

RAJYA SABHA

*Friday, the 11th December, 1964/
the 20th Agra-hayana, 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 Bamia 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 Archaeology visited Afghanistan for a fortnight last July, and made some recommendations to the Government of Afghanistan.

(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 institutions 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 स्टेट्यूज मिले हैं उनको इस समय कहां 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 चोर-डिया : क्या श्रीमान यह बतलाने की कृपा करेंगे कि उन मूर्तियों की सुरक्षा की दृष्टि से हमने वहां की सरकार से बातचीत चलाई है तो क्या ऐसा कोई एग्जिमेंट हुआ है कि जब हम उनकी सुरक्षा का दायित्व अपने ऊपर लेते हैं तो वहां 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-