

Ours is a democratic country. People belonging to different religions, castes and languages live here. Our country stands out in the world in terms of geographic, social and local diversities. However, our Constitution has been formed to ensure equal opportunities to all, irrespective of their background. Each country has its own Constitution in the form of fundamental document. The government follows the Constitution in order to administer the country. The country should be run in accordance with its Constitution. Our Constitution is the longest written Constitution in the world and it has been formed to run the country efficiently amidst geographical diversities and other challenges.



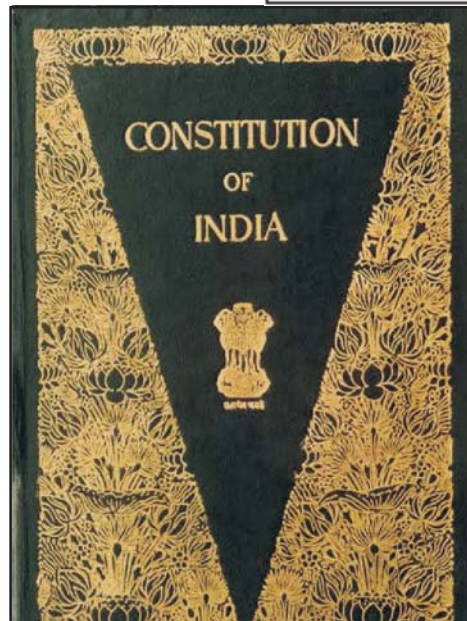
### Meaning of Constitution

'A systematic compilation of a set of rules to run the country is known as the 'Constitution' of the country'.

### Architect of Constitution

A proper guideline was needed to administer our country after independence and therefore it was felt necessary to form a Constitution. A 'Constituent Assembly' was formed for this purpose.

The Constituent Assembly, in all, had 389 members. For the Constitution forming process, 23 committees involving different subjects were formed. These committees involved people belonging to different communities, religions, gender, geographical areas, representatives of political parties and scholars of different fields as members. Among others, well-known personalities like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Sardar Baldev Singh, Frank



Constitution of India



Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar

Anthony, H. P. Modi, A.K.S. Ayer, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Kanhaiyalal Munshi, K.T. Shah, and female representatives Sarojini Naidu, Vijaya Laxmi Pandit were also included in these committees.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the president of the Constituent Assembly. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was the chairman of the Drafting Committee. Owing to his particular contribution to the process of shaping the Constitution, he is known as the chief architect of the Constitution of India.

### Activity

- Photos of some of the members of the Constituent Assembly are given below. Recognise and write their names.

			
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The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly was held on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1946. The whole process of Constitution framing was completed in 2 years, 11 months and 18 days. During this time-period, 166 meetings of the Constituent Assembly were held. Before giving the Constitution its final shape, important aspects of the constitutions of different countries were thoroughly studied. After India's independence, the Constituent Assembly passed the Constitution on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1949 and it was enforced on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950.



### Meetings of Constituent Assembly

The Constitution-day is celebrated on 26<sup>th</sup> November every year. On the eve of the Constitution-day, the Parliament House and the Rashtrapati Bhavan are illuminated with multicolour lights. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar is particularly remembered on this day for his great contribution in the shaping of the Indian Constitution.

## Features of the Constitution

In many ways, our Constitution can be termed as unique. As mentioned earlier, it is the longest written Constitution in the world. It starts with a preamble, which means introduction. Basic principles and aims of administration are mentioned in this preamble. We will learn about some of the features of the Constitution.



Voting

**Democracy :** India has adopted democratic way of governance. In a simple and common language, democracy is defined as the 'rule of the people, by the people and for the people'. In other words, the rule or the system authorised and managed by the people. In India, elections are held every five years in which people elect their representatives. The elected candidates represent the people for five years. Any citizen of India can be a candidate in election irrespective of any discrimination based on sex, caste, religion etc. Independence is one of the important aspects of democracy.

### Know This

- At the time of formation of the Constitution, minimum age for voting was decided as 21 years.
- After 39 years of enforcement of the Constitution, the minimum age for voting was changed to 18 years through 61<sup>st</sup> amendment in the Constitution.

**Secularism :** India is a secular country. It means that the country is not run on the basis of ideology or beliefs of any sect or religion. No discrimination is made or practiced on the basis of sect or community. The Constitution has provided certain sect or religion related freedom to each citizen of India. On its basis, citizens have freedom to follow and propagate their religion and beliefs.



Sectarian Symbols

### Know This

The word 'secular' was included in the preamble through 42<sup>nd</sup> constitutional amendment in 1976 AD.

**Republic :** India is a republic country. It means that the country is run by its own people, who are elected directly or indirectly. The head of the State is not decided by inheritance as it happens in monarchy



but elected through indirect voting. In this system of republic, all positions, from Panchayat to Parliament, are open to all citizens irrespective of gender, caste or religion.

### Union Territory/State

India is a federal union comprising different states. India being a huge country with great diversities, it is difficult to run it from one central place and therefore the Constitution has made provisions for federal structure.

Federal structure has two parts : (1) Federal government and (2) State government. Work and authority of these two types of governments are clearly defined. The federal government is entrusted with important tasks and authority. The federal government is also known as the central government.

### Fundamental Rights and Duties

Fundamental rights and duties of citizens of democratic India are stated in our Constitution. As a citizen of India, we enjoy certain rights. However, in order to see that our rights are not hurting anyone, and also to make citizens participate in the development of the nation, some fundamental duties are also stated in the Constitution. Rights and duties are like two sides of a coin. Let us know about them.

**Fundamental Rights :** Fundamental rights are essential for the stability of the nation as well as to protect individual freedom.

**(1) Right to Equality :** All citizens are equal before law. There should be no discrimination on the basis of religion, gender, caste or colour and all citizens should get equal opportunity according to their merit/competence.

**(2) Right to Freedom :** Every citizen of India is free to express his/ her ideas and is also free to travel, reside and pursue livelihood in any part of the country.

**(3) Right to Protest against Exploitation :** The main aim of the Constitution is to ensure the formation of a society sans exploitation, where no one gets exploited by others. Pushing children aged less than 14 years into employment is also a kind of exploitation. This right ensures that anyone can stop or protest against exploitation.

**(4) Right to Freedom of Religion :** Each citizen of India is free to follow and propagate any religion which is not against morality and health.

**(5) Cultural and Educational Rights :** Each citizen of India is free to conserve, maintain and develop his/her language, dialect, traditions, values etc.

**(6) Right to Constitutional Remedies :** Regardless of formation of a number of laws and making provisions for ensuring fundamental rights, it makes no sense if they are not properly implemented. And therefore, provisions have been made for implementation of these rights. Any citizen, who feels deprived of fundamental rights, can go to the court. Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar has therefore referred to this right as the very 'Soul of the Constitution'.

However, under specific circumstances, these fundamental rights can be deferred for a limited time-period. No one can practise his/her fundamental rights by hurting the interest of any other person, community or the nation.

#### Know This

Human rights were declared by the United Nations General Assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1948. Therefore, 10<sup>th</sup> December is celebrated as 'Human Rights Day'.



## Fundamental Duties

Along with fundamental rights, some fundamental duties are also mentioned in the Constitution. They are depicted below :

- (a) To abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) To cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) To uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) To defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) To value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (g) To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures;
- (h) To develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of curiosity and reform;
- (i) To safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (j) To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement; and
- (k) Parent or guardian has to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.

### Know This

- Fundamental duties were included in the Constitution by making an amendment in 1976 AD.
- In India, 'Fundamental Duties Day' is celebrated on 6<sup>th</sup> January.

The Indian Constitution is perceived as a sacred document. In the absence of a written Constitution, anyone can spread anarchy in the administration of the country. Constitution helps in maintaining our justice system and inspires people to work modestly and in harmony.

### Activity

Organise a quiz in your school based on fundamental rights and fundamental duties.



**1. Fill in the blanks :**

- (1) Our Constitution starts with the ..... .
- (2) ..... was the chairman of the Constituent Assembly.
- (3) In all, the Constituent Assembly had ..... members.
- (4) The Constitution has made provision for ..... type of government.

**2. Answer the following questions in one or two sentences :**

- (1) Describe the meaning of Constitution.
- (2) Who is known as the chief architect of the Constitution ?
- (3) What is democracy ?
- (4) When was the Constitution implemented ?

**3. Answer the following questions concisely :**

- (1) Describe the main features of the Constitution.
- (2) Write about any two Fundamental Rights.
- (3) State any four Fundamental Duties.

**4. Think and Write :**

- (1) What kind of situation would emerge if citizens are not granted fundamental rights ?
- (2) In a student life, how can all fundamental duties be observed ?
- (3) Why is 26<sup>th</sup> November celebrated as Constitution day ?

