

Indeed, democracy is a means to an end. What is the end we still aim at? The end is the good life for every individual. Democracy, so far here in our country, is not going in the direction, everywhere, of what might be called economic democracy. It may take different forms, but only in the measure that it solves the economic problems would it succeed even in the political field. If the economic problems are not solved then the political structure goes to dogs.

The Parliament occupies a pre-eminent and pivotal position in the country's constitutional set up and political life. It is for the Parliament to ceaselessly strive towards the consummation of the socio-economic revolution envisaged in the Constitution and to translate the blueprint into reality. For, in a democratic polity, it is the legislature that must create the climate and help gather the national consensus for change and provide the formative lead to society.

As a living institution, in the words of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, "Parliament should mirror evolving aspirations of the people and find solutions to various old and newly emerging problems." It belongs to the legislature as part of its primary task to take the right initiative to bring about orderly social change by enacting laws, laying down appropriate policies in the important matters and keeping a stand watch on their effective implementation. However, in a

Democracy and change

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democracy as the supreme representative body of the people, the Parliament has to be ever responsive to multifarious changes taking place in society thereby acting as a guiding force to the state apparatus for the initiation and implementation of policies considered necessary for socio-economic change.

The State is no longer confined to its traditional functions. It has got to discharge activities of diverse nature embracing all fields of economic and social change. It has even the responsibility of anticipating the social needs and preparing the people to accept the changes. It has, therefore, got to initiate suitable and timely action to mould the existing social institutions and through them the social consciousness of the people.

It is in this context that the Parliament as the supreme law making body enacts and vests with the state suitable legislation for socio-economic change. Law, like science is a potential force for socio-economic progress. With the declining influence of other social institutions and moral norms in modern times as regulators of human conduct, law becomes the most potent instrument for social change and social control. A great deal depends,

therefore, on the objectives of, and the form in which laws are enacted and the manner in which these are implemented.

It is a sad state of affairs that our mothers and sisters continue to suffer the indignities inflicted on them by anti-social elements day in day out. We have a law to prohibit dowry, but the continuing reports coming from various parts of the country about the violation of its provisions, point to its inadequacies. Torture of young brides by their in-laws or husbands just because they are unable to fulfill their lust for money and riches is heinous crime against humanity. Again one shudders at reading about the number of rape cases reported in the newspapers. Likewise killings in the name of the so-called "Karo-Kari" custom continue to be committed.

Sad deaths due to consumption of illicit and spurious liquors are the

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result of a serious malaise in our society. All this is indicative of the weaknesses in the existing social change legislation, which encourages open defiance of the laws by unscrupulous people. Identification of the problems and obstacles that come in the way of implementation of these laws is, therefore, a major task facing us today.

We have the Child Marriage Restraint Act, we have laws prohibiting child labour, prostitution, illicit distillation and vending and so on. They are good pieces of legislation but they are just in the statute book. They are not implemented in the real sense of the term.

Here both the executive and the politicians fail. Legislators should be aware of what laws they are enacting and they should pursue these laws to their logical end. The executive should implement the laws, and at the same time, the Parliament must also oversee the actual implementation. Unfortunately, we have failed in this direction and much harm has been done to the social and economic structure of the country by the non-implementation of such measures.

How can we expect the laws to bring

about the desired social changes and regulate the behaviour of the society, if, after hammering out the enactments on the legislative anvil, the legislators themselves become complacent or do not help in creating the right atmosphere for their effective implementation?

Experiences have shown us that any legislation which runs-out the social urge always remains ineffective. Hence, true limits of the law's competence must be found in the social consciousness of the people. If the people are made to feel that a particular legislative measures even the contentious Legal framework Order (LFO) is in their interest or common good, then and then alone, can a particular social law give proper direction, form and continuity to social change. The legislators must explain to the common people, in language which they understand, the purpose behind the deadlock of LFO and various other legislative measures and convince them of their efficacy in brining about the much-needed transformation in their lives.

Precisely speaking, Parliament would have served as a barometer of the nation. Whatever is happening in the country and what is about to happen, its immediate reflection should have been found in the National Assembly. The floor of the House would have served as a living and throbbing institution of the people. Unfortunately, the truth is otherwise.