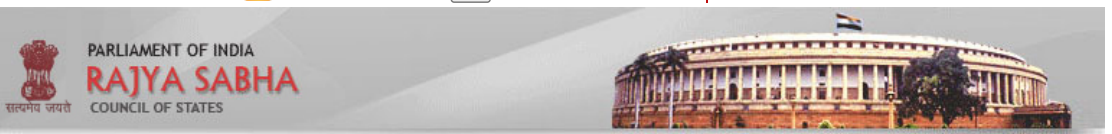


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LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (AS IN NOVEMBER, 1949)

[MADRAS]	[BOMBAY]	[WEST BENGAL]	[UNITED PROVINCES]
[EAST PUNJAB]	[BIHAR]	[CENTRAL PROVINCES & BERAR]	[ASSAM]
[ORISSA]	[DELHI]	[AJMER-MERWARA]	[COORG]
[MYSORE]	[JAMMU AND KASHMIR]	[TRAVANCORE-COCHIN]	[MADHYA BHARAT]
[SAURASHTRA]	[RAJASTHAN]	[PATIALA AND EAST PUNJAB STATES UNION]	[BOMBAY STATES]
[ORISSA STATES]	[CENTRAL PROVINCES STATES]	[UNITED PROVINCES STATES]	[MADRAS STATES]
[VINDHYA PRADESH]	[COOCH BEHAR]	[TRIPURA AND MANIPUR]	[BHOPAL]
[KUTCH]	[HIMACHAL PRADESH]		

[MADRAS]

- O.V. Alagesan
- Mrs. Ammu Swaminadhan
- M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar
- Moturi Satyanarayana
- Mrs. Dakshayani Velayudhan
- Mrs. G. Durgabai
- Kala Venkatarao
- N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar
- D. Govinda Das
- Rev. Jerome D'suza
- P. Kakkan
- K. Kamaraj
- V.C. Kesava Rao
- T.T. Krishnamachari
- Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar
- L. Krishnaswami Bharathi
- P. Kunhiraman
- M. Thirumula Rao
- V.I. Muniswamy Pillay
- M.A. Muthiah Chettiyar
- V. Nadimuthu Pillai
- S. Nagappa
- P.L. Narasimha Raju
- B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya
- C. Perumalswamy Reddy
- T. Prakasam
- S.H. Prater
- Raja Swetachalapati Ramakrishna Renga Roa of Bobbili
- R.K. Shanmukham Chetti
- T.A. Ramalingam Chettiyar
- Ramanath Goenka
- O.P. Ramaswamy Reddiyar
- N.G. Ranga
- N. Sanjeeva Reddi
- K. Santhanam
- B. Shiva Rao
- Kallur Subba Rao
- U. Srinivasa Mallayya
- P. Subbarayan
- C. Subramaniam
- V. Subramaniam
- M.C. Veerabahu
- P.M. Velayudapani
- A.K. Menon
- T.J.M. Wilson
- Mohamed Ismail Sahib

- K.T.M. Ahmed Ibrahim
- Mahboob Ali Baig Sahib Bahadur
- B. Pocker Sahib Bahadur

[BOMBAY]

- Balchandra Maheshwar Gupte
- Mrs. Hansa Mehta
- Hari Vinayak Pataskar
- B.R. Ambedkar
- Joseph Alban D'Souza
- Kanayalal Nanabhai Desai
- Keshavrao Marutirao Jedhe
- Khandubhai Kasanji Desai
- Bal Gangadhar Kher
- M.R. Masani
- K.M. Munshi
- Narhar Vishnu Gadgil
- S. Nijalingappa
- S.K. Patil
- Ramchandra Manohar Nalavade
- R.R. Diwakar
- Shankarrao Deo
- G.V. Mavalankar
- Vallabhbai J. Patel
- Abdul Kadar Mohammad Shaikh
- A.A. Khan

[WEST BENGAL]

- Monomohan Dass
- Arun Chandra Guha
- Lakshmi Kanta Maitra
- Mihir Lal Chattopadhyay
- Satis Chandra Samanta
- Suresh Chandra Majumdar
- Upendranath Barman
- Prabhudayal Himatsingka
- Basanta Kumar Das
- Mrs. Renuka Ray
- H.C. Mookherjee
- Surendra Mohan Ghose
- Syama Prasad Mookerjee
- Ari Bahadur Gurung
- R.E. Platel
- K.C. Neogy
- Raghob Ahsan
- Jasimuddin Ahmad
- Naziruddin Ahmad
- Abdul Hamid
- Abdul Halim Ghuznavi

[UNITED PROVINCES]

- Ajit Prasad Jain
- Algu Rai Shastri
- Balkrishna Sharma
- Banshi Dhar Misra
- Bhagwan Din
- Damodar Swarup Seth
- Dayal Das Bhagat
- Dharam Prakash
- A. Dharam Dass
- R. V. Dhulekar
- Feroz Ganhdi
- Gopal Narain
- Krishna Chandra Sharma
- Govind Ballabh Pant
- Verdana; Govind Malaviya
- Verdana; Har Govind Pant
- Verdana; Harihar Nath Shastri
- Hriday Nath Kunzru
- Jaspat Roy Kapoor
- Jagannath Baksh Singh
- Jawaharlal Nehru
- Jogendra Singh
- Jugal Kishore

- Jwala Prasad Srivastava
- B.V. Keskar
- Mrs. Kamala Chaudhri
- Kamalapati Tiwari
- J.B. Kripalani
- Mahavir Tyagi
- Khurshed Lal
- Masurya Din
- Mohan Lal Saksena
- Padampat Singhania
- Phool Singh
- Paragi lal
- Mrs. Purnima Banerji
- Prurshottamadas Tandon
- Hira Vallabha Tripathi
- Ram Chandra Gupta
- Shibban Lal Saxena
- Satish Chandra
- John Matthai
- Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani
- Sunder Lall
- Venkatesh Narayan Tivary
- Mohanlal Gautam
- Vishwambhar Dayal Tripathi
- Begum Aizaz Rasul
- Hyder Hussain
- Hasrat Mohani
- Abul Kalam Azad
- Muhammad Ismail Khan
- Rafi Ahmad Kidwai
- Mohd. Hifzur Rahman

[EAST PUNJAB]

- Bakshi Tek Chand
- Jairamdas Daulatram
- Thakurdas Bhargava
- Bikramlal Sondhi
- Yashwant Rai
- Ranbir Singh
- Achint Ram
- Nand Lal
- Sardar Baldev Singh
- Giani Gurmukh Singh Mu safir
- Sardar Hukam Singh
- Sardar Bhopinder Singh Mann

[BIHAR]

- Amiyo Kumar Ghosh
- Anugrahnarayan Sinha
- Banarsi Prasad Jhunjunwala
- Bhagwat Prasad
- Boniface Lakra
- Brajeshwar Prasad
- Chandika Ram
- K.T. Shah
- Devendra Nath Samanta
- Dip Narain Sinha
- Guptanath Singh
- Jadubans Sahay
- Jagat Narain Lal
- Jagjivan Ram
- Jaipal Singh
- Kameshwara Singh of Darbhanga
- Kamaleshwari Prasad Yadav
- Mahesh Prasad Sinha
- Krishna Ballabh Sahay
- Raghunandan Prasad
- Rajendra Prasad
- Rameshwar Prasad Sinha
- Ramnarayan Singh
- Sachchidananda Sinha
- Sarangdhar Sinha
- Satyanarayan Sinha

- Binodanand Jha
- P.K. Sen
- Sri Krishna Sinha
- Sri Narayan Mahtha
- Syamanandan Sahaya
- Hussain Imam
- Saiyid Jafar Imam
- Latifur Rahman
- Mohammad Tahir
- Tajamul Hussain

[\[CENTRAL PROVINCES & BERAR \]](#)

- Raghu Vira
- Rajkumari Amrit Kaur
- B.A. Mandloi
- Brijlal Nandlal Biyani
- Thakur Cheedilal
- Seth Govind Das
- Hari Singh Gour
- Hari Vishnu Kamath
- Hemchandra Jagobaji Khandekar
- Ghanshyam Singh Gupta
- Lakshman Shrawan Bhatkar
- Panjabrao Shamrao Deshmukh
- Ravi Shankar Shukla
- R.K. Sidhva
- Shankar Tryambak Dharmadhikari
- Frank Anthony
- Kazi Syed Karimuddin

[\[ASSAM \]](#)

- Nibaran Chandra Laskar
- Dharanidhar Basu-Matari
- Gopinath Bardoloi
- J.J.M. Nichols-Roy
- Kuladhar Chaliha
- Rohini Kumar Chaudhury
- Muhammad Saadulla
- Abdur Rouf

[\[ORISSA \]](#)

- B.Das
- Biswanath Das
- Krishna Chandra Gajapati Narayana Deo of Parlakimedi
- Harekrushna Mahatab
- Lakshminarayan Sahu
- Lokanath Misra
- Nandkishore Das
- Rajkrishna Bose
- Santanu Kumar Das

[\[DELHI \]](#)

- Deshbhandhu Gupta

[\[AJMER-MERWARA \]](#)

- Mukut Bihari Lal Bhargava

[\[COORG \]](#)

- C.M. Poonacha

[\[MYSORE \]](#)

- K. Chengalaraya Reddy
- T. Siddalingaiya
- H.R. Guruv Reddy
- S.V. Krishnamurthy Rao
- K. Hanumanthaiya
- H. Siddaveerappa
- T. Channiah

[\[JAMMU AND KASHMIR \]](#)

- Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah
- Motiram Baigra
- Mirza Mohmmad Afzal Beg
- Maulana Mohammad Sayeed Masoodi

[\[TRAVANCORE-COCHIN \]](#)

- A. Thanu Pillai
- R. Sankar
- P.S. Nataraja Pillai
- Mrs. Annie Mascarene
- K.A. Mohamed
- P.T. Chacko
- P. Govinda Menon

[[MADHYA BHARAT](#)]

- V.S. Sarwate
- Brijraj Narain
- Gopikrishna Vijayavargiya
- Ram Sahai
- Kusum Kant Jain
- Radhavallabh Vijayavargiya
- Sitaram S. Jajoo

[[SAURASHTRA](#)]

- Balwant Rai Gopalji Mehta
- Jaisukhlal Hathi
- Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar
- Chimanlal Chakubhai Shah
- Samaldas Laxmidas Gandhi

[[RAJASTHAN](#)]

- V.T. Krishnamachari
- Hiralal Shastri
- Sardar Singhji of Khetri
- Jaswant Singhji
- Raj Bhadur
- Manikya Lal Varma
- Gokul Lal Asava
- Ramchandra Upadhyaya
- Balwant Sinha Mehta
- Dalel Singh
- Jainarain Vyas

[[PATIALA AND EAST PUNJAB STATES UNION](#)]

- Ranjit Singh
- Sochet Singh
- Bhagwant Roy

[[BOMBAY STATES](#)]

- Vinayakrao Balshankar Vaidya
- B.N. Munavalli
- Gokulbhai Daulatram Bhatt
- Jivraj Narayan Mehta
- Gopaldas A. Desai
- Paranal Thakurlal Munshi
- B.H. Khardekar
- Ratnappa Bharamappa Kumbhar

[[ORISSA STATES](#)]

- Lal Mohan Pati
- N. Madhava Rau
- Raj Kunwar
- Sarangadhar Das
- Yudhishthir Misra

[[CENTRAL PROVINCES STATES](#)]

- R.L. Malaviya
- Kishorimohan Tripathi
- Ramprasad Potai

[[UNITED PROVINCES STATES](#)]

- B.H. Zaidi
- Krishna Singh

[[MADRAS STATES](#)]

- V. Ramaiah

[[VINDHYA PRADESH](#)]

- Avdesh Pratap Singh
- Shambu Nath Shukla
- Ram Sahai Tiwari
- Mannulalji Dwivedi

[COOCH BEHAR]

- Himmat Singh K. Maheshwari

[TRIPURA AND MANIPUR]

- Girja Shankar Guha

[BHOPAL]

- Lal Singh

[KUTCH]

- Bhawani Arjun Khimji

[HIMACHAL PRADESH]

- Y.S. Parmar

FIRST DAY IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The Constituent Assembly met for the first time in New Delhi on 9 December, 1946 in the Constitution Hall which is now known as the Central Hall of Parliament House. Decorated elegantly for the occasion, the Chamber wore a new look on that day with a constellation of bright lamps hanging from the high ceilings and also from the brackets on its walls.

Overwhelmed and jubilant as they were, the hon'ble members sat in semi-circular rows facing the Presidential dias. The desks which could be warmed electrically were placed on sloping green-carpeted terraces. Those who adorned the front row were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Acharya J.B. Kripalani, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Smt. Sarojini Naidu, Shri Hare-Krushna Mahatab, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, Shri C. Rajagopalachari and Shri M. Asaf Ali. Two hundred and seven representatives, including nine women were present.

The inaugural session began at 11 a.m. with the introduction of Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, the temporary Chairman of the Assembly, by Acharya Kripalani. While welcoming Dr. Sinha and others, Acharyaji said: "As we begin every work with Divine blessings, we request Dr. Sinha to invoke these blessings so that our work may proceed smoothly. Now, I once more, on your behalf, call upon Dr. Sinha to take the Chair."

Occupying the Chair amidst acclamation, Dr. Sinha read out the goodwill messages received from different countries. After the Chairman's inaugural address and the nomination of a Deputy Chairman, the members were formally requested to present their credentials. The First Day's proceedings ended after all the 207 members present submitted their credentials and signed the Register.

Seated in the galleries, some thirty feet above the floor of the Chamber, the representatives of the Press and the visitors witnessed this memorable event. The All India Radio, Delhi broadcast a composite sound picture of the entire proceedings.

SOME FACTS

The Constituent Assembly took almost three years (two years, eleven months and seventeen days to be precise) to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution for Independent India. During this period, it held eleven sessions covering a total of 165 days. Of these, 114 days were spent on the consideration of the Draft Constitution.

As to its composition, members were chosen by indirect election by the members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies, according to the scheme recommended by the Cabinet Mission. The arrangement was:

1. 292 members were elected through the Provincial Legislative Assemblies;
2. 93 members represented the Indian Princely States; and
3. 4 members represented the Chief Commissioners' Provinces.

The total membership of the Assembly thus was to be 389. However, as a result of the partition under the Mountbatten Plan of 3 June, 1947, a separate Constituent Assembly was set up for Pakistan and representatives of some Provinces ceased to be members of the Assembly. As a result, the membership of the Assembly was reduced to 299.

On 13 December, 1946, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru moved the Objectives Resolution

1. This Constituent Assembly declares its firm and solemn resolve to proclaim India as an Independent Sovereign Republic and to draw up for her future governance a Constitution;
2. WHEREIN the territories that now comprise British India, the territories that now form the Indian States, and such other parts of India as are outside British India and the States as well as such other territories as are willing to be constituted into the Independent Sovereign India, shall be a Union of them all; and
3. WHEREIN the said territories, whether with their present boundaries or with such others as may be determined by the Constituent Assembly and thereafter according to the law of the Constitution, shall possess and retain the status of autonomous Units, together with residuary powers and exercise all powers and functions of government and administration, save and except such powers and functions as are vested in or assigned to the Union, or as are inherent or implied in the Union or resulting
4. WHEREIN all power and authority of the Sovereign Independent India, its constituent parts and organs of government, are derived from the people; and
5. WHEREIN shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India justice, social economic and political : equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality; and
6. WHEREIN adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes; and
7. WHEREBY shall be maintained the integrity of the territory of the Republic and its Sovereign rights on land, sea, and air according to justice and the law of civilized nations; and
8. this ancient land attains its rightful and honoured place in the world and make its full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.

This Resolution was unanimously adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 22 January 1947.

Late in the evening of 14 August, 1947 the Assembly met in the Constitution Hall and at the stroke of midnight, took over as the Legislative Assembly of an Independent India.

On 29 August, 1947, the Constituent Assembly set up a Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to prepare a Draft Constitution for India. While deliberating upon the draft Constitution, the Assembly moved, discussed and disposed of as many as 2,473 amendments out of a total of 7,635 tabled. The Constitution of India was adopted on 26 November, 1949 and the hon'ble members appended their signatures to it on 24 January, 1950. In all, 284 members actually signed the Constitution. On that day when the Constitution was being signed, it was drizzling outside and it was interpreted as a sign of a good omen. The Constitution of India came into force on 26 January, 1950. On that day, the Assembly ceased to exist, transforming itself into the Provisional Parliament of India until a new Parliament was constituted in 1952.

Sessions of the Constituent Assembly	
First Session:	9-23 December, 1946
Second Session:	20-25 January, 1947
Third Session:	28 April - 2 May, 1947
Fourth Session:	14-31 July, 1947
Fifth Session:	14-30 August, 1947
Sixth Session:	27 January, 1948
Seventh Session:	4 November, 1948 - 8 January, 1949
Eighth Session:	16 May - 16 June, 1949
Ninth Session:	30 July - 18 September, 1949
Tenth Session:	6-17 October, 1949
Eleventh Session:	14-26 November, 1949
The Assembly met once again on 24 January, 1950, when the members appended	

IMPORTANT COMMITTEES OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND THEIR CHAIRMEN	
Name of the Committee	Chairman
Committee on the Rules of Procedure	Rajendra Prasad
Steering Committee	Rajendra Prasad
Finance and Staff Committee	Rajendra Prasad
Credential Committee	Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar
House Committee	B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya
Order of Business Committee	K.M. Munsi
Ad hoc Committee on the National Flag	Rajendra Prasad
Committee on the Functions of the Constituent Assembly	G.V. Mavalankar
States Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru
Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas	Vallabhbhai Patel
Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee	J.B. Kripalani
North-East Frontier Tribal Areas and Assam Excluded & Partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee	Gopinath Bardoloi
Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (Other than those in Assam) Sub-Committee	A.V. Thakkar
Union Powers Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru
Union Constitution Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru
Drafting Committee	B.R. Ambedkar

STATEWISE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA AS ON 31 DECEMBER, 1947		
PROVINCES-229		
S.No.	State	No. of Members
1.	Madras	49
2.	Bombay	21
3.	West Bengal	19
4.	United Provinces	55
5.	East Punjab	12
6.	Bihar	36
7.	C.P. and Berar	17
8.	Assam	8

STATEWISE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA AS ON 31 DECEMBER, 1947
PROVINCES-229

9.	Orissa	9
10.	Delhi	1
11.	Ajmer-Merwara	1
12.	Coorg	1

INDIAN STATES-70

1.	Alwar	1
2.	Baroda	3
3.	Bhopal	1
4.	Bikaner	1
5.	Cochin	1
6.	Gwalior	4
7.	Indore	1
8.	Jaipur	3
9.	Jodhpur	2
10.	Kolhapur	1
11.	Kotah	1
12.	Mayurbhanj	1
13.	Mysore	7
14.	Patiala	2
15.	Rewa	2
16.	Travancore	6
17.	Udaipur	2
18.	Sikkim and Cooch Behar Group	1
19.	Tripura, Manipur and Khasi States Group	1
20.	U.P. States Group	1
21.	Eastern Rajputana States Group	3
22.	Central India States Group(including Bundelkhand and Malwa)	3
23.	Western India States Group	4
24.	Gujarat States Group	2
25.	Deccan and Madras States Group	2
26.	Punjab States Group I	3
27.	Eastern States Group I	4
28.	Eastern States Group II	3
29.	Residuary States Group	4
	Total	299

ADDRESS BY DR. SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST SITTING OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

Parliament House, New Delhi

Monday, December 9, 1996 18 Agrahyana, 1918 (Saka)

It gives me immense pleasure to participate in this function to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the first sitting of the Constituent Assembly of India.

On behalf of the nation I pay tribute to all Members of the Constituent Assembly. Their painstaking efforts provided India with the basic legal and ethical framework for progress and development.

It is also my privilege to felicitate some members of the Constituent Assembly who are with us today.

The 9th of December, like the 9th of August, is important in the history of our long struggle for Freedom. Indeed, the demand for a Constituent Assembly was intrinsically linked to our larger goal of Freedom and Independence. The resolution for Purna Swaraj in 1929 had aroused great nationalist fervour and galvanized the people to take part with renewed vigor in the Freedom Movement. The clear and unambiguous articulation of this deep-rooted longing of the people of India to be in control of their own destiny contained within itself the idea of a democratic Constitution which would provide a framework for the governance of independent India by the Indian people. Clearly, such a Constitution could only be drawn up by the elected representatives of the people of India. It was from this unassailable logic that the demand for a Constituent Assembly was articulated by Panditji. The proposal was accepted by the Indian National Congress in 1934, whereafter it became a significant part of the nationalist agenda for Independent India. Mahatma Gandhi himself fully endorsed this proposal. Writing in the 'Harijan' on 25th November, 1939, he said: [I quote]

"Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has compelled me to study, among other things, the implications of a Constituent Assembly. When he first introduced it in the Congress resolutions, I reconciled myself to it because of my belief in his superior knowledge of the technicalities of democracy. But I was not free from scepticism. Hard facts have, however, made me a convert and, for that reason perhaps, more enthusiastic than Jawaharlal himself." [Unquote]

It was to take seven more years before the Constituent Assembly became a reality. This was a period which saw dramatic developments not merely in India but throughout the world. In India, our Freedom Struggle was at its peak in 1942 during the historic Quit India Movement. Internationally, there was a fundamental transformation in the geo-political situation after the Second World War. The world was in a state of flux when our peaceful and non-violent struggle attained success. It was a struggle led by women and men of character, leaders who had braved the trials and tribulations of colonial rule and had undergone tremendous suffering and hardship.

It was our beloved leaders who belonged to the masses, individuals with deep knowledge and learning and imbued with the values of our civilization, who were elected to participate in the Constituent Assembly. They had a broad global vision which encompassed all humanity and sought to harmonize the great spiritual values of our culture with the modern dynamic approach of other traditions.

The values of our ethos and their own experiences during the Freedom Struggle spurred the constant striving of our people for the ideals of liberty, equality, justice, respect for human dignity and democracy. These ideals, the goals and values of the Freedom Struggle form the real essence, the life-breath of our Constitution and are enshrined in the Preamble.

Already, in the decades before Independence our people were giving thought to their vision of an Independent India. Pandit Motilal Nehru drafted the well-known Nehru Report on the Constitution of free India. The Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress held in March, 1931 adopted the famous Resolution moved by Mahatma Gandhi which contained our charter on Fundamental Rights. It is against this historical backdrop of a long and arduous struggle and the crystallization of our vision of a sovereign, democratic nation that the first session of the Constituent Assembly was held in 1946, when, as Panditji said, we embarked on 'the high adventure of giving shape, in the printed and written word, to a nation's dream and aspiration'.

There was a sense of mission in the members of the Constituent Assembly to draft a Constitution which would preserve the pluralism and essential oneness, and the unity and integrity of India. Our Constitution ensures that India remains a secular State. People belonging to different religious denominations who are all part of our vibrant pluralistic society, are guaranteed the freedom to practice their own religions. I might add that these Rights under our Constitution are available even to those who are not citizens of India.

Our Constitution is not merely a political document which provides the framework and institutions for democratic governance - our Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary. It provides a framework for the economic and social emancipation of society and particularly, the poor, the underprivileged and the downtrodden. As Granville Austine has said, "the core of the commitment to the social revolution lies in Parts III and IV, in the Fundamental Rights and in the Directive Principles of State Policy. These are the conscience of the Constitution." It is of profound import that the Fundamental Rights are enforceable by Courts of Law. Article 32 of the Constitution guarantees the implementation of these Rights. This is a very crucial safeguard against excesses by executive authority and casts a very heavy responsibility on our Judiciary, a vital pillar of our democratic polity, to ensure that fundamental human freedoms are guaranteed.

When our Constitution was adopted on 26th November, 1949 our statesmen and visionaries had said that the Constitution is as good or bad as people who are entrusted to administer it, wish it to be. The Chairman of the Drafting Committee, the brilliant jurist, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, speaking a day before the adoption of the Constitution, had said: [I quote]

"The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution ... The factor on which the working of (the) organs of State depends are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics." [Unquote]

India has been fortunate to have leaders of outstanding calibre. They brought to bear the profound moral and ethical values of our ethos to the functioning of the institutions of our Parliamentary Democracy. In this way they ensured that democracy flourished and developed even stronger roots in our society. Many of you would recall the great care and attention, the interest and personal involvement of Panditji in the work of the Parliament, the jewel in the crown of Democracy.

During the last five decades, India can be proud to have safeguarded and enlarged the gains of freedom. We have provided flesh and blood to the constitutional edifice bequeathed to us by the founding fathers. Our Constitution has given us the framework for a strong nation, a Union of States; a nation of harmony between the Union and States and between the various institutions of our democratic polity. We can claim to have achieved significant success in the diverse and inter-connected spheres of democratic governance, our Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary. The philosophy of the Constitution nurtures a polity where the precepts and practices of democracy can become second nature to the people. Through the elections to eleven Lok Sabhas, the people of India have repeatedly displayed their determination to fulfil their duties as responsible citizens of the Republic.

Our Parliament is the pre-eminent institution of our polity. Members of Parliament are the true representatives of the people and it is the people's interests which they articulate in the context of a larger and broader national vision. As Panditji said in the Lok Sabha on 21 December, 1955: [I quote]

"(Members of Parliament) are not only Members of this or that particular area of India, but each Member of Parliament is a Member for India and represents India. ..." [Unquote]

Our Constitutional framework has also resulted in economic progress and the social emancipation of society. Effective representation is provided to the socially depressed groups in legislatures and steps are underway to ensure a strong representation for women. In recent years, we have provided a new impetus to our Panchayati Raj institutions. This has fostered the participation of the people at the grassroots level in our democratic processes in a very tangible and effective manner.

If we look at nations around us, we can be proud of our resilient, living Constitution which has adapted over time, to changing circumstances, needs and requirements. Indeed, it has become a model for constitutions in other countries.

I believe this is an important occasion for all of us to contemplate ways and means of improving the functioning of the institutions of our democratic polity. We should bring the meaning and import of the Constitution closer to the common man. This would be possible if we take up the challenge of making our institutions, our administration and systems of work, more and more directly accountable and fully mindful and sensitive to the needs and feelings of our people.

We must all comprehend the importance of unity, the true significance of canons of propriety and the value of having the freedom to voice different viewpoints which, indeed, are the hallmarks of any pluralistic society. As our sages of yore said, our aims are common, our endeavours common, and there are diverse ways to reach our goals.

At this moment in our history, as we prepare to step into a new century and millennia, let us all ask ourselves what our goals and tasks are as citizens of this great and ancient nation striving to develop and modernize. What are our responsibilities in nation building ? How best can we discharge them ? The answers are not far, nor difficult to seek. Many have been provided to us by the life and work of the great stalwarts who have preceded us. We also find them in our tradition of selfless service and sacrifice and in the timeless moral and ethical ideals of our society. Let us draw inspiration from Bapu's life and work and live up to his message of `Anasakti' and `Nishkaam Karm' or selfless service i.e. service without regard to the fruits of action.

This anniversary provides an opportunity for every citizen of India to renew the pledge to work for `Purna Swaraj', for the well-being of our people, for peace and harmony in our society and indeed, the world.

JAI HIND

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