

75 Years of the Indian Constitution: Evolution, Achievements and Challenges

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 15th Dec 2025 Accepted: 18th Dec 2025 Published: 20th Dec 2025 Keywords: INDIAN CONSTITUTION Challenges	The Indian Constitution, which went into effect on January 26, 1950, is still considered one of the world's most complete constitutional frameworks. Over the last 75 years, it has led India through political transitions, economic reforms, social transformation, and institutional consolidations. This study critically examines the historical backdrop of its formulation, the evolution of constitutional principles through amendments and judicial interpretation, and the role of federalism, rights discourse, and governance structures in shaping modern India. This study provides insights into the strengths of India's constitutional system as well as avenues for future reforms targeted at strengthening democratic governance by examining accomplishments and persistent issues.
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1. Introduction

The adoption of the Indian Constitution represented a pivotal point in the political narrative of the subcontinent. After enduring nearly two centuries of colonial governance and the upheaval of Partition, India was confronted with significant social, economic, and political hurdles [3]. The Constituent Assembly was charged with the responsibility of not just creating a legal framework but also imagining a cohesive nation founded on democratic principles [2].

The creators of the Constitution aimed to harmonize international constitutional standards with local socio-political contexts. Consequently, the Constitution emerged as a transformative document designed to break down systems of inequality, promote democratic engagement, and maintain national unity amidst vast diversity [4].

As India marks 75 years of this constitutional order, it is necessary to assess how the Constitution influenced governance, protected rights, and fostered socioeconomic progress. This study uses a thematic analysis of constitutional evolution, institutional functioning, and emerging concerns to present a comprehensive knowledge of India's constitutional history.

2. Historical Background

2.1 Constitutional Developments Before 1950

India's constitutional journey grew out of earlier colonial reforms. The Indian Councils Act (1909) introduced limited elections, the Government of India Act (1919) brought dyarchy, and the Government of India Act (1935) laid out federal principles and provincial autonomy [2]. Though narrow in scope, these reforms created the institutional base later used in constitution-making.

2.2 Constituent Assembly and Drafting Process

Formed in 1946, the Constituent Assembly brought together leading thinkers, lawyers, and freedom-movement leaders. Guided by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Drafting Committee shaped diverse ideas into a coherent constitutional document. The Assembly debated major issues such as fundamental rights, minority protections, federalism, and language. Drawing from global traditions-British parliamentary practice, American judicial review, and Irish welfare principles-it crafted a constitution tailored to India's needs [2,3].

2.3 Philosophical Foundations

The Preamble expresses the core ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. Ambedkar stressed that political democracy must be reinforced by social and economic democracy, making the Constitution a powerful instrument for societal transformation [4].

3. Key Features of the Indian Constitution

India's constitutional framework blends federalism with strong unitary elements. While powers are shared between the Union and the States, the Centre holds greater authority in key areas through emergency powers, All India Services, and special legislative provisions [2,3]. India's parliamentary system further keeps the executive answerable to the legislature, supporting stable governments, frequent elections, and orderly political transitions despite occasional strains. Fundamental Rights (Articles 12-35) protect equality, free speech, religious freedom, and life, with courts expanding these rights through progressive interpretation [6,7]. Cultural and minority protections reinforce the

Constitution's pluralistic outlook. Although the Directive Principles are not enforceable, they guide the State toward social and economic justice, influencing policies on land reforms, labour welfare, and education [13]. An independent judiciary, backed by judicial review, has upheld constitutional limits and shaped democratic governance through landmark rulings [6–10].

4. Evolution of the Constitution Through Amendments

Across 75 years, the Indian Constitution has adapted to political change, judicial intervention, social movements, and economic shifts, showing itself to be a living and flexible document.

4.1 Early Amendments and Nation-Building (1950s–1970s)

In the first decades, the focus was on stabilizing a newly independent nation. The First Amendment (1951) tackled tensions between individual freedoms and socio-economic reforms, especially efforts toward land redistribution [2,4]. Judicial pushback on land laws led to constitutional protections for agrarian reforms. The Seventeenth Amendment (1964) expanded the Ninth Schedule to reinforce these measures. Together, these early amendments reveal how constitutional change supported social equity and economic restructuring.

4.2 Emergency-Era Amendments and Constitutional Crisis

The Emergency (1975–77) created intense constitutional pressure. The 42nd Amendment (1976), often called the “Mini-Constitution,” centralized power, restricted judicial review, and modified key provisions, exposing vulnerabilities in institutional safeguards. Afterward, the 44th Amendment (1978) overturned many of these changes, strengthened civil liberties, and restored democratic checks, reaffirming commitments to liberty and federalism [2,3].

4.3 Decentralization and Grassroots Democracy (1990s)

A major shift came with the 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992), which gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies [12]. This boosted local governance, expanded grassroots participation, and advanced inclusive democracy by enabling marginalized groups to hold power.

4.4 Rights Expansion and Social Commitments (2000s–Present)

In recent years, the rights framework has widened. The 86th Amendment (2002) made the Right to Education a Fundamental Right [13]. Later reforms—including the GST amendment [14], cooperative society provisions, and EWS reservation—reflect evolving economic and social needs.

Together, these developments show how the Constitution continues to adjust to national demands while preserving its foundational vision.

5. Role of Judiciary in Constitutional Development

The Indian judiciary has played a decisive role in shaping constitutional democracy, using judicial review, major rulings, and broad interpretations of rights to keep core constitutional values intact. Its contribution is essential to understanding how the Constitution has evolved over seventy-five years.

5.1 Establishing Constitutional Boundaries: The Basic Structure Doctrine

The landmark *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973) judgment [6] marked a turning point. By holding that Parliament cannot change the Constitution's “basic

structure,” the Supreme Court protected democracy, secularism, and judicial independence. This principle proved especially crucial during the Emergency and continues to act as a safeguard against potential authoritarianism.

5.2 Expansion of Fundamental Rights

Through judicial interpretation, Article 21 grew from a narrow procedural right into a wide protection of human dignity [7–10]. Decisions on privacy, health, environment, livelihood, and education brought fundamental rights in line with modern expectations.

5.3 Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and Judicial Activism

From the 1980s, PILs opened the doors of justice to marginalized groups and helped address environmental harm, bonded labour, custodial abuse, and corruption. The judiciary emerged as a guardian of constitutional morality.

5.4 Contemporary Role and Emerging Challenges

Courts now engage with issues like data privacy, digital freedoms, gender equality, and minority rights [9,10]. Yet persistent concerns—case delays, accountability debates, and pressure on judicial independence—highlight the need for structural reforms to preserve judicial strength.

6. Fundamental Rights and Transformative Constitutionalism

The Constitution’s commitment to justice and equality has driven major social transformations over the past seven decades.

6.1 Abolition of Social Hierarchies and Promotion of Equality

The removal of untouchability (Article 17), safeguards against discrimination (Article 15), and affirmative action policies have deeply influenced India’s social landscape [2,3]. These steps helped empower Dalits, Adivasis, and other backward classes by improving their access to education, public jobs, and political spaces.

6.2 Gender Justice and Personal Law Reform

Judicial decisions broadened women’s rights in inheritance, marriage, and workplace equality [6,7]. Recent judgments on reproductive rights, triple talaq, and gender-based discrimination show the Constitution’s continuing commitment to gender justice.

6.3 Rights of Minorities and LGBTQ+ Community

Rulings such as *Naz Foundation*, *Navtej Johar* [10], and *Puttaswamy* [9] upheld the Constitution’s promise of dignity and equality, extending safeguards to sexual minorities and reinforcing the right to privacy.

7. Achievements Over 75 Years

Over the past seventy-five years, the Constitution of India has supported democratic stability, social change, and institutional continuity, making it a standout example among post-colonial nations. Its ability to adapt to shifting political, social, and economic conditions reflects the vision of its framers.

India’s steady democratic record is one of its greatest accomplishments. Since 1952, the country has held eighteen peaceful general elections, including the historic 1977 election that ended the Emergency. The Election Commission, empowered by Articles 324–329, has safeguarded electoral fairness, leading scholars like Ramachandra Guha to describe India’s democratic journey as a “remarkable democratic experiment” [3,11].

The Constitution has expanded opportunities for marginalized groups through reservations for SCs, STs, OBCs, and EWS communities, improving access to education,

jobs, and political participation. The 73rd and 74th Amendments strengthened this progress by guaranteeing 33% reservation for women in local bodies, resulting in more than 1.4 million elected women representatives [12].

Federalism has helped preserve unity while respecting India's diversity. The States Reorganization Act (1956) and bodies such as the Finance Commission, Inter-State Council, and GST Council have supported cooperative federalism. Judicial independence has also protected constitutional values, with landmark rulings-Kesavananda Bharati (1973), Maneka Gandhi (1978), Puttaswamy (2017), and Navtej Singh Johar (2018)-expanding rights to liberty, dignity, and privacy under Article 21.

The Constitution has further enabled national integration by recognizing 22 official languages, granting regional autonomy under Article 371, and incorporating princely states. Major reforms such as land redistribution, the Green Revolution [15], the Right to Education, and economic liberalization occurred within this constitutional framework. Decentralization through the 73rd and 74th Amendments also created over 250,000 local governments, strengthening grassroots democracy.

8. Persistent Challenges

Despite major progress, several constitutional goals remain unfinished:

- Economic inequality, rural distress, and regional gaps still pose obstacles to achieving full social justice.
- Institutional neutrality faces strain as political polarization grows.
- An overloaded judiciary and an outdated criminal justice system continue to restrict timely access to justice.
- New concerns-including digital surveillance, data protection, AI ethics, and cyber governance now bring fresh constitutional challenges.

9. Way Forward

India's constitutional future calls for reforms that reinforce democratic transparency, institutional trust, and social justice. Key priorities include:

- Enhancing judicial efficiency through technology-based improvements.
- Improving fiscal balance between the Centre and the states.
- Strengthening safeguards for privacy and digital rights.
- Expanding inclusion through focused socio-economic measures.
- Updating constitutional interpretation to keep pace with technological change.

These steps will help the Constitution stay responsive and effective in the 21st century.

10. Conclusion

The 75-year journey of the Indian Constitution reflects a compelling story of endurance, adaptation, and democratic growth. It has weathered emergencies, political shifts, economic transitions, and major social changes, emerging stronger each time. Its balance of flexibility and stability has enabled India to maintain democratic continuity while driving meaningful social progress.

As the country steps into the next stage of nation-building, the Constitution remains a moral and legal anchor. Its continued success relies on a shared commitment to constitutional principles, the strength of institutions, and the ongoing pursuit of justice,

liberty, equality, and fraternity for every citizen.

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