

Prose: The Grammar of Anarchy

BR Ambedkar

Pre-reading Activity

- What is 'anarchy'? What is its opposite?
- We celebrate August 15 as Independence Day and January 26 as Republic Day. What is the significance of these two dates, and what is the difference between them?
- India became an independent country on August 15, 1947. What was the status of India before independence?
- What is a 'country' and what is a 'nation'? Do both words mean the same or is there any difference between them?
- What does the phrase "unity in diversity" mean? How is it relevant to India? How is 'unity' different from 'uniformity'?
- Do you know the origins of the slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"? Today, it is also the motto of two countries. Do you know which are these countries?

About the Author

The chief architect of the Indian Constitution and one of the makers of the modern Indian nation, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, BR Ambedkar (1891–1956), was born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow, now in Madhya Pradesh. Hailing from a community considered "untouchable" by the Hindus, Ambedkar grew up experiencing the trauma of seclusion and discrimination. Encouraged by the Maharaja of Baroda, he went to Columbia University, New York, where he did his master's thesis on the caste system and doctoral work on British Finance in India. He was a social reformer who fought for the rights of people from the deprived sections of society. As the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, he worked with Promethean zeal to bring out a comprehensive document that was inclusive

and had the capacity to hold the diverse populace of India together. He was awarded the “Bharat Ratna”, India’s highest civilian honour, posthumously in 1991.

About the Speech

“The Grammar of Anarchy” is an edited extract from Dr BR Ambedkar’s closing speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949. The speech outlines the diversity of India and details the challenges the country would face in implementing the Constitution. Emphasising the need to build a nation on the basis of social equality, Dr Ambedkar unfolds a road map that India needs to follow in order to hold its fragments together and graduate from being a country to a full-fledged nation. Dr Ambedkar’s three advices—to give up the grammar of anarchy, to avoid hero-worship, and to work towards a social and not just a political democracy—continue to be relevant even today.

The Grammar of Anarchy

BR Ambedkar

(Extract)

Speech by The Honourable Dr BR Ambedkar (Bombay: General) in The Constituent Assembly of India.

Friday, the 25th November, 1949

On 26th January, 1950, India will be an independent country. What would happen to her independence? Will she maintain her independence or will she lose it again? This is the first thought that comes to my mind. It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence she had. Will she [lose] it a second time? It is this thought which makes me most anxious for the future. What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people...Will history repeat itself? It is this thought which fills me with anxiety. This anxiety is deepened by the realisation of the fact that in addition to our old enemies in the form of castes and creeds, we are going to have many political parties with diverse and opposing political creeds. Will Indian[s] place the country above their creed or will they place creed above country? I do not know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood.