

# The Making of India, 1947-2022



# The Making of India, 1947-2022:

*Pivotal People, Events,  
and Institutions*

By

Gurucharan Gollerkeri  
and Renuka Raja Rao

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In remembrance of Gollerkeri Umesh Rao and Poda Raja Rao who  
strived, each in his own way, to make India a better place.



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**Note: All photographs have been procured from the Photo Division, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, specifically for inclusion in this book.**

## PREFACE

Seventy-five years of independence is a significant milestone, and it is a time to pause and reflect with legitimate pride on India's numerous achievements, and with circumspection on the challenges that she will encounter in the foreseeable future. It is also a time to recognise the vision for action articulated by pivotal people, events that decisively shaped the course of independent India's history, and institutions that advanced India's march toward becoming a modern society and economy.

The Constituent Assembly (1946-1949) envisioned a sovereign, secular, democratic republic that would be everything that British India was not. The country was being divided into two nations on the eve of independence, and aspirations for a unitary territory were met with the challenge of integrating over 550 princely states. Few people gave the fledgling country that was born at midnight on August 15, 1947, a chance of survival, let alone success. However, the people of India and its leaders proved them all wrong. Winston Churchill's uncharitable remark that India was merely a geographical term and no more a united nation than the equator was proven spectacularly churlish and wrong.

There is little doubt that India is significant. If she achieves her economic goals while steadily improving the quality of life for millions of people, she is demonstrating to the world that she is capable of doing so without sacrificing democracy, the rule of law, or personal freedoms. Two factors have shaped independent India's progress: the development of science, technology, and, thus, the economy, unquestionably a great success story of our time; and the ideological churning of both the socialist and the capitalist political streams driving public policies and their reversal; but taken together, the unmistakable strengthening of democracy (Gollerkeri: August 10, 2022. Deccan Herald).

This book is about the pivotal people, events, and institutions that shaped India into what she is today: a beacon of democracy, united in her

diversity, and one of the world's rising powers. When future generations look back on India's seventy-five-year history, they will see these characteristics of a young nation as exceptional. Notably, these pivotal movements began as ideas in the minds of people before becoming events and institutions. Thus, this is a book of lists about the making of a nation –

about India's eight decades - presented with the conviction that the time has come to provide a new generation of readers with a range of the best and worst of India in one set of covers. The entries in this volume are based on a variety of credible primary and secondary sources that we believe best fit the subject. We drew from these sources, cited at the end of each entry, because they best captured and articulated the subject. The choice between one source and another was subjective but ideologically agnostic, with an emphasis on factual accuracy. If some inaccuracies remain, the responsibility is ours alone.

This book is for anyone with an interest in India, both admirers and detractors, as well as those who are curious about the counter-factual or what might have been. It is also for those who are interested in the remarkable experiment of India's 'tryst with destiny,' as described so eloquently by India's first prime minister. Most importantly, the book is intended as a reference book for India's youth, with each entry self-contained and self-explanatory enough to be read as a stand-alone piece. India is a work in progress, so if you read it chronologically, it should serve as a brief overview of India's journey to becoming, gradually but steadily, the light of South Asia. It might help us better understand the India we live in and its many contradictions.

India cannot be referred to in the singular. Shashi Tharoor emphasises India's diversity quoting E.P. Thompson, the British historian's unpublished essay 'Six Weeks in India': 'All convergent influences of the world run through this society: Hindu, Moslem, Christian, Secular, Stalinist, Liberal, Maoist, Democratic, Socialist, Gandhian. There is not a thought that is being thought in the West or East that is not active in some Indian Mind' (Tharoor 1997: 09). The fact that it works - often exceeding expectations - should not prevent us from grasping it all together. The history of independent India exemplifies a larger problem in Indian

politics: the politics of hagiography that obscures a proper understanding of the socio-economic as well as the political, currents in which the myriad actors were engaged, but only partially in control.

Making a list presents several challenges. As a result, a caveat is in order. This book is an attempt to re-read history, re-examine policy, provoke thought, and look at the familiar in new ways. We have attempted to graze in the uneven pastures of the past. The selection of entries - what to include and exclude - is subjective and limited by space constraints. While we anticipate broad agreement on most entries, we hope that others that readers believe should have been added or left out will provide a discussion base for good faith disagreement. In the end, all of the people who populate this book or, in the reader's opinion, should have found a place strove towards a common goal - the making of a nation.

[Secondary literature:

1. Tharoor, Shashi. (1997). *India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond*. Penguin Books India, New Delhi. 1997: 09
2. Gollerkeri, Gurucharan. (August 10, 2022: 08: Deccan Herald).]

# **PART I**

## **THE WARM AFTERGLOW OF FREEDOM: 1947–1966**

The transfer of power through the Indian Independence Act of 1947 liberated India from the British Raj. Independent India represented a new beginning for her people: the start of a journey to overcome widespread poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, and disease, and to achieve social justice and equality.

The early years of independence were fraught with difficulties relating to national unity, territorial integrity, and underdevelopment. The people and their leaders were imbued with the spirit of nation-building in the warm afterglow of freedom. The first two decades of Indian history tell the story of how the country responded to those challenges and chose to shape itself as a nation seeking to reflect the aspirations of her people described beautifully by Jawaharlal Nehru in his famous ‘Tryst with Destiny’ speech delivered at the midnight hour on 14 January 1947: ‘A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.’ (Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings) - Volume V. 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947:02).

In the first five years of independence, India had absorbed eight million refugees, completed her Constitution, and held an election with 176 million voters, all of which were remarkable achievements in and of themselves. Simultaneously, India had fought her first war with Pakistan over Kashmir, absorbed nearly six hundred other semi-autonomous princely states into its union, and launched her first five-year economic development plan.

So, India's journey began seventy-five years ago.

[Secondary Literature: Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings)  
Volume V. 14th August 1947: 02. Lok Sabha CA Debates File C14081947.  
Parliament of India, Lok Sabha Digital Library.]



# 1. JAWAHARLAL LAL NEHRU (1889–1964): THE COLONIAL INTELLECTUAL

Even as India completes seventy-five years of freedom, there is a growing discourse that seeks to re-evaluate the legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. Never before has Nehru and his stewardship of independent India's early years been subjected to such trenchant criticism or laudatory celebration as in today's divided polity. At the heart of this discourse is the contest between two ideas of India; between the idea of India that Nehru envisioned and the idea of a country of majoritarian persuasion. Regardless of one's position in this discourse, there can be little doubt that Nehru's contribution to steering India along the path of democracy and towards a modern economy is foundational.

Jawaharlal Nehru straddled two worlds – of the Congress Party and of the government - both engaged in India's political economy, steering the direction of independent India's economic development within the larger context of political democracy. The period 1947 to 1964 was undoubtedly the Nehru era. The spirit of nationalism that spilled over from the freedom struggle meant that there were fewer conflicts to resolve during the first half of this period. Nehru deserves credit for establishing a strong public sector and attempting to direct economic power to better serve India's fledgling economy. The Gross Domestic Product grew by over 3.5 percent between 1951 and 1964, primarily from a rapid increase in public investment. Conscious effort was made to address the problem of deeply entrenched and widespread poverty, even if it was long on rhetoric and short on substance.

By the time he became India's prime minister, Nehru had positioned himself as an anti-imperialist and anti-colonial intellectual, at least in the Global South, and later in the early years of the cold war, as a dominant figure in the Non-Aligned Movement. Nehru's ambivalence on both anti-colonialism and, later, non-alignment was to diminish his stature as a world statesman. His thesis of non-alignment came under international

scrutiny when, in 1956, India was the only non-aligned country to vote in the United Nations (UN) with the Soviet Union on its invasion of Hungary. Yet, it was the full-scale Indo-China war in October 1962 that really broke not just Nehru's conception of the Panchsheel Agreement but the image he had cultivated as a world leader and come to believe in. He appeared never to recover from this.

Nehru's lasting contribution was in modernising India, establishing, and legitimising parliamentary democracy in the first decade of a newly independent country. As Prime Minister, Nehru facilitated the development and maturation of India's democratic institutions and gave legitimacy to their operating principles. The scientific research organisations that Nehru helped to establish realised his vision for the future of science. Several of Nehru's comments, however, reflected his personal opinions and were significantly less common in official policy. The Scientific Policy Resolution 1958, under his guidance, declared that the concept of development and the welfare state could only be implemented via research. Despite this early vision, the emphasis in recent years has shifted to an instrumental perspective of science, which is dominated by public-sector research and technology agencies. Nonetheless, India's commanding position in science may be traced back to the Nehru era.

Nehru deserves credit for establishing a consensus and a long-term vision for the future of India. He accomplished this through a legislative-deliberative process designed to remove pre-existing fault lines that could lead to disaffection in the Indian polity. Land reforms ended feudalism and eliminated the single most significant source of antagonism in rural India. The linguistic reorganisation of states removed a major potential source of conflict from the political elite. Together with these structural measures, Nehru's faith in democratic values and institutions, as well as his sustained efforts to put them into practice through the general election process, provided India with a remarkable consolidation of its independence. Nehru's charisma made him a big vote-getter, and he led the Indian National Congress to three consecutive general elections victories in 1951–1952, 1957, and 1962.

Ironically, Nehru was far less democratic in the most basic of democratic institutions - his own Congress party - failing to recognise that the impact of parties on democratic responsiveness depends on what parties are. The Congress high command was overshadowed as an instrument of power and party discipline undermined by Jawaharlal Nehru's personality. Nehru may have exaggerated the importance of his own personality in holding the country together, and his preoccupation with consolidating his own personal power had long-term consequences for the Congress Party he left behind. The decline in internal democracy signalled the beginning of the party's rank and file's sycophancy, a weakness that would render the party apparatus ineffective and sow the seeds of dynastic rule.

Toward the end of his prime ministership, the most frequently asked question was, "Who comes after Nehru?" To answer the question of whether Nehru favoured his daughter to succeed him, one must look to his actions.

Indira Gandhi accompanied him to all political and administrative functions and was introduced to all of the Congress party's state leaders. She spoke at election meetings, presided over Congress women's committees, served as hostess when Nehru entertained visitors, and often travelled with her father on foreign trips. She was able to walk right into the Working Committee of Congress President U.N. Dhebar despite holding no position. Durga Das, the renowned journalist, and chief editor of the Hindustan Times, wrote in his weekly column on June 18, 1957, 'If he (Nehru) is consciously trying to build anyone as his successor, he is building up his daughter.' According to Nehru's colleagues, when Nehru needed something done but was uncomfortable doing it himself, he would have others do it for him. Members of the Congress party were only too happy to help. Nehru resigned from the powerful Central Parliamentary Board six months after being nominated to the Working Committee, and Shri Dhebar promptly nominated Indira Gandhi. This committee chose election candidates and decided the political fate of thousands of Congress party workers. While her father was prime minister, the daughter was elected party president in 1959. Nehru used the word 'surprise' to describe the desire of a section of the Congress party to see young leadership. In his

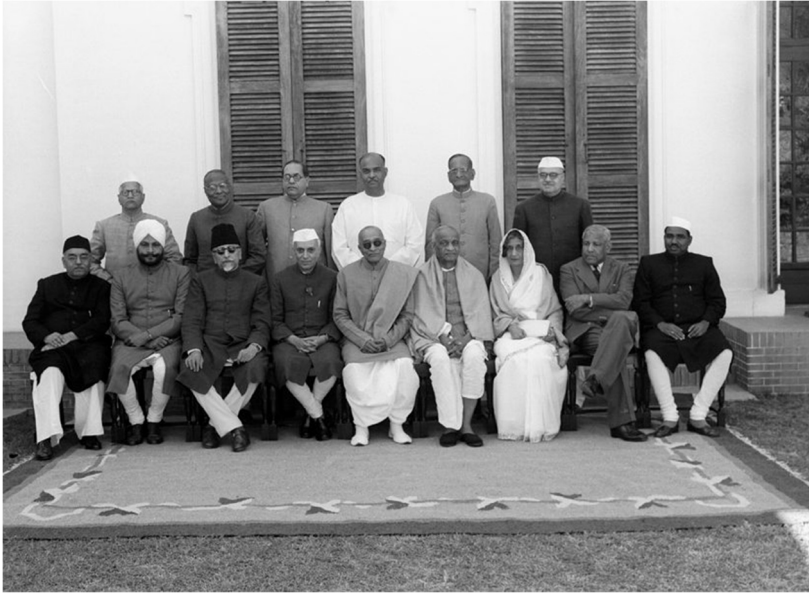
book “India, From Curzon to Nehru and After,” Durga Das concludes that Nehru was indeed grooming his daughter to succeed him.

One counterfactual question arises from Nehru's legacy. On 23 October 1947, Pashtun tribesmen from Pakistan's North-West Frontier invaded Kashmir, triggering India's first undeclared war with Pakistan. The Indian government airlifted troops into Srinagar, and the tribesmen were driven back to a line that has divided Kashmir since early 1949. On January 1, 1949, Nehru agreed to the UN-sponsored ceasefire, against the advice of many of his eminent contemporaries in government. Was this yet another example of Nehru's exaggerated sense of himself as a world statesman, which left a festering wound in India's side?

The Nehru who emerges from history is one who steadfastly refused to consider the possibility that Muslims in undivided India might think of themselves as Muslims rather than Indians when faced with the prospect of an independent India in which every Indian would have a vote and they would be reduced to a minority. The absence of this perspective was far more important than any of the political ploys of the time in making Partition inevitable.

[Secondary Literature: 1. Moraes Frank. (2007). *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*. Frank Moraes. Jaico Publishing House, New Delhi. 2007. Das Durga. (2002). *India: From Curzon to Nehru & After*. Rupa and Company, New Delhi 2002)]

Figure 1-1



Prime Minister Nehru and his cabinet with the Governor General C. Rajagopalachari June 1950.

Seated (left to right): Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Baldev Singh, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Dr John Mathai, and Jagjivan Ram. Standing: NV Gadgil, KC Neogy, Dr BR Ambedkar, Dr SP Mookerji, Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, and Jairamdas Daulatram

## 2. VALLABHBHAI PATEL (1875–1950): THE GREAT PRIME MINISTER THAT INDIA NEVER HAD

In recent years, the political discourse by the dominant right in India has sought to appropriate Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's legacy to a non-congress stream, implying that there were significant ideological differences between Patel and Nehru in addressing problems that independent India faced in her early years. There were doubtless, differences in approach and several misgivings; but there was also unanimity between Nehru and Patel in their vision of India's future - a union of states that was democratic in its polity, plural in its society, and modern in its outlook.

Sardar Patel served as deputy prime minister, home minister, and minister of states from 1947 to 1950. Patel, who studied law at the Middle Temple in the United Kingdom, joined the liberation movement in 1917 in response to Mohandas K. Gandhi's demand for Satyagraha, believing that it would help India's fight against British rule. Gandhi's moral convictions and ambitions, which he saw as unrelated to India's pressing political, economic, and social problems, influenced him less. Vallabhbhai Patel's successful Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928 earned him the moniker 'Sardar' and established him as a pivotal figure in the independence movement.

Patel was the front-runner for the Indian National Congress presidency in 1945-1946 on the eve of India's independence, but Gandhi intervened on Nehru's behalf, causing Sardar Patel to withdraw his campaign despite having the support of twelve of the fifteen provincial Congress Sabhas. Why, one could ask? Nehru reportedly told Gandhi that he would not play second fiddle to anyone. He was elected unopposed when Patel withdrew from the race at Gandhi's behest. Later, as Congress President, the British Viceroy invited Nehru to form an interim administration. But for the wily politics of the time, the clear, resolute, and realistic Sardar Patel would have been India's first prime minister.

Nonetheless, his lasting legacy is based on his securing the peaceful integration of the princely states into the Indian Union and thus the political unification of India and in guiding the self-assured and decisive action required during the first Kashmir war, when Nehru appeared uncertain in confabulations with Mountbatten.

Sardar Patel's most important role was as Minister of States, where he strove unwaveringly for India's territorial integrity. He urged the rulers of the princely states to agree on three matters:

“The States have already accepted the basic principle that for defence, foreign affairs, and communications they would come into the Indian Union.... This country with its institutions is the proud heritage of the people who inhabit it. It is an accident that some live in the States and some in British India, but all alike partake of its culture and character. We are all knit together by bonds of blood and feeling no less than of self-interest.” (Menon 1955: 69)

Sardar Patel's main success was securing agreement on and implementing the instrument of accession of the princely states to the Indian Union. His mastery in engaging rulers was a crucial factor in the success of the accession policy. The princely state rulers identified him as a credible and dependable leader in Indian politics who would give them a fair deal.

When the British decided to hand over power to India, the best solution they devised was to declare that their supremacy over the Indian states would automatically lapse. Except for Sardar Patel, few in India at the time recognised the real threat of Balkanisation. Sardar Patel established a symbiotic relationship between the states and the Union. The rulers of the bigger states, notably Hyderabad, Junagadh, and Jammu and Kashmir, made things enormously difficult. On the question of Hyderabad, Sardar Patel was unequivocal when he told the Nizam's highest representative, Laik Ali: ‘I am speaking to you plainly.... The Hyderabad problem will have to be settled as has been done in the case of other States. No other way is possible.’ (Menon 1955: 242). What stands out is that Sardar Patel was a man of great principles, and his integrity was best demonstrated when after the integration of the princely states into the Indian Union, the privy purses were being questioned, he said:

“We cannot take the stand that we shall accept only that part of the settlement which confers rights on us and repudiate or whittle down that part which defines our obligations. As a nation aspiring to give a moral lead to the world, let it not be said of us that we know the price of everything and the value of nothing.” (Menon 1955: 331)

Even greater was Sardar Patel’s perspicacity to visualise what lay ahead: In place of 554 states, after the integration, 14 administrative units had emerged. He said, ‘The real task has just begun ... to consolidate the gains that we have secured, and to build ... an administrative system at once strong and efficient ... in a design that would fit well into the pattern of all India.’ (Menon 1955: 333). The robust foundation for the administrative consolidation, the financial integration and the organic unification under India’s constitution was Sardar Patel’s contribution.

Another significant contribution was the establishment of the All-India Services - the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), and the Indian Police Service (IPS), which now serve as the administrative framework that holds India together. Sardar played the wise parent role. Unseen and almost unheard, he assisted states in gaining experience and discordant party elements in developing a team spirit. Two exhortations by this great statesman-administrator of independent India stand out as touchstones for civil servants and elected political representatives alike, particularly in the present day: his address to the first batch of IAS officer trainees at Metcalfe House in April 1946, a few months before independence, and his speech in the Constituent Assembly on the need for the protection and independence of the civil services in independent India, delivered in October 1949. To paraphrase Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s 1946 address, the civil service must prioritise impartiality and incorruptibility in administration. A civil servant cannot and should not engage in politics. He should also avoid getting involved in communal squabbles. Deviating from the path of rectitude in either of these areas debases and diminishes the dignity of public service. He exhorted civil servants to serve without fear or favour, and without expecting extraneous rewards (Gurucharan Gollerkeri: June 3, 2021:08 Deccan Herald).



What standard should elected representatives uphold if civil servants are to continue serving without fear or favour? We must return to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's address to the Constituent Assembly:

“If you want an efficient All-India Service, I advise you to allow the Services to open their mouths freely. If you are a Premier it would be your duty to allow your secretary, or Chief Secretary, or other Services working under you, to express their opinion without fear or favour. But I see a tendency today that in several provinces the services are set upon and told. ‘No, you are servicemen; you must carry out our orders.’ The Union will go—you will not have a united India, if you have not a good All-India Service which has the independence to speak out its mind, which has a sense of security that you will stand by your word.” (Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings) - Volume X. 10<sup>th</sup> October 1949: 07)

Sardar Patel lived by his own creed: ‘It will be folly to ignore realities; facts take their revenge if they are not faced squarely and well.’ (Menon 1955: 335). India owes him an eternal debt, one that she will scarcely be able to redeem. Sardar Patel showed that India has no reason to be afraid of her own shadow.

What might have been India’s trajectory had Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel deservedly been the first prime minister?

[Secondary Literature:

1. Menon V.P. The Story of the Integration of the Princely States. Longman Green and Company, London. 1955.

1. a. Menon 1955. Ibid: 69.

1. b. Menon 1955. Ibid: 242.

1. c. Menon 1955. Ibid: 331.

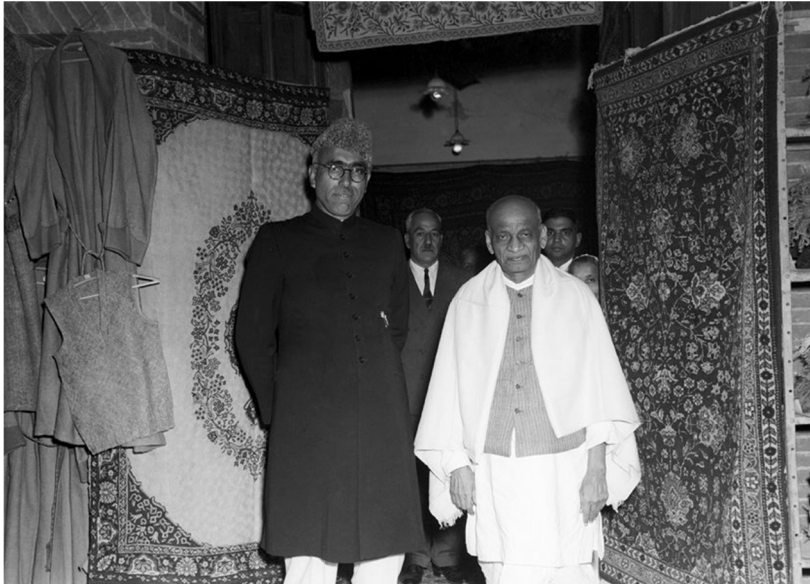
1. d. Menon 1955. Ibid: 333

1. c. Menon 1955. Ibid: 335

2. Gollerkeri, Gurucharan. (June 2021:08 Deccan Herald, Bangalore)

3. Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings) - Volume X. 10<sup>th</sup> October 1949: 07. Lok Sabha CA Debates. Draft Constitution. New Article 283-A. Parliament of India, Lok Sabha Digital Library.]

Figure 2-2



Sheikh Abdullah with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at a meeting in November 1949 in New Delhi

### 3. BHIMRAO RAMJI AMBEDKAR (1891–1956): A JURISPRUDENTIAL REVOLUTIONARY

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a scholar, statesman, and social activist par excellence. His contribution to India was to embed in the national consciousness the imperative of social justice. He served as the Chair of the Committee of the Constituent Assembly that was charged with the drafting of India's constitution. He was also the country's first law minister, and an unyielding crusader against the pernicious practice of discrimination based on caste and the resulting socioeconomic deprivation. He was the conscience of the Constituent Assembly, ensuring that the country's constitution was plural and inclusive in its framework and content, in order to serve as an instrument for a social revolution and national resurgence.

The Indian Constitution was formally adopted and came into effect on January 26, 1950. The Preamble contained four remarkable values that captured the aspirations of a new sovereign, democratic republic: justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. The work of Babasaheb Ambedkar, as he was affectionately known, was instrumental in enshrining these enlightened values in the Constitution, thereby providing the statutory basis for making them part of India's DNA.

Ambedkar's foresight highlights his revolutionary, social, economic, and jurisprudential contributions to modern Indian intellectual and constitutional history. In his closing address to the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar, as chair of the Constitution's drafting committee, explained that it was not the mechanics of the concepts that gave them meaning, but the principles underlying them. Each of the four living values that define India's constitution was shaped by Dr. Ambedkar's experiences and imbued with his unparalleled knowledge. The values serve to remind us to renew our commitment to our most basic aspirations as a democratic republic, not as a wish from the past, but as a promise for the future.

History beckons greatness, establishing a time and place for an exceptional individual's singular actions. In late 1946, the Constituent Assembly began deliberations on drafting a constitution for a free India. This presented Dr. Ambedkar with the opportunity he had been preparing for his entire life. Despite his difficult circumstances, he had demonstrated exceptional intellectual abilities and, after graduating in 1912, gone to the United States of America for further studies. During his time at Columbia University, he developed critical analytical skills: He learned about history as a progressive movement from historian James Harvey Robinson. From T. Shotwell, an expert on labour and human rights, that the expansion of rights could be the driving force behind progress. He learned to believe in the transformative power of democratic institutions to create more socially equitable societies from philosopher John Dewey. Booker T. Washington taught him the importance of education in liberating a disenfranchised population. These influences shaped his intellectual and political career, which would prove revolutionary for a young, independent India.

Ambedkar, more than anyone else, recognised that India had a cultural unity that was rooted in oppression far deeper than the British Raj's political rule. His examination of the caste system yielded an important insight: the caste hierarchy was based on voluntary submission and required little coercion. He described it brilliantly as 'an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt' (Moon. (ed.) 1987: 101-02). This, he said, prevented any concerted challenge to the system:

"All have a grievance against the highest and would like to bring about their downfall. But they will not combine. The higher is anxious to get rid of the highest but does not wish to combine with the high.... The low ... would not make a common cause with the lower.... Each class being privileged, every class is interested in maintaining the system." (Moon. (Ed.). 1987: 101-02)

Ambedkar's expansion of these ideas in his writings and speeches exemplifies polemical scholarship of great importance in his time. More importantly, his political ideas live on because he codified them into law through the Constitution, doing more to move the needle toward rights-based entitlements for the socially disadvantaged than any other reformer before him.

By the time Ambedkar returned to India, he was undoubtedly the most learned statesman in India's first decade after independence. He had two doctorates, one from Columbia University and another from the London School of Economics. Gray's Inn called him to the Bar, where he established a reputation as a scholar for his research in the fields of law, economics, and political science, far surpassing the accomplishments of the elite with whom he was about to engage. At the round-table meeting in 1931 to establish a future constitution for India under dominion status, Ambedkar and Gandhi began an intellectual contest, which would continue until Gandhi's death.

In fact, Gandhi's much publicised hunger strike in 1932 was not prompted by British coercion, but by a fundamental disagreement with Ambedkar. The disagreement was about whether Indians should first unite to struggle for independence, as Gandhi believed, or first offer fairness to one another, as Ambedkar argued. Just the year before, Gandhi had imperiously said, 'I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast mass of the untouchables.' (Khilnani 2016: 476) Ambedkar saw Gandhi as an apologist for the upper castes and turned against him and the Congress, convinced that the untouchables had to fight their own battle.

The most transformative provisions of the Indian Constitution are those that grant citizens fundamental rights primarily as members of communities rather than as individuals - rights against discrimination, including caste discrimination specifically - and empower the state to act against such discrimination. Ambedkar worked harder than anyone else to include these safeguards in the Constitution. How did a man who fought Gandhi and was barely trusted by Nehru end up playing such an important role in modernising India?

Ambedkar was a towering intellectual who demonstrated his ability to think across a wide range of issues, and the leadership of the time recognised that his intellectual abilities were required in the early years following Independence. He was appointed as Minister for Law and Justice in Jawaharlal Nehru's first cabinet. After serving as the minister for law and justice from 1947 to 1951, he resigned on principle and in protest when the Hindu Code Bill he introduced, which sought to give women

rights to property inheritance and divorce, was defeated by conservative Hindus. This incident exemplifies Ambedkar's deep commitment to radical social reform. Ambedkar's legacy lives on in India's struggles for social justice. Addressing the closing debate in the Constituent Assembly in December 1949, Ambedkar said,

“Political democracy cannot last unless there lay at the base...social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life...They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy ...Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Without fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Without fraternity, liberty and equality cannot become the natural course of things.” (Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings; November 1949) – Volume XI: 26)

Ambedkar contributed to the creation of a constitution that represents the beginning of a history, of a newly independent country pursuing a just and equal society. In doing so, he reiterated his exhortation to adhere to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic goals, to abandon agitation and Satyagraha - the 'Grammar of Anarchy' (Constituent Assembly of India Debates: Ibid). He also urged us to heed John Stuart Mill's warning to all who care about democracy not to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with power that allows him to subvert their democratic institutions (Constituent Assembly of India Debates, *ibid*: 27). This must remain the creed that animates our democracy.

[Secondary Literature:

1. Khilnani Sunil. *Incarnations: India in 50 lives*. Penguin Random House, Allen Lane London.2016.

1. a. Khilnani 2016. *Ibid*. pp 476.

2. Rathore Singh Akash. *Ambedkar's Preamble: A Secret History of the Constitution of India*. Penguin Random House, New Delhi, India 2020