

**FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST SITTING
OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY**



9 December, 1996

“Swaraj will not be a free gift of the British Parliament. It will be a declaration of India’s full self-expression, expressed through an Act of Parliament. But it will be merely a courteous ratification of the declared wish of the people of India. The ratification will be a treaty to which Britain will be a party. The British Parliament, when the settlement comes, will ratify the wishes of the people of India as expressed through the freely chosen representatives.”

—*Mahatma Gandhi, 1922*

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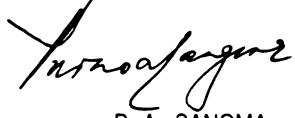
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FOREWORD

Ninth of December is a golden day in the annals of India. It was on this day, fifty years ago, that the Constituent Assembly had its first sitting to frame the Constitution of our Republic. This publication is a simple commemoration of that day.



NEW DELHI;
9 December, 1996

P. A. SANGMA
Speaker, Lok Sabha

PREFACE

When the first sovereign representative body of the people of India, the Constituent Assembly, began its deliberations on 9 December, 1946, it was to mark a new chapter in the history of the country, after centuries of foreign rule. With an incredible perception of the fundamentals of democratic governance and with a remarkable sense of history, patriotism and commitment, our Founding Fathers went about the task of drafting the Constitution for Independent India. The process through which this task was accomplished is now an integral part of our history.

Today we owe it to the memory of these great first generation leaders of Independent India to remind ourselves of their contributions so that we and all the succeeding generations can uphold their ideals and continue to live in freedom and dignity. The unique significance of that great and memorable occasion, when the Constituent Assembly first met fifty years ago, is sought to be recalled and projected through this booklet.

This booklet contains a reproduction of the proceedings of the First Day's sitting of the Constituent Assembly, a few photographs and some interesting information about its sittings.



NEW DELHI;
9 December, 1996

S. GOPALAN,
Secretary-General,
Lok Sabha

FIRST DAY IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The Constituent Assembly met for the first time in New Delhi on 9 December, 1946 in the Constitution Hall which is now known as the Central Hall of Parliament House. Decorated elegantly for the occasion, the Chamber wore a new look on that day with a constellation of bright lamps hanging from the high ceilings and also from the brackets on its walls.

Overwhelmed and jubilant as they were, the hon'ble members sat in semi-circular rows facing the Presidential dias. The desks which could be warmed electrically were placed on sloping green-carpeted terraces. Those who adorned the front row were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Acharya J.B. Kripalani, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Smt. Sarojini Naidu, Shri Hare-Krushna Mahatab, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, Shri C. Rajagopalachari and Shri M. Asaf Ali. Two hundred and seven representatives, including ten women were present.

The inaugural session began at 11 a.m. with the introduction of Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, the temporary Chairman of the Assembly, by Acharya Kripalani. While welcoming Dr. Sinha and others, Acharyaji said : "As we begin every work with Divine blessings, we request Dr. Sinha to invoke these blessings so that our work may proceed smoothly. Now, I once more, on your behalf, call upon Dr. Sinha to take the Chair."

Occupying the Chair amidst acclamation, Dr. Sinha read out the goodwill messages received from different countries. After the Chairman's inaugural address and the nomination of

a Deputy Chairman, the members were formally requested to present their credentials. The First Day's proceedings ended after all the 207 members present submitted their credentials and signed the Register.

Seated in the galleries, some thirty feet above the floor of the Chamber, the representatives of the Press and the visitors witnessed this memorable event. The All India Radio, Delhi, broadcast a composite sound picture of the entire proceedings.

INVITATION TO MEMBERS TO ATTEND THE FIRST
MEETING OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ISSUED BY
THE SECRETARY OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

November 20, 1946

In pursuance of paragraph 21 of the statement made by the Cabinet Delegation and His Excellency the Viceroy on the 16th May, 1946, the Provincial Legislatures have elected their representatives to the Constituent Assembly. I am now, under His Excellency the Viceroy's instructions, to request you as a member of the Constituent Assembly to attend its first meeting which will be held at 11 A.M. on the 9th December, 1946 at the Constituent Assembly Chamber in the Council House, New Delhi.



Members of the Constituent Assembly
coming to attend the First Day's Sitting

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA

Monday, the 9th December 1946

The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly of India took place in Constitution Hall, New Delhi, on Monday, the 9th December 1946, at Eleven of the Clock.

ELECTION OF TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN

Acharya J.B. Kripalani (United Provinces: General): (in requesting Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha to take the Chair as temporary Chairman, said)—

*[Friends, at this auspicious occasion of historical importance I invite, on your behalf, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha to be the temporary Chairman of this Assembly. Dr. Sinha needs no introduction. You all know him. He is not only the oldest among us but also the oldest parliamentarian in India, having served, as you know, as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council from 1910 to 1920. He entered the Central Legislative Assembly in 1921 not only as one of its members, but its Deputy President also. He was then entrusted with the portfolio of an Executive Councillor and Finance Member of the Government of Bihar and Orissa. So far as I remember Dr. Sinha was the first Indian who was ever appointed as a Finance Member of a Province. He has a particular taste for education having been Vice-Chancellor of the Patna University for eight years. Over and above all this, Dr. Sinha is the oldest Congressman among us. Up till 1920 he was a member of the Congress, being at one time its Secretary.

*[] English translation of Hindustani Speech.

After the year 1920 when we started on a new way to gain freedom he parted company with us. He, however, never wholly left us. He has always been helping us. He never joined any other organization and his sympathies were ever with us. Such a person is entitled to be the temporary Chairman of this Assembly. His work is brief but it is all the same most important. It is inaugurating the proceeding of this House. As we begin every work with Divine blessings we request Dr. Sinha to invoke these blessings so that our work may proceed smoothly. Now, I once more, on your behalf, call upon Dr. Sinha to take the Chair.]

(Acharya J.B. Kripalani then conducted Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha to the Chair, which he then occupied amidst acclamation.)

MESSAGES OF GOODWILL

The Chairman (Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha) : Hon'ble Members, I shall read out to you this morning three messages which have been received by me from responsible State Officials of America, China and the Government of Australia. The American Charge 'd' Affaires writes :

"My dear Dr. Sinha,

It gives me great pleasure to transmit herewith a copy of a telegram I have just received from the Honourable Dean Acheson, the Acting Secretary of State of the United States.

The telegram received is as follows:

'From the Acting Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha,
Provisional Chairman of the
Constituent Assembly, New Delhi.

With the approach of December 9, I extend to you as Provisional Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, and through you to the Indian people, the sincere good wishes of the

United States Government and of the people of the United States for a successful conclusion of the great task you are about to undertake. India has a great contribution to make to the peace, stability, and cultural advancement of mankind, and your deliberations will be watched with deep interest and hope by freedom-loving people throughout the entire world." (*Cheers*).

The next message is from the Embassy of the Republic of China:

"New Delhi.

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha Provisional Chairman Constituent Assembly: 'On the auspicious occasion of the opening of the Indian Constituent Assembly I have the honour to extend to Your Excellency in the name of the National Government of China my heartiest congratulations. I sincerely hope that your great Assembly will succeed in laying a solid foundation for a democratic and prosperous India.

WANG SHIH CHIEH,

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China".

(*Cheers*).

The third and last message I have to read out to this Assembly is one from the Australian Government to the Members of the Indian Constituent Assembly.

"Australia has watched with keen interest and sympathy the course of events which have given the people of India their rightful place in the community of nations. The Australian Government, therefore, greets the opening of the Constituent Assembly as an outward sign of a new era for India and offers the delegates of the Constituent Assembly their best wishes for success in their task." (*Cheers*).

I am sure the House will authorise me and permit me to convey its thanks to the representatives of these Governments who have sent us such cheering and inspiring messages. I may further add that this is a very auspicious sign for the success of your work. (*Cheers*).

ELECTION PETITION FROM KHAN ABDUS SAMAD KHAN OF BRITISH BALUCHISTAN

The Chairman : The next thing which I have to bring to the notice of the House is that I have received an election petition from Khan Abdus Samad Khan of British Baluchistan challenging the validity of the election of Nawab Mohammad Khan Jogazai as a member of the Constituent Assembly representing British Baluchistan. The House will doubtless look into this matter, in due course, after the election of the permanent Chairman. But my ruling at this stage is that the gentleman declared elected will continue to be regarded as a Member of this House until the matter is disposed of, at a later stage, by the House, after the election of the permanent Chairman.

The next item on the agenda is the provisional Chairman's inaugural address. I will do my best to read out the whole of the address, but if I feel the strain too much, you will kindly permit me to hand over the typescript to Sir B.N. Rau, who has very kindly undertaken to read it for me. But I hope there will be no occasion for it.

CHAIRMAN'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

HON'BLE MEMBERS OF THE FIRST INDIAN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY :

I am deeply beholden to you for your having agreed to accept me as the first President of your Constituent Assembly, which will enable me to assist you in transacting the preliminary business before the House—such as the election of a permanent President, the framing of the Rules of Business, the appointment of various Committees, and settling the question of giving publicity to, or keeping confidential, your proceedings—which will ultimately lead you to crown your labours by formulating a suitable and stable constitution for an Independent India. In expressing my sense of appreciation of your great kindness, I cannot conceal from myself that I

feel—comparing small things with great—that I am, on the present occasion in the position in which Lord Palmerston found himself when Queen Victoria offered him the highest Order of Chivalry, namely, the Knighthood of the Garter. In accepting the Queen's offer, Lord Palmerston wrote to a friend as follows:—

“I have gratefully accepted Her Majesty's gracious offer as, thank God, there is no question of any damned merit about the honour conferred on me.”

I say I find myself more or less in the same position, for you have agreed to accept me as your President on the sole ground that I am, in age, the senior-most member of this Assembly. Whatever the ground, however, on which you have chosen to have me as your first President, I am nonetheless profoundly grateful to you. I have had, in my fairly long life, several honours conferred on me in recognition of my services as a humble worker in public interest, but I assure you that I regard your mark of favour as a signal honour, which I shall cherish throughout the rest of my life.

On this historic and memorable occasion, you will not grudge, I am sure, if I venture to address to you some observations on certain aspects of what is called a Constituent Assembly. This political method of devising a constitution for a country has not been known to our fellow-subjects in Britain, for the simple reason, that under the British Constitution, there is no such thing as a constituent law, it being a cherished privilege of the British Parliament, as the sole sovereign authority, to make and unmake all laws, including the constitutional law of the country. As such we have to look to countries other than Britain to be able to form a correct estimate of the position of a Constituent Assembly. In Europe, the oldest Republic, that of Switzerland, has not had a Constituent Law, in the ordinary sense of that term, for it came into existence, on a much smaller scale than it now exists, due to historic causes and accidents, several centuries back. Nevertheless, the present constitutional system of Switzerland has several notable and instructive features which have strongly been recommended by qualified authorities to Indian constitution-makers, and I have no doubt that this great

Assembly will study carefully the Swiss Constitution, and try to utilise it to the best advantage in the interest of preparing a suitable constitution for a free and independent India.

The only other State in Europe, to the constitution of which we could turn with some advantage, is that of France, the first Constituent Assembly of which (called "The French National Assembly") was convoked in 1789, after the French Revolution had succeeded in over-throwing the French monarchy. But the French Republican system of Government had been changed since then, from time to time, and is even now, more or less, in the melting pot. Though, therefore, you may not be able to derive as much advantage from a study of the French system of constituent law as that of the Swiss, that is no reason why you should not seek to derive what advantage you can in the preparation of the task before you, by a study of it.

As a matter of fact, the French constitution-makers who met in 1789 at the first Constituent Assembly of their country, were themselves largely influenced by the work done but a couple of years earlier in 1787, by the historic Constitutional Convention held at Philadelphia by the American constitution-makers, for their country. Having thrown off their allegiance to the British King in Parliament, they met and drew up what had been regarded, and justly so, as the soundest, and most practical and workable republican constitution in existence. It is this great constitution, which had been naturally taken as the model for all subsequent constitutions not only of France, but also of the self-governing Dominions of the British Commonwealth, like Canada, Australia, and South Africa; and I have no doubt that you will also, in the nature of things, pay in the course of your work, greater attention to the provisions of the American Constitution than to those of any other.

I have referred above to the self-governing constitutions of the great Dominions of the British Commonwealth being based on, to a large extent, if not actually derived from, the American constitutional system. The first to benefit by the American system was Canada, the historic Convention of which country, for drawing up a self-governing constitution, met in

1864, at Quebec. This Convention drew up the Canadian Constitution, which was subsequently embodied in what is still on the Statute Book as the British North American Act, passed by the British Parliament in 1867. You may be interested to hear that the Quebec Convention consisted of only 33 delegates from all the provinces of Canada, and that Convention of 33 representatives issued as many as 74 resolutions, which were afterwards duly incorporated *in toto* in the British North American Act, under the provisions of which the first self-governing Dominion of the British Commonwealth of Canada, came into existence, in 1867. The British Parliament accepted the Canadian Convention's scheme in its entirety, except for making only one drafting amendment. I hope and pray, Hon'ble Members, that your labours may be crowned with a similar success.

The American constitutional system was more or less adopted in the schemes prepared for framing the Constitutions of Australia and South Africa, which shows that the results achieved by the American Convention, held at Philadelphia in 1787, had been accepted by the world as a model for framing independent federal constitutions for various countries. It is for these reasons that I have felt justified in inviting your attention to the American system of constituent and constitutional law as one which should be carefully studied by you—not necessarily for wholesale adoption, but for the judicious adaptation of its provisions to the necessities and requirements of your own country, with such modifications as may be necessary or essential owing to the peculiar conditions of our social, economic and political life. I have done so as according to Munro—a standard authority on the subject—the American Constitution is based on “a series of agreements as well as a series of compromises”. I may venture to add, as a result of my long experience of public life for now nearly half a century, that reasonable agreements and judicious compromises are nowhere more called for than in framing a constitution for a country like India.

In commending to you for your careful consideration and acceptance, with reasonable agreements and judicious compromises, the fundamental principles of the American system, I cannot do better than quote the striking observations

on the subject of the greatest British authority, namely Viscount Bryce, who in his monumental work, called "The American Commonwealth", writes as follows, putting in a very few lines the substance of the fundamental principles of the American Constitution:—

"Its central or national is not a mere league, for it does not wholly depend on the component communities which we call the States. It is itself a Commonwealth, as well as a union of Commonwealths, because it claims directly the obedience of every citizen, and acts immediately upon him through its courts and executive officers. Still less are the minor communities, the States, mere sub-divisions of the Union, mere creatures of the National Government, like the counties of England, or the Departments of France. They have over their citizens an authority which is their own, and not delegated by the Central Government."

It may possibly be that in some such scheme, skilfully adapted to our own requirements, a satisfactory solution may be found for a constitution for an Independent India, which may satisfy the reasonable expectations and legitimate aspirations of almost all the leading political parties in the country. Having quoted the greatest British authority on the great, inherent, merits of the American Constitution, you will, I hope, bear with me a fairly long quotation from the greatest American Jurist, Joseph Story. In concluding his celebrated book, called "Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States", he made certain striking and inspiring observations which I present to you as worthy of your attention. Said Story:—

"Let the American youth never forget, that they possess (in their Constitution) a noble inheritance, bought by the toils, and sufferings, and blood of their ancestors; and capable, if wisely improved, and faithfully guarded, of transmitting to their latest posterity all the substantial blessings of life, the peaceful enjoyment of liberty, property, religion, and independence. The structure has been erected by architects of consummate skill and fidelity; its foundations are solid; its compartments are beautiful, as well as useful; its arrangements are full of

wisdom and order; and its defences are impregnable from without. It has been reared for immortality, if the work of man may justly aspire to such a title. It may, nevertheless, perish in an hour by the folly, or corruption, or negligence of its only keepers, THE PEOPLE. Republics are created—*these are the words which I commend to you for your consideration*—by the virtue, public spirit, and intelligence of the citizens. They fall, when the wise are banished from the public councils, because they dare to be honest, and the profligate are rewarded, because they flatter the people, in order to betray them.”

To quote yet one more leading authority on the almost ideal Constitution of America, James (at one time Solicitor-General of the United States) says in his highly instructive book, called, “The Constitution of the United States—Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow”—

“Constitutions, as a governmental panacea, have come and gone; but it can be said of the American Constitution, paraphrasing the noble tribute of Dr. Johnson to the immortal fame of Shakespeare, that the stream of time which has washed away the dissoluble fabric of many other paper constitutions, has left almost untouched its adamant strength. Excepting the first ten amendments, which were virtually a part of the original charter, only nine others have been adopted in more than one hundred and thirty years. What other form of government has better stood the test of time?”

Hon'ble Members, my prayer is that the Constitution that you are going to plan may similarly be reared for 'immortality', if the work of man may justly aspire to such a title, and it may be a structure of 'adamantine strength', which will outlast and overcome all present and future destructive forces.

Having invited your attention to some aspects of the question of constitution-making in Europe and America, I may now profitably turn to some aspects of the question in our own country. The first definite reference to a Constituent Assembly (though not under those words or under that

particular name) I have found in a statement of Mahatma Gandhi, made so far back as 1922. Mahatmaji wrote :—

“Swaraj will not be a free gift of the British Parliament. It will be a declaration of India's full self-expression, expressed through an Act of Parliament. But it will be merely a courteous ratification of the declared wish of the people of India. The ratification will be a treaty to which Britain will be a party. The British Parliament, when the settlement comes, will ratify the wishes of the people of India as expressed through the freely chosen representatives.”

The demand made by Mahatma Gandhi for a Constituent Assembly, composed of the “freely chosen representatives” of the people of India, was affirmed, from time to time, by various public bodies and political leaders, but it was not till May, 1934, that the Swaraj Party, which was then formed at Ranchi (in Bihar), formulated a scheme in which the following resolution was included :—

“This Conference claims for India the right of self-determination, and the only method of applying that principle is to convene a Constituent Assembly, representative of all sections of the Indian people, to frame an acceptable constitution.”

The policy embodied in this resolution was approved by the All-India Congress Committee, which met at Patna—the capital of Bihar—a few days later, in May, 1934; and it was thus that the scheme of a Constituent Assembly for framing the Indian Constitution was officially adopted by the Indian National Congress.

The above resolution was confirmed at the session of the Congress held at Faizpur in December, 1936. The confirming resolution declared that—

“The Congress stands for a genuine democratic State in India where political power has been transferred to the people, as a whole, and the Government is under their effective control. Such a State can only come into existence through a Constituent Assembly having the power to determine finally the constitution of the country.”

In November, 1939 the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution which declared that—

“Recognition of India’s independence and the right of her people to frame their constitution through a Constituent Assembly is essential.”

I may add that in the resolutions from which I have quoted above (those adopted at the Congress Working Committee of November, 1939, and at the Faizpur session of the Congress of 1936) it was declared that the Constituent Assembly should be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. Since the Congress gave a lead on the subject in 1934, the idea of a Constituent Assembly had come to prevail largely as an article of faith in almost all the politically-minded classes in the country.

But until the adoption of the resolution on Pakistan, in March 1940, by the Muslim League, that political organization had not favoured the idea of a Constituent Assembly as a proper and suitable method for framing a constitution for this country. After the adoption of that resolution, however, the attitude of the Muslim League seems to have undergone a change in favour of the idea of a Constituent Assembly—one for the areas claimed by the League for a separate Muslim State, and the other for the rest of India. Thus it may be stated that the idea of a Constituent Assembly, as the only direct means for the framing of a constitution in this country, came to be entertained and accepted by the two major political parties in 1940, with this difference that while the Congress desired one Constituent Assembly for India, as a whole, the Muslim League wanted two Constituent Assemblies, in accordance with its demand for two separate States in the country. Any way, whether one or two, the idea of a Constituent Assembly being the proper method for the framing of a constitution had clearly dawned by that time on public consciousness in the country, and it was with reference to that great mental upheaval that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru declared that “it means a nation on the move, fashioning for itself a new Government of its own making, through their elected representatives”.

It remains to add that the conception of a Constituent Assembly as the most appropriate method for framing the

constitution of India had also found favour with the members of the Sapru Committee in the report of which, issued last year (1945), is formulated a definite scheme for the composition of a Constituent Assembly. We are meeting, however, in this Assembly today, under the scheme propounded by the British Cabinet Mission, which though differing from the suggestions made on the subject by the Congress, the League, and other political organizations, had devised a scheme which, though not by all, had been accepted by many political parties, and also by large sections of the politically-minded classes in the country, but also by those not belonging to any political party, as one well worth giving a trial, with a view to end the political deadlock, which had obtained for now many years past, and frustrated our aims and aspirations. I have no desire to go further into the merits of the British Cabinet Mission's scheme as that might lead me to trespass on controversial ground, which I have no desire to traverse on the present occasion. I am aware that some parts of the scheme, propounded by the British Cabinet Mission, have been the subject of acute controversies between some of the political parties amongst us, and I do not want, therefore, to rush in where even political angels might well fear to tread.

Hon'ble Members, I fear I have trespassed long on your patience, and should now bring my remarks to a close. My only justification for having detained you so long is the uniqueness of this great and memorable occasion in the history of India, the enthusiasm with which this Constituent Assembly had been welcomed by large classes of people in this country, the keen interest which matters relating to it had evoked amongst various communities, and the prospect which it holds out for the final settlement of the problem of all problems, and the issue of all issues, namely, the political independence of India, and her economic freedom. I wish your labours success, and invoke Divine blessings that your proceedings may be marked not only by good sense, public spirit, and genuine patriotism, but also by wisdom, toleration, justice, and fairness to all; and above all with a vision which may restore India to her pristine glory, and give her a place of honour and equality amongst the great nations of the world. Let us not forget to justify the pride of the great Indian poet, Iqbal, and his faith in the immortality of the destiny of our great,

historic and ancient country, when he summed up in these beautiful lines :

*Yunan-o-Misr-o-Roma sab mit gaye jahan se,
Baqi abhi talak hai nam-o-nishan hamara.
Kuch bat hai ke hasti mit-ti nahin hamari,
Sadion raha hai dushman daur-e-zaman hamara.*

It means: "Greece, Egypt, and Rome, have all disappeared from the surface of the Earth; but the name and fame of India, our country, has survived the ravages of Time and the cataclysms of ages. Surely, surely, there is an eternal element in us which had frustrated all attempts at our obliteration, in spite of the fact that the heavens themselves had rolled and revolved for centuries, and centuries, in a spirit of hostility and enmity towards us."

I particularly ask of you to bring to your task a broad and catholic vision, for as the Bible justly teaches us—

"Where there is no vision the people perish." (*Applause*).

NOMINATION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

The Chairman (Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha) : I have a proposal to make to you on purely personal grounds, and I hope you will kindly approve of it. For many years past, under medical advice, I have not been able to do any work in the afternoons, and I do not propose to sit after the luncheon recess. So for the time I am temporary Chairman, while the House is going on with the presentation of credentials and the signing of the register in the afternoon, I propose to request the House to give me the assistance of a Deputy Chairman, and I propose that Mr. Frank Anthony be nominated by you. (After a pause). I declare the motion carried.

DEATH OF MR. PRASANNA DEB RAIKUT

The Chairman (Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha) : Next, I am informed that a member of our Constituent Assembly, who had been duly elected, had passed away, Mr. Prasanna Deb Raikut from Bengal, and I desire on behalf of the Constituent Assembly to convey our condolence to his relations. I think I may take it as carried.

SIGNING OF THE REGISTER

The Chairman (Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha) : Now I think we shall start the formal business which is the presentation of credentials and the signing of the Register. I will present my credentials to myself. Though Hon'ble Members must pass through certain formalities, I have cut out from the procedure the coming of members to the platform to shake hands with the Chairman after signing the Register. We tested this matter yesterday, and found that it would take about a minute and a half, if not two minutes, if after signing his name each member were to ascent this platform by the circuitous route, and shake hands with the Chairman, and then return to his seat. So, I have thought that that formality may be dispensed with. The Secretary will now call out the names of Hon'ble Members, who will come up, present to him their credentials, sign the Register, and go back to their seats.*

The Chairman (Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha) : If any Hon'ble Member's name has not been called through oversight, he will stand and his name will be called out. He will then come and sign his name in the Register.

(No one stood up.)

The Chairman (Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha) : That finishes our agenda for today. Therefore, there will be no sitting in the afternoon. The Assembly will meet tomorrow. A new agenda will be prepared, which is not yet ready. I have asked the Constitutional Adviser's Office to circulate the agenda to Hon'ble Members, if possible by this evening, and I hope it may be done. If you so desire, the Assembly will meet at 11 A.M. or 11-30.

Many Hon'ble Members : 11 A.M.

The Chairman (Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha) : We shall meet at 11.

The Assembly then adjourned till Tuesday, the 10th December 1946, at 11 A.M.

* Thereafter 207 Members presented their credentials and signed their names in the Register.

SOME FACTS

The Constituent Assembly took almost three years (two years, eleven months and seventeen days to be precise) to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution for Independent India. During this period, it held eleven sessions covering a total of 165 days. Of these, 114 days were spent on the consideration of the Draft Constitution.

As to its composition, members were chosen by indirect election by the members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies, according to the scheme recommended by the Cabinet Mission. The arrangement was : (i) 292 members were elected through the Provincial Legislative Assemblies; (ii) 93 members represented the Indian Princely States; and (iii) 4 members represented the Chief Commissioners' Provinces. The total membership of the Assembly thus was to be 389. However, as a result of the partition under the Mountbatten Plan of 3 June, 1947, a separate Constituent Assembly was set up for Pakistan and representatives of some Provinces ceased to be members of the Assembly. As a result, the membership of the Assembly was reduced to 299.

On 13 December, 1946, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru moved the **Objectives Resolution**:

- (1) This Constituent Assembly declares its firm and solemn resolve to proclaim India as an Independent Sovereign Republic and to draw up for her future governance a Constitution;
- (2) WHEREIN the territories that now comprise British India, the territories that now form the Indian States, and such other parts of India as are outside British India and the States as well as such other territories

as are willing to be constituted into the Independent Sovereign India, shall be a Union of them all; and

- (3) WHEREIN the said territories, whether with their present boundaries or with such others as may be determined by the Constituent Assembly and thereafter according to the law of the Constitution, shall possess and retain the status of autonomous Units, together with residuary powers and exercise all powers and functions of government and administration, save and except such powers and functions as are vested in or assigned to the Union, or as are inherent or implied in the Union or resulting therefrom; and
- (4) WHEREIN all power and authority of the Sovereign Independent India, its constituent parts and organs of government, are derived from the people; and
- (5) WHEREIN shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India justice, social, economic and political : equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality; and
- (6) WHEREIN adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes; and
- (7) WHEREBY shall be maintained the integrity of the territory of the Republic and its sovereign rights on land, sea, and air according to justice and the law of civilized nations; and
- (8) this ancient land attains its rightful and honoured place in the world and make its full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind."

This Resolution was unanimously adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 22 January, 1947.

Late in the evening of 14 August, 1947, the Assembly met in the Constitution Hall and at the stroke of midnight, took over as the Legislative Assembly of an Independent India.

On 29 August, 1947, the Constituent Assembly set up a Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to prepare a Draft Constitution for India. While deliberating upon the draft Constitution, the Assembly moved, discussed and disposed of as many as 2,473 amendments out of a total of 7,635 tabled.

The Constitution of India was adopted on 26 November, 1949 and the hon'ble members appended their signatures to it on 24 January, 1950. In all, 284 members actually signed the Constitution. On that day when the Constitution was being signed, it was drizzling outside and it was interpreted as a sign of a good omen.

The Constitution of India came into force on 26 January, 1950. On that day, the Assembly ceased to exist, transforming itself into the Provisional Parliament of India until a new Parliament was constituted in 1952.

SESSIONS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

First Session	9—23 December, 1946
Second Session	20—25 January, 1947
Third Session	28 April — 2 May, 1947
Fourth Session	14—31 July, 1947
Fifth Session	14—30 August, 1947
Sixth Session	27 January, 1948
Seventh Session	4 November, 1948 — 8 January, 1949
Eighth Session	16 May — 16 June, 1949
Ninth Session	30 July — 18 September, 1949
Tenth Session	6—17 October, 1949
Eleventh Session	14—26 November, 1949

[The Assembly met once again on 24 January, 1950, when the members appended their signatures to the Constitution of India]

**IMPORTANT COMMITTEES OF
THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND THEIR CHAIRMEN**

Name of the Committee	Chairman
Committee on the Rules of Procedure	Rajendra Prasad
Steering Committee	Rajendra Prasad
Finance and Staff Committee	Rajendra Prasad
Credentials Committee	Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar
House Committee	B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya
Order of Business Committee	K. M. Munshi
Ad hoc Committee on the National Flag	Rajendra Prasad
Committee on the Functions of the Constituent Assembly	G. V. Mavalankar
States Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru
Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas	Vallabhbhai Patel
Minorities Sub-Committee	H. C. Mookherjee
Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee	J. B. Kripalani
North-East Frontier Tribal Areas and Assam Excluded & Partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee	Gopinath Bardoloi

Name of the Committee	Chairman
Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (other than those in Assam) Sub-Committee	A. V. Thakkar
Union Powers Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru
Union Constitution Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru
Drafting Committee	B. R. Ambedkar

**STATEWISE MEMBERSHIP OF
THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA
AS ON 31 DECEMBER, 1947**

PROVINCES—229

	No. Of Members
1. Madras	49
2. Bombay	21
3. West Bengal	19
4. United Provinces	55
5. East Punjab	12
6. Bihar	36
7. C.P. and Berar	17
8. Assam	8
9. Orissa	9
10. Delhi	1
11. Ajmer-Merwara	1
12. Coorg	1

INDIAN STATES—70

1. Alwar	1
2. Baroda	3
3. Bhopal	1
4. Bikaner	1
5. Cochin	1
6. Gwalior	4
7. Indore	1

	No. Of Members
8. Jaipur	3
9. Jodhpur	2
10. Kolhapur	1
11. Kotah	1
12. Mayurbhanj	1
13. Mysore	7
14. Patiala	2
15. Rewa	2
16. Travancore	6
17. Udaipur	2
18. Sikkim and Cooch Behar Group	1
19. Tripura, Manipur and Khasi States Group	1
20. U.P. States Group	1
21. Eastern Rajputana States Group	3
22. Central India States Group (including Bundelkhand and Malwa)	3
23. Western India States Group	4
24. Gujarat States Group	2
25. Deccan and Madras States Group	2
26. Punjab States Group	3
27. Eastern States Group I	4
28. Eastern States Group II	3
29. Residuary States Group	4
Total	299