

RAJYA SABHA

*Friday, the 11th December, 1964/ the 20th
Agrahayana, 1886 (Sika).*

The House met at eleven of the clock, MR.
CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

STATUES OF BUDDHA FOUND IN AFGHANISTAN

♦522. SHRI BIREN ROY: Will the Minister
of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in the Bamiya
area of Afghanistan two huge statues of
Buddha measuring 53 metres and 35 metres in
height have been found in mountainous
region;

(b) if so, whether rock caves similar to
those in Ajanta and Ellora in India have also
been reported in the vicinity of the said
statues;

(c) whether in view of these 'finds' the
Government of India approached the
Government of Afghanistan for exploration
with India Government staff in these areas;
and

(d) if so, how far away are these areas
from the communication lines?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (SHRI
M. C. CHAGLA) : (a) The existence of these
two images of Buddha has been known for
many years.

(b) There are rows of painted
caves around the statues. But these
are not like the caves of Ajanta or
Ellora.

(c) In October 1963 the Government
of India offered to send a team of
archaeologists to Bamiyan to assist the
Afghan authorities in preserving
these statues. This offer was accepted,
and the Director General of Archaeo-
logy visited Afghanistan for a fortnight
last July, and made some recommen-
dations to the Government of Afgha-
nistan.

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(d) Bamiyan is 246 kilometres from
Kabul.

SHRI BIREN ROY: Has any arrangement
been arrived at in regard to the actual cost of
maintenance and preservation of these places
between the Afghan Government and the
Government of India?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: Well, Sir, the
position is this: We prepared a report
containing the recommendations of Mr.
Ghosh for the preservation of Bamiyan on
general lines and for the excavation of a site
called Bigran. The Government of
Afghanistan welcomed these steps. The site of
Bigran is 48 miles north of Kabul. The whole
matter is now under the consideration of the
Government. Afghanistan has been very co-
operative. We are considering what further
steps we should take and we will do
everything to preserve the statues and the
caves.

SHRI BIREN ROY: As Indians have
practically no unfettered right to travel to
countries outside India, even to those
countries from where their forefathers
migrated or to those places where Indian
civilisation was taken later, has the
Government thought of producing detailed
brochures giving photographs and everything
about these things for the benefit of the insti-
tutions and individuals interested in these
things?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: Sir, I do not quite
follow that the Indians have not got
unrestricted right to travel . . .

SHRI BIREN ROY: It is so. These are
places outside India and there are 'P' forms to
be filled and so many foreign exchange
difficulties are there. Therefore I have asked if
these things would be published in brochures
giving details so that the persons who want to
study them can have them.

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: I will certainly
bear this suggestion in mind and have
brochures published. I will pass it on to the
Director-General of Archaeology.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As a substitute for travelling.

श्री भगवत नारायण भार्गव : क्या मैं यह जान सकता हूँ कि ये जो भगवान बुद्ध के स्टैट्यूज मिले हैं उनको इस समय कहाँ रखा गया है और उनकी सुरक्षा का क्या प्रबंध किया गया है ?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: Well, Sir, in Afghanistan—a foreign country—we can arrive at arrangements only with their consent and, as I said, our Director-General visited that place in July 1964. When he submitted his report we forwarded it to them; they welcomed it and now we are taking steps to see that they are preserved. We cannot do anything without the consent of that Government.

श्री विमलकुमार मन्नालालजी चौर-
ङ्गिया : क्या श्रीमान यह बतलाने की कृपा करेंगे कि उन मूर्तियों की सुरक्षा की दृष्टि से हमने वहाँ की सरकार से बातचीत चलाई है तो क्या ऐसा कोई एग्रीमेंट हुआ है कि जब हम उनकी सुरक्षा का दायित्व अपने ऊपर लेते हैं तो वहाँ की सरकार भी सुरक्षा का भार अपने ऊपर वहन करेगी ? और अगर नहीं हुआ है तो अब तक इस दशा में क्या गति चल रही है ?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: Well, Sir, the whole matter is under consideration and discussion. Our main concern is to preserve the statues. Whether they should be preserved by us or by the Afghan Government, who should bear the expenses and how their preservation should take place, all these are matters for consideration and discussion. I hope some decision will be arrived at as soon as possible.

PANDIT S. S. N. TANKHA: Has the Government any intention of requesting the Afghan Government to permit us to bring the statues here?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: Well, Sir, I do not know they are embedded and whether they could be removed. Anyway, I will certainly pursue that suggestion.

SHRI G. RAMACHANDRAN: Arising from the information which the Minister gave that the Director-General of Archaeology visited Afghanistan, may I know whether there is a detailed report from the Director-General after he visited Afghanistan and what are the salient points in his report and if there is a report, what consequential action do the Government of India propose to take in collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: I think I have already told the House that he prepared a report which contains his recommendations for the preservation of these things on general lines and for the excavation of a site called Bigran. He feels that if Afghanistan gives us permission to excavate a site around the statues, important discovery might be made. That report has been considered by the Government. We have made certain recommendations to the Afghan Government and, as I said, the matter is still under negotiation.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: May I know whether the hon. Minister is aware that these huge statues have been cut out from the mountains, they are irremovable and they have been very well looked after by the Afghan Government for a number of years? I speak with personal knowledge, Sir.

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: I am very glad to hear all that, Sir. Thank you very much.

SHRI M. SATYANARAYANA: In view of the fact that they are carved out in Afghanistan and they are also the property of Afghanistan, is it not possible for our Government to see that the Afghan people are interested

in these statues for their well preservation as much as we do?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: My hon. friend has just heard from another hon. Member that they have been very well looked after by the Afghan Government. The hon. Member knows that Indian culture spreads far and wide; we have monuments and culture spread in all parts of the world.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

*523. SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Will the Minister of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

(a) the amount spent on the acquisition of works of art for the National Gallery of Modern Art in 1963-64; and

(b) how much out of this amount was spent on purchase of paintings and sculptures of modern artists?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (SHRI M. C. CHAGLA): (a) Rs. 68,124.37 paise.

(b) The entire amount.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: With your permission, may I ask the hon. Minister whether, since these purchases have been made from year to year for many years now, he has considered the possibility of appointing an Evaluation Committee which should be able to assess whether the pieces of art acquired were worth while and also whether the policy followed in that respect has been a correct one?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: We have got an Arts Purchase Committee and I take it on this Committee there are people who know something about art, and we make purchases only on the advice of this Committee. I do not know whether anything that we have purchased was not worth purchasing. The whole object is to help contemporary artists and we have many distinguished contemporary artists. I can assure you that they receive full support and encouragement from us.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: While I do not fully endorse the views of the hon. Minister that the entire money is spent on the acquisition of pieces of modern art, all the same, Sir, since the Committees have changed from year to year and we have acquired a considerable quantity of these things, is it not worth while that now some kind of evaluation is made so that for the future a better policy is laid down and also we can have some phased programme for the acquisition of pieces of modern art so that the modern paintings and modern sculpture which go out mainly stop going and find their place here itself?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: Well, Sir, that is a very valuable suggestion for action and I will certainly look into it and see what I can do.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: May I ask the hon. Minister if the Government is considering the possibility of constructing a permanent gallery for this purpose?

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: Yes, Sir, we have a very interesting project in hand—we pursued it in Paris—and that is to have a sort of artists' village where as many countries as possible in their permanent pavilions will exhibit pieces of modern art every two years. There are certain schemes in Rome, Paris and other places and the French Government have shown very sympathetic interest towards that.

DR. SHRIMATI PHULRENU GUHA: May I know where this artists' village is going to be established?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is probably too early to say.

SHRI M. C. CHAGLA: Sir, my topographical knowledge of Delhi is bad but we have been exploring a site and if we can acquire it, we will erect these pavilions which will be presented by different countries.

SHRI SANTOKH SINGH: May I know, Sir, if there are any complaints pending with the Department with re-