

Begum Aizaz Rasul (United Provinces: Muslim): Sir, I congratulate the Honourable Dr. Ambedkar for his lucid and illuminating exposition of the draft Constitution. He and the Drafting Committee had no ordinary task to perform and they deserve our thanks.

Sir, I feel it a great privilege to be associated with the framing of the Constitution. I am aware of the solemnity of the occasion. After two centuries of slavery India has emerged from the darkness of bondage into the light of freedom, and today, on this historic occasion we are gathered here to draw up a constitution for Free India which will give shape to our future destiny and carve out the social, political and economic status of the three hundred million people living in this vast sub-continent. We should therefore be fully aware of our responsibilities and set to this task with the point of view of how best to evolve a system best suited to the needs, requirements, culture and genius of the people living here.

Much has been said about the fact that most of the provisions have been borrowed from the Constitutions of the U.S.A., England, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, etc. Sir, I for my part see nothing wrong in so borrowing as long as the higher interests of the nation and the well-being and prosperity of the country are kept in mind. There is no doubt that the draft Constitution has been framed to fit in with the present administration. But this had to be so in the very nature of things. After all, we have all become used to a certain way of life of government and of administration. If the draft Constitution had changed the whole structure of Government, there would have been chaos. India is a new recruit to the democratic form of Government. Its people have been used to centuries of autocratic rule and, therefore, to carry on more or less on the lines they have been accustomed for some time more, with changes here and there according to changed conditions, is the best thing possible. The important thing is that power is derived from the people and it is the people who will make or mar the destiny of India.

A lot of criticism has been made about Dr. Ambedkar's remark regarding village polity. Sir, I entirely agree with him. Modern tendency is towards the right of the citizen as against any corporate body and village panchayats can be very autocratic.

Sir, coming to the Fundamental Rights, I find that what has been given with one hand has been taken away by the other. Fundamental Rights should be such that they should not be liable to reservations and to changes by Acts of legislature. It is essential that some at least of the civil liberties of the citizen should be preserved by the Constitution and it should not be easy for the legislature to take them away. Instead of this, we find the provision relating to these Rights full of provisos and exceptions. This means that what has been given today could easily be changed tomorrow by an Act of the legislature.

To my mind it is necessary that some sort of agency should be provided to see that the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles are being observed in all Provinces in the letter and in the spirit. Otherwise it may be that the absence of such an agency may give rise to the formation of communal organisations with the object of watching the interests of their respective communities. It should be the function of the agency I have suggested to bring to the notice of the Government the cases where the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles are not being followed properly. I hope this point of mine will be seriously considered by this august Assembly when we come to discuss the Draft Constitution clause by clause.

Sir, as a woman, I have very great satisfaction in the fact that no discrimination will be made on account of sex. It is in the fitness of things that such a provision should have been made in the Draft Constitution, and I am sure women can look forward to equality of opportunity under the new Constitution.

Sir, I will not go into the details of the Constitution because I shall deal with the various provisions as we discuss the Constitution clause by clause, but there are a few fundamental issues which have been raised and discussed on the floor of this House during the last two or three days to which I may refer in passing.

Sir, the question of the reservation of seats for the minorities has engaged the attention of this House. It is true, Sir, that last year on the recommendations of the Minorities Sub-Committee, this House accepted the principle of the reservation of seats for certain communities. At that time also I was opposed to this reservation of seats, and today again I repeat that in the new set-up with joint electorates it is absolutely meaningless to have reservation of seats for any minority. We have to depend upon the good-will of the majority community. Therefore speaking for the Muslims I say that to ask for reservation of seats seems to my mind quite pointless, but I do agree with Dr. Ambedkar that it is for the majority to realise its duty not to discriminate against any minority. Sir, if that principle that the majority should not discriminate against any minority is accepted, I can assure you that we will not ask for any reservation of seats as far as the Muslims are concerned. We feel that our interests are absolutely identical with those of the majority, and expect that the majority would deal justly and fairly with all minorities. At the same time, as has been pointed out by some honourable Members in their speeches, reservation of seats for minorities in the Services is a very essential thing and I hope that the members of this House will consider it when we deal with that question.

Then, Sir, another question which has been engaging the attention of this House is the question of language. Sir, the question of language in its very nature is a very important question because after all we have to devise something which is most acceptable to the people living in this country. It is quite true that the language of the country should be the language that is mostly spoken and understood by the people of the country, and I do not deny the fact that Hindi is the language which is understood and spoken by the majority of the people (hear, hear), but, Sir, the word 'Hindi' as it is being interpreted today is a very wrong interpretation. After all there is not much difference between Hindi and Hindustani. Everyone will bear witness to the fact that the language spoken in the country, whether by Hindus or Muslims, is a very different language to that which is being described as Hindi and which is being advocated by the protagonists of Hindi. What is advocated is Sanskritised Hindi which is only understood by a small section of the people. If we take the villages, the language spoken there is very different to what is called Hindi here.

Then, Sir, I do not think that the forty million Muslims living in this country can immediately be asked to change their language. I agree that we will have to learn Hindi in the Devanagri script, but some time must be given to us to affect the change-over. It is very unfair of you to ask us suddenly to transact all the business of the state as well as the business in the legislatures in a language that we are not conversant with. I therefore feel that this is a matter which should be calmly and coolly considered. After all, this is not a matter which can be decided on the spur of the moment or on grounds of sentiment or passion. We have to keep in mind the requirements of the country. The Father of the Nation up to the last advocated Hindustani written in both the scripts as the only language which is most suitable and which can be acceptable to the mass of the people living in this country. I therefore recommend that, whereas Hindi in the Devanagri script can be made the ultimate lingua franca of the country, a certain time limit, say about 15 years, must be given for the change-over and until then Hindustani in both the scripts should remain the language of India.

In conclusion, Sir, I would say that whatever we put in this Constitution, we must see that all our efforts are concentrated to make India strong and prosperous with equality of opportunity, happiness and prosperity for all so that India may lead the countries of the world on the path of peace and progress.