

Shrimati G. Durgabai (Madras : General): Mr. President, the question of national language for India which was an almost agreed proposition until recently has suddenly become a highly controversial issue. Whether rightly or wrongly, the people of non-Hindi speaking areas have been made to feel that this fight or this attitude on behalf of the Hindi speaking areas is a fight for effectively preventing the natural influence of other powerful languages of India on the composite culture of this nation. I have heard some honourable Members who are supporters of Hindi with Hindi numerals say, "You have accepted nearly 90 per cent of our thesis; therefore, why hesitate to accept the other 10 per cent?" May I ask them with what sacrifice, we have accepted this? Some friends said: "Absolutely there is no sacrifice on your part. You have to accept. You must". This is the attitude in approaching the people of the non-Hindi speaking areas for asking them to accept their proposition in its entirety.

Sir, the national language of India should not be and cannot be any other than Hindustani which is Hindi *plus* Urdu. For the sake of satisfying the sentiments of our friends we have accepted Hindi in Devanagari script. It is no less sacrifice for us to have had to depart from a principle, which we have all along fought for and lived for. This departure means a very serious inconvenience to us and it is not without a pang that we have agreed to this departure from the tolerant Gandhian ideology, the Gandhian philosophy and the Gandhian proposition, namely, that the official language of India should be only that which is commonly understood and easily spoken and learnt. Sir, this is the sacrifice that we have made.

Perhaps Tandonji, Seth Govind Dasji and others do not know this and are not aware of the powerful opposition in the South against the Hindi language. The opponents feel perhaps justly that this propaganda for Hindi cuts at the very root of the provincial languages and is a serious obstacle to the growth of the provincial languages and provincial culture. Sir, the anti-Hindi agitation in the south is very powerful. My friend Dr. Subbaroyan dealt at some length on this point yesterday. But, Sir, what did we do with the supporters of Hindi? We braved that fierce agitation and propagated Hindi in the South. Long before the Pandits of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan realised the importance of having a national language for India, we all in the South obeyed the call of Mahatma Gandhi and carried on Hindi propaganda in the South. We started schools and conducted classes in Hindi. Thus with great inconvenience we dedicated ourselves very long ago to the propagation and learning of Hindi.

Sir, leaving alone the efforts of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Pracharak Sabha, I must in this connection pay a glowing tribute to the women and children of the South who have taken with great zeal and earnestness to the learning of Hindi. Sir, Gandhiji's efforts and influence, worked tremendously on the students of colleges who, after putting in hard work in their colleges, used to come in the evenings to the Hindi classes to learn this language. Not only the students, even the lawyers after their court

hours, officers after finishing their office work, instead of going in the evenings to the recreation clubs, attended Hindi classes and learnt Hindi. I am impressing this fact upon you just to show how genuinely and honestly we took to this propagation of Hindi as a result of Mahatmaji's call and appeal to us.

My friends will do well to note that all this was a voluntary effort on our part to fall in line with the national sentiment. In this connection I may refer to a visit which was paid to by the late Seth Jamnalal Bajaj in 1923. In that year, when Sethji visited Cocanada for the Congress Session he visited some ladies' institutions where he found some hundreds of women learning Hindi. Remember, Sir, that this was in the year 1923, some two and a half decades ago. Sethji was so happy to see the ladies learning Hindi that he offered a very handsome donation to the Hindi institution then working. But, the organisers declined the donation saying: "We also feel that we should have a national language. We are therefore conducting the school in Hindi with our own efforts." That is the spirit with which we worked.

Now what is the result of it all? I am shocked to see this agitation against that enthusiasm of ours with which we took to Hindi in the early years of this century. Sir, this attitude on your part to give a national character to what is purely a provincial language is responsible for embittering the feelings of the non-Hindi speaking people. I am afraid this would certainly adversely affect the sentiments and the feelings of those who have already accepted Hindi with Devanagari script. In short, Sir, this overdone and misused propaganda on their part is responsible and would be responsible for losing the support of people who know and who are supporters of Hindi like me.

I have already said that in the interests of national unity, Hindustani alone could be the national language of India. We urge caution and an accommodating spirit on their part, in the interests of the minorities here who, like the Muslims, need time and sympathy to adjust themselves. Sir, they have all displayed large-hearted readiness to fall in line with the predominant sentiment. Purely from the point of view of excellence of literature and international reputation, Bengali is worthy of adoption as the national language. From the point of view of sweetness and also from the fact that it is the second largest of the languages spoken in India, Telugu could be worthy of adoption as the national language. Sir, we have, given up our claims for Telugu. We have not spoken one word in favour of it. We have not advocated it. We have not suggested that one of these provincial languages should be accepted as the national language of our country.

Now, Sir, when we have made this sacrifice, you come out and say, sacrifice another point and swallow the other five per cent remaining out of the hundred percent and adopt the Hindi numerals. I should say that is the height – I hesitate to put it that way but I must say it – of language tyranny and intolerance. We have agreed to adopt Hindi in the Devanagari script, but I must remind the House that we have agreed to the adoption of Hindi in the Devanagari script, subject to certain conditions. Condition No. 1 is, whatever be the name of the language – I do not propose to speak about the controversy about Hindi *versus* Hindustani—whatever name you may give it, it must be all inclusive and therefore the clause concerned in Shri Gopaldaswami Ayyangar's draft should commend itself to the House and the House should unhesitatingly and unanimously agree to that clause. That language should be capable of absorbing the words which are already in use whether of Urdu or any other regional language. It is only then you will convince us that you are asking us to accept it as a national language and not the special brand of C.P. or U.P. Hindi.

Another condition which is equally important is that the *status quo* should be maintained at least for a period of fifteen years, which would enable us to learn and to speak and also to adjust ourselves to the new environment. People from the Hindi areas are not even willing to concede this point. They say, "Some of you can speak Hindi and so bring it into effect from tomorrow or at least in the shortest possible time." I have heard some people say—

Tumari jindagi me hindi kabhi nahi rashtra bhasha banegi

I ask you, Sir are we going to have this Constitution only for ourselves and our lives? What about our children and the generations to come? Are they not to follow this? I am speaking from my own personal experience. I learnt Hindi, I taught Hindi to some hundreds of women at least, in the South. My experience is this: Those who have passed the highest examinations in Hindi can read and write, but it is impossible for them to speak, because for speaking there must be some kind of environment, some kind of atmosphere. In the South, where do we find this atmosphere? Nowhere in the South have we opportunities of speaking what we have learnt. You will only realise this difficulty when you come to the South and you have to speak one of the provincial languages there. Therefore, be patient and cultivate the spirit of accommodation and tolerance. This is the thing that we ask of you to show to us.

The third condition which is not clear from Shri Gopaldaswami Ayyangar's draft is that there is some obligation placed on the non-Hindi speaking people to speak Hindi. There should be equally an obligation on your part to learn one of the provincial languages. It does not matter whether it is

Bengali, Tamil, Telugu or Kannada or any other language for that matter. Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, while speaking on this subject yesterday, dwelt on this point sufficiently and on the resolution which the Sahitya Sammelan passed recently in their conference in Delhi. We will carefully wait and watch and see how that resolution would be implemented by the Premiers of Provinces who were parties to that resolution.

On the question of numerals, I do not want to say anything because sufficient has already been said. You have already understood the gravity of the situation. Suffice it to say, let there be no sentiment or let there be no question of its being a religion with anybody. If that is religion with you, it would be a powerful religious force with us, not to have adopted a language which is not our own, which is only a provincial language, which is not sufficiently developed. Therefore let not anybody say that it is religious with him or her.

Sir, the other question which I wanted to speak about is that in the non-Hindi speaking areas we have got to learn Hindi which we have raised to the position of an official language. Our purse is very meagre and we are already spending so much for the removal of illiteracy in our provinces. Therefore, it becomes the duty and responsibility of the Centre to give sufficient grants to the provinces which are non-Hindi speaking areas to develop and also to propagate this Hindi.

Sir, you have given me an opportunity to speak and I should not take much time of the House. Please remember that we are accepting Hindi only with these conditions which I have stated. For your part, you should have no hesitation to accept Shri Gopalaswami Ayyangar's draft. Even we do not agree with some of the provisions there, but we have accepted it, and therefore you should have no hesitation in accepting it and supporting it. Thank you, Sir.