

India After Independence

A New and Divided Nation: India finally gained independence, but it was divided into two separate nations. This resulted in the mobilization of a large number of people. The settlement of these people and organization of princely states were the main challenges before the new nation.

A Constitution was formed: Constitution is a written document, which lays out the working of the government of the country. The duties and responsibilities of all the organs of government are mentioned in this document. Moreover, the rights and duties of the citizens are also mentioned in the constitution.

A large population with diversity: the Indian population at the time of independence was 345 million. The people followed different faiths, spoke different languages and followed different cultures. Therefore, many people opined that India could never unite as a nation. The problem of development was also attached to this.

Constituent Assembly: In order to frame the Constitution for India, Constituent Assembly was appointed. It had members from all parts of the country. It met between December 1946 and November 1949. Discussions and debates were held on different issues in order to frame the constitution which could be acceptable by all.

Features of the Indian Constitution: Indian Constitution conferred Universal Adult Franchise to all its citizens above the prescribed age limit. Another feature of the Indian Constitution was a provision of equality before law. One important feature included in the Constitution was the provision of special privileges for poor and backward groups.

Power Sharing: Constituent Assembly spent many days in discussing the issue of sharing of power between the central government and the state governments. Discussions led to the division of powers between the centre and states.

National language: Many leaders were of the view that Hindi should be recognized as the national language, but leaders of non-Hindi states opposed this opinion.

Prominent Leaders: B. R. Ambedkar was the chairman of the Drafting Committee. His responsibility was to draft the constitution after compiling the reports of all the Committees.

The demand of the Linguistic States: Nationalist leaders were reluctant to form states on the basis of languages or religions, as a country had already undergone the

trauma of partition. Potti Sriramulu went on hunger strike and died after 58 days of strike, which made the condition worse.

Planning for Development: In 1950, the Planning Commission was formed for designing and executing suitable policies for the economic development of the country. The mixed economy model was chosen for India.

Second Five-Year Plan: In 1956, the second five-year plan was formulated. It laid stress on the development of the heavy industries and building of dams.

The Nation after Sixty Years: On August 15th 2007, India celebrated its 60 years of independence. In its 60 years, India has remained free and democracy exists in India. However, divisions are still persisting in Indian society. Communal violence and caste discrimination still exist in India.

Partition created a number of problems for independent India.

First and foremost task was to rehabilitate the refugees who had come into the country from the newly born Pakistan.

Then there was the problem of the princely states.

These two problems needed an immediate solution. Afterward, the new nation had to adopt a political system that would best serve the hopes and aspirations of its people.

The population of India in 1947 was about 345 million. One could observe a lot of diversities in the country regarding languages, foods, dresses, professions etc. There was wide gap between high castes and low castes. In spite of all these diversities, people had to live together in one nation-state. This created the problem of unity.

The problem of development was another major point. Indian economy was very weak at the time the country got freedom. Farmers and peasants depended on the monsoon for their survival.

In the cities, factory workers lived in crowded slums with little access to education or health care.

The new nation had to do a lot of work in order to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, etc. It had to increase productivity of agriculture and promote new, job-creating industries.

A written constitution was essential for the country. For this a series of meetings on the country's political future was held. As a result the Indian Constitution came into being on 26 January 1950.

The constitution adopted Universal Adult Franchise. All Indians above the age of 21 would be allowed to vote in state and national elections. (Later it was reduced to 18' years.)

Our constitution guaranteed equality before the law to all citizens, regardless of their caste or religious affiliation.

A third feature of the constitution was that it offered special privileges for the poorest and most disadvantaged Indians. The practice of untouchability was abolished. A certain percentage of seats in legislatures as well as jobs in government was reserved for members of the lowest castes.

Along with the former untouchables, the advasis or Scheduled Tribes were also granted reservation in seats and jobs. Like the Scheduled Castes, these Indians too had been deprived and discriminated against.

In order to maintain balance between the central government and that of the state governments, the constitution provided three lists of subjects—a Union List, with subjects such as taxes, defence and foreign affairs, which would be sole responsibility of the Centre, a State List with subjects such as education and health, which would be taken care of mainly by the states, a Concurrent List under which would come subjects such as forests and agriculture, in which both the centre and states would have joint responsibility.

The language was also an important point. Several members of the Constituent Assembly wanted to replace English language with Hindi. But non-Hindi speakers had different opinion. They wanted English language to be continued. Therefore, a compromise was finally arrived at. It was resolved that while Hindi would be the 'official language' of India, English would be used in the courts, the services and communication between one state and another.

Another major problem was that of the formation of state. Both Prime Minister Nehru and Deputy Prime-Minister Vallabhbhai Patel were against the creation of linguistic states. Nehru clearly said that he had to check disruptionist tendencies caused due to partition and make the nation strong and united.

This caused great disappointment among the Kannada speakers, Malayalam speakers, the Marathi speakers and the Telugu speakers. They began to protest. The strongest protest came from the Telugu-speaking districts of the Madras Presidency.

In October 1952 a veteran Gandhian named Potti Sriramula went on a hunger fast demanding the formation of Andhra state to protect the interests of Telugu speakers. As the fast went on, it attracted much support. Hartals and bandhs were observed in many towns.

Finally, the new state of Andhra Pradesh came into being on 1 October, 1953.

Now other linguistic communities also began to demand their own separate states. A States Reorganisation Commission was set up which submitted its report in 1956, recommending the redrawing of district and provincial boundaries to form compact provinces of Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu speakers respectively.

The large Hindi-speaking region of north India was broken up into several states.

In 1960, the bilingual state of Bombay was divided into separate states for Marathi and Gujarati speakers.

In 1966, the state of Punjab was also divided into Punjab and Haryana.

Now, planning for development began to be made. Lifting India out of poverty and building a modern technical and industrial base was 'among the major objectives of the new nation.

In 1950, the government set up a Planning Commission to help design and execute suitable policies for economic development.

In 1956, the Second Five Year Plan was formulated which focused strongly on the development of heavy industries.

Sixty-two years of independence have passed. This is not a short duration. A lot has been achieved in this time but at the same time, there have been a number of failures.

Successes: India is still united and it is still democratic.

- There is a free press.
- There is an independent judiciary.
- Unity in diversity.

Failures

- Deep divisions persist.
- Despite constitutional guarantee, the Untouchables or the Dalits face violence and discrimination.
- The gulf between the rich and the poor has grown over years.

Refugee: A person who has been forced to leave his country because of some political, social or religious reasons.

Franchise: The right to vote.

Linguistic: Relating to language.

State: Concerned with the government.

Non-alignment: The policy of not providing support for or receiving support from any of the powerful countries (USA and USSR) in the world.

15 August 1947 – Indian got independence.

30 January 1948 – Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated.

26 January 1950 – The Indian Constitution was adopted.

1 October 1953 – The new state of Andhra Pradesh came into being.

1960 – The bilingual state Bombay was divided into separate states for Marathi and Gujarati speakers.

1966 – Punjab and East Patiala states union were divided into Punjab and Haryana.