

Lok Sabha Debates

Discussion On The Motion For Consideration Of The Prohibition Of ... on 19 December, 2006

> Title: Discussion on the motion for consideration of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2006, as passed by Rajya Sabha (Bill passed).

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, we will take up Item No.48 – Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2006. Shrimati Renuka Chowdhury.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): Sir, I beg to move:

“That the Bill to provide for the prohibition of solemnization of child marriages and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration.”

Sir, through you, I would appeal to all the hon. Members in this House to pay attention to one aspect. We all stand here collectively to be able to take part in bringing about a historical legislation which will enable us to facilitate the safe passage of our girl child from the time of her natural birth till her life time when she will live through that life span. I appeal to everyone here that when we look at the Bill, we should not look at it only in isolation of the Bill per se but we should consider the impact it will have on the social fabric and on what it would mean for a society to ban child marriage. I believe that the term “child marriage” is oxymoron. You cannot have children and have a marriage because both negate each other.

Children are supposed to be having a childhood. In childhood, there is no place for marriage. Marriage is for an adult who will take the full responsibility of being a partner and spending a life span together with another individual. Instead of it, ignorance, cultural practices, superstition and worse of all the fact that we attach so little value to a human being in the form of a girl child is what demeans all of us collectively as a society. How sad it is that because we do not want the responsibility of our girl children within the framework of our own family, parents and the society get together to pass this obligation on to somebody else to get rid of a child from the warmth and the home security to another home where she is not entitled to childhood at all. More often than not, these children go on to become mothers of other children. Why is it important that today when we stand at the fag end of 2006 that we have found the need to repeal the Sharda Act which was brought in 1929? It is important, first, because I do believe that it is so late but better late than never that we repeal the Bill which is really not relevant in today's time. When we talk of progress and development, it is a collective shame that we send our children away and get the marriage performed. Children then become parents to other children. As a result of it, we have some questions...(Interruptions)

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL): Are you aware that we do not allow the female child to be born? You are always speaking about child marriage, prevention and all that...(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Radhakrishnan ji, you have not got my permission. Nothing is going on record.

(Interruptions)\* MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Swain, you are not getting the permission. Nothing should be recorded. Only her Statement is to be recorded.

(Interruptions)\* SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: You are absolutely right. I was coming to that. When we talk of the social fabric that we have, when we take into cognizance the life-span of a child, we should be allowing children to be born. You are absolutely correct. Today, in India, in the past 20 years, about one crore girl children were killed. They have been identified before they have been born. Science and Technology such as amniocentesis and ultra-sound have been used to identify girl children even before they are born and they have been ruthlessly killed by the parents, by the so-called doctors who have taken oath to uphold life.[R37] \* Not recorded Given this kind of a scenario, it is already happening that we have skewed sex ratios in most of our affluent States. In States like Punjab, Haryana, Uttaranchal and sadly today in the North East Arunachal Pradesh as well as other States in the country – no one is untouched - we have a growing number of sex ratio differences. Young men do not have women with whom they can partner or get married and stay together today. That has, in turn, given rise to other social evils such as cross-border trafficking where sex workers from other countries have been coming into India. It will, in the future, become a problem for us to map diseases, to be able to identify the Indian gene pool and the DNA which has survived 5,000 years of evolution.

Having said that, to get back to the point of child marriages, our social systems and our practices such as Teej festivals etc. which encourage and accept child marriages would mean that we need to address a societal change. We have to alter a mindset of practices which all of us, at some point or the other, have endorsed and have facilitated in our society.

Today, however, given the kind of awareness and reporting that is happening, it is high time that we put an end to this obscenity that I call as child marriage. When women across the world have been achieving, when women across the world have surpassed and have established beyond doubt that given an opportunity, any woman can achieve in the fields that we have today...(Interruptions)

SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY (DHENKANAL): They can stand on their own feet.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Thank you.

SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY : Then they don't need reservation. They can fight on their own.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: I appreciate that, but reservation would help facilitate that.

14.17 hrs (Shri Varkala Radhakrishnan in the Chair) Sir, study reports still show that in our country even today 65 per cent of the girls are married before the age of 18 years. Why has the Government recognized girls to be maturing at the age of 18 and boys at the age of 21? There is an

anatomical, physiological, biological development that need to be completed as well as mental development. That is why we take cognizance of that. When we tell our children that they cannot vote when they are 15 years of age, we do not allow them to drive or to drink, then how is it that we think that they are capable of getting married, or becoming mothers in turn or parents in turn and that they would be able to have the maturity of decision making which is required in a marriage or a partnership? Is it not a skewed way of looking at our own people where on the one hand we say the law applies to them but on the other hand we are happy to dump them from our homes and our lives and report them as somebody else's responsibility?

Sir, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have a high incidence of girls getting married below 18 years where the total number of child marriages is as high as 45 to 55 per cent even today.

Now, what are the implications of an early marriage? It would mean that on an average, if a girl is from a certain economic strata, in the first place, she is not even breastfed by her own mother for as long as her brother would have been breastfed and her life depends on her gender. Unfortunately, here in India today gender is a matter of life and death. Boys live and girls die and that is the tragedy of our times.

These girls are then denied access to schools, they are made to look after their younger siblings, they have no access to food security, much less to immunization, they are anemic, they are subjected to untold exposures of infections and horrors and as soon as they enter their reproductive years, irrespective of the fact that they live in a tropical country like ours where onset of reproductive years is much earlier than in some other countries, these children are then sent off to be married and they become mothers at that age, at that stage of malnutrition, at that stage of denial of food security and at that stage of incubating disease whereby they, in turn, give birth to malnutrition children.[R38] To[r39] day, we answer international communities who question India on saying that why are your maternal mortality rates high, why are your infant mortality rates high. Obviously, it is not rocket technology for us to realise, but if a mal-nutritioned woman child gives birth to another one, then it will obviously have very little opportunity to survive the traumas of birth itself.

After that these children are then vulnerable to domestic violence, alcoholic husbands who come home and beat them, abuse of different kinds, trafficking, taken away and exposed to horrors of such type that we cannot even begin to imagine. Although, the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 was brought into force nearly 77 years ago, it only brought restraint. It did not talk of prevention or removal.

Some of the issues that we have addressed in this are strengthening some of the old legislations, but mostly we have put in preventive checks and positive checks into this Bill so as to enhance the security that can be provided for a girl child in our societal structure today.

Earlier, we only sought to restrain, but not its prevention or prohibition. The procedure under the Act today is to prevent the solemnization of child marriage, because those provisions were so

cumbersome, and we have made it much more user friendly and much more hands on.

I look towards all of you, my respected colleagues here, and I know that I will have your support across the board. I am looking forward to your interventions and your contribution to this very important Bill and your valuable suggestions will help us to be able to steer this Bill not only to remain as a piece of paper, but to become an encompassing comprehensive Bill, which will facilitate the transition of this girl from being a victim to remaining as a citizen as the Constitution has enshrined and envisioned for her.

I would like to discuss some of the important features and amendments of the Bill. The two broad areas that we have set are to prohibit and protect and provide relief to the victims to child marriage because I refuse to accept that any child can give his or her consent. They are children, they are coerced, bullied, black-mailed, emotionally exploited and quite often under duress. So, I would see every child who marries in this country as a victim and it is to these victims that we have given the strength, the exit policy and the ability sustain themselves after we have dealt with their offenders.

So, I leave the floor open now to all my hon. Colleagues and I am looking forward that you will address the new sections and that you will give us your valuable suggestions and then in my concluding remarks I will be able to address what all of you are going to say.

A very forward looking clause which some people in the Rajya Sabha raised, but which you will see is that any material exchanges between the two contractual parties, is that the Bill even applies to them, that these material gains will be returned to the families so that there is no loss of material things incurred by these families as well as the very important thing that any child who is married before she attains the age of adulthood can call off the marriage. It will be rendered as null and void and any off-spring born within the framework of that is deemed as legitimate, but that she has the exit policy. [r40] In the eventuality, she is a child who has been forced to trafficking or who has been promised under false impression about marriage, taken away and exploited. I thought, it is imperative that we give that child another chance and another opportunity to live.

I look forward to hear from all of you.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Motion moved:

“That the Bill to provide for the prohibition of solemnization of child marriages and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration.”

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SHRIMATI C.S. SUJATHA (MAVELIKARA): Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir. At the outset I congratulate the hon. Minister Shrimati Renuka Choudhary for introducing the Bill on Prohibition of Child Marriage. I have gone through the Bill and I agree with the legislative intention and I welcome those provisions. The appointment of the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer is considered an important measure to help preventing the child marriage. As this is a very serious problem with long history and social attitude, that measure alone would not help. The question of child marriage is a matter of great social concern. It is often debated in the House and outside by the civil society. Even though there are laws in this country to prevent the incidents of child marriage, still this practice has been continued unabated in various parts of the country.

Roop Kanwar committed Sati despite the law is there to prevent Sati. Dowry deaths are here almost everyday and there is a law preventing it. The child labour is banned by law. But India remains the country with largest number of cases of child labour.

In a recent incident in Madhya Pradesh, an Anganwadi worker, Shrimati Shakuntala was brutally attacked and her hand was mutilated when she tried to prevent a child marriage being conducted in a village. It is important to note that this incident took place in full view of the public who gathered at the venue of the marriage. It clearly shows the mindset of the society.

So, just legislations alone would not help prevent such evil practices. It is imperative that sensitization of the populace and the law implementing agencies is simultaneously done. There are many laws pertaining to the protection of women. There is law against dowry, law against dowry,



law on equal remuneration for equal work, law on prohibition of child labour etc. [MSOffice44]

On the ground level, the measures stipulated by these legislations are not practical in their real spirit. The major hurdle, I feel, is the age-old backward thinking of the general masses based on the feudal values of the society and the indifferent attitude of the implementing agencies.

To overcome this situation, the mindset of the society has to be changed and for that, the Government can do lot many things. In this connection, larger representation of women in the Judiciary and the law-implementing agencies is a must. There is a need to enhance the awareness in the society. The local self-governments – Gram Panchayats, Block Panchayats and District Panchayats – should be involved in the process of implementation of law and should be given more powers so that they may create awareness in the society against malpractices and could become an effective instrument in bringing to notice all such incidents as also the implementation of the law. The women organisations could also be utilised in this direction. The Anganwadi Centre, which has units in almost all villages in the country, would be a great instrument in spreading awareness, but the condition of anganwadi workers is pitiable. The remuneration paid to them is meagre. I would request the Government to provide them incentives so as to enable them to participate in this process.

Then, awareness on such matters should be created among the students right from the primary level onwards and their school curriculums should contain lessons on the problems of the women.

I strongly feel that the political parties and mass organisations in the country should adopt a positive approach to the problem of women and play a leading role in creating awareness about the atrocities committed against women.

14.47 hrs (Mr. Speaker in the chair) The Government should take necessary measures for helping political parties and mass organisations to discharge these responsibilities.

I support this Bill.

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SHRIMATI V. RADHIKA SELVI (TIRUCHENDUR): Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in this Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2006.

This is one of the important Bills. I can proudly say that I come from a State where no child marriage is in practice. When two children marry, they cannot result in a successful union.

The Minister regretted that despite signing all the Conventions on Child Rights and Marriage, India still has the highest infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate. The practice of child marriage is prevalent in the country due to poverty and social attitude.

As per the 2001 census, nearly 35 per cent women are married between 15 and 18 years of age. In this, three lakh girls below the age of 15 gave birth to at least one child. Indian culture and tradition does not allow girls to step out of marriage even in child marriages. Moreover, society also does not support these girls. It is high time now that the tradition and culture need to change along with the law.

We need to build capacity of the girls and equip them with knowledge about the rights and laws that would help them. The first State to come out of this social injustice to women is Tamil Nadu. Social justice was started by Thandai Periyar in Tamil Nadu; it was continued by Dravidian leader Arignar Anna and now it is followed by our dynamic leader, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Dr.

Kalaignar Karunanidhi. During his regime as the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, there is no differentiation between male and female child. He implemented equal rights for both male and female in the ancestral property. The Tamil Nadu Government encourages the girl children by giving Rs.15,000 to the girls who are getting married after the age of 18 years, if they have studied up to 10th standard.

When women come up in life, the country will develop. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Dr. Kalaignar Karunanidhi believed in this concept and has allocated 33 per cent of seats in the local body election. Dr. Kalaignar is the first Chief Minister to do this. Now, all of us can see that Tamil Nadu State has developed manifold which is because of the guidance of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Other States can follow this model so that India can develop and prove its supremacy in the world soon.

With the present Bill, if the girls who marry under the age of 18 years, without their consent, then such marriages can be declared void. This is a welcome provision. Moreover, there are penal provisions which should be made stronger.

With these words, I conclude my speech and on behalf of the DMK Party, I support this Bill.

SHRIMATI ARCHANA NAYAK (KENDRAPARA): Sir, thank you for giving me an opportunity to participate in the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2006.

First of all, I would like to extend my full support to the hon. Minister, Shrimati Renuka Choudhury, for bringing a Bill to end the uncivilized system of child marriage prevailing in our country even during the 21st century.

It is really a curse of India that even after passage of half a century after our Independence, the barbaric system of child marriage is prevailing in our country. It is high time that we stop child marriage from our country.

The recent study shows that 65 per cent of Indian girls in Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are married before attaining the age of 18 years. Section 3 of the Bill says that the marriage shall be 'voidable' if the contracting party says that she was a child at the time of marriage. But Section 3 (1) of the Bill stipulates that for annulling a child marriage by a decree of nullity can be filed in the district court only by a contracting party to the marriage who was a child at the time of marriage.[MSOffice49] There must be provision for filing such petition in the Session's court rather than in District court at a far away place.

The other provision of Section 3(2) says that if the Petitioner is a minor, the petition may be filed through his or her guardian or next friend along with the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer. We know that we have Dowry Prohibition Officers in the country. How far are we able to prevent dowry in the country? Unless and until the rules are made stringent and society is forced to follow

them, it cannot be implemented. Hence, to stop child marriage, social awareness is needed very much.

At the same time, there must be a provision in the Act that the rule is not misused. A genuine marriage can be stopped if somebody obtains an injunction from the court under Section 13 (1) of the Act by misrepresenting that it is a child marriage.

Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to incorporate necessary stringent provisions in the Bill to make it fool proof.

Once again, I congratulate the hon. Minister for this historic Bill. With these words, I would like to conclude my speech.

SHRI PRABODH PANDA (MIDNAPORE): Thank you, Speaker, Sir. I rise to support this important Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2006.

It is a matter of great concern that in many parts of our country child marriage scenario is very much there. It is very much disturbing and is a subject of deep concern. We will have to curb this practice of child marriage in the country. There was an Act earlier, the Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, 1929. That was not adequate and I may say that it was becoming obsolete. There have been recommendations made by the National Commission for Women as also by the National Human Rights Commission. I thank the Minister categorically that she and her Ministry considered most of these recommendations. This is a legislation related to entry in the Concurrent List and the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. The Union Government circulated the proposed amendment, suggested by both the Commissions, to the State Governments. Most of the State Governments have sent their opinions and endorsements to the Union Ministry. So, it is a welcome step and I must thank the UPA Government for bringing this sort of legislation. But, Sir, legislation alone is not sufficient to change the mind-set of our society. I must say that it is the legacy of the medieval age of our country. We must refer the Manu Samhita in this regard. What is the attitude towards the women in Manu Samhita? According to this, women should not be given independence. I would like to quote:

“PITA RAKSATI KAUMARYE VARTA RAKSATI YUBANE RAKSHANTI STHABIRE PUTRA NA STRI SWATANTRAHARTI.” This is the idea of the Manu Samhita. [R50] So this is the idea of the medieval ages and this is the attitude towards the women of our country. So, in order to change the mindset, an awareness programme should be there and some sort of positive steps should be taken in this regard not only by the Union Government but also by the State Governments, Panchayats and even the social organizations. I may refer to Renaissance of Bengal, Ram Mohan Rai, Vidya Sagar and Vivekananda who have done so many things and we may refer to them. So, the passing of this legislation and appointing officers at different stages is not sufficient. I would say that awareness is required.

Once again I thank the Minister and the UPA Government for bringing this legislation. I support the Bill.

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 am sure the hon. Minister has heard you closely.



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§ 1. The Bill aims at preventing child marriages, particularly girl child marriages and to rehabilitate the innocent, victimized girls who are pushed into forced women-hood at the tender age. Tender age means that it is the age which cannot take on the responsibility of marriage. They are abusing the mind and body. So, that is why, without healthy citizens, we cannot build a healthy nation. Therefore, it is our responsibility to take care of this problem.

§ 2. Soon after the subject of Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 was transferred from the Ministry of Law to the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare in January 2006, immediately the hon. Minister has taken steps to process the amendments to the Act and she has brought forward the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill. It is sad to notice that marriage of young girls and women has the acceptance and approval of all sections of the society. It is really sad. Also, the worrying factor is the reduction in the rate of birth of girl child. It is really worrying. Already, we have debated this issue. It shows the seriousness of Parliament. In the North-Eastern Region also, it is declining. It is so because India is having different cultures, traditions, races. As my sister Sumitra ji has said, it is our duty to keep up our tradition of 5000-year old Indian-ness. For that, at least we must maintain healthy mothers. Child marriages are taking place cutting across income, cultural,

SHRIMATI TEJASWINI SEERAMESH (KANAKAPURA): Sir, I would like to compliment the Chair wholeheartedly because you are always very supportive and always showing a lot of concern and kindness towards the women's problems in this country. I would also like to compliment all my sisters who spoke on this very painful issue. But, at the same time, when we are painfully speaking on this most crucial problem of the girl child, particularly who are entering into the marriages, I can see two extreme examples in the world. On the one side, Indian origin Shrimati Sunita Williams is enjoying here space walks in the space and who made us all proud and, on the other side, many innocent unfortunate girl children or women are entering into the cruelest practice of sati[a54].

So, it makes me sad all the time. But, anyway, with the support of the august House, with the blessings and the strong support of the UPA Chairperson Shrimati Sonia Gandhi and our hon. Prime Minister, Madam Renuka ji brought forward this amendment to the Prevention of Child Marriage Act and the repeal of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929. It has brought me some ray of hope that we can end this evil practice.

This Bill aims at preventing child marriages, particularly girl child marriages and to rehabilitate the innocent, victimized girls who are pushed into forced women-hood at the tender age. Tender age means that it is the age which cannot take on the responsibility of marriage. They are abusing the mind and body. So, that is why, without healthy citizens, we cannot build a healthy nation. Therefore, it is our responsibility to take care of this problem.

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traditional, ethnic and religious barriers. It is a worrying factor. The media can play a vital role in this. Today, globalization and access to glamorous material is there. The media can really spare some valuable time to educate the innocent people of the country where they are contributing a lot. So, it is the responsibility of the media to do this.

Apart from poverty, strong and blind belief, superstition, illiteracy and age-old traditional practices are aggravating this problem. Society needs overall development. For that, not only social development but also economic development is necessary. If economic development reaches every nook and corner of women, then, they can decide. As my sister Karuna ji has said, women can decide, mothers can decide on the fate of the child, particularly the girl child. But unless we get the economic independence, it will not resolve the overall issue at one time.

The poor girl children are treated as animals. In my State of Karnataka, in the coastal belt, poor parents are indulging in trafficking of young girls. Some rich people from the Middle East are involved in this. That problem needs to be addressed. It is a shame. Really, I share my total concern with Ranjita ji and other colleagues as also the hon. Minister who spoke on this. We should hang our head in shame that flesh trade is flourishing. In the flesh market, a majority of the girls is pushed into trafficking. So, unless we stop this, we cannot say that this is our great India, Mera Bharat Mahan. We cannot make all these statements. We must introduce stringent punishment. In this regard, I also urge upon the media to take care of this. More programmes are sexual in nature. It also provokes and instigates people. A lot of harassment is inflicted on the girl child.

At last, I would like to address this problem. Child marriages are not only taking place among the backward and tribal people but even learned VIPs are indulging in this. I am very much pained to say that even learned representatives, VIPs who come from elite society are also indulging in this. At the age of 60-70 years, some men are marrying girls of 9 years, 10 years and 15 years. It is really a very shameful thing. I expect the hon. Minister to introduce not soft punishment but stringent punishment. She should introduce life term for those who destroy the tender age of the girl child. She should introduce life-term, if not capital punishment.[R55] They really deserve capital punishment because they take away the right of the girl child. So, I appeal to the hon. Minister to introduce more stringent punishment for such people.

Then, we should also sensitize our police because police will not take up cases when they approach the police station. So, we need more humane police personnel to take up these cases.

We have to make use of our Anganwadi workers who are very helpful and committed to this cause. We should involve our panchayats also in this because some accountability is needed at the grassroots level. Through the panchayats we can educate the people about this evil and create awareness among them.

The child marriage denies the girl child the right to good health, nutrition, education and economic independence. In the name of marriage, they abuse the child's mind and body. It is the cruelest offence and this leads to domestic violence also.

With these concerns, I would request the hon. Minister to go ahead with this. She has the fullest support of the Parliament including our Speaker who is behind all of us and also the Opposition. We are all behind the hon. Minister on this. With these words, I support this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, the Speaker is at least very proud of being the Speaker because of the high level of debate that we are having on this Bill. I wish to compliment all sides for their wonderful contribution on this very important subject.

Now, I call Shri Suresh Prabhu to speak. I am sorry, I can only allot four minutes to you.

SHRI SURESH PRABHAKAR PRABHU (RAJAPUR): Gender bias is not good. Since women are only speaking, I thought I will also speak.

MR. SPEAKER: You should have asked the lady Member of your party to speak.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): No, Sir. I want the men to speak.

MR. SPEAKER: They are the culprits! SHRI VIJAYENDRA PAL SINGH (BHILWARA): Sir, I must also get time to speak because only lady Members from the BJP are speaking.

MR. SPEAKER: All right. We are having a very high level of debate. I am very happy and proud.

SHRI SURESH PRABHAKAR PRABHU (RAJAPUR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me also join my other colleagues in not only supporting but also complimenting the Minister for bringing this legislation.

Marriage is supposed to be a conjunction of two souls, two families and beginning of a new life of two individuals. But many times, when you get into wedlock, when two individuals marry, it really is a marriage between two individuals. But when a marriage is solemnized by someone else, who is not a party to the marriage directly, the individuals who are marrying do not know what they are doing because somebody else is getting them married and that is why, child marriage is, in fact, not a marriage between two individuals. It is a connivance or a conspiracy hatched by others who are going to reap benefit out of this arrangement and, therefore, the people who are getting married, rather than beginning a new blissful life, are actually going to have a tortuous journey ahead of them. Therefore, this type of marriage has to be stopped and nipped in the bud. That is why, this law is the beginning of a process which will actually help the people not to engage into such an arrangement which will actually create problems for them. Therefore, as I said, I really support the Bill and I also compliment the Minister.

Sir, the issue is, when we pass the law in this Parliament, it provides us an enabling environment. It only helps us to deal with the situation legally. But that should not be an end in itself. I would request the Minister to look at the possibility of creating an atmosphere wherein the

law will be implemented by those who are really as committed to the cause as we are when we are passing the legislation. We always feel that there is a huge gap between the spirit of the law, the letter of the law and what we finally see, at the end of the day, as the implementation of the law. Therefore, the responsibility of the Government now is this. The Government should create an environment in which we would be able to take the thinking of all of us, for which, Sir, you have complimented all of us, and our spirit forward to the grassroots level, to the villages where the problem is actually going to surface. We all realize it, we feel about it, we are sensitive about it, but they are the ones who are going to take action on it. [R56] T[r57] herefore, that is my first point as to how to get into it.

Sir, here I would like to make some suggestions. In the last Session, we passed another law, welcoming, very forward looking, very progressive legislation, that is, dealing with domestic violence. We are already dealing with the problem of child marriage, which is one part and child labour is another part. So, domestic violence is one, child labour is another issue and child marriage is the third one, but it is not the same problem.

I feel you create an institution at the district level, maybe eventually at the level of local self-Government, that is, Gram Panchayat wherein, at least, one person may be elected by the villagers themselves to look into all these issues in a comprehensive manner. The Ministry will have to play the role of training these people. Unless you train these people, it is really not going to happen because to accept that it should be sensitized to do this is not really going to work. Therefore, we must create a new breed or a cadre of officers and people who are actually as sensitized to the issue as is required and then they are going to act at it. So, I would request the hon. Minister to prepare a list of such officers.

The hon. Minister has very rightly left this responsibility to the State Governments. As you are aware, the State Governments are supposed to create family courts. How many districts of the country have family courts? How many of those courts have judges? How many of those judges are as sensitized as they should be. Therefore, the first and foremost requirement or responsibility will begin with the Parliament and that responsibility will have the beginning with the responsibility of the Government to begin and I think, that should be to sensitise this.

Sir, there are two-three other very important points. Firstly, you must ensure that all the births that take place in the country – there is a law which hardly implemented – should be registered as soon as possible. For example, the relationship between the birth and this law. How do you justify and how will you establish the age of a child that the boy is 21 and the girl is 18? In many cases in the villages, in the absence of proper birth records, there are a lot of litigations for nothing. People usually say that this girl looks bigger than what she is or elder than what she is. So, birth registration is important.

Secondly, there should be compulsory marriage registration. That is again not required under the law today. I think, if you do not insist on registration of marriage compulsorily, the arrangement which will be primarily entered, how will you prevent the child labour. Therefore, compulsory registration is necessary.

In addition to that, we have already amended the Constitution to say that we want to make sure that there will be compulsory education at primary level. I think, this is about the time that we really introduced this spirit that we have already passed a law into a proper implementable fundamental right given to all the citizens so that there will be a compulsory education, at least, till the age of 15 so that automatically a child who is going to enter into marriage will be able to make an informed decision, an informed choice. Therefore, this will be required.

Sir, there are two other general points. We are already talking about domestic violence, as I was mentioning about it earlier. Why not create compulsory, at least for a Taluka, a proper court which will deal with issues related to family, related to inter-personal relationship, which does not affect the society? These are the issues which should be handled in a very delicate manner. We should not leave it to the district court in which people will be coming and there the criminals will be tried as well as such issues will be tried. These are the issues which should be dealt with a lot of care and caution. Therefore, we really need to create that if you really want to take care of all the issues.

Sir, the fundamental problem that persists and which actually is manifested into such socio-economic problem is the socio-economic conditions of the people. Unless we target that in a very effective manner, we are not going to solve this problem. I was hoping that we will be able to discuss the Five-Year Plan today, but I am told that the Five-Year Plan will not be discussed today because normally the Five-Year Plan targets are not supposed to be met in five years. They are met much later. So, probably, we thought, why should we discuss now, we can discuss it even after three years when we will be able to do it. So, probably the socio-economic conditions should be properly taken into consideration and that is why I thought, it will be discussed.

MR. SPEAKER: It will be very seriously discussed.

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MR. SPEAKER: We all must ask ourselves as to what we are doing to stop this.

Now, Shrimati Minati Sen.

SHRIMATI MINATI SEN (JALPAIGURI): Sir, on behalf of my Party as well as myself, I rise to support the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2006.

Sir, I am of the opinion that the problem of child marriages is correlated to lower level of literacy and poverty. In most of the cases, the women are treated as lower than second class citizens, and as such, they do not enjoy to give any opinion in any matter, be it marriage of herself at minor age or marriage of her daughter. I strongly demand a comprehensive action plan for upgrading the literacy level and economic empowerment of the women to bring them at par with the male counterpart of the society.

Sir, it may not be out of track if I refer a recent Report of UNICEF titled 'the state of Children 2007'. [R59] [R60] The Report states that in the women headed Gram Panchayats of West Bengal, the roads are better; drinking water supply is better; more girls can go to school; and more health workers visit the villages.



This proves that if women are allowed to enjoy power like their male counterparts, they can prove themselves to be worthy.

Sir, the objective of this Bill is obviously to give more teeth to the Acts already in vogue for prevention of child marriage. This Bill is a welcome step, no doubt. Let us hope that we may not have to come again on the floor and lament that we need some more teeth to protect our children from child marriage since the present Act is not sufficient. I also hope that the law maintaining machineries of the Government will act at the right moment to prevent any child marriages, and the guilty will be punished.

Lastly, Sir, I demand compulsory registration of all marriages and request the Government to bring a comprehensive legislation. I would also request the Government that the fees of registration of marriages should be within the financial means of the poor villagers. I would also request the hon. Minister to take into consideration the recommendations given by the National Commission for Women.

Once again, I render my support to this Bill.

SHRIMATI SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO (BOLANGIR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to wholeheartedly welcome and support the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2006. At the very outset, I would like to congratulate and compliment the hon. Minister for bringing forth this Bill.

Sir, I would not go into too much detail. There are just a few points that I would like to make. Firstly, I compliment the hon. Minister for including the legitimacy of the child born out of this union despite the fact that it may be nullified.

The second point is regarding maintenance and the custody clauses included in the Bill. The third point is on mass marriages, which are held on important and auspicious dates like Akshya, Tritiya and all. These are very relevant points.

I also support the points raised by Mr. Suresh Prabhu regarding proper registration of births and marriages because without that, the Bill would not have much teeth.

There was also a point raised by the RJD Member, Shrimati Ranjit Ranjan, which was very passionately put by her, and we all wholeheartedly support this.

Madam, I would like to mention here... MR. SPEAKER: Sorry; at this old age, do I look like a Madam?

... (Interruptions)

SHRIMATI SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am so sorry... (Interruptions)

I would like to mention here that it is very unfortunate that we almost have to regard women as an endangered species even in today's day and age, and we are trying to bring in all kinds of legislation to protect the rights of the girl child, woman in general etc. Coming to the Bill, the very term 'Child Marriage', I feel, is a paradox because a child who has not attained maturity as yet, is not really meant to be married and take on the responsibilities of the real world. In today's day and age, the pressures and stresses of adulthood, as it is, come soon enough, and it is our duty to protect the innocence of children, their interests, their health and development as long as we can.[r61] [MSOffice62] In today's day and age where we have become extremely aware of the rights of children and have brought in and passed Bills in the House like Protection of Children's Rights Bill, it is only natural that this Bill also should follow in order to strengthen the rights of the children.

As many times, more often than not, the children are forced into marriage by the elders, parents, guardians or whoever in-charge of them, I feel this Bill is a very important step and it is socially a very relevant Bill. Ours is a nation where the maternal mortality rate is the second highest in the world estimated at about 540 per 1,00,000 live births. Approximately 1,25,000 women die each year due to pregnancy and pregnancy-related causes. The high maternal mortality rate is attributed to certain factors like poverty, malnutrition, anaemia, lack of health care during pregnancy and most importantly, biologically the young girls are undeveloped as they are under-nourished and underage.

Also, the infant mortality rate in our country is very high. It is estimated at 62 per 1000 live births. In rural India almost 60 per cent of the girls are already married off before they attain the age of 18. Nearly 60 per cent of the married girls become mothers before they attain the age of 19. As a result, not only does the health of the mother suffer but also the babies are born below the average birth weight. So, all these factors are very important when we talk about prohibition of child marriage.

Early marriages, as we all know, deprive the girl child of access to proper education and economic independence. Unfortunately, the girl child in our country by and large, not only in rural India but also, I would say, in urban India are made to feel as though they are merely a transferable and disposable commodity and liability at best.

So, in our country the psyche is such that the moment a girl attains puberty, you know, there is fretting and fuming in the family that the girl has to be married because the parents want to shirk their responsibility. They do not want to spend as much on girl child's education as on the boy of the house. Unfortunately, they feel that looking after a girl is a big burden in our country. Therefore, sometimes a girl is sold even under the garb of getting married as lot of our previous hon. Members have raised. I do not want to get into this repetitive thing or what other Members have mentioned that they are used for sexual exploitation, misused and subjected to all kinds of problems at the hands of pedophiles. This is a surprising thing we hear about NRIs, and then you have rickety old men coming and marrying young girls who are barely 13 and 14. It is absolutely disastrous.

Also, though the issue of female foeticide is not relevant here, I would like to mention that the male-female ratio has dropped down to 947 to 1000 males. All these go to show that in our country women do not have a very comfortable position.

Now, as far as the Bill goes, in a progressive society like ours where we are fighting for gender equalities, there are two Sections. One is Section 13 clause (10) and another is Section 11 clause (1) where it is mentioned that women would not be imprisoned. I would like to refer to this.

Section 13, clause (10) says: "Whoever, knowing that an injunction has been passed, has been issued under sub-section (1) against him, disobey such injunction, shall be punishable with imprisonment, etc., etc." [MSOffice63] 16.00 hrs It is also said – "But provided that no woman shall be punishable with imprisonment." Though I am a woman, I oppose this vehemently because more often than not we find that women are equally responsible in perpetuating such crimes on women.

Secondly, the cases should be time-bound. There should be speedy disposal of these cases. Otherwise, they just carry on and on. Thirdly, as far as custody of the child goes, I would like to suggest that the mother should be given custody of the child. Usually even in divorce cases, this is the prevalent custom that the mother should be given the custody of the child while the maintenance of the mother and child can be provided by the husband.

Lastly, I want to raise two more points. One is on the CMPO – the Child Marriage Prevention Officer. It is given here that there would be, by and large, one Child Marriage Prevention Officer in the State or by modification a few may be added. Since it is such a revolutionary Bill which we are passing in Parliament, I would like to make a humble suggestion that we should have one Child Marriage Prevention Officer per district at least. The responsibilities which have been conferred on them are immense and creating an awareness etc. cannot be done by one man alone.

Lastly, let us see what was prevalent in earlier days, the Gona system where even if there was an arrangement by two families in rural India that a marriage would take place whenever they came of age, if you can bring about a similar system like this that even if the marriage has been annulled in order not to give to social evils like promiscuity and prostitution because when women are financially not very comfortable, then there is no choice but to go into these sorts of lines. What really should be encouraged is that a modified Gona system should be incorporated where even if the marriages are annulled, but as and when they attain maturity they may be re-united and till then the lady may live in her own parents' home or since ours is a Welfare State, if the State provides a short-stay home or something like that, that would be more than welcome. ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I think we should have a special Session on children and women issues where everybody would speak without the whip.

... (Interruptions)

SHRIMATI SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO : I just want to conclude.

MR. SPEAKER : I wish to compliment you.

SHRIMATI SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO : I would like to convey my compliments to the hon. Minister and request her to kindly incorporate these amendments.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Francis Fanthome to speak now. Can you finish in three minutes?

SHRI FRANCIS FANTHOME (NOMINATED): I will try, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER : No, not only try but please do it.

SHRI FRANCIS FANTHOME (NOMINATED): Sir, let me begin by complimenting the hon. Minister for bringing in this extremely important piece of legislation. It cannot be underscored that this legislation has taken a long gestation. Sir, you will recall that the earlier Bengal Renaissance Movement which was spearheaded by no less than a dignitary like Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar and Keshav Chandra Sen had advocated the abolition of child marriages. They struggled for many decades; but could not see this legislation in place.

It is important now that this 14th Lok Sabha is witnessing a historical legislation supported by our Chairperson of the UPA and the hon. Prime Minister. I would like to say that while this Bill brings in the element of the dignity of the child, I would not like to think that the dignity of the child in terms of marriage is merely an economic argument as has been mentioned in certain quarters.

This, to me, is more an attitudinal issue and more an exploitative issue. We must look at this issue in terms of what type of attitudes do men and, perhaps, some women bring to the social order in terms of how they see the growth of their children. [MSOffice64] [s65] In this larger context, I feel that this legislation will go a long way in creating a new awareness in civil society that will set in place extremely important designs that will alter the civil society in very many manners. While a lot of issues have been stated in terms of the emotional impact, I would like to mention that when we prevent child marriages, what we also put in place is an element that we address children in terms of the knowledge economy, in terms of the 21st Century sensitivities, in terms of what we consider as people responsible for building the human capital. It is in that context that I feel that this piece of legislation would go a long way.

To me, the test of this legislation would be how we react in April next to the Akshaya Tritiya Festival in Rajasthan. Would we be able to prevent the child marriages that are rampant during Akshaya Tritiya Festival in the State of Rajasthan? If we are able to put in place, as I would think, the prevention of child marriages, as was being mentioned by my previous colleague, it is a more important aspect of this rather than the other aspects of controlling or regulating or putting in penalties because as we know, the society in which we live in and the society to which these children are born, they have several ramifications if their marriages are annulled or if their marriages after having been solemnised are not put into practice in the manner in which their cultural identities relate to. So, I would like to think that the Minister has reasonably adequate time to try and put in place a preventive mechanism in each district and in each region so that the children are prevented

from these marriages.

There are several issues to speak on, but I would conclude as you have given me three minutes. I would like to mention that seemingly, there is a contradiction within the Bill in terms of clause 2(a) and clause 9. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to this. While clause 2(a) defines a male adult in terms of reaching 21 years of age, clause 9 states 'whoever being a male adult above 18 years'. Therefore, It needs to be clarified whether the child above 21 is reaching adulthood or child at 18 is reaching adulthood. We would need some information on that.

I would like to support the recommendation of Shrimati Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo when she says that there needs to be fast track mechanisms to put into place the people who do not follow this law and consequentially who put into jeopardy the lives of our children.

With these words, I commend and support this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, the hon. Minister will speak.

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MR. SPEAKER: It is only to accommodate you. Please do not embarrass me here.

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SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL): Sir, I would like to speak a sentence. I have to make very important point.

MR. SPEAKER: Everything coming out from you is important.

... (Interruptions) MR. SPEAKER: Then, you should have been the first speaker of your party. I will not allow you.

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MR. SPEAKER: If any hon. Members want to submit written speeches, they can do so.

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MR. SPEAKER: I shall try to see that we have a special discussion on this issue.

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MR. SPEAKER: You are defying me. I never called you.

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MR. SPEAKER: You have supported it. Very well, I compliment you and your party. The Minister now.

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 THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI RENUKA  
 CHOWDHURY): Sir, I rise to thank all my hon. colleagues for having contributed so passionately, so  
 sensitively and their great experience by which they have helped us set direction. I am also deeply  
 appreciative that I have been fortunate to have you in the Chair today. As Chairperson of the  
 Parliamentary Forum on Child I am sure that you will help us to map a future that all of us have



the Income-Tax Act were having a son gave you exemptions but having a daughter was not defined. Today, when we talk of these issues, we have to look - does a rural poor family have any budgets for a woman's health?[r68] [MSOffice69] A man will spend Rs.100 on a bottle of turrah, but not Rs.50 on woman's pair of glasses that will enable her to see. A lot of men told me, £

Why does she subject to become a victim of domestic violence? It is because she feels that the violence of one man is preferred to the violence of 10 men, if she steps out of the security of the so-called home.

Today, I have to intervene into the homes with Domestic Violence Act because there is no security in the home any more for women. The girl child, the women,  $\phi$  -  $\phi\mathbb{S}$   $\square\mathbb{S}$ ,  $\mathbb{L}$   $\ddagger$  - ' '  $\mathbb{S}\square$  '  $f\mathbb{S}\P$  -  $\square\mathbb{S}$  i  $\phi$   $f\Re$  She has no voice to reach out to the world and say, 'help me'. The man who she is married to, who pledges, '  $\phi\mathbb{S}$  ,  $\square$  '  $f\mathbb{S}$ ,  $\mathbb{L}$   $\mathbb{Y}\mathbb{S}$   $f\mathbb{S}$   $\mathbb{S}$   $\mathbb{S}$   $\dagger$   $\Re$   $\mathbb{S}$   $f\mathbb{S}$   $\phi$   $\mathbb{S}$   $\bullet f$  -

*f*? Do we not know that if you take away somebody's money, it is a crime? Do we not know that if you take an ex parte decision, you can answer in the court for that? Yet, a woman is never asked how many children she wants to bear. What is worse is this.

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*f*       i °    × This is a medical, biological fact. But their own weaknesses are transferred to women and women are made responsible. That is why, men, to protect their own lives, to protect their own turf and then start violence on other women so that they remain secure, that their sons are forced to look after them, that their sons are made dependent on their mothers and they cannot move out, and they cannot have healthy relationships with other women.

So, my dear colleague-Members, we have this collective responsibility; this Bill is not going to alter the mindsets, but yes, it will impact on the new generations, on the children today who have access to education, who have access to nutrition, who have access to health securities, who can have immunization and go to a full-life, hopefully this generation of young people will grow up thinking that it is unnecessary to hit a woman, that it is cool to be respectful towards a woman.

Sir, very early in India's Independence, Shri Rajiv Gandhi Ji envisioned this. Today when this House refuses to pass the Women's Reservation Bill, it saddens me because that Bill is not about the numbers; it is not mathematics of politics that we want this for; it is not because women want to replace men in Parliament, because then we would be lacking in ambition! We want to be recognized because we are important like the warp and weft of a cloth that when we weave them, then they become a cloth – so, women and men contribute together to the social fabric of our life.

Today we have reservations at the panchayat level. Rajiv Gandhi Ji, with one signature, empowered ten lakh women across the country who now participate in grassroots decision making. I

am very happy to inform the House that today the reservation was for 33 per cent and today, across the country, we have 42 per cent of women in panchayati raj, taking decisions. [MSOffice70] [R71] When Rajiv Gandhiji brought in 18 years of age and that empowered the youth to vote, a lot of people criticized him. They thought that it was political opportunism. They failed to see the vision that he had. That will keep the children not just dreamers of their dreams but as architects of their future and that there will be enabling procedures which will help these children translate these dreams. I hope that we will be around to see those children one day in this Parliament where they will address what affects our country and its collective future.

It is because of these reasons that we are bringing in a slew of legislations to facilitate the girl child. What is her life today? First she is denied birth. Then, she does not have the financial securities. Then, the mother does not breast feed her as long as she breast feeds her male child. Then, she is not sent to school. She is kept to look after the animals at home and her younger siblings to whom she becomes a proxy mother. She has to learn to cook the food. If she is lucky, she is sent to school. It is because of this Government which has said that you must have access to school. We have brought in Sarva-Shiksha Abhiyan to facilitate this. If she reaches the Anganwadi Centres which we have established, we can give them the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and they can have access to immunization, if she can stay unmarried till the age of 18. If she is lucky she will marry some man. Then, she will have to survive. If she does not give enough dowry, she will be burnt. Then, her husband will drink and indulge in domestic violence at home. Then, the return journey to her mother's house is supposed to be only as a corpse. Is this the status of women that we are talking about? Is this the enabled, empowered and progressive society? Do you think that we can go forward and take that quantum leap into the future if we leave 72 per cent of our population behind? That is what women and children of this country constitute today.

A lot of Members have made some very valuable suggestions. These suggestions are being taken on board. There are some clarifications which I will immediately give. Some one has asked why is there dichotomy in the age group. The girl is recognized at the age of 18 as adult and the boy is recognized at the age of 21 as adult. That is why the dichotomy has been given. People question us on IMRs and MMRs as Sangeetaji has very rightly pointed out infant mortality rates and maternal mortality rate. It is no surprise. It is not rocket technology. If children give birth to children and malnutrition children at that, what do you expect? Most of us are farmers in this House. Do we not know that when you want a good crop, your land has to be ready? How do you suppose we can give birth to a healthy generation? It is 20 times more expensive to correct nutritional deficiency than to feed them. We have not addressed these issues in the past. We are constituting a National Commission of Child for the first time. This is a historic step that we are taking where children are going to be recognized in their own right and identities. They will be represented by their own colleagues in the House.

The Prevention of Child Marriage Bill has passed through the injunction filed by the Prevention Officer. Ms. Karuna Shuklaji has said that the child marriage can be declared null and void at the option of the party over 18 years of age. That is not true. Even the child who is under 18 years of age can go and complain and have it declared null and void. But she necessarily needs a guardian so that she is not misguided. But her objection will stand. [R72] This is

[MSOffice73] under trafficking. There is an amendment which I am going to bring to the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act.

journey will be facilitated to enable her to remain safe.

We have a child helpline number, 1098 and a women helpline number, 1091. We should be able to have these four digit numbers very much like our other national numbers and a call centre at each place which can reach and help women and children. I had also approached Shri Maran who is in charge of the Ministry of Telecommunications to put out these numbers at every public call booth and to facilitate the call booths to take on toll free numbers so that children and women who do not have telephones may help us to be able to save a life.

Now the responsibility of this has been given to the States to constitute Protection Officers. But we all know, at the ground level, what the fate of it is going to be, if we leave it. So, I will look towards all of you for support when I take steps to ensure that every district and every State will be responsive and we are going to make States competitive so that if we do not comply with these, then they will not be able to access other developmental areas. I think, they should be made mandatory and we should call for accountability. The Government has spent crores of rupees over developmental issues and social sector issues. Most of them obviously have not been translated into action. We have the IMR rate of 58, the MMR rate of 407, malnutrition rate as 52.5 per cent, literacy rate as 47.8 per cent and child labour approximately as 6.03 millions. The drop-out rate is unusually high. But the most frightening of all is the declining sex ratio which we all are witness to.

Shrimati Sangeeta Deo said that girl child is an endangered species. She is right. This is the land of disappearing daughters. It is we who can collectively make that change. I intend to start a nation-wide awareness and sensitization campaign because laws, in themselves, are not solutions. Advocacy, sensitization on a sustained basis throughout the country, well designed area and cultural specific campaigns and a sense of value and respect for the females are necessary. Women are discriminated even in Parliament. ..(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Not in my presence. We ignore him.

(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: We have attempted to address other issues such as integrated child development services. We want to bring in an Integrated Child Protection Scheme which will put in different checks and measures. The Kishori Shakthi Yojana addresses adolescent girls who form the prime target group of our Child Marriage Prevention Act. The Kishori Shakthi Yojana addresses those children to ensure that they have optimum physical weight and we are trying to do the cash transfer schemes in the Eleventh Plan. There is the Palna Scheme at every district in which if parents do not want the girl children, we assure them that we will look after them. Please give the girl child to us but do not kill her.

A series of initiatives are going to be taken up by the Ministry of Women and Child Development which will enhance the value of girl child in the mind-sets of both their own parents as well as that of the societal values.

Education remains the key area to opening the door to progress and development. The insurance cover for survival and development of the girl child is also being examined. Health and immunization, retention in schools and placing foundation of nutrition, health and play in the zero to six years of age are necessary. All of us know that children in the age of zero to six lay their developmental foundation for the rest of their life. [MSOffice74] What you eat, how you are immunized and your access to food securities defines the kind of adult that you will become. The right-based approach for the child as has been enunciated in the 11th Plan is important. I urge all the hon. Members to kindly accord the highest value to this problem in their respective constituencies. I will be sending all of you a letter with a proforma which has a self-addressed envelope for you to please fill in some data and if you return that to me, we will together be able to ensure that our constituencies are truly reflective of the progress that we talk about.

Sir, I would request, through you, and it is my passionate appeal to all the hon. Members that they fill up that proforma and send it back to us, which will help us to establish a database across the board, something that we have not had. I also urge the hon. Members to take up the issue of sensitizing our community. In any public function you go, even if it is not related to child marriage and domestic violence, we must talk about it. A very few people are going to call all of you to come and address such meetings. But you must do it. It is really not worth our respect, if we do not tell our men not to beat our women.

Sir, at the grass-root level, the ill-effects of child marriage are something that if we do not turnaround, will hold us back in our path to progress and development.

Now, I request that the House may kindly pass the amendments to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill, 2006 and repeal the Child Marriage Act of 1929, as has been passed by the Rajya Sabha.

MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

“That the Bill to provide for the prohibition of solemnization of child marriages and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration.” The motion was adopted.

MR. SPEAKER: Now the House will take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

The question is:

“That clauses 2 to 21 stand part of the Bill.” The motion was adopted.

Clauses 2 to 21 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title were added to the Bill.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Sir, I beg to move:

“That the Bill be passed.” MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

“That the Bill be passed.” The motion was adopted.