

**Begum Aizaz Rasul** (United Provinces : Muslim): Mr. President, Sir, this is indeed a very solemn and auspicious occasion that this Constituent Assembly has finished its mighty task of drafting a Constitution for free India — a Constitution which embodies in itself the hopes and aspirations of the Indian people. If a Constitution can be judged by its phraseology, or by the provisions it contains, then, certainly, our Constitution deserves a very high place in the constitutions of the world and I think we are justified in feeling proud of it. I would like to congratulate Dr. Ambedkar and members of the Drafting Committee on their wonderful work and to thank you, Mr. President, for the patient and efficient manner in which you have conducted the proceedings of this House. The Secretariat staff of the Constituent Assembly also deserve our thanks for their hard work and incessant labours.

Sir, the most outstanding feature of the Constitution is the fact that India is to be a purely secular State. The sanctity of the Constitution lies essentially in its affirmation of secularity and we are proud of it. I have full faith that this secularity will always be kept guarded and unsullied, as upon it depends that complete unity of the peoples of India without which all hopes of progress would be in vain.

Then, Sir, being a Democratic Republic, the Constitution provides for all citizens, individually and collectively, the best fruits of democracy and ensures to them those basic conditions and freedoms which alone made life secure, significant and productive. Even though these Fundamental Rights are hedged in by various conditions and provisos, yet to my mind, Sir, they guarantee to the citizen that measure of liberty which is necessary for a free and full development of his total personality. These are also justiciable which is an essential corollary to the theory of Fundamental Rights which are incorporated in a Constitution to ensure the principle that man has certain rights independently of the Government under which he lives and a court of justice is there to see that these rights are not infringed by any of the governmental bodies—the Legislature or the Executive.

Articles 14 to 28 ensure to the individual social, economic and political equality, irrespective of caste, creed or sex, religious freedom and equality of opportunity. Articles 29 and 30 ensure to the minorities the preservation of their language, script and culture. I hope that Article 29 will be so applied as to be effective, and primary education of children will be imparted in their mother-tongue wherever such demand is reasonably made.

But, Sir, I regret to say that Article 31 relating to the right of property has been very unfairly and unjustly embodied in the Constitution. Like builders of cities, the makers of the Constitution frame a Constitution for all times, embodying principles of universal applicability. The Constitution should not favour one party or one group or one province. It is regrettable that the provisions of Article 31 do not pass this test and have been made to facilitate party programme in some provinces. It discriminates against zamindari abolition in provinces other than the U.P., Bihar and Madras, and also discriminates between agricultural and industrial property. It takes away the rights of justiciability from agricultural property in these provinces. This is a strange provision and makes an ugly blot on an otherwise beautiful picture.

Sir, the introduction of adult franchise in the country means a great step forward, but with the large masses of uneducated people this system would only succeed if effective measures are taken immediately to educate the people of India for citizenship.

Sir, the women of India are happy to step into their rightful heritage of complete equality with men in all spheres of life and activity. I say so because I am convinced that this is no new concept which has been postulated for the purposes of this Constitution, but is an ideal that has long been cherished by India, though social conditions for some time had tragically debased it in practice. This Constitution affirms that ideal and gives the solemn assurance that the rights of women in law will be wholly honoured in the Indian Republic.

Then, Sir, one of the most important and historic features of the Constitution is the abolition of reservation of seats for minorities. I am in the happy position to remind the House that right from the very beginning I have consistently supported the thesis for the abolition of these seats, as I made clear in my speech at the time of the First Reading of this Constitution. The part that I have played in the removal of these reservations and which I did with the greatest sense of responsibility, was inspired by the conviction that it was absolutely suicidal for a religious minority to keep alive the spirit of separatism by demanding reservation on communal lines. As a matter of fact nothing can protect a minority or group less than a barrier that divides it from the majority. It makes it a permanently isolated group and prevents it from moving closer to the other groups in the country. I hope that by doing away with reservations we have also swept away those difficulties and misunderstandings which so unfortunately marred our public and political life in the past few years. I look forward, Sir, to the day when individuals will cease to regard themselves as members of religious minorities. But this, Mr. President, can only be done if and when the majority also cease to be conscious of their majority and members of all communities, big or small, sincerely and simultaneously begin to consider themselves and one another as full and equal citizens of a Secular State.

Another interesting aspect of our Constitution is the fact that it is now applicable to the whole of India, including the erstwhile Indian States. This has been made possible by the remarkable genius of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who has achieved in a miraculously short period of time, in a completely non-violent manner, the unification of our country in spite of the intransigence and obduracy of such States as Hyderabad and Bhopal. We look forward to welcoming very shortly in our midst the chosen representatives of Hyderabad.

May I say, Sir, what a thrill of pride we felt on reading that the Prime Minister had referred to and quoted from the Constitution of India when he addressed the Parliament of the mightiest democracy of the modern world. By this gesture of his we feel that the seal of authenticity has been placed on the democratic nature of our Constitution. Sir, a Constitution is judged by the spirit in which it is worked : it is judged by the manner and method of its implementation. Then, again, the ultimate aim of all constitutions is to increase human happiness, human well-being and weld together the various elements in a country into one nation. Ours is a great country with a great destiny stretching before her. I hope and pray that the implementation of this Constitution will be such as to enhance the prestige of our motherland and make her a dynamic force that will bring together all nations of the world within the orbit of a enduring peace. Sir, I support Dr. Ambedkar's motion.