

A REPUBLIC IS BORN: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON JANUARY 26, 1950

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Indian Constitution - Historical underpinnings & Evolution

The inauguration of the Republic of India is an act of high faith in the people of this country, a gesture of dedication of all the nation's talent and resources to the realisation of worthy purposes. It amounts to an implicit pledge on the part of every Indian that he will to the extent of his strength and capacity uphold the honour of his country, augment her strength for good and persuasively convey to a distracted world her immemorial message of *abhaya*. A democratic Republic, which is what our Constitution aims to build, is one in which the worth of the individual is not submerged in the collective will but sustains it. In such a polity no man may walk on crutches or regard public business as no concern of his. Every citizen must remember that if matters go wrong with the State it is he that is ultimately responsible. He must, therefore, not only acquire by study enough familiarity with the working of the machinery of Government through which democracy functions. He must understand the basic problems which have to be tackled if the good life is to be realised here and now. He must have the strength of character which alone is a nation's true capital. And above all he must have the will to put his shoulder to the wheel and push and pull, never getting out of step with his fellows, never seeking short cuts, never succumbing to the temptation to find scapegoats.

The special Supplement which we are issuing to-day is intended to give our readers an idea of the onerousness as well as the grandeur of the great adventure on which the people of India are setting out. Nearly a hundred and seventy contributors, drawn not only from every part of India and from every walk of life, but also from other countries, notably Britain and America, have with ready courtesy responded to our invitation to write. (Unfortunately some of the contributions were received too late to be included in the Supplement; but we are printing most of them in to-day's issue). Each is an acknowledged expert in his field and offers not only a synoptic survey of such achievements as we may legitimately claim but also an indication of the leeway that must be made up and of the methods which are likely to lead us swiftly to the goal. The poverty as well as the potentialities of our economy, the urgent need for tapping our inexhaustible human wealth, the power of education for unfreezing the spirit after its age-long sleep, the lessons as well as the warnings that we must draw from the successes and failures of other self-reliant peoples — all these matters, as set out in these hundred odd pages, will, it is hoped, provide the reader with a coherent picture of the social and cultural pattern which is in the making on the loom of time.

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The predominant note, as any discerning reader will observe, is one of cautious optimism for the future. The first fine careless rapture of August 1947 has sobered down with the exercise of responsibility in conditions, to have survived which is itself triumph. We have had too many things to do. And we have tried to do too many things at a time. Trained capacity has not matched with ambition. Power went to the head of too many who had done little to generate it but who swarmed to it as flies to sugar. The sharing of responsibility is a spiritual process for which men must devoutly prepare themselves. The greatest lack that Swaraj has revealed is that behind the brilliant band of patriots who under the Mahatma's lead won freedom there has been built up practically no second line of defence, no phalanx of younger statesmen to whom the torch could be handed without a flicker and in whose hands it might be trusted to burn as bright as ever. For Republican India it is as necessary, as it was for India struggling to be free, to

keep the crusading spirit alive. Only, the crusade must be turned against the enemy within. The Constitution has provided us with the shell of democracy. It is up to us to invoke life into it. The Puranic legends of Creation speak of the Virat lying prone on the face of the waters, unresponsive to any of the lesser powers that entered, until at last the Supreme Spirit entered and forthwith the Virat moved. We may regard that as a parable of our present political situation. The Republic of Weimar drew up an admirable Constitution which became waste paper because the Republic had no fire in its belly. It is that fire, that energy of life, that must be roused in the dormant consciousness of the people if India is to build up a fair, equitable and viable polity and a full life for her millions.

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