

### ABOUT THE BOOK

The dominion of India was reborn on January 26, 1950, as a sovereign democratic republic and a union of states. With universal adult franchise, India's electorate was the world's largest, but the traditional feudal roots of most of its illiterate populace were deep, just as their religious caste beliefs were to remain far more powerful than more recent exotic ideas, such as secular statehood. Elections were to be held, however, at least every five years, and the major model of government followed by India's constitution was that of British parliamentary rule, with a lower House of the People (Lok Sabha), in which an elected prime minister and a cabinet sat, and an upper Council of States (Rajya Sabha). Nehru led his ruling Congress Party from New Delhi's Lok Sabha until his death in 1964. The nominal head of India's republic, however, was a president, who was indirectly elected. India's first two presidents were Hindu Brahmans, Rajendra Prasad and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the latter a distinguished Sanskrit scholar who had lectured at the University of Oxford. Presidential powers were mostly ceremonial, except for brief periods of "emergency" rule, when the nation's security was believed to be in great danger and normal constitutional procedures and civil rights were feared to be too cumbersome or threatening.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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