

Shrimati Ammu Swaminathan (Madras : General): Sir, the passing of this Constitution for an Independent India can be called without exaggeration the realisation of a great dream of four hundred million people. For so many years the people of this country had been working for this realisation and today we have actually got what we had been working for.

The first picture which really comes into my mind when I stand here this afternoon is the picture of the great man, Mahatma Gandhi, who by years and years of untiring work made it possible for us today to be an independent country. I think if we are to deserve this Constitution we have to make up our minds to work it, into something alive and something that will be of benefit to every citizen of this country. I know that the Constitution gives us in the Fundamental Rights, equal status, adult franchise and has also provided for the removal of untouchability and things of that kind for which India had been fighting all these years. But all these things appearing on paper is not enough if we are to make this country happy and prosperous. We have to see that these ideas and ideals which are on paper in the Constitution are implemented by the people of this country.

Sir, I would also like to pay my tribute to you and join with other Members who had congratulated you and shown their gratitude to you. All Members of this Assembly will always remember you with great affection and esteem and we will always remember the kindness and consideration you have shown towards every Member of this House.

We have also to pay our tribute to Dr. Ambedkar and the members of the Drafting Committee and the Secretariat of the Constituent Assembly for the very hard work that they had put in for so many weeks and months. I know their task has not been an easy one but they have overcome all difficulties and thus we are today on the eve of passing this great Constitution of our country.

I feel that the Constitution actually rests on two pillars - Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy. The fundamental rights of the people of India are guaranteed in such matters as freedom of speech, association and worship. The last is a very vital question to the people of this country. The Hindus have always been known to be tolerant towards all religions and we have put that down in our Constitution so that there will be no mistake about it and nobody can say that our Constitution did not include freedom of worship to every citizen of this country.

Now it is for us to see that this Constitution is worked properly so as to bring about the democratic State in India for which we had been working and hoping for and when we bring this about we must see that not only the rights are assured to every citizen but that he knows his duties and responsibilities towards the State. His freedom should be so used as to be of benefit to this country. Freedom is not to be used for doing anything that anyone likes. As it is so often said, freedom does not mean license. Let us hope that in the years to come this Constitution will be considered as something worthy of our country. Though there are many who find fault with a great number of clauses in it I hope they will remember that when we were going on with this work of constitution-making India was passing through difficult times, very unhappy times and our task was a very difficult one. I feel that it has been a great achievement to have been able to bring all the divergent opinions together and frame a Constitution of this kind which has been agreed to by a very large majority, though perhaps not by all.

A great many Members of this House have been praising this Constitution and there has been a certain amount of criticism also. There is one criticism which I would like to make and that is that this Constitution is to my mind a very long and a very bulky volume. I always imagined a constitution and still believe, to be a small volume which one could carry in one's purse or pocket and not a huge big volume. There was no necessity to go into so many details as has been done here. All the details, I think, should have been left to the Government and the legislatures. After all they are going to function according to the policy laid down by the Constitution and was it necessary, I would ask, to load the Constitution with all this? I know very little about constitution making, nor do I pretend to be an expert. But I do feel as one of the citizens of India and as one of those who have been a member of a legislature for two or three years that it was not necessary to have so much details in the Constitution. However, as it is I do think that it is a great piece of work and I would like to say that it has been a great joy and happiness to me to have been here as a Member of this Assembly when framing the Constitution of India and I hope that some of us will live to see that the Constitution becomes a real stronghold for human rights and it will be worked towards establishing a real democracy, so that there will be happiness and prosperity for every one in India.

Equal right is a great thing and it is only fitting that it has been included in the Constitution. People outside have been saying that India did not give equal rights to her women. Now we can say that when the Indian people themselves framed their Constitution they have given rights to women equal with every other citizen of the country. That in itself is a great achievement and it is going to help our women not only to realise their responsibilities but to come forward and fully shoulder their responsibilities to make India a great country that she had been.

With these few words, Sir, I strongly support that the Constitution may be passed.