

UNIT 1

CHAPTER 2

Historical Background Of the Constituent Assembly

- Under the **Cabinet Mission Plan** of 1946, elections were held for the Constituent Assembly. The members were elected by the members of the provincial assemblies by the method of a single transferable vote of proportional representation.
- In the beginning, there were 389 members. But after the partition of the country into India and Pakistan, the number came down to 299 when some members went on to Pakistan.
- Out of this 299, 229 were from the British Indian provinces while the remaining 70 were from the princely states.
- Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, the oldest member was elected as the first Chairman (temporary) of the Assembly. Later, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected the President and Harendra Coomarr Mookerjee was elected the Vice President. B. N. Rau was made the Constitutional Advisor.
- In the first meeting on 9 December 1946, the Muslim League members had boycotted, demanding partition. Out of the initial 389 members, there was a dominance of Congress party members with them having bagged 208 seats. The Muslim League had won 73.
- Jawaharlal Nehru said this in the first session, *“The first task of this Assembly is to free India through a new constitution, to feed the starving people, and to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity.”*
- The Assembly was in function for 2 years, 11 months and 18 days. Its last session was held on 24 January 1950.
- B. N. Rau prepared the original draft of the Constitution. There were several committees in the Assembly each having different tasks.
- There were five stages to the Assembly's work. They were:

- The various committees presented their reports on various issues.
- B N Rau prepared the initial draft based on these reports and his own findings.
- The **Dr B R Ambedkar**-led Drafting Committee then presented a detailed draft of the constitution. This was publicised for public discussion. Dr. BR Ambedkar is known as the father of Indian Constitution.
- The draft constitution was subject to discussions and amendments.
- Finally, the Constitution was adopted.
- The **Constitution was passed by the Assembly on 26 November 1949.**
- The Constitution came into force on **26 January 1950** which became India's **Republic Day**.
- The total money spent on the framing of the Constitution was Rs.64 lakhs. The Assembly had 11 sessions meeting for a total of 166 days.
- The **Objective Resolution** which was moved by Nehru on 13 December 1946 and adopted by the Assembly in January 1947 became the **Preamble** to the Constitution.
- Apart from the Congress Party, the Assembly also had members from the Scheduled Caste Federation, the Unionist Party and the Communist Party of India. There were 9 women also in the Assembly.
- After 26 January 1950, the Constituent Assembly became the Provisional Parliament of India until 1952. Then, the first general elections of the country were held on the basis of universal adult franchise and a new parliament was elected.
- **Prominent members** of the Constituent Assembly: Jawaharlal Nehru, B R Ambedkar, Rajendra Prasad, B N Rau, Vallabhbhai Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, C Rajagopalachari, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, S Radhakrishnan, C Subramaniam, John Mathai, Frank Anthony, K M Munshi, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, K Kamaraj, etc.

