

Shrimati Dakshayani Velayudan (Madras: General): Mr. Chairman, before I express my views on the Resolution, let me pay my humble homage to our Revolutionary Father, Mahatma Gandhi (*applause*). It is his mystic vision, his political idealism and his social passion that gave us the instruments to achieve our goal. I submit that a Constituent Assembly not only frames a constitution, but also gives the people a new framework of life. To frame a constitution is an easy job, because there are many models for us to imitate. But to renew a people on a new foundation requires the synthetic vision of a planner. The Independent Sovereign Republic of India plans a free society. In our ancient polity, there were conflicts between absolutism and republicanism. The slender flame of republicanism was snuffed out by the power political States. The Lichavi Republic was the finest expression of the democratic genius of our ancients. There, every citizen was called a Raja. In the Indian Republic of tomorrow, the power will come from the people.....

We could understand the attitude of the Princes in this matter from the statement made by the members of the Negotiating Committee who represent the Chamber of Princes. But here comes a Maharaja with a historic message to his people. I mean the Maharaja of the Cochin State, which is one of the most advanced States in India and I am proud to say that I belong to it. Here is a part of the message:

"I believe in pure constitutional rule and, throughout my life, I have sedulously cultivated an attitude towards life and institutions which are antipathetic to autocracy and personal rule."

From this message it is obvious that the power comes from the people. In the Indian Republic there will be no barriers based on caste or community. The Harijans will be safe in a Republican State of the Indian Union. I visualise that the underdogs will be the rulers of the Indian Republic. I therefore appeal to the Harijan Delegates of this Constituent Assembly that they should not harp on separatism. We should not make ourselves the laughing stock of our future generations by harping on separatism. Communalism, whether Harijan, Christian, Muslim or Sikh, is opposed to nationalism. (Hear, hear.) What we want is not all kinds of safeguards. It is the moral safeguard that gives real protection to the underdogs of this country. I am not at all afraid of the future of the Harijans. It is not safeguards that go to improve the status of the Harijans.

The other day we heard Mr. Churchill waxing eloquent over the question of the Harijans. He said that the British Government is responsible for the life and welfare of the so-called Scheduled Castes of India. I would like to ask him one question. What has the British Government done to improve the social status of the Harijans? Did they ever pass any legislation to remove the social disabilities of the Harijans except producing some chaprassis and butlers? And Mr. Churchill also complained that the Harijans were thrown at the mercy of the Caste Hindus, their oppressors. Mr. Churchill cannot take the 70 million Harijans of this land to Great Britain to give them protection. He may give protection to a few communalists who might fly to England. Mr. Churchill should understand that we are Indians. The Harijans are Indians and they have to live in India as Indians and they will live in India as Indians. We also heard recently that the Scheduled Castes are considered as a minority. Nothing of the sort is mentioned in the State Paper of May 16. I refuse to believe that the 70 million Harijans are to be considered as a minority. Neither Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, nor even the Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, nor even the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Churchill, is going to improve the condition of the Harijans. What we want is the removal, immediate removal, of our social disabilities. Only an Independent Socialist Indian Republic can give freedom and equality of status to the Harijans. Our freedom can be obtained only from Indians and not from the British Government.

Let me make a personal appeal to Dr. Ambedkar to join the nationalist forces of this country. He is the only leader of the Harijan community and his non-co-operation with the nationalist forces is a great tragedy to the Harijans; his co-operation with the nationalist forces will enhance the emancipation of the Harijans. Here is a unique occasion for you Sir, (addressing Dr. Ambedkar) to place your services before the country. The Harijans will be free only in a Socialist Republic India, and let us all support the Resolution and work for its implementation even if it demands the utmost sacrifices from us.

Regarding the amendment brought forward by the Right Hon'ble Dr. Jayakar, I think those who support the amendment get their inspiration from Whitehall and not from the people of this land. Recently we heard much about the postponement of the Constituent Assembly from different quarters Lord Wavell pleaded for it, Mr. Jinnah insisted on it. I feel that Dr. Jayakar by moving this amendment, is questioning the very validity of the Constituent Assembly and is strengthening the argument put forward by Mr. Churchill the other day in the House of Commons.

Dr. Jayakar also expressed a pious sympathy for the people of the States. If by the term 'States' the Hon'ble members means the real representatives of the States, I can assure the Hon'ble Member that the people of the States are behind the Congress and the Constituent Assembly, (applause) and any decision made by the Constituent Assembly will be acceptable to the people of the States. I think I should make some reference to the views expressed by the Communist leader. In the historic Resolution moved by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, I think every provision is made for the development of every individual in this land. And now the Party which called the war as the People's war, has come here to advise the Constituent Assembly to postpone the consideration of this Resolution for some time. If I am wrong there, I may be excused. The so-called Communists, instead of emancipating the Harijans, are only exploiting them. They promise pieces of land to the Harijans and in that way they try to take them away from the nationalist forces. I think the Communist Party is getting its inspiration from some outside quarter and so it is not for us to accept the views of the Communists. We cannot depend on such a party for our emancipation and our emancipation lies in the national forces which are represented in this Assembly. I therefore hope that in the future independent India the Harijans 'will have an honourable place as every other citizen of this land.