

# The Republic Day of India: A Great National Festival

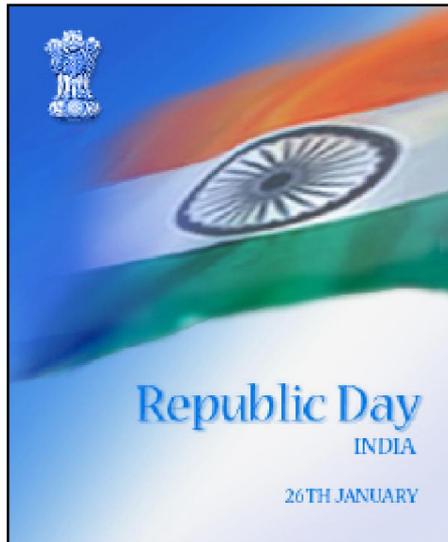
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## Introduction

The word 'Republic' is used to denote that a country in which the supreme power is held by the people or their elected representatives (politicians) or by an elected or nominated President not by a permanent head like the King or queen of Britain. India is one of the important republican countries of the World. In India, the Republic Day is celebrated every year on 26<sup>th</sup> January in New Delhi with great pomp and pageant. The Republic Day is enthusiastically observed by citizens as one of the important national festivals of India. This national festival is also celebrated all over the country and all the administrative units like the capital cities, district headquarters, sub-divisions, panchayats and educational institutions with a lot of enthusiasm. The date 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950 is one of the memorable days in Indian history as it was on this day the constitution of India came into force and India became a truly sovereign state. On that day, the people of India finally realized the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the numerous

freedom fighters those who fought for and sacrificed their lives for the independence of our motherland.

The date 26<sup>th</sup> January of every year has been recognized as the Republic Day of India.



The Republic Day is a national holiday of India to mark the adoption of the constitution of India and the transition of India from the British dominion to a republic on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950. This festival is always a solemn reminder of the sacrifice of the martyrs who dedicated their lives for the freedom movement and the succeeding wars. On the Republic Day, the independence pledge of nationalists is renewed. The Republic Day is without

speeches. It is the only ceremony in which rhetoric is in the background and visuals are given priority. This national festival at Delhi and the state capitals revolves around the parade in which all the Defence, N.C.C., school children and cultural groups participate followed by a display of tableaux and folk dances. Before going to the subject, here we have to discuss briefly on the



salient features of the constitution of India for which the Republic Day is celebrated throughout the country.

### **Salient Features of the Constitution of India:**

After a grand struggle, India achieved her long-cherished freedom on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947. The Independence Day, August 15<sup>th</sup> is celebrated to commemorate the birth of the world's biggest democracy as a great national festival. Our freedom fighters made India free from British Dominion. Thereafter, we could become the ruler of our country. India was governed by a constitution, which was framed by the Britishers previously. It was the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress at midnight of 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1929, the congress President Jawaharlal Neheru announced the congress policy that 'Complete Independence' was the goal of India. It was to be "Complete freedom from British domination and imperialism". In that historic session, Mahatma Gandhi also moved his famous resolution on "Purna Swaraj". The resolution on Purna Swaraj was passed by the congress on the last day of the year 1929. The tricolour National flag, signifying independence, was unfurled by the Congress President Jawaharlal Neheru as the thunderous shouts of "Inquilab Zindabad" or long live the resolution greeted the occasion from countless throats. The 26 January, 1930 was initially observed by nationalists as the day of Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence. The nationalists also took the independence pledge on that memorable day. The pledge declared "freedom as the inalienable right of the Indian people" and criticized the foreign Government for ruling India. Arising out of Gandhi's serious thought, a pledge had been taken that every year on January 26, the Republican Day would be celebrated and that the people would unceasingly strive for the establishment of a Sovereign, Democratic Republic of India.

Although, India achieved its independence on August 15, 1947, it did not have a permanent constitution. A Constituent Assembly had been entrusted with the task of framing a new constitution for free India. On August 29, 1947, the Drafting Committee was appointed to draft a permanent Constitution with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the Chairman. A Draft constitution was prepared by the Committee and submitted to the Assembly on November 4, 1947. The Assembly met, in session open to public, for 166 days, spread over a period of 2 years, 11 months and 18 days before adopting the Constitution. After many deliberations and some modifications, the 308 members of the Assembly signed two handwritten copies of the document (one each in Hindi and English) on January 24, 1950. Two days later, the Constitution of India became the law of all the Indian lands. The constitution of India came into effect only on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950. Following the date January 26, 1950, Rajendra Prasad was elected as the President of India. This was, in fact, a deliberate act signing the Constitution on 26<sup>th</sup> January, to mark and respect the freedom fighters who wanted 26<sup>th</sup> January as India's initial Independence Day. Hence India finally declared herself as a Republic State on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950. It is because of this the August 15<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as the Independence Day while January 26 of every year is observed as the Republic Day of India respectively.

The Constitution of India is the longest and the elaborate document of the world. A galaxy of top ranking leaders of India, who were assembled in the Constituent Assembly, prepared the draft after ransacking all the known constitutions of the world. The Indian Constitution originally contained 395 Articles arranged in twenty-two parts and ten schedules. Since then additions have been made by numerous amendments and some provisions have been



repealed. The preamble defines India as Sovereign Democratic Republic State. The preamble is an integral part of the constitution, which states the aims and objectives of the Constitution. The preamble to the constitution reads: "we, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens." The four essentials of democracy are justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, which are the principal objectives of the Indian Constitution. Justice: social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all. Fraternity assures the dignity of the individual and the unit of the nation. Dominion Status of India established under the Independence Act of 1947 has been terminated and India is now a full-fledged State with all the characteristics of sovereignty. The word "Democratic" signifies that the real power emanates from the people. The Constitution introduces universal adult franchise and confers on the adult population of the country the right to elect their representatives for the Union Parliament and State Legislatures at the time of periodical elections to be held every five years. In this way democracy with all its relevant representative institutions has been introduced in India for the first time during the course of its long history. In fact, the Constitution of India is an elaborate document drawn from many sources. The fundamental rights of people and directive principles of the state policy have been elaborately documented in it.

Observing the Constitution of free India, an American constitutional authority Granville Austin has described the Indian Constitution drafted by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as "first and foremost a social document". The majority of India's Constitutional provisions are either directly arrived at furthering the aim of social revolution

or attempt to foster this revolution by establishing conditions necessary for its achievements. Similarly, at the time of the emergence of Indian Republic, Sir Anthony Eden, the Prime Minister of Britain (April, 1955 to January, 1957), said "of all the experiments in government, which have been attempted since the beginning of time, I believe that the Indian venture into parliamentary government is the most exciting. A vast subcontinent is attempting to apply to its tens and thousands of millions a system of free democracy. It is a brave thing to try to do so. The Indian venture is not a pale imitation of our practice at home, but a magnified and multiplied reproduction on a scale we have never dreamt of. If it succeeds, its influence on Asia is incalculable for good. Whatever the outcome we must honour those who attempt it." The Constitution of India is remarkable for certain unique features of its own. According to B.L.Mitter some of the distinctive features of the Constitution of India are "the disappearance of the Princely order, sovereignty of People, full adult suffrage, joint electorate, the abolition of the Privy Council's jurisdiction and substitution of the Supreme Court in its place, the abolitions of titles and untouchability, civil equality irrespective of religion, enumeration of fundamental rights, directive principles of the state policy, the creation of the President and Cabinet system of government and the establishment of a secular state". Practically, the Indian constitution has been unique in the world, remarkable in upholding the fundamental rights of the citizens of our country. Considering the importance of the Indian Constitution, the effective date of the Constitution is generally celebrated as the Republic Day of India.

### **Celebration of the Republic Day at the National Capital:**

The capital, New Delhi, is the seat of national celebrations on all occasions. The



Republic Day of India commenced from 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950 signifies the adoption of the Constitution of India. It is regarded in the present days as one of the three national holidays in India. Since 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950 every year on the 26 January, the Republic Day is celebrated all over India with great patriotic fervour. It is a great national festival of our country. To mark the importance of the occasion, every year a grand parade is held in the capital New Dehli, from the Raisinia hill near the Rastrapati Bhavan (President's palace), along the Rajpath, past India Gate and on the Historic Red Fort. The capital city, New Delhi, witnesses one of the most majestic parades on the Republic Day. The different regiments of the Army, the Navy and the Air-force participate in the parade with their finery and official decorations even the horses of the cavalry are attractively caparisoned to suit the occasion. The crème of N.C.C. Cadets selected from all over the country consider it an honour to participate in this event. School children from various schools of the capital actively take part in the parade. Police, ex-servicemen, Scouts also participate in the parade with patriotic fervour. They spend many days preparing for the event and no expense is spared to see that every detail is taken the essential props and their uniforms. The seating arrangements are made in the lawns near the Red

Fort. The V.I.Ps take their seats on the said day before the commencement of the function. The Prime Minister lays a wreath on the Jawan-Jyoti. The celebration starts with the Presidential to the nation. The beginning of the occasion is always a solemn reminder of the role and sacrifice of the martyrs who died for the cause of country in the freedom movement and also in the succeeding wars for the defence of sovereignty of their motherland. The Prime Minister expresses his high sense of respect to the martyrs. At about 8 A.M. the President comes in his coach drawn by horses. Mounted body guards with uniforms escort the President's coach. The Prime Minister receives the President at the saluting base. As the President climbs the saluting base a twenty one gun salute is given to him or her. The President of India unfurls the national flag with the song of the national anthem. The helicopters shower flower petals from the air. The President takes salute at an impressive parade. Then, the President comes forward to award the medals of bravery to the people from the armed forces for their exceptional courage in the fields and also the civilians, who have distinguished themselves by their different acts of valour in different situations. The President delivers his or her patriotic speech to audience about the importance of the Republic Day.

The parade is followed by a pageant of spectacular displays from the different states of the country. These moving exhibits depict scenes of activities of people in those states and the music and the songs of that particular state. Each display brings out the diversity and richness of the culture of India and the whole show lends a festive air to the occasion. A colorful cultural programme follows the military programme. The Parade is also an occasion for the display of India's military strength and a number of arms, ammunitions, tanks and fighter aircrafts, some of them indigenously developed, are paraded. The latest war weapons



move slowly by the saluting base. The band plays martial tunes. As armed forces pass the saluting base, they turn their eyes towards the President. The commanding officer salutes and marches on. Hundreds of schools children pass on with colourful dresses, carrying flags. The folk dancers from the different states also pass on.

In short, at capital Delhi the most spectacular celebration includes the march past of the three armed forces, massive parade, folk dances by tribal folks from the different states in picturesque customs marking the cultural unity of India. Further, the streak of jet planes of Indian Air force, leaving a trail of coloured smoke, marks the end of the festival.

#### **Celebration of the Republic Day in Orissa:**

The Republic Day is enthusiastically celebrated in all the states of India including Orissa with patriotic fervour. Orissa is one of the important coastal-states of India. Some of the freedom fighters as well as martyrs of Orissa had sacrificed their lives for the cause of our country. They are Veer Surendra Sai, Birsha Munda, Buxi Jagabandhu Vidyadhar Mahapatra, Netaji Subash Bose, Laxmana Naik, Jayee Rajguru, Baji Rout, and others. The freedom fighters of our state waged a relentless struggle against the British government and actively supported the programmes of the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation. In Orissa, the celebration of the Republic Day is organized by the state government at Bhubaneswar. At the capital city, Bhubaneswar, the Republic Day is celebrated with patriotic fervour. N.C.C., Police, ex-servicemen, Scouts, school children actively take part in the parade on the occasion of Republic Day on 26<sup>th</sup> January every year. The Governor of Orissa takes the salute from the Police, N.C.C. and students. On that day, he unfurls the national flag in memory

of the martyrs those who dedicated their lives for the cause of our motherland. The people of Orissa enjoy the colorful march past. The Governor delivers his eloquent speech on the importance of Republic Day. Besides unfurling the national flag and taking salutes, the Governor of Orissa also gives away awards of merit to the teachers, policemen and to the employees of the state Government. The students selected to get the state awards in different branches are also given the prizes on that day.

The Republic Day is also celebrated at other administrative units' like districts headquarters, sub-divisional headquarters, *panchayats*, etc. Really, some of the freedom fighters of Orissa lost their lives during the struggle against the Britishers. The Republic Day is commemorated in memory of the martyrs those who dedicated their lives for the achievement of independence of India from the British Dominion. On the Republic Day, we pay our respectful homage to those valiant fighters for their supreme sacrifice and immense love for our motherland. People of other states of India also celebrate the Republic Day like Orissa with great enthusiasm.

#### **Observation of the Republic Day at Educational Institutions:**

January 26 is also observed in all the schools, colleges, universities and other technical institutes of the whole country as the Republic Day of India. On that day, the head of the institution unfurls the national flag and takes the salutes of the students. He addresses the students about the objectives of the Republic Day and also reminds the selfless sacrifice of the martyrs and freedom fighters of our country. In the different educational institutions, the head of the institution gives away prizes to the students for different competition held earlier. Thereafter various cultural programmes are arranged to make the day more appealing for the spectators.

**As a Social Celebration:**

The Republic Day of India has acquired the status of the social celebration in which people participate whole-heartedly as spectators. The celebrational mosaic is studded with different activities. Though the parade is the main ceremony, various activities spill over from early morning when *prabhat pheris* (morning rounds) are held followed by homage to Gandhi. The parade is succeeded by sports events in the afternoon. At home functions at the Raj Bhavan, at the District Magistrates, and SDM's are followed by illumination of public buildings of the State Capitals and Administrative headquarters.

The patriotic fervour of the people in this day brings the whole country together even in her essential diversity. Every part of the country is represented on the occasion, which makes the Republic Day the most popular of all the national festivals of India. At the level of the people, the Republic Day is observed at homes, housing colonies, schools, colleges, universities and institutions of various kinds.

The Republic Day celebrations have rightly become world famous as one of the greatest shows on earth drawing thousands of eager sight-seers from all over the country and many parts of the world. No other country can draw on such a wealth of tribal traditions and cultures, so many regional forms of dances and dresses. And no other country in the world can parade so many ethnically different people in splendid uniforms as India's Armed forces. But they are all united in their proven loyalty to the Government elected by the people and in their proud traditions.

The celebrations of Republic Day are universal and participatory; children take part in a big way. Variations in culture are displayed through colourful attires and folk dances. The

tradition predominates along with a touch of modernity reflected in the display of might (latest defence gadgetry and acquisitions), technology and capabilities of growth in various sectors. The Parade symbolizes the might; the tableaux are predominated by cultural motifs.

**As a People's Day:**

The Republic Day of India can be considered as a people's day. The constitution of India whose promulgation is celebrated and it is a highly symbolic of the aspirations which "we the people of India" cherish. It ushered in a social revolution silently by changing the status of the individual from a subject of a colonial empire to a citizen of a free country. The Constitution laid down the method of governance and established the relationship of the citizen to the state. It endeavours to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity and assures the dignity of the individual by conferring fundamental rights upon the citizen. The Constitution abolished all distinctions of status, rank, creed, colour and sex. It outlawed untochability, an abominable social practice that had created discrimination and tensions in society. Really, the Constitution is the supreme law in our country. Hence the Republic Day is sacrosanct as its significance is deep rooted. India at present owes its programmes to the Constitution. She can build her future on the basis of the tenets enshrined therein. It is a day of the citizen of the country when he is supreme. Symbolically, he can fly the national flag on his vehicle and at the top of his house. It is a great privilege. The Republic Day is a holiday when everyone has a right to celebrate it. No wonder the mood is festive and recreational. Picnics are common in society on that day.

**Conclusion**

It is known from the above discussion that the celebration of the Republic Day is basically homage to the martyrs. There is a great pomp



and show in the Republic Day celebration of India. On 26<sup>th</sup> January of every year, the national flag is unfurled on the government buildings all over the country. The day is considered as a great importance as on this day our own Constitution came into force and our country became a secular democratic republic. The Republic Day of India bears a great message for us. Untiring efforts of the martyrs and freedom fighters of our country are solemnly commemorated in this occasion. On the Republic Day, we also pay our respect to those great persons who conceptualized the basic ideals enshrined in the Indian constitution, which came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950. The Republic Day gives a scope to the countrymen to assess how much has been achieved and how much is still to be achieved. It also inspires the youth to work for the fulfillment of ideas for a progressive India. In every year, we observe three national festivals such as Independence Day on 15<sup>th</sup> August, Gandhi Jayanti on 2<sup>nd</sup> October and Republic Day on 26<sup>th</sup> January. Among these national festivals, the Republic Day is celebrated by us with more enthusiastic zeal than other two. The celebration of 26<sup>th</sup> January commemorates the day of 'Purna swaraj' (complete independence), which was declared at the historic Lahore Session of Indian National Congress on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1929. On the basis of the resolution passed by the Lahore Session, the nationalists of our country had initially observed the date 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1930 as the Independence Day of India. Really, India achieved her independence from the British Dominion on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947. Thereafter, accordingly a complete Draft prepared by the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly under the chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the date 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950 has been recognized as the

remembrance day of the Indian Constitution. On that day, the Constitution of India came into force. So the date 26<sup>th</sup> January of every year is universally accepted as the Republic Day of India. This Day is enthusiastically celebrated throughout the country as a great national festival of India. Thus, the Republic Day is a memorable day for us to remember the day of 'Purna Swaraj' and the effective date of the Constitution of India for ever.

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