

WOMEN MEMBERS OF RAJYA SABHA

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One of the defining movements of the 20th century has been the relentless struggle for gender equality, led mostly by women, but supported by growing numbers of men. When this struggle finally succeeds — as it must — it will mark a great milestone in human progress. And along the way it will change most of today's premises for social, economic and political life.

—Human Development Report, UNDP, 1995



RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

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PREFACE

Throughout the world, the issue of women's representation in legislatures has emerged as one of the key issues to determine the level and extent of their empowerment. While it is lamented that women's representation in Parliament is less, their immense contribution to the proceedings of the House and their path-breaking parliamentary initiatives need to be brought to light for understanding their important role as parliamentarians. This volume "Women Members of Rajya Sabha" possibly a first of its kind in India, in terms of depth of analysis, constitutes a modest attempt to capture their insightful suggestions, sparkling wit and humour and keenness to involve themselves in the parliamentary work for furthering the cause of people in the highest forum of democracy. By unearthing information from the voluminous debates of Rajya Sabha and analysing them, chapters have been framed to underline their valuable role during the last five decades. One may not find each and every lady member's name in the chapters of this volume, who on her own right, stands out as an eminent parliamentarian. However, the broad spectrum contributions of women parliamentarians have been encapsulated to drive home the point that their historic performances in the august House have enhanced the traditions of parliamentary democracy beyond measure and are essential to promote all round progress of the nation. I hope readers will find this volume useful and informative.

NEW DELHI;
December, 2003

DR. YOGENDRA NARAIN
*Secretary-General
Rajya Sabha*

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Introduction

As long as women of India do not take part in public life, there can be no salvation for the country.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Down the ages women have played important roles in vital sectors of collective life. Our Indian civilization witnessed the equality of status between men and women in the Vedic period. The transformation of society and the resultant changes in women's socio-economic and political status in the middle ages led to significant social and political movements that highlighted the issues relating to equality of men and women.

The impact of nineteenth century reform movements and the spread of modern education among women brought about qualitative changes in their consciousness regarding their status in the society. No doubt the fruits of the reform movements or the spread of education did not percolate down to the common man and woman but it brought about a significant departure from the past. A direct fall out of the emergence of new consciousness resulted from their organized activities. These were exemplified by the setting up of women's organizations, namely the Women's Indian Association (this was later merged in the All India Women's Conference), the National Council for Women and the All India Women's Conference. With the beginning of the institutionalization of women's movement for enhancement of their status, a new set of demands was vigorously put forth for granting franchise to them. Indeed, it was a new dawn for the women of India when in 1917, a deputation of Indian women under the leadership of late Smt. Sarojini Naidu, presented to the British Parliament a demand for the enfranchisement of women on the basis of equality with men.

The constitutional reforms of 1919 left the matter to the discretion of elected legislatures in the provinces and finally the Reforms Act of 1921 enfranchised a very small fraction of the Indian population including women. This right to vote was circumscribed by severe conditions, namely attainment of marital status, property and education. Therefore, it was restricted to only an infinitesimal minority of women.

Women's activism displayed during the struggle for independence was a marked departure from the traditional notion of their role in society. This was mainly due to the function of the mesmerizing call given by Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi to all sections of society to fight non-violently against colonial rule.

Mahatma Gandhi declared in 1918 :

Woman is the companion of man fitted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man, and she has the same right to freedom and liberty as he...by sheer force of vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have.

In 1929, championing the cause of women's rights, Mahatma Gandhi said :

Women must have votes and an equal legal status, but the problem does not end there. It only commences at the point where women begin to affect the political deliberations of the nation.

This clarion call of our Father of the Nation had a decisive impact on the attitude of women towards the freedom struggle. Events proved that without the cooperation of women, the freedom struggle would not have been so successful. Almost 17,000 ordinary women from villages and remote corners of India willingly participated in Salt Satyagraha, which was indicative of the emergence of growing consciousness among them for empowerment. This kind of participation had a direct bearing on the attitude of women also. A meeting of the representatives of women's organizations in 1930 drafted a memorandum demanding immediate acceptance of adult franchise without sex discrimination. It was turned down by the Government. But in 1931, the Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress took the historic decision, committing itself to political equality of women, regardless of their status and qualifications.

The Government of India Act, 1935 increased the number of enfranchised Indians, the proportional suffrage rights of women and relaxed some of the previous qualifications. All women over 21 years of age could vote provided they fulfilled the conditions of property and education. In 1943, Mahatma Gandhi devised a Constructive Programme which aimed at not only liberating India from foreign rule but also bringing positive social changes. It contained eighteen points out of which one was about the upliftment of women. By doing so, he drove home the point that without elevating the status of women we cannot attain Swaraj.

Thus, our freedom struggle encapsulated, among other things, the issues relating to social transformation along progressive lines. It underlined the important aspects of ameliorating women's condition in totality — socially, economically, politically and juridically.

With the enactment and adoption of the Constitution of free India on 26 January 1950, a new era dawned for the vast millions of the country. Particularly in the context of women, this symbolized the beginning of a progressive period.

Begum Aizaz Rasul, a Member of the Council of States, while participating in the debate on Motion of Thanks on President's Address in 1952 echoed this idea and said, "We have today a Constitution framed on the basis of equality for every man and woman, in which the rights of every individual are guaranteed, and all barriers of caste, creed and community done away with. The most important feature of this Constitution is that women have been given equal status with men and equality of opportunity. The shackles that women have worn for centuries have been cast aside and women have now come into their own".

The Preamble to the Constitution of India resolves to secure to all its citizens, justice — social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation. Women thus were treated at par with men in the context of constitutional prescriptions relating to equality, liberty, justice and fraternity. Specific provisions of the Constitution also seek to create juridical conditions to attain the above purposes and also to elevate the status of the fair sex.

Through article 326 of the Constitution and various provisions of the Fundamental Rights, women are accorded political equality with men. Article 326 guaranteed adult suffrage to all Indian citizens who are not less than 18 years of age. Some of the provisions in the chapter on Fundamental Rights ensure both positive and negative rights to women.

Guaranteeing political equality to women at par with men since the adoption of the Constitution marked a significant beginning. It heralded a new era in as much as it negated certain traditional socio-cultural norms, which were against women. It was also significant in the context of other modern developed nations of the West, which accorded equal political rights to women only after a protracted struggle launched by the women for their rights.

The United States of America and the United Kingdom granted franchise to women only after decades of struggle by their women. Most other countries conceded it only after the Second World War. Japan granted franchise to women in 1946, China in 1949. The exceptions were Thailand and Philippines which granted a limited franchise, similar to the Indian case, in 1932 and 1933, respectively. Among the West European countries, France granted franchise to women in 1945 and Switzerland in 1971.

Therefore, the act of according equal political status in terms of guaranteeing voting rights to all adult citizens redounds to the credit of our national leadership and the cherished values of our freedom struggle.

Besides the provision of adult suffrage, the Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms such as freedom of speech and expression [article 19 (1) (a)], protection of life and personal liberty (article 21). While these may be termed as positive rights, the negative rights are the prohibition of discrimination (article 15) or non-denial of equal protection of the Laws on grounds of sex, etc. (article 14). Indian women are beneficiaries of these rights in the same manner as men. Article 15(3) enables the State to make any special provision for women and children. Under article 16, equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State is ensured. Article 16 (2) stipulates that no citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

The Directive Principles of State Policy containing important socio-economic and political aspects envisage setting up a 'Welfare State'. Coupled with the provisions in the chapter on Fundamental Rights, the Directives have envisioned a new social order. That is why even though the Directive Principles of State Policy are not justiciable these are considered to be fundamental in the governance of the country (article 37).

Some of the directive principles concern women directly and have a special bearing on their status. Under article 39 (a) it is envisaged that the State shall direct its policy towards securing that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood. Equal pay for equal work for both men and women is envisaged under article 39(d). Article 39(e) of the Constitution directs the State that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age and strength. Under

article 42 directions have been given to the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. Article 44 directs the State to endeavour for securing for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India. It is felt that the adoption of a uniform civil code will promote equality between men and women and among women.

The Fundamental Duties as incorporated in the Constitution by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976 stipulate *inter alia* that it should be the duty of every citizen of India 'to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women' [article 51 A(e)].

A historic step for women's empowerment was taken when one-third of seats in Panchayat and Municipal bodies were reserved for women under the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act and the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act respectively. So far almost one million women are being elected to such bodies every five years. A Bill has been introduced in Parliament to reserve 1/3rd seats for women in our legislatures. Such attempts in India have been described by Ms. Joan Holmes as, "...the greatest social experiment of our age..."

Thus, the provisions of the Constitution pertaining to women and incorporated in the Fundamental Rights, the Directive Principles of State Policy and the Fundamental Duties and other parts of the Constitution are the instruments to attain our national objective of justice, liberty and equality for all irrespective of gender. By adopting the principle of universal adult suffrage, the Constitution seeks to establish a democratic republic by giving the adult population direct or indirect share in the decision-making machinery of the Government. Normatively and practically this has created conditions for elevating the status of women in society and polity.

In fact in 1999 a study conducted in the U.S.A. to find out the top 100 events of the twentieth century, American women getting right to vote in 1920 occupied fifth position and remained way ahead of the historical and epoch making events such as the discovery of the theory of relativity by Einstein, discovery of penicillin, discovery of DNA, testing of atom bomb, disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union, etc. Twentieth century has been described as the century of women's suffrage. If right to vote is held to be so important for women then one will imagine the overwhelming significance of other political, social, economic, cultural and environmental rights for them and therefore for society at large to realize gender equality in practice.

In fact women's empowerment and gender equality is a pre-requisite for effective participation of women in strengthening the institutional structure of democracy. Since the Constitutional recognition of this equality, more and more women have come forward to participate in electoral politics and some of the successful women candidates have adorned the seats of various representative institutions in the country. In the context of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) many distinguished women candidates have joined the election fray to occupy the seats of this august House since its inception in 1952.

The Council of States popularly known as the Rajya Sabha came into being as the legislative, deliberative and revisory chamber of Indian Parliament. The founding fathers of the Constitution envisaged that in the Union Legislature, the Council of States would consist of experienced and seasoned people who would represent the States and Union Territories and contribute meaningfully to the multi-functional role of the Second Chamber in the Indian polity. As an organic component of our parliamentary institutions, it embodies the federal principle. In performing its myriad roles, Rajya Sabha has consolidated our democratic ethos and acted as a central lever of social engineering. Women Members have made invaluable contributions to this process.

Since its constitution on 3 April 1952 till November 2003 a total number of 160 women members have occupied seats of this august House. Out of that, 15 women members constituting 9.55% have been nominated by the President of India under article 80(3) of the Constitution. To comprehend their manifold contributions as parliamentarians, an effort has been made to discuss their role in enriching the vast expanse of legislative activities.

Parliament being the highest forum of democracy provides an opportunity to the members to air their grievances, suggestions and throw light on new areas which the government might have otherwise missed while formulating policies. Ours is a democracy and people's participation is a fundamental prerequisite to operationalise the policies of the government. In a system based on representation of people, it is the members of Parliament through whom people participate in the decision making process. As representatives, they are entrusted with the responsibility to articulate and aggregate the interests of the people. They thus maintain the political communication between the rulers and the ruled. Therefore, the participation of Members of Parliament on the floor of the House is of vital importance. This is particularly so in the context

of the increasingly important role of Parliament in our nation building activities. As the Constitution has assigned an important role to the government to reconstruct the polity, society and economy in a progressive manner, its predominant position in determining the policy decisions has been growingly felt. At the same time the government's accountability to the legislature cannot be undermined.

Therefore, effective participation of the Members of Parliament is a vital necessity in order to consolidate the important position of the legislature and also to make our democracy vibrant. Against this background, it would be interesting to study the role of women members of Parliament in Rajya Sabha during the last five decades, *i.e.*, from 1952 to 2002.

The Council of States, the Upper House of Indian Parliament, provides an unique opportunity to its members to represent not just a constituency but the entire State. Therefore, their ambit of operation becomes large. In this sense, the vision of the members of Rajya Sabha transcends the limits of the constituency and encompasses in it the interests of the fundamental unit of our federalism. The women members, no doubt, espouse the cause of their respective States but also take up national issues on a priority basis.

The role of women members in taking part in the proceedings of Rajya Sabha has been very significant. Most of them had high educational attainments. Some of them with their background in the struggle for freedom and participation in representative institutions had added lustre to the debates and discussions of the House. The women members having professional background relating to social work and upliftment of women and weaker sections were in an advantageous position to champion the cause of the downtrodden. Many of the women members with a distinguished career in the profession of law and journalism articulated the interests of common people with great passion.

The nominated women members possessing special knowledge or professional experience and being relatively free from the political affiliations have driven home their points with vigour and courage. This has been facilitated by the fact of their nomination which makes them the representatives, not of any State or Union Territory but of the whole nation. Their scintillating performance has not only brought them laurels but also heightened the prestige of the Council of States and vindicated the vision of our founding fathers in incorporating the provision of nomination to the Rajya Sabha in the Constitution.

An indepth study of the role of the women members in Rajya Sabha throw light on their effective participation and parliamentary initiatives. In the Second Chapter titled *Women Members of Rajya Sabha: A Profile* the socio-economic details, the important positions held by women members of Rajya Sabha etc. have been presented. In the Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Chapters participation of women members during Question Hour, their contribution during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, Budget (General) and (Railways), their parliamentary initiatives and other important matters have been taken into account. In the Eighth Chapter titled *Women Presiding Officers of Rajya Sabha*, the contribution of three Deputy Chairpersons of Rajya Sabha, the application of rules by them in the conduct of the House, their rulings, etc. have been covered. The Ninth Chapter titled *Role of Women Members in strengthening Parliamentary Traditions* is a brief one detailing the manner and demeanour of women members in the House which has contributed to the consolidation of the democratic traditions of Parliament. In the last Chapter titled *Women Members and Wit and Humour in Rajya Sabha* instances where women members have participated to make the serious discussions of the House lighter and humorous. A brief conclusion to this whole exercise is appended in the end.

Women Members of Rajya Sabha: A Profile

Every woman is a creator in the ideals of nationhood. I want the women of India to have consciousness of the great and dynamic nation whose energies have to be mobilized and harmonized for common purpose.

—Smt. Sarojini Naidu

Women have played a very significant role in the growth and development of parliamentary democracy in India. They have occupied important positions both in the legislature and the government and enriched these institutions with their manifold contributions. A glimpse of their participation on the floor of the House reveals the varied dimensions and magnitude of their efforts. They have not only highlighted the issues concerning the upliftment of women but numerous other issues of national and international importance. They have rendered valuable contributions inside the House and outside also they have made notable achievements. The women who have become members of Rajya Sabha over the last five decades have excelled in their respective fields like theatre, arts, law and education. Many women have won national and international acclaim for their achievements and some of them have been nominated to the Upper Chamber of Indian Parliament for their distinctive achievements. During more than five decades of its existence the representation of women members in Rajya Sabha has remained less than 11 per cent, except in the years 1980 and 1986. However, their contributions to the proceedings of the House and their endeavours for the national development are no less significant than their male counterparts.

Representation of women members in Rajya Sabha

Biennial representation of women in Rajya Sabha from 1952 to 2002 is given in Table 1*. See also Chart A. In 1980, there were 29 women members in the Upper Chamber constituting 11.98 per cent which was the highest representation of women in the House. The representation was lowest in 1970, when 14 women members were there in Rajya Sabha constituting 5.85 per cent of the House. An overview of the biennial representation of women members in Rajya Sabha shows that in 1952, there were 15 women members in the House, which constituted 6.94 per cent of the membership. Their representation showed a gradual increase till the year 1960, when the number of women members rose to 24, constituting the percentage of 10.25. In 1962, their percentage decreased substantially to 7.20. From 1964 to 1974, the representation of women members remained around 7 to 10 per cent. In 1970 their percentage touched the lowest, *i.e.*, 5.85, however, it increased to 10.16 in 1976 and thereafter, till 1990, it remained on the higher side. In 1992, the percentage of women members dipped to 7.29 and remained around 7 to 9 till the year 2000. The number of women members increased to 25 in 2002, constituting 10.20 per cent of the total membership of Rajya Sabha. See Table 1.

Socio-economic Indicators

In terms of average age of women members since 1952 the lowest average was 42.86 in 1952 (See Table 2* and Chart B). It increased gradually and by 1970, reached up to 57.21. The average age of women members showed a decline in 1972, when it came down to 51.33 and further to 49.16 in 1974. From 1976 to 1996, their average age remained around 49 to 55. In 1998, the average age of women members rose up to 58.31, the highest average so far. Thereafter, it decreased and in 2002, the average age of women members was 55.04. Among the elected women members, the oldest lady member of Rajya Sabha was Smt. Uma Nehru who was 78 years of age when she joined Rajya Sabha in 1962. The youngest members elected to Rajya Sabha were Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan and Kumari Sushila Tiria who were both 32 years of age when they got elected in 1986. The oldest nominated member Smt. Fathema Ismail was 75 years of age at the time of her nomination. Smt. Shabana Azmi has been the youngest nominated woman member of Rajya Sabha. She was nominated to the Rajya Sabha at the age of 46 years. A study of the tenure of membership of women members brings to focus the fact that Smt. Pratibha Singh was longest serving woman member of Rajya Sabha. She was member of Rajya Sabha for 22 years without break from

*See Annexure.

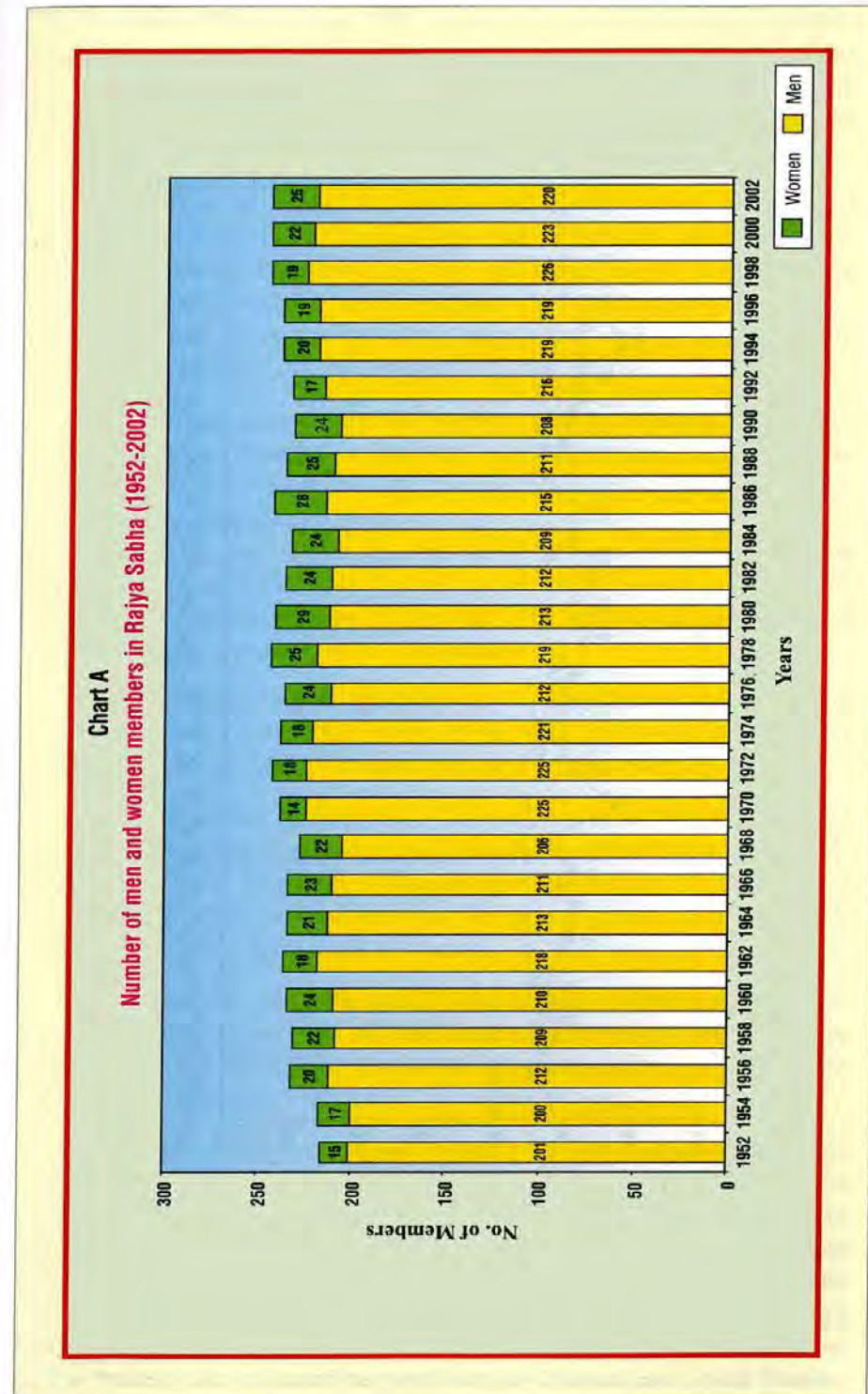
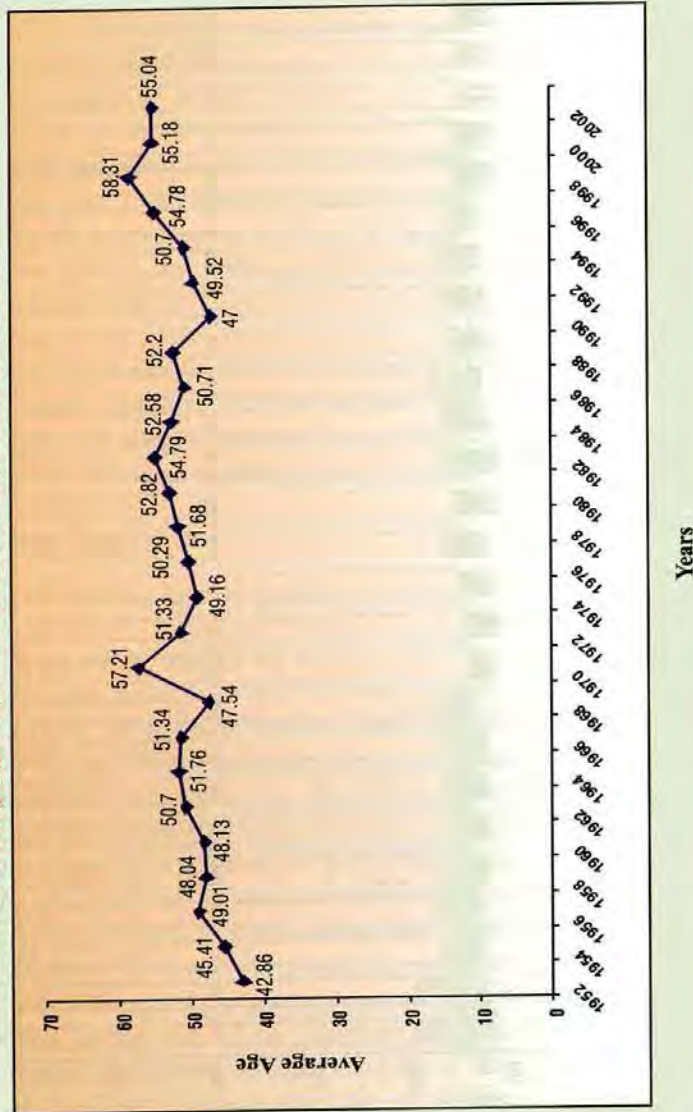


Chart B
Average age of women members of Rajya Sabha (1952-2002)



31 December 1970 to 6 July 1992. Among the nominated women members, Smt. Maragatham Chandrasekhar was the longest serving member of the House. She was nominated on 3 April 1970 and was a member till 2 April 1982. Again she was nominated on 27 September 1982 and remained a member till 29 December 1984.

An analysis of educational background of the women members of Rajya Sabha from 1952 till date show that fairly large number of them have had good qualifications. In 1952, the Upper House had 15 women members out of which 5 were Graduates, 5 Post-Graduates and 1 held Doctoral degree. Only one was not a Matriculate. And in 2002 also, only one-woman member did not possess a formal Matriculation certificate.

A reasonably large number of women members of Rajya Sabha since 1952 have been Graduates or had some other higher qualifications. It was only in 1956 that out of the total number of women members just two had Graduate degrees. In 1980, out of a total of 29 women members in the House, 16 were Graduates. In the 1990s the number of women members with only Graduate degrees, at any point of time in the House, had remained between 6 and 9. And in 2002 the House had 7 women members with education up to Graduation.

The number of women members having Post Graduate qualification remained below 10 till 2002, except in the year 1990 when their number rose to 10. There were 9 women members in this category in 2002.

Only one woman member had a Doctoral degree in 1952. The number of women members in this category generally remained below 5 till 1996. In the year 2000, there were 7 women members holding Doctoral degree or other high academic qualifications, the highest number in this category till now. In 2002, there were 6 members in this category.

An analysis of the professional background of 160 women members of Rajya Sabha since 1952 till date makes an interesting reading. There were significant number of women hailing from different walks of life like theatre, teaching, journalism, law and literature.

The largest number of women members in Rajya Sabha have given their profession as Political and Social Workers. There have been 5 or more than 5 women members from this professional category at any given point of time. Smt. Indira Gandhi, the first and only woman Prime Minister of India, was a member of Rajya Sabha when she became the Prime Minister. She had also mentioned her profession as political and social worker. Ms. Mayawati, who became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh also indicated her profession as Political and Social Worker.

Many prominent women members in Rajya Sabha belonged to the field of theatre, arts, films, etc. The famous ladies from this field were Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale, Smt. Nargis Dutt, Ms. Jayalalitha, Smt. Vyjayantimala Bali, Smt. Jayaprada Nahata, Smt. Shabana Azmi, Ms. Lata Mageshkar, Smt. Hema Malini and others. Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale was a famous theatre artiste and also an animal rights activist. A born artiste Smt. Arundale evinced keen interest in arts, culture and theosophy. She worked for India's cultural renaissance through art, culture and education. She was nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 1952 and again in 1956. As a parliamentarian she actively participated in the business of the House. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Bill, 1953 was introduced by her and her tireless efforts culminated in the enactment of a law relating to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1960.

Smt. Nargis Dutt was nominated to Rajya Sabha in 1980 for her contribution to the field of cinema. In addition to being one of the most talented artistes, she was a dedicated social worker and always took keen interest in matters that came up in the House. Ms. Jayalalitha, an accomplished Bharatnatyam exponent, proficient in other classical dances was a member of the House from 1984 to 1989. In the five years when she was the member of Rajya Sabha, she spoke on many diverse subjects. Currently, she is the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Smt. Shabana Azmi, a much acclaimed actress, took keen interest in discussions in the House relating to the welfare of women and children.

In the Rajya Sabha there have been women members who have espoused the cause of the workers of both the organized and unorganized sectors and participated in trade union activities before they were elected to Rajya Sabha. One of the leading women Trade Union Leaders was Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt who was nominated by the President of India to Rajya Sabha. Another prominent woman member who has been an active social worker and trade unionist was Smt. Kamla Sinha.

Women advocates have also been elected to the House. Smt. Chandrika Abhinandan Jain, an advocate by profession was elected to the House in 1990. Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan also a prominent lawyer was the youngest woman member to be elected to Rajya Sabha. She evinced special interest in providing legal aid for the poor and protection of environment. Smt. Margaret Alva, a lawyer by profession has also contributed immensely through her participation in the House. Thus women from a wide spectrum of professions have represented the States and Union territories of the Indian Union in the Rajya Sabha.

From 1952 till date, 15 women members have been nominated to Rajya Sabha by the President of India. These women members had

distinguished careers and they had made a mark in their respective fields, such as art, literature, science and social service. The names of the 15 nominated women members are given in Table 3*. Out of the total of 15 nominated members 5 were artistes, namely, Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale, Smt. Nargis Dutt, Smt. Vyjayanthimala Bali, Smt. Shabana Azmi and Smt. Hema Malini. Four nominated women members were social workers by profession, namely, Smt. Shakuntala Paranjpye, Smt. Fathema Ismail, Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt and Ms. Nirmala Deshpande. Two educationists, namely, Smt. Maragatham Chadrashekhara and Dr. (Ms.) P. Selvie Das were nominated members of Rajya Sabha. Other distinguished personalities nominated to Rajya Sabha were, namely, Prof. (Mrs.) Asima Chatterjee, Scientist; Smt. Syeda Anwara Taimur, Administrator and Smt. Amrita Pritam, Writer.

Important Positions held by Women Members and their varied Legislative Experience

During the period 1952-2002 some of the women members of Rajya Sabha had the distinction of holding important portfolios in the Union Cabinet. Smt. Indira Gandhi became the first woman Prime Minister of India on 24 January 1966 when she was a member of Rajya Sabha. Rajya Sabha's existence during the last five decades witnessed inclusion of its 18 women members in the Union Cabinet. Most of the women members held different portfolios in the capacity of Deputy Minister and Minister of State. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was the first woman Union Minister of India. She held the portfolio of Union Minister of Health from 1947 to 1957 with additional charge of Communications from 1951 to 1952. In the present Council of Ministers, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, who belongs to Rajya Sabha, is holding the portfolios of the Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

The women members of Rajya Sabha not only rendered distinguished services in the sphere of governmental activities but also performed in exemplary manner on the floor of the House. Their stature as effective parliamentarians and their grasp of parliamentary practice and procedure paved the way for them to get elevated to important positions. For instance, Smt. Mona Hensman was the first woman whip of the Indian Parliament. Besides, three distinguished women members were elected to the post of Deputy Chairman. The first one to be elected was Smt. Violet Alva. She was in office from 1962-1969. The second woman member who occupied this prestigious post is the present Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Smt. Najma Heptulla. Her first term of office was from 25 January 1985

*See Annexure.

to 20 January 1986. She was again elected to the same post on 18 November 1988 to 4 July 1992. She was elected the Deputy Chairman for a third term from 10 July 1992 to 4 July 1998. Her fourth term commenced on 9 July 1998 and she continues to be the Deputy Chairman till date. Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil had the distinction of becoming the third woman member to be elected as the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha. Her tenure of office was from 18 November 1986 to 5 November 1988.

With consummate skill and impartiality these distinguished women Deputy Chairmen have conducted proceedings of the House efficiently and maintained the dignity and privilege of the Council of States.

Some of the women members were also nominated by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha to the Panel of Vice Chairmen. Begum Aizaz Rasul had the distinction of becoming the first woman to be nominated to the panel. From 1952-2002, a total number of 21 women members have been nominated to the Panel of Vice-Chairmen. Table 4 shows the names of the women members who were nominated to the Panel of Vice-Chairmen during different periods. These women Vice-Chairmen in the absence of Chairman and Deputy Chairman have presided over the sittings of Rajya Sabha and conducted the proceedings of the House smoothly.

Apart from their legislative experience in the State legislatures some women members of Rajya Sabha have also had the distinction of becoming members of the Lower House of Indian Parliament before their elections to the Upper House. It includes also those distinguished ladies who held important portfolios in the Union Council of Ministers while being members of the Lok Sabha, who were later elected to Rajya Sabha.

Another significant aspect relating to women members of Rajya Sabha is their rich legislative experience before they were elected to the House. Begum Aizaz Rasul and Smt. Ammu Swaminadhan had the experience of working as members of the important parliamentary institutions of pre-independent India. While the former was a member of the Constituent Assembly, the latter was member of the Central Legislative Assembly, Constituent Assembly and Provisional Parliament. There were women members who have had the experience of working as members of the State Legislative Councils before they joined Rajya Sabha.

Prior to their elections to Rajya Sabha some of the women members have also had the distinction of serving as important functionaries in the provincial legislatures. For instance Begum Aizaz Rasul was the Leader of the Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council during 1937-40. Smt. C. Ammannaraja had the distinction of working as

Deputy Speaker of the Madras Legislative Assembly from 1946 to 1952. Besides, some women members of Rajya Sabha during their stint in State Legislatures as members had got important ministerial positions. For instance, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil and Smt. Purabi Mukhopadhyay had held important portfolios as Cabinet Ministers in Haryana, Maharashtra and West Bengal, respectively, during different periods. Smt. Syeda Anwara Taimur, who became member of Rajya Sabha in 1988, was the Chief Minister of Assam from December 1980 to June 1981. Smt. Chandrika Abhinandan Jain, elected to Rajya Sabha in 1990 was the Minister of State for Education in Maharashtra for many years.

Notable Achievements of Women Members

Our freedom struggle witnessed large-scale participation of women and weaker sections of society. After independence some of the women actively involved in the freedom struggle joined the political fray and got elected to different parliamentary institutions. Their participation in the freedom struggle trained them to plead for the cause of women in our parliamentary institutions. Some of the leading figures who were associated with the struggle for independence and later got elected or nominated to Rajya Sabha were Smt. Indira Gandhi, Smt. Violet Alva, Smt. Lilavati Munshi, Smt. Rukmani Bai, Smt. Uma Nehru, Smt. Leela Damodara Menon, Kumari Maniben Vallabhbhai Patel, Smt. Maragatham Chandrasekhar, Dr. (Smt.) Phulrenu Guha, Smt. Fathema Ismail and others.

An analysis of the background of women members reveals that some of them had the honour of holding very important positions. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was Secretary to the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi for sixteen years and later became the first Union Minister of India. While Smt. Violet Alva was the President of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand was in the panel of Consultants of the ILO on the problems of women in employment. Dr. (Smt.) Phulrenu Guha after her retirement from Rajya Sabha was appointed Chairman of the Committee on the Status of Women, which submitted a monumental report recommending various measures for the amelioration of the fair sex.

During the freedom movement organized articulation of women's cause was fructified by the formation of All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1926. A large number of distinguished women who were prime movers in setting in motion this organization and a few of them holding key positions as its office bearers got elected later to Rajya Sabha. Rajkumari

Amrit Kaur and Smt. Ammu Swaminadhan were founder members of the Conference. The former was also its Chairman and President. Other two women members Smt. Lakshmi N. Menon and Smt. Nandini Satpathy also held the posts of President and Vice-President of the AIWC respectively during different periods. Some women members associated with the Conference were also instrumental in creating chain of branches of the AIWC in different States, for instance, Smt. Uma Nehru was founder of the AIWC, Allahabad. Thus their involvement in the All India Women's Conference both at the national and state levels provided them the much-needed exposure to uphold the cause of women.

The women members of Rajya Sabha not only displayed their skill and ability in Parliament but also in various other fields. Their commendable services had brought them rich laurels and coveted awards at the national as well as international levels. The prestigious award Bharat Ratna was conferred on Smt. Indira Gandhi and Ms. Lata Mangeshkar. Women members have been the recipients of Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padmashri Awards. Nominated member Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt was crowned with Magasaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1979, the Right Livelihood Award Sweden in 1984 and Padma Bhushan in 1986. Smt. Amrita Pritam had the distinction of becoming the recipient of Jnanapeeth Award for her outstanding literary contributions. Smt. Shabana Azmi was awarded the National Award for the Best Actress five times. She has been the recipient of several national and international awards including Padmashri.

The above analysis of the background of the women members of Rajya Sabha throws light on their rich and varied experience as public figures. Against this backdrop, an attempt has been made in the following Chapters to understand their parliamentary contributions.

Question Hour and Women Members

One of the truest measures of a nation's advancement is the state of its women. For out of the women comes the new generation, and it is from their lips and from their laps that it begins to learn.

—Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

Good scrutiny makes good government. The procedural device of asking questions, apart from helping Members to scrutinize and expose the activities of the Government, enables them to elicit information from the executive, ensure its accountability to the legislature, ventilate their grievances and impel the authorities to take corrective action wherever necessary. The value and importance of question in driving home a point in legislature and bringing to public knowledge the wrong doings of Government authorities has been realized since the days of our freedom struggle. Shri S. Sathyamurty excelled as a great Parliamentarian in the Central Legislative Assembly and became a role model for freedom fighters for his sharp and pointed supplementary questions which considerably embarrassed the British Government by uncovering its defects and mal-administration. Acknowledging his astute ability in framing such questions he was hailed by his colleagues and admirers as "Supplymurty" and Mahatma Gandhi impressed by his role as a Parliamentarian had remarked that "If we have 10 persons like Sathyamurti in Parliament, the British Government will fall without struggle."

After we attained independence and two months after the commencement of Rajya Sabha, in 1952 itself, the issue of keeping in the Lobby the copies of statements and answers to oral questions was raised to enable Members to ask more supplementary questions during Question Hour. Smt. Lilavati Munshi, a Member of the Council of States recounted her tenure in the Bombay Legislative Council and stated that the questions and answers were circulated there so that supplementary questions could be asked after reading them. She mooted the idea of adopting that procedure which she thought might help them to work

better. Smt. Munshi's remarks were demonstrative of the Member's keenness to use Question Hour effectively by further augmenting its scope through supplementaries.

A perusal of questions fielded by lady Members in the first few months of Rajya Sabha bring to light several useful supplementary questions which throw light on issues which are of significance at the national and international level. It is well known that women's access to educational opportunities is hindered by many difficulties even though they enjoy legal equality in this respect. On 22 July 1952, when a Member asked a question as to which States have introduced free and compulsory primary education in pursuance of the provision contained in Article 45 of the Constitution the concerned Minister gave the desired reply. Smt. Lakshmi Menon asked a supplementary question seeking to know if free and compulsory, wherever it existed, was equally applicable to boys and girls. The Minister gave an affirmative reply but Smt. Menon knowing the ground reality skeptically asked, "That may be in theory, but is that the case in actual practice?" When the Minister asserted that "If it is compulsory, that means it is compulsory for both boys and girls." Smt. Menon stated "That is no answer".

The question asked by Smt. Menon raised the issue of gender equality in the year 1952 which to this day remains one of the crucial and challenging questions of all times. Women's access to education is like a long hurdles race. Smt. Menon's question underlined women's struggle and the need to keep its momentum to realize their equality in practice.

In September 2000, the First Ladies of some countries of the Asia-Pacific region met in Kuala Lumpur to discuss the subject Rural and Island Women: Poverty and Empowerment. Probably the meeting was first of its kind to focuss attention on not only rural but also island women. But it is interesting and instructive to know that Smt. Savitry Nigam a Member of Rajya Sabha asked a question almost fifty years back *i.e.*, on 26 November 1952 to know the facilities provided by the Government for female education in Andaman island, the number of girls' schools run by the local administration and the public there, the total number of school going girls in the Andamans and whether domestic science was taught in those schools and if not why. The then Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Scientific Research, Shri K.D. Malaviya, in his reply merely stated: "The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House in due course". The question asked by Smt. Nigam and the answers she sought became the central concerns of our developmental agenda in due course and was also taken up in the prestigious forum of the First Ladies of the Asia-Pacific region.

With the attainment of independence we undertook the task of reconstructing India while confronting mounting problems and challenges. At the heart of such reconstruction remained the issues concerning the institutionalization of democracy development of India and its constituent units through the process of planning, reorganization of states on the basis of language, enactment of Hindu Civil Code, formulation of a progressive foreign policy, etc. Women Members of Rajya Sabha through numerous questions have sought to know the details of about these policy formulations and critically examine their implementation. Many questions were raised by them expressing their dissatisfaction and disappointment on the issue of the piece-meal introduction of the provisions of the Hindu Code Bill. Many others through their questions wanted to know the steps being taken by the Government of India to frame for the whole country a uniform civil code which has of late been also stressed by the Supreme Court.

The partition of India in 1947 and the hostile situation in our neighbouring areas raised serious concerns for safeguarding our unity and integrity. Uppermost in the minds of some of the lady Members were maintaining the security and defence of our country in the context of centuries of foreign rule and recurring loss of our independence throughout our history. Many Members while participating in discussions in the Council of States in 1952 underlined the need to build up India's naval strength. But what was said by Smt. Violet Alva became notable not only for the relevance of those ideas at that juncture but also for their long term utility. She suggested in early 1952 that India's naval capacity might be augmented by inducting an aircraft, carrier, building naval aviation and deploying submarines. This far sighted suggestion to strengthen India's ability to safeguard her oceanic frontier assumes significance in the context of Sardar K.M.Pannikar's observation, in his insightful book "India and Indian Ocean" that India lost her independence to European powers when she lost control over her territorial waters. The European rule, as contrasted to the rule of other powers, turned India into a colony and resulted in distorting our society, economy, polity and even our minds, the deleterious consequences of which are being suffered by generations of Indians till today.

When a question was raised by a Member in Rajya Sabha concerning defence production in our ordnance factories Smt. Violet Alva asked through a supplementary whether any such ordnance factory had been closed down. Possibly, her concerns were essentially about the need to continue to accelerate production from ordnance factories so that India, following a long-term goal, could become strong and self-reliant in defence matters.

In fact our success in the 1965 war against Pakistan and our decisive victory against that country in 1971 have been attributed to the long term planning undertaken by the Government for strengthening and expanding the capacities of our ordnance factories. Former President of India Shri Venkatraman and the late editor of *The Mainstream*, Shri Nikhil Chakravarty have emphatically written that India's enhanced defence capability resulted from policies pursued from 1960s which gave quality and enduring output after a long gestation period.

Defence against hunger and peace for our teeming millions depend on the success of our agriculture. Failure of crops due to various reasons have resulted in massive loss to the farmers and the consequent hardships to the entire nation. Even before the introduction of crop insurance was taken up on a wide scale and at a national level, Smt. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, an hon'ble Member of the Council of States keeping in mind farmer's interest intervened in Question Hour on 9 December 1963, referred to an answer on Crop Insurance and asked if the Government had consulted the farmers before introducing compulsory crop insurance. About nineteen years after that, i.e., in 1982 when some State Governments introduced crop insurance schemes Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla asked a question on the subject and was keen to know if all State Governments had been instructed to take similar measures. The Government in its reply informed that it had asked all State Governments and Union Territories in 1979 to implement pilot crop insurance schemes in their areas. The above examples show the continuity of their commitments to issues which are crucial to national reconstruction. They took up such emerging and challenging issues on the floor of the House which received attention at the highest level of decision making process and thereby ensured mobilization of public opinion in favour of early implementation.

Population explosion is one such issue which has greatly agitated the minds of the women Members. India is acclaimed in the world as the first country to have officially adopted a programme on family planning and population control in 1952. Two years after the policy was adopted Smt. Violet Alva asked a question on 13 September 1954, to know the ways in which funds meant for family planning have been spent and whether any grants were made to any institutions or persons for research in family planning. This question of Smt. Alva promoted another member to ask a supplementary question whether the Government had any plan to supply contraceptives to poor people at cheap rates. The then Minister for Health, Smt. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who was a Member of Rajya Sabha, replied that the Government was not supplying contraceptives to anybody. Thus, through insistent questioning by lady members, even as

far back as 1950s, the inadequacies in the Government's family planning programmes were highlighted.

Much before the general public became conscious on the problem of pollution and its contaminating effect on air, water and atmosphere, the Council of States had the benefit of knowing and getting sensitized about it in greater depth through the Questions of some women members in 1982. In 1983 when a particular Member called the attention of the Minister regarding the situation arising out of the air, water and gas pollution a prominent nominated Member Prof. Malcolm Adiseshiah described the problem as "Little known and little regarded" and expressed the hope that a much wider discussion would take place outside the House on it.

On 25 March 1982, a year before, the attention of the Minister was drawn to the so called little known issue by Dr. Najma Heptulla who asked a question on the air pollution around steel plants, wanted to know if 15% of the total amount of waste gases released in the atmosphere came from the iron and steel industry. When the Minister answered by saying that the percentage of waste gases released in the atmosphere from the steel factories are not known and studies had been initiated to determine it, Smt. Heptulla wanted to know if, attempts were being made in India, like in many western countries, to use mechanical, chemical and electrical devices in such factories to control air pollution. The concerned Minister first stated that the question related to pollution generated by steel plants and then gave a long answer outlining the steps taken to minimise air pollution. Dr. Heptulla reacted to the reply by stating, "Sir, I am sorry the Minister is giving a very vague answer. He is trying to avoid saying that effort has been made and whatever result is there has not been specified, so far as smoke and air pollution are concerned". Mentioning that "there were other kinds of pollution that are let out by the steel factories right from the ore to the final product" she said that people working in those industries were affected by TB, rashes, allergy etc. When the Minister concerned gave a reply which contained scientific terms, Hon'ble Chairman commented that none could understand such technical details and further reminded the Minister that as Dr. Heptulla is herself a scientist and all the details, therefore, could be given to her.

Another lady Member of the House Smt. Asima Chatterjee, who herself had the distinction of being a scientist asked a supplementary question and wanted to know the steps being taken by the Government to check and control pollution caused by carbon monoxide. She also suggested that by planting various kinds of plants around factories pollution could

be checked to a great extent. The above example shows that through the procedural device of Question the important issue of pollution gravely threatening the environment and health of the people was raised by lady Members and they remained vigilant so as to further examine the answers given by the Government and even suggested important measures to prevent further deterioration of our ecology.

On 19th August 1983 when a Member called the attention of the Government to discuss the situation arising out of the air, water and gas pollution in several industrial units Smt. Najma Heptulla participated in the discussion and expressed regret that in the House, the Minister of Environment was not present to give answers to the problems of pollution. While intervening in the discussion she made important suggestions such as compelling the industrial houses to install continuous monitoring devices to check air quality and prevent pollution. Professor (Smt.) Asima Chatterjee while participating in the discussion also suggested many measures one of which was that the industrialists who own industries should be pressurised to take corrective steps to protect the environment.

The effort for a cleaner environment is an on going process and it was exemplified by the question of Miss Mabel Rebello who on 8th August 2003 asked the Government to know whether, as per WHO report, 80 per cent of health problems and one third of all deaths in the country were due to contaminated Ganga water, whether contaminated river water reached the ground water system affecting water supply and agriculture and what came on the way of the action plan to clean water, control pollution and save crops from contamination.

The concerned Minister replied that there were no such report of the WHO. He, however, admitted that the river water might get contaminated due to sewage and industrial discharges and adversely affect ground water and agriculture.

Apart from the pollution of the environment, there are other kind of pollution caused by corruption and deterioration of standards of behaviour and values in public life. One such example of scam which agitated the nation was popularly known in the country as the security scam. It is important to note that before that scam was detected Smt. Sarla Maheshwari had asked a question on 18 August 1992 to know if SEBI guidelines were violated by many companies while issuing shares to the public. The concerned Minister in his reply stated that manipulation of allotment of shares was done in one case at least by promoters and registrars of the company and outlined the action taken by SEBI to monitor the activities

of the promoters and registrars. The question asked by the woman member preceded the unearthing of a major scandal which led to the appointment of Joint Parliamentary Committee in the early 1990s.

In 1996, at the time of her retirement a member of the House, Shri G. Swaminathan glowingly acknowledged her role in asking a question which led to unfolding of series of developments and detection of a scam. He said:

I want to speak about Smt. Sarla Maheshwari who belongs to the Communist Party (Marxist). She will be remembered as long as the hawala issue is remembered. The hawala episode took the present shape because of a question which she raised about some obscure thing which happened somewhere else and that carried the day. The Press came in and a lot of publicity was given to the issue. Many matters have come out of the issue.

One of the heartening and inspiring development of the 1990s was the introduction and implementation of the MPs Local Area Development Scheme. Through such schemes many developmental measures have been taken in different parts of the country for the benefit of the people. For some time it was thought that a Committee of Parliament could be appointed to monitor its activities. On 4 December 1995 Smt. Basanti Nayak asked a question in this regard and wanted to know the reasons for the delay in the constitution of such a Committee. As the policy was at its initial stage the Government had maintained, at that time, that it was too early to set up such a Committee. However, on 5 September 1998 the Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (Rajya Sabha) was set up under the Chairmanship of Deputy Chairman, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla.

Many questions of the women Members expressed finer emotions of mercy, compassion and love reflecting the nobler aspects of life. For instance on 5 April 1953 Smt. Violet Alva asked a question as to whether the Government knew about the way in which monkeys exported by India are being used. She was particularly keen to know if such monkeys were used for medical research or conducting experiments in atomic energy establishments. Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale a nominated Member of the House through her questions drew attention to vivisection of monkeys without anaesthesia and preservation of wildlife. Such concerns reflected one of the predominant issues covering rights of animals which are now being taken up by many environmentalists throughout the world.

The above attempt captures the broad range of issues raised by women Members in Rajya Sabha. It is well known that, women Members through the mechanism of half-an-Hour discussions and Short Notice Questions raised many other issues and afforded the House and its Members opportunities to discuss them.

Materials unearthed here unfolds the magnitude of the role of women Members in using the Question Hour, among other things, for making the Government accountable to the legislature. The range of issues raised through questions, the level and depth of discussions generated by them and information provided by the Government to each such question amply demonstrate the colossal role played by women Members in making the highest forum of democracy vibrant and lively and respond to the grievances of our teeming millions.

Participation in the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address

Women must be regarded as agents and beneficiaries of change. Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development.

—Human Development Report, UNDP, 1995

Under article 87(1) of the Constitution, President addresses both the Houses of Parliament assembled together at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the House of the people and at the commencement of the Budget session each year. Since the President's Address is a policy-statement of the government, its scope is vast encompassing the policies and achievements of the Government during the previous year and the policies to be followed in the year ahead. It contains important programmes and projects to be undertaken by the government and envisages the legislative measures to be taken during the course of parliamentary sessions of that year. The discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address offers wide opportunities to members to raise manifold issues. Therefore, while participating in the discussion of the House, women members have discussed government policies threadbare and very frankly made critical remarks. On certain matters of national and international importance they have suggested useful measures and remedies to the government of the day.

In 1952, while seconding the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address Begum Aizaz Rasul raised an issue of which we are seized of even today. She spoke on the issue of equal status and equality of opportunity for women as given in the Constitution of India. She said:

We have today a Constitution framed on the basis of equality for every man and woman, in which the rights of every individual are guaranteed, and all barriers of caste, creed and community

have been done away with. The most important feature of this constitution, Sir, is that women have been given equal status with men and an equality of opportunity. The shackles that women have worn for centuries have been cast aside and women have now come into their own.

However, even after 50 years of independence and phenomenal development in social and economic spheres, the equality that Begum Aizaz Rasul spoke about in the first Motion of Thanks on the President's Address on 19 May 1952, is far from achieved. Even today, Rajya Sabha, the Upper Chamber of the Indian Parliament has only 25 women members. The insistent demand of innumerable women's organisations and political groups and major political parties for 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament has yet to be translated into reality.

In 1953, again, Begum Aizaz Rasul, in her speech, delivered during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address underlined the importance of nation building activities for the progress of the country. She suggested that the government should lay on the Table from time to time a statement showing progress registered through the implementation of the Five Year Plans.

While participating in the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in the same year, Smt. Violet Alva cautioned the government to be careful in inviting foreign capital to the country. She also stood for the linguistic States. She very frankly expressed the opinion that in the President's Address, defence issue did not get adequate importance. She stressed that India should not be caught unawares when crisis confronted her and therefore, emphasised on continuous defence preparedness. Possibly, she proved to be prophetic in the context of China's aggression on India in 1962.

In 1955, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand supporting the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address suggested, *inter-alia*, that India should take steps to ask at appropriate forums as to whether the real cause of world tension was not the way in which the territories were divided among the nations. In this context, she added that equitable distribution of land and wealth in the world would lead to peace. She said:

I would like to make a suggestion that India with the original path she has struck in the counsels of the world, should go a step further and ask the different nations, at an appropriate forum ...to read the lessons of history and find out whether or not the real cause of world tension today is not the way in which the

worlds' territories are divided among nations. If socialisation is considered to be the proper solution for the equitable distribution of lands and wealth in a country in order to satisfy people's land hunger and give them satisfaction and not lead to any heart burning among them, socialisation in the international field should and ought to mean the division of the world's lands on a fairer basis... what is required and meant by equal division of world's lands is the opportunity for using the world's commodities, opportunity for sharing the raw materials of the world without any restriction.

This particular suggestion in a way was a pointer towards new international economic order which India and other developing countries started demanding in the late 1960s. And in the beginning of the 21st century this acquires significance in the context of globalisation and the growing inter-dependence of the economies of the world.

Shrimati Rukmini Devi Arundale in 1956, while speaking on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address referred to the birth anniversary of Lord Buddha mentioned in the Address and described it as the indicator of the spiritual revival which the country needed the most. She also underlined the need for allocating money for educating people in spiritual matters and reviving spiritual values. This would, according to her, stem the tide of riots and mob frenzy. She went on to suggest:

I would like to see a programme in the Second Five Year Plan and for the next fifteen years laying special emphasis on character and also on building into the people spiritual values which alone will make India the foremost country in the world, which will make India a land that shall not merely speak of peace elsewhere, not only speak of peace in India, but even more a land that knows how to acquire peace within and how to get rid of the enemy within our own hearts, giving place to compassion, to truth, to high and noble thinking.

In August 1958, our first Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru authored a significant document entitled "The Basic Approach" which outlined the objectives before the nation and suggested the ways and means of achieving them. Lamenting the absence of focus on spiritual values and a philosophical approach to life, he underlined the need to inculcate spiritual values among people and wrote :

In our efforts to ensure material prosperity of the country, we have not paid any attention to the spiritual element in human

nature. Therefore, in order to give the individual and the nation a sense of purpose, something to live for and if necessary, to die for, we have to revive some philosophy of life and give, in the wider sense of the word, a spiritual background to our thinking.

In twenty-first century, there is serious thinking on spiritualism as the new religion of mankind. Eminent scientist Dr. Mashelkar has said that future will increasingly be shaped by digital, spiritual and herbal resources. Focus on spiritualism by lady member Smt. Rukmini Arundale in 1956 testified to her deep thinking and visionary approach.

Smt. Yashoda Reddy's participation in the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in 1957 brought forth many suggestions. She emphasised that for the success of the five year plans people should be made plan conscious. According to her, this could be done by divesting bureaucratic traditions from the government departments. It was only in the 1990s that an attempt was made for the first time in Kerala to involve people in planning process. Cutting through bureaucratic red-tape an attempt was made to decentralise the whole concept of planning and make people conscious of the plans and participate in making and implementing them. Probably, what Smt. Yashoda Reddy had in mind when she suggested that people should be made plan conscious is being experimented only now.

On the question of food problem, she was of the opinion that unless the country solved the population problem scientifically, systematically and permanently, it would be difficult to tackle the food problem. Therefore, she suggested that food and population problems should be interlinked. Referring to the unemployment problem in general and unemployment of women in particular, she opined that if the talent potential of women would be tapped, life in every home would be better and happier. Therefore, she suggested that government should constitute a commission to study the problem of unemployment among educated and uneducated women and provide some avenues of income for them. The appointment of the Committee by the Government of India in 1971 on the 'Status of Women' to examine, among other things, the questions relating to their rights and status in the country reinforced the validity of the suggestion of Smt. Yashoda Reddy. The appointment of a National Commission for Women by the Government in 1991 also vindicated the stand of the woman member.

Smt. Lakshmi Menon's observations made in 1957 during the delivery of her speech on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address dealt with India's stand against military pacts and development of atomic

weapons and weapons of mass destruction. She narrated in detail the efforts of India in the United Nations and other international forums for mobilizing public opinion in favour of world peace and disarmament. She observed:

We have always objected to military pacts and to the formation of groups because we believe that the world should more and more develop on cooperative lines when differences based on ideology or otherwise should yield to the common well-being and to common interests.

She also noted that a country's greatness and influence depended not on the possession of atomic weapons or in creating political groups, but in strengthening its own economy and its own stability. The issues of international magnitude such as, dismantling of many military blocks, the signing of many historic treaties for disarmament and the end of the Cold War, had been vehemently raised by her.

While participating in the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in 1959, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand drew the attention of the House to the scanty references made in the Address on the subject of education. She maintained that the problems of education were getting more and more complicated. She referred to the issues of medium of instruction and growing indiscipline among the youth in the educational institutions. In this regard she also stressed the need for the development of technical and multi-purpose institutes.

Smt. Jahanara Jaipal Singh in 1965 commented that the President's Address gave a rosy picture of the state of affairs in the country. According to her, it should have given a realistic assessment of the actual political and economic conditions obtaining in the land. Her suggestions during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address centered on moulding the country's youth for constructive activities. She said that the indiscipline among the youth would be checked if their energy was directed for nation-building activities such as development of agriculture, road-building, spreading literacy and hygiene and social and community services. She emphatically concluded that the future of this country, as of any other country, depended on how the young people are moulded.

Nominated woman member Shrimati Shakuntala Paranjpye's constant refrain on family planning and planned parenthood found its echo in the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in 1965. She emphasized that family planning should be treated as a part and parcel of the medical and health activity. She expressed her satisfaction over the fact that the President's Address accorded first priority to family

planning. She suggested that not more than three maternity benefits should be granted to anyone who is working in a government institution or an institution receiving government aid. She expressed satisfaction that her suggestion put forth the previous year that family planning be made part of the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) dispensaries, maternity institutions and child welfare centers had been implemented by the Government.

On the functioning of public sector undertakings, she noted that the Public Accounts Committee had reported about embezzlement of public money and exorbitant overhead expenses and therefore, suggested that the government should ensure the smooth running of public sector undertakings and their commercial viability.

Replying to the debates on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address on 2 March 1966, the then Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, who also was the member of Rajya Sabha, referred to the criticism and suggestions put forth by the members during the debate and said that these had been made in the interests of the progress and prosperity of the country. She also expressed the hope that the members would keep up this spirit and also stand united in the service of the country. She said that it was not possible to reply to all the points raised by members but the government would try to take necessary action in regard to those points to which a reply could not be given.

On the issue of increasing defence expenditure, she was of the opinion that it put obstacles in the path of our progress. But at the same time, she maintained that India had to spend huge amount on defence to safeguard the integrity of the country. She also added that despite the increasing defence expenditure enough money had been earmarked in the Budget for developmental activities.

On the demand to check the rise in prices, the Prime Minister replied that the government would try to check it, but she affirmed that the prices could be stabilised only by increasing the production of goods.

Dwelling on the questions relating to foreign policy, she maintained that India's policy perspectives and diplomatic orientation on external affairs had been appreciated by all. On the acceptance of foreign aid, the Prime Minister maintained that she would not compromise the honour of the country to get assistance from external sources.

While participating in the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in 1969, Shrimati Satyavati Dang's pointed reference to the task of undertaking road construction activities in the hills in

preference to the irrigation, reflected her concern for area specific strategy for development. She said:

...though it is all right for the whole of India to have irrigation as the first priority, in the hills it is not the same because, in the hills, even if you give first priority to irrigation, we cannot use the irrigation machinery, whatever it is without adequate road construction. In the hills first priority should be given to the construction of roads because, unless communication facilities are provided in the hills, it is not possible to develop the area, to put through any scheme of industrialization there, or any other thing.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna it has been decided now to provide connectivity in Himachal Pradesh to all villages having population of more than 250 persons with an all weather road by the year 2007.

In 1978, Shrimati Noorjehan Razack, while speaking on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address described the press and courts as two eyes of democracy and welcomed the restoration of powers of the courts and the freedom of the press in the wake of the lifting of emergency. During her participation she highlighted the need to utilize science and technology as part of an overall programme for updating traditional skills. She said:

Though the need of the hour is rapid rural development, let us not forget that India has forged to a front place in science and technology which should be purposefully used as part of an overall programme for updating traditional skills and improving production and distribution techniques.

In 1980, for the first time in the history of Rajya Sabha the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address was amended. The Amendment No. 104 which stood in the name, among others, of Dr. (Smt.) Sethiavani Muthu but moved by Shri Bhupesh Gupta was adopted on 30 January 1980. The amendment regretted that the Address did not take notice of the disturbing attempts to engineer defections on a large scale in the assemblies in the States ruled by the non-Congress-I governments and even to arbitrarily dissolve such assemblies in flagrant violation of all federal principles, nor did it give any assurance that the government would not in any manner encourage, directly or indirectly, such attempts at subverting the Constitution and flouting democratic norms and standards.

In 1991, the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address was moved by Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan, a lawyer by profession, on 17 July 1991. Shrimati Natarajan's speech referred to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. She described his tragic death as a great sacrifice for the cause of democracy and unity and integrity of the country.

On the question of women's rights, she expressed satisfaction that the President's Address made reference to the appointment of the Commissioner for Women's Rights. She also suggested that there should be a package of reforms for women covering education, employment and health. According to her, this could place women along with men as equal partners. She also demanded that every plan should have a women's component and every Ministry should have a women's cell. The Ninth Five Year Plan document which was the most gender sensitive document in the history of planning in India underlined that every effort for planning must have a sub-plan containing women's interest. On the question of housing she alleged that women were completely ignored in the government policy.

Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan also suggested that census rules needed to be amended as these did not count women's work — cooking and household activities — as productive. So these were not included in the calculation of the Gross National Product (GNP). She maintained that since the GNP did not take into account women's work enough funds were not allocated for their development.

Many amendments were moved to amend the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. Some of them were negatived and others were withdrawn. Shrimati Kamla Sinha also moved four amendments on 17 July 1991, which she later withdrew.

In the year 1992, Shrimati Pratibha Singh was the only woman member to have participated in the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. Supporting the Motion, she underlined the need to restore democratic processes in the States of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. On the question of consolidating grassroots democracy she was of the opinion that the *Panchayati Raj* system should be strengthened. She also stressed that we must seek long term solutions to terrorism which had bedevilled many parts of the country. Besides, she suggested that employment oriented schemes should be launched in the backward areas of the country. Keeping in view the problems relating to river water disputes, she stated that these should be solved and potable water be supplied to the tribals and Harijans in the remote areas. Referring to the setting up of the National Commission for Women, she hoped that it

would ensure justice to women in all spheres of life. It is noteworthy that women members while participating in the Motion of Thanks on President's Address have attempted to touch on women's issues in addition to the issues affecting the nation.

In 1994, Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, while speaking on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address took the opportunity to highlight the plight of women. She focused on the increasing incidence of female infanticide which was affecting the sex ratio of certain communities. She said:

I have one specific demand which I make to the Government and to the entire House, through you, that there should be an immediate ban on amniocentesis test except for the purpose of finding out whether the foetus that a woman is carrying has any congenital or genetic defect... There should be a national consensus and a national policy and a legislation to ban the amniocentesis test with immediate effect.

Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan's focused talk on this issue in the House in 1994 made way for a greater awareness in this matter and which culminated in the passing of the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act by Parliament.

In 1997, Smt. Kamla Sinha while speaking on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address focused on the economic issues and the need for reforms in the power and telecom sector and foreign policy matters. She spoke also on children working in hazardous industries and providing education and other welfare measures for them. In the same year, Smt. Margaret Alva and Smt. Malati Sharma also participated on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. Smt. Margaret Alva spoke at length on the matters covered in the Common Minimum Programme of the Government. She took exception to the Ordinances being issued by the Government in order to avoid discussion in the House and specifically on matters which if voted were likely to be defeated in the House. While speaking on foreign policy matters she brought an international report to the notice of the House wherein it was stated that India consistently provided soldiers to U.N. for peace keeping operations since 1960 and that UN owes India more than 58 millions dollars. In this context she also raised the point of denial of seat for India in the Security Council.

Smt. Malati Sharma spoke about the declining law and order situation especially in Uttar Pradesh which was under President's Rule at that time. She spoke critically about the schemes for education of minorities and focused on the need for vocational education which alone she felt

could ensure economic development. Smt. Leelavati Munshi also, way back in 1957 had expressed a similar concern during her speech on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address.

In 1998, Smt. Shabana Azmi made her maiden speech while speaking on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. She spoke with great sensitivity on the issue of shelter. She said:

Tonight, millions in my country are going home to sleep on the streets, on the pavements, in the railway stations or under a piece of plastic held by a stick called a '*jhuggi-jhonpri*'. Tomorrow, they will wake up to the lack of water, sanitation and electricity. Thousands of others will wake up to the insecurity and the threat of their *jhuggi-jhonpris* being demolished. Is this the 'tryst with destiny'?

Madam, as custodians of this nation, it is our responsibility intellectually, morally, politically and emotionally to respond to this basic need, basic human right to shelter. Can we provide shelter for all by the year 2020? My answer is an unequivocal 'yes'. But we must respond by changing our perspective and by providing a political will. We need to change our perspective by looking at housing as a process of social reorganization, as a process of social reorganization that can develop strong and meaningful relationships, cutting across communities and castes, gender and having an effect on families, communities and neighbourhood. We need to look at housing not only as a consumption expenditure but as something that is going to be a productive investment. We need to look at housing not only as an end to itself but as a propeller of the economy and an employment generator. We need to look at housing not as an end in itself but as a vehicle of removing poverty. Conversely we have to look at homelessness as a breeder of social turmoil, crime and disease. Those who live on the streets or in crowded unhygienic homes, cannot rise to the level of their human potential, either emotionally or intellectually or even culturally or even as a family. In fact, inadequate and insecure shelter can lead to political and social disability which greatly hampers the economic growth. Housing, in all its aspects, holds an enormous opportunity for increasing economic activity, accelerating construction creates employment, not only in the building industry itself, but in all the other related industries, whether it is that of building materials or infrastructure or transportation, marketing, durable goods and so on.

Her comprehensive and thorough approach on this issue of shelter and housing for the poor and underprivileged is an indication of her interest and commitment to social issues.

In 1999, Prof. (Smt.) Bharati Ray spoke on the issue of education, culture and women while participating in the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. She reminded the House of the obligation of providing for universal elementary education. To substantiate her point she quoted facts and figures regarding dropouts from schools. She said:

There has not been a single word here about the obligation of universalizing elementary education. No strategy has been mentioned. Or, no worry has been expressed as to how to deal with the staggering rate of dropouts. Sir, 36.32 per cent of children, between classes 1 to 5 are out of schools; 6.3 crores of children, mostly belonging to the SC/ST in the age group of 6 to 14, are out of schools. What are you going to do about these children? Are you driving them into the hands of anti-social elements?

The insistent demand of educationists like Prof.(Smt.) Bharati Ray, and several others has ultimately compelled policy makers to pass the Constitution (Ninety-third) Amendment Bill, 2002 seeking to provide free and compulsory education for children upto the age of 14 years. Speaking about higher education she spoke about the issue of brain drain, improving and adding new areas into the syllabi of medical science.

In 2000, Smt. Saroj Dubey, during her participation in the Motion of Thanks spoke about our grand legacy of a composite culture and the laying of the foundation of a secular state five decades ago, which followed the ancient tradition of *Sarvadharmā Sambhav*, the quintessential characteristic of the Indian sub-continent. She maintained however, that political values have gradually deteriorated and that today power hungry people were conspiring to disintegrate our nation in order to stall the progress of democracy. Thus the opportunity available to her to speak on the Motion of Thanks was utilized by the member to warn the nation of the forces of communalism and to contain such tendencies.

In 2003, Smt. Prabha Thakur, began her participation in the Motion of Thanks, by paying her tributes to Dr. Kalpana Chawla, the Indian born astronaut, who scaled great heights. Smt. Prabha Thakur, in her speech, apart from raising matters relating to her home state, spoke on issues relating to national significance, such as containing religious fundamentalism, fighting terrorism, empowerment of women, potable water to rural areas, telecom policy, etc.

Women members in spite of poor representation in the House have contributed immensely to the meaningful debates in the House and have been instrumental in bringing to light issues which are at the core of our development process. And in this regard, Motion of Thanks on President's Address has been effectively used by women members. A survey of the participation of women parliamentarians on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address vividly shows that they have utilized this opportunity to discuss domestic and foreign policies from all angles and suggested constructive steps. The gamut of issues discussed, questions raised, relevant suggestions made and above all amendments moved to amend the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address clearly prove the tremendous contribution of women parliamentarians.

Participation of Women Members in Budget Discussions

There isn't a single country in the world — not one — where men and women enjoy completely equal opportunities... that is why we must change attitudes and policies. The aim must be to give each and every human being greater freedom to make choices about their own lives...

—Gro Harlem Brundtland,
Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995

Akin to their participation in the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, women members' speeches made on the floor of the House while discussing the Budget (General) throw light on important issues and their sense of involvement in nation building activities. As the representatives of the States and Union territories, they no doubt raise specific questions relating to their respective States but a general survey of the Budget discussion and women members' participation in it, indicates the churning of ideas on national and international issues. Their role as the moulder of public opinion and *via* the media through which the input to the governmental decision is fed and feedback from people to the government is made, comes to full display on the occasion when discussion takes place on the Budget. It has been aptly observed by Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand in the House that:

Budget discussion in the House may be compared to something like spring cleaning, known in England, where everything is to be seen carefully, to see what has happened during the year ending, and how things come to be placed for the next year.

An analysis of the Budget speeches of women members will drive home the point that their concern for issues of national and international importance were second to none. The catalogue of suggestions made by them amply proves their zeal for national reconstruction.

The women members of Rajya Sabha during their participation in the proceedings of the House have not only made valuable suggestions regarding various measures to be taken by the Government on many important socio-economic matters, but also have stressed the need for making the voice of members of the Council of States on Budget matters more effective. For example way back in 1953, while taking part in the discussion on the Finance and Central Excises and Salt (Amendment) Bill, 1953, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand had observed that:

There was no use of the Council Members discussing the Budget proposals in the House as they were done today because they were not in a position to make any changes which could be taken into consideration. ...If their suggestions are put into the Finance Bill finally, then the Members of the Council would feel that their suggestions are at least of some value in the framing of Government's policy. If necessary, changes will have to be made in the Constitution so that the voice of the Members of the Council of States even in Budget matter would be effective.

The constitution of the Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committees has enabled the Members of Rajya Sabha to play an important role on equal footing with the members of Lok Sabha while considering the Demands for Grants of the Ministries/Departments of the Government of India.

Participation in the Budget (General) Discussions

While participating in the discussions on the Budget (General) presented year after year, in the last five decades, women members of Rajya Sabha have spoken on wide-ranging issues. They have analysed the Budget proposals threadbare and presented their views with a deep insight on the possible future implications. In fact, during the early years of our independence, women members had pointed out the implications of curtailing defence expenditure on our security. It was highlighted by Begum Aizaz Rasul and Smt. Violet Alva in their speeches delivered during their participation in the Budget discussions. Smt. Alva went on to suggest that there should be co-ordination between defence and economic and asserted that the expenditure on defence must be explained to the people.

Pointing out that there was less public debate on matters relating to defence, Smt. Violet Alva, while participating in the discussion on the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 1956, suggested that in a democracy people

should know more and more of the working of the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces. She stated that defence ideals must be kept before our people to meet any crisis situation. She also opined that India must build up her Engineering Corps for defence purposes. She said:

...as far as our Engineering Corps goes, let us build up something to be proud of. We shall need it not only on our borders — God forbid — but we will need it for our civilian purposes. Today, all the leaders talk about more engineers and more engineers. Every country talks about more engineers and more engineers. ...recently in an editorial on the subject ...they said that diplomacy has changed and Sir Anthony Eden will have to meet the four million engineers that the Soviet Union will produce in four years. That was the editorial comment of a British paper. How soon we are moving away from the active warfare diplomacy to a diplomacy of build and live and defend! Here, if that argument is to be taken, India must build up her Engineer Corps.

Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand's thought provoking suggestions in her speeches delivered on several occasions during discussions on Budget (General) and Appropriation and Finance Bills, have highlighted important issues. Her opinion that big business families should be properly taxed to collect income tax, import of non-essential items should be stopped to earn foreign exchange, income tax offenders should be ostracized and they should not be appointed to any corporation or honorary offices, pension holders should also be given dearness allowance, moral standards of the young people should be raised through education, a tax should be levied for promotion of compulsory primary education, consumer stores should be set up to check price rise, introduction of mid-day meals in schools, etc. have proved beyond doubt her social concerns and effective participation on the floor of the House.

As a champion of women's causes, she had very fervently pleaded for measures for their amelioration. While participating in the discussion on the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 1956, she reiterated, "when you educate a woman you educate a nation, when you educate a man you educate an individual". In this context, she demanded the formation of a hundred per cent women's body to advise the Education Minister on the question of women's education. She also maintained that representation of women in medical profession was less and therefore, argued that the abolition of Dufferin Fund which was meant for financing women candidates who chose medical profession had created further problems for them.

While participating in the Budget discussion in 1956, she referred to a demand made by a member that MPs should get air travel facilities on the same footing as railway passes were given, and said that this was not in consonance of the demand of the legislators that more money should be made available for the welfare of the poor. She said:

I would like to refer to some remarks yesterday from one of the members with regard to an item under Rajya Sabha- the facilities about air travel and telephones. I would particularly refer to this air travel. I feel when we are here making demands to get as much money as possible for the poor ...it does not, in my humble opinion, look proper that we should demand further amenities for ourselves which we can have almost for the asking, such as air travel all over India. I would not mind our asking for air travel passes only for attending meetings of Parliament, or in connection with Government work. But to say that just on the same footing as we are given railway passes, we should be given air tickets also is not to show in my humble opinion, the same consideration to saving some money for public good.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's concerns for the issues relating to health care were reflected in her speech delivered during the discussion on the Budget (General), 1957-58. She suggested that health cess should be levied to collect money to build up hospitals and render health services to the people. While participating in the discussion on the Finance (No. 2) Bill, she opined that a small cess should be levied on every third child born in a family if two children were alive, to control population explosion and promote planned family. She further stated that the problems relating to food and drug adulteration, bribery and corruption were rampant in spite of laws, and as a result integrity and efficiency were biggest casualties. She exhorted that the public and the Government must make common cause in order to stem the tide of inefficiency and corruption.

Smt. Lilavati Munshi's speech on the Appropriation (No. 4) Bill, 1957 touched on the issue of functioning of public enterprises and referred to several reports of the Estimates Committee of Parliament on these enterprises, which had highlighted the frittering away of national resources and consequent loss to the nation. In this context, she underlined the need to run national undertakings on efficient business principles. She also stressed that Parliament and the public should know scheme by scheme or unit by unit or item by item the expenditure proposed in the plan, the expenditure actually incurred, variations if any, and the reasons for the variations and the evaluation of the work done. She further stated

that the expansion of public sector undertakings required a more realistic approach rather than a doctrinaire predilection in favour of nationalization of all such industries.

Participating in discussion on the Finance Bill, 1959, a nominated woman member Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale opined that promotion of education for knowledge, understanding and cultivating an attitude to life are important for development of the individual. She cautioned that scientific education without morality, spirituality and training of the mind of the individual would prove dangerous. She also suggested that there should be humanitarian tax and the money thus collected can be utilized to get rid of beggar problem.

Smt. Jahanara Jaipal Singh while participating on the Budget debate in 1960 dwelt on the issue of qualitative education and educated unemployed. She said:

We seem to be obsessed with the qualitative aspect of education regardless of whether the astronomical amounts we spend, produce the results we desire and need today. Can we say that we are producing an educated number to fit into our Plan? Or are we turning out of our schools and colleges a large battalion of young men and women unfit for the India of tomorrow? Educated unemployment stares us in the face.

In the context of education she suggested that in the industrial belts of India education with a technical bias should be stressed so that the students of that area can take full advantage of employment opportunities nearer home. And this she felt would also minimize the chances of outsiders ousting the local people in the field of employment and thereby check potential causes of social tension. This was, no doubt, a far-sighted suggestion from the member.

During the discussion on the Finance Bill, 1960, Smt. Jahanara Jaipal Singh referred to the necessity of giving tax holiday in case of Andamans to attract industrial concerns from the mainland. She said:

We are told Government is deeply concerned about the development of backward areas. Take the case of the Andamans. Here there are great prospects for developing new industries. ...I feel Government should consider conceding a tax holiday in order to attract more concerns from the mainland.

Today this concept of tax holiday is regularly adopted to boost economy of an area considered backward.

Smt. Yashoda Reddy's speech on the Budget (General), 1960-61, subsumed the most important problem of population explosion. She suggested that to control it, some drastic methods had to be adopted. She also underscored the need to fulfil the basic needs of the people — food, clothing and housing.

In the aftermath of Indo-China war of 1962, the concerns for defence and security of the nation were expressed by the members on the floor of the House. Such concern was reflected in Smt. Nandini Satpathy's speech on the Budget (General), 1963-64, when she said that India had to strengthen not only her defence but also economy by her own efforts. While participating in the discussion on the Mid-Term Appraisal of the Third Five Year Plan, she said that if the States could do something to plan for themselves, that would facilitate them to take a detailed view of the situation.

Dr. (Smt.) Phulrenu Guha's suggestions made during the discussion on the Budget (General) 1966-67 underlined the need to take steps to formulate a national food policy. According to her, democracy could not function properly with millions of half starved people. Therefore, she suggested to work on the food policy on a war footing.

Participating in the discussion on the Appropriation (No.2) Bill, 1971, Smt. Purabi Mukhopadhyay suggested that the country should have common laws for all the religious communities.

The speeches of Smt. Sumitra G. Kulkarni and Smt. Sushila Shankar Adivarekar on the Budget (General) 1973-74 contained their anxieties on rising prices and the flourishing black money, respectively. Smt. Adivarekar went on to urge the then Finance Minister not to reduce but to make provision of funds for community, family and youth welfare. She said:

It will be entirely wrong to take the human side of development for granted. Sociological tensions in our country are growing and many old ideas are breaking fast. The economic development has to be linked with human resource development.

While participating in the discussion on the Appropriation Bill, 1979, Smt. Kanak Mukherjee dealt with the increase in non-developmental expenditure such as police, general administration, defence, etc. Therefore, she suggested that the non-developmental expenditure would have to be curbed.

Smt. Leela Damodara Menon said that the lack of progress in rural development was not due to dearth of funds but because of the poor

infrastructure. On the functioning of the nationalized industries, she stated that unless these showed good results it would be difficult to convince people about the good effects of nationalization. These observations were made by her during her participation in the discussion on the Budget (General) 1979-80.

Participating in the discussion on the Budget (General) 1983-84, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla extensively dealt with many issues which have a bearing on our national development. Supporting the Budget, she stood by the decision of the government to go for higher defence expenditure in view of the deteriorating security situation in and around the country, and particularly in the context of concentration of arms race in the Indian Ocean. She also suggested that the government should invest the valuable foreign exchange in the area of off-shore oil exploration. She appreciated the Government's decision for making allocation of large amount of money on family welfare and agriculture. She stressed that more resources should be allocated to scientific research which would enable to cross the plateau of 133 million tonnes of food production. She suggested to set up a new Agricultural Commission in the pattern of 1970s to formulate new policies for agricultural sector. She emphasized that agricultural sector should not be neglected at the cost of any other sectors.

Miss Jayalalitha's speech delivered during the discussion on the Appropriation (Vote on Account) Bill, 1986, suggested linking of the Ganga and Kaveri rivers. According to her, this project would not only control floods, provide electricity and sufficient water for irrigation but also foster a new sense of national unity.

Participating in the discussion on the Budget (General) 1991-92, Smt. Mira Das opposed the Budget stating that cut in subsidies would hit the farmers the most. She wanted an assurance from the Finance Minister to the effect that money to be borrowed from the international financial institutions should be utilized properly.

Smt. Bijoya Chakravarty commended the seemingly pragmatic approach of the Minister of Finance to the Budget (General) 1991. She also suggested that sufficient funds should be allotted for the welfare of women. She mentioned about the worst exploitation of women in the unorganized sector and urged the Government to pay attention to their problems.

Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan while critically analyzing the Budget (General) 1997-98, said that it was pro-rich and did not appear to touch on major infrastructure sector, namely, public investment in power generations,

highways, railways and ports. She felt that leaving greater initiative to the private sector might not be enough. Smt. Renuka Chowdhury while speaking on the same Budget, in her speech highlighted the issue of oil pool deficit and consequent effect on the economy in terms of inflation, price hike, etc.

Ms. Mabel Rebello while speaking on the Budget (General), 2003-04 touched upon the issue of universalisation of elementary education provided for under the Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 and asked:

If you see the Budget proposals, the Education Minister has announced *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. Can it be realized? Can it be actualized? It cannot be actualized, because that Budget proposal, that *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, require something like Rs. 8,000 crore annually. This is what the HRD Minister demanded and the Planning Commission has said that Rs. 7,960 crores should be given annually to achieve this objective, the laudable objective, of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, Universalisation of Education. But, what have they given to them? They have given only Rs. 4,900 crores for primary education. How will you achieve these objectives? There will be backlogs, and that will go on.

Thus, women members through very pointed questions and queries on the Budgetary allocations to various sectors have attempted to highlight crucial developmental issues. A review of the discussions shows that women members have very enthusiastically participated in it and suggested to the Government many refreshingly new ideas. Their concerns for socio-economic development of the country and the various problems faced by the nation, particularly women have been very significantly dealt with. This indeed is a major attribute of their role as worthy representatives of the States and the Union territories comprising our federal structure.

Participation in the Budget (Railways) Discussions

The sense of involvement of the women members in the discussions on the Budget (Railways) has shown new ideas on many matters. They have utilized this opportunity not only to discuss problems relating to railways but also highlight women's issues and other problems of national and international importance. Since the beginning of the discussion on the Railway Budget in Rajya Sabha, the women members have demanded emphatically better services from the Railways. During the discussion on the Budget (Railways) 1955-56, Smt. Lilavati Munshi and Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand highlighted the issues of corruption and inefficiency in the Railways. Both of them also demanded more association of women in catering services.

Earlier in 1954, while participating in the discussion on the Budget (Railways) 1954-55, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand contended that in the Amenities Committees of the Railways, women should have been represented in greater number. In 1955, she complained that in the Catering Committee, no Member of Parliament from either House was represented. She also added that its report was never presented to them nor brought to their notice. Therefore, she commented, "When everything is done by the Government with the authority of Parliament, it is naturally and absolutely necessary that these new policies which Government wants to take up should be brought to the notice of Parliament". This reflected her interest in the matters concerning Railways.

While participating in the discussion on the Budget (Railways), 1956-57, Smt. Parvathi Krishnan in 1956 said that the improvement of the Railways and transport system could be judged in the context of the raising of the economic conditions and the standards of living of the people. In this context, she underlined the need to accord priority to industrialization and development of mineral resources. According to her, if these things were developed properly, Railways could be sustained in a better way. She also pleaded for giving incentives to the railway workers. On the question of accidents, she wanted that Members of Parliament and public should be made aware of the Shah Nawaz Report on Accidents.

Participating in the discussion on the Indian Railways (Amendment) Bill 1959 which sought to increase the penalties on ticketless travelling, Smt. Yashoda Reddy said:

First, there must be more people to check the ticketless travelling as the number of people travelling nowadays has increased. ...Provide more than one man for the booking office, so that the people waiting at the booking offices can get their tickets.

The next thing I want to say is about educating the public. You must educate your public either through radio or through films or through posters. You let the ordinary man know that by encouraging one ticketless traveller, indirectly he is putting strain on his income. Let him know that if the national income is lessened, the progress of the country itself is hit, and that is the most important thing.

In 1965, Miss Mary Naidu voiced concern at the over crowding and congestion in the trains and suggested that Minister must pay attention to this matter. She also suggested that railway administration must be improved to serve the passengers in a proper way.

On the question of safeguarding railway property, she said that public must be educated to take care of railway property. In this connection, she suggested that the Ministry of Railways should coordinate its efforts with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to devise programmes to educate the public.

Smt. Margaret Alva supporting the Budget (Railways) 1975-76 commented that the greatest need was the improvement of efficiency. She added:

The Railways are interwoven into the life of the economy. They are both the reflection and creation of economy. A revenue based budget is no answer to the ills of the Railways. Operational efficiency, rationalization, technical improvement, optimum use of rolling stock, besides what so many speakers have emphasized, control on pilferage and wanton destruction of railway property are the fields, I think, that have got to be taken special care of if anything is to be done at all.

She demanded that the facility of saloons provided to officers including Ministers, with a few exceptions like the Prime Minister, who would need them in an emergency, should be withdrawn. Stating further she said, "Saloons are, I would say, a remnant of the British days when officers were considered different from the people. I feel our officers must travel like the general public, share their problems and know what it is to travel as an ordinary citizen."

Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla's speech on the Budget (Railways) 1981-82 contained significant observations on important aspects of the Railways. She complimented the Railways for the improvements in their services. Referring to the plans of the Railways to introduce container system and the provision for door to door service she observed that this would help the people.

Participating in the discussion on the Appropriation (Railways) (No. 3 and No. 4) Bill, 1985, Smt. Kanak Mukherjee observed that Railway is the key factor in ensuring political unity and integrity, economic development and removal of regional imbalances. She believed that the expansion of Railways throughout the length and breadth of the country, in the tribal and far-flung areas of the north-eastern region, including Tripura and Assam, in the islands of South Bengal, in the torrid regions of Central India could strengthen national unity and integrity.

Smt. Kamla Sinha initiated the discussion on the Budget (Railways) 1991-92 and highlighted the problems faced by the passengers and the

Railways. She opposed the Budget as it, according to her, was against the interests of the common man who was already under heavy burden of rising prices.

Smt. Suryakanta Patil while participating in the discussion on the Budget (Railways) 1991-92 expressed the concern that for the backward and neglected region of Marathwada, expenditure for the ongoing railway developmental projects had been reduced. Therefore, she wanted the reconsideration of the decision in that regard.

Participating in the discussion on the Budget (Railways) 1992-93 both Smt. Kamla Sinha and Smt. Sarla Maheshwari criticized the Government for privatising the catering services in the Railways which earned profit in the previous years. Smt. Kamla Sinha was also critical of the Government's decision to privatize the uneconomic railway lines of the North-Eastern Zone and the North-Eastern Frontier Zone. She maintained that the areas in the North-East region were the most neglected and undeveloped, but nevertheless sensitive part of the country. Therefore, she warned the Government not to go ahead with the programme.

Both Smt. Kamla Sinha and Smt. Sarla Maheshwari were critical of the freight policy of the Railways. Smt. Kamla Sinha maintained that the freight policy was oriented to discourage small traffic, which would lead to the use of road transport by the small businessmen in a large scale, which would pave the way for inflation. She expressed the apprehensions that if freight movement went into the hands of big capitalists they might create an artificial scarcity and make profits out of it. Besides, she was of the opinion that increased road transportation would cause environmental hazards.

Referring to the decision of the Railways to allow private companies to purchase their own wagons and containers, Smt. Sarla Maheshwari also expressed apprehension that it would create a class of such businessmen who would purchase wagons and containers from the Railways and sell them to other persons leaving the godowns of the Railways emptied.

In contrast to the critical postures adopted by Smt. Kamla Sinha and Smt. Sarla Maheshwari towards the Budget (Railways) 1992-93, Smt. Ratan Kumari supported the Budget. She described the decision of the government to privatize catering services as a 'good decision'. In this connection, she maintained that catering services should not be monopolized and suggested that it should be run by unemployed youth and their cooperatives.

Prof. (Smt.) Bharati Ray while participating in the Railways Budget (1997-98) highlighted the historical reasons and said:

When Lord Dalhousie penned his famous railway minute of 20th April 1853, it was not the welfare of the people of this great country that was his concern. Lancashire Textile interests and the compulsions of imperial defence and speedy military movement, that weighed with him when he planned and began the execution of the Indian Railway system. If the subsequent development of Railways served as a vehicle for modernization and progress, that was only a subsidiary benefit from a primarily colonial policy.

After independence, our objectives have changed. We want our railway policy as a part of the entire development policy of the nation. It should be people-oriented, development-conducive, and it must be in tune with our social concern, economic needs and ecological considerations.

She asked whether the policies were people-oriented and whether the priorities of the Government were correct. In this context, among various issues she raised the point of Metro Rail in cities. She said:

The demographic pressure has necessitated a planned approach — this is a very important point — towards meeting the urban traffic requirement. Considering the high rise in the passenger traffic in the metropolitan cities we can safely say that a speedy and safe suburban service will be the requirement of tomorrow. It is from now on that the planning must commence.

Smt. Bimba Raikar while speaking on the Budget (Railways) 2003-04 raised a very essential public facility namely, a medical shop. She said:

See, at any station, you won't get a single tablet. You know, in the plane also, there is a small shop. We have travelled so many times to America. There is a small shop in the plane, where they sell whisky, brandy, snacks, and all these things. But why can't we have a small medical shop in a train so that if a man wants to have some medicine, he should be in a position to buy some medicine? There should be some paramedical nurse also in the train, because we are travelling for hours together, for days together. Anything may happen at any time.

Raising another minor but vital issue affecting the public, she said:

I would like to refer to a small thing. You may feel that it is very small, but I think, it is a necessity. See, when a diabetic patient is travelling for three days, he never gets tea or coffee without sugar, either in the pantry or at the station. At the station also, if you go for milk, ...the milk available there is mixed with sugar... So milk without sugar, should be made available at the railway stations.

Thus, women members, while participating in the discussions on the Budget (Railways) of different years have touched wide array of issues and put forth constructive suggestions with great sensitivity which, in fact, testify to their concerns as effective legislators.

Parliamentary Initiatives of Women Members

Today woman power is a hidden treasure that we are discovering and utilizing for the benefit of the nation... The empowerment of women...might well be a decisive factor that will purify and save the democratic politics in India from the deterioration of standards and values it is experiencing today. The awakening of the women...of India is something that gives us hope.

—Shri K. R. Narayanan

Since the inception of Rajya Sabha in 1952, women members, whether they were elected to the House or nominated by the President of India, have performed remarkably their role as legislators. Their active and meaningful participation in proceedings of the House and its Committees highlight their immense contributions to the enrichment of parliamentary work. Distinguished and renowned personalities representing different States and Union territories of our country and hailing from diverse walks of life adorned Rajya Sabha and added lustre to its debates and discussions. Each woman member of Rajya Sabha with her distinctive outlook and identity has enriched the parliamentary business. Names such as Smt. Violet Alva, Smt. Lilavati Munshi, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand, Smt. Nandini Satpathy, Smt. Indira Gandhi, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, Smt. Nargis Dutt, Prof. (Smt.) Asima Chatterjee, Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt, Smt. Amrita Pritam, Smt. Margaret Alva, Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Smt. Ambika Soni, Smt. Shabana Azmi, and others, take one to the long line of outstanding and admirable women members of Rajya Sabha, whose involvement in the business of the House is beyond the realm of their routine allegiance to parliamentary responsibilities and, therefore, more substantive and fundamental.

The Council of States has witnessed the effective involvement of women members of Rajya Sabha in the debates and discussions on many Bills, Motions, Resolutions, etc. To highlight their contributions to the

proceedings of the House and the parliamentary initiatives taken by them, a few important instances are narrated below.

Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand, a leading woman member of Rajya Sabha in its initial years, took active part in the proceeding of Rajya Sabha and displayed tremendous parliamentary initiative by introducing several Bills concerning women and underprivileged sections of the society. She introduced the Indian Suppression of Immoral Traffic and Brothels Bill, 1953 and also moved the motion that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee. The Bill could not be taken up for discussion on the Government raising a point of order that the President's recommendations on certain provisions of the Bill had not been obtained.

On 4 September 1953, she introduced the Women's and Children's Institution Licensing Bill, 1953 and moved the motion on 3 September 1954 that the Bill be referred to the Select Committee. The same day the motion was withdrawn by her on Government's objection that the matter pertains to the sphere of the State Government. Even though the Bill was withdrawn from Rajya Sabha, the same was discussed after its introduction by a woman member in Lok Sabha. With its adoption in Lok Sabha, the Bill as passed by the Lower House was discussed in Rajya Sabha on a motion which was incidentally moved by Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand on 14 December 1956. It was adopted the same day.

Though the initiative for introducing the Bill could not be credited to her name she was instrumental in first initiating it in Rajya Sabha and creating climate of opinion which subsequently helped smooth passage of the Bill and its enactment. This vividly highlighted her role as an eminent parliamentarian.

Out of fourteen private members' Bills which have so far been enacted during fifty years of our Parliament, one was initiated by Dr. (Smt.) Parmanand. She discovered that provisions for judicial separation of a couple in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 were not at par with the provisions in the Special Marriage Act. Therefore, she moved an amendment to the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 which was adopted by Parliament and eventually entered the statute book.

Outlining the service rendered by Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand in introducing that important legislation, the then Minister for Legal Affairs, Shri H.V. Pataskar said, "If she had not done it there would have been many difficulties in the way of Government doing it, because there is a sense of complacent feeling having once passed an Act. It would take very long to move the Government machinery to effect the amendment".

Dr. (Smt.) Parmanand had also introduced the Special Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 1956. She withdrew the same on 31 May 1957 on the ground that more amendments than what was envisaged in her Bill were required.

Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand used to introduce many Resolutions and legislations on important subjects. Practically, almost all the time the Minister concerned used to request her to withdraw them on the ground that the government would come forward with a comprehensive proposal. On one Friday when this was repeated, she commented that Friday instead of being called private members' day may be called government assurance day for comprehensive legislation. Her statement was a reflection of her ardour and initiative for parliamentary work which, she realised, had important bearing on people and society. The list of Bills introduced by Dr. (Smt.) Parmanand clearly establishes her credibility as an affective legislator.

The participation of Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale, a nominated member, in the legislative business of Rajya Sabha has also been remarkable. She raised several crucial issues and eventually introduced the Prevention of Cruelty Against Animals Bill, 1953, on the issue of cruelty against animals. She wanted protection of the lives of animals and in a way upheld the rights of these voiceless creatures. While introducing the Bill, she delivered a moving speech which stirred Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. He requested her to withdraw the Bill on the assurance that the government would introduce a legislation on the subject. The enactment of a government legislation on the issue of prevention of cruelty against animals largely owes to her initiative. The introduction of Bill on Prevention of Cruelty to Animals by the Government and its subsequent adoption and enactment demonstrates the effectiveness of the private members' initiative in creating conditions for future comprehensive legislation.

Again on 28 April 1953, Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale, while participating in the discussion on the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 1952, defined immorality in films not only in terms of depiction of sexually suggestive and obscene acts but also in terms of depiction of violence and cruelty. "Immorality" she said, "is not only that which is sensual or that which stimulates sensuality but that which is cruel and ugly, that which detracts from character". Such redefinition of immorality in the context of film censorship is of immense value. She being an artist emphasized on beauty and aesthetics of our cultural tradition which she said forms the basis of unity of our diverse people.

Smt. Shakuntala Paranjpye, another nominated woman member, during 1960s enriched the proceedings of the House by her effective participation. She remained in the forefront educating and sensitizing people to control population growth. She raised this issue on the floor of the House through many questions and discussions and introduced a Bill on 27 November 1964 under the title the Sterilisation of the Unfit Bill, 1964. The motion to take the Bill into consideration was moved by her after a gap of more than four years, that is, on 13 December 1968. The Bill was then referred to a Select Committee of Rajya Sabha on 28 November 1969. Eventually, the discussion on the Bill took place on 20 March 1970 and on that very day the House negatived it. At the end of the discussion, the then Vice-Chairman, Shri Akbar Ali Khan, paid glowing tributes to her for her services to the country and said, "...let me tell you on behalf of the House that...you have brought a very important matter to the notice of the Governemnt and Parliament...We appreciate your social service not only in this House but in the country". This step of Smt. Paranjpye received wide publicity in media and a nationwide debate took place on the issue.

A champion of women's causes, Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt was a nominated member of Rajya Sabha. She raised many issues relating to women, such as harassment caused to them due to demand for dowry and their ill-treatment in society and family. She even suggested that projection of women in media in the rigid stereotypes also constituted indecent representation of women. While participating in the discussion on the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Bill, 1986 she redefined meaning of indecency vis-a-vis women and said, "It is indecent to reduce women to just an attractive body or an attractive face alone. It is also demeaning and I think indecent to show women only as a housewife, mother, secretary, air hostess, etc. It is against the dignity and against the concept of equality between women and men to constantly show her as servant to men or subordinate to men. Such portrayal is equally insidious and dangerous also. In reality our women are in every profession. They are working as farmers, workers, engineers, doctors, pilots, politicians, etc. So this should be reflected in all the forums of our media."

Her ardour and initiative for the protection of women's interests was amply demonstrated during the discussion in Rajya Sabha on the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Bill, 1987. Describing sati as "... basically a property motivated evil" she categorically stated that "The motive is to remove women out of the line of succession". Explaining further, she forcefully stated that no poor family would ever push its

woman to the funeral pyre of her dead husband. She proposed to move an amendment to shift the burden of proof to those who are charged with the crime. The then Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Margaret Alva in her reply to the discussion acknowledged that Smt. Ela Bhatt's proposal had been taken care of. By that measure a nominated member's concerns for women's interests were reflected by the Government action.

Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt's introduction of the Home Based Workers' (Protection) Bill, 1988 is another case in point which establishes the fact that women, as nominated members also, have demonstrated concern for the downtrodden and marginalized sections of the society.

The women members have displayed their legislative acumen vigorously while participating in discussion on Bills. One such example is their participation on the historic States Reorganisation Bill, 1956. Smt. Yashoda Reddy while participating in the discussion described the Bill as the most important legislation and added that it would go down in the history of Parliament of India as one of the most important legislative measures ever undertaken by it. Stating that under the British rule, India was divided into different States and Provinces not because of any rational or scientific basis, but because of administrative convenience and military strategy, she maintained that the reorganization of the States on the basis of language was a better principle. She also asserted that as long as unity of India and her economic development was not hampered, linguistic reorganization of States would be considered a good strategy.

Smt. Lilavati Munshi also participating in the discussion on the States Reorganisation Bill, 1956, expressed happiness over the fact that the government had found solutions to the difficult problems to the satisfaction of the parties concerned.

Smt. K. Bharathi described the propositions put forward in the Bill as sound and good. She moved an amendment to the States Reorganisation Bill, 1956 which envisaged to create four Zonal Councils for the States located in the eastern, western, northern and southern parts of the country. But later she withdrew it. The creation of four Zonal Councils in subsequent years has proved that she had great foresight in this matter.

Recently, an important Bill, namely, Marriage Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2003 was brought forward by Smt. Bimba Raikar. On 1 August 2003, praising her efforts in the House, the Deputy Chairman Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla commented :

...I feel, extremely good Resolutions are being brought forward by the Members of Parliament, very good Private Members' Bills

are being brought forward by the Members of Parliament. One Private Member Bill which was brought forward by Smt. Bimba Raikar, was eventually accepted by the Government and then it was brought forward as a Bill and we passed it this week, it was the Marriage Laws (Amendment) Bill.

Participation of women members on some important Bills reveals their genuine interest for legislative measures meant for social change. The debates and discussions on the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Bill, 1952, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Bill, 1953, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Bill, 1956, etc., witnessed their keen participation in the proceedings of the House. This was exemplified by their support to these Bills, contribution in their passage and adoption. These Bills have codified the Hindu Law and accorded legal rights to women on a par with men in matters of property, adoption, marriage and divorce. In other words, all these legislations opened a progressive chapter for the women of India.

Other Bills which later were adopted and enacted and which had a direct bearing on women related issues also evoked a keen sense of participation in the women members of Rajya Sabha. For instance, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 1980 which was adopted in 1983 provided protection to the victim of rape from the glare of publicity during investigation and trial. It also changed the definition of rape to remove the element of consent and shifted the onus of proof on the accused. Women members of Rajya Sabha contributed significantly in supporting and adopting the aforesaid Bill. Similarly, the participation in the discussion on the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Bill, 1986, the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Bill, 1987, the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Bill, 1986, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Bill, 1986 etc. also reflected the concerns of women parliamentarians on the floor of the House to ameliorate the conditions of women by legislation.

Some women members introduced in the House Bills which deal with issues relating to women. For example, Smt. Veena Verma's the Married Women (Protection of Rights) Bill, 1988, Smt. Bijoya Chakravarty's Banning of Pre-birth Sex Determination Tests Bill, 1990, Smt. Kamla Sinha's the Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women Employment at their Work Places Bill, 1990, Smt. Sarla Maheshwari's the Domestic Violence (Prevention) Bill, 2001, Smt. Kum Kum Rai's the Property Rights of Women and Girls Bill, 2002, the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Harassment of Women and Girls at Work Place Bill, 2002, Smt. Bimba Raikar's the Women and Girls (Prevention of Stripping, Teasing, Molestation, Branding as Witches and Offering as Devdasi) Bill, 2003, envisaged to safeguard the interests of women.

These instances describe in a nut-shell the participation of women members of Rajya Sabha in expressing their viewpoints and placing their opinions and suggestions before Parliament and the people. These, indeed, speak volumes for their contribution to the debates and discussions of the House on important legislations.

There are umpteen number of instances of women members of Rajya Sabha introducing Bills that contained not only important aspects relating to women and children but also significant issues of national importance.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 1980 by Smt. Purabi Mukhopadhyay, the Delhi Rent Control (Amendment) Bill, 1983 by Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 1989 by Smt. Bijoya Chakravarty, the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 1989, the Indian Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 1990, the Youth Welfare Bill, 1990 and Employment Guarantee Bill, 1990 are some of the illustrations.

The above mentioned Bills show the dynamic role of women parliamentarians as legislators. Their involvement and concern on myriad issues have been reflected in these Bills. This *per se* mobilizes public opinion regarding these issues and makes the people in general and the Government in particular, act on them at the earliest. Thus, the parliamentary initiative of the women members have led to the enactment of legislations on many vital issues.

Constitution Amendment Bills: Women members of Rajya Sabha have also exhibited their deep sense of involvement in suggesting amendments to the Constitution Amendment Bills which have been discussed from time to time. Their concern for incorporating necessary changes in the Constitution which have taken place in the wake of emerging socio-economic conditions and political realities have been reflected in their participation during the discussion on the Constitution Amendment Bills on the floor of the House. For instance, Smt. Leela Demodara Menon while participating in the discussion on the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1976 said that the far reaching social changes were needed to be incorporated in the Constitution. She also said that a growing nation needed to have a wider constitutional structure to bring about social changes and to fulfil the people's aspirations. According to her, any rigid Constitution is most vulnerable to extra-constitutional behaviour. Similarly, Smt. Ambika Soni's speech on the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1976 touched on the same point. She said, "a vintage Constitution may have a hallowed place in the archives, but it has no constructive role in the lives of the people."

Many other Constitution (Amendment) Bills sponsored by the Government have also seen the participation of the women members of the Council of States very effectively. They have frankly expressed their views on the relevance of these Bills and analysed different clauses with critical perspective. Their meaningful suggestions in many cases have also proved their capabilities as legislators. For example, the suggestion made by Smt. Leela Demodara Menon during the discussion on the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1976, that workers should be trained to play their role effectively across the table, highlights the most talked about issue of worker's participation in management. A bold suggestion to amend the Preamble to the Constitution had come from Dr. (Smt.) Sathiavani Muthu. While participating in the discussion on the Constitution (Forty-fifth Amendment) Bill, 1978, she said that introduction of the word 'Federal' in the Preamble would strengthen our federal identity.

A content analysis of their participation in these debates has clearly shown that women members have very vociferously supported the Constitution Amendment Bills which envisaged progressive socio-economic and political restructuring of our country. Besides, any Constitution Amendment Bill which incorporated the issues relating to the welfare of women and weaker sections of society has also been endorsed by them. For example, Smt. Leela Demodara Menon while participating in the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1976 welcomed the insertion of the Fundamental Duties and also the provision in it which prescribes to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. Similarly, all the Constitution (Amendment) Bills which extended reservations for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes have been unanimously supported by the women members. For example, when the Constitution (Twenty-third Amendment) Bill, 1969 (envisaging extension of Constitutional provision of reservations) came to Rajya Sabha after Lok Sabha had passed it, Dr. (Smt.) Phulrenu Guha, who was Minister of State in the Ministry of Law and in the Department of Social Welfare, and belonged to Rajya Sabha, moved the Bill for the consideration of the House.

There are some Constitution (Amendment) Bills which have been introduced by women members. For instance, Smt. Bijoya Chakravarty introduced as many as five Constitution (Amendment) Bills in Rajya Sabha during the period from August 1989 and December 1990. Even though none of these Bills had been passed and one Bill was withdrawn, it shows the parliamentary initiative taken by the concerned woman member in trying to effect amendments to the Constitution. All these above illustrations show their tremendous contribution to the debates and

discussions of the House on the Constitution (Amendment) Bills and also their efforts to initiate such Bills.

Since 1952, 17 women members of Rajya Sabha have joined the Council of Ministers in various capacities. While being a member of Rajya Sabha, Smt. Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India. Smt. Lakshmi N. Menon, Smt. Violet Alva, Smt. Jahanara Jaipal Singh, Smt. Nandini Satpathy, Dr. (Smt.) Phulrenu Guha, Kum. Saroj Khaparde, Miss Kumudben Manishankar Joshi, Smt. Margaret Alva, Dr. (Smt.) Sathiavani Muthu, Smt. Sushila Rohatgi, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Smt. Renuka Chowdhury, Smt. Kamla Sinha, Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, Smt. Urmila Chimanbhai Patel and Smt. Sushma Swaraj have held many portfolios and introduced many Bills concerning the issues in which the respective ministries were involved. They also made important statements and very effectively replied to the debates and discussions on their Ministries.

Some of the important Bills introduced by the women members of Rajya Sabha, who were also concurrently holding various portfolios in the Government are mentioned below :

During 1985-86 when Smt. Sushila Rohatgi was Minister of State in the Ministry of Education and Culture, she introduced the UGC (Amendment) Bill, 1985. Smt. Margaret Alva as Minister of State in the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports and Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development had introduced very momentous Bills on women which were ultimately passed by both the Houses of Parliament and enacted. Some of these are : Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Bill, 1986, Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Bill, 1986, the Infant Milk-foods and Feeding Bottles (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Bill, 1986, etc.

These facts vividly show that both as private members and as members of the Council of Ministers, women members of Rajya Sabha played veritably an important role in taking parliamentary initiatives to highlight several significant issues.

Motions : The women members of Rajya Sabha have also participated in the debates concerning Motions. One important Motion relating to women which was moved on the floor of the House has been discussed below to highlight the participation by women members in debates on Motions.

While participating in the discussion on the Motion to consider the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, many women

members evinced keen interest on the issues concerning women. For instance, with regards to the electoral reforms, Smt. Leela Demodara Menon, in her speech, expressed happiness at the suggestion which envisaged reservation of 15 per cent of seats for women candidates in every political party. She felt that 15 per cent reservation would not be enough and demanded for 25 per cent reservation. She asserted that unless women participate politically, their status in the country would not be equal or even half equal to men despite many legislations.

She also moved an amendment to the Motion which was adopted. The original Motion aimed at considering the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. The amendment, *inter alia*, urged the Prime Minister to remove as far as possible the discriminations against women by taking recourse to specific legislative and administrative measures.

Smt. Margaret Alva while taking part in the discussion on the original Motion congratulated the government for appointing a Committee to study the status of women in India and also the members of the Committee who had produced an excellent report. She also suggested that for the successful implementation of the social laws, change of social attitude had to be brought about. In this context, she said that more and more voluntary organizations, particularly women's organizations, should be associated to mobilize public opinion.

Resolutions: A number of Resolutions have been introduced by the women members of the Council of States in their capacity as private members. Some of these have been adopted.

Smt. Lilavati Munshi's Resolution to prohibit the exhibition of undesirable films was adopted by the House in 1954. That particular Resolution moved the Government to amend the Cinematograph Act in 1959. Referring to that Resolution former Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Shri R. Venkataraman, in his address on the theme "The Role of a Private Member of Parliament", delivered at the Harold Laski Institute of Political Science, Ahmedabad, in 1986 said, "...Film censorship is now accepted as a fact. It is not remembered that the first step towards this were taken as a result of a private member's Resolution moved by Smt. Lilavati Munshi and adopted in the Rajya Sabha in 1954". This Resolution was indeed one of the first steps for censorship of films.

Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand moved a Resolution in September 1955 regarding introduction of compulsory training in NCC or ACC for high school and university students. The Resolution was adopted by the House

the same day with an amendment which stated that State Governments should progressively widen the scope of training for students in NCC or ACC.

Smt. Violet Alva, moved a Resolution in May 1956 which aimed at giving preference to Indian owned/controlled advertising agencies for advertisements by Railways, Government companies, etc. The Resolution was adopted by the House. In March 1970, Shri Joachim Alva also moved a Resolution, the subject matter of which was advertisements to Indian owned/controlled advertising agencies. This was in furtherance of earlier Resolution moved by Smt. Violet Alva.

The Chinese aggression on India in 1962, was the single major external threat since independence against our territorial integrity. When Rajya Sabha discussed the Resolution regarding the Proclamation of Emergency and Aggression by China, three women members, namely, Kumari Shanta Vashisht, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand and Smt. Nandini Satpathy participated in the discussion and supported the Resolution. Kumari Shanta Vashisht maintained that India never favoured war. She added that India was prepared to face any eventuality using her available strength and resources. She also supported the then Prime Minister Pandit Nehru's stand that winning the battle on the farms and factories was as important as winning it on the military front. Therefore, she urged upon everybody to take up whatever responsibility he or she could take during the war period.

Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand firmly stated that there was nothing to be apologetic about the non-alignment policy. Rather, the policy had ensured world peace she maintained. Commenting on the efforts to stop the Chinese aggression, she added that, among other organizations, the Democratic Women's Federation should go to China and in liaison with Chinese women exert pressure against war.

Smt. Nandini Satpathy's speech on the Resolution also laid stress on the theme of not giving up the policy of non-alignment, and categorically emphasized that the purpose of Chinese aggression was to force India to deviate from her path. She cautioned that by foregoing the policy of non-alignment, India could play into the hands of China. She underlined the importance of India's independence not only for herself but for the world peace as well. She emphasised that despite pressures, India must not deviate from her policies. The fact that India did not digress from her policy of the non-alignment and peaceful co-existence despite the Chinese aggression clearly establishes the validity and relevance of the suggestions made by the woman member.

Smt. Violet Alva moved a Resolution on 7 September 1962, to set up a Committee of Rajya Sabha to recommend the Draft Rules of Procedure for the Council of States was adopted on the same day. On the basis of the Resolution a Committee was set up. Its report was discussed on a motion by Rajya Sabha on 27 May and 2 June 1964. The same was adopted by the House on 2 June 1964.

The recommendations of the Committee as adopted by the House became the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Council of States. The introduction of the above Resolution indeed speaks of women members concern for framing Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business for the Rajya Sabha.

On 11 December 1981, Smt. Monika Das moved an important Resolution urging that, "the Central and State Governments should make concerted efforts to implement the scheme for environmental improvement of urban slums in a ten-year time schedule so that the entire slum population of the country totalling about 30 million is covered and the family planning programme in the slum areas is also accelerated side by side."

The Resolution was adopted by the House after an engrossing debate on the subject. The then Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Works and Housing thanked Smt. Monika Das for bringing the Resolution and also praised the member for taking very keen interest in the debate.

On 8 March 1996, the Deputy Chairman, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, made a reference to the International Women's Day and proposed a Resolution which aimed to "further augment the status and well-being of women as our commitment in the spirit of our Constitution". It was suggested that to achieve the objectives laid out in the Resolution and to monitor to progress and also to suggest ways and means to implement the policies and projects meant for improving the status of women, a standing committee of both the Houses of Parliament be constituted. The Resolution was adopted unanimously by the House. Consequently, a Committee on the Empowerment of Women was set up in 1997.

Many other Resolutions have also been moved by women parliamentarians of the Rajya Sabha. Most of them have been withdrawn on Government assurances that the steps would be taken by the Government conforming to the points raised by the lady members in the Resolutions. Examples relating to this are given below.

On 28 August 1953, Smt. Leelavati Munshi moved a Resolution on Sterilisation of Adults suffering from incurable diseases which was withdrawn on the Government assurances.

On 31 August 1956, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand moved a Resolution which sought to enlist public cooperation for Second Five Year Plan. Later the Resolution was withdrawn on the assurance given by the concerned Minister.

Smt. Roda Mistry's Resolution regarding legislation to make legal aid organization for the poor and needy statutory was moved on 12 August 1983 and withdrawn on 26 of August 1983. Another Resolution relating to Women's Rights was moved and later withdrawn by Smt. Veena Verma.

Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla moved a Resolution, on 2 May 1986, regarding combating the drug menace and rehabilitation of drug addicts. Through this Resolution, the House recommended that the government should "take steps to combat effectively the spreading menace of drugs and narcotics, which are degenerating the nation, especially the younger generation, and make institutional arrangement for the rehabilitation of drug addicts by using the revenue realized by way of penalties, seizures, etc. from offenders and drug traffickers." The Resolution was withdrawn on the same day, on the assurance given by the Minister concerned.

To address the problems faced by the weaker sections of society, a Resolution was moved by the nominated member Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt on 5 August 1988, urging the House to formulate a national policy for the hawkers and vendors to protect their livelihood. Through that Resolution she urged the House to issue licences to them so that they can be protected from harassment meted out to them by officials and some sections of our society. She also pleaded that their interests should be taken into account while making plans for the urban development. Irrespective of the fate of the Resolution, the very fact that she introduced and moved such a Resolution amply speaks of her desire to uplift those sections of society who serve the rest of the population but get ill-treatment and humiliation.

Smt. Sushma Swaraj's Resolution dealing with the need to fix some time limit for grant of President's assent to the Bills sent to him by the State Legislatures was moved by her on 7 September 1990. It was withdrawn by her on the same day. Even if these Resolutions were withdrawn, their contents show that the women members of Rajya Sabha felt very much agitated by the social and constitutional issues, because of which they initiated Resolutions to that effect.

Smt. Sushma Swaraj also moved a Resolution on 8 May 1992 regarding the creation of two separate States namely Uttaranchal and Vananchal in order to ensure the balanced development of the States of

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, respectively. With the prorogation of the House the Resolution lapsed, but the parliamentary initiative of the woman member in moving the Resolution and the discussion it generated on the issue, highlighted the importance of the matter. The States of Uttaranchal and Jharkhand were created in the year 2000 when the Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 2000 and the Bihar Reorganisation Bill, 2000 were passed by Parliament.

Parliamentary initiatives of the women members have been manifested in the form of many other amendments moved by them to important Bills, Motions, etc. Some of them have been adopted. This underscores their concern for improving upon the existing legislations and relevance of their ideas and suggestions. Some of the instances given below will underline the point.

Their positive and abiding concerns to contribute to the legislative measures to ameliorate the status of women have led the women members to move important amendments to the Bills relating to the Hindu Personal Law. For example, two amendments (No. 2 and 5) moved on 15 December 1954 by Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand to clause 1 of the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Bill, 1952 were adopted on the same day.

Similarly, Smt. Lilavati Munshi's amendment to clause 6 moved on 25 November 1955 to clause 6 was adopted on 28 November, of the same year. Three amendments of Smt. Lakshmi Menon to clause 19 of the Hindu Succession Bill, 1954 were moved by her on 30 November 1955 and were adopted by Rajya Sabha on the same day.

On 30 March 1990, the Resolution disapproving the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance and Code of Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill, 1990 was adopted by Rajya Sabha by incorporating four amendments of Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan. On 13 May 1975, Smt. Leela Damodaran Menon moved an amendment to the motion of the then Minister of Education, Social Welfare and Culture, Prof. S. Nurul Hassan for considering the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. It was adopted on the same day.

The amendment adopted by Rajya Sabha urged the Prime Minister to initiate a comprehensive programme of specific legislative and administrative measures in the year 1975, which was observed as the International Women's Year. It also envisaged that these programmes would aim at removing, as far as possible, the economic and social injustices, disabilities and discriminations to which Indian women continued to be subjected.

Discussions on Ministries/Departments

Another domain in which the women parliamentarians of Rajya Sabha have decisively displayed their role as legislators is the discussion on the functioning of different Ministries and Departments of the Government of India.

Since Rajya Sabha does not vote on the Demands for Grants of various Ministries a matter exclusively reserved for Lok Sabha, a practice has been started in 1970 whereby the functioning of a few selected Ministries of the Government of India is discussed by Rajya Sabha.

The speeches made by the women members during such discussions show that many a time they have initiated the discussion and explored the areas of functioning of Ministries and critically remarked on their day to day working. For example, Smt. Usha Malhotra initiated the discussion on the working of the Ministry of External Affairs on 6 August 1980. In many cases, they have suggested inter-ministerial co-ordination for effecting not only economy in administration, but also making it more service oriented. For instance, on the question of strengthening external publicity, Smt. Usha Malhotra suggested to establish liaison between the Ministry of External Affairs on the one hand and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Ministry of Tourism on the other.

On 3 August 1971, Smt. Nandini Satpathy, while participating in the discussion on the working of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting suggested that India should develop an international news agency which would interpret the news and views of the world objectively to our country and to project the image of India in the true perspective abroad. She maintained, "such a news agency is lacking and we continue to see the world through the eyes of foreign news agencies".

In conformity with our policy of creating a 'Welfare State' and responsive administration, the women members have often underlined the necessity for shedding stereotyped attitude by the government departments and formulating new programmes. They have also criticized the apathetic and callous attitude of civil servants in discharging their duties. On many occasions, they have also demanded that the policies followed by the Ministries should have a human component.

In her speech delivered on 25 July 1973, during the discussion on the working of the Ministry of Education, Social Welfare and Culture, Smt. Sushila Shankar Adivarekar commented that most of the programmes of the Ministry were stereotyped, going on with same slow tempo. She

also stressed that the programmes had benefited the richer people among the backward sections and less fortunate were left out. In view of that, she suggested that the programmes of the Ministry needed reformulation. She also suggested that to effectively implement the programmes more and more voluntary associations should be involved.

While discussing the functioning of the Ministries, the women members of Rajya Sabha have always espoused the cause of women and other weaker sections of society whenever the need arose. They have ensured the safeguarding of women's interests. Many a time, the suggestions made by women members have been oriented to demand association of more women in the developmental programmes launched by various Ministries. They have demanded the representation of more women both at the apex and lower levels of the decision making process. In this context, Smt. Leela Demodara Menon's thought provoking suggestions put forth in 1979 during the discussion on the functioning of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs have underscored the point. Her suggestion that a Special Law Commission be set up to go into the question of social legislation, specially with regard to women and elimination of discrimination against them reflected her concern for the amelioration of women. She also wanted to know whether it would be made a part of electoral law or compulsory for all the political parties to ensure that a certain percentage of the candidates put up by them for elections were women. Besides, she also suggested to amend Maternity Benefit Act to include unorganized labour, check the evil practice of dowry, make prostitution illegal and declare it an offence and create more employment opportunities for women.

In 1992, Smt. Kamla Sinha and Smt. Sushma Swaraj participated in the discussion on the functioning of the Ministry of Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution. Both Smt. Sinha and Smt. Swaraj stated that Public Distribution System (PDS) was meant for poorer sections of society to provide them foodgrains and basic necessities of life. Smt. Swaraj maintained that the non-availability of ration to the poor was due to the diversion of the ration to black market. Smt. Sinha also maintained that despite many plans initiated by the government to minimize hoarding, black marketing and diversion of essential commodities from the Public Distribution System, no success had still been attained. She also complained that in the rural areas, influential people with political patronage get the chance to open ration or the PDS shops. As a result, the Public Distribution System was not geared to serve the poor and the needy. Emphasising the need to continue the PDS for the poorer section of the population, she said that till the economic situation of the indigent

population, was not improved, the PDS would have to be run. Therefore, Smt. Sinha stood for revamping the Public Distribution System. Smt. Swaraj also emphasized the need to remove the shortcomings plaguing the system. Smt. Swaraj also complained that the ration shops in deserts, hilly, tribal and drought prone areas were non-existent. She also referred to the non-allotment of foodgrains to the ration shops and said that whatever goods were supplied were of inferior quality.

In May 1997, participating in the discussion on the working of the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation, Smt. Renuka Chowdhury spoke extensively on several social and economic issues. Emphasizing the need for decentralization, she observed, "It is the fundamental obligation of the federal structure that you decentralize thinking and planning. You cannot have a comprehensive plan for a nation which has so many varied languages and cultures when you impose it from the top. You must resource it from the bottom. It has to be micro planning which goes down, takes in the inputs, gets the feedback and then brings about a plan implementation programme that can be adhered to."

Further, during the same discussion, she dealt with the issues relating to women. Expressing her concern for the safety of women, she said, "We do not have safety for women. There is one more dream of Mahatma Gandhi which is still to be attained. When women can walk fearlessly in the middle of the night, then only we can say that India has reached those levels which enable us to dream ahead."

The women members of Rajya Sabha not only participated in the discussions on the social issues, they have also expressed their deep concern regarding environmental issues. On 22 July 1998, during the discussion on the working of the Ministry of Environment and Forests many women members actively participated. They raised a number of matters concerning their States and highlighted other vital national issues. Expressing her concern about the depletion of forests, Smt. Chandresh Kumari said, "Forests are our national wealth, but unfortunately, these are being cut down mercilessly which is also endangering the wildlife of our country. It is also damaging our environment. I think it is of great importance to us that we should protect our national wealth and see that by protecting this we protect the people of India."

On 22 April 2003, women members of Rajya Sabha participated substantially in the discussion on the working of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Highlighting the growing menace of terrorism, Smt. N. P. Durga

suggested for the constitution of some effective machinery to deal with the problem more effectively. She strongly demanded for modernization of police force by giving them the latest weaponry and communication systems, strengthening the police network, speedy disposal of case and immediate implementation of the POLNET Project.

During the discussion on the Working of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, On 28 April 2003, Smt. Vanga Geetha emphasized the role of education in nation building and inculcation of humane elements and moral values in the existing system of education. She observed, "Along with the construction of more school buildings with improved infrastructure, we have to bring about a change in our education pattern too... Present day education makes a student eligible to participate in the competitive examination but is not training him to be a good citizen. This is my opinion. So, we should see that our education would also inculcate a sense of patriotism and moral values among our students." She suggested that "these points should be considered while framing the syllabus and setting examination papers. The syllabus should always be relevant to the present day situations".

During the same discussion, highlighting the imperative need for knowledge generation in the fast changing world, Miss Mabel Rebello said, "In today's globalised world, where distances have crumbled, we live in a global village, knowledge generation has become very important. One who dominates in the knowledge generation will also dominate in the economic, military and social terms as well. We see it all over the world. For knowledge generation, education is critical. All the three levels of education, whether it is elementary, secondary or collegiate, are definitely critical and must be given top national priority."

Besides this, the women members of Rajya Sabha also made use of procedural devices such as Calling Attention notices, Special Mentions, etc. to raise the matter of urgent public importance.

Calling Attention Notices: Under Rule 180 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Rajya Sabha, a member may with the previous permission of the Chairman, call the attention of a Minister to any matter of urgent public importance and the Minister may make a brief statement or ask for time to make a statement at a later date. The concept of a Calling Attention enables a member to expose the Government's failure or inadequacy of its action on a matter of urgent public importance. It has been described as a device which is analogous 'to an adjournment motion but divested of the element of censure'.

This procedure has provided the women members an opportunity to exercise their right of parliamentary initiative as a private member. They have kept themselves abreast of the developments of national and international importance and called the attention of the government on such important issues, making the proceedings of Rajya Sabha pulsate with vibrancy.

On examination of the subjects on which the Calling Attention notices have been admitted and statements made shows that it covers a wide spectrum of issues which have a bearing on domestic as well as international matters. For instance, the issues relating to price rise, communal disturbances, law and order situation, outbreak of deadly diseases in some parts of the country etc. were raised by the women members of the Rajya Sabha through this procedural device.

Besides, their focus of attention on problems relating to women also activated them to give notices of Calling Attention on such vital questions. Some of the examples have been cited in the following paragraphs.

On 30 June 1980, Smt. Purabi Mukhopadhyaya called the attention of the concerned Minister on growing atrocities on women in various parts of the country engendering a sense of insecurity among them because of the alleged collusion and involvement of police.

Similarly, Smt. Kanak Mukherjee, on 26 February 1982, called the attention of the concerned Minister regarding the reported death of 6 lakh women in the country every year due to illegal abortions. Realising the evil effect of the dowry system, Smt. Monika Das, on 13 August 1982, gave a Calling Attention notice on growing menace of dowry in marriages and ever-growing demand for dowry by grooms.

Apart from calling attention of the government on issues relating to women, the women members have also raised several other matters of national importance by using this parliamentary device.

In 1983, while participating in a discussion arising out of a Calling Attention notice on the issue of deterioration of telephone services, Prof. (Smt.) Asima Chatterjee, a scientist, and a nominated member of the Council of States suggested to the Government to send more satellites to space for improving our telephone connectivity. The rapid spread of telephone links in the length and breadth of our country during 1980s and 1990s after we launched satellites for communication purposes bring to light the relevance and importance of the suggestion of a nominated member of the Council of States.

Women members have also called the attention of the concerned Ministers to the serious security threat to our country from across the border and the presence of the naval forces of the external powers in the Indian Ocean. For instance, on 13 August, 1984, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla called the attention to the serious situation arising out of the concentration of big powers naval presence in the Indian Ocean and the consequent threat to our security.

The above few instances show the drive of the women members of Rajya Sabha in highlighting the most important topical issues through the Calling Attention notice. This has not only made their involvement in the proceedings more meaningful but has also drawn the attention of the Government to urgent matters which otherwise it would have missed in the normal course. Indeed this facilitates ensuring parliamentary oversight on the Executive.

Special Mentions: Through the procedure of Special Mention, members of Rajya Sabha take an opportunity to raise matters of urgent public importance on the floor of the House with the prior permission of the Chairman. This procedural device enables the members to raise such matters which they might not be able to do at an early opportunity.

Women members of Rajya Sabha have utilized this procedure since its introduction in 1974 and raised many matters of public importance which have a bearing on our national life.

The content and themes of the special mentions made by the women members show that these include vital national and international affairs. Very often their endeavour to espouse the cause of women and other weaker sections of the society have led them to highlight their issues through this procedure. One instance is that of Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan's Special Mention on 13 November, 1987 regarding proposed rally to glorify Sati in some places of West Bengal. Similarly, Smt. Monika Das's special mention on 7 May 1981 and 23 December 1981 on the exploitation of labourers in stone mining queries and offering girls as Devdasis in some parts of Karnataka and Maharashtra, respectively also prove the point.

Smt. Ila Bhattacharya's Special Mention, on 3 August 1982, relating to increasing dowry deaths and Smt. Veena Verma's on the subject "reported advice given by Station House Officer, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi, to a dowry victim to take to call girl trade", amply demonstrate the priority given by the women members to the cause of women.

Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, Prof. (Smt.) Bharati Ray, Smt. Chandra Kala Pandey and Smt. Shabana Azmi raised a Special Mention on 11 June 1998, regarding discrimination in the retirement age of Air Hostesses working in Air India as against male flight attendants and against Air Hostesses in Indian Airlines. Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan and Prof. (Smt.) Bharati Ray raised the Special Mention on 9 December 1998, regarding rising violence against girls in college campuses all over the country and the need to ensure the protection of girl students. Smt. Sarla Maheshwari raised a Special Mention on 27 November 2000, on the need to take steps on domestic violence against women.

These examples clearly demonstrate the serious concern expressed by women members on the floor of the House on the increasing incidence of violence against women.

Besides the above mentioned issues, the concerns of women members of the Rajya Sabha also related to the problems on scientific development and research. Nominated woman member, Smt. Asima Chatterjee's Special Mention, on 28 August 1987, regarding the depletion of Ozone layer in earth's atmosphere and Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla's Special Mention, on 17 March 1981, commending the work of the scientists of the National Institute of Oceanography in Mining and Polymetallic Nodules, Smt. N.P. Durga's Special Mention on 21 April 2003, on need for installation of Photovoltaic Solar Modules in all villages of the country and Miss Mabel Rebello's Special Mention on the need for development of technology to counter water crises in the country are some of the instances.

On international issues and bilateral matters involving India's relations with neighbours, the women members of Rajya Sabha have displayed keen interest. This has been reflected by the Special Mentions, by them on the floor of the House. The Special Mentions of Smt. Asima Chatterjee on 24 August 1984, regarding the US move to withdraw from the UNESCO and Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla's Special Mention, on 11 March 1988, concerning atrocities being committed by Israelis on Palestinians show the interest taken by them on the developments that occur beyond our territorial frontiers. In fact, the entire House associated with the Special Mention of Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla. The Special Mention made by Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan in 1998, on the issue of recurring attacks on the Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy and the need to take up the matter with the Sri Lankan Government and Smt. Kum Kum Rai's Special Mention on 22 November 2001 underlines the interest taken by the women members on the India's relations with her neighbours.

The nominated women members with their specialized and expert knowledge have evinced keen interest in raising matters of urgent public importance. This has been exemplified by Dr. Smt. Asima Chatterjee's Special Mention as discussed above and by Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt's Special Mention raised on 29 March 1988, regarding carelessness of doctors in operations performed for fulfilling family planning targets. Similarly, Smt. Amrita Pritam's Special Mentions subsume the points relating to art, literature and the problems of the authors and writers. She raised a Special Mention on 5 August 1986, regarding need for application of international copyright law between India and Pakistan. She also made a Special Mention on 16 November 1987, regarding commercial use of places for literacy and cultural activities. Smt. Shabana Azmi raised Special Mentions on such topical issues as the need for providing Housing to slum dwellers in Mumbai, the need for change in the norms of centrally sponsored Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme and the need for uniform civil code based on gender justice, on 5 March 2003, 8 April 2003 and 21 August 2003, respectively.

This succinct description of the Special Mentions made on the floor of the House by the women members shows the wide range of issues covered. This attests to their parliamentary initiative as Members of Parliament. This is also a reflection of their capacity as legislators to realise the importance of the latest developments that took place in both domestic and external affairs and raise them on the floor of the House.

Participation of women members in the Committees

At the present stage of history, civilization is almost masculine, a civilisation of power, in which woman has been thrust aside in the shade—And at last the time has arrived when woman must step in and impart her life rhythm to this reckless movement of power.

—Rabindranath Tagore

During five decades of the existence of Rajya Sabha, the women members have contributed significantly to the different parliamentary activities. In addition to the references made in the preceding pages about their participation on the floor of the House as members, it can be said that their roles in different Committees of Parliament and particularly those of Rajya Sabha have been remarkable.

Committees of Parliament, among other things, function to ensure the accountability of the executive to the legislature. With the setting up of seventeen Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees, a beginning has been made to scrutinize the broad policies and activities of the Ministries/Departments of the Government. On 31 March 1993, while inaugurating these Committees, the then Vice-President of India and Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Shri K.R. Narayanan threw light on their scope and purpose. He observed that :

The main function of our Committees would be in-depth examination of the functioning of the Government, consideration of Demands for Grants, Bills, long term national policies, etc. The main purpose, of course, is to ensure the accountability of Government to Parliament through more detailed consideration of measures in these Committee. The intention is not to weaken or criticize the administration but to strengthen it by investing it with more meaningful Parliamentary support.

Unlike the atmosphere on the floor of Parliament, the ambience in the Committees is calm and quiet. Members, therefore, with a cool temper participate in the proceedings of the Committees. Since the Committees function away from the glare of publicity, the participation in such bodies provide an opportunity to the members to contribute their might without being commented upon by the media. With all seriousness and non-partisan attitude they dive deep into the issues and examine various matters in a businesslike manner. Some of the women members of Rajya Sabha having been elected or nominated to various Standing and *ad hoc* Committees of Parliament in general and the Rajya Sabha in particular, have richly contributed to the deliberations, examination of evidences and adoption of reports. They have also very actively involved themselves in various Study Groups, Sub-Committees set up by different Committees on many areas. Since the inception of Rajya Sabha, a large number of women members have been associated with one Committee or the other. Members of Rajya Sabha are associated with the Committee on Public Accounts and Committee on Public Undertakings. Names of some of the leading woman members who were elected during different periods to the Committee on Public Accounts include Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand, Smt. Savitri Devi Nigam, Smt. Leela Damodara Menon, Smt. Purabi Mukhopadhyay, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, Miss Jayalalitha, Smt. Sushila Shankar Adivarekar, Smt. Pratibha Singh, Smt. Manorama Pandey and others. Smt. Manorama Pandey was elected to the Committee on Public Undertakings in 1988. However, from 2001 there has been no women members in this Committee.

Similarly, many women members of Rajya Sabha have also been elected to the Committee on Public Undertakings. Miss Mary Naidu was the first woman member of the Council of States to have been elected to this Committee in 1967. The names of few other distinguished women members who represented Rajya Sabha in this Committee are Smt. Purabi Mukhopadhyay, Smt. Kumudben Manishankar Joshi, Smt. Margaret Alva, Miss Saroj Khaparde, Smt. Ratan Kumari, Smt. Renuka Choudhury, Smt. Kamla Sinha and Smt. Ambika Soni. In fact, Smt. Ambika Soni is currently a sitting member of the said Committee.

These women members were also very actively associated with the Study Groups and Sub-Committees of the Standing Committees of Parliament. Smt. Kamla Sinha the then member of the Committee on Public Undertakings was in the panel of Committee on Public Undertaking's two Study Groups and two sub-committees. The two Study Groups of which she was a member dealt with, among other things, social responsibilities and public accountability of the public

undertakings of disinvestments on the accountability and autonomy of such undertakings.

She was also a member and convenor of the Action Taken Sub-committee of the Committee on Public Undertakings which examined, *inter alia*, the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee since its inception.

Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil who served as the Chairman of the Privileges Committee of Rajya Sabha and also as a member of the Business Advisory Committee of that House, reflecting on the functioning of Parliamentary Committees, said:

The system of Parliamentary Committees is very good. It should be strengthened. We can really have better discussion in the Parliamentary Committees than in the Parliament itself. But the Committees should devote more time and discuss various issues in a more serious way. Their reports should be taken up in Parliament in a serious manner. Suggestions of Parliamentary Committees also should be noted. It is actually the Minister and various departments who are supposed to take the suggestions into consideration. It should be noted how the suggestions have been implemented and what have been their achievements....

Some of the women members were also nominated to the two out of three Subject Committees of Parliament after their constitution in 1989. Smt. Syeda Anwara Taimur was the first nominated woman member of the Rajya Sabha to have become a member of the Committee on Environment and Forests during 1989-90. In the period 1990-91, Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan and Kumari Chandrika Premji Kenia were nominated to the same Committee. While Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan was again nominated to the Committee for the period 1991-92, Smt. Renuka Choudhury was nominated for the first time during the same period.

The Standing Subject Committee on Science and Technology had two women members from Rajya Sabha during 1990-91. They were Kumari Sayeeda Khatun and Smt. Kamla Sinha. For the period 1991-92, Kumari Sayeeda Khatun and Smt. Chandrika Abhinandan Jain were nominated. Subsequently, Kumari Khatun retired from the membership of Rajya Sabha. Presently, Smt. Savita Sharda is its member since 2001, *i.e.*, consecutively for three years. Similarly, Smt. S.G. Indira has been in this Committee for the last two years, *i.e.*, 2002 and 2003.

As Members of the Subject Committees, some of the women Members were actively associated with the Study Groups/Sub-Committees of these

Committees. For instance, during 1990-91, Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan was a member of the Study Group of the Committee on Environment and Forests dealing with Social Forestry, Depletion of Himalayan Forests and Conservation of Forests and Wildlife Preservation. For the period 1991-92, she was a member of the Sub-Committee on Forests. Similarly, Smt. Renuka Choudhury was in the panel of Sub-Committee on Environment. During 1990-91 another woman member of the same Committee Kumari Chandrika Premji Kenia was a member of the Study Group on Ozone Layer and Global Warming. She was also the alternate convenor of the Study Group. Besides she actively worked as a member of the Study Group on Action Taken Reports.

Women Members of Rajya Sabha, Smt. Kamla Sinha and Kum. Sayeeda Khatun who were nominated to the Committee on Science and Technology were associated with its Study Group in the Department of Space, the Indian National Satellite Programme and the Department of Ocean Development.

For the period 1991-92, Smt. Sayeeda Khatun was associated with the Study Group dealing, among other things, with the INSAT Programme and Deep Sea Bed Exploration. Smt. Chandrika Abhinandan Jain was also associated with the above Study Group.

After the creation of full fledged Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees since 1993, more and more women members have been actively involved, not only in these Committees, but also in their different Sub-Committees. There are six such Department-related Committees of Rajya Sabha such as Committee on Home Affairs, Committee on Human Resource Development, Committee on Commerce, Committee on Industry, Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests and the Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture.

Over the years it has been observed that in the Committees on Human Resource Development and Science and Technology, Environment and Forests, nomination of women members have been greater in comparison to other such committees. Smt. Savita Sharda has been the member of the Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests since 2001, *i.e.*, consecutively for three terms. Similarly, Smt. S.G. Indira has been in this Committee from 2002, that is, for the last two terms. Currently, Prof. Alka Balram Kshatriya is also a member of this Committee.

Smt. Vanga Geetha has been a member of the Committee on Human Resource Development from 2001. Presently, Smt. Chandra Kala Pandey is also member of this Committee. It is interesting to note that both of

them are also members of the Sub-Committee on University and Higher Education. Committee on Human Resource Development in the past had quite a good number of active women members who had contributed qualitatively on reports, such as, report on Value-based Education, Vocational Education and on Technical Education. Prof. (Smt.) Bharati Ray, Smt. Jayanti Patnaik and Smt. Kamla Sinha are few to be mentioned.

In the report on Value-based Education, they had suggested for gender sensitization in the overall academic programme. At the infant stage through the process of story telling, group songs, dances and other activities, good social behaviour could be developed in the young minds.

In the report on Vocational Education they had suggested for integration of a number of vocational schemes being run separately by different Departments, such as Department of Education, Rural Employment and Poverty Alleviation and Ministry of Labour, so that a common strategy could be developed for maximum advantages of facilities available with the Departments. Moreover, persons being benefited could also be counted in the long term basis.

Similarly, in the report on Technical Education, they had strongly argued in favour of developing and meaningful coordination between technical institutions and industry so that industry which is the gainer of technical know-hows also contributes for development of technical institutions. Moreover, industry should also be consulted for curriculum formulation, Joint Research and Development Programme so that a long term industry-institute relation could be developed for overall growth of technical education in the country.

Similarly, in the Committee on Industry in the year 2003 there are two women members—Smt. Saroj Dubey and Smt. Sushree Devi. Presently, Smt. Maya Singh is a member of Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture. Smt. Ambika Soni is currently a member of the Committee on Home Affairs.

In the Committee on Commerce no woman member of Rajya Sabha has been nominated for the year 2003. However in 2002, Dr. Prabha Thakur was its member.

Besides, their elections and nomination to the Standing Committees of Parliament, many women members have also been nominated to Standing Committees of the Rajya Sabha. Some prominent women members have also headed few Committees of the Council of States.

For instance, Smt. Shyam Kumari Khan was the Chairman of the House Committee during 1967-68. Miss Saroj Khaparde was also the Chairman of the same Committee during 1982-83 and 1983-84. Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil was the Chairman of the Committee of Privileges of Rajya Sabha from November 1986 to November 1998. Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla was the Chairman of the same Committee during her tenure as Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha.

It is worth mentioning here that currently Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla is the Chairperson of the Committee on Privileges from November 1988 onwards, Committee on Provision of Computers for Members of Parliament since March 1997 onwards and Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) of Rajya Sabha from September 1998 onwards. She was also the Chairperson of Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women of Lok Sabha from May 1997 to April 1999.

The first report of the Committee on Empowerment of Women which had exhaustively dealt with developmental schemes for rural women was brought out under her Chairmanship in the year 1999 with scheme-specific recommendations and critical evaluation of on-going schemes. It had broadly recognized that siphoning off of rural development fund was a despicable phenomenon as that affected ultimately the poorest of the poor. Therefore, it had suggested for a survey of this problem by independent professional agencies in one of the most backward and most developed districts of each State to make a comparative assessment of the extent of the problem with a view to take necessary remedial measures. Such recommendations of long term nature have contributed greatly for effective legislative control over executive to prove the worth of parliamentary democracy.

Apart from it, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla has also been the member of Committee on Rules, General Purposes Committee and Business Advisory Committee from 1989 onwards.

Committee on Papers Laid on the Table was chaired by Smt. Margaret Alva during 1990.

Some of the ad-hoc Committees of Rajya Sabha have also been headed by women members. For instance, Smt. Violet Alva was the Chairman of the Committee set up by Rajya Sabha on 7 September 1962 to recommend draft Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business for the Council of States.

A Committee of Parliament appointed in 1983 to bring about a reconciliation between Akalis and Nirankaris was headed by Smt. Margaret Alva.

Some of the women members nominated to Rajya Sabha have also been associated with different Committees. For instance, while Smt. Nargis Dutt was nominated to the Committee on Petitions in 1980, Smt. Asima Chatterjee was not only a member of the Committee on Petitions but also of the Rules and House Committees. It has been mentioned earlier that Smt. Syeda Anwara Taimur was the first nominated woman member of the Rajya Sabha to have become member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Forests when it was set up in 1989.

Besides their participation in the Standing Committees of Parliament and Rajya Sabha, women members have also very effectively played their roles as member of the ad-hoc Committees appointed by the House on specific subjects from time to time. It has been mentioned in the preceding pages that on 7 September 1962 the House appointed a Committee to recommend draft Rules of Procedure and in 1983, another Committee of Parliament was constituted to bring about reconciliation between the Nirankaris and Akalis.

In both the Committees some of the women members of Rajya Sabha were associated. In the Committee to recommend Draft Rules of Procedure of the Council of States, Smt. Violet Alva, Smt. Ammanna Raja and Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand actively participated as its members. Smt. Violet Alva, as mentioned earlier, was the Chairman of the Committee. The Committee's report as adopted by the House on 2 June 1964, provided the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Rajya Sabha.

As discussed earlier, in the Committee of Parliament constituted to bring about reconciliation between the Nirankaris and Akalis, Smt. Margaret Alva was the only woman representative from Rajya Sabha. She was elected its Chairman unanimously on 21 December 1983.

There are Parliamentary Committees constituted by both Houses of Parliament by passing motions on that behalf. In such Committees also women Members of Rajya Sabha have been associated. For instance, many woman members have been associated with the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Library Committee. Miss Saroj Khaparde and Smt. Kailash Pati were the members of the Committee on the Welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes during the period 1980-1982. Smt. Kailashpati was also a member of the same Committee during 1990-91. She also continued to be a member for

the period 1991-92. Besides, Kumari Sushila Tiria was a member of the same Committee during 1990-91. Smt. Kailashpati and Kumari Sushila Tiria were closely associated with the Study Groups of the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. For instance, while the former was associated with the Study Groups on Reservations for employment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Indian Airlines and Minerals and Metal Trading Corporation, the latter was a member of the Study Group on formation, implementation and monitoring of reservation policy by the Department of Personnel and Training in the Ministry of Welfare and the working of the Integrated Tribal Development projects in Bihar.

As far as the Library Committee is concerned, Smt. Manorama Pandey was its member from 1980 to 1981.

There are also some other Committees of both the Houses of Parliament constituted under the provisions of law as for example, Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Contribution Regulation Bill, 1973, Joint Committee on the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Bill etc.

Some of the women members of Rajya Sabha had also been associated with such Committees. For instance, Smt. Kanak Mukherjee, Smt. Usha Malhotra and Smt. Manorama Pandey were associated with the Joint Committee to review the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla was associated with the Joint Committee on Marriage Laws (Amendment) Bill, 1981. Similarly, in 1986 Smt. Sudha Vijay Joshi and Smt. Veena Verma were associated with the Joint Committee on Offices of Profit and Committee of Parliament on Official Language Bill, respectively.

It is furthermore a great contribution of women members of Rajya Sabha who in the long run have acted as a cementing force for empowerment of Indian women. They have recognized and advocated that through economic independence and a proper place in decision making in family, government and society at large they can truly be emancipated. In this respect, the contribution of women members of Rajya Sabha in the Committee on the Empowerment of Women, namely, Dr. (Ms.) P. Selvie Das, Smt. Shabana Azmi, Miss Mabel Rebello, Prof. (Smt.) Bharati Ray, Smt. Saroj Dubey, Smt. S. G. Indira, Smt. Savita Sharda, Smt. Chandresh Kumari, Smt. Jayaprada Nahata, Smt. Basanti Sarma, Ms. Pramila Bohidar, Smt. Vanga Geetha, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, Smt. Chandra Kala Pandey, Smt. Bimba Raikar and Smt. Maya Singh deserves to be praised.

Members like Smt. Shabana Azmi voiced their argument not only in the Committees but also took it to the floor of the House stating that a role where male alongwith female member of a house could be considered as bread winners and also share the kitchen work would truly reflect the gender justice. This role has to be developed from the home and finally spread to the larger society. It is to that day our efforts should continue tirelessly.

These above illustrations adequately demonstrate the close association of women members with the Committees of Parliament and Rajya Sabha. These attest to their ability to make Parliament more effective in over-seeing the executive authority.

Women Presiding Officers of Rajya Sabha

I have always tried to run this House not with the help of the Rule Book, but with the help and cooperation of all the Members...this is the way the Parliament works and we are proud of keeping the dignity, the high principles of this Parliament. We are very proud of our democracy, the largest in the world.

—Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla

In the history of Rajya Sabha, three women members have so far been elected to the coveted position of the Deputy Chairman of the House. Smt. Violet Alva had the distinction of becoming the first woman member to have been elected to this august office and had two consecutive terms. Her first term commenced on 19 April 1962 and came to an end on 2 April 1966. Her second term began with her election to the office of Deputy Chairman on 7 April 1966 and she held the position till 16 November 1969.

Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla has been the second woman member elected as the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha. She has the distinction of presiding over the House for the longest period, that is, for almost 16 years. Her first term began with her election to the august office on 25 January 1985 and ended on 20 January 1986. She was elected as the Deputy Chairman again on 18 November 1988 and continued till 4 July 1992. Her third term commenced on 10 July 1992 and lasted up to 4 July 1998. Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla adorned this esteemed office for the record fourth term on 9 July 1998 and she continues to hold this position till now.

Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil was the third woman member of Rajya Sabha to have occupied the office of Deputy Chairman from 18 November 1986 to 5 November 1988.

These three illustrious women Presiding Officers of Rajya Sabha have brought glory and dignity to the House. They have established a reputation for impartiality and fairness, flexibility of approach, immense patience, great vigilance and understanding of different points of view. Their judicious and impartial handling of the proceedings of the House have consolidated the democratic tradition and freedom and privileges of the House. As Presiding Officers they have safeguarded the privileges and freedom of the House and enormously enriched the parliamentary traditions. In fact, their capabilities as Presiding Officers have been amply demonstrated on the floor of the House. They have given significant rulings and made important observations. On many occasions they made important references. Indeed, as Presiding Officers their contributions are immense and multifarious.

Smt. Violet Alva, the first Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha, conducted the proceedings of the House with great dexterity and foresight. She was elected as the Deputy Chairman for the second time on 7 April 1966. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the first Chairman of Rajya Sabha, while felicitating her, observed:

Smt. Violet Alva is not unknown to us. She has been our Deputy Chairman for four years and has established a reputation for impartiality and fairness and for other qualities which any person sitting in the Chairman's seat in this House has to have ample understanding for different points of view, flexibility of approach, immense patience, great vigilance...All these qualities which are essential for anyone presiding over this House have been amply displayed by Smt. Violet Alva.

As arbitrator of the proceedings of the House, the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva ensured that business in the House was conducted smoothly and according to the rules of procedure and conduct of business. On 5 September 1962, during the course of the discussion on the motion regarding Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 1962, Shri Bhupesh Gupta raised a point of order. According to him, the discussion on the Bill should have been put to an end, as long as the Supreme Court judgement, on which the Bill was based, was not supplied to the members of the House. Replying to that Minister of Law, Shri A.K. Sen said that the Bill contained extracts of the judgement. Shri Bhupesh Gupta insisted that full judgement should have been supplied. On this issue Deputy Chairman Smt. Violet Alva ruled that Shri Bhupesh Gupta did not have the point of order and also added that if the concerned member wanted a copy of the judgement it could be supplied to him or he could go to library and

read it. This ruling ensured the smooth discussion on the Bill in the House.

On many occasions, the Presiding Officers have to clarify procedural intricacies on the floor of the House.

On 5 December 1962, while participating in the discussion on the motion to consider the Defence of India Bill, 1962, a member sought permission to refer to some amendments which had not been moved then. Another member observed that there could not be any discussion on the amendments which had not been proposed. The Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva clarified the position and said that the concerned member could generally comment on the amendments though these had not been moved.

While participating in the discussion on the Resolution on Reinstatement of Central Government Employees who had participated in the strike of July 1960, a member towards the end of the discussion pointed out that sufficient discussion had not taken place and some members from the opposition benches had not got chance to speak on the subject. On 11 May 1962, referring to the above point, Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva observed:

It is for the Chair to decide that we have had sufficient debate on this particular subject or not. The last time we had the debate eighteen members spoke and today six members have spoken from the morning. I think there has been a sufficient debate.

As the Presiding Officer of the House, Smt. Violet Alva, time and again, protected the rights of members belonging to all sections. On one occasion, when during the discussion on the Budget (General) 1962-63, a member complained that leaders of Opposition parties were not invited or consulted while fixing time limit for discussion on various matters on the floor of the House, Smt. Violet Alva observed that no section of the House was neglected when the time limit was put for any debate.

As the custodian of the dignity and privileges of the House and its members, Smt. Violet Alva always endeavored to uphold them. During the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, on 1 May 1962, a member pointed out that from the Government side there was no Minister present in the House. Other members also joined the issue and underlined that the House should be treated seriously by the Ministers. Smt. Violet Alva immediately agreed with the members that

the House be treated seriously and senior Ministers should be present. She observed:

The Chair demands the attention of the Treasury Benches that this House be treated with proper courtesy and I do hope that such a lapse will not occur again.

On 11 February 1964, Shri Pyare Lal Kureel 'Talib' made a reference to the detention of Shri B.P. Maurya, a member of Lok Sabha. Shri K. Santhanam pointed out that it was not the usual convention for Rajya Sabha to take notice of actions against members of Lok Sabha but only of action taken against its own members. Shri Bhupesh Gupta argued that the two Houses of Parliament were an integral whole and that if any impropriety was committed or wrong done to the members of one House, the other House, being a part of Parliament, could certainly take it up.

The Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva, said:

Normally relevant issues should be raised here, and therefore what Mr. Santhanam has said should be carefully considered. Even though you want to raise an issue, because you want to join with what Mr. Kureel has raised, it has no relevancy here. Therefore, it does not arise here.

On 12 February 1964, when Shri M.K. Govindan Nair sought to raise a question of privilege, the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva stood up to say that the facts presented by Shri Govindan Nair in the House have already been presented to the Chair in the Chamber. At that stage many members of the House stood up to speak all at once.

The Deputy Chairman said :

Please take your seat. You must take your seat when I am on my feet...I think this is very indecorous. When the Chair stands, I think...in courtesy to the Chair, every Member should take his seat. I hope such a thing like this will never recur in this House.

On 19 February 1964, while the Minister of Planning, Shri B. R. Bhagat, was reading out his written reply to starred question no. 153 about the amount collected by the Punjab Chief Minister for election purposes, Shri Awadheshwar Prasad Sinha rising on a point of order, said that many people and parties collected money for election purposes but such questions never came before the Council. He asked the Deputy Chairman under what rule she had allowed that particular question.

Smt. Violet Alva said :

The question has been allowed. I do not think any member in this House can question the admissibility or inadmissibility. That is left to the Chair.

On 26 March 1965, after the Council gave permission for Shri P. Ramamurti to remain absent from all meetings of the Council during the session, Shri M. Ruthnaswamy, rising on a point of order, asked whether it was necessary for persons detained under the law, who find it physically impossible to attend the meetings of the Council, to apply for leave of absence, when they had no control over their movements at all.

The Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva said:

Normally they have to. Whoever has been detained either under the Preventive Detention Act or under any other rule or law, he obtains permission of the House.

On 21 March, 1967, in the course of his speech on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, Shri Rajnarain started reading from what he alleged to be a private letter written by somebody. Shri L.K. Gujral rising on a point of order, asked whether it was given to any member to read highly defamatory things from any private letter and claim his parliamentary privileges for it. He said that if the member wanted to quote something he should authenticate it. The Deputy Chairman observed :

I do not think anyone should read from any document or letter. Unless it is authenticated it cannot be laid on the Table. But you may say what you want to say without reading.

On 23 March 1967, when the discussion on the President's Address was going on, Shri Lokanath Misra rising on a point of order submitted that the Chairman had given a specific ruling in the past that during the discussion on the President's Address a Cabinet Minister should be present in the House because it was a very important debate but in spite of the ruling no Cabinet Minister was present in the House to hear what members had to say. Shri P.N. Sapru also supported the stand taken by Shri Lokanath Misra.

Smt. Violet Alva, who was presiding over the House observed :

In any case, whatever the House decides, its direction that a Cabinet rank Minister should be here at least for the President's

Address when it is debated should be observed. I do feel that very strongly, but I leave it to the House. We go on till 5.30 and adjourn, and this may be brought to the attention of the Cabinet Ministers also.... This will be for the last time that we shall continue without a Cabinet Minister till 5.30. In future it will depend on the House and they must accommodate themselves.

On 1 June 1967, Shri Banka Behary Das, Shri Bhupesh Gupta and some other members raised the point that Parliament was not competent to enact the Central Industrial Security Force Bill, 1966, as the force sought to be created under it was in the nature of a police force, "police" being a State subject under List II of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.

Smt. Violet Alva ruled :

It does not arise at this stage at all. If anything is unconstitutional, it goes to the court of law.

On 31 March 1969, in connection with a calling attention notice, when Shri Bhupesh Gupta insisted on laying on the Table a photostat copy of the letter he had obtained, Smt. Alva observed:

Any member can refer to any document; he may read out or he may give a summary; that is permissible, but not laying on the Table of the House. That is a discretion of the Chair. I will not allow it to be laid on the Table of the House.

On 29 April 1969, during a discussion on the calling attention regarding Telengana situation, when several members wanted to seek clarifications in spite of having spent more than half an hour, the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva observed:

...if you have something very cogent to ask, ask but you cannot read letters and papers and give information all the time to the Minister. That can be done outside or in the lobby or in the Minister's room but here the purpose is only for asking questions or clarifications and nothing more and I, with your cooperation, seek to enforce this rule. I hope I will get the cooperation of the House.

On 29 July 1969, Shri Rajnarain made certain remarks about the Secretariat in connection with the inclusion of certain questions in the list of questions. Some members took objection to those remarks as they

considered them to be derogatory, upon which the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva observed :

...You cannot cast aspersions on the Secretariat on the floor of the House.

The above instances substantiate her role as the able arbitrator of the Proceedings of the House. These also speak of the ability and capability of Smt. Violet Alva who consolidated the parliamentary and democratic traditions.

As has been mentioned earlier, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla became the second woman member of the House to have been elected to the august position of Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha. Her first term lasted just for one year, i.e. from 25 January 1985 to 20 January 1986. Even during this short span, the magnitude of her contribution was remarkable. Following the democratic and parliamentary traditions, she conducted the proceedings of the House very ably and upheld its dignity and privileges. The following instances prove the point.

On 30 January 1985, when the discussion on the motion to consider the Punjab Appropriation Bill, 1985 was going on, a member demanded that they (Opposition) be given time, if another member who was speaking then was given more time. Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla observed that when so many people spoke from that side (Opposition), naturally some people wanted to speak from this side (Treasury Benches) also. This testifies to her role as the upholder of the rights of all the sections of the House.

On 14 March 1985, during the discussion on the Handloom (Reservation of Articles Production) Bill, 1984, Shri Jaswant Singh raised a point of order. The Deputy Chairman, Dr.(Smt.) Najma Heptulla who was presiding then listened to him carefully. She disallowed the point of order stating that it did not pertain to the discussion on the Bill. She also observed that a point of order could not be raised on a matter which was discussed at some other time.

On many occasions, when members while participating in the proceedings deviated from the rules, practice and procedure of the House, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla tried to effectively enforce them. On 13 August 1985, when a member made a special mention, other members demanded that the concerned Minister must make a statement on the issue. Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla observed:

It is never done in special mentions that the Minister replies immediately. We are not going to deviate from our policy or

whatever position we took in the House, your matter is being noted. Fortunately, the Minister is here. So directly he must have heard it. He must have heard it definitely and you will get the answer in due course. You cannot just ask anybody to give an answer immediately. Please don't ask for such a thing which is not done.

On 17 December 1985, Shri F. M. Khan wanted to raise an issue of some irregularities in election in Karnataka. When he was not permitted by the Chair, Shri Khan attempted to sit in dharna inside the House. At this Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla ruled :

I am not concerned with what happens outside the House. I am concerned with what happens here inside the House. You cannot come over here and sit.

Even after that when Shri Khan insisted on making his point, the Deputy Chairman said :

I will not allow you to make a point about something which has not happened in the House.

Disallowing Shri Khan to say anything further, the Deputy Chairman reiterated:

Nothing will be recorded. You go and speak to the Election Commission... or whatever you want to say you can speak to me in the Chamber. It may be a matter of one minute, half a minute or one moment. I am not going to allow you to speak about something that has happened outside. If you want, afterwards you can come and tell me, but not on the floor of the House. Please sit down and abide by my ruling.

On 20 December 1985, during the discussion on a motion of the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 1985, some members interrupted the member who was delivering his speech. The Deputy Chairman, Dr.(Smt.) Najma Heptulla immediately defended the member's right to speak and observed that all the members belonging to every party have a right to speak what they like.

As the custodian of the dignity of the House, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla has, time and again, reminded the members about the need to maintain the decorum on the floor of the House. During the discussion on the Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill, 1985 some members made derogatory and unpleasant remarks against one other.

Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, after the discussion on the Bill was over, observed:

...I would like to mention to the members that there were certain derogatory and unpleasant remarks made against each other. The Bill was very serious, as the Home Minister has said, and the discussions should have been kept up to the standard. The House is known as the House of Elders and it is not becoming of the elders to use such remarks against each other.

After this observation was made, two members tendered unqualified apology and the then Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs shared the concern of the Deputy Chairman and assured that dignity of the House would be maintained.

Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil was the third woman member to have been elected to the august office of Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha on 18 November 1986. Her term of office lasted till 5 November 1988. Warm felicitations were offered to her in the House on 18 November 1988. Sharing the sentiments expressed by the members, Shri R. Venkataraman, the then Chairman of Rajya Sabha, said:

I join the Prime Minister and Leaders of various groups in offering my felicitations to Smt. Pratibha Patil and I welcome her to this seat. She brings to her in the discharge of her new responsibilities a very rich and vast experience. She has been a member. She has been a Minister. She has sat in the Opposition and she has had the experience of representing India in some of the most important conferences relating to women's rights. She has been a representative in the Nairobi Conference. She has represented India in the Conference on the Status of Women in Austria. And she has visited a number of other countries. Therefore, her experience is very vast and very rich. I am quite sure that she will be of very help and will be a sort of relief to me also. I offer my felicitations and wish her a very successful career.

Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil conducted the proceedings of the House with grace and dignity and consolidated the parliamentary traditions. Her rulings, observations, directions and remarks proved her effectiveness as the Presiding Officer of the Council of States.

On 1 December 1986, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Shri Chintamani Panigrahi made a statement regarding the killings of innocent bus passengers in Punjab on 30 November 1986. Some

members wanted the Minister of Home Affairs, Shri Buta Singh to be present there so that they could seek clarification from him. Thereupon, the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil observed :

The Minister is in the other House. He cannot be present in both the Houses at one and the same time. If it is possible for him to come today, he will do so. Otherwise, he will reply tomorrow.

Prof. C. Lakshmanan wanted to know whether the Minister of State would reply to the clarifications that the members might seek on the statement. The Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Shri M.M. Jacob also wanted that in the interest of the whole House the Minister of Home Affairs should reply to the clarifications the next day as he was busy in the other House.

Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil further observed :

...because we are discussing very serious issue, in the morning also, putting all conventions aside, the Chairman himself has moved a sort of resolution and everybody agreed with him. So we need not quote this convention at this juncture. And I would like the members to put forth their views if they want, and if they want to seek any clarification they can do so. If the Minister of Home is available he would come. Otherwise, he will reply tomorrow morning. If you want to seek any clarification, I am ready to allow.

On 11 March 1987, Shri Jaswant Singh, participating in the discussion on the Budget (General) 1987-88, alleged that the Prime Minister who was also the Finance Minister had presented the Budget without reading it properly. The Deputy Chairman, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil ruled out the allegation, saying:

When any Minister makes a statement it is presumed that he has read it. You cannot say that the Prime Minister has not read it.

On 20 April 1987, Shri K. Mohanan was initiating a short duration discussion on the reported decision of the Government to institute an inquiry into the involvement of commission agents in certain defence deals. The Deputy Chairman objected to the use of unparliamentary words in his speech and ruled for the expunction of a particular word. Shri Jaswant Singh defended the use of that word on the ground that the word was not unparliamentary.

After carefully listening to the point raised by Shri Jaswant Singh, she remarked:

I have followed what you said. In the list of unparliamentary expressions which have been given, if it is referred to a Minister, it is unparliamentary. And that is why it is expunged.

Further replying to the query of a member whether the use of that word with reference to a party was unparliamentary or not, the Deputy Chairman observed :

Please sit down, I am giving a ruling on that also. Even with reference to a party if you say that, even that is unparliamentary.

On 28 July 1987, two notices of breach of privilege against the Prime Minister for misleading the House were received by the Deputy Chairman. One notice was given by Shri Jaswant Singh and the second notice was given by Shri Dipen Ghosh and others. They demanded the suspension of question hour so that the privilege motion could be taken up immediately. Listening to the submission and analysing the points raised by members, the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil gave the following ruling:

Now I am giving my ruling. My ruling is that the question hour cannot be suspended.

On 11 August 1987, Shri Jaswant Singh, while participating in the discussion on the motion relating to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Bofors Contract, referred to certain newspaper reports. This provoked the Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence, Shri Shivraj Patil to intervene. The Minister while referring to the Rules and conventions of the House said that statements made and reports referred to should be authenticated. Therefore, the member cannot refer to the newspaper reports.

Listening carefully to the contention of other members like Shri V. Gopalsamy and Shri Ram Awadesh Singh in favour of referring to newspaper reports, the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil observed :

Let me speak. Unless a report is authenticated, it cannot be quoted. However, if there is any report, it can be referred to and if it is not correct, the Government can contradict.

On 12 August 1987, during the debate on the motion for appointment of a Committee of the Houses to enquire into the Bofors contract, Shri Satya Pal Malik sought the permission of Smt. Patil who was

presiding over the House, to participate in the debate as per the assurance of the Chairman. For want of time she could not allow him to participate in the debate. Shri P. Upendra pleaded with her to allow Shri Malik to speak. Shri Lal K. Advani, Shri Dipen Ghosh also supported Shri P. Upendra, by raising points of order. Disallowing Shri Satya Pal Malik to participate in the debate, she observed:

You wanted to say that the hon'ble member should be permitted. The hon'ble member belongs to the Congress(I) Party. The Congress(I) Whip gave a list of speakers, but due to lack of time they have withdrawn the name of the remaining speakers. Therefore, the member cannot be permitted, this is a simple thing and you need not raise all these things here.

On 18 August 1987, Shri Lal K. Advani was given permission by the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil to raise some points. Shri Advani pleaded with her to revise the ruling given by the Chair on 12 August 1987. The issue was that Shri Satya Pal Malik was disallowed by the Chair to participate in the Bofors debate, as the list given by Congress(I) Party did not include his name. Shri Advani pointed out that a ruling of this sort becomes a precedent which would be contrary to the precedents that have been established. Shri A.G. Kulkarni while not supporting the contention of Shri Advani said that it was always the discretion of the Chair to allow or disallow a member in order to maintain a balanced debate.

Ruling out the request of Shri Advani to revise the earlier ruling, she observed :

On August 12, 1987, when Shri Satya Pal Malik wanted to speak on the motion regarding the Joint Committee on Bofors, I did not allow him to speak. Shri L.K. Advani and other members have taken objection to my doing so. They have stated that my ruling is contrary to parliamentary practice and procedure. I wish to make it clear that it was not a ruling as such. It is a well-established practice in our House that the Chair goes by the list of speakers submitted by the Whips of the parties. Although the Chair is not bound by the list, due consideration is given by the Chair to such list while calling upon the members to speak. Further, the Chair has the right to regulate the debate and select members to take part in the debate. A member cannot insist on being called. This is amply made clear by Kaul and Shakhder in their book on page 776 from which Shri Advani has quoted some extracts in his letter to me.

Since the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs had stated that he had withdrawn the list of members from his party to speak on the motion, I did not permit Shri Malik to speak. There is no question of this being quoted as a precedent or a ruling.

On 13 November 1987, while the Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri K. Natwar Singh, was replying to a short duration discussion on Sri Lankan situation. Shri V. Gopalsamy repeatedly interrupted the Minister saying that the points raised by him are not properly replied to. At this point of time, Mirza Irshadbaig and Shri Gopalsamy engaged themselves in a verbal duel. On this, the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil remarked:

Both of you please sit down now. You should listen now. You see, there is a limit to interruption also. If you go on interrupting like this, that crosses the limit of interruption and it amounts to obstruction to the right of reply of the Minister. Mr. Gopalsamy, you have initiated the debate and now you are not ready to listen to the reply.

I am on my legs, you may, therefore, please sit down. You may not agree. When you said certain things, probably, the Minister also did not agree with your views. But he did listen patiently. And, therefore, he has listened to it. You may not agree to what he says. But that does not mean that you will not allow him to reply. Therefore, listen to him now. This is a very important matter on which not only you but the whole country wants to know what the Government is doing about it and what the policy of the Government is. Therefore, the Minister is giving the reply to the whole country and not only to one member. It is to the whole House and to the country that he is stating what the policy of the Government is. Therefore, you please do not obstruct. Otherwise, I will have to take a very serious view. Mind you please.

On 4 December 1987, while Shri N.K.P. Salve was speaking on the reported remark of the Home Minister against the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Satyanarayan Reddy objected to certain remarks made by Shri Salve. Thereupon, the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil observed:

Everybody please sit down. Mr. Reddy, Please sit down. One Minute. I would like to request the hon'ble members that if you try to raise objection to each and every word that is uttered, this is not...may be his view, and your view may not be the same

but he has a right to express his views unless and until it is unparliamentary. He should not say anything which is unparliamentary or against the Rules. But then he has a right to express his views. You cannot take objection to each and every word. You cannot carry on a discussion in this manner. So bear with him. If some different views are expressed, you have to be tolerant. You may not agree with those views. So please. I once again request all the hon'ble members to carry on the business smoothly.

On 7 December 1987, while Shri N.K.P. Salve was participating in the discussion on the reported remarks by the Home Minister against the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, he said certain things which Shri S.P. Malaviya found objectionable. Quoting rule 238 from the Rule Book he said that the conduct of those people who were in high authority could not be discussed without a substantive motion.

Ruling out the point of order of Shri Malaviya, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, who was presiding over remarked :

Shri Satya Prakash Malaviya has raised a point of order that allegation against a Chief Minister or conduct of a Chief Minister cannot be discussed unless there is a substantive motion. But for his information I would like to point out that there is no such provision of bringing a substantive motion if a Chief Minister is to be discussed. In the past on 21 December 1964, a motion was there and it was discussed against the Chief Minister of Punjab. Against the former Chief Minister of Orissa Shri Biju Patnaik, a calling attention was brought and there were some corruption charges against him and the Chief Minister's conduct was discussed.

On 7 December 1987 Shri Dipen Ghosh, while participating in a half-an-hour discussion on points arising out of the answer given to starred question No. 342 in Rajya Sabha on 1 December 1987 regarding counter-trade agreement with Bofors, made his speech unduly lengthy. As there were ten more members to participate in the discussion, the Deputy Chairman asked Shri Ghosh to sum up his speech. Shri Dipen Ghosh wondered why a half-an-hour discussion could not take a few hours when special mention could be converted into a three days debate. Thereupon, she said:

Please don't try to cast any aspersions on the Chair. It was the desire of the House from both the sides. Also, it was a very special thing.

It was something special that the Chairman had admitted. This was admitted as half-an-hour discussion with your consent. Even if you want to have seven days for it, you could seek permission. But it has been admitted as half-an-hour discussion and you have accepted it.

...You are interfering with the time of the House. Therefore, I would request you to just make your specific points for clarification.

On 1 March 1988, during the course of his speech on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, Shri Jaswant Singh accused the Government of evading truth in matters concerning the Bofors' issue as there was no mention of it in the President's Address. Shri Madan Bhatia raised a point of order submitting that as per an earlier ruling there could be no reference to Bofors. When some members objected to the point of order as the reference was not to the parliamentary Committee enquiring into the Bofors' issue, the Deputy Chairman commented :

...I feel that this Committee is of a completely different nature, different from a Joint Select Committee or any other Committee. This is a Joint Parliamentary Committee of an investigative nature. An enquiry is being asked to be done by this Committee. Secondly, it will not be possible for the Government to reply if any issue is raised here because the Government cannot reply in the absence of the Report of the Committee available to the Government. When the Government cannot reply on any issue raised here since it is under the consideration of the Committee, I think the member cannot raise the issue.

However, as this could not satisfy the agitated members, she later ruled :

...regarding what Mr. Jaswant Singh was mentioning in the forenoon, he can make a reference in a general way. But he should not refer to the specific points which are before the Committee.

Smt. Patil made all efforts to maintain the dignity and decorum of the House as its Presiding Officer. Sometimes, she used to issue stern warnings to the members who blatantly deviated from the rules. During a short duration discussion, when a member made some derogatory remarks, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil warned him immediately not to use such remarks and ordered him to withdraw them. The concerned

member had to abide by her orders by withdrawing those remarks. This shows the effectiveness with which she used to conduct the proceedings of the House.

On 29 July 1987 when the House met, Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy stood up to make a submission with the permission of the Chair regarding certain commotion and confusion which occurred in the House the day before. Suddenly, Shri Puttapaga Radhakrishna waved some papers containing some derogatory remarks against the Prime Minister. Admonishing the member for his unruly behaviour, the Deputy Chairman asked the member to withdraw from the House. When the member did not abide by the direction of the Chair, the Deputy Chairman asked the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs to move a motion under the Rules for the suspension of the member. The House unanimously resolved that he may be suspended for a week from the House. She observed :

Shri P. Radhakrishna is suspended for one week from the House.

The above example also shows the firmness with which she used to stick to her decisions and as to how she was within the parameters of parliamentary practice, procedure and democratic traditions.

As mentioned earlier, the tenure of Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil ended, on 5 November 1988. She was succeeded by Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, who was unanimously elected as the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha. On 18 November 1988, offering her warm felicitations for being elected again as the Deputy Chairman, the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was then a member of the House, expressed in his characteristic style:

A lady has taken over from a lady, this may be a matter of satisfaction but not a matter of great delight. It would be a matter of delight when a woman takes over from man. Najmaji has come back to occupy her previous office. Earlier when she was the Deputy Chairperson, I was not a member of this House but even then while sitting in the other House I had the opportunity to hear people praise her...

Najmaji hails from a noble family, an old family. Though she comes of a veteran family yet her attire is modern. As if she combines the two different eras. She has done her M.Sc. in Zoology and secured her Doctorate in Cardio-Thoracic. She is a scientist. A learned lady like her rarely joins politics.



SHRIMATI VIOLET ALVA

(19.4.1962-2.4.1966)

(7.4.1966-16.11.1969)



SHRIMATI PRATIBHA DEVISINGH PATIL
(18.11.1986-5.11.1988)



DR. (SMT.) NAJMA HEPTULLA
(25.1.1985-20.1.1986)
(18.11.1988-4.7.1992)
(10.7.1992-4.7.1998)
(9.7.1998-till date)

Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma, the then Chairman of Rajya Sabha, also congratulated her by saying :

Since she has been in touch with the methods and moods of this House, I am quite sure that she will be able to soften the ruffled tempers by her tact and charm. I once again congratulate her and wish success in office of Deputy Chairman.

On 10 July 1992, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla was elected the Deputy Chairman for the third time. Felicitating her on the occasion, Shri K. R. Narayanan, the then Chairman of Rajya Sabha observed :

Dr. Heptulla brings to the office of Deputy Chairman a great and widely-acknowledged quality of a fine intellect, rich experience, warmth and goodness of heart, sensitive understanding of parliamentary procedure and practice, patience, persuasive ability and much else. I am sure she would further enhance the dignity and distinction of the high office she has been elected to. I extend to her my best wishes for every success in the months and years ahead.

On 9 July 1998, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla was again elected unanimously. She was congratulated profusely by the Leader of the House, Leader of the Opposition and Leaders of various political parties and groups in the House and members. Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, a prominent member of the House, expressing her deep sentiments, stated :

...Sir, we in the Rajya Sabha, in the Council of States, represent not only all the States of this great nation, but also come from every class, from every facet of this vast Indian diaspora. Rising above all those differences of background, of culture, of opinion and the geographical difference, we have managed to come together over the last few years to form one big happy family...I would like to say that this spirit of the Rajya Sabha, this essential spirit of harmony in our parliamentary democracy, Najmaji has both captured and contributed to. In her handling of the House her capacity of firmness is matched only by her capacity to cajole the members into behaving well. With her quick smile and her ready wit she has defused many a potentially troublesome situations in this House.

...Najmaji has once again been elected as the Deputy Chairman of this House—not because she is a woman but because of the tremendous qualities of head and heart that she has exhibited—I am happy that a woman will adorn this high office because it

is my considered view, that, as a woman, she will lend more grace, charm and dignity to this august office and on that count also I would like to felicitate her.

Shri Krishan Kant, the then Chairman of Rajya Sabha, joined the House in congratulating Dr. (Smt.) Heptulla on her unanimous election as the Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha for another term. He observed :

...Najmaji has been a distinguished and an able presiding officer of this august House. She has succeeded in bringing her long and deep experience as parliamentarian and Deputy Chairperson to help this House conduct business in an orderly, dignified and productive manner. She has earned our respect and gratitude. Her unanimous election has displayed exemplary parliamentary statesmanship by the ruling coalition joining the Opposition proposal. This is well for our legislative system. I hope that this spirit will continue to guide our work in the House and set a healthy example for democratic functioning with elegance and dignity for parliamentary system all over the country. I wish Najmaji God-speed and continued success in the conduct of the business of this House.

During her long and outstanding tenure as the Presiding Officer of Rajya Sabha, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla has performed in an exemplary manner. She has won laurels from the members for her objectivity and impartiality. Her observations and rulings have thrown light on a number of intricate procedural aspects and helped immensely in the smooth conduct of the proceedings of Rajya Sabha. Some of the instances of rulings and observations made by her amply demonstrate her keen insight into several important parliamentary and procedural aspects.

On 3 April 1989, Shrimati Renuka Chowdhury made a special mention on the allegation of a member of the House against another on leakage of Thakkar Commission Report. During her speech, she referred to an interview in the April issue of the *Surya*, where a Minister of State implicated a Cabinet Minister in the leaking of the Report. This charge of the member provoked Shri Kalpnath Rai, Minister of State for Power, to give a personal explanation. Bringing an end to the arguments and counter-arguments of members about the Minister's right of personal explanation, the Deputy Chairman, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla observed :

You please refer to "Kaul and Shakhder". According to that, a member has a right to make his personal explanation. He is a member of this House and he is sitting here...

And he happens to be present in the House now. He has denied it also. Now, if you still feel that he has not stated the truth, the correct fact, on which you think you have a right to make a privilege issue, I think you cannot discuss it. "Kaul and Shakhder" is very clear on it. There is going to be no discussion on a personal explanation. That is the rule and that is the rule in this book. That is all.

On 3 August 1989, Shri S.S. Ahluwalia was making a special mention on revival of fundamentalism due to pact between communal and political parties. While speaking on the special mention he raised some points relating to the year 1942 and mentioned some names. Shri Gurupadaswamy and Shri P. Upendra objected to the special mention and asked the Chair whether the year 1942 is a matter of urgent public importance? Generally, special mentions are on matters of urgent public importance.

The Deputy Chairman ruled :

I want to give my ruling on your suggestion that a special mention is made on a matter of public importance. I think, communalism and fundamentalism are of public importance. That is why it was allowed.

On 13 October 1989, Shri L.K. Advani raised a point of order relating to interpretation of 'Abstention' in the electronic vote recorder while voting on a Constitution (Amendment) Bill. The Constitution (Amendment) Bills require a special majority of the House which has been defined under article 368 of the Constitution wherein it is said that the Bills have to be passed by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting. Shri Advani raised this issue as the electronic device was provided with three buttons. 'Ayes, Noes and Abstention', and his point was that if a member is present and pushes the 'Abstention' button, he is also voting and therefore, the total strength of the House, present and voting includes him. Therefore, what is crucial is not that he voted against the Bill but that he did not support the Bill. He was keen on ascertaining the Chair's interpretation of 'present and voting', and whether the strength of those members who vote for 'Abstention' is also to be computed while deciding the special majority that has voted in favour or not.

The Deputy Chairman, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla observed :

I will read out what is the legal implication. But I also want to say that in common sense voting means that you are here voting 'yes' or you are voting 'no'. 'Abstention' is for computing how

many members are present, to correct it. That is what my understanding is. I will read out the legal paper that the Secretariat has found out.

Article 368(2) of the Constitution, *inter alia* provides that a Bill to amend the Constitution is required to be passed in each House by the majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting. A point has been raised whether the member who abstained from voting can be deemed to be present and voting within the meaning of the article. In other words, the point is whether the abstention could be counted in any way for the purpose of voting. It is established that abstentions in any voting are not taken into consideration in declaring the result on any question. A member who votes 'Abstention' either through the electronic vote recorder or on voting slip or in any other manner does so only to indicate his presence in the House and his intention to abstain from voting. He does not record his vote within the meaning of the words 'present and voting'. The expression 'present and voting' refers to those who vote for 'Ayes' or for 'Noes' and not to those who are merely present but not voting either in favour or against any question before the House. This has also been the practice in this House in the past so that whenever members have abstained from voting, they have not been counted for the purpose of declaring the result of a division. Even in an election if you abstain, your vote will not be counted.

On 24 May 1990, during a discussion on a question of privilege regarding a statement made by Shri K.K. Tiwari which was derogatory to the dignity of the Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition, Shri P. Shiv Shanker, referred to a letter written by him to the Chairman in this regard. Shri Kamal Morarka protested against it and sought the ruling of the Chair.

The Deputy Chairman disallowed the reading of the letter and referred to the Handbook for Members of Rajya Sabha which says, "No member should raise in the House the subject matter of a notice or communication sent by him to the Chairman unless he has been specifically permitted by the Chairman to do so". She ruled as under :

So, I am not in a position to allow you to read the letter.

On 31 July 1991, when the House was discussing the Budget (General) 1991-92, Shri R.K. Dhawan, Shrimati Kamla Sinha, Shri Yashwant Sinha and Shri Jagesh Desai together tried to draw the attention of the Chair

to raise certain points. The members felt disappointed for not being identified by the Chair. Asking the members to take their seats, the Deputy Chairman made the following observation :

It is entirely up to the Chair who is presiding over to recognize or not to recognize. You know it better than I do...I am going to impose my right. That is it.

On 11 May 1992, Shri S. Jaipal Reddy drew the attention of the Deputy Chairman through a point of order to the replacement of a calling attention by the Finance Bill, 1992 in the list of business, when it was already decided in the Business Advisory Committee to take up the calling attention on that day. He alleged that the change in the agenda was made behind the back of the members.

Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla who was presiding over the House then, explained the compelling circumstances and the technical reason for which the change in the agenda was made. Refuting the allegation of Shri Reddy, she gave the following ruling :

...let me explain to him the procedure. Mr. Jaipal Reddy, I think there I must point out that your information, to some extent is not very correct...

To accept a calling attention, to reject a calling attention, is entirely the prerogative of the Chairman, not of the Business Advisory Committee... If the Chairman sometimes takes the opinion of the Business Advisory Committee, that is his kindness. So he allowed it on Monday, but when he realized that this is the technical difficulty, in his own wisdom he allowed that the calling attention be shifted from Monday to Tuesday.

On 12 August 1993, during a discussion on a calling attention regarding situation arising out of large scale disinvestment in Public Sector Undertakings, the Leader of the Opposition raised an objection that as the matter was related to the Ministry of Industry, it was wrong on the part of the Finance Minister to have made a statement thereon. He, therefore, demanded that the Prime Minister, who was in-charge of the Industry Ministry, should be in the House at the time of clarifications and should reply to questions seeking clarifications. Giving her ruling on this, the Deputy Chairman stated :

...you cannot have two people replying to a calling attention motion. If it was a short duration discussion, anybody can intervene. But, in this case, the Finance Minister will be responsible for answering whatever queries you ask.

On 30 December 1993, Shri Ram Jethmalani spoke on the Report of the Joint Committee to Enquire into Irregularities in Securities and Banking Transactions. Shri Madan Bhatia, Shri S.S. Ahluwalia, Dr. Abrar Ahmad and other members objected to his speaking on the issue on the ground that he was a counsel for the main accused in the case. They wanted his whole speech expunged. Thereupon, the Deputy Chairman gave the following ruling:

A member having a personal pecuniary or direct interest on a matter before the House is required, while taking part in the proceedings at that matter to declare the nature of interest.

On 12 December 1994, immediately after the papers were laid on the Table, Dr. Biplab Dasgupta raised a point regarding settlement of Babri Masjid issue. Prof. Vijay Kumar Malhotra also joined the issue and made certain observation. At this point, Syed Sibtey Razi raised a point of order regarding the desirability of discussing a subject which was pending in the Allahabad High Court. Responding to that point of order, the Deputy Chairman ruled :

...I would say that any matter which is pending before any court, which is *sub judice*, we do not take up in this House. As the Chairman Saheb has given permission to Dr. Biplab Dasgupta — I can read out the title which says 'Settlement of the Babri Masjid Issue' — we should limit ourselves to the topic. We should not go into the details of it. To talk about a settlement of any problem is permitted but let us not go into the details which may be bringing us into difficulties when the matter is pending in the court.

On 22 August 1995, when the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Shri Rajesh Pilot wanted to lay a *suo motu* statement regarding the escape of LTTE cadres from the Vellore Special Camp in North Arcot Ambedkar District of Tamil Nadu, Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan raised a point of order and objected to the Minister laying the statement on the Table of the House. She contended that it would deprive the member of their right to seek clarifications on the statement. The Deputy Chairman ruled:

In the past a statement was never laid. If there is a *suo motu* statement, it has to be read out. Since the statement is a *suo motu* statement, it has to be read out whenever the House permits him. If the time is not there then, we can fix up some other time and clarifications can follow after it has been read out...

On 30 August 1996, when the papers were being laid on the Table of the House by Shri Muhi Ram Saikia, Shri Satish Agarwal objected to the laying of Reports and asked for the reasons for the delay and demanded an explanation from the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister could not give any explanation. The Deputy Chairman then directed:

...The Ministers should come with the explanation. They have come with explanation which is not satisfactory. ... all the Ministers while laying papers on the Table of the House should not take it casually and that they should take it seriously...This is my ruling. It should not happen the next time.

On 17 March 1997, during a discussion on the Railway Budget many members sought to know about several projects some of which had not figured in the Budget proposals for the year 1997-98. The Minister for Railways said that he would not wish to comment as the projects would be discussed at length in the Standing Committee on Railways after which it would come before the House. Some members asked if the Standing Committee on Railways had the authority to amend the Budget proposals by suggesting new projects and requested the Deputy Chairman to give her ruling. The Deputy Chairman, thereupon ruled:

As far as a Standing Committee is concerned, it cannot change. It is only recommendatory in nature. It cannot change the Budget proposals which the Railway Minister has made.

On 7 December 1998, while mentioning about a Select Committee during a short duration discussion, a member was quoting from a newspaper report. When some members objected to it, the Deputy Chairman observed:

If any member speaks about the functioning of a Select Committee on his own initiative and criticizes the conduct of any member on the floor of the House, I will not permit it. But, he is not doing it himself...If he is reading from the papers, he is only quoting it. And it will come on record that it is not his allegation; it is what the newspaper has said.

On 9 March 1999, during a discussion regarding 'Need for Government to Accommodate Discussion on Important Issues', Shri Pranab Mukherjee and Shri Gurudas Das Gupta expressed a feeling that the Upper House had been bypassed in case of certain legislations. It was mentioned that several issues, even substantive issues like the Approach to the Ninth Plan, which had been approved by the National Development Council, no word had been heard from the Government. It was stated that even in areas where the House had right as a legislative body, that

right was not being accorded to it. A piece of legislation which required the endorsement of the House was never brought in. The Prasar Bharati Bill which was a legislation initiated by the Government was passed by Lok Sabha and after that it was to be introduced in Rajya Sabha. Instead, an Ordinance was issued. As per the constitutional requirement, the Ordinance had to be placed in the House for consideration either for approval or disapproval, which also was not done in the next session. Expressing his anguish, Shri Gurudas Das Gupta said that the members of the House had a feeling that they had been abandoned. The House had no opportunity to discuss the vital issues, as the Leader of the House had not given time for discussion. He requested that important issues should be discussed at length instead of just raising the matter in the zero hour. Many other members held the same view.

After listening to the views of the members, she ruled :

So far as the constitutional responsibility is concerned, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Information and Broadcasting have confirmed it. So, you rest assured...Every Government has got certain privileges and those privileges are also shared by this Government. But I still feel that, considering the sentiments of the members, any legislation, that has been passed in the other House should be brought to this House so that not only the constitutional requirement is fulfilled but propriety is also maintained. The business should not lapse and it should not appear that the business has been made to lapse. It might lapse by not your wanting it to lapse, but because of some negligence or some ignorance or whatever it may be. But it should not appear that it was purposely made to lapse. Now, you know the sentiments of the House. One never knows who sits on which side in future. So, it is better that we keep the healthy practices and the traditions of this House.

On 15 December 2000, the Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley sought permission to introduce a Bill to amend the Indian Divorce Act, 1869. Immediately, Shri Eduardo Faleiro stated that he had given a notice to oppose the Bill at the introduction stage. The Deputy Chairman, said that normally in principle, Bills were allowed to be introduced and once they were introduced, at the time of the discussion objections were raised but since the member was pleading, she was permitting him. Shri Eduardo Faleiro began to speak in detail on the issue. The Deputy Chairman maintained:

You cannot make a speech when the Bill is not introduced.

However, when Shri Faleiro insisted on opposing the Bill, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Shri Pramod Mahajan remarked in the name of opposing a Bill at the introduction stage, normally the legislative competence of the House to make a legislation is talked about. He welcomed suggestions from Shri Faleiro for the Government to improve upon the Bill and requested that it should not be treated as a discussion at the introduction level. But when Shri Faleiro insisted on continuing, she said :

You can, in your full right, either support a Bill or oppose a Bill, but the procedure is, at the time of introduction, you can oppose it when I put it, "The question is : That leave be granted to introduce a Bill...".

On 13 March 2002, the Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley made a statement on the "Supreme Court's Judgment on Symbolic Puja in Ayodhya". After the statement was made, some members wanted the Prime Minister to come to the House and reply. However, the Deputy Chairman did not accede to this demand. Some of the members said that they would listen only to the Prime Minister and not the Law Minister who had to make the Statement. Dismissing their plea the Deputy Chairman observed as under:

This is a procedure of the House...He (the Law Minister) made a statement on which everybody made certain comments. It is right. As per the tradition of Rajya Sabha, he should answer.

As the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Dr.(Smt.) Najma Heptulla has always concurred with the decision of the House on issues relating to women. Once, when the House was discussing the decision of the Business Advisory Committee with particular reference to the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Bill, 1985, many members pointed out that no woman member had been included in the Select Committee. Dr.(Smt.) Najma Heptulla also agreed to that. The then Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Shri H.K.L. Bhagat accepted the mistake of not including women members in the Select Committee. The Deputy Chairman further hoped that the Parliamentary Affairs Minister would in future take note of it.

The women Presiding Officers of Rajya Sabha have over the years contributed immensely to the orderly conduct of the House. Their flexible approach in handling ticklish procedural deadlocks in the conduct of the House and understanding of the different points of view represented in the House have gone a long way in establishing strong traditions of impartiality and strengthening democratic values.

On several other occasions she has expressed her concern for the condition of women and status of girl child in our society and has guided the House through her sagacious observations on such issues. On 4 March 1997, when the House was discussing the issue regarding foeticide in Bihar, Dr. (Smt.) Heptulla expressed her views, thus:

There have been reports of girl child being killed in the foetus itself but not only from one State, I must tell you. May be one newspaper wrote about it, but many other newspapers have written about this happening in Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Bombay or anywhere. So, I always guide my Members that when they make an important mention, they should not destroy its import by bringing in political overtones. When you say one State, it means one State. It means you are not concerned about other States, where the girl child is being killed. This is not the correct way. If you feel that a child should not be killed just because it is a girl child, please make a general statement. Otherwise, I know, it will be destroyed, because your statement will be objected to by other Members.

On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 1996, two identical resolutions for constituting a Standing Committee on both the Houses for improving the status of women were moved in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. In pursuance of these resolutions, the matter was considered by the Rules Committee (Eleventh Lok Sabha) and accordingly the Committee on Empowerment of Woman was constituted on 29 April 1997. Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla has the distinction of becoming the first Chairman of this Committee. Her tenure as the Chairman of the Committee on Empowerment of Women commenced on 6 May 1997 and came to an end on 26 April 1999.

Her sterling qualities as an eminent parliamentarian and above all as a great communicator with a farsighted vision were amply demonstrated in her speech delivered in Rajya Sabha on the occasion of the Special sitting of the House to celebrate the golden jubilee of our independence. She appealed for national unity and said:

At this historic juncture with the experience of five decades of Swaraj and with the vistas of next millennium ahead of us, this House must give voice to the nation's resolve to forge ahead with united vision towards a better future for all. Let each last citizen of this country feel proud to be an Indian. We are all part of this indivisible unity that is Indian nationality.

Her forceful and moving speech has been included in the volume, "100 Best Parliamentary Speeches 1947-1997" compiled and edited by Dr. Subhash Kashyap.

While presiding over the House she, on several occasions, has put forth valuable suggestions which have been taken note of by the Government for appropriate action. On 9 December 2003, when the motion for consideration of National Charter for Children, 2003 was being discussed, she recalled the observation that "war starts in the minds of man" and suggested that war toys and games may be banned to save our children from being influenced by negative thoughts of violence, hatred and ill-will.

The Minister for Human Resource Development described her suggestion as significant and thought that not only the House but also all those associated with producing films must take it seriously. He also assured that he would ask the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to focus attention on the suggestion.

One of the lesser known but outstanding aspects of Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla's role has been her historic assertion in the early 1990s to deepen the role of Rajya Sabha in expanding and strengthening the newly created Parliamentary Committees to examine and scrutinize the activities and policies of Ministries and Departments. She remained in the forefront in suggesting that Rajya Sabha should establish three Standing Parliamentary Committees on Human Resource Development, Industry and Labour to review the working of the respective ministries. Actually in 1989 the Lok Sabha set up and constituted three Parliamentary Standing Committees on Agriculture, Science and Technology, and Environment and Forests. On 17 August 1992 when the General Purposes Committee (GPC) of the Council of States met to discuss, among others, the issue of forming Committees on similar lines, Dr. Heptulla, while presiding over the meeting, referred to the initiative earlier at her instance to constitute such Committees by nominating members of both the Houses of Parliament. She noted that there remained large numbers of Ministries and Departments which could not be covered by the Committees set up by the Lok Sabha and therefore stressed that Rajya Sabha might take the initiative to create new Committees which would reflect the concerns of the House, its status and enable it to keep the departments of the Government under parliamentary review. Her suggestion that initially three Committees may be constituted by nominating members of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha in the proportion of 7 : 15 for scrutinising the works of the Ministries of Human Resource Development, Industry and Labour was endorsed by the G.P.C.

The Committee on Rules of Rajya Sabha in its meeting held on 18 August 1992 and presided over by Deputy Chairman Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla also unanimously opined that the three Committees be set up immediately.

In 1993 seventeen Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committees were created to examine *inter alia*, the demands for grants of different Ministries and Departments. The draft rules in this regard, framed by Lok Sabha suggested that only members of those Committees belonging to the House of the People would participate in the voting. To discuss and finalise the rules concerning those Committees the joint meeting of the Rules Committees of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha took place on 11 March 1993 under the Chairmanship of the then Chairman of Rajya Sabha Shri K.R. Narayanan. For the first time in the history of our Parliament the Rules Committees of both the Houses met and the Chairman Shri Narayanan underlined the need to reflect the equality of the two Houses notwithstanding the primacy that Lok Sabha has with regard to money matters.

Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla attended that historic meeting and made important contributions for its success. Taking into account the fact that Rajya Sabha is a permanent body and members are drawn not only from the political field but also from among those distinguished sections of society who have excelled in the fields of literature, science, art and social service she suggested that some Committees should function under the overall control of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha and some under the Speaker, Lok Sabha.

She has often raised the issue of granting adequate financial powers to Rajya Sabha by amending the Constitution. Such view points and the vision amply reflects the emerging thoughts for further strengthening Rajya Sabha in our bodypolity.

Her distinguished parliamentary career and significant contributions to enrich parliamentary traditions further elevated her to the unique position of the President of the Council of the International Parliamentary Union during October 1999 and September 2002. She has the distinction of becoming the first woman ever to be elected to this office in the 110 year history of the IPU. She is now honorary President of the Council of the IPU for life. As the President of the IPU Council, she pioneered the initiative to organize a Conference of the presiding Officers of legislative bodies of many countries in New York and presented a report on parliamentary dimensions to the United Nations prior to its millennium summit. Earlier in 1997 she took the initiative to organize a Specialised Inter-Parliamentary Conference, in the Central Hall of Parliament, on the theme 'Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics'. Apart from her present role as Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, she is now serving as the President of the Indian Council for Cultural relations. A many splendoured personality, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla has thus played important roles both inside and outside the country and distinguished herself as a parliamentarian and Presiding Officer.

Role of Women Members in strengthening parliamentary traditions

Woman in India has a special role. She is the upholder of tradition and she must also be usher for modernity. Her task is to be a vehicle for social reform and the bringing in of a new society.

—Smt. Indira Gandhi

The effectiveness and success of any institution rests on its orderly functioning and the extent to which it adheres to standards of discipline, dignity and regard for foundational norms and values. This is particularly so of the parliamentary institutions which embody the will of the people and constitute the fora of democracy to carry out among other activities, the principal task of legislation and scrutiny of the executive. Erosion of these values and norms leads to the erosion of parliamentary institutions. Therefore, they have always been considered sacrosanct and efforts have been made to preserve, protect and defend them.

On 25 November 1949, when our Constitution was adopted Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had asked, "if we wish to maintain democracy... what must we do?" Replying to this question, he said, "...first thing in my judgement we must do, is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives". Stating that "when there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods," he remarked that such methods in the context of the availability of constitutional methods "are nothing but the grammar of anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us". The views expressed by Dr. Ambedkar about the successful functioning of democracy more than five decades ago, are all the more relevant for the functioning of democratic institutions in the present context.

During more than five decades of the functioning of our parliamentary system, women members have not only contributed immeasurably to the proceedings of the House by expressing their deep concern for social

causes and other topical issues but they have always been conscious of their roles in maintaining dignity and preserving conventions and traditions of the House.

The participation and parliamentary initiatives of women members of Rajya Sabha have always remained within the stipulated parameters of the parliamentary practice and procedures. Their respect for Chair and adherence to the conventions and customs of the House and the overall parliamentary traditions have been exemplary. They have done so not only as a matter of course but also in trying circumstances which witnessed conflicting interpretations of rules and disorderly scenes. Some of the instances narrated below will illustrate the above mentioned point.

Smt. Indira Gandhi during her concurrent tenure as the Prime Minister of India and member of Rajya Sabha, pronounced in clear terms her respect and reverence for parliamentary traditions and customs. On 27 August 1966, while intervening in the discussion on the Motion regarding Fifty-fifth Report of the PAC she referred to the charges leveled against the Government officials by some members on the floor of the House and said:

It has been a custom that the names of the officials will not be taken on the floor of the House because they are not here to defend themselves. As with Ministers or anybody else or with officials if they are guilty, if anything comes up against them, an enquiry will be made and if they are guilty they will be punished.

On 17 November 1966, she reiterated the same point while intervening in the discussion on the Motion regarding Statement made in connection with the demonstration near Parliament House on 7 November 1966. She maintained:

The responsibility of the Government for whatever the Government does or does not do is that of the Minister concerned and it is, I think, a convention also that we do not either praise or criticise a Government servant on the floor of the House because it is not possible for him to reply for himself.

Again, during the above mentioned discussion she intervened and emphasized on upholding the parliamentary convention which required that if a Minister wants to make a statement at the time of his resignation and if at that time Parliament is sitting it is better that he or she makes a statement on the floor of the House rather than in the press. The observations of the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi were made when a member referred to the resignation of the then Minister of Home

Affairs, Shri Gulzarilal Nanda and his statement to the press to that effect. To underline the importance she attached to the parliamentary conventions, her observations are quoted below:

I would like to urge that we should observe that convention that if a Minister wishes to make any statement, if a Minister resigns when the Parliament is sitting, it is much better that he makes a statement on the floor of the House rather than in the Press.

* * *

This was the convention before. I think during Speaker Mavalankar's time, Dr. Ambedkar made such a statement and that statement was shown to the Prime Minister as well as to the Speaker of the House before it was made. And I think the same procedure was followed at the time of Dr. Deshmukh's resignation and I personally think that this is a very good convention which we should follow.

Apart from being a healthy convention for us to accept this sort of procedure, I feel that it would enable us to keep to certain proprieties.

On many other occasions women members of Rajya Sabha have held the Chair in high esteem and bowed to its rulings.

On 18 December 1967, while participating in the discussion on the Motion regarding Food Situation, Smt. Lilavati Munshi delivered her speech. The Chairman, knowing that she had spoken beyond her time limit asked her to stop. She begged for two more minutes to speak and continued her speech. The Chairman asked her to conclude her speech. Immediately, Smt. Lilavati Munshi stating that the Chair could have allowed one or two more minutes said, 'I bow to your ruling'.

On 1 December 1959, when a member gave notices of amendments to the Haj Committee Bill, 1959 at the time of its consideration in the House the Deputy Chairman ruled that these were belated and also opposed by a member. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur commented that if amendments did come even a little later then technically they were admissible, they should not be objected to. But she added, "We have to abide by your ruling and even if it is a technical ruling, I do not question it."

On 6 August 1969, a member raised the matter regarding election of the Chairman of Rajya Sabha and said that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House had not consulted the Opposition parties in putting up the candidate for the post. Other members also joined the issue. The Vice-Chairman sitting in the Chair allowed the matter to be raised.

In this context, Smt. Yashoda Reddy said that it is a convention that the Leader of the Party or the Prime Minister consults the Opposition members and if possible, arrive at an agreed candidate whether it is for the post of President or Vice-President. She added that parties can decide on their own nominees and afterwards they could vote for them if they like or not vote for them but this issue cannot be raised in Rajya Sabha in this way because the Rajya Sabha is not concerned with the selection of the candidates either for the President or for the Vice-President's post. She also expressed surprise as to how the Chair had allowed the matter to be raised and at the same time, she bowed to the decision of the Chair.

Divergence of opinions and dissensions are the essential features of a democratic system. These do not stall the progress of democracy, rather they represent the diversity of views and liberal aspects which are required for smooth functioning of a parliamentary system. A few examples cited above reveal that women members have given due regard to the Chair, even though sometimes, their points of view differed from those of the Presiding Officers.

Women members of Rajya Sabha have also voiced their concern for strengthening parliamentary traditions and conventions, occasionally, in their writings. Smt. Parvathi Krishnan, who became member of Rajya Sabha, as early as 1954, emphasizing the importance of proper conduct, said, "A great deal did depend on the manner in which we women conducted at all levels. And the women members of Parliament did, indeed, conduct themselves with both decorum and ability."

Smt. Kanak Mukherjee, a leading woman member of Rajya Sabha, who was a member of the House for two successive terms and was also a member of the Panel of Vice-Chairmen observed in one of her articles:

Parliament is the embodiment of Indian democracy. And the most attractive part of the Parliament is its debates. Many of the top most political leaders of the country are assembled here. Here in the House is reflected the great political, intellectual and cultural heritage of our great nation. And the true image of the Parliament is created through the debates. Debates on constitutional matters, on Budget, economic and defence policies, on various social, political and cultural subjects and on Bills comprise the main contribution of the members of Parliament as the representatives of the people.

...Oratory in parliamentary debates is a much cherished virtue which has to be acquired by the learned members of the

Parliament through continuous and sustained process of self-education and development. The House is not an ordinary mass gathering to be addressed by political leader, but a prestigious place of high dignity and honour where only the selected few of the country exchange their views and opinions, express the wishes of the people to promote their democratic rights as promised by the Constitution, and ultimately to bring social changes for better life of the people.

Another woman member of Rajya Sabha, Smt. Veena Verma also raised this issue. Referring to the glorious history of Indian Parliament, she said that parliamentary values and conventions were scrupulously upheld earlier. She further said:

There is a need to create awareness towards parliamentary functioning. Impartiality is also essential in the entire process. It has generally been observed that some members take advantage of their stronger vocal cords and interrupt the debates. Therefore, in order to establish healthy parliamentary conventions, a code of conduct for members is required to be formulated.

I have seen that some lady MPs have shown a craving for a change and a strong will to put forward their point of view effectively at the proper time; and they have shown acute anxiety to follow healthy traditions of the Parliament. This has generated a hope for a better future.

The need to have a Code of Conduct for members which has been highlighted in the aforesaid para, was being felt for quite a long time. This issue was also discussed at various fora. Finally, a Code of Conduct for members was formulated which *inter-alia*, lays down that—

The Members of Rajya Sabha should acknowledge their responsibility to maintain the public trust reposed in them and should work diligently to discharge their mandate for the common good of the people. They must hold in high esteem the Constitution, the Law, Parliamentary Institutions and above all the general public. They should constantly strive to translate the ideals laid down in the Preamble to the Constitution into a reality.

Women Presiding Officers have also played a significant role in strengthening and preserving parliamentary conventions, norms and etiquette. Rulings and observations made by them on these aspects prove this point effectively.

On 27 March 1985, during a debate on the motion seeking revocation of the Proclamation issued by the President on 6 October 1983, under article 356 of the Constitution, in relation to the State of Punjab, the speech of Shri Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandare was interrupted and there were some altercations between some members. Shri Nirmal Chatterjee rose on a point of order seeking withdrawal of certain remarks by Shri Deba Prasad Ray. The Deputy Chairman, Dr.(Smt.) Najma Heptulla who was presiding over requested the members to maintain peace. She assured the members that she would see the record and if anything was derogatory to any member, she would expunge it.

Afterwards, before the adjournment of the House for the day, she gave her ruling with the following observations :

Before we adjourn the House, I would like to mention to the members that there were certain derogatory and unpleasant remarks made against each other. The Bill was very serious, as the Home Minister has said, and the discussions should have been kept up to the standard. But I think the climate outside is sometimes very hot, the summer is coming and it might have affected us—some of the members. I only request that considering age-wise we might be very young now but this House is known as the House of Elders, and it is not at all becoming of the Elders to use such remarks against each other.

I have seen the records and we will remove those remarks, but I would request the members in future to restrain themselves from using such a language. After all we are living in a democracy and we are very proud of it. Everybody has a right to defend and we can express our view point without shouting or interrupting.

On 2 January 1991, Shri Gurudas Das Gupta called the attention of the Minister of Home Affairs to the communal situation in the country and the action taken by Government in regard thereto. When the Minister for State in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Shri Subodh Kant Sahay, answered to the calling attention before the members spoke, Shri S. S. Ahluwalia raised a point of order questioning whether it was a convention for the Minister to speak first. The Deputy Chairman, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla observed :

Do not argue; you do not know. Unfortunately, we did not have many calling attentions. So, the members have forgotten the procedure for calling attention. When the member calls the attention of the Minister, the Minister has to reply to that and

then everybody has to ask questions. This is the rule not only the rule but convention, procedure, everything. It is right. If there are more calling attentions we will remember it.

On 3 January 1991, some members were demanding a statement from the Government on a reported excise scandal involving crores of rupees. As the Finance Minister and the Leader of the House, Shri Yashwant Sinha was reacting to the demand, some members from the Opposition interrupted him repeatedly. Thereupon, the Deputy Chairman, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla ruled:

Do not interrupt. He is the Leader of the House. He has a right to speak. This is the convention of this House...When the Leader of the House is on his legs, the convention of the House is that nobody will interrupt him and I am going to uphold that convention of this House.

On 12 August 1993, when Shri Mentay Padmanabham wanted to raise a point of order regarding the procedure and how the House was to be conducted, the Deputy Chairman ruled :

The conduct of the House, you cannot discuss it on the floor of the House... This is not the forum where you can discuss the conduction of this House...

All the three women Presiding Officers, namely, Smt. Violet Alva, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla and Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil have successfully conducted the proceedings of the House while giving rulings of significance on several procedural matters, always keeping in view the traditions and conventions of the House. Contributions of these women Presiding Officers, to the strengthening of parliamentary values, have been acknowledged profusely.

Smt. Violet Alva was the first woman Presiding Officer of Rajya Sabha. She was the Deputy Chairman of the House for two terms. Her second term began in April 1966. On this occasion, warm felicitations were offered to her in the House. While reciprocating, Smt. Alva underlined the need to preserve the healthy norms for debates and conventions of the House. She said:

...This House has got an outstanding record of having worked within the frame work of the well-established norms of parliamentary practices. I do not admit that one who sits in the Chair must be impartial. I do also welcome the heat in the debate, for, without the heat in the debate, solutions are not easy but one must bear in mind that when tempers fly in the heat of the

debate, one must know that we have given into ourselves a democratic set-up. Whether it be the other side or this side that sits in the Opposition, both have jointly to work to solve the many ills that this country suffers from and so one who sits in the Chair needs a lot of understanding and co-operation. Hon'ble members have assured me and I feel sure that they will continue to give me this co-operation and understanding. On my side, I shall give to the fullest measure this understanding and co-operation within the framework of the healthy conventions we have laid in this House and the Rules of Procedure that we have given unto ourselves.

Highlighting her experience as the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla referred to some important aspects which are required to be followed for utilizing the precious time of the House purposefully. She said:

When I became a member of Parliament, I was eager to put forth my view, was impatient and prone to get agitated in discussions. It was only when I got elected as the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha that I got my experience as to how it feels to be on the other side of the members' Benches. My long tenure as a Deputy Chairman developed in me the art of being patient, to be able to listen to all views—both from the Treasury benches and those from the Opposition, views of all political colours. Never to be agitated myself, and yet try my level best to calm down agitated members. While in the Chair, I realized the essence of time. I came to the conclusion that one has to develop the art of being articulate and precise. If a member cannot put across his views in 5 minutes or so, he just might not be able to do the same given all the time in the world. Here I would like to mention the speeches of our late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi who used to speak briefly yet precisely. I still recall her reply to a No-confidence Motion in Lok Sabha which, according to me, remains still yet a memorable reply. Time of the House should not be wasted in irrelevant arguments, we should realize that by doing so, not only time but a lot of public money is wasted.

Thus, the role of women parliamentarians, both as members and as Presiding Officers, has been of tremendous importance in conserving the traditions of the House, preserving parliamentary norms, and upholding the democratic values, which form the foundation of a successful parliamentary system.

Women Members and Wit and Humour in Rajya Sabha

Legislative work, no doubt is serious business but sometimes, legislators end up making it a grim business. No doubt, members should avoid flippancy in discourse, but a sense of humour goes a long way in enlivening the proceedings and enhancing the effectiveness of an argument.

—Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla

Notwithstanding the serious debates and discussions in the House to which the women members contributed immensely, the lighter aspects of their personalities were in full display on the floor of the House. The surcharged atmosphere of Rajya Sabha with serious deliberations and brain teasing technicalities of law and procedure has been punctuated with wit and humour of the women members of Rajya Sabha. Some of the instances of wit and humour are narrated below.

Much heat was generated in the House when the motion to consider the Report of the Import and Export Policy Committee was taken up for consideration. To ease the tension which held a sway over the House, Shri Sitaram Jaipuria told the Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva:

I find myself in a little difficult position immediately to speak after the motion has been moved with such a fiery approach.

Another member added by saying: 'you can also have some firing'.

To this, Shri Jaipuria said :

My friend is accustomed to fire works. I would say that the turn was that of my friend, Mr. Ramamurti, but when I requested him to allow me to speak first, as I will have to go away early, he readily agreed to it. When I told him how he had so readily co-operated, he said : 'I want to fire you also'. It appears that firing is going to be in this side and on that side also.

Thereupon, Deputy Chairman, Smt. Violet Alva remarked: 'you have submitted yourself to that'.

On 14 December 1959, when the Dowry Prohibition Bill, 1959 was being discussed Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand humorously remarked:

I should really think that the proper title of this bill should—it is not because Mrs. Pushpalata Das dislikes the word 'dowry', but because of realities—"Bride Groom Black Marketeers Bill", because that is what it comes to.

When the House was discussing the Hindu Succession Bill a member asked as to why sons do not take their names after the name of the mother instead of the father. To this, Smt. Lakshmi Menon replied that in some cases sons do take their names after the names of their mothers. Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand then added: 'whoever is more illustrious'.

While making his special mention on demand to enquire into the hiring of Fairfax Group afresh, Shri Subramanian Swamy addressed Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla as "Madam Chairman". A member objected to this and said:

She is not the Chairman.

The Deputy Chairman, however, clinched the issue by saying :

I do not feel anti towards men. You are free to call me "Chairman" or "Chairwoman", anything you like.

During supplementaries to a question regarding congestion in the geostationary orbit in space, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla wanted to know from the Minister as to what the Government of India was doing to prevent foreign probing satellites, which were being put in the geostationary orbit. Shri Piloo Mody said that they were going to put Usha into orbit. Smt. Usha Malhotra immediately reacted as follows:

I do not mind going provided you come along so that I could leave you there and come back myself.

Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla who had resigned from the post of Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, was thanking the Chairman and other members who had made kind references to her while bidding her farewell. Speaking on the occasion Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla alluded the following remarks to Shri Asoke Sen in a lighter vein :

I had some of the very enlightened moments in the House which I remember such as our Law Minister, Mr. Asoke Sen, who once

said that in the other House, he forgets sometimes and calls the Speaker as 'My Lord'. Now, I won't be in the Chair to give him opportunity to call me 'My Lady'.

Participating in a debate on the University Grants Commission (Amendment) Bill, Shri Ramchandra Bhardwaj, while agreeing with the fixing of age limit of 65 years for the Chairman of the UGC suggested that the tenure of educationists should be extended upto 70 years of age, provided the persons concerned had been medically declared fit because with growing years they become more and more accomplished and experts in their respective fields. The Deputy Chairman* quipped:

Age is a quality of mind.

Once Rajya Sabha was discussing the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Bill after it discussed the Coffee and Tea Bills, the other day. Smt. Mona Hensman commented, thus :

There is usually coffee and tea served after marriages in this country but in this House we have decided to work the other way, in that we are now having the Marriage Bill before us and had the Coffee and Tea Bills passed by the House the other afternoon. Sir, I am grateful to the House for taking so much interest in marriage. It shows that the Ministers have been so happily married that they think of bringing forward this Bill to make others, perhaps less fortunate than themselves happy too.

At the time of the discussion on the Indira Gandhi National Open University Bill, the Deputy Chairman, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla was presiding. She pressed the time bell when a member's time span to speak on the said Bill was about to be over. But the concerned member requested for three more minutes, to which Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla assented. After that the member concerned commented that when the bell rings it gives complete full stop, not even a semicolon. Thereupon Deputy Chairman remarked:

I wish it has the same effect on everyone. For some people it acts as an incentive.

While Shri H. Hanumanthappa started seeking clarifications on the statement made by the Minister of State in the Department of Railways, Shri Madhavrao Scindia regarding setting up of Rail Coach Factory at

*Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla.

Kapurthala in Punjab, some women members had gathered together behind the Minister's seat. They were talking among themselves which distracted the Minister's attention. This led to the following repartee:

Shri Madhavrao Scindia : Madam, I seek your protection. These five hon'ble lady members are harassing me.

The Deputy Chairman, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla : I would request the hon'ble members to go to their seats.

Shri H. Hanumanthappa : Fortunately, a lady member is in the Chair.

The Deputy Chairman : I think because of the lady members the Minister wants to run his train faster.

When the House was discussing the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Bill, an hon'ble member Shri J.S. Bisht said:

In fact in Europe, in England, in America and other countries there are regular clubs of henpecked husbands and I am sorry there is no such club in this land. Otherwise, they would have voiced their feelings very strongly against this Bill. Their number must be lakhs and lakhs in the country.

Replying to this Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand replied:

I hope the hon'ble member now speaking will be, the Chairman of that future club.

While taking up further discussion on the Budget (General) the then Deputy Chairman, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil said, "Smt. Jayalalitha Jayaram had not completed her speech yesterday. She may continue now." Thereupon, Miss Jayalalitha said that she is 'Miss' and not 'Smt.'. To this Deputy Chairman added, 'Even Miss can be called as Smt.'. Then Miss Jayalalitha quipped: 'I did not know it'.

When Smt. Yashoda Reddy was speaking, she was interrupted by Shri Bhupesh Gupta. Shri D. Thengari, the Vice-Chairman advised Shri Gupta not to interrupt ladies. Sympathising with Shri Gupta*, Smt. Yashoda Reddy remarked :

Unfortunately for Mr. Gupta he has no ladies to interrupt him in his house. So he seeks to interrupt on the floor of the House.

*Shri Gupta was a bachelor.

Reacting to the comment, Shri Bhupesh Gupta said :

The only thing I would ask the lady is, can experienced men only interrupt? She says that I have no ladies at home.

Clarifying her intent, Smt. Reddy said :

My comment came because somebody said: 'Do not interrupt ladies.' I said: 'Give him this much of leniency as he has no ladies in his house.' I meant nothing more.

Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla has done her Ph.D. in Zoology which has often been used humorously by her while she was in the Chair. Once while participating in a calling attention on the situation arising out of floods, droughts and other natural calamities in various parts of the country Shri Ramanand Yadav stated that in the flood affected areas animals die within one hour of consuming the grass carried by flood waters which the Deputy Chairman might not be aware of.

Thereupon, the Deputy Chairman quipped:

Animals have been my subject of study.

To this, Shri Yadav immediately retorted:

You live among them.

On another occasion, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla while on the Chair recalled an amusing conversation she had with another Member of Parliament. The conversation ran somewhat like this:

Member of Parliament : You have done your Ph. D. in Zoology, you are a Zoologist?

Deputy Chairman : Yes.

Member of Parliament : What are you doing over here?

Giving the Member of Parliament a close look up and down Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla retorted :

What do people do after qualifying as Zoologists? Where do they go?

On the election of Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla to the post of Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha for the third time felicitations were being offered by the members of various parties and groups in the House. Shri Sikander Bakht commented that he had a serious complaint in the way Dr. Heptulla was smiling when Shri Yaswant Sinha was speaking which was totally

different from the way she smiled when he himself was speaking. At this Shri Yaswant Sinha enquired as to whether he was speaking or looking at her* at that time. Shri Sikander Bakht playfully replied that he was just looking at her. Further, Shri Bakht said:

Mr. Chairman Sir, I have one more complaint. I was afraid when Mr. Chavan said that a hat trick has been performed. The point is that when youthfulness (Shabaab) becomes everlasting then it leads to monotony. We are praying to God to bestow more and more youthfulness upon you.

At this Shri N. K. P. Salve said:

Mr. Chairman Sir, Mr. Sikander Bakht is greatly mistaken. It is not a question of the manner in which one looks at somebody but also that of the intention behind it.

Shri Sikander Bakht jovially replied : My vision is quite clear.

At this point, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi humorously said : Let a parliamentary committee examine the matter.

Referring to the contest for the post of Deputy Chairman between Smt. Renuka Chowdhury and herself, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla said: "It is not for the first time that Renuka Chowdhury and I have crossed swords with each other. But that has always been the case when I am in the Chair and she is in her bench. She has been fighting for a cause which she thought was right and I have been fighting for a cause which I thought was right to keep the decorum of the House according to the rules. But this was for the first time that she and I were crossing swords with each other for the Chair. The unfortunate part in this is that the majority of male members in the House have tried to put up two women to contest. I would have been very happy to fight against a gentleman, not against a gentle lady..."

The discussion on the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Bill, 1999 took a lighter turn when Shri Nilotpal Basu pointed out instances of "new fashionable products" being insured. It went like this:

Shri Nilotpal Basu: ...I remember a very interesting anecdote. In the 30s, Madam, you must have heard of Marilyn Dietrich...

The Deputy Chairman*: In the 30s, I was not born.

*Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla

Shri Nilotpal Basu tried again:

In the 40s, if I remember right, Marilyn Dietrich was a very famous Hollywood actress. The whole world went ga-ga when the great Llyods Insurance Company of England insured one of her legs.... Now, Mr. Shirodkar is indicating 'two legs'. Maybe; I do not know. I was not born at that point of time.... The wrist of Sachin Tendulkar—it is a very interesting product—the hands of Yehudi Menuhin, who plays violin, or some such products; these are very important ones. But in a country...where the official figure of poverty level is 40 per cent...

The Deputy Chairman was nevertheless inspired to quip:

I wish somebody could insure my throat and my finger, which presses this button, because these are the two most important things in the functioning of the House.

During the discussion on the Appropriation (Railways) No. 2 Bill, 2001, Shri Khagen Das accused the former Minister of Railways* of mortgaging the nation's tomorrow for her today and said that the Railway Budget for 2001-2002 had displayed neglect, gross injustice and step-motherly treatment to the people of the North Eastern region.

Protesting at the gender terminology, the Deputy Chairman# said:

He is not a mother. He is a father. Why are you using this very gender-prone thing?

Shri Khagen Das : Madam, the reference was to the ex-Railway Minister.

The Deputy Chairman : Now, she is not here. It is 'he'. So, you may use the correct terminology as 'step-fatherly'.

Shri Khagen Das : I am not manipulating anything.

The Deputy Chairman: No, my objection is, why women should always become the target? Why should everybody say 'step-motherly'? Why can't they say, sometimes 'step-fatherly'? This is a very gender biased statement which I object to.

Prof. Ram Gopal Yadav : This privilege belongs only to the women.

*Ms. Mamta Banerjee

#Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla

The Deputy Chairman : You take it...

Prof. Ram Gopal Yadav : They are considered to be the superior species so...

The Deputy Chairman promptly retorted:

We willingly relinquish our rights to all the men.

While bidding farewell to the retiring members of Rajya Sabha on 22 August 2003, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs referred to her friendship with Smt. Shabana Azmi, a noted film actress and a retiring nominated member of the House. Expressing her deep sentiments, she said:

I have a different type of relationship with Shabana Azmi. People are often surprised to see our friendship. I have expressed this fact in her presence a number of times and today, I would like to mention before this House that she has been my favourite actress...I had never imagined that I would get a chance to work with her as a Member of Parliament, friend and colleague but when I got that chance, the introduction was turned into friendship and friendship into intimacy very soon...Today she is leaving this House and I will feel her absence but this absence will be more intensely felt by my husband because she was one of the few lady colleagues who used to sit with him in the Central Hall.

At this Shri Swaraj Kaushal* interrupted to say:

Sir, this is not the forum for making complaints. This topic has been discussed extensively at home.

Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha commented on this:

It can be termed as complaint only if she is jealous of her meeting with you.

Smt. Sushma Swaraj, however, ended the matter wittily:

This is not a complaint, Mr. Chairman. It is a feeling of greater responsibility because the little time she used to share with him will now have to be shared by me.

*Husband of Shrimati Sushma Swaraj

These witty and humorous remarks have enlivened the debates and proceedings in the House. During certain tense moments, witty observations have eased the situation. Since these remarks flow spontaneously they have an instant impact on the members cutting across party lines. Indeed lively functioning of the House owes a lot to the wit and humour of the members of the House. Without these, the proceedings would be tame and boring. Therefore, serious deliberations punctuated with lighter moments and witty and humorous remarks have gone a long way in making the Council of States more lively.

Conclusion

In the past the world has witnessed movements for the abolition of slavery, the liberation of the working class and the freedom of colonial peoples. They were revolutionary steps in the direction of democracy and in the unchaining of mankind from bondage. But the question of the emancipation and the empowerment of women cuts deep into the heart of society and symbolises a total revolution.

—K. R. Narayanan

Women's participation in legislatures is not only indispensable for the success of democracy but also for the overall progress and development of society and nation. Women's empowerment and their representation in decision making bodies is therefore considered as basic and critical to every aspect of nation building. Our leadership much before our independence had underlined the importance of women's upliftment and their active involvement with democratic institutions. In fact, participation of women in public life was considered as a fundamental pre-requisite for the improvement of women's position in society. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, while participating in the second Round Table Conference was asked a question as to whether the future legislature of India would co-opt women in its fold. In his own characteristic way, he stated that he would boycott the legislature if it did not have sufficient representation of women. He had outlined the vision of India in which women with franchise rights and equal legal status would in his words, "affect the political deliberations of the nation".

Women Members of Rajya Sabha, as this volume tries to show, have "affected the political deliberations of the nation" by actively participating in the debates and discussions of the Council of States and enriching its proceedings and the works of many parliamentary committees through their valuable contributions.

It is well known that world over approximately 10 per cent of the parliamentary position have been occupied by women. India is no exception to it. Only legislatures of Scandinavian countries with more than

30 per cent representation of women stand out in terms of women's empowerment. However, as early as 1950 our first Prime Minister in a letter to Chief Minister had expressed regret that sufficient number of women had not been elected to the Provincial Parliament and State Assemblies. Stating that "...our real and basic growth will only come when women have a full chance to play their part in public life", he asserted, "Wherever they have had this chance, they have, as a whole, done well, better if I may say so, than the average man...."

By availing of the chance to represent respective states in Rajya Sabha women parliamentarians have given an excellent account of their role in participating in debates, initiating legislation, suggesting thoughtful ideas, bringing to light issues for corrective action on the part of Government and the civil society and indicating a trend of thinking which could discern the future developments in matters of national and international significance. Even though their representation is well below the desired level, the quality and content of their ideas and contributions are testimony to their high standards and far-sighted vision. As early as 1950s they remained in forefront in putting forth suggestions which were implemented much later. It is lesser known that it was Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand a woman member of Rajya Sabha who opined in the very first session of Rajya Sabha that mid-day meals should be introduced in schools for providing proper nutrition to children. Much after the suggestion was put forward in Rajya Sabha, many States introduced mid-day meals in schools.

Many research studies have now come to the conclusion that introduction of mid-day meals have contributed in curbing drop out rate in schools. It is now considered as significant input to the promotion of literacy and education among children throughout the country. The present day fascination for mid-day meal schemes is a testimony to the importance and relevance of the idea which was advocated in the Council of States in 1952. In fact, on 28 November 2001 the Supreme Court had directed all State Governments to provide cooked mid-day meals in all primary schools within six months. On 28 November 2002 when Smt. Shabana Azmi made a Special Mention regarding implementation of mid-day meal scheme for school children and urged the Central Government to assist the State Governments to ensure implementation of the scheme the whole House associated with it. While going through the voluminous debates of Rajya Sabha, to understand the contributions of women members, one comes across numerous such examples.

It is said that Houses of parliament constitute the sounding board of the nation. Through clash of opinions many great thoughts emerge and guide the country and inspire future generations to take appropriate action.

When there is so much debate taking place inside and outside the legislature about the writing and rewriting of text books one's attention is focused on Smt. Shabana Azmi's speech delivered in the House on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2002. Her interventions captured the issue of women's empowerment and the traditional stereotypes which determine the status of women in society and which come in the way of their upliftment. While recognizing that education is one of the strongest tools of empowerment she critically analysed the contents of a particular textbook which reinforced the traditional notion that women were destined to shoulder the burden of household work and therefore ran counter to the movement for their empowerment. Giving the details, she said:

I was looking at some textbooks for first standard children. There is a question which repeatedly appears. The question is, where is mother? The reply is that mother is in the kitchen. Where is father? The reply is that he is in the office. My question is why it cannot be that when it is asked where is mother? The reply is that mother is at office. And where is father? The reply is—in the kitchen. Why it cannot be that both mother and father are in the kitchen or both are in office? We fill our children with this kind of role playing through the medium of books which need to be removed. Because often education merely reinforces gender divide.

Smt. Shabana Azmi's attempts to address the issue of gender equality draws our attention to the textbook entitled *Bal Pothi* authored by none other than Mahatma Gandhi in 1921. In that book there was a small chapter on household work through which Gandhiji intended to instruct children to share domestic responsibilities with women and understand their role beyond the four walls of home. Through an imaginary debate among a brother, sister and mother he conveyed powerful message of gender equality in 1921 the crux of which was found in Smt. Shabana Azmi's speech in 2002. Concerned sister in Gandhiji's *Pothi* expressed here desire to study and play. Her brother, reared in the traditions of a male dominated society objected to his sister's desire to pursue studies and advised her to help the mother in doing the work at home. When the sister persisted to study and play and questioned her brother as to why a girl should not do what a boy did in class rooms and playground, the brother argued by stating that he as a boy had to have education and other opportunities to grow up as a man so that he would look after the family. During that debate the mother intervened and said, "No my son you are wrong". She categorically stated that house belonged to both men and women and therefore household work had to be performed by

both men and women. Describing household work as education she mentioned that household activities such as washing clothes, sweeping the floor and cleaning the utensils kept the person concerned physically fit and enabled him or her to become independent in life. Through the chapter of a textbook Mahatma Gandhi aimed at inculcating the message of gender equality by changing the stereotyped notions of women in society. When the book was published, Gandhiji's associates alleged that such ideas would bring rebellion in families. Mahatma Gandhi, however, replied that by educating children in that manner a good society could be created. On International Women's Day in the year 2001, former first lady of India, Smt. Usha Narayanan used the summary of *Bal Pothi* in her important speech "A New Century for Women" and urged for a change of outlook and attitudes so that society could understand women's role beyond the household work and in the larger context of society, polity and nation. When Prof. Madhu Dandavate read that speech he wrote a letter to the Minister for Human Resource Development suggesting to include it in the educational curricula of all States and in all languages for character building and education of school children. The importance of Smt. Shabana Azmi's intervention is driven home with added significance when one locates it against the above background. In fact, the depth and intensity of her suggestion can be further realized if one refers to Mexico where housewives on a particular day in the year 2000 went on strike demanding that man should perform household work on that day. It is instructive to know that one of their demands was that the idea to share household work should be incorporated in the school text books for children so that they could learn the values of gender equality and grow up with a proper perspective about women's role in society.

By demanding on the floor of the Rajya Sabha that school textbooks may be changed for correct understanding of women's position and importance in society, Smt. Azmi was in fact articulating an idea which in our history was underlined by Mahatma Gandhi and which is now being highlighted at the international level.

Women members have enriched our democratic tradition through their parliamentary initiatives. By introducing Bills, Resolutions and various motions they have contributed significantly to the law making process. It is well known that one of the most important functions of Parliament is to make laws. A survey of history brings to light the bitter truth that women had hardly played any role in shaping law and legislation which governed them. In the Constructive Programme prepared by Mahatma Gandhi, to liberate our country from foreign rule, he gave prominent place to women's upliftment and lamented that "Women are in the position

somewhat of the slave of old who did not know that he could or ever had to be free". He further stated that "Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand". The sentiments and ideas were echoed by Smt. Savitry Devi Nigam on 17 July 1952. While participating in the discussion on Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 1952, she suggested for establishment of a Law Revision Commission and requested the Government to accord priority to revising those laws which were related to women. Her emphasis that laws relating to women be given primacy sprang from her conviction that women suffered because of absence of laws and legal rights for their protection and upliftment. It is in this context that one has to appreciate the role played by women members of Rajya Sabha in the law making process. It has been earlier mentioned that it was Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand, a member of Rajya Sabha during 1950s who found a lacuna in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and moved a Bill to rectify it. Eventually the Bill was adopted by Parliament and became the part of the statute book. Her role in amending a law relating to women was applauded by many members. The then member of Rajya Sabha Shri P.N. Saprú admired her vigilance in detecting a mistake in the Hindu Marriage Act and correcting it through a legislation. He then described her as "a model legislator" and wished that "...we should all take as much interest in the day-to-day work of Parliament as Dr. (Smt.) Seeta Parmanand does".

The proceedings of the Council of States are replete with such important examples which vividly demonstrate the dynamics of democracy on the floor of the House.

From the pages of this publication one could appreciate the important role played by women members in consolidating democracy and giving greater depth and content to it. However, it is unfortunate that their contributions have not been widely known. Possibly, if the seats of our legislatures are adorned by more women members, their contributions will further multiply and their rightful role as parliamentarians would be realised throughout the country. As early as in 1952, Smt. Savitry Devi Nigam had raised the issue of insufficient representation of women in Rajya Sabha and said that even if women constituted fifty per cent of the population, their presence in the House remained insignificant. On International Women's Day on 8th March 1996, the Rajya Sabha unanimously adopted a Resolution, moved by its Deputy Chairperson, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, which *inter-alia* proposed that adequate reservation of seats for women's representation in State Legislatures and Parliament be constitutionally provided. The issue of more representation

of women, as already mentioned, was taken up by our national leadership even before our independence. In 1946, Mahatma Gandhi answering a question as to whether it was necessary to have more women in elective bodies, had given a reply which is revealing and revolutionary in the context of the Bill pending in Parliament for reserving 33% seats in legislatures at the national and state levels. He said:

“I am not enamoured of equality or any other proportion in such matters... seeing, however, that it has been custom to decry women, the contrary custom should be to prefer women.... to men, even if the preference should result in men being entirely displaced by women... Women and for that matter any group should disdain patronage. They should seek justice, never favours.... for men to take a lead in this much needed reform would be not a matter of favour but a simple act of belated justice”.

The country must learn from the immense contributions of women members of Rajya Sabha and give the belated justice due to them.

ANNEXURE

TABLE 1
Number of women in Rajya Sabha and their percentage
(1952-2002)

Year	Number	Percentage
1952	15	6.94
1954*	17	7.79
1956**	20	8.62
1958	22	9.52
1960	24	10.25
1962	18	7.20
1964	21	8.97
1966	23	9.82
1968	22	9.64
1970	14	5.85
1972	18	7.40
1974	18	7.53
1976	24	10.16
1978	25	10.24
1980	29	11.98
1982	24	10.16
1984	24	10.30
1986	28	11.52
1988	25	10.59
1990	24	10.34
1992	17	7.29
1994	20	8.36
1996	19	7.81
1998	19	7.75
2000	22	9.01
2002	25	10.20

*Who's Who Rajya Sabha 1955

**Who's Who Rajya Sabha 1957

TABLE 2
Average age of women members of Rajya Sabha
(1952-2002)

Year	Average Age
1952	42.86
1954	45.41
1956	49.01
1958	48.04
1960	48.13
1962	50.07
1964	51.76
1966	51.34
1968	47.54
1970	57.21
1972	51.33
1974	49.16
1976	50.29
1978	51.68
1980	52.82
1982	54.79
1984	52.58
1986	50.71
1988	52.02
1990	47.00
1992	49.52
1994	50.07
1996	54.78
1998	58.31
2000	55.18
2002	55.04

TABLE 3
Nominated women members of Rajya Sabha
(1952-2003)

1. Shrimati Rukmini Devi Arundale (Artist), 1952-62
2. Shrimati Shakuntala Paranjpye (Social Worker), 1964-70
3. Shrimati Maragatham Chandrasekhar (Teacher and Social Worker), 1970-84
4. Shrimati Fathema Ismail (Social Worker), 1978-84
5. Shrimati Nargis Dutt (Artist), 1980-81
6. Prof. (Mrs.) Asima Chatterjee (Scientist), 1982-90
7. Shrimati Amrita Pritam (Litterateur), 1986-92
8. Shrimati Ela Ramesh Bhatt (Social Worker), 1986-88
9. Shrimati Syeda Anwara Taimur (Administrator), 1988-90
10. Shrimati Vyjayantimala Bali (Artist), 1993-99
11. Shrimati Shabana Azmi (Artist), 1997-2003
12. Dr. (Ms.) P. Selvie Das (Educationist), 1997-2003
13. Kumari Nirmala Deshpande (Social Worker), 1997-99
14. Ms. Lata Mangeshkar (Artist), 1999—till date
15. Shrimati Hema Malini (Artist), 2003—till date

TABLE 4

List of women members nominated to the
Panel of Vice-Chairmen, Rajya Sabha
(1952-2003)

1. Begum Aizaz Rasul
2. Shrimati Violet Alva
3. Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan
4. Shrimati Chandravati Lakhanpal
5. Shrimati Sharda Bhargava
6. Shrimati Savitry Devi Nigam
7. Shrimati Maya Devi Chetty
8. Shrimati K. Bharathi
9. Shrimati Pushpalata Das
10. Shrimati T. Nallamuthu Ramamurti
11. Shrimati Jahanara Jaipal Singh
12. Shrimati Tara R. Sathe
13. Shrimati Purabi Mukhopadhyay
14. Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla
15. Shrimati Margaret Alva
16. Dr. (Shrimati) Sarojini Mahishi
17. Shrimati Kanak Mukherjee
18. Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan
19. Shrimati Sushma Swaraj
20. Miss Saroj Khaparde
21. Shrimati Kamla Sinha

TABLE 5

Women Members of Rajya Sabha
(1952-2003)

Name of the Members	Period	States
1	2	3
A (1-13)		
1. Adivarekar, Shrimati Sushila Shankar	1971-72, 72-78 & 78-84	Maharashtra
2. Aizaz, Begam Rasul	1952-56	Uttar Pradesh
3. Alia, Kumari	1989-92	Uttar Pradesh
4. Alva, Shrimati Margaret	1974-80, 80-86, 86-92 & 92-98	Karnataka
5. Alva, Shrimati Violet	1952-60, 60-66 & 66-69	Mysore now Karnataka
6. Amarjit Kaur, Shrimati	1976-82 & 82-88	Punjab
7. Ammanna Raja, Shrimati C.	1962-68	Andhra Pradesh
8. Ammu, Shrimati Swaminadhan,	1957-60	Madras now Tamil Nadu
9. Amrit Kaur, Rajkumari	1957-58 & 58-64	Punjab
10. Amrita Pritam, Shrimati	1986-92	Nominated
11. Angelina, Shrimati Tiga,	1952-54	Bihar
12. Arundale, Shrimati Rukmini Devi	1952-56, 56-62	Nominated
13. Azmi, Shrimati Shabana	1997-2003	Nominated
B (14-27)		
14. Babar, Dr. (Kumari) Sarojini Krishnarao	1968-74	Maharashtra
15. Bali, Shrimati Vyjayantimala	1993-99	Nominated
16. Barthakur, Shrimati Usha	1966-72	Assam
17. Barupal, Shrimati Jamana Devi	2000 till date	Rajasthan
18. Beniwal, Shrimati Vidya	1990-96	Haryana
19. Bhadauria, Shrimati Sarla	1964-70	Uttar Pradesh

1	2	3
20. Bharathi, Shrimati K. Udaya Bhanu	1954-58 & 1958-64	Kerala
21. Bhargava, Shrimati Sharda	1952-56, 56-62 & 63-66	Rajasthan
22. Bhatt, Shrimati Ela Ramesh	1986-88	Nominated
23. Bhattacharya, Shrimati Ila	1980-86	Tripura
24. Bindumati Devi, Shrimati	1967-72	Uttar Pradesh
25. Bohidar, Ms. Pramila	2000 till date	Orissa
26. Bose, Shrimati Pratima	1975-81	West Bengal
27. Buragohain, Shrimati Bedavati	1954-60, 60-66	Assam
C (28-37)		
28. Cariappa, Shrimati Prema	2002 till date	Karnataka
29. Chakravarty, Shrimati Bijoya	1986-92	Assam
30. Chandrasekhar, Shrimati Margatham	1970-76, 76-82 and 82-84	Nominated
31. Chandresh Kumari, Shrimati	1996-2002	Himachal Pradesh
32. Chatterjee, Prof. (Mrs.) Asima	1982-84 & 84-90	Nominated
33. Chaturvedi, Shrimati Vidyawati	1966-72 & 72-78	Madhya Pradesh
34. Chavan, Shrimati Premilabai Dajisaheb	1980-84	Maharashtra
35. Chetry, Shrimati Maya Devi	1952-58 & 58-64	West Bengal
36. Chowdhury, Shrimati Renuka	1986-92 & 92-98	Andhra Pradesh
37. Chundawat, Shrimati Lakshmi Kumari	1972-78	Rajasthan
D (38-49)		
38. Dang, Shrimati Satyawati	1968-74	Himachal Pradesh
39. Das, Shrimati Mira	1990-96	Orissa
40. Das, Shrimati Monika	1980-86	Karnataka
41. Das, Dr. (Ms.) P. Selvie	1997-2003	Nominated
42. Das, Shrimati Pushpalata	1952-56 & 56-62	Assam
43. Das, Kumari Shoila Bala	1952-54	Orissa
44. Deori, Shrimati Omem Moyong	1984-90	Arunachal Pradesh
45. Deshmukh, Shrimati Vimal Punjab	1967-72	Maharashtra

1	2	3
46. Deshpande, Kumari Nirmala	1997-99	Nominated
47. Dubey, Shrimati Saroj	1998 till date	Bihar
48. Durga, Shrimati N.P.	2002 till date	Andhra Pradesh
49. Dutt, Shrimati Nargis	1980-81	Nominated
G (50-53)		
50. Gandhi, Shrimati Indira	1964-67	Uttar Pradesh
51. Gopidas, Shrimati Devaki	1962-68	Kerala
52. Guha, Dr. (Shrimati) Phulrenu	1964-70	West Bengal
53. Gurcharan Kaur, Shrimati	2001 till date	Punjab
H (54-57)		
54. Habibullah, Shrimati Hamida	1976-82	Uttar Pradesh
55. Hema Malini, Shrimati	2003 till date	Nominated
56. Hensman, Shrimati Mona	1952-56	Madras now Tamil Nadu
57. Heptulla, Dr. (Smt.) Najma	1980-86, 86-92, 92-98 & 98 till date	Maharashtra
I (58-60)		
58. Imam, Shrimati Aziza	1973-76 & 76-82	Bihar
59. Indira, Shrimati S.G.	2001 till date	Tamil Nadu
60. Ismail, Shrimati Fathema	1978-84	Nominated
J (61-65)		
61. Jain, Shrimati Chandrika Abhinandan	1990-96	Maharashtra
62. Jamuna Devi, Shrimati	1978-80	Madhya Pradesh
63. Jayaram, Miss Jayalalitha	1984-89	Tamil Nadu
64. Joshi, Miss Kumudben Manishanker	1973-76, 76-82 & 82-85	Gujarat
65. Joshi, Shrimati Sudha Vijay	1984-90	Maharashtra
K (66-77)		
66. Kailashpati, Shrimati	1985-88 & 88-94	Uttar Pradesh
67. Kaul, Shrimati Krishna	1982-88	Uttar Pradesh

	1	2	3
68.	Khan, Shrimati Shyam Kumari	1963-68	Uttar Pradesh
69.	Khan, Shrimati Ushi	1976-82	Rajasthan
70.	Khaparde, Miss. Saroj	1972-74, 76-82, 82-88, 88-94 & 94-2000	Maharashtra
71.	Khatun, Kumari Sayeeda	1986-92	Madhya Pradesh
72.	Kidwai, Shrimati Anis	1956-62 & 62-68	Uttar Pradesh
73.	Kidwai, Begum Saddiq	1956-58	Delhi
74.	Krishna Kumari, Shrimati	1954-60	Madhya Pradesh
75.	Krishnan, Shrimati Paravathi	1954-57	Tamil Nadu
76.	Kshatriya, Prof. Alka Balram	2002 till date	Gujarat
77.	Kulkarni, Shrimati Sumitra G.	1972-78	Gujarat
L (78-79)			
78.	Lakhanpal, Shrimati Chardrarati	1952-56 & 56-62	Uttar Pradesh
79.	Lila Devi, Shrimati	1956-62	Himachal Pradesh
M (80-98)			
80.	Mahajan, Shrimati Sumitra	2002 till date	Haryana
81.	Mahanta, Dr. (Shrimati) Joyasree Goswami	1999-2001	Assam
82.	Maheshwari, Shrimati Sarla	1990-96 & 1999 till date	West Bengal
83.	Mahishi, Dr. (Smt.) Sarojini	1983-84 & 84-90	Karnataka
84.	Maiti, Kumari Abha	1960-62	West Bengal
85.	Malhotra, Shrimati Usha	1980-86	Himachal Pradesh
86.	Mangeshkar, Ms. Lata	1999 till date	Nominated
87.	Manhar, Shrimati Kamla	2003 till date	Madhya Pradesh
88.	Maya Singh, Shrimati	2002 till date	Madhya Pradesh
89.	Mayawati, Miss	1994-96	Uttar Pradesh
90.	Mehta, Shrimati Pushaben Janardanrai	1966-72	Gujarat

	1	2	3
91.	Menon, Shrimati Lakshmi N.	1952-54, 54-60 & 60-66	Bihar
92.	Menon, Shrimati Leela Damodara	1974-80	Kerala
93.	Mistry, Shrimati Roda	1980-86	Andhra Pradesh
94.	Mohinder Kaur, Shrimati	1964-67 & 78-84	Himachal Pradesh
95.	Mukherjee, Shrimati Kanak	1978-84 & 84-90	West Bengal
96.	Mukhopadhyay, Shrimati Purabi	1970-76 & 76-82	West Bengal
97.	Munshi, Shrimati Lilavati	1952-58	Rajasthan
98.	Muthu, Dr. (Shrimati) Sathiavani	1978-84	Tamil Nadu
N (99-103)			
99.	Nahata, Shrimati Jayaprada	1996-2002	Andhra Pradesh
100.	Naidu, Miss M.L. Mary	1964-70	Andhra Pradesh
101.	Natarajan, Shrimati Jayanthi	1986-92, 1992-97 & 1997-2001	Tamil Nadu
102.	Nehru, Shrimati Uma	1962-63	Uttar Pradesh
103.	Nigam, Shrimati Savitry Devi	1957-58	Uttar Pradesh
P (104-117)			
104.	Pahadia, Shrimati Shanti	1984-90	Rajasthan
105.	Panda, Shrimati Ila	1992-98	Orissa
106.	Pandey, Shrimati Chandra Kala	1993-99 & 1999 till date	West Bengal
107.	Pandey, Shrimati Manorma	1980-86 & 86-92	Bihar
108.	Paranjpye, Shrimati Shakuntala	1964-70	Nominated
109.	Paramanand, Dr. (Shrimati) Seeta	1952-58 & 58-64	Madhya Pradesh
110.	Parthasarathy, Prof. (Shrimati) G.	1960-66	Madras now Tamil Nadu
111.	Patel, Shrimati Anandiben Jethabhai	1994-98	Gujarat
112.	Patel, Kumari Maniben Vallabhbai	1964-70	Gujarat
113.	Patel, Shrimati Urmilaben Chimanbhai	1993-99	Gujarat
114.	Patil, Shrimati Pratibha Devisingh	1985-90	Maharashtra

	1	2	3
115.	Patil, Shrimati Suryakanta	1986-92	Maharashtra
116.	Patnaik, Shrimati Jayanti	1996-98	Orissa
117.	Pradhan, Shrimati Saraswati	1972-78	Orissa
R (118-130)			
118.	Rai, Shrimati Kum Kum	2000 till date	Bihar
119.	Raikar, Shrimati Bimba	2000 till date	Karnataka
120.	Rajagopalan, Shrimati G. Lalitha	1965-70	Madras now Tamil Nadu
121.	Rajinder Kaur, Dr. (Shrimati)	1978-84	Punjab
122.	Ramamurthy, Shrimati T. Nallamuthu	1956-62	Madras now Tamil Nadu
123.	Rao, Shrimati Ratnabai Srinivasa	1972-78	Andhra Pradesh
124.	Ratan Kumari, Shrimati	1976-82, 82-88 & 88-94	Madhya Pradesh
125.	Ray, Prof. (Shrimati) Bharati	1996-2002	West Bengal
126.	Razack, Shrimati Noorjehan	1977-83	Tamil Nadu
127.	Rebello, Miss Mabel	1998-till date	Madhya Pradesh
128.	Reddy, Shrimati Yashoda	1956-62 & 1967-72	Andhra Pradesh
129.	Rohatgi, Shrimati Sushila	1985-88	Uttar Pradesh
130.	Rukmani Bai, Shrimati	1956-62	Madhya Pradesh
S (131-149)			
131.	Sarma, Shrimati Basanti	1991-96 & 1996-2002	Assam
132.	Sathe, Shrimati Tara Ramachandra	1962-68	Maharashtra
133.	Satpathy, Shrimati Nandini	1962-68 & 1968-72	Orissa
134.	Satya Bahin, Shrimati	1988-94	Uttar Pradesh
135.	Savita Behan, Shrimati	1972-78	Delhi
136.	Scindia, Shrimati Vijaya Raje	1978-84 & 1984-89	Madhya Pradesh
137.	Seeta Yudhvir, Shrimati	1958-64 & 1964-70	Andhra Pradesh

	1	2	3
138.	Shanti Devi, Shrimati	1961-62	Uttar Pradesh
139.	Sharda, Shrimati Savita	1999 - till date	Gujarat
140.	Sharma, Shrimati Malti	1994-2000	Uttar Pradesh
141.	Shyam Kumari Devi, Shrimati	1968-74 & 1974-80	Madhya Pradesh
142.	Singh, Shrimati Jahanara Jaipal	1958-64, 1964-70 & 1972-78	Bihar
143.	Singh, Shrimati Pratibha	1970-76, 1976-82, 1982-88 & 1988-90	Bihar
144.	Sinha, Shrimati Kamla	1990-94 & 1994-2000	Bihar
145.	Sita Devi, Shrimati	1972-74	Punjab
146.	Soni, Shrimati Ambika	1976-80 & 2000 - till date	Delhi
147.	Sultan, Shrimati Maimoona	1974-80 & 1980-86	Madhya Pradesh
148.	Sushree Devi, Shrimati	2002 - till date	Orissa
149.	Swaraj, Shrimati Sushma	1990-96 & 2000 - till date	Uttaranchal
T (150-156)			
150.	Taimur, Shrimati Syeda Anwara	1988-90	Nominated
151.	Talwar, Dr. (Shrimati) Mangla Devi	1966-72	Rajasthan
152.	Thakur, Dr. Prabha	2002 - till date	Rajasthan
153.	Tharadevi, Shrimati D.K.	1990-91	Karnataka
154.	Thimmareddy, Shrimati Annapurna Devi	1958-64 & 1964-70	Mysore now Karnataka
155.	Tiria, Kumari Sushila	1986-92	Orissa
156.	Topno, Kumari Frida	1998-2002	Orissa
V (157-160)			
157.	Vanga Geetha, Shrimati	2000 - till date	Andhra Pradesh
158.	Varma, Shrimati Naryani Devi	1970-76	Rajasthan
159.	Vasisht, Kumari Shanta	1960-66 & 1966-72	Delhi
160.	Verma, Shrimati Veena	1986-88, 1988-94 & 1994-2000	Madhya Pradesh

TABLE 6
Women Members of Rajya Sabha in the Council of Ministers
(1952-2003)

Sl.No.	Name of Member	Portfolio
1	2	3
1.	Alva, Shrimati Margaret	Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (From 13.12.1984—25.9.1985); Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development—Department of Women and Child Development and Youth Affairs and Sports (From 25.9.1985—2.12.1989*); Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions (From 21.6.1991—16.5.1996*); Also Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (From 19.2.1993—16.5.1996*)
2.	Alva, Shrimati Violet	Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Home Affairs (23.4.1957—10.4.1962*)
3.	Amrit Kaur, Rajkumari	Minister of Health (From 15.8.1947—26.1.1950*) (Again from 26.1.1950—6.5.1950*) (Again from 23.6.1950—13.5.1952*) (Again from 13.5.1952—17.4.1957*) and additional charge of Communications (1951-1952)
4.	Chowdhury, Shrimati Renuka	Minister of State (without portfolio) (From 3.6.1997—9.6.1997); Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (From 9.6.1997—19.3.1998)

*The date of dissolution of Council of Ministers.

1	2	3
5.	Gandhi, Shrimati Indira Nehru	Minister of Information and Broadcasting (From 2.7.1964—11.1.1966*) (Again from 11.1.1966—24.1.1966*); Prime Minister and Minister of Atomic Energy (From 24.1.1966—13.3.1967*); (Also held charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs (From 9.11.1966—13.11.1966); Prime Minister and Minister of Atomic Energy (From 13.1.1967—18.3.1971*); (Also assumed the office of Minister of Planning) (From 5.9.1967—18.3.1971*); (Also assumed the office of Minister of External Affairs) (From 5.9.1967—14.2.1969); (Also assumed charge of Ministry of Finance) (From 16.7.1969—27.6.1970); (Also assumed temporary charge of Ministry of Home Affairs) (From 27.6.1970—18.3.1971*); Prime Minister and Minister of Atomic Energy (From 18.3.1971—24.3.1977*); (Also assumed the office of Minister of Home Affairs) (From 18.3.1971—5.2.1973); (Also assumed temporary charge of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) (From 18.3.1971—8.11.1973); (Also assumed temporary charge of Ministry of Planning) (From 18.3.1971-24.4.1971);

*The date of dissolution of Council of Ministers.

1	2	3
		(Also assumed the office of Minister of Space) (From 2.6.1972—24.3.1977*);
		(Also assumed the charge as the Minister of Electronics) (From 17.6.1971—5.2.1973);
		(Also assumed temporary charge of Ministry of Steel and Mines) (From 6.6.1973—23.7.1973);
		(Also assumed temporary charge of Ministry of Planning) (From 2.1.1975—24.3.1977*);
		(Also assumed the office of Ministry of Science and Technology) (From 2.1.1975—24.3.1977*);
		(Also assumed temporary charge of Ministry of Defence) (From 1.12.1975—21.12.1975);
		Prime Minister and Minister of Atomic Energy (From 14.1.1980—31.10.1984**);
		(Also assumed the charge of the Departments of Electronics, Science and Technology and Space) (From 19.10.1980—31.10.1984**);
		(Also held charge of Ministry of Defence) (From 14.1.1980—15.1.1982);
		Held charge of the Ministry of External Affairs (From 19.7.1984—31.10.1984**);
		Held charge of the Ministry of Industry (From 3.8.1984—14.8.1984)
6.	Guha, Dr. (Shrimati) Phulrenu	Minister of State in the Department of Social Welfare (From 3.3.1967—14.2.1969);

*The date of dissolution of Council of Ministers.

**The date of her assassination.

1	2	3
		Minister of State in the Ministry of Law (From 14.2.1969—26.6.1970)
7.	Jahanara Jaipal Singh, Shrimati	Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Transport & Civil Aviation (15.2.1966—13.3.1967*); Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation (18.3.1967—14.2.1969); Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Education & Youth Services (14.2.1969—27.6.1970)
8.	Joshi, Miss Kumudben M.	Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (From 17.10.1980—15.1.1982); Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (From 15.1.1982—31.10.1984*); (Again from 4.11.1984—31.12.1984*)
9.	Khaparde, Miss. Saroj	Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (From 12.5.1986—4.7.1989*); Minister of State in the Ministry of Textiles (From 4.7.1989—2.12.1989*)
10.	Menon, Shrimtai Lakshmi N.	Deputy Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs (From 17.4.1957—10.4.1962*); Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (From 16.4.1962—27.5.1964*); (Again from 27.5.1964—9.6.1964*); (Again from 15.6.1964—11.1.1966*); (Again from 11.1.1966—24.1.1966*)
11.	Muthu, Dr. (Smt.) Sathiavani	Minister of Social Welfare (From 19.8.1979—23.12.1979)

*The date of dissolution of Council of Ministers.

1	2	3
12.	Natarajan, Shrimati Jayanthi	Minister of State (without portfolio) (From 3.6.1997—9.6.1997) Minister of State in the Ministry of Civil Aviation and in Parliamentary Affairs (9.6.1997—March 1998)
13.	Patel, Shrimati Urmilaben Chimambhai	Minister of State in the Ministry of Power (10.2.1995—16.5.1996*)
14.	Rohatgi, Shrimati Sushila	Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Finance (From 2.5.1971—24.3.1977*); Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development—Department of Education and Culture (From 25.9.1985—12.5.1986); Minister of State in the Ministry of Energy—Department of Power (From 12.5.1986—9.5.1988); (Also Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas) (From 24.6.1986—22.10.1986)
15.	Satpathy, Shrimati Nandini	Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (From 29.1.1966—12.3.1967*) (Again from 18.3.1967—14.2.1969); Deputy Minister (without portfolio) (From 14.2.1969—26.6.1970); Minister of State (without portfolio) (From 26.6.1970—18.3.1971*); Minister of State in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (From 18.3.1971—14.6.1972)
16.	Sinha, Shrimati Kamla	Minister of State (without portfolio) (From 3.6.1997—9.6.1997) Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs (From 9.6.1997—19.3.1998*)
17.	Swaraj, Shrimati Sushma	Minister of Information and Broadcasting (From 16.5.1996—1.6.1996*);

*The date of dissolution of Council of Ministers.

1	2	3
		Union Cabinet Minister, Information and Broadcasting and Telecommunications (Additional Charge) (From 19.3.1998—12.10.1998); Minister of Information and Broadcasting (From 30.9.2000—29.1.2003); Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (From 29.1.2003 till date)

TABLE 7
Nominated women members of Rajya Sabha
(1952-2003)

Sl. No.	Year of nomination	Nominated Members	Date of Birth	Age at the time of Nomination	Educational Qualifications	Professions
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	1952-56 1956-62	Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale	February 29, 1904	48	N.A.	Artist, Educationist, Lecturer, Author
2.	1964-70	Smt. Shakuntala Paranjpye	January 17, 1906	58	B.Sc., M.A.	Social Worker, Author
3.	1970-76 1976-82 1982-84	Smt. Maragatham Chandrasekhar	November 11, 1917	53	B.Sc., L.T., B.Sc., H. & S.S., Diploma in (i) Freelance Journalism, (ii) Domestic Sc., (iii) Dietetics Course	Teacher, Social Worker
4.	1978-84	Smt. Fathema Ismail	February 4, 1903	75	Matric, Pre-Medical	Social Worker
5.	1980-81	Smt. Nargis Dutt	June 1, 1929	51	N.A.	Artist, Film actress, Social Worker
6.	1982-84 1984-90	Prof. (Mrs.) Asima Chatterjee	September 23, 1917	65	D.Sc., M.Sc., P.R.S.	Scientist, Teacher, Reader in Chemistry
7.	1986-92	Smt. Amrita Pritam	August 31, 1919	67	D. Litt	Writer, Author
8.	1986-88	Smt. Ela Ramesh Bhatt	September 7, 1933	53	B.A., LL.B., International Diploma in Labour and Cooperative (Israel)	Social Worker

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	1988-90	Smt. Syeda Anwara Taimur	Novemebr 24, 1936	52	M.A.	Administrator
10.	1993-99	Smt. Vyjayantimala Bali	August 13, 1933	60	Matric	Artist, Actress, Business woman
11.	1997-2003	Smt. Shabana Azmi	September 18, 1951	46	B.A. (Psychology), Diploma in Acting	Artists, Film Actress, Social activist
12.	1997-2003	Dr. (Ms.) P. Selvie Das	September 29, 1932	65	M.S. (Home Eco.), Ph.D. (Education)	Educationist, Lecturer, Professor, Reader, Principal, Vice-Chancellor
13.	1997-99	Kumari Nirmala Deshpande	October 17, 1929	68	M.A. (Pol. Sc.)	Social Worker
14.	1999 till date	Ms. Lata Mangeshkar	September 28, 1929	70	D. Litt (<i>Honoris Causa</i>)	Artist, Singer
15.	2003 till date	Smt. Hema Malini	October 16, 1948	55	Matric	Artist

TABLE 8

Bio-data of Shrimati Violet Alva

ALVA, SHRIMATI VIOLET*: M.A., LL.B.; Social Service Diploma of the Servants of India Society; Congress (Mysore); **b.** April 24, 1908; **ed.** at St. Xavier's College and Government Law College, Bombay; **m.** Shri Joachim Alva, M.P., 2 **s.** and 1 **d.**; Journalist and Advocate, Supreme Court; presided over Juvenile Courts, Bombay, 1948-54; Professor of English, Indian Women's University, 1936; jailed with her 5 months old child in the "Quit India" movement, 1943; first woman advocate in India to have successfully argued a case before a full Bench of a High Court, 1944; *Founder and Editor* of "The Begum" later "Indian Woman"; *President*, (i) Agripada Rehawasi Seva Mandal, Bombay, 1945-53, (ii) International Federation of Women Lawyers (I.F.W.L.), 1962-64, (iii) Y.W.C.A. of India and Y.W.C.A. of Delhi, 1964 and (iv) Business and Professional Women's Association, Delhi, 1964; *Vice-President*, All India Christian Conference, 1946; *Municipal Corporator*, Bombay, 1946-47; Regional Vice-President of I.F.W.L., 1958-60 and 1960-62; Parliamentarian of I.F.W.L. since 1964; *Hony. Presidency Magistrate*, Bombay, 1947; Justice of the Peace; *Member*, (i) Legislative Council, Bombay, 1947-52, (ii) Indian Press Delegation to Egypt, 1950, (iii) International Federation of Women Lawyers and its Vice-President for India, 1952-57, (iv) Panel of Vice-Chairmen, Rajya Sabha, 1953-54, (v) Executive Committee of the Congress Party in Parliament, 1953-54 and 1955-56, (vi) Public Accounts Committee, May, 1954 to June, 1956, (vii) Indian Delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference held in Nigeria, 1962, (viii) Indian Parliamentary Delegation to the U.S.A., 1963, (ix) Indian Parliamentary Delegation to West Germany and U.K. 1964 and to the Philippines, 1965 and (x) Indian Delegation to the Commonwealth and Empire Law Conference, Sydney, Australia, 1965; first woman to be elected to the Standing Committee of the All India Newspapers Editors' Conference, 1952; *attended* the 1962 Convention of I.F.W.L. held in Mexico; acted as *Secretary* to the Women's Cultural Delegation to the Soviet Union, 1954; *Observer* to the United Nations Seminar in Asia and the Far East on Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders held in Rangoon in 1954; *Liaison Representative* of the International Federation of Women Lawyers to the (i) Ninth Session of the UNESCO Field Office, New Delhi, 1956 and (ii) the Asian Field Office of I.L.O., 1957; *Deputy Minister* of Home Affairs, Government of India, 1957-62; sole *representative* of Government of India to U.N. Seminar on Human Rights

*Rajya Sabha, Who's Who, 1968

held in Ceylon in 1959; also sole *delegate* of the Government of India to the U.N. Seminar on Human Rights held in New Zealand, 1961; first woman to be elected as *Deputy Chairman* of Rajya Sabha, 1962, re-elected in 1966; *nominated delegate* to the All India Congress Committee, 1965; *invited* by the U.S. Department of State to a tour of U.S.A., sponsored by the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. Senate, 1962; *visited* U.S.S.R. on an invitation from the Chairman of the Soviet of the Union of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., 1965; *Leader* of the Indian Delegation to the I.P.U. Conference held in Tehran in 1966; elected to Rajya Sabha in 1952, re-elected in April, 1960 and again in April, 1966

Died. Obit. on 20.11.1969*

*Rajya Sabha Members Biographical Sketches, 1952-1990

TABLE 9

Bio-data of Shrimati Pratibha Devisingh Patil

PATIL, SHRIMATI PRATIBHA DEVISINGH*: M.A., LL.B.; Congress (I) (Maharashtra); **d.** of Shri Narayanrao; **b.** at Jalgaon, December 19, 1934; **ed.** at M.J. College, Jalgaon; **m.** Shri Devisingh Ramsingh Shekhawat, July 7, 1965; **Is.** and **Id.**; Social Worker; Organised Women Home Guards in Jalgaon District and was their Commandant at the time of Chinese Aggression; was champion in Table Tennis during College days and won shields in Inter College Tournaments; *Chairman*, Committee of Privileges, Rajya Sabha from November, 1986- November 5, 1988; *President*, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee; *Vice-Chairman*, National Federation for Co-operative Urban Banks and Credit Societies; *Managing Trustee*, Sharma Sadhan Trusts; *established* a hostel for working women in Bombay and an engineering college at Jalgaon for the benefit of students in rural areas; *Member*, (i) Standing Committee of All India Women's Conference, (ii) Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, 1962-85, (iii) Business Advisory Committee, Rajya Sabha from November, 1986-November 5, 1988, (iv) Committee on Rules, Rajya Sabha from November, 1986-November 5, 1988 and (v) General Purposes Committee, Rajya Sabha since November, 1986; *Deputy Minister* in Maharashtra Government from 1967-1972 with portfolios of Public Health, Prohibition, Tourism, Housing and Parliamentary Affairs and *Cabinet Minister* with portfolios, (i) Social Welfare, 1972-74, (ii) Public Health and Social Welfare, 1974-75, *established* Mahila Arthic Vikas Maha Mandal in the State of Maharashtra for the economic benefit of women, (iii) Prohibition, Rehabilitation and Cultural Affairs, 1975-76, (iv) Education, 1977-78, (v) Urban Development and Housing, 1982-85 and (vi) Civil Supplies and Social Welfare, 1983-85; *Leader of Opposition*, Congress (I) Party in the Maharashtra Assembly, July, 1979-February, 1980; *attended*, International Council of Social Welfare Conference at Nairobi and Puerto Rico; *Leader* of delegation to Austria on 'Status of Women' Conference and went to Bulgaria as a Member of the A.I.C.C. delegation, 1985; *attended*, Commonwealth Presiding Officers Conference, London, 1988; *Deputy Chairman*, Rajya Sabha from November 18, 1986-November 5, 1988; elected to Rajya Sabha in June, 1985

Travels abroad: Austria, Bulgaria, Nairobi (Kenya), U.S.A., Japan, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Italy, Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, Norway, U.K. and U.A.E.

Special interests: Betterment of rural economy and development of women

Favourite pastime and recreation: Music and reading

Permanent address: 84, Rajul-B Apartments, 9, Harkness Road, Malabar Hill, Bombay-400006

*Who's Who Rajya Sabha, 1988

TABLE 10

Bio-data of Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla

HEPTULLA, DR. (SMT.) NAJMA

[Indian National Congress-Maharashtra]

Father's Name	Syed Yousuf Ali
Mother's Name	Shrimati Fatima Yousuf Ali
Date of Birth	13 April 1940
Place of Birth	Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh)
Marital Status	Married on 7 December 1966
Spouse's Name	Shri Akbarali A. Heptulla
Children	Three daughters
Educational Qualifications	M. Sc. (Zoology), Ph.D. (Cardiac Anatomy) Educated at Motilal Nehru Vigyan Mahavidyalaya
Profession	Social Worker and researcher in scientific field
Permanent Address	Heptulla Park, 29, 2nd Hasanabad Lane, Santacruz (W), Mumbai-400054 Tel. : 26490104, 26490197
Present Address	4, Akbar Road, New Delhi-110011 Tel. : 23016391, 23016436 E-mail : najmah@sansad.nic.in
Positions Held	
1973 onwards	Member, All India Congress Committee
July 1980	Elected to Rajya Sabha
1981	Member, Joint Committee on Marriage Law (Amendment) Bill, 1981
1982-84	Nominated to the Panel of Vice-Chairman, Rajya Sabha
	Member, Committee on Petitions
1984	Member, Committee on Public Accounts General Secretary, Science Forum of Parliament

Jan. 1985-Jan. 1986	Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha
1985 and 1989 onwards	Member, General Purposes Committee Member, Committee on Rules Member, Business Advisory Committee
July 1986	Re-elected to Rajya Sabha (second term)
1986-87	General Secretary, All India Congress Committee (I) In-charge, youth activities of A.I.C.C. In-charge, N.S.U.I., the student wing of the Congress Party
1986-87 and 1998	Spokesperson, All India Congress Committee
Nov. 1988 onwards	Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha Chairperson, Committee of Privileges, Rajya Sabha
July 1992	Re-elected to Rajya Sabha (third term)
March 1997 onwards	Chairperson, Committee on Provision of Computers to Members of Rajya Sabha
6 May 1997-26 April 1999	Chairperson, Committee on the Empowerment of Women
July 1998	Re-elected to Rajya Sabha (fourth term)
Sept. 1998	Elected Vice-President of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (I.P.U.)
Sept. 1998 onwards	Chairperson, Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)
1999	Vice-President of the I.P.U.
Oct. 1999-Sept. 2002	President of the Council of the I.P.U., the first woman ever to be elected to this office in the 110-year history of the I.P.U.
Sept. 2002	Honorary President, Council of IPU for life
Books Published	Published several research papers in foreign and Indian journals. Contributed to many Indian and foreign magazines on issues relating to women and social development. Member of the Advisory Committee and Editorial Board of 'The Indian Journal of

Zoology' and 'Journal of Anatomy', *Editor and Publisher* of the quarterly magazine 'Dialogue Today' since 1986. *Author* of the books, (i) 'India's Progress in Science and Technology-Continuity and Change', 1985, (ii) 'Indo-West Asian Relations-The Nehru Era', 1992, (iii) 'Reforms for Women-Future Options', 1992, (iv) 'Environment Protection in Developing Countries', 1993, (v) 'Human Social Security and Sustainable Development', 1995 and (vi) 'A.I.D.S.-Approaches to Prevention', 1996

Social and Cultural Activities, Literary, Artistic and Scientific Accomplishments and other Special Interests

Promotion of scientific knowledge, international economic cooperation, international understanding, upliftment of women and other issues related to them, secular values and human development and environment; *awarded*, the Grand Cordon of Alwai aal-Wissam, the highest civilian decoration of Morocco-Award presented by the King of Morocco

Sports, Clubs, Favourite Pastimes and Recreation

Chairman, The India Club; *Member*, (i) Gymkhana Club, Delhi, (ii) Bombay Presidency Radio Club, Mumbai, (iii) India International Centre, Delhi, (iv) Sea Rock Hotel Club, Mumbai, (v) India Habitat Centre and (vi) India Islamic Cultural Centre, New Delhi; reading and writing, freelance journalism, music of various languages and countries, sports and games (took part in badminton and squash)

Countries Visited

Travelled extensively all over the globe

Other Information

Got first division and stood first in the University in M.Sc. (Zoology), 1960; Ph.D. (Cardiac Anatomy), 1962; awarded Junior Fellowship and Senior Fellowship of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (C.S.I.R.) for 5 years; served in the scientists' pool of the Government of India.

Academic affiliations: Advisor, Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Harvard, 1992-96; Vice-President, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Institute for Asian Studies, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India; Founder Chairperson, Centre for Asian Studies, 1993; Fellow, (i) Academy of Zoology, India and (ii) Zoological Society, London; served as a Professor of Zoology; Member, (i) Indian Science Congress for the last 23 years, (ii) Aligarh Muslim University Court and (iii) Jawaharlal Nehru University Court

Parliamentary offices held : International—Vice-Chairperson, Executive Committee, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 1987 (the first woman ever to hold the office); President, (i) Women's Group of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 1990 and (ii) Inter-Parliamentary Council, I.P.U., 16 October 1999-27 September 2002 (the first woman President of the I.P.U. Council); Founder President, Parliamentarians' Forum for Human Development under the aegis of U.N.D.P. since August 1993; Coordinator, Women Parliamentarians' Group, I.P.U. since 1993; Chairperson, (i) Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, I.P.U. and (ii) Committee on Environment, I.P.U., 1994; Member, (i) Executive Committee, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 1985-88, (ii) Sub-Committee on Staff and Accommodation, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 1987, (iii) Environment Committee, now Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development of the I.P.U., 1990-95, (iv) Standing Committee of the Presiding Officers of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and (v) Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1995-99

Other important offices held : President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations; Vice-President, Indian Parliamentary Group; Chairperson, (i) Monitoring Committee, Central Wakf Council since 1988, (ii) Steering Committee of Specialised Conference of the I.P.U. on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics" in New Delhi, 1997; Vice-Chairperson, Standing Committee of the Conferences of Presiding Officers and Secretaries of Legislative Bodies in India; Distinguished Ambassador of Human Development nominated by the U.N.D.P.; Member, (i) National Integration Council, Government of India, (ii) Central Wakf Council, Ministry of Welfare since 1988, (iii) All India Haj Advisory Board, (iv) General Body and Executive Committee of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (I.C.C.R.) and (v) National Population Commission

Social organisations : Founder, Maulana Azad Multi-purpose Higher Secondary School, 1962; Patron, Indo-Turkish Cultural Association; Founder President, Azad Foundation for Research and Development; President, (i) Institute of Directors, the apex voluntary organisation for Total Quality Management and I.S.O.-9000 Series Certification, (ii) Rasaja Foundation, a voluntary organisation for the promotion of the Art of Modern India, (iii) Indo-Arab Society, (iv) Indian Scouts and Guides Fellowship, (v) Indian Council for Social Marketing and (vi) Maharashtra Parent-Teachers' Association; Director, Bandra People's Cooperative Bank; Treasurer, Society of Latin America; Member, (i) Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Trust, (ii) Board of Trustees, India Islamic Cultural Centre, (iii) Society for Communal Harmony and (iv) Bombay City Social Education Committee

Women's issues : Member, (i) National Committee for International Women's Year, 1975, (ii) National Committee for Women, 1989, (iii) Maharashtra State Government Committee for the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Women and (iv) Maharashtra State Government Committee for the Status of Women; *President*, Indian Housewives Federation since 1985; *organised* several national level meets for identification and redressal of women's problems and over hundred seminars on the status of women in India

Parliamentary and other delegations: As special envoy of the Prime Minister, *visited* (i) Saudi Arabia, 1989, 1990 and 1991, (ii) Iraq, 1990, (iii) Kuwait, 1990, (iv) Jordan, 1990, (v) U.A.E., 1990 and (vi) Fiji (to attend the funeral of President Dr. Timoci Bavadra), 1989; *led*, (i) Goodwill Delegation to Iraq, 2001 and (ii) National Delegation to Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Kuwait, 2002 to apprise the leadership of these countries about India's viewpoint on international terrorism

Inter-Parliamentary Union : Leader of the Delegation to the I.P.U. Conferences held at (i) Nicosia, 1990, (ii) Copenhagen, 1994, (iii) Madrid, 1995 (Women Parliamentarians' Meet), (iv) Istanbul, 1996 and (v) Cairo, 1997; *Member of the Delegation* to the I.P.U. Conferences held at (i) Punta del Este, 1990, (ii) Santiago, 1991, (iii) Bangkok (Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Economic Cooperation), 1991, (iv) New Delhi, 1993, (v) Paris, 1994, (vi) Bucharest, 1995 and (vii) Beijing, 1996; *attended*, (i) Special Session of the I.P.U. on the occasion of the U.N. Population Summit, Cairo, 1994, (ii) Special Session of the IPU on the occasion of the UN Social Summit, Copenhagen, 1995, (iii) Special Session of the I.P.U. on the

occasion of 50 years of the U.N., New York, August, 1995, (iv) Special Session of The I.P.U. on the occasion of Fourth World Women Conference, Beijing, 1995 and (v) The 100th I.P.U. Conference, Moscow, 1998, (vi) IPU-UNAIDS Working Group of Presiding Officers, Geneva, 1999 and (vii) IPU Conference, Brussels, 1999; *presided over*, (i) CPA Women Parliamentarians' Conference, New Delhi, 1991, (ii) Women Parliamentarians' Conference, I.P.U., New Delhi, 1993, (iii) the Special Session of the I.P.U. on the occasion of the U.N. General Assembly, New York, 1999, (iv) the Meeting of the Asia-Pacific regional group of the I.P.U., Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia), 1999, (v) the Joint IPU-UNCTAD X Parliamentarians' Meeting, Bangkok, 2000, (vi) the 3rd Prepcom of the Presiding Officers' Conference of the I.P.U., Geneva, 2000, (vii) the I.P.U. Council at the 102nd Conference, Berlin, 2000, (viii) the I.P.U. Council at the 103rd Conference, Amman, 2000, (ix) the I.P.U. Council at the 104th Conference, Jakarta, 2000, (x) the I.P.U. Council at the 105th Conference, Havana, Cuba, 2001, (xi) the Parliamentary Meeting on International Trade convened jointly by the I.P.U. and the W.T.O., Geneva, 2001, (xii) the I.P.U. Council at the 106th Conference Ouagadougou, 2001 and (xiii) the I.P.U. Council at the 107th Conference, Morocco, 2002; *Member*, I.P.U.-UNAIDS Working group on drafting of Handbook on AIDS Prevention for Legislatures, "Focal Point" of the I.P.U. for the questions relating to the status of women; Seminar on Gender Budgeting at Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2003

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: Delegate, Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences held at (i) Saskatchewan (Canada) (Executive Committee Meeting),

1985, (ii) Nicosia (Executive Committee Meeting), 1985, (iii) London (Executive Committee Meeting), 1985, (iv) London (Annual Conference), 1986, (v) Regina, Canada (Plenary Meeting), 1986, (vi) Jersey Island (Executive Committee Meeting), 1986, (vii) Kuala Lumpur (Executive Committee Meetings), 1987, (viii) Port of Spain (Executive Committee Meeting), 1988, (ix) Canberra (Executive Committee Meeting and Annual Conference), 1989, (x) Tasmania (Executive Committee Meeting), 1989, (xi) Harare, 1990 and (xii) New Delhi, 1991; *attended*, Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers' Conference, Canberra, 2000

United Nations : *Member* of the Indian delegation to attend (i) the United Nations General Assembly Annual Session, New York, 1996 and (ii) 50th Anniversary of the U.N., New York, 1995; *Delegate* (i) General Assembly and Special Political Committee, 1983, (ii) Special Session of the U.N., Geneva, 1988, (iii) General Assembly and First Political Committee, New York, 1989, (iv) General Assembly and Economic Committee, New York, 1992; *invitee*, (i) Special U.N. invitee from Asia-Pacific Region to attend Nordic Women Parliamentarians' Meet on Population, 1994, (ii) U.N.D.P. invitee to the global release of Human Development Report, Tokyo, 1996 and (iii) U.N.D.P. invitee to attend the special conference on "Women in Decision Making" at Columbia University, U.S., 1996; *led* the Indian delegation to the U.N. Commission on Status of Women, 1997; *attended*, 1st Prepcom Conference on the U.N. Millennium Conference, Vienna, 1999; *presided over*, (i) the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments on the occasion of the Millennium Session of the U.N., New York, 2000 and (iii) tripartite consultations on the occasion

of 'Beijing+5' Special Session of the U.N.G.A., New York, 2000; *Chaired*, the Parliamentarians' Forum on Children on the occasion of the Special Session of the U.N.G.A. on Children, New York, 2002; *Member*, Coordination Committee of the Presiding Officers' Conference coinciding with the U.N.G.A. Session for Millennium 2000

Participation in conferences, delegations, etc. in other countries : Presided over the Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 2nd Global Forum for Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity, The Hague, May, 2001; *Led the delegation* (i) Fellowship of former Scouts and Guides, Yogyakarta (Indonesia), 1993, (ii) representing the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation to the Seminar on Strategic Environment and Disarmament, Moscow, 1993, (iii) sponsored by Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation, (M.M.T.C.) to the Jewellery Exhibition, Singapore, 1994 and (iv) to the Specialised Conference on Food Security Organized by IPU-FAO, Rome, 1998; *Member*, Parliamentary Delegation, Sophia, 1993; *Delegate* to, (i) the Asia-Pacific Conference on Women, Islamabad, 1984, (ii) the Indian National Congress to attend the 27th C.P.S.U. Meeting, Moscow, 1986, (iii) attend the fourth Ruling National Party Conference on behalf of the Indian National Congress, Cairo, 1986, (iv) the inauguration of Science and Technology Exhibition as part of Indian festivals in U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1987, (v) attend the celebration of the 75th year of the establishment of Parliament of Turkey, Ankara, 1995 and (vi) to inaugurate India-Expo (sponsored by Ministry of Commerce and External Affairs), Morocco, 1996; *visiting faculty*, (i) Harvard University, Boston, 1984, 1992 and 1993, (ii) Woodrow Wilson Centre,

Washington, D.C., 1993, (iii) Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C., 1993, and (vi) Carnegie Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1993; *Special invitee*, World Women's Forum, Harvard, 1997; *attended*, (i) Science and Technology Meeting, U.S.A. and Japan, 1985, (ii) Women's Meet, Tashkent, 1989, (iii) the seminar on Contribution of Islam to Civilisation and honoured by President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, as one of the fifteen selected intellectuals of the world, Alexandria, 1993, (iv) Advisory Board Meeting of Centre for Middle-Eastern Studies, University of Harvard, Istanbul, 1994, (v) the first summit meeting of the Council of World Women Leaders, University of Harvard, Istanbul, 1994, (vi) Standing Committee of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers Conference, Cape Town, 1997, (vii) 18th General Assembly of the Latin American Parliaments, Sao Paolo, 2000, (viii) The Conference of the Senates of World, Paris, 2000, (ix) the Conference of the Speakers of the Euro-Mediterranean countries, Alexandria, 2000, (x) Conference on "Parliament and the Media: Building an Effective Relationship", New Delhi, 2000 and (xi) 8th General Assembly of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians Conference on 'Environment and Development', Hyderabad, 2000; *visited*, (i) Kuala Lumpur, on the invitation of the Speaker of the Senate, 1989, (ii) Ankara, on the invitation of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 1994, (iii) Beijing, at the invitation of the Speaker of the National People's Congress, 2000, (iv) Palestine National Authority, to address the Joint Session of the PNC and the PLC, 2000, (v) Israel, to address the Special Session of the Knesset, 2000 and (vi) Berlin, Germany as the President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (I.C.C.R.) for the inauguration of the Asia-Pacific Week, 2003

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