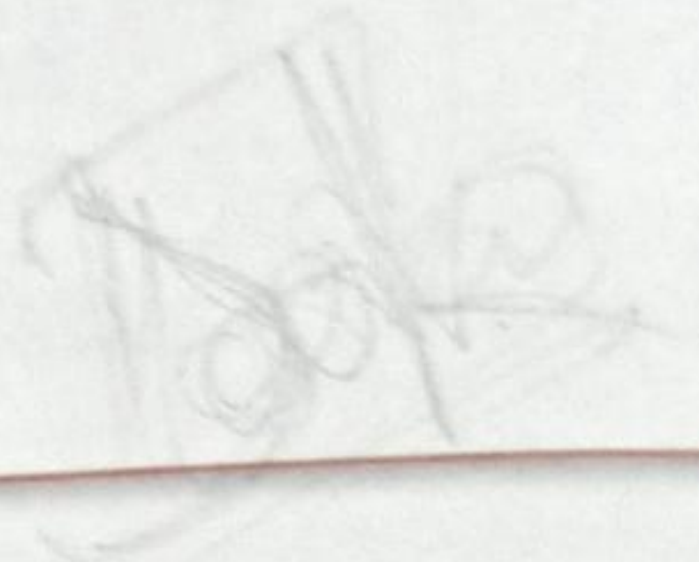


# Our Constitution

## Scope

- Definition of Constitution — date of adoption
- Date of enforcement of the Constitution
- Significance of the constitution
- Single citizenship
- Universal adult franchise

26 Nov  
1949



India became independent from the British rule on 15 August 1947. The Constitution of India came into force on 26 January 1950. On this day, India was declared a **Sovereign Democratic Republic**.

## Constitution

A constitution is a comprehensive document that contains the rules and laws according to which a country is governed. The Constitution of India is the world's lengthiest written constitution. The Indian Constitution defines the basic political principles and establishes the structures, procedures and powers of the government. It states the duties of the three organs of the government — the legislature, executive and judiciary. The Constitution also incorporates the rights and duties of a citizen to regulate the relationship between the citizens and the state.

## The Constituent Assembly

The Constitution of India was drafted by the Constituent Assembly, which was set up under the Cabinet Mission Plan on 16 May 1946. The Constituent Assembly met for the first time in New Delhi on 9 December 1946 at the present Central Hall of the Parliament House. It was presided over by Dr Sachidananda Sinha. On 11 December 1946, the Assembly elected Dr Rajendra Prasad as its permanent chairman.



▲ Dr B R Ambedkar

The members of the Constituent Assembly were elected indirectly by the Provincial Legislative Assemblies of undivided India. The Constituent Assembly comprised 389 members. However, when the Muslim League decided to withdraw its candidates from the Constituent Assembly, the membership was reduced to 299.

## Composition of the Constituent Assembly

The Constituent Assembly comprised important personalities, such as Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr B R Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Parsis by Dr H P Modi. The Constituent Assembly was a mini-India. All the communities were represented in the Assembly. The Anglo-Indians were represented by Frank Anthony and the Parsis by Dr H P Modi. There were several important women members, such as Sarojini Naidu, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Vijaylakshmi Pandit. The chairman of the Minorities Committee was Dr H C Mukherjee. and Muhammed Saadullah. The Muslim community was represented by Zafar Imam

## The Drafting Committee

The Drafting Committee was set up on 29 August 1947 under the chairmanship of Dr B R Ambedkar. It was entrusted with the task of preparing a draft of the new Constitution. The first draft of the Constitution was published in February 1948. It was discussed and was open for comments and amendments for eight months. In the light of the observations and suggestions, the Drafting Committee prepared a second draft, which was published in October 1948.

## Time taken to pass the Constitution

The Constituent Assembly took almost three years to complete the historic task of drafting the Constitution. It was divided into 22 parts, comprising 395 <sup>articles</sup> and eight schedules.

## Date of enforcement

Initially, only some provisions related to citizenship, elections, and provisional parliament were enforced. The Constitution as a whole came into force on 26 January 1950. In order to commemorate this date Republic Day is celebrated on 26 January. Dr Rajendra Prasad was unanimously elected the first President of India.

## Points to Remember

- Constitution is a comprehensive document that contains the rules and laws according to which a country is

sectional interests. National integration is the prime need of the country today. Keeping this objective in view, the Preamble was amended in 1976 to include the word integrity. The Constitution of India seeks to achieve 'dignity of the individual' by guaranteeing fundamental rights to each citizen.

### Significance of the Preamble *Constitution*

The Preamble holds a very significant position in the Constitution of India.

- ✓ It declares that **all authority is derived from the people.**
- ✓ It also states that **the government must secure social, economic and political justice for all the citizens.** Thus, the aspirations of the people of India are reflected in it.
- ✓ The Preamble states that India is a **sovereign, secular, socialist, democratic republic.** The people are also guaranteed the **freedom of thought, expression, faith, belief and worship.**
- ✓ It promotes the **equality of status and opportunities** among all the people of India.
- ✓ The **spirit of brotherhood** among all is also promoted.
- ✓ Also, the **courts have been given the right to interpret** and if necessary, **amend the Constitution.**

Thus, the Preamble gives us the basic structure of the Constitution. It is the soul and spirit of the Constitution. It effectively reflects the dreams and aspirations of the founding fathers of our Constitution.

### Single Citizenship

The Constitution of India recognises **single citizenship** despite a federal structure. This means that a person born anywhere in India can only be a citizen of India and not have a separate citizenship of the state to which he/she belongs. All the citizens enjoy the same rights. This provision helps in promoting unity and integrity of the nation. This is a unitary feature in contrast to the dual citizenship prevailing in several countries like the USA. For example, a person hailing from Texas, USA, is a citizen of Texas as well as the USA.

### Universal Adult Franchise

The Constitution of India also provides for **universal adult franchise.** It means that all the citizens of India, who are eighteen years and above, have the right to vote without any discrimination of caste, class, colour, religion or sex. It is based on the principle of equality which is one of the basic pillars of democracy. To deny anyone this right is to violate their right to equality. Universal adult franchise spreads the message that all are equal and no one is privileged. This helps in promoting national unity.

### Points to Remember

- The Constitution of India recognises single citizenship for its citizens.
- All the citizens enjoy the same rights of citizenship.
- The Indian Constitution also provides for Universal Adult Franchise.



▲ Voting