

LOK SABHA

Monday, 27th February, 1956

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(No Questions : Part I not published)

11 A.M.

DEATH OF SHRI G. V. MAVALANKAR

**The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru):** Sir, misfortunes appear to descend upon us in all directions. We all think that an evil fate is pursuing us. It has become my lot to be the bearer of evil tidings to the Lok Sabha repeatedly.

At a quarter to nine this morning, I received a telephonic message from Ahmedabad, from our Speaker's son, to inform me that his father had breathed his last at 7-50, that is, within an hour of my getting the message. He told me that, on the whole, his father's condition was slightly better yesterday. But, anyhow, he passed away at that hour.

In a sense, during the last few days we had been anxious, of course, and we had been full of apprehension. I confess to you, Sir, that my apprehension was rather about the more distant future. It never struck me that at the present moment, suddenly, he will be struck down. Anyhow, our Speaker is dead.

It is now nine years, I believe, since some of us, including me, started functioning in these Assemblies. They were the last days of the old Assembly; then the Constituent Assembly and then the Lok Sabha. Throughout these early days, difficult days, formative days, it was Shri Mavalankar who sat as the guiding deity, helping us, chiding us, trying to keep us in the right path, laying down and making precedents to be followed later, and moulding the development of parliamentary life in India, of course, mostly in the Lok Sabha. In another field, every year, as you know, he gathered together the Speakers of all our State Assemblies and discussed

various matters of common interest with them because he was anxious that the foundations of parliamentary government should be well and truly laid here. He had considerable experience himself because, as the Lok Sabha knows, he became the Speaker of the old Assembly and functioned there for a considerable time. Later, all of us have come into intimate contact with him and have worked under his guidance.

I must confess that I, and I think, perhaps some others, had got so much used to Shri Mavalankar as our Speaker and had come to rely so much on the way he could deal with any situation that might arise with calmness, with courtesy, and at the same time, with firmness, that we could hardly think of this Parliament without him. He was an inseparable part of it, the cementing link between all of us. Therefore, his passing away, apart from the obvious personal sorrow involved, is a break from a tradition, from almost an institution that had grown up here. No doubt, this Parliament and all of us will carry on our work. The world goes on. The Parliament goes on. India goes on, undoubtedly. Nobody is indispensable whoever he might be. But, the fact remains that if a person was considered so intimate a part of this Parliament, as almost to be indistinguishable from its working, it is Shri Mavalankar, and his going away, for the moment, leaves the Lok Sabha almost like a headless body, leaving a gap behind, which is very very difficult to fill.

Many of us have come into contact with the Speaker Shri Mavalankar in other ways, not so much directly in the political field, but because of his great interest in good work. He was associated with big funds, the Gandhi Memorial Fund, the Kasturba Memorial Fund, all meant for the public good. It was a very considerable burden on him to look after these big funds and to see that they were utilised to the public advantage. He gave a great deal of his time and energy to it. Naturally, he was helped by others. But, in effect, he saw to it that he went into the smallest detail. I confess I have often been surprised to find how he had gone into the

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

little details of the working of these funds, to see that they were properly utilised. Some of us, sometimes, were a little impatient at his thoroughness, because his thoroughness involved some delay in coming to decisions—I am talking about the funds. But, it was a very good thing that he was so thorough. It would probably be a good thing if we, all of us, are thorough as he was, in such matters and others.

Anyhow, we here in the Lok Sabha are concerned with him in many ways, more especially as the Speaker. He was the first Speaker of the Lok Sabha, we might almost say, the Father of the Lok Sabha, and his name, I am quite sure, will be associated with the Lok Sabha and with our Parliament for long periods to come as a person who gave it shape, gave it direction and gave it the stamp and impress of his personality. All of us have profited by that; all of us have been conditioned to a certain extent by that; all of us have been made a little better by that. That is a very big thing to say about any individual that he has conditioned, and influenced and improved others because of his contact with them. Through us as individuals, he has impressed the Lok Sabha and Parliament and through that again, to some extent, the country as a whole.

So, we are sad and are forlorn. Now, all I can say is that you will be good enough to convey our deep feelings of sorrow and sympathy to his family. I have no doubt that you and the House would like that the House do adjourn today.

**Shri H. N. Mukerjee** (Calcutta North-East): May, 1, Sir, on behalf of my party in this House, add my voice to that of the Prime Minister in expressing our profound grief at the passing away of Shri Mavalankar?

This session a cruel fatality seems to be dogging us, and we are having blow upon blow, overwhelming in its impact and creating national problems of replacement which I fear cannot be easily solved.

As far as our Speaker was concerned, even this morning we read the bulletin in the papers and we hoped that he would recover, but that was not to be.

Speaking as a Member of the Opposition, I think I may say categorically that to most of us it is a real, cruel blow and it is inconceivable that we shall come to this House and not see him in

the Chair, not see his smile, his gracious bearing, his dignity and the shine of his personality. I remember the Prime Minister perhaps in the first session of this Parliament saying that it was almost inconceivable to think of anybody else in the Chair of this House. We had our differences with Shri Mavalankar, but as far as our personal relationships were concerned, there was never a trace of bitterness and we had occasion to find out ever so often that he had a passion which very few people have—at least I have met nobody else who had that passion in his measure—and that was a passion to see parliamentary forms worked in this country in a manner which would be in conformity with our political traditions, and to that passion he gave all the talent that he possessed—and talent he possessed in plenty—as everybody who knew him would testify. That is why I feel that he was a person whose like we shall not easily see again and our sorrow is deep and genuine, and I wish you, on behalf of our party particularly and on behalf of everybody in this House, to convey to the members of Shri Mavalankar's family how deeply distressed we are at his passing away at this juncture of our national life.

**Shri Asoka Mehta** (Bhandara): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the sentiments that have been expressed.

Shri Mavalankar was a close friend of my grandfather in Ahmedabad and therefore our relations spread over more years than I can hope to recall. He was one of the architects of modern Ahmedabad. The economic, social and political life of the City bears indelible impressions of Shri Mavalankar. Next only to Sardar Patel perhaps, Shri Mavalankar was the builder of Ahmedabad. As the Speaker of the Bombay Assembly in the early days, he helped to guide my State in the direction of parliamentary democracy.

When I came here two years ago I found that to a new Member he was always a source of advice and guidance.

In this House the Opposition is weak and disorganised, but he was a sheet-anchor, he was there to protect our rights, rights of which we were not even aware very often because we are so new to parliamentary life. There have been occasions in the past when some of us differed with him but looking back I have found that more often he was in the right and we were in the wrong.

Always, here in the House but more often in his chamber, he advised us, he guided us.

Some time back, you will remember, my leader Acharya Kripalani referred to the Speaker as a teacher. It was really meant to give him a great compliment because he was a teacher. You will remember that at the meetings of the Business Advisory Committee, very often there were occasions when he gave us unforgettable lessons as to how Parliament has to work, how it has to grow. As the Prime Minister said, the work of Parliament will go on, but will it be the same as it was under his guidance? We are so unsure of our steps here. We wanted some one like him who had the strength of character, who had the courage, who had the integrity and who evoked the goodwill and the allegiance of every section of the House, to be there in the Speaker's chair. After all, the executive is so powerful. We are so weak here. And the nation needs, for democracy to grow up, some one in the Chair just of his courage and abiding qualities. It is unfortunate that just now when we needed him so sorely, he has been taken away.

I hope that the members of his family will realise that though it is a great loss that they have suffered, the entire nation shares it with them, and each one of us suffers the wrench. It is almost as personal as is felt by the members of his family.

**Shri N. C. Chatterjee (Hooghly):** I deem it my duty, my melancholy duty, to associate myself with the tribute which has been paid to the memory of Shri Mavalankar.

In the history of the evolution of parliamentary democracy in India, Shri Mavalankar will occupy a very distinguished and honoured place. I had the privilege to go to England in connection with a Commonwealth conference when I had the privilege of meeting some Members of the British Parliament, and I can assure you that they were speaking in the highest terms about our Parliament and about the Speaker of our Parliament. It is a great joy and a great inspiration that the great parliamentarians of the Mother of Parliaments wanted to elect our Speaker as the President of the Council of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and wanted light and guidance and wisdom from him. As a Member of this House, of this Parliament and as

an Indian I felt very proud to know that our Speaker was respected not merely in this House, but even outside in distant countries.

We had our differences with him. We sometimes resented some of his rulings, but I associate myself with Shri Mukerjee and Shri Asoka Mehta in paying this tribute to his memory today, which is a just tribute to him, that he was very vigilant about the rights of the Opposition and he was the genuine custodian of the privileges of every Member of this House. As Chairman of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation, it is my duty to recognise and to openly declare that he resented every trace of executive depotism and he cautioned us every time that we the members of that Committee were really the protectors of public rights and we should see that in no shape or form is there a trespass on parliamentary sovereignty, or any intrusion on the sovereign rights of this august House.

This has been the most tragic month in the contemporary history of India. This month we have lost one of the greatest scientists of India, who was our colleague. We have lost Acharya Narendra Deo, a noble son of India. We have lost the greatest jurist of modern India in the former Chief Justice of India, and we are today mourning the death of one who has been rightly described by the Prime Minister as the Father of this House.

We particularly in the Opposition deem it our duty to recognise that although he was firm and strong, still he was prompted by the highest ideals of evolving the true type of parliamentary democracy in India. This loss is irreparable and all sections of the House will mourn with the members of his family the great loss which is truly a national loss in this crisis.

**Sardar Hukam Singh (Kapurthala-Bhatinda):** Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, today India has lost another illustrious son of hers in the passing away of Shri Mavalankar. Parliament needed his guidance and inspiration, and the country his advice and assistance for a long time to come. He could maintain the dignity of the House and yet could protect the rights of the Members as well. He has established traditions that will be followed for a long time to come. The loss is very great. We feel that this House will be much poorer without his presence. The shock

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is so grave that at present, we do not know how we will be able to reconcile ourselves with what we have suffered. But we are helpless. At this moment we can only pray that his soul might rest in peace.

I on behalf of my party associate myself with all the remarks that have been made by my friends here, and I request you as also the Prime Minister to convey our deep sorrow and regret to the members of his family.

**Shri U. M. Trivedi (Chittor):** I on behalf of the Jan Sangh Party associate myself with the sentiments that have been expressed by all the hon. friends who preceded me, and I feel deeply the passing away of one of the foremost stalwarts of the country who secured independence for us. I cannot refrain from saying that his very firm impartiality towards all Members of the House irrespective of party affiliations has left an indelible mark in the history of the Lok Sabha.

I hope, Sir, that you will convey our condolences to the bereaved family.

**Dr. Lanka Sundaram (Visakhapatnam):** Mr. Deputy-Speaker, as the lone Member of the House not belonging to any party, I thank you for giving me this opportunity of paying my humble tribute to the memory of our departed Speaker.

In mourning his death the Lok Sabha, Parliament as a whole and the country mourn the passing away of a great man, a good man.

Sir, exactly one month ago today this thing might have happened in my town, Visakhapatnam, on the 27th January when the Speaker had his first serious attack. He cancelled his public programme and stayed there for three days, and it was my privilege to put him on the train, which I now feel has become his last journey. Such were his confidence in himself, in his capacity to recover and his sense of duty to the numerous institutions with which he was connected that he even authorised me to send a telegram to the press and to his friends in Bombay and other places that he did not have a heart attack, that

he was all right and that he was journeying back to Ahmedabad. That was on the 30th of last month, at Visakhapatnam.

One incident I would like to share with the House, because it is not known. On the day I put him on the train after three days of anxiety for all of us he, as Chairman of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, having come to know that a temple for Harijans—perhaps the only temple of its kind in India—had been consecrated by Gandhiji in 1933, undertook the journey to see the temple and, against my great importunities, got down the car, examined the temple, made arrangements for its proper upkeep and then took the train.

He had a consuming passion for public work which was something amazing. I knew him both inside and outside Parliament for a number of years. I repeat he was a great man, a good man, a patriot, and I beg you to permit me to associate myself in the message of condolence to be sent by you to his family.

**Shri G. D. Somani (Nagaur-Pali):** Sir, I associate myself on behalf of the Independent Parliamentary Group with the sentiments that have been expressed and the tributes that have been paid in this House to the memory of the Speaker.

श्रीमती उमा नेहरु (जिला सीतापुर व जिला खेरी-पश्चिम) : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं अपनी ओर से और लोक-सभा की महिला सदस्यों की ओर से श्री जी० वी० मावलंकर के गुजरने पर श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित करती हूँ। श्री मावलंकर के बारे में जो कुछ अभी कहा गया या कहा जाय वह कम है आज यह लोक-सभा बौर उनके बिलकुल सूनी दिखाई देती है। मुझे याद है कि कई दफा हमारी बहिनें मिल कर उनके पास जाती थीं और वह हमको नसीहत देते थे कि लोक सभा में किन किन विषयों पर हम को बोलना है और हमको उनकी बहुत मदद थी। मुझे यह भी ख्याल आता है कि यह जो लोक-सभा है, इसकी नींव प्रसल में उन्होंने डाली थी। कल तक हमें यकीन था व और विश्वास हो चला था कि भगवान उनकी उन्नत बना देगा और आज सुबह का प्रखबार देखने के बाद हम समझते थे कि अब वे अच्छे

हो जायेंगे लेकिन आज ६ बजे सुबह जब हमने उनकी बुखद मृत्यु का समाचार सुना तो हमारे दिल को बड़ा ज़बरदस्त धक्का लगा और हमें निहायत ही दुःख हुआ। श्री जी० बी० मावलंकर इस लोक-सभा के स्पीकर ही नहीं थे बल्कि घसल में वे एक बहुत बड़े और मज़बूत पहाड़ थे। जब भी उनसे हम लोग मिलते थे तो वह हमको लोक-सभा के कायदे क़ानून समझाते थे, इसके अलावा वे देश के एक बड़े भारी समाज सेवक थे और खास तौर से कस्तूरबा ट्रस्ट का काम उनकी देखरेख में चलता था और उस काम के सिलसिले में जब हम उनसे मिलने जाते थे तो वे हमको बतलाते थे कि स्त्रियों की उन्नति किस तरीके से की जाय और हमको क्या करना चाहिये, बराबर इस पर चर्चा किया करते थे। आज उनके गुजर जाने से सम्पूर्ण देश का बहुत भारी नुकसान हुआ है और हम बहिनों का और खास तौर से इस लोक-सभा का तो बहुत ही बड़ा नुकसान हुआ है। मैं चाहती हूँ कि हमारी ओर से आप श्रीमती जी० बी० मावलंकर को, उनके पुत्रों को और उनकी पुत्रियों को यह प्रस्ताव भेज दीजिये कि हमें निहायत रंज और दुःख है।

मैं समझती हूँ कि उनकी मृत्यु से जो क्षति पहुंची है उसकी पूर्ति होना संभव नहीं मालूम पड़ता। भारत में तो हमें कोई ऐसा व्यक्ति दिखाई नहीं देता जो उनकी जगह पर आ सके।

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** I fully associate myself with all the sentiments and remarks that have been made by the hon. the Leader of the House and all other Members, Leaders of various Groups in this House.

It is a very great loss and almost a void has been created by the death of Shri Mavalankar. All of us knew that he had been keeping indifferent health for two or three years. Though he was not attending Parliament sometimes and was lying in bed either in Delhi or even in Ahmedabad, we had a sense of courage, and particularly as regards myself I felt he was all the time guiding me.

I have learnt many a lesson under him and if I was able to do anything in this House it was entirely due to the advice he was giving me from time to time. I still hoped, much against hope, that he would recover and that God would spare him for many a long year and that, though he might not be able to attend Parliament, as long as some of us could meet him, Parliament and the country as a whole could have his advice. But Providence willed otherwise.

He led a glorious life as a person, as an individual, as a politician, as a great statesman and patriot, Thrice or four times, as often as there was need in the struggle for freedom, he went to jail. He was a great social worker. He was practically the builder of new Ahmedabad. He was the right-hand man of Sardar Patel.

Gujarat has produced very great souls. The Father of the Nation came from Gujarat. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel came from Gujarat. There was Shri Vithalbhai Patel who was fighting freedom's battle, who was President of the old Assembly; he fought during the previous regime when we were not in charge of the administration. But after freedom was won, we had Shri Mavalankar. Rightly, he has been described as the Father of this Parliament. He has contributed enormously to the growth of democracy and has laid democratic traditions and foundations solidly in the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha can never forget the traditions that he has built up. Recently he was to attend the meeting of the General Council of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association at Jamaica; he and I are both members representing India. But he could not go; but all the same, in his absence, all the members unanimously proposed him as the Chairman of the Council—they could not think of any other. They were all anxious that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association should meet here, and he suggested that they might come here and hold the conference in December 1957. It was because of him and our Prime Minister that the various Commonwealth countries were insistent upon holding the conference here. He is not only respected in India in this Parliament; he was respected particularly in all Commonwealth countries wherever he had occasion to go. He led the Parliamentary Delegation from India many a time. He also attended the Commonwealth Speakers' Conference.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

He convened many a time the Conference of Presiding Officers here. He went to various places year after year, the capital of some State or other. He visited those places with all the Speakers and Deputy-Speakers. His advice was very valuable. He was a guiding star; now we have lost him. Of course, Parliament will go on; other institutions also will go on. But that amount of light that has been shed will be wanting and the void cannot be made up for a long time.

I shall certainly convey the sentiments of the Lok Sabha and the expressions of sorrow to the members of his

family. As a mark of respect to his memory, I request hon. Members to rise in their seats for a minute.

*The Lok Sabha then stood in silence for a minute.*

**Mr. Deputy-Speaker:** I do not think it is right that we should have a sitting of the Lok Sabha today. In token of his memory, the Lok Sabha will stand adjourned, and meet again tomorrow at 11 A.M.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, the 28th February 1956.*

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