

**Shrimati G. Durgabai** (Madras: General): Mr. Vice-President, let me assure you that I will take up only one or two minutes of the valuable time of the Assembly. I want to say a few words on this article. There is the amendment of Professor Shah intended to substitute in clause (1) 'Traffic in human beings or their dedication in the name of religion to be Devdasis or be subject to other forms of enslavement and degradation as well as *begar*', for the words 'Traffic in human beings and *begar*.'

Sir, if any province has suffered from this bad practice of dedication of devdasis in the name of religion, it is the province of Madras. The worst form of this custom existed in Madras for a long time. I do not know whether this custom of dedication exists in any other province in any form. But we all know that in several ways this was practised. But, I do not think, while appreciating the object of Professor Shah in bringing forward this amendment and while being thankful to him for having realised the necessity for removing this evil, that this amendment is necessary. Madras has already prohibited this practice under a law passed a few years ago. It is no more in vogue there. Though some relics of that system still exist, these, I am sure, will disappear in course of time. I should mention in this connection my appreciation of the efforts put in by reformers like Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddy. It is mainly on account of her efforts that this evil is no more there. Our deep debt of gratitude is due to her for her efforts. As I said, Madras has passed a law prohibiting this custom. I do not, therefore, think it necessary to include this provision in Article 13, although I very much appreciate the spirit which has actuated Professor Shah to move this amendment.