

April - 2025

E-ISSN : 2348-7143

International Research Fellows Association's

RESEARCH JOURNEY

International E-Research Journal

Peer Reviewed, Referred & Indexed Journal



Issue 353 (F)

Multidisciplinary Research

Guest Editor :

Dr. Rajendra More

Principal,

Chhatrapati Shivaji College,

Satara, Dist-Satara [M.S.] INDIA

Executive Editor :

Dr. Manohar Nikam

Co-Editor :

Dr. Raghunath Salunkhe

Dr. Smt. Varsha Mane

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'RESEARCH JOURNEY' International E- Research Journal

Issue 353 (F) : Multidisciplinary Issue

Impact Factor-6.625(SJIF)

Peer Reviewed Journal

E-ISSN :

2348-7143

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Price : Rs. 1000/-

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75 Years of the Indian Constitution (Evolution, Achievements and Challenges)

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Introduction:

The Indian Constitution is the world's lengthiest written constitution, serving as a guiding document for the largest democracy. Drafted by the Constituent Assembly under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Indian Constitution on the date of 26th of November 1949, which came into force on January 26, 1950. Over the past 75 years, the Indian Constitution has 448 articles divided into 25 parts and has 12 schedules. It was originally adopted in 1949 with 395 articles divided into 22 parts and had 8 schedules. It has since been amended 106 times.

The Constitution has guided India's development over the past decades, even as the country has faced various social and political challenges. The Constitution's flexibility and the critical role of equality, liberty, and fraternity. However, it acknowledges the gaps in achieving true social and economic equality. It has been instrumental in upholding democracy, ensuring social justice, and promoting national integrity.

Historical Evolution.

1. Formation and Adoption of the Indian Constitution.

The Constituent Assembly that drafted the Indian Constitution came into existence as per the provisions of the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 1946. Its task was to formulate a constitution to facilitate the transfer of sovereign power from British authorities to Indian hands. The Constituent Assembly first met on 9th December 1946, electing Rajendra Prasad as President, H. C. Mukharjee and V.T. Krishnamachari as Vice Presidents, and B.N. Rau as Constitutional legal advisor. The Constitution's adoption marked the culmination of the struggle for India's independence and the realization of Jawaharlal Nehru's declaration of 'Poorna Swaraj' in 1929. On 13th December 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru introduced the "Objective Resolution" in the Assembly, laying down the philosophy of the constitution aimed at fostering India as a Sovereign, Democratic Republic with federal distribution of powers and securing equality, justice, and rights for all its citizens as reflected in the preamble today.

The Constituent Assembly was given complete autonomy and legislative authority by the Indian Independence Act of 1947, allowing it to draft and adopt the constitution as India's first free parliament. A drafting committee was set up on 29th August 1947 and appointed Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as its chairperson. After extensive deliberations and drafting by the drafting committee, the final constitution was passed and adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 26 November 1949, with certain provisions coming into effect immediately and the rest on 26 January 1950, which is celebrated as India's Republic Day. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected as India's first President, the national flag, national anthem, and national song were also adopted by the Constituent Assembly.

2. Amendments and Reforms.

Since its inception, the Constitution has undergone over 100 amendments, reflecting India's dynamic socio-political landscape.

2.1. Major Amendment in Indian Constitution

1st Amendment (1951) added restrictions on freedom of speech (Article 19) concerning public order, security, and relations with foreign states. empowered the state to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes. Introduced the Ninth Schedule to protect land reform laws from judicial review.

7th Amendment (1956) Reorganized states based on linguistic lines. Abolished the classification of states into Part A, B, C and D categories. Introduced the concept of Union Territories.

25th Amendment (1971) Limited the right to property by making it subordinate to Directive Principles of State Policy. allowed the government to acquire private property for public purposes.

42nd Amendment (1976) 42nd Amendment Act, often referred to as the "Mini Constitution", made significant changes to the structure and powers of the Indian Constitution. amended articles more than 40. Inserted articles more than 10. Inserted parts 4A and 14A amended schedule 7. The Preamble was amended to add the words 'Socialist', 'Secular' and 'Integrity'. Transferred 5 subjects from the state list to the concurrent list: Education, Forests, Weights & Measures, Protection of wild Animals and Birds, and Administration of Justice. Added 10 Fundamental Duties for citizens (on recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee). Introduced Part XIV-A titled 'Tribunals dealing with Administrative matters' and 'Tribunals for other matters'. added 4 new Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs) Art 39 to secure opportunities for the healthy development of children, Art 39A to promote equal justice and to provide free legal aid to the poor, Art 43A to take steps to secure the participation of workers in the management of industries

Art 48A to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard forests and wildlife. Curtailed the power of judicial review and writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and high courts. Raised the tenure of Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies from 5 to 6 years, etc.

44th Amendment (1978) reversed many provisions of the 42nd amendment. restored the fundamental right to property as a legal right. made it harder to declare a National emergency. restored judicial review powers of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

52nd Amendment (1985) – Anti-Defection Law Introduced the Tenth Schedule, disqualifying MPs and MLAs who defect from their parties.

61st Amendment (1989) reduced the voting age from 21 to 18 years.

73rd and 74th Amendments (1992) Established Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies with constitutional status.

86th Amendment (2002) Made the Right to Education a fundamental right for children aged 6-14 years (Article 21A).

101st Amendment (2016) – GST Introduced the Goods and Services Tax (GST), replacing multiple indirect taxes

103rd Amendment, (2019) Introduced 10% EWS reservation (Articles 15(6), 16(6))

106th Amendment, (2023) Reserves one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi including those reserved for SCs and STs.

2.2. Landmark Judgments

'Doctrine of Basic Structure' and important cases

The Doctrine of Basic Structure has evolved through landmark Supreme Court judgments, establishing limits on Parliament's power to amend the Constitution and protecting the fundamental features of the Indian Constitution. It refers to the division of powers between the various organs of the state - the executive, legislature, and judiciary the timeline shows the key court cases that have shaped the evolution of this doctrine.

Shankari Prasad v. Union of India (1951) the Supreme Court upheld the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution, including the Fundamental Rights.

Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan (1965) and Golaknath vs State of Punjab (1967) the Supreme Court ruled that Parliament cannot amend the Fundamental Rights.

KesavanandaBharati v. State of Kerala (1973) the Supreme Court established the doctrine of basic structure, holding that Parliament cannot amend the basic features of the Constitution.

Minerva Mills v. Union of India (1980) the Supreme Court held that the Constitution is supreme, not Parliament, and that Parliament cannot have unlimited power to amend the Constitution.

WamanRao v. Union of India (1981) the Court held that all amendments made before KesavanandaBharati (1973) are valid, but future amendments must follow the basic structure doctrine.

S. R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994) Federalism and secularism are part of the basic structure, preventing arbitrary dismissal of state governments.

I. R. Coelho v. State of Tamil Nadu (2007) Laws placed under the Ninth Schedule (meant to protect them from judicial review) are still subject to the Basic Structure doctrine

The key principles established by the courts are

- a) Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution, but it cannot alter the basic structure or framework of the Constitution.
- b) Fundamental Rights are part of the basic structure and cannot be abridged or taken away.
- c) The Constitution is supreme, not Parliament, and Parliament cannot have unlimited power to amend the Constitution.

Other Important Cases:

Public Interest Litigation (Mumbai Kamgar Sabha 1976) Introduced PIL as a mechanism to provide justice to marginalized sections of society, broadening access to legal remedies beyond traditional litigation.

Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, 1978 Supreme Court ruled that personal liberty cannot be restricted arbitrarily, and any procedure limiting liberty must be fair, just, and reasonable.

Indra Sawhney v. Union of India, 1992 (Social Justice – Reservations) set the 50% threshold for reservations and introduced the concept of excluding the 'creamy layer' from reservation benefits.

S.R. Bommai v. Union of India, 1994 limited the misuse of Article 356 by establishing judicial review criteria for imposing President's Rule in states.

NALSA v. Union of India, 2014 Recognized transgender persons as a third gender, affirming their right to dignity and equality under the Constitution.

Puttaswamy v. Union of India, 2017 declared privacy as a fundamental right emerging from Article 21, protecting individual autonomy and personal liberty.

ShayaraBano v. Union of India, 2017 declared triple talaq unconstitutional, ruling it as arbitrary and violative of fundamental rights.

Supreme court also decriminalise same sex relationship as well as electoral Bond scheme declared unconstitutional, triple talaq declared unconstitutional on the basis of right to religious freedom

Key Achievements of Indias Constitution in 75 Years.

- a) **Democratic Foundation:** Despite challenges, India has remained a vibrant democracy, conducting free and fair elections at regular intervals. established a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic. Ensure checks and balances among the executive, legislature, and judiciary.
- b) **Protection of Rights:** The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, including the right to equality, freedom, and protection against discrimination, enabled landmark judgments like KesavanandaBharati (1973) upholding the Basic Structure Doctrine. while directive principles guide state policies toward social justice.
- c) **Social Transformation** Facilitated affirmative action, including reservation policies for marginalized communities empowered women with 33% reservation in local bodies and recent legislation for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha. and progressive laws on gender equality have been significant achievements.
- d) **Economic and federal Reforms.** Enabled LPG (Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization) reforms under a constitutional framework encouraged policies balancing development with constitutional principles. The Constitution has facilitated economic liberalization, GST implementation, and decentralized governance, enhancing economic growth and federalism.
- e) **Civic Responsibility.** Strengthened civic literacy and responsibilities through movements like Digital India and environmental safeguards.
- f) **Judicial Independence** The judiciary has upheld constitutional supremacy, striking down unconstitutional laws and protecting civil liberties.

Challenges:

- a) **Rapidly violation of fundamental rights** alleged misuse of laws like UAPA and sedition laws Cases such as Stan Swamy and Umar Khalid highlight rights violations.
- b) **Judicial Overreach and Delays** the backlog of cases and judicial overreach have raised concerns about the efficiency of the judiciary.
- c) **Political and Electoral Reforms** Issues such as electoral malpractices, money power in politics, Criminalization and Corruption in Politics Over 46% of MPs in 2024 Lok Sabha have criminal cases. Also they are using mussel power in election.
- d) **Social Inequalities.** Despite constitutional safeguards, caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, and communal tensions persist.
- e) **Federalism and Center-State Relations** the balance of power between the Union and states has often led to disputes, necessitating better cooperative federalism.
- f) **Digital and Privacy Rights** With increasing digitalization, issues related to data privacy, surveillance, and cyber laws need constitutional safeguards.
- g) **Decline in Press Freedom.** Ranked 159th in World Press Freedom Index 2024. Increasing censorship and intimidation of dissent.

h) Weakened Parliamentary Debates Decline in debates and discussions; 2023 Budget passed without discussion.

Way Forward:

- a) Limit State Power** Strengthen institutional checks to prevent overreach.
- b) Enhance Democratic Values** Democracy must emphasize accountability and free speech beyond elections.
- c) Uphold Directive Principles** Policies must align with socio-economic goals outlined in DPSPs.
- d) Judicial Independence** Safeguard judiciary's autonomy for upholding constitutional morality.
- e) Parliamentary Reforms** Revive debates, discussions, and oversight mechanisms in Parliament.
- f) Civic Engagement** Promote constitutional literacy and citizen participation in governance.

Conclusion:

The Indian Constitution has demonstrated remarkable resilience over the past 75 years, adapting to evolving socio-political and economic conditions. While it has ensured democratic governance, social justice, and national integrity, emerging challenges necessitate continuous reforms. Strengthening judicial efficiency, promoting political transparency, and safeguarding civil liberties will be crucial for sustaining India's constitutional democracy in the future.

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