



Touchstone of the Republic

Posted at: 26/11/2018

Touchstone of the Republic-The unity of India is sustained by the Constitution and not by any particular faith

- The adoption of the Constitution on November 26, 1949 by the Constituent Assembly was a historic moment that laid the foundation for a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic.
- The Constitution provides a framework for good governance based on law and jurisprudence.

Finding a place

- From its first meeting on December 9, 1946 till the completion of its work and adoption of the Constitution, the Constituent Assembly had to work in a politically turbulent environment.
- Some may not know that B.R. Ambedkar did not find a place among the 296 members initially sent to the Constituent Assembly.
- Only the withdrawal of Jogendra Nath Mandal, who was nominated from East Bengal, paved the way for Ambedkar to enter the Constituent Assembly.
- Ambedkar ceased to be a member of the Constituent Assembly when India was partitioned.
- Given the dependence of the Assembly on Ambedkar, who had done extraordinary work, Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel took efforts to get him elected from Bombay Presidency.
- Historians point out that Mahatma Gandhi, who knew about Ambedkar's excellent work in the Constituent Assembly and in various other committees, was keen that Ambedkar head the Drafting Committee.
- On August 30, 1947, the Drafting Committee formally met and unanimously elected Ambedkar as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee.
- Thereby he became the prime architect of the Constitution.
- Mr. Ambedkar rejected the idea of a theocratic state and a presidential form of government, believed in the idea of a republic and wanted India

to be a secular state.

Challenge to the Constitution

- Today there is an open challenge to the Constitution.
- Ambedkar defined the Indian state as a welfare state in a society that is stratified by caste and deeply mired in structural forms of inequalities.
- The state, Mr. Ambedkar said, should strive “to secure to all its citizens, Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.”
- The manner in which constitutional objectives are being deliberately ignored by the present government in pursuit of the goals set by various corporates reminds me of Ambedkar’s warning in his last speech in the Constituent Assembly.
- Ambedkar said that if political parties put creed ahead of the interests of the country, then we would stand to lose our independence forever.

Protecting the idea of India

- Ambedkar had warned that even without altering the Constitution, administrators could subvert it using their powers, causing it to collapse.
- We need to address such problems, which have assumed the proportion of a crisis today.
- We need to defend the Constitution and cultivate constitutional morality.
- In undermining the Constitution, we are undermining and diminishing the very idea of India.

The Hindu

