

# Topics - MINDS MAPS included (Daily current affairs 24th January 2025)

- Target UPSC CSE Prelims 2025
- **NITI Aayog's first Fiscal Health Index (FHI)**
- **75 Years of the Constitution of India- Analysis of constitutional values**
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- **IR IN NEWS**
- **Mains**



**By saurabh Pandey**



## **Target Mains -2025/26 -**

**Q Essay topic → “Curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back.”**

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**Q Baggage Rules recently seen in news are associated with which among the following.**

**(The Hindu)**

- A) Satellite carrying capacity**
- B) Gold Limits for abroad travelers**
- C) Mutual Fund investments**
- D) Carbon credit system**

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# Odisha tops NITI fiscal health index, Chhattisgarh next best

Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Kerala were the worst-performing States, as per the Niti Aayog report, while Maharashtra, U.P., Telangana, M.P., Karnataka were in 'front-runners' category

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

**M**ineral-rich Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa, and Jharkhand have emerged as top-performing 'achievers' among the States listed in NITI Aayog's first Fiscal Health Index (FHI) report released on Friday.

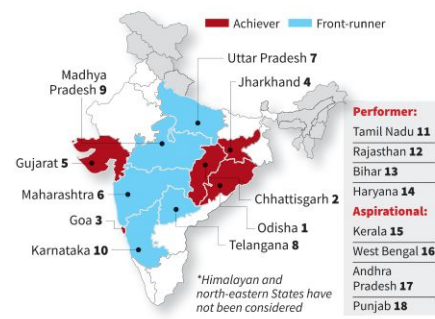
The report titled "Fiscal Health Index 2025" ranked States for 2022-23, covering 18 major States that drive the Indian economy in terms of their contribution to India's GDP, demography, total public expenditure, revenues, and overall fiscal stability.

According to the report, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Kerala were the worst-performing States in the Fiscal Health Index (FHI), each facing significant fiscal challenges, and listed under "aspirational" category.

The report aims to evolve an understanding of the fiscal health of States and it has listed Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka under the "front-runners" category. Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Rajas-

## Fine balance

Analysis in the Niti Aayog's report on the fiscal health index for FY23 highlights that strong revenue mobilisation, effective expenditure management, and prudent fiscal practices are critical determinants of success



than, and Haryana were classified as performers.

As per the report, released by 16th Finance Commission Chairman Arvind Panagariya, Odisha excelled in fiscal health, with the highest overall index score of 67.8.

Referring to top five achiever States, NITI Aayog said these States have higher capital outlay of up to 4% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), effective mobilisation of non-tax revenue, are revenue sur-

plus, and have low interest payments which is up to 7% of revenue receipts.

The government think tank said the front-runner States reported high total developmental expenditure up to 73%, witnessed consistent growth in own tax revenue, had balanced fiscal management and improved debt sustainability with debt-to-GSDP ratio of 24%.

The report noted that the aspirational States of Kerala, West Bengal, And-

hra Pradesh and Punjab are struggling to meet the fiscal and revenue deficit targets, have low revenue mobilisation, witnessing a growing debt burden with debt sustainability a concern in these States.

As per the report, Odisha tops the debt index (99.0) and debt sustainability (64.0) rankings with better than average scores under quality of expenditure and revenue mobilisation. Odisha has maintained low fiscal deficits, a good debt profile, and an above average capital outlay/GSDP ratio.

While Kerala and Punjab struggle with low quality of expenditure and debt sustainability, the report said, West Bengal faces revenue mobilisation and debt index issues. Andhra Pradesh has high fiscal deficit and Haryana has a poor debt profile, it said.

According to the report, Odisha, Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Chhattisgarh scored the highest average FHI score for 2014-15 to 2021-22 period. The data used to calculate the Fiscal Health Index were sourced from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

## **Topic → NITI Aayog's first Fiscal Health Index (FHI)**

### **Introduction to the Fiscal Health Index**

The recent release of NITI Aayog's first Fiscal Health Index (FHI) report has stirred quite a buzz in the Indian economic landscape. This report, titled “Fiscal Health Index 2025,” evaluates the fiscal health of 18 major states, shedding light on their contributions to the Indian economy. With states like Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa, and Jharkhand emerging as top performers, it's essential to dive deeper into what this means for the future of these regions.

### **Overview of NITI Aayog's Fiscal Health Index**

The Fiscal Health Index is a comprehensive tool designed to assess the fiscal stability of states based on various parameters. It considers factors such as GDP contribution, public expenditure, revenue generation, and overall fiscal management. The report aims to provide a clearer picture of how states are performing financially and where improvements can be made.

### **Purpose of the Fiscal Health Index**

The primary goal of the FHI is to foster a better understanding of the fiscal health of states. By ranking states, it encourages healthy competition and motivates them to improve their financial management practices. This is crucial for ensuring sustainable economic growth across the country.

### **Top Achievers in the Fiscal Health Index**

Among the states evaluated, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa, and Jharkhand have emerged as the top achievers. Their performance reflects a robust fiscal health that can serve as a model for others.

## Odisha: The Leader of the Pack

Odisha has taken the lead with an impressive overall index score of 67.8. This achievement is a testament to its effective fiscal management and strategic planning.

### **Key Metrics of Odisha's Success**

Odisha's success can be attributed to several key metrics: a capital outlay of up to 4% of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), effective mobilization of non-tax revenue, and a revenue surplus. Additionally, its interest payments are kept low, at around 7% of revenue receipts, which is commendable.

### **Chhattisgarh, Goa, and Jharkhand**

Following Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa, and Jharkhand have also shown remarkable fiscal health. These states have managed to maintain balanced fiscal management and improved debt sustainability, making them stand out in the FHI report.

## **The Aspirational States**

On the flip side, the report highlights states like Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Kerala as aspirational states. These regions are grappling with significant fiscal challenges.

### **Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Kerala**

These states have been categorized as “aspirational” due to their struggles in meeting fiscal and revenue deficit targets. They face low revenue mobilization and a growing debt burden, which raises concerns about their fiscal sustainability.

### **Challenges Faced by Aspirational States**

The challenges faced by these states include low quality of expenditure and high fiscal deficits. For instance, Kerala and Punjab are struggling with debt sustainability, while West Bengal is facing issues with revenue mobilization.

### **Front-Runners and Performers**

The report also categorizes other states into front-runners and performers.



Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka

These states are recognized as front-runners, showcasing high total developmental expenditure and consistent growth in their own tax revenue. Their balanced fiscal management is commendable, with a debt-to-GSDP ratio of 24%.

### **Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Haryana**

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Haryana are classified as performers, indicating that while they are doing better than aspirational states, there is still room for improvement.

### **Understanding Fiscal Health**

Understanding fiscal health is crucial for the economic stability of any state.

### **Importance of Fiscal Stability**

Fiscal stability ensures that a state can meet its obligations, invest in development, and provide essential services to its citizens. It's the backbone of sustainable growth.

## **The Role of Revenue Mobilization**

Effective revenue mobilization is key to achieving fiscal health. States that can efficiently collect taxes and generate revenue are better positioned to invest in infrastructure and public services.

### **: Conclusion**

The Fiscal Health Index report by NITI Aayog provides valuable insights into the financial health of Indian states. With Odisha leading the way, it sets a benchmark for others to follow. The challenges faced by aspirational states highlight the need for strategic planning and effective fiscal management. As states strive to improve their rankings, the overall economic landscape of India stands to benefit.

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# At 75, constitutional justice and personal liberty



**A**s we mark 75 years of the Constitution of India, I urge everyone to remember the ways in which the core values of the Constitution flounder in a deep ethical and moral crisis, trapped as we are in reductionist, mechanical readings of the constitutional value of personal liberty and human dignity. In the midst of the celebration, we need to step back and take a sober look at the right to personal liberty, which is a core constituent of an idea of justice.

**Reinstating dissent as constitutional ethic**  
The Supreme Court of India reinstated Justice S. Fazl Ali's dissenting opinion in *A.K. Gopalan vs State of Madras*, unanimously in *Puttaswamy vs Union of India* (2017), a case about the fundamental right to privacy. The preventive detention of the communist leader, A.K. Gopalan, by the government of independent India and the Supreme Court's majority ruling on constitutional interpretation in that case, in the inaugural year of the Constitution, (1950), have now been effectively declared as a judicial wrong. The resurrection of this dissent (which, in effect, upheld Gopalan's right to political dissent) and two later ones (all three on the question of personal liberty), saw the majority judgments truncating liberty as being flawed from the standpoint of constitutional ethics. Within a broader framing of justice, the technicalities of the interpretation of a fundamental right were seen as inseparable from the centrality of personal liberty to constitutional ethics.

It can scarcely be forgotten that Article 21 (the right to life and personal liberty) is 'designed to assure the dignity of the individual as a most cherished human value which ensures the means of full development and evolution of a human being' (Justice R.F. Nariman in *Puttaswamy*, paragraph 42). How and on what basis might we piece together memories that render the Constitution 'workable', 'flexible' and 'strong' (in the words of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar)? How may we discover pathways through which the Preamble lights up ways to 'hold the country together' at a time when the dominant political discourse reduces and degrades politics to the fractured banality of shades – such as the 'tukde tukde' narratives?

Preventive detention, arbitrary arrests, denial of fair trial through the impunity that is guaranteed statutorily in anti-terror laws, and democratical violence enact 'rituals of



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In the midst of marking 75 years of the Constitution of India, India needs to take a sober look at the right to personal liberty being a core constituent of an idea of justice

humiliation' – to use Sunder Boopalan's words – and impose indescribable wrongs on conscientious resisters in India today. I posit a juxtaposition that is instructive – there is the case of A.K. Gopalan (1950) challenging the inauguration of constitutional contradictions and being detained at one end, and Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Gulfisha Fatima and several other anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) resisters in prison (2025) challenging the CAA 2019 and living with bulldozers, dispossessions and the partisan prison complex, at the other end.

By 2017, when the *Puttaswamy* judgment came, preventive detention and prolonged custody without bail had proliferated under the aegis of constitutional courts; there was an escalation in arrests and the prolonged detention of dissenters under the spiralling list of laws (State and central) that, by now, authorised detention and custody with scant regulations. Over the years, the process has become the punishment. We witness young and spirited dissenters who courageously challenged the CAA 2019, now trapped in the talons of anti-terror laws. There is an impenetrable opacity of procedure and an endless deferment of decisions on the vital issue of personal liberty.

Dissent is criminalised even while dissent is reinstated; this is the deep paradox of our times that courts must reflect on in the 75th year of the Constitution.

## A.K. Gopalan and today's resisters

In his memoir, *In the Cause of the People: Reminiscences* (1973), A.K. Gopalan gives us a fine-grained account of his imprisonment along with several others 'by Indians', and of the numerous trials he faced and the petitions he filed to secure liberty from British courts and Indian courts thereafter, but to no avail. Deciding to celebrate Independence day in jail on August 15, 1947, he led a small procession in jail and hoisted the national flag. He was arrested for this 'crime' on a treason charge for stirring enmity against the emperor under Section 124A, and produced before the ADM Calicut in independent India (p.274).

He filed affidavits and wrote letters to the court 'as a matter of course' and was unwilling to 'remain quiescent'. Gopalan himself argued in another writ petition filed in Madras, in a hearing that saw large crowds: 'The court set me free on

the last day of the hearing. I was re-arrested after release at the door of the court and escorted once more to Cuddalore jail. I filed another writ petition which was heard two days after my re-arrest. The court released me again. The judges specially ordered the police not to touch me. The police did not dare to disregard this injunction. I had been imprisoned in December 1947 and released in 1951. Four years in jail!'

This account has a familiar contemporary ring to it. The anti-CAA resisters have spent roughly four years in custody, but the difference is that the courts have not yet moved with a sense of urgency to set them free. The Preventive Detention Act, 1950, belonged to free India's 'rule of law' regime.

K.G. Kannabiran, while reflecting on the travails of civil libertarian lawyers and their petitioners in courts over five decades, observed that the Gopalan judgment "is our own. It is the first 'Indian-made foreign judgement'" which upheld an Indian-made colonial law. To this, 75 years later, we have now added more Indian-made colonial laws. But will the courts hold the *Puttaswamy* view of dissent and dignity in place and extend their reach as constitutional values that further the cause of personal liberty as the ultimate expression of justice under the Constitution?

## No room for retrospective regret

The case of the 16 arrests made in the Bhima Koregaon case (writers, intellectuals, cultural activists, poets, performers, teachers), the 19 arrests made in the Delhi riots case of anti-CAA protesters (most of them community leaders and student leaders and activists, of whom 17 are Muslim), and the anticipation of violence, arrest and homicide as a 'clear and present danger' confronted especially by Muslims who dare to challenge unlawful state action, must make us pause. They call for a slew of interventions by constitutional courts in the exercise of 'creative constitutionalism' (to use Professor Upendra Baxi's phrase) in the cause of the right to personal liberty as justice. This is needed so that India does not end up waiting 'another seven decades and four generations' to discover that we were again on the wrong side of the Constitution. Or that we understood and worked the Constitution in its seventh decade in ways that negated its ethical spirit, instead of upholding and furthering the idea of justice embedded within.



# 75 Years of the Constitution of India: Analysis of Constitutional Values

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## **Topic → 75 Years of the Constitution of India- Analysis of constitutional values**

As we celebrate 75 years of the Constitution of India, it's essential to reflect on its core values and the ethical dilemmas we face today. The Constitution was designed to uphold personal liberty and human dignity, but are we truly honoring these principles?

### **Introduction**

The Constitution of India stands as a beacon of hope and justice. However, as we mark this significant milestone, we must confront the reality that its core values are entangled in a moral crisis. The reductionist interpretations of personal liberty and human dignity have led us astray.

### **The Core Values of the Constitution**

At the heart of the Constitution lies the commitment to personal liberty and human dignity. These values are not just legal terms; they are the foundation of a just society.

### **Personal Liberty and Human Dignity**

Personal liberty is not merely the absence of restraint; it is the freedom to express oneself, to dissent, and to live with dignity. The Constitution guarantees these rights, but how often do we see them upheld in practice?

## **The Ethical Crisis**

We find ourselves in a deep ethical crisis, where the mechanical readings of the Constitution overshadow its intended spirit. This crisis calls for a reevaluation of how we interpret and apply constitutional values.

## **Reductionist Readings of the Constitution**

The reductionist approach simplifies complex issues, stripping away the nuances of personal liberty and dignity. This oversimplification can lead to grave injustices, as seen in recent legal interpretations.

## **Reinstating Dissent as a Constitutional Ethic**

Dissent is a vital component of democracy. The Supreme Court of India has recognized this through its judgments, particularly in the Puttaswamy case, which reinstated the importance of dissent in the context of personal liberty.

## **The Puttaswamy Judgment**

The Puttaswamy vs Union of India case reaffirmed the right to privacy as a fundamental right, echoing Justice S. Fazl Ali's dissent in the A.K. Gopalan case. This judgment highlights the need to protect dissenting voices.

## **A.K. Gopalan vs State of Madras**

The A.K. Gopalan case serves as a historical reminder of the struggles for personal liberty. Gopalan's preventive detention was a stark violation of constitutional ethics, a lesson we must not forget.

## **The Importance of Article 21**

Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. It is a powerful tool for ensuring individual dignity and development.

## Dignity as a Cherished Human Value

Justice R.F. Nariman emphasized that Article 21 is designed to assure individual dignity. This principle must guide our understanding of justice and liberty in contemporary India.

### **The Current Political Landscape**

Today, we face a political landscape where preventive detention and arbitrary arrests are rampant. The state often uses these tools to suppress dissent and undermine personal liberty.

### **Preventive Detention and Arbitrary Arrests**

The rise of anti-terror laws has led to a culture of impunity, where dissenters are silenced under the guise of national security. This trend poses a significant threat to the constitutional ethos.

### **The Case of Contemporary Resisters**

The plight of contemporary resisters, such as those opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), mirrors the struggles of historical figures like A.K. Gopalan. Their experiences highlight the ongoing battle for personal liberty.

### **: The Paradox of Dissent**

In a society that claims to value dissent, we paradoxically witness its criminalization. This contradiction must be addressed if we are to honor the Constitution's spirit.

### **Criminalization of Dissent**

The criminalization of dissent stifles free expression and undermines the very foundation of democracy. Courts must reflect on this paradox as we celebrate the Constitution's 75th anniversary.



## **A.K. Gopalan and Today's Resisters**

A.K. Gopalan's memoir offers a poignant account of his struggles for liberty. His experiences resonate with today's resisters, who continue to fight against unjust laws and practices.

### **Historical Context of Dissent**

Gopalan's story serves as a reminder of the historical context of dissent in India. It underscores the need for vigilance in protecting our constitutional rights.

### **The Need for Creative Constitutionalism**

To navigate the complexities of our current situation, we must embrace creative constitutionalism. This approach encourages innovative interpretations of the Constitution that uphold personal liberty and justice.

### **Conclusion**

As we reflect on 75 years of the Constitution, let us commit to upholding its core values. We must ensure that personal liberty and human dignity are not mere words on paper but lived realities for all citizens.

# Foundational values, the journey of the Indian state



**I**n the 75th anniversary of the coming into effect of the Constitution of India, it is imperative to evaluate the journey of the Indian state from the perspective of its foundational values before we plan the course ahead. After nearly three years of debate and deliberation, the Constituent Assembly of the newly independent India adopted its founding document, the Constitution of India. Two months thereafter, the Republic officially came into force with the Constitution being given effect to. When Dr. B.R. Ambedkar delivered the closing address to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, he characterised the complex challenges ahead. He anxiously wondered whether Indians would place “the country above their creed”. Today, we realise that the words from the closing address carry meaningful lessons for the next 75 years and propel us to guard the Constitution.

## The federal republic

Many of the constitutional issues that have been keenly debated in recent times have been around the interpretation of India's federal structure. Tussles between State governments and some of the State Governors have made their way to the Supreme Court of India. Pitched battles are being fought within and outside Parliament on the issue of simultaneous elections. The neglect of ‘regional languages’ such as Tamil, Kannada, Bengali, Marathi and so on is being argued from the vanguard of multilingual equality and State autonomy. Fiscal federalism has been a major sticking point for States that are suffering under the dual regime of the Finance Commission and the Goods and Services Tax Act. The next delimitation exercise, which will determine the democratic future of India, is set to result in a showdown between the Union and States that have controlled their population.

It is strange that given how integral federalism has been to the constitutional discourse over the last 50 years or so, the word ‘federal’ is nowhere to be found in the text of the Constitution.



**Manuraj Shunmugasundaram**

is Spokesperson, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and an advocate in the Madras High Court

Rather than reinventing the wheel of the Constitution, there has to be a strong defence of India's democratic principles

Criticism of the Constitution in the early days, and one that was well anticipated by Dr. Ambedkar, was that the document is anti-federal and tilts the balance in favour of the Union. Addressing this complaint while speaking in 1949, Dr. Ambedkar explained that the ‘Centre and the States are co-equal’ in matters of legislative and executive authority. He clarified to the Constituent Assembly that the overriding powers for the Union are only placed “to be used in an emergency”. As such, the regular conduct of democratic business in India is within a federal framework and not to be mistaken for a unitary one. On this count, constitutional courts have confirmed the proposition by ear-marking federalism to be a part of the basic structure of the Constitution, beginning with the judgment in *S.R. Bommai vs Union of India* (1994) and continuing to the *Government of NCT of Delhi vs Union of India* (2024).

## An unequal democracy

Another question of contemporary interest is on whether and how India has matured over the 75 years, into a social democracy that is guided by the constitutional values of liberty, equality and fraternity. The argument put forth by many critics of the government is that it has become a police state. The offence of sedition along with stringent special statutes such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act supplement this position. Similarly, whether the country has been able to achieve a degree of equality among various cohorts, and whether it is truly democratic are questions that merit introspection.

With tremendous foresight, Dr. Ambedkar explained that the country must strive to remove social and economic inequality before they become a threat to democracy itself. He went on to underline the importance of fraternity for the fledgling republic. Terming the idea of an Indian nation as a delusion, Dr. Ambedkar asked how

people divided into several thousands of castes can be a nation.

Seventy-five years hence, can we fairly claim to have fostered fraternal feelings through social and political movements? Have we succeeded to some degree in neutralising the significance of caste in determining merit and success in society? The answers must be in the negative. But, that does not necessarily imply that the Constitution has failed. It is an indication of how much farther the country must travel.

## The need for constitutional guardians

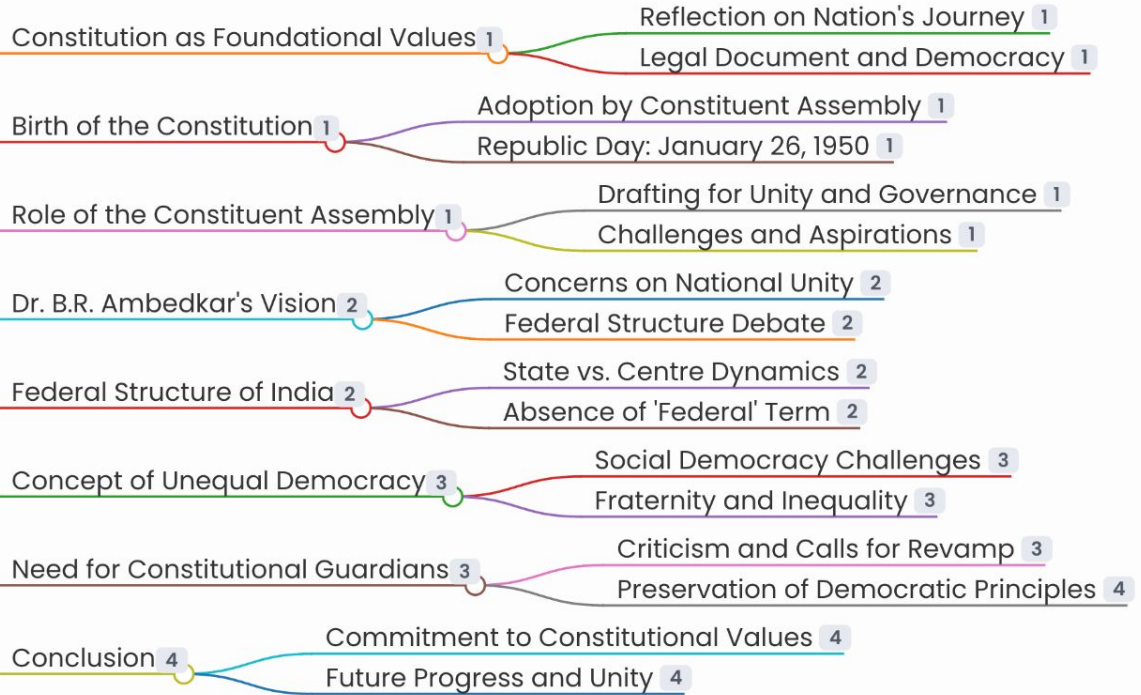
Of late, there has been some noise about revamping the Constitution, as the accusation is that it has evolved from an European colonial perspective. It has become a common trope among the social right to suggest replacement of the present-day Constitution with an ‘Indic’ constitutional document drawing from Hindu *dharmic* concepts – there can be no greater insult to the combined intellect of the Constituent Assembly than this. There can be no greater disservice than this to the three years of the Constituent Assembly and the 75 years of nation-building that have made India what it is today.

Rather than reinventing the wheel of the Constitution, the country must respond to Dr. Ambedkar's calls to defend our democratic principles and preserve the Constitution. For it is not the document that makes the nation but the people who are called to govern.

What is required today is clear-headed guidance on the future of our constitutional philosophy. In Plato's *Republic*, he argues the case for a class of guardians who are philosopher-kings. India today needs guardians who can place the country above their creed more than ever: they need to be guardians in the form of judges, bureaucrats, politicians, activists, journalists and citizens. Only then can we truly aspire to fulfil the promise of the Constitution.



## 75th Anniversary of the Constitution of India



# **Topic → The 75th Anniversary of the Constitution of India-- Constitution as Foundational values**

## **Introduction**

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Constitution of India, it's a moment to reflect on the journey of our nation. The Constitution is not just a legal document; it embodies the foundational values that guide our democracy. So, what does this anniversary mean for us? Let's dive into the past, present, and future of our Constitution.

## **The Birth of the Constitution**

The Constitution of India was adopted after nearly three years of intense debate and deliberation by the Constituent Assembly. This assembly was a melting pot of ideas, aspirations, and hopes for a newly independent nation. On January 26, 1950, the Republic officially came into force, marking a new chapter in Indian history.

## **The Role of the Constituent Assembly**

The Constituent Assembly was tasked with drafting a document that would not only govern but also unite a diverse nation. It was a monumental task, and the assembly members were acutely aware of the challenges that lay ahead. They were not just creating laws; they were laying the groundwork for a nation.

## **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Vision**

### **The Challenges Ahead**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution, delivered a poignant closing address on November 25, 1949. He expressed concerns about whether Indians would prioritize the nation over their individual identities. His words resonate even today, reminding us of the importance of unity in diversity.

### **Understanding India's Federal Structure**

#### **The Federal Debate**

In recent years, discussions around India's federal structure have gained momentum. The tussles between state governments and governors have often found their way to the Supreme Court. Issues like simultaneous elections and the status of regional languages have sparked heated debates.

#### **The Absence of 'Federal' in the Constitution**

Interestingly, the term 'federal' is absent from the Constitution. Critics argue that this indicates a tilt towards a unitary system. However, Dr. Ambedkar clarified that the Centre and the States are co-equal in legislative and executive matters, with overriding powers reserved for emergencies.

# **The Concept of Unequal Democracy**

## **Social Democracy and Its Challenges**

As we reflect on the past 75 years, we must ask ourselves: has India matured into a social democracy? Critics argue that the nation has become a police state, citing laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

## **The Role of Fraternity**

Dr. Ambedkar emphasized the need to address social and economic inequalities to protect democracy. He questioned the notion of an Indian nation, given the deep-rooted caste divisions. Have we made progress in fostering fraternity? The answer seems to be a resounding no, indicating that the journey is far from over.

## **The Need for Constitutional Guardians**

### **Criticism of the Constitution**

Recently, there have been calls to revamp the Constitution, with some suggesting a shift towards an 'Indic' document based on Hindu principles. This notion undermines the collective intellect of the Constituent Assembly and the hard work that has gone into nation-building.



## **The Call for Preservation**

Instead of reinventing the wheel, we must heed Dr. Ambedkar's call to defend our democratic principles. The Constitution is not merely a document; it is a living testament to our collective aspirations. We need guardians—judges, bureaucrats, politicians, activists, and citizens—who prioritize the nation above personal beliefs.

## **Conclusion**

As we celebrate this milestone, let's commit to safeguarding the values enshrined in our Constitution. The journey of the Indian state is ongoing, and it is our responsibility to ensure that the next 75 years are marked by progress, unity, and a true realization of the constitutional promise.

# After row, 'Jaffna' restored in India-built cultural centre's name in Sri Lanka

**Meera Srinivasan**  
COLOMBO

A strong backlash from politicians and intellectuals in Jaffna, over renaming the India-built Jaffna Cultural Centre as Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre, has prompted Indian authorities to put up yet another name board, now calling the facility "Jaffna Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre".

On January 18, the Indian High Commission announced the renaming of the Jaffna Cultural Centre as "Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre", "in honour of the great Tamil poet-philosopher Thiruvalluvar". High Commissioner Santosh Jha and Sri Lanka's Minister of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs Hiniduma Sunil Senevi jointly unveiled the new

name at a special event held in Jaffna.

Following the ceremony, which coincided with Pongal celebrations marked by Tamils that week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar posted on X, welcoming the renaming. Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi termed it "another milestone" in Mr. Modi's "continued efforts to celebrate and propagate the pride of Tamil language and culture worldwide".

Mr. Modi laid the foundation stone for the Jaffna Cultural Centre in 2015, while marking an Indian Premier's maiden visit to Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna city.

The Cultural Centre was built with a \$12 million-grant from India. Following its construction, Mr.

Jaishankar virtually inaugurated the building during his visit to Colombo in 2022. It was dedicated to the people of Jaffna in February 2023, in the presence of former President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

The 11-floor structure has been promoted as a state-of-the-art facility, with a 600-seating capacity auditorium, a conference hall, an amphitheatre and a digital library. It was constructed on land belonging to the Jaffna Municipal Council, near the iconic Jaffna Public Library.

**Administrative support**  
Amid concerns over the municipality lacking funds to run the facility, India offered additional financial and administrative support for five years. The Centre has been periodically host-



**Contentious issue:** The new name board reads 'Yazhpanam (Jaffna) Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ing shows of local artistes, as well as cultural performances and talk shows of artistes and scholars from India. All this while, New Delhi has used the original name and its abbreviation "JCC" in its official statements.

While neither the Indian nor Sri Lankan govern-

ment has officially clarified who decided to change the name, or what prompted it now, enquiries with multiple sources – they requested anonymity citing "sensitivities" – pointed to New Delhi.

According to diplomatic sources, the name of Thiruvalluvar, "the great Ta-

mil philosopher, poet and thinker" celebrated and respected by Tamils all over the world, was considered for naming the facility, "in view of the nature of the project". The Government of Sri Lanka "had no objection", a diplomatic source told *The Hindu*.

## 'Unaware of change'

All the same, Sri Lanka's Minister of Fisheries Ramalingam Chandrasekar, who represents the northern Jaffna district in the legislature, told Jaffna-based media that he was unaware of the name change until the day of the event, in which his Cabinet colleague Mr. Senevi shared the dais with the Indian High Commissioner.

Observing that he had no objection celebrating Thiruvalluvar, Mr. Chan-

drasekar said omission of the word "Jaffna" from the name was a cause of concern, as was giving the Tamil language the "third place" on the display board, after English and Sinhala. He was echoing a position many senior Sri Lankan Tamil politicians, across party lines, have since voiced.

As the controversy spiralled in Tamil media in Sri Lanka and social media platforms, with many attacking India for the omission of the name 'Jaffna', acting president of the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK) handed over a letter to the Indian Consul General in Jaffna, expressing the party's surprise and anguish at the sudden name change, without consulting Tamil political representatives or the people.

"We revere the saint poet Thiruvalluvar here [in Sri Lanka], we have installed several statues of his. We do not oppose him. But the removal of the word "Jaffna" [from the Cultural Centre's earlier name] amounts to insulting us," the letter signed by acting president C.V.K. Sivagnanam said, underscoring the "pride" and "identity" that "Jaffna" symbolises for Sri Lanka's Tamils.


Further, the party urged the Indian authorities to review and rectify the matter. "The Indian authorities were receptive to our suggestion. I am happy that they have now installed a name board calling the building Jaffna Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre as a compromise," Mr. Sivagnanam told *The Hindu* on Friday.




## Jaffna Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre: A New Chapter


### Renaming and Significance


 The Jaffna Cultural Centre was renamed to "Jaffna Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre" after local political and intellectual pressure.

 Announced by the Indian High Commission on January 18, the renaming honors the Tamil poet-philosopher Thiruvalluvar.

 The unveiling coincided with Pongal celebrations, attended by High Commissioner Santosh Jha and Sri Lanka's Minister of Buddhasasana, Hiniduma Sunil Senevi.

### Political and Cultural Impact

 Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar supported the renaming on social media.

 Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi described the renaming as a "milestone" for promoting Tamil culture globally.

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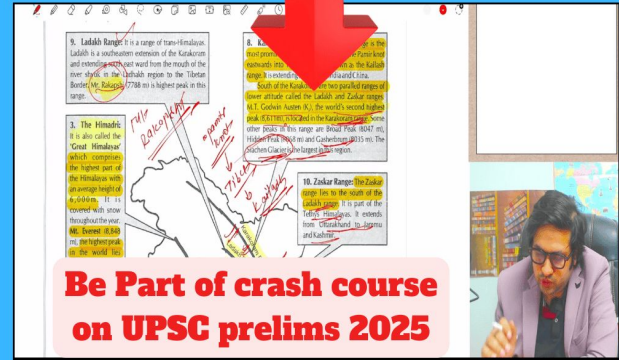
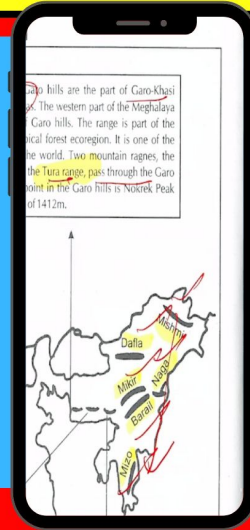
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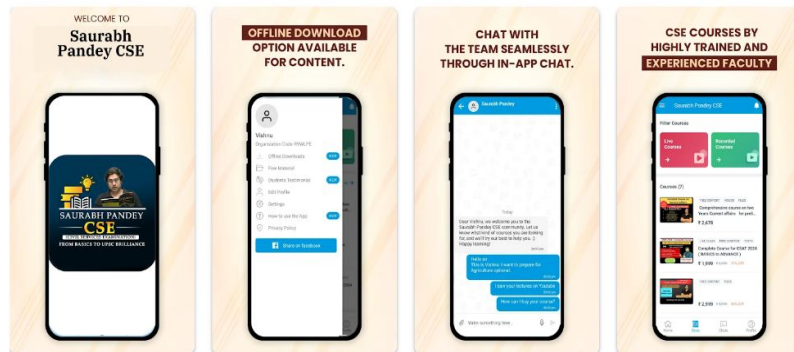
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