the Defence Minister: Has he acted, in this case, in keeping with the high military traditions of India? Let him answer this question for himself.

An hon. Member: Surely not.

Shri Kapur Singh: Coming to the last point, namely the accountability and culpability of Pakistan, I would submit that there is the legal aspect and there is the cultural aspect of the matter. As we know, the rules of war are codified in the Geneva and Hague Conventions and they permit a belligerent to exercise certain extraordinary powers beyond those which a State enjoys in peace. These include power to invade and occupy

enemy territory, to destroy enemy armed forces and to requisition and confiscate certain types of enemy property etc. The exercise of these powers is considered as 'military necessities'. But capture and carrying away of enemy's women for purposes of criminal assault, is just plain barbarism and contrary to all international law and practices.

Now, I come to the cultural aspect. When Guru Gobind Singh, the modern Law-giver of the Hindu race was asked as to why he strictly forbade capture and dishonouring of women of the enemy in war, particularly when Muslim practices favoured it, his reply was:

*Hindu Dharm raakhem ham jag mem,
Chalem chalaavem sikhi mag mem*

That is, 'Our mission is to preserve Hindu values of life and to make them prevail throughout the world—this is Sikhism'.

When countered with the wisdom of the ancients:

*Vishyom visham aushadhic shathe
shaatyam samacharet*

i.e., poison alone can counteract poison, and, therefore, destroy the evil man through his own evil, the Guru rejoined:

*Hamlem janom panth uchere
Adhogati ko nahim panchanem*

that is, 'We have come to raise men to, a higher moral plane and not to drag them lower down. And he added: "As for women, whether yours or of the enemy, remember always the precept of our ancestors, which is contained in the Manusmriti, namely:

*'Yatra naryah pujayante ramante tatra
devatah'.*

that is, where women are honoured, there gods come to dwell?

So, revenge and retaliation in kind being out of the question, so far as India is concerned, may I with your permission, Sir, say a few words to Field Marshal Ayub Khan and to

Commander-in-Chief Gen. Musa of Pakistan, if my feeble voice can now pierce the thick walls of hatred and misunderstanding raised between Delhi and Rawalpindi? There are a large number of men in India who have known President Ayub during pre-Partition days. By them he is held in high esteem as a decent, friendly and Godfearing man, and despite all that has happened during recent years, we cannot believe that capture and carrying away of Sikh women, or, indeed, any civilian whatsoever, has his approval. Gen. Musa is a Punjab Jat and has tribal kinship with many of us. It is unnecessary for me to tell him how we feel about what his soldiers have done in this matter. I merely say this to the Field Marshal and to the General that, long after the present conflict and misunderstanding between India and Pakistan is over, long after this sorry chapter in the history of this sub-continent is consigned to the limbo of academic archives, this misdeed of the Pakistan soldiery against the womenfolk of their neighbours across a political frontier, will be remembered and will continue to poison human relationships. I say no more and leave both these gallant soldiers themselves to decide as to what is now proper for them to do.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Fifteen Members have given notices. Obviously all of them cannot be given a chance. I shall give chance to one Member from each party.

Shri Ranga (Chittoor): I would like to know why it is that our Defence Ministry through the Defence Forces have not taken sufficient action, apart from the spontaneous protection given by our chivalrous airmen who were there in the skies, and why they did not come earlier with a full account of this tragedy and a proper explanation for their failure to take what other action could possibly have been taken not only with regard to these eight or seven unfortunate women but also others who had been taken away to Pakistan.

Shri Bade: After hearing this statement from the hon. Member, Kapur Singhji, of course, our blood boils. It is rather shameful and disgraceful on the part of Pakistan. . .

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: What is the question?

Shri Bade: I am putting my question. The hon. Defence Minister himself is a Mahratta and his blood must have boiled. May I know from him whether he has made any enquiry from these 8 girls who have come back to India, and, as is usual with the Congress Government, has it made any protest to the Pakistan Government over this matter? Has he made any inquiries into the whole thing?

Dr. L. M. Singhvi (Jodhpur): After Sardar Kapur Singh had brought this question, this unfortunate and tragic episode, to the notice of Government, what inquiries were made by them? Were the statements of these 7 girls recorded? Were any efforts made to verify these facts and do anything about the matter? We would like to know the details of what the Government themselves have done after these facts came to their notice.

श्री हुकम चन्द कच्छबाय (बेवास) :
15 सदस्य उपस्थित नहीं हैं, पांच या छः उपस्थित हैं, इसलिए सब को मौका दिया जाए।

श्री रामसेवक यादव (बाराबंकी) :
उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, सिधबी जी ने पूछा कि क्या उनका ध्यान लिया गया और लिया गया तो अब तक सरकार ने क्या किया। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि अब इस बारे में सरकार या रक्षा मंत्रालय क्या करने की सोचते हैं ताकि उसका कोई अच्छा भ्रसर पड़े और कोई सख्त कार्रवाई हो ?

श्री प्रकाशबीर शास्त्री (बिजनौर) :
मुझे यह पता लगा था कि इधर लाहौर सैबटयर में सब से पहले दिन, जिस दिन हमारी

सेना भागे बढ़ी, उस दिन पाकिस्तान के कुछ सैनिकों और सेनापतियों को हमारे सैनिकों ने चाय पीते हुए पकड़ लिया, और उनके साथ उनके परिवारों समेत जब व अपने क्षेत्र में आए तो हमारे जनरल ने कहा कि हमारी शत्रुता इन के परिवार के लोगों से नहीं है, इन के परिवार के लोगों को सीमा पार छोड़ कर आओ, हम बच्चों और महिलाओं को परेशान नहीं करना चाहते। एक और तो भारत की यह सभ्यता है और दूसरी और पाकिस्तान की यह असभ्यता है जिसकी श्री कपूर सिंह ने अपने भाषण में चर्चा की है। तो क्या भारत के रक्षा मंत्री ने या भारत सरकार ने इस समाचार की सत्यता के बारे में छानबीन की है, और यदि इसमें कुछ सत्यांश है तो उनके असभ्य व्यवहार के खिलाफ भारत सरकार ने क्या पग उठाया है ?

श्री बूटा सिंह (मोंगा) उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, जब इस लड़ाई में हमारी फौजों ने सरहद पार की उस वक्त हमारी केन्द्रीय सरकार और हमारी पंजाब सरकार को भी अच्छी तरह से मालूम था कि सरहद पर रहने वाले लोगों के साथ क्या होने वाला है। जो फाजिल्का सैक्टर में हुआ उसकी सरदार कपूर सिंह ने दिल को दिलाने वाली दास्तान सुनायी। एसा ही खेमकरन और दूसरी जगहों पर हुआ। पंजाब सरकार ने यह रिपोर्ट दी कि कुछ परिवारों को पाकिस्तानी फौज ले गयी थी।

मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि इन सब बातों को जानते हुए हिन्द सरकार ने और पंजाब सरकार ने उन सरहद पर रहने वालों को यह सूचना क्यों नहीं दी, यह एक प्रश्न है।

दूसरे सरहद पर रहने वाले सिख लोगों को हथियार इसलिए नहीं दिए जाते कि उनके ऊपर शक किया जाता है और इस के फलस्वरूप एसी घटनाएँ घटीं, नहीं तो वे लोग अपनी बहनों को बचा सकते थे।

में जानना चाहता हूँ कि रक्षा मंत्री यह नीति कितनी देर तक और धरनाने वाले हैं ?

श्री श्रीकार लाल बेरवा (कोटा) : मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि जब हमारे रक्षा मंत्री को पता था और केन्द्रीय सरकार को पता था कि पाकिस्तान पंजाब में इन गांवों पर हमला करने वाला है तो क्यों नहीं उन गांवों को खाली करने की व्यवस्था की गयी और वहाँ के लोगों की सुरक्षा का प्रबन्ध सरकार ने क्यों नहीं किया ?

श्री हुकूम चन्द कच्छवाय : सभी माननीय सरदार कपूर सिंह ने जो घटना बतायी है उसके सम्बन्ध में सरकार ने क्या प्रगति की है। और जिन लड़कियों को ले जाया गया क्या उन लड़कियों के पितामहों के द्वारा या उनके परिवार के द्वारा सरकार को कोई शिकायत मिली है ? यदि हाँ, तो उस सम्बन्ध में सरकार ने क्या प्रगति की है ?

The Minister of Defence (Shri Y. B. Chavan): I shall first of all give the factual background that I have got about this matter, but before that, I would like to make one point clear, that personally, the detailed facts which the hon. Member, Shri Kapur Singh, just now gave in this hon. House were not known to me till he mentioned them just now. I only know about this when he put a starred question, and after we started making enquiries about the facts from the Punjab Government.

Just before the day we answered the question, that is on Monday, a few hours before that, we got some oral information from the Punjab Government about the missing of certain families from those two villages, including women, but even that information was through a telephonic message. So, I could not confirm that information, because when I have to give information here—and, as you know, this type of information has to be confirmed—I have to get further clarification

and verification of the facts. So, I did not deliberately mention the number of women. I thought possibly I would be able to give the information to the hon. Member later, because the whole set of facts seems to be very serious.

But then, he asked for a half-hour discussion. So, I am here to reply. As I said, I only came to know about these facts, about the missing of women from those two villages, only last Sunday. This particular fact I want to bring to the notice of the hon. Member and the hon. House so that they may try to judge me on merits.

After that we got further information from the Punjab Government, and the information that I have now got has been given by the Punjab Government. The factual position is this. I have also tried to verify this as far as I could. I have not gone into further details yet, but I propose to do so. The information that has so far reached me is that on the 6th afternoon or evening, when our forces entered the Lahore sector, some sort of firing and attack started on these two villages which are within half a mile on the border of our country.

A question was asked why it was that we did not ask these villagers to vacate. It is a very relevant question.

An hon. Member: Or arm them.

Shri Y. B. Chavan: I have got very great regard and respect for the Punjab villagers. Wherever they find that the army posts are there, they have refused to vacate, because they do not like to vacate. They wanted to live a normal life, and we did not want to create some sort of panic on the entire border by asking them to vacate, because we did not know where there would be an attack, where the action would start. It would have been wrong to start that sort of panic. Therefore, deliberately such a thing was not done, keeping in view the attitude of the Punjab people themselves, including the brave Sikh villagers.

[Shri Y. B. Chavan]

In this particular case what happened was that they were attacking from the other side, our forces were on this side. There was a sort of exchange of fire. Normally when such attacks start, confusion also starts, and in that confusion, some villagers did come on this side. This was the information that I had got.

This information that some women took shelter in the trenches and the Air Force protected them, and that after they crossed the river the Army did not do so, I am hearing for the first time. I can tell you with my hand on my conscience that I heard it for the first time on the floor of the House. If the hon. Member had given me this information before he put this question, reserving his right to put the question, it would have helped me. He can very well expect that I should have my own information. I should have, but if I had this information, possibly I would have come to the hon. House and given more factual information, I would have started enquiries after that.

I entirely share his anxiety and anger over this matter. Whoever has failed in protecting, intentionally or knowingly, the honour of the women, certainly is guilty of the first order, I have no doubt about it. If the Defence Minister is guilty of that or anybody else, he should certainly face the consequences. I will not come in the way. But I should like to assure the hon. House that looking to the tradition of our Army and the Air Force nobody in the Indian Army will allow the honour of women to be dishonoured like that; they would never allow that. I am glad for the enlightenment that the hon. Member has given me about what happened at the time of the Third Panipat War. All honour to Sikhs for that. But I am not saying this only because I happen to be a Maharashtrian. We in India have not only cared for the honour of our women, we have cared for the honour

of all women, of every woman. I can cite another example from Indian history, when Shivaji honoured the daughter-in-law of a great Muslim Subedar of Kalyan. That is our tradition. There is no question or doubt about it. Any woman's honour is as inviolable as that of my mother's honour or my sister's honour, be that a Sikh woman or any other woman. There is no question of showing any negligence about it.

Shri Kapur Singh: The Sikhs have regarded all Indian women as sisters; it is consistently given in our records.

Shri Y. B. Chavan: What the Sikhs did at the time of the Third Panipat war is certainly something that we all honour; we should be thankful and grateful to them. Certainly, I assure the hon. Members that I will make further enquiries in the light of what the hon. Member has said. If there is any failure on the part of any officer or any unit, certainly they will be brought to book if there is any deliberate negligence behind it. But in this case we will have to see the background of the whole thing. The Pakistanis are capable of doing such things. I support the appeal that the hon. Member has made to President Ayub Khan. Now what steps have we taken after the incident? We have got a system of the International Red Cross to find out such facts. We have also got certain Pakistani families whom we have kept in the camps and we are looking after them very well. Therefore, we took the initiative in these matters and allowed the International Red Cross agency to go and find out how we are treating them. We contacted Red Cross people and gave them information, about the Sikh women and other people so that they can find out, if they could get the facility to visit the camps, to see if these women are in Pakistan Camps. Certainly we will again try to find out where the other women, six or seven women who have come back, and

their families are. Hon. member has got those names and he may give them to me as it may facilitate things. Of course I will try to get them on my own also. I will contact them and get fuller information and a fuller report on this and come to this hon. House. The honour of India is not merely that of land; the honour of every living man and woman is the honour of India. When we say that we are fighting for the integrity of India, it is this concept of honour of

Indians, that we are fighting for. These are the values of life that we are fighting for. This is all that I have to say.

17.35 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, November 18, 1965/Kartika 27, 1887 (Saka).
