

(DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD, DECEMBER 11, 1946)

I hope you...who have come here for framing a constitution for an independent and free India, will be able to...place before the world a model of a constitution that will satisfy all our people, all groups, all communities, all religions inhabiting this vast land, and which will ensure to everyone freedom of action, freedom of thought, freedom of belief and freedom of worship, which will guarantee to everyone opportunities for rising to his highest, and which will guarantee to everyone freedom in all respects.

Hon'ble Members will not consider it ungracious on my part if I tell them that at the present moment I feel more overwhelmed by a sense of the burden of responsibility which they have placed on my shoulders than by a sense of elation for the great honour which they have conferred upon me. I realize that the greatest honour which an Assembly like this could confer on any Indian, you have been pleased to confer on me, and I am not using merely the language of convention when I say that I appreciate it greatly and I am grateful to you for it.

I know the difficulties which I have to face in the discharge of the heavy responsibilities which I have undertaken on your behest. I know the work of the Constituent Assembly is beset with various kinds of obstacles, but I know too that in the discharge of my duties, I can count upon your unstinted support and the same kind of generosity which you have exhibited in electing me to this high honour. Our Constituent Assembly is meeting in difficult circumstances. We see signs of strife in many places in this unfortunate land. But other countries too, when they elected their constituent assemblies and asked them to frame a constitution for them, were faced with similar difficulties. We can take comfort in the fact that in spite of those difficulties, in spite of the differences in view-points which exhibited themselves with vigour, sometimes with trouble and turmoil, the assemblies were able, in spite of them, to frame constitutions which were acceptable to the people at large and which have become in course of time an invaluable heritage for the people in those lands. There is no reason why we also should not succeed similarly. All that we need is honesty of purpose, firmness of determination, a desire to understand each others view-point, that we shall do justice, that we shall behave as fairly, as

squarely as possible towards everyone else—and with that determination, with that resolve, I cannot see why we should not be able to overcome the obstacles in our way. I am aware that this Constituent Assembly has been born with certain limitations placed on it from its very birth. We may not forget, disregard or ignore those limitations, in the course of our proceedings and in arriving at our decisions. But I know too that in spite of those limitations the Assembly is a self-governing, self-determining independent body with the proceedings of which no outside authority can interfere, and the decisions of which no one else outside it can upset or alter or modify. Indeed it is in the power of this Constituent Assembly to get rid of and to demolish the limitations which have been attached to it at its birth and I hope you, Ladies and Gentlemen, who have come here for framing a constitution for an independent and free India, will be able to get rid of those limitations and to place before the world a model of a Constitution that will satisfy all our people, all groups, all communities, all religions inhabiting this vast land, and which will ensure to everyone freedom of action, freedom of thought, freedom of belief and freedom of worship, which will guarantee to everyone opportunities for rising to his highest, and which will guarantee to everyone freedom in all respects.

I hope and trust that this Constituent Assembly will in course of time be able to develop strength as all such assemblies have done. When an organisation like this sets on its work it gathers momentum, and as it goes along it is able to gather strength which can conquer all difficulties and which can subdue the most formidable obstacles in its path. Let me pray and hope that our Assembly too will gather more and more strength as it goes along.

It is a most regrettable thing that I find many seats unoccupied today in this Assembly. I am hoping that our friends of the Muslim League will soon come to occupy these places and will be glad and happy to participate in this great work of creating a constitution for our people, creating a constitution which according to the experience of all other nations of the world, which according to our own experience and which according to our own traditions and our own peculiar conditions, will guarantee to every one all that can be guaranteed, all that need be guaranteed and all that require to be guaranteed, and will not leave any room for any complaint from any side. I am hoping also that you all will do your best to achieve this great objective.

Above all, what we need is freedom and as some one has said “Nothing is more valuable than the freedom to be free”. Let us hope and pray that as a result of the labours of this Constituent Assembly we shall have achieved that freedom and we shall be proud of it.

---