4 Nov 1948 – Dr B.R. Ambedkar moved the Draft Constitution in the Constituent Assembly (first reading begins)

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News

On 4 November 1948 Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee, moved the Draft Constitution – 315 Articles and 8 Schedules – for consideration in the Constituent Assembly with a long introductory speech. In it, quoting the historian Grote, he explained 'constitutional morality', and defended taking the individual, not the village, as the unit. General discussion (commonly taught as the 'first reading') continued till 9 Nov 1948. 4 Nov 2026 marks its 78th anniversary.

Key facts

Drafting Committee	29 Aug 1947 – 7 members; Chairman Ambedkar
Members	N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, K.M. Munshi, Syed Muhammad Saadulla, B.L. Mitter (later N. Madhava Rau), D.P. Khaitan (died 1948; later T.T. Krishnamachari)
Draft	Based on Constitutional Adviser B.N. Rau's first draft (Oct 1947); Draft Constitution submitted to the Assembly President on 21 Feb 1948
Stages	General discussion 4–9 Nov 1948; clause-by-clause 15 Nov 1948 – 17 Oct 1949; third reading 17–26 Nov 1949

Adoption	26 Nov 1949 – adopted (Constitution Day since 2015); 24 Jan 1950 – signed; 26 Jan 1950 – in force
Assembly	First met 9 Dec 1946 (interim chairman Sachchidananda Sinha); permanent President Rajendra Prasad (11 Dec 1946)

Background

- Constituent Assembly: indirectly elected by the provincial legislatures under the 1946 Cabinet Mission Plan. Nehru's 'Objectives Resolution' was moved on 13 Dec 1946 and adopted on 22 Jan 1947 – it later became the Preamble. Framing the Constitution took about 2 years, 11 months and 18 days.
- Polity: the Draft had 315 Articles and 8 Schedules; the adopted Constitution had 395 Articles, 22 Parts and 8 Schedules. In the 4 Nov speech Ambedkar called the Constitution federal and India a 'Union' from which States cannot secede. About 7,600 amendments were tabled and about 2,400 discussed during the debates.
- Ambedkar: born 14 Apr 1891, Mhow (MP); 'chief architect of the Indian Constitution'; independent India's first Law Minister; died 6 Dec 1956 ('Mahaparinirvan Diwas'); Bharat Ratna 1990. In his final speech of 25 Nov 1949 he stressed that political democracy must become social democracy.

Tamil Nadu link: of the Drafting Committee's 7 members, Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar (Advocate-General of Madras, 1929–44) and N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar (former Diwan of Jammu & Kashmir; key drafter of Article 370) were from the Madras Presidency. After D.P. Khaitan's death in 1948, T.T. Krishnamachari of Madras (later Union Finance Minister) joined it. Ambedkar praised Alladi as 'bigger, better and more competent than myself'.

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