

Introduction

All the great civilizations, and probably all human societies, have known that human beings are capable of imagining; India merely cultivated this art, or faculty, more boldly than most.¹

(David Shulman, *More than Real. A History of the Imagination in South India*)

From November 1947 India embarked on the preparation of the first draft electoral roll on the basis of universal adult franchise. A handful of bureaucrats at the Secretariat of the Constituent Assembly initiated the undertaking. They did so in the midst of the partition of India and Pakistan that was tearing the territory and the people apart, and while 552 sovereign princely states had yet to be integrated into India. Turning all adult Indians into voters over the next two years against many odds, and before they became citizens with the commencement of the constitution, required an immense power of imagination. Doing so was India's stark act of decolonisation. This was no legacy of colonial rule: Indians imagined the universal franchise for themselves, acted on this imaginary, and made it their political reality. By late 1949 India pushed through the frontiers of the world's democratic imagination, and gave birth to its largest democracy. This book explores the greatest experiment in democratic human history.

India's founding leaders were determined to create a democratic state when the country became independent in 1947. But becoming and remaining a democracy was by no means inevitable in the face of the mass killings and the displacement of millions of people unleashed by the subcontinent's partition on 15 August 1947. Partition led to a mass displacement of an estimated 18 million people, and the killing of approximately one million people.² Moreover, creation of a democracy had to be achieved in the face of myriad social divisions, widespread poverty,

¹ David Shulman, *More than Real. A History of the Imagination in South India*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012, p. ix.

² The exact number of those killed in partition violence is unknown. The figure of one million is adopted in some studies. See, for example, Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, *The Partition of India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 61–2. For an

and low literacy levels, factors that have long been thought by scholars of democracy to be at odds with the supposedly requisite conditions for successful democratic nationhood.

How, against the context of partition, did democracy capture the political imagination of the diverse peoples of India, eliciting from them both a sense of 'Indianness' and a commitment to democratic nationhood? And how, in this process, did Indian democracy come to be entrenched? It was through the implementation of the universal franchise, I suggest, that electoral democracy came to life in India.

The adoption of universal adult suffrage, which was agreed on at the beginning of the constitutional debates in April 1947, was a significant departure from colonial practice.³ Electoral institutions existed before independence. But these institutions were largely a means of coopting ruling elites and strengthening the colonial state.⁴ The legal structures for elections under colonial rule stipulated the right of an individual to be an elector, and the provisions for inclusion on the electoral rolls were made on that basis.⁵ But the representation was based on 'weightage' and separate electorates, wherein seats were allotted along religious, community and professional lines, and on a very limited franchise.⁶ Rather than defining voters exclusively as individuals, the law defined them as

estimation of the scale of human displacement see, for example, Gyanesh Kudaisya, 'The Demographic Upheaval of Partition: Refugees and Agricultural Resettlement in India, 1947–67', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, Special Issue, 1995, p. 73. For the partition violence see, for example, Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998; Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*. New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2007.

³ *Interim Report of the Advisory Committee on the Subject of Fundamental Rights* (presented on 29 April 1947 – date of Report, 23 April 1947), Constituent Assembly of India, Reports of Committees (First Series) 1947 (from December 1946 to July 1947), New Delhi: The Manager, Government of India Press, 1947, p. 20. Accordingly, the Principles of the Model Provincial Constitution and the Union Constitution both contained provisions for elections on the basis of adult suffrage.

⁴ David Washbrook, 'The Rhetoric of Democracy and Development in Late Colonial India', in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (eds), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 36.

⁵ Thus, provisions for franchise in the Government of India Act, 1935 repeatedly specified that: 'No person shall be included in the electoral roll ... unless he ...' *Government of India Act, 1935*, Sixth Schedule, pp. 247–98 (emphasis added). Also see Article 291 of the 1935 Act. For a discussion of the designation of voters as individuals in colonial electoral law see David Gilmartin and Robert Moog, 'Introduction to "Election Law in India"', *Election Law Journal*, Vol. 11, no. 2, 2012, p. 137.

⁶ See India Office Records, *Return Showing the Results of Elections in India 1937*, London: HMSO, 1937, pp. 5–13. Also see Reginald Coupland, *The Indian Problem, 1833–1935: Report on the Constitutional Problem in India, Submitted to the Warden and Fellows of Nuffield College, Oxford*. Part 1, London: Oxford University Press (Third Imprint), 1943;

members of communities and groups.⁷ Thus, not only did the experience and legacy of elections under colonialism offer restricted representation without democracy, the electoral practices, which informed patterns of political mobilisation, resulted in the deepening of sectarian nationalism and impeded unity.⁸ British officials unfailingly argued that universal franchise was a bad fit for the people of India. The small and divided electorate was based mainly on property, as well as education and gender qualifications. Under the last colonial legal framework for India, the 1935 Government of India Act, suffrage was extended to a little more than 30 million people, about one-fifth of the adult population.⁹

The national movement had been committed to universal adult suffrage since the Nehru Report of 1928. Anti-colonial mass nationalism after the First World War further strengthened that vision.¹⁰ But there remained a large gap to bridge in turning this aspiration into a reality,

B. Shiva Rao, *The Framing of India's Constitution: A Study*, Nashik: Government of India Press, 1968, pp. 470–1.

⁷ Indeed, as Gilmartin and Moog argue, the colonial legal structure of Indian elections was based on contradictory principles. Gilmartin and Moog, 'Introduction to "Election Law in India"', p. 137. For the structure of representation on the basis of communities also see David Gilmartin, 'Election Law and the "People" in Colonial and Postcolonial India', in Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Majumdar and Andrew Sartori (eds), *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial. India and Pakistan in Transition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 70–1; David Gilmartin, 'A Magnificent Gift: Muslim Nationalism and the Election Process in Colonial Punjab', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 3, 1998, pp. 415–17.

⁸ See James Chiriyankandath, "'Democracy" Under the Raj: Elections and Separate Representation in British India', in Niraja Gopal Jayal (ed.), *Democracy in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 53–81. Also see Gilmartin, 'A Magnificent Gift'; Sumit Sarkar, 'Indian Democracy: The Historical Inheritance', in Atul Kohli (ed.), *The Success of India's Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 23–46; Alistair McMillan, *Standing at the Margins: Representation and Electoral Reservation in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, 18–73; Uday S. Mehta, 'Indian Constitutionalism: The Articulation of a Political Vision', in Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Majumdar, and Andrew Sartori (eds), *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial. India and Pakistan in Transition*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 22.

⁹ See India Office Records, *Return Showing the Results of Elections in India 1937*, p. 5; F. O. Bell, 'Parliamentary Elections in Indian Provinces', *Parliamentary Affairs* 1, no. 2, 1948, p. 21; W. H. Morris Jones, 'The Indian Elections', *The Economic Weekly*, 28 June 1952, p. 654; Chiriyankandath, "'Democracy" Under the Raj', p. 51. The estimates for the proportion of the adult population that could vote under the 1935 Act ranged between 20% and 25% at most. The previous electorate to the Provincial Legislatures under the 1919 *Government of India Act* reached 2.8% of the population. See 'Summary of Indian Franchise Report' (presented to Parliament, 2 June 1932), L/I/1/607, India Office Collections, British Library, London (hereafter IOC).

¹⁰ See Sarkar, 'Indian Democracy', p. 29. It is noteworthy that besides adult suffrage, the Committee appointed by the All Parties Conference to determine the principles of the Constitution for India, which resulted in the Nehru Report, discussed in detail three main proposals with a more restricted franchise and their possible anomalies and implications for the representation of different communities. Their conclusion was that 'the only solution is adult suffrage'. See Moti Lal Nehru, *Report of the All Parties Conference*

both institutionally and in terms of the notions of belonging that electoral democracy based on universal franchise would require. Throughout the first half of the 1930s in the course of making inquiries ‘into the *general problem* of extending the franchise’¹¹ in the run-up to the 1935 Act, both colonial administrators and Indian representatives in the provincial legislatures across the country claimed that ‘assuming adult suffrage’ would be ‘impracticable at present’,¹² as well as ‘administratively unmanageable’.¹³

The preparation of the electoral roll on the basis of universal franchise was a bold operation, wherein the newly born state set out to engage with all its adult citizens, ultimately expanding the electorate more than five fold to over 173 million people, 49 per cent of the country’s population. Putting adult suffrage into practice and planning for the enrolment of over 173 million people, about 85 per cent of whom had never voted for their political representatives in a legislative assembly and a vast majority of whom were poor and illiterate, was a staggering bureaucratic undertaking.

The first elections took place between 25 October 1951 and 21 February 1952. But the overwhelming and complex preparatory work for the elections, in particular the preparation of the first draft electoral roll on the basis of adult franchise, had begun in September 1947. Before that ‘stupendous’¹⁴ administrative task was handed over in March 1950 to the first Chief Election Commissioner of India, it was designed and managed by a small, newly formed interim bureaucratic body of the state in the making: the Constituent Assembly Secretariat (hereafter CAS), under the close guidance of the Constitutional Adviser, B. N. Rau.¹⁵

(*Together with a Summary of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Lucknow*), General Secretary, All India Congress Committee: Allahabad, August 1928, p. 93.

¹¹ Letter from Ramsay Macdonald to C. H. Lothian, 29 December 1931, Mss. Eur. f/138/15, IOC. Emphasis added.

¹² *Reports of the United Provinces Government and Provincial Committee*, 1932, IOR/Q/IFC/61, IOC.

¹³ Bell, ‘Parliamentary Elections in Indian Provinces’, p. 21. In 1932 the Lothian Committee estimated that adult franchise would mean an electorate of 130 millions. See ‘Summary of Indian Franchise Report’, L/I/1/607, IOC.

¹⁴ Election Commission of India, *Report on the First General Elections in India 1951–52*, New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1955, p. 10.

¹⁵ The setting of the Constituent Assembly Secretariat to assist with the drafting of the new Union constitution began in May 1946. The Viceroy requested B. N. Rau to prepare a scheme for the secretariat, as well as with those of the Provinces and Groups. See Rao, *The Framing*, Vol. 1, pp. 360–71. In a letter to Rajendra Prasad in early December Rau stressed that: ‘The whole organisation is non-political and non-party in character and its services are equally available to every member, irrespective of party or creed.’ *Ibid.*, p. 371. In a note to Nehru dated 7 September 1946, liaising the preparation for the inaugural meeting of the Constituent Assembly, Rau mentioned the need to create

This book explores the making of the universal franchise in India between 1947 and 1950. It tells the story of the making of the Indian electorate through the preparation of the first draft electoral roll for the first elections under universal franchise. This work was done in anticipation of the Indian constitution. The book, therefore, focuses on the practical – rather than ideological – steps through which the nation and its democracy were built. In this process, during the extraordinary period of transition from colonial rule to independence, bureaucrats inserted the *people* (*demos*) into the administrative structure that would enable their state rule (*kratia*). This process of democratic state building transformed the meaning of social existence in India and became fundamental to the evolution of Indian democratic politics over the next decades.

In the process of making the universal franchise, people of modest means were a driving force in institutionalising democratic citizenship as they struggled for their voting rights and debated it with bureaucrats at various levels. I argue that in India the institutionalisation of electoral democracy preceded in significant ways the constitutional deliberative process, and that ordinary people had a significant role in establishing democracy in India at its inception. By the time the constitution came into force in January 1950, the abstract notion of the universal franchise and the principles and practices of electoral democracy were already grounded.

The first draft electoral roll on the basis of universal franchise was ready just before the enactment of the constitution. Indians became voters before they were citizens. This process produced engagement with shared democratic experiences that Indians became attached to and started to own. The institutionalisation of procedural equality for the purpose of authorising a government in as deeply a hierarchical and unequal society as India, ahead of the enactment of the constitution turned the idea of India's democracy into a meaningful and credible story for its people.

There is an ambiguity about the use and meaning of the term democracy. It both designates and describes empirical institutional structures, as well as a set of ideals about the power of the people by the people, and

forthwith a Reference and Research Section in the Constituent Assembly. H. V. Iengar, the Secretary of the CAS, recalled: 'it had been decided by the Viceroy that I would be the secretary of a new department, the object of which was to prepare the way, for all the administrative arrangements for the Constituent Assembly which was to meet in the month of December ... Now, there were two people appointed. One was Sir B. N. Rau, a very fine man, he was made the Constitutional adviser; he was to prepare the ground for the constitution and the other was myself.' H. V. Iengar, *Oral History Transcript*, No. 303, p. 129, Nehru Memorial and Museum Library, New Delhi (hereafter NMML).

the will of the people. While analytically distinct, in practice the institutional and normative components always coexist.¹⁶ The thrust of this book lies in the structural makeup of democratic rule. It explores how Indian bureaucrats departed from colonial administrative habits and procedures of voter registration to make the universal franchise a reality. In some ways, they were taking their cue from pre-independence local Indian constitutional convictions about franchise such as the position of the Nehru Report, which stated that '[a]ny artificial restriction on the right to vote in a democratic constitution is an unwarranted restriction on democracy itself' and that the colonial notion of 'keeping the number of votes within reasonable bound' for practical difficulty 'howsoever great has to be faced'.¹⁷ To do so, in the circumstances of independence, Indian bureaucrats used imaginative power with which they ultimately shaped their own democracy.

This book explains the relations between two key democratic state-building processes – constitutional and institutional – that took place against the backdrop of partition over the two and a half seam line years of India's transition from dominionhood to becoming a republic. The first was the process of constitution making, during which the ideals of electoral democracy and the conceptions of the relations between the state and its would-be citizens evolved. 'Who is an Indian?' was a contested issue and a constitutional challenge at independence.

The second process, which took place on the ground, was the preparation from November 1947 of the preliminary electoral roll. The preparation of the roll dealt in the most concrete way with the question of 'Who is an Indian?', since a prospective voter had to be a citizen. The preparation of the preliminary roll for the first elections was principally based on the anticipatory citizenship provisions in the draft constitution. The enrolment throughout the country, in anticipation of the constitution engendered, in turn, struggles over citizenship. This process provided the opportunity for people and mid to lower level public officials to engage with democratic institution building and to contest the various exclusivist trends to be found at the margins of the Constituent Assembly debates. The quality of the engagement and the responses to these contestations, the suggestions and questions that arose in the process of making the roll, and the language that these interactions produced, democratised the political imagination. It was these contestations over membership

¹⁶ There is a vast literature on that subject. For a brief analytical discussion see, for example, Raymond Geuss, *History and Illusion in Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 1–5.

¹⁷ See Nehru, *Report of the All Parties Conference*, 93.

in the nation through the pursuit of a 'place on the roll', I argue, that grounded the conceptions and principles of democratic citizenship that were produced in the process of constitution making from above. For some key articles these contestations and the experience of roll making even shaped the constitution from below. Moreover, as a consequence of the process of implementing a universal franchise and the consequent citizenship making, the government at the centre was able to assert legitimate authority relatively smoothly over the changing political and territorial landscape of the subcontinent, giving meaning to the new federal structure.

The preparation of a joint electoral roll on the basis of universal franchise in anticipation of the constitution played a key role in making the Indian union. It contributed to forging a sense of national unity and national feeling, turned the notion of people's belonging to something tangible. They became the focus of the new state's leap of faith, in which they now had a stake.

The Archive

The archival materials that form the bedrock of this study are from the record room of the Election Commission of India. In addition, the book draws on a host of primary materials I researched at the National Archives of India, and the manuscript room of the Nehru Memorial and Museum Library, both in New Delhi, and briefly at the Maharashtra State Archives in Mumbai. Moreover, I was also able to gain copies of reports, parts of reports and documents prepared, in the main, in the context of the work of committees of the Constituent Assembly that are not available in the Constituent Assembly Debates, or in the collection of Select Documents in the *Framing of India's Constitution*.¹⁸ In the UK I obtained supplementary materials from the India Office Collections (IOC) at the British Library, London, and from archival materials at the Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge.

The Election Commission of India Record Room was a true treasure trove. The materials on the preparation of the first electoral rolls on the basis of universal franchise that lay at the bottom of long shelves at the back of the cool basement of the building, held the tale of a staggering bureaucratic endeavour. The materials include 70 folders, containing more than 1,600 documents, among them correspondences between and among the Secretariat of the Constituent Assembly of

¹⁸ Rao, *The Framing of India's Constitution: A Study*, Vols I-IV.

India in Delhi, high-, mid-, and low-level public officials and with a wide range of civic organisations and people from across the country. Between September 2010, when I sought permission to inspect the files dealing with the planning and preparation of the electoral roll for the first elections, and September 2012, I consulted all these records at the Election Commission record room. Thereafter, the files were transferred to the National Archives of India, where archivists catalogued them for the first time. The files became available for review there from December 2012.

What impelled me to search the early records of the Election Commission was a question I had been asking of senior election management officials for some time, and for which I could not get a satisfactory answer. I asked repeatedly how the first list of voters on the basis of universal franchise was prepared. How, under the conditions prevailing in the country at the time, did they actually enrol millions of men and women? The official *Report on the First General Elections in India* includes just over two pages on the ‘preliminary steps taken by the Constituent Assembly’ for the preparation of the electoral rolls.¹⁹ It states, with reference to the Constituent Assembly, that it was ‘decided that the work should be taken in hand immediately’, and that in November 1947, the Secretariat of the Constituent Assembly addressed the state governments on the matter, and notes some steps that were taken thereafter.²⁰ I could not find a record of such a decision by the Assembly in 1947, nor of the work of the Secretariat. It was clear to me that behind these two pages there lay a much bigger story.

Once I began reading the records, I found myself drawn into an overwhelming story. I read the records in daily instalments; my schedule set by the opening hours of the record room, or by the working hours of its keeper, Mr Mahto. He suggested that I read the files upstairs in the air-conditioned library of the Commission. But I insisted on immersing myself in the files’ home, quarrying through the solid dust that covered the files. Excavating my way through to the ‘bottom of India’s electoral democracy’, I could gradually piece together the core plot. But there were manifold stories within the main story. On each issue or question raised there were a series of opinion notes prepared by members of the CAS, who each, in their turn, wrote a note on the previous note. The string of notes started from the junior staff, who usually presented the subject matter, and ended with comments and revisions made by the Joint Secretary of the CAS, and sometimes the Constitutional Adviser. These notes unravelled the thinking process

¹⁹ Election Commission of India, *Report on the First General Elections in India 1951–52*, p. 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–1.

that underlay the steps the CAS took for the preparation of rolls. From time to time, a member of the CAS prepared a note that recapped the ‘story’ of the preparation of rolls as it developed until that point. At the end of the working day I was left in great anticipation for the next, eager to find out how the CAS had replied to this person or that official. What were their decisions on the matters they were grappling with? I was like Padma, from Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, keen to know ‘what happened next’.²¹

I began, I realised, to read the archive as a ‘serialised epic’: the epic of India’s democracy. In particular, as I encountered letters from ordinary people and read the notes of members of the Secretariat on these letters, I grew eager to know what ultimately happened. I also grew in my admiration and appreciation of the real heroes of the making of the universal franchise in India: the staff of the Secretariat, under the leadership of B. N. Rau.²²

There has been much theoretical discussion over the last few decades about politics and statecraft in the fashioning of archival knowledge, its structure, and control of what materials are preserved or ‘lost’, and the limits these impose on the discursive possibilities that the archive allows.²³ These, of course, caution against the excitement in the face of new archival discoveries. The story of the preparation of the rolls in this book also draws on a variety of other sources. Nonetheless, it has been truly impossible, as a reader of these records, not to be profoundly inspired by them. One striking omission in the archive of the preparation of the electoral rolls for the first elections, however, is that there was not a single letter from or to a woman.²⁴ It is also clear that some of the material is missing. I hope the following chapters will take the reader, as authentically as possible, with me along the archival trail.

Perspectives on Democracy and Modern Indian History

India’s democracy and its survival has been a subject of major research interest over the last two decades. Previously, scholars of comparative politics and political theory considered India’s democracy to be an

²¹ ‘But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what happened next.’ Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, London: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 44.

²² On B. N. Rau and the staff of the Secretariat see Appendix 5. I.

²³ For an interesting discussion see Ian Almond, *The Thought of Nirad C. Chaudhuri. Islam, Empire and Loss*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 65–99. Also see Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

²⁴ See a reference to that point in Chapter 3.

anomaly from which there was little to learn.²⁵ Yet, India's democracy has proved to be robust. A number of major challenges, which are currently being faced by other democracies – both old and new – such as the problem of managing democratic regimes in multicultural and multireligious societies, have already been debated and experimented with in India. Thus, comparativists and political theorists are no longer able to ignore the contribution of the study of India to general democratic theory and practice.²⁶ As Sunil Khilnani pointed out, India represents 'the largest exercise of democratic election in human history; an index of what is in fact the largest reservoir of democratic experience within a single state, a resource for intellectual reflection that remains still underused'.²⁷ Indeed, since the 1990s, scholars of South Asia have 'highlighted the political and intellectual limitations of universalizing Western experiences of democratization by bringing to light the particular genealogies of postcolonial democracy in South Asia, many of which lie beyond the colonial state'.²⁸ This book about the institutionalisation of democracy in India aims to contribute to the study of democracy in three main ways.

²⁵ See, for example, Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989; Dahl, *On Democracy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000; Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Governments in Twenty-One Countries*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984. India is not included in the classic study of the transition to democracy: Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991 (first published in 1986).

²⁶ See, for example, Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1997; Khilnani, 'Arguing Democracy: Intellectuals and Politics in Modern India', Centre of the Advanced Study of India (CASI) Working Paper Series, University of Pennsylvania, 2009; John Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2009; Alfred C. Stepan, Juan Linz, and Yogendra Yadav, *Crafting State-Nations. India and Other Multinational Democracies*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.

²⁷ Khilnani, 'Arguing Democracy', 2009, p. 4.

²⁸ Eleanor Newbiggin, Ornit Shani, and Stephen Legg, 'Introduction: Constitutionalism and the Evolution of Democracy in India', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 1, 2016, p. 42. For the work of scholars who focus on the emergence of the Indian liberal subject and democratic ideas and politics as they emerged locally, from within India, in the context of anti-colonial struggle, see, for example, Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993; Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004; Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999; Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006; Sinha, 'Totaram Sanadhya's *Fiji Mein Mere Ekkis Varsh*: A History of Empire and Nation in a Minor Key', in Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr (eds), *Ten Books that Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2014, pp. 168–89; Anupama Rao, *The Caste Question: Dalit and Politics in Modern India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

First, scholars have in the main studied how Indian democracy survives, despite profound divisions, by exploring a range of constitutional, institutional, and policy safeguards and mechanisms, which enabled it to manage its religious, ethnic and deep social diversity.²⁹ These explanations account for the endurance of democracy and democratic citizenship in India. But they offer little insight into its seemingly rapid and deep institutionalisation under the difficult conditions of independence. This book offers a fresh perspective on the embedding of democracy in India at the birth of the nation-state.

Second, theorists of democracy have conventionally seen the establishment of India's democracy as a product of elite decision-making and institutional design. In this view, popular democracy, and the constitution, were endowed from above by discerning nationalist leaders and intellectuals. The shared premise of many analyses stemming from this view is that ultimately democracy 'irreversibly entered the Indian political imagination'.³⁰ The universal franchise, accordingly, was destined to happen. One political theorist suggests that universal franchise came about because 'the idea of universal franchise lay securely within the

²⁹ Among others, see Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Democracy and Development in India', in Amiya Kumar Bagchi (ed.), *Democracy and Development. Proceedings of the IEA Conferences Held in Barcelona, Spain*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, pp. 92–137; Arend Lijphart, 'The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation', *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 2, 1996, pp. 258–68; Khilnani, *The Idea of India*; Khilnani, 'Branding India', *Seminar*, 533, 2004; Khilnani, 'Arguing Democracy'; Ashutosh Varshney, 'Why Democracy Survives', *Journal of Democracy* 9, no. 3, 1998, pp. 36–50; Varshney, *Battles Half Won. India's Improbable Democracy*, New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2013; Alfred Stepan, 'Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the U.S. Model', *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 4, 1999, pp. 19–34; Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State–Society Relations*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988; Kohli, *The Success of India's Democracy*; Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, 'New Dimensions of Indian Democracy', *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1, 2002, pp. 52–67; Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007; Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, London: Pan Books, 2008 (first published, 2007); Stepan, Linz, and Yadav, *Crafting State-Nations*. These explanations examine, for example, the nature of federalism (Stepan 1999), consociational interpretations of power sharing (Lijphart 1996), the production of the state's image of itself as the authoritative entity that embraces diversity (Roy 2007). Khilnani explores the construction of the nation, the ideational sources for a logic of accommodation and the 'distinctive, layered character of Indianness' that is not defined as a singular identity (Khilnani, 1997: 153, 169, 175; 2009). Guha (2008) offers one of the seminal historical accounts of the forces, individuals and institutions that held India together against the 'axes of conflicts' that might have threatened its integrity, examining state support for certain forms of pluralism, in response to popular demands. Stepan, Linz, and Yadav (2011) analyse the formation of a 'state-nation', rather than nation-state – a polity with a number of diversity sustaining measures beyond federalism.

³⁰ See, for example, Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, p. 60; Khilnani, 'Arguing Democracy', p. 26. Also see Varshney, *Battles Half Won*, pp. 5, 39.

heart of nationalism' and that 'once the idea of a nation took root ... the idea of democratic self government could not but have followed'.³¹ Sumit Sarkar argued that there was a 'decisive linkage between anticolonial mass nationalism and the coming of democracy', yet recognised that the precise nature of the linkage has not been well explained.³² Indeed, how was universal franchise, the bedrock of democracy, institutionalised? The practical process of establishing universal franchise, that is the enrolment of all adult would be citizens just after independence, and of embedding the habit of an electoral democracy among India's gigantic electorate was an enormously challenging task and it was not obvious at all that India would succeed in doing so. Among the challenges that Indian administrators confronted were the registration of millions of displaced refugees that were moving across the still open borders and that their citizenship status was in question, and more generally, an electorate that was 85 per cent illiterate, many of whom had no clear place of residence, which was required for enrolment. Even if the idea of universal franchise was secured as a future constitutional provision, the question of it coming into effect – its practicability and administrative feasibility – was not preordained.

Third, many have viewed India's democracy as an inheritance of the British Raj, an extension of its bureaucratic structures and legal framework, which the Government of India Act, 1935 had already established.³³ The fact that other British colonies, with similar colonial constitutional structures, did not evolve into robust democracies undermines this viewpoint. There is the example of Pakistan, which shares the same colonial legacy as India but which has a deeply troubled history of democratic practice despite its founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, stating at the beginning of the constitutional debates that Pakistan would have a liberal citizenship regime.³⁴

³¹ Rajeev Bhargava, 'Introduction', in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Politics and Ethics of the Indian Constitution*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 17–18. In another study, for example, making universal franchise is described as something that happened almost by itself as a result of the constitutional provisions: 'with one stroke, not only were communal constituencies abolished but also women got the voting right straightway via Articles 325 and 326 of the Indian Constitution'. M. L. Ahuja, *General Elections in India, Electoral Politics, Electoral Reforms and Political Parties*, New Delhi: Icon Publications, 2005, p. 17.

³² Sarkar suggests that 'the connections between imperatives of united mass anti-colonial struggle and the specific ... form of Indian democracy in fact need to be explored much more than they have been so far'. See Sarkar, 'Indian Democracy', pp. 29–30.

³³ See, for example, Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics, On Democracy*; Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox: Essays in Indian Politics*, Delhi: Sage, 1989. Also see discussion in Patrick Heller, 'Degrees of Democracy: Some Comparative Lessons from India', *World Politics*, 52, no. 4 (July 2000), pp. 484–519.

³⁴ Two recent important studies, which look into some political institutional aspects of why India, unlike Pakistan, democratised amidst the post-independence turmoil are Maya

In Pakistan the question of the nature of the franchise was the subject of controversy from the outset. The 1956 constitution (subsequent to a second Constituent Assembly, after the first was dissolved by executive powers) provided for direct elections on the basis of universal franchise, and the electoral law provided for an ambiguous structure of separate electorates for West Pakistan and a joint electorate for East Pakistan.³⁵ The then Prime Minister, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, excused and bemoaned the lingering delay in holding elections, suggesting that the 'thorniest problem' in preparing for the process has been 'to relate the Moslem and non-Moslem portion of our population in the franchise'.³⁶ In the following four decades separate electorates were intermittently repealed and then reintroduced, mainly as an act of political expediency.³⁷ The altering nature of the franchise in Pakistan made it very difficult to compile electoral rolls. In Pakistan more than two decades passed before direct elections on the basis of universal franchise were held and electoral rolls were prepared in 1970.³⁸

Tudor, *The Promise of Power: The Origins of Democracy in India and Autocracy in Pakistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013; and Steven I. Wilkinson, *Army and Nation: The Military and Indian Democracy since Independence*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. Tudor examines the importance of a stable class alliance combined with the strength of the dominant Congress party in India for its democratic trajectory. Wilkinson explores the historical relationship between the Indian army and the nation, to show how India's new leaders succeeded in 'keeping the army out of politics and preserving its democracy'. Wilkinson, *Army and Nation*, p. 3.

³⁵ G. W. Choudhury, *Constitutional Development in Pakistan*, London: Longmans, 1959, p. 225. Adult franchise was introduced in Pakistan for the first time on the eve of Provincial Assembly elections in 1951 in Punjab and the North West Frontier Province, in 1953 in Sindh, and in 1954 in East Bengal. As Tahir Kamran argued, 'Those elections did not contribute in any tangible measure to bring about the development of political institutions in Pakistan.' Tahir Kamran, 'Electoral Politics in Pakistan 1955–1969', *Pakistan Vision* 10, no. 1, p. 82. The Electoral Reform Commission appointed in October 1955 ascribed the travesty of these elections to the fraud and mismanagement of the electoral rolls, which created doubts in democracy. See *ibid.*, and Tahir Kamran, 'Early Phase of Electoral Politics in Pakistan: 1950s', *South Asian Studies* 24, no. 2, 2009, pp. 257–82.

³⁶ Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, 'Political Stability and Democracy in Pakistan', *Foreign Affairs* 35, no. 3, 1957, p. 426.

³⁷ Under Ayub Khan's Basic Democracies system (1958–1965) elections were held under a joint electorate but the elections were indirect by an electoral college. Zia-ul-Haq imposed separate electorate in 1979 for political gains (on the basis of the political forecast at the time), and they remained intact until Pervez Musharraf abolished separate electorate after he took power in a military coup in 1999.

³⁸ Suhrawardy, 'Political Stability and Democracy in Pakistan', p. 426. The question of granting full legal citizenship and the right of franchise to the people of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (the formerly North West Frontier Province) was still being considered by the Pakistani parliament in 2017, 70 years after independence. Manan Ahmed Asif, 'Half a Cheer for Democracy in Pakistan', *The New York Times*, 20 March 2017.

This book seeks to explain the institutionalisation of a democratic political imaginary in India, rather than taking it for granted. By demonstrating the ways in which Indians took part in the process of democracy building it suggests that democracy was not simply gifted from above. In doing so, I aim to contribute to our understanding of ‘democratic deepening’ that theorists have only recently started to explore, which is conceptually distinct from the democratic transition literature.³⁹ Showing how Indians made their own democracy will also indicate significant transformations and departures from the colonial legal framework and structures.

This is the first historical study of the preparations of India’s first draft electoral roll on the basis of universal franchise. It will complement what is surprisingly a very limited scholarship on India’s first elections, and an absence of research on the preparatory work for the first elections during the transition years from dominionhood to the establishment of the republic.⁴⁰ As such it offers scholars of democratic theory an important case on which to draw. Moreover, as the first study of the interrelationship between the making of universal franchise and the evolution of democratic Indian citizenship, which brings to light an important and previously untold part of modern Indian history, this book also aims to contribute in three main ways to current debates and new research on modern Indian history.

³⁹ See Heller, ‘Degrees of Democracy’, p. 484; Heller, ‘Democratic Deepening in India and South Africa’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 44, no. 1, 2009, pp. 123–49.

⁴⁰ Barring India’s Election Commission report on the first election there is, to my knowledge, very little research on the actual preparatory work for the first elections. See Election Commission of India, *Report on the First General Elections in India 1951–52*. Also see Irene Celeste Tinker, ‘Representation and Representative Government in The India Republic’, PhD thesis, University of London, June 1954, pp. 261–82. On the preparation for the elections in Hyderabad, see Taylor C. Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India. Negotiating Citizenship in Postcolonial Hyderabad*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 132–3. For works on India’s first elections see, for example, Richard Leonard Park, ‘India’s General Elections’, *Far Eastern Survey* 21, no. 1, 1952, pp. 1–8; Park, ‘Indian Democracy and the General Election’, *Pacific Affairs* 25, no. 2, 1952, pp. 130–9; T. N. Z. and M. Z., ‘The Indian General Elections’, *The World Today*, 8, no. 5, 1952, pp. 181–91; Nagoji Vasudev Rajkumer, *The Pilgrimage and After. The Story of How the Congress Fought and Won the General Elections*, New Delhi: All India Congress Committee, 1952; Tinker, ‘Representation and Representative Government in The India Republic’; Irene Tinker and Mil Walker, ‘The First General Elections in India and Indonesia’, *Far Eastern Survey* 25, no. 7, 1956, pp. 97–110; W. H. Morris Jones, ‘The India Elections’, *The Economic Weekly*, 28 June 1952; S. V. Kogekar and Richard L. Park, *Reports on The India General Elections 1951–52*, Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1956; Margaret W. Fisher, and John V. Bondurant, *The Indian Experience with Democratic Elections*, Berkeley: University of California, 1956; Ramachandra Guha, ‘Democracy’s Biggest Gamble: India’s First Free Elections in 1952’, *World Policy Journal* 19, no. 1, 2002, pp. 95–103; Guha, *India after Gandhi*, pp. 133–43.

The historian Sumit Sarkar, among others, called attention to a lack of historical research on the transition across the 1947 divide.⁴¹ He also wrote that ‘the constituting of democratic structures amidst the turmoil of the late 1940s’ has not been addressed.⁴² This book is part of what is now an emerging new body of work on that period.⁴³ Recent work on the Indian state, particularly as it was shaped during the transition from colonial rule to independence, tends to emphasise continuities.⁴⁴ While recognising important continuities, which such literature sheds light on, this book examines a key aspect of the rupture and discontinuity in the making of independent India, which was critical to its process of democratisation. In particular, it explores changes to the bureaucratic political imagination in the transition from colonial rule to independence, the actual creation of democratic citizenship, and the institutionalisation of electoral democracy that were enabled by the administrative undertaking of making the universal franchise.

Moreover, in the same way that theorists of the transition to democracy have focused for a long time on the role of elites in establishing and installing democratic institutions, scholars of India have often claimed that in India, social transformation and democratisation was not driven from within the society but through a state bureaucratic agency and a

⁴¹ Sarkar, ‘Indian Democracy’, p. 23. Also see Guha, *India after Gandhi*, pp. xxii–xxiii.

⁴² Sarkar, ‘Indian Democracy’, p. 23.

⁴³ See, for example, Sarah F. D. Ansari, *Life after Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh, 1947–1962*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India: 1947–1967*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Chakrabarty, Majumdar, and Sartori (eds), *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial*; Taylor C. Sherman, William Gould and Sarah Ansari (eds), ‘From Subjects to Citizens: Society and the Everyday State in India and Pakistan, 1947–1970’, *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 1, Special issue, January 2011; William Gould, *Bureaucracy, Community and Influence: Society and the State in India, 1930s–1960s*, London: Routledge, 2011; Eleanor Newbigin, *The Hindu Family and the Emergence of Modern India. Law Citizenship and Community*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013; Niraja Gopal Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents. An Indian History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013; Wilkinson, *Army and Nation*; Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India*; Benjamin Siegel, ‘“Self-Help Which Ennobles a Nation”: Development, Citizenship and the Obligations of Eating in India’s Austerity Years’, *Modern Asian Studies* 50, no. 3, 2016, pp. 975–1018; Gyan Prakash, Michael F. Laffan, and Nikhil Menon (eds), *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia*, New York: Bloomsbury (forthcoming); Rohit De, *The People’s Constitution (1947–1964)*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (forthcoming).

⁴⁴ See, for example, Chakrabarty, Majumdar, and Sartori (eds), *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial*; Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, ‘Customs of Governance: Colonialism and Democracy in Twentieth Century India’, *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 3, 2007, pp. 441–70; Gould, *Bureaucracy, Community and Influence in India*; Sherman, Gould, and Ansari (eds), ‘From Subjects to Citizens: Society and the Everyday State in India and Pakistan 1947–1970’.

‘passive revolution’.⁴⁵ This book demonstrates how, in the process of making the universal franchise, ordinary people were a driving force in the institutionalisation of democratic citizenship – and that bureaucrats were responsive and engaging with these people. It provides a lens into the interaction between political processes and democratic institution building from above and from below. Recently, some scholars argued that in India it is ordinary Indians and particularly the poor who guard democracy and ensure its survivability.⁴⁶ I reveal the origins of this trait in India.

Over the last decade a new and important literature on citizenship in India has emerged.⁴⁷ Some of these studies focus on the legal formal articulation of citizenship, its history, and the ways in which the citizenship articles and future legislations were marked by the partition and the movement of population it wrought.⁴⁸ Gopal Jayal also examines citizenship in India beyond it being a legal status, looking at group struggles and their negotiation of rights and identity claims in the legal, social, and political spheres. Her study of the predicament of citizenship in India emphasises the ways India’s democracy fell short of its constitutional promises, mainly to promote equality. Taylor Sherman studies the variety of ways Muslims of Hyderabad, who became particularly marginalised after partition, articulated and negotiated their belonging in the first decade of independence. Her examination of practices and performative aspects of citizenship, rather than its formal legal status, as these emerged in the local context of Hyderabad throw new light on the processes of Muslims’ abstraction into the ‘India-wide concept of the

⁴⁵ Partha Chatterjee, *Empire and Nation: Selected Essays*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 241–66; Suddipta Kaviraj, ‘A Critique of the Passive Revolution’, in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *State and Politics in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 45–87.

⁴⁶ See, in particular, Javeed Alam, *Who Wants Democracy?* New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004. Also see, for example, Patrick Heller, ‘Making Citizens from Below and Above. The Prospects and Challenges of Decentralization in India’, in Sanjay Ruparelia, Sanjay Reddy, John Harriss, and Stuart Corbridge (eds), *Understanding India’s New Political Economy. A Great Transformation?* London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 157–71; Amit Ahuja and Pradeep Chhibber, ‘Why the Poor Vote in India: “If I Don’t Vote, I am Dead to the State”’, *Studies in Comparative International Development* 47, no. 4, 2012, pp. 389–410; Mukulika Banerjee, *Why India Votes?* New Delhi: Routledge, 2014.

⁴⁷ See Anupama Roy, *Mapping Citizenship in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010; Gopal Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents*; Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India*; Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007; Joya Chatterji, ‘South Asian Histories of Citizenship, 1946–1970’, *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 4, 2012, pp. 1049–71; Haimanti Roy, *Partitioned Lives: Migrants, Refugees, Citizens in India and Pakistan*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁴⁸ Roy, *Mapping Citizenship*; Gopal Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents*; Chatterji, ‘South Asian Histories of Citizenship’.

Muslim Minority'.⁴⁹ Other studies have begun to look into issues relating to citizenship and to governance more broadly during that period of transition from colonial rule to independence.⁵⁰

The struggles for citizenship that emerged in the context of the preparation of the electoral rolls on the basis of universal franchise turned the idea of democratic citizenship into a living practice prior to the constitution being passed. As we will see, individuals and various groups fought for a place on the roll. Becoming voters turned them into equal right-bearing citizens for the purpose of authorising their government. They attained a position, albeit a limited one, of being equal in the public domain, while they were also members of a highly hierarchical society. This powerful aspect in the institutionalisation of democratic citizenship in India at its inception became, I suggest, a key to democracy's survival in the face of its enduring shortfalls and many unfulfilled constitutional promises.

While this book is not a study of India's constitution, it offers a unique empirical lens into some of the ways in which people understood and reacted to the constitution in-the-making from below, and how they used the draft constitution in their struggles for membership in the nation. There is no social history of the making of India's constitution.⁵¹ Commonly, studies of the drafting of the constitution centre on the deliberations in the 'ivory tower' of the Constituent Assembly. The study of the preparation of the electoral rolls in anticipation of the constitution shifts the focus onto the ways these deliberations were received on the ground by both officials and the people. I will show, in turn, how their inputs contributed to the shaping of the constitution from below. India's constitution, which is one of the longest in the world, has endured despite many predictions that it would not do so in the long run and that it would not succeed as a basis for a stable democracy. Indeed, India's ability to sustain its new democratic constitution was doubted even by some of its own makers. One of them commented at the end of the

⁴⁹ Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India*, p. 174. For a more general analysis of the ways in which Muslims who remained in India after partition negotiated their membership in the nation by intermittently drawing on different conceptions of citizenship see Ornit Shani, 'Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the "Muslim Question"', *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 1, 2010, pp. 145–73.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Gould, *Bureaucracy, Community and Influence*; Gould, 'From Subjects to Citizens? Rationing, Refugees and the Publicity of Corruption over Independence in UP', *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 1, 2011; William Gould, Taylor C. Sherman, and Sarah Ansari, 'The Flux of the Matter: Loyalty, Corruption and the "Everyday State" in the Post-Partition Government Services of India and Pakistan c. 1946–1952', *Past and Present* 219, no. 1 (1 May 2013), pp. 237–79.

⁵¹ Also see Madhav Khosla, *The Indian Constitution*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 38–43.

constitutional debates that ‘this Constitution made as it is for regulating our daily life, would not prove suitable and would break down soon after being brought into operation’.⁵² The study of the interrelationship between the preparation of the electoral rolls and constitution making offers a fresh perspective on its endurance.

How India Became Democratic

Chapter 1 analyses the process of designing the instructions for the electoral roll on the basis of universal franchise and examines its implications for fostering democratic dispositions among those individuals who made up and operated the administrative machinery around the country. I suggest that, in effect, this process became an all-India administrative exercise in guided democratic political imagination. The notion of universal suffrage came to be imbued within the administrative machinery around the country. The idea of equality for the purpose of voting was bureaucratized. By examining this process against colonial discourses on franchise and on preparation of electoral rolls, I explore key changes in the bureaucratic political imagination in the transition from colonial rule to independence that were enabled by the administrative undertaking of making the universal franchise.

Distinct forms of exclusionary practices on the ground in the preparation of the draft electoral roll, once the work started, generated struggles for citizenship. Chapter 2 examines how the anticipated constitutional citizenship provisions were acted upon in these struggles over membership of the new nation. I focus on the question of the registration of partition refugees as voters, an issue that was a constitutional challenge and that led to numerous contestations over citizenship in the early stages of the making of the electoral roll. In the context of these contestations, a wide range of organisations from across the country deliberated over and used the language of the draft constitution. They also made resolutions on its basis and even enacted some draft-constitutional provisions in order to establish their democratic citizenship and voting rights. As a result of this process, democratic dispositions began to develop among both state officials and the people, as they were mentored into the principles of electoral democracy, and the abstract language and forms of the democratic constitution in the making started to strike roots among the population at large.

Chapter 3 explores how the principle and institution of universal franchise attained meaning and entered the political imagination of Indians.

⁵² Lakshminarayan Sahu, *Constituent Assembly Debates* (hereafter *CAD*), 17 November 1949, (available at <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/debates.htm>, accessed 28 June 2017).

It argues that it was the way in which the preparation of the first electoral roll on the basis of adult franchise became part of popular narratives that played an essential role in connecting people to a popular democratic political imagination. The Constituent Assembly Secretariat communicated its directives for the preparation of electoral rolls as a story through press notes, subsequently discussed in the press. People could insert themselves into this narrative as its protagonists. This process, in turn, gave rise to a collective passion for democracy, contributing to the democratisation of feelings and imagination.

From its inception, the preparation of the electoral roll on the basis of universal franchise was an all-India administrative operation. It took place while 552 princely states were being dismantled and integrated into the new Union, and as the immediate consequences of partition were still unfolding. Chapter 4 explores how in the process of the preparation of the roll, and in dealing with the resulting contestations over citizenship, the centre disciplined the new federal structure. The constitutional and administrative challenges of welding the federation and of forging a common idea of Indianness manifested in the process of the preparation of the electoral roll. Yet, it was in the face of these challenges, I argue, that the preparation of electoral rolls became a key mechanism of integration, and of making a democratic federal structure.

The preparation for the first elections was inextricably linked to the process of constitution making. Both elections and citizenship lie at the heart of the democratic edifice. The outcomes of the preparatory work for the first elections, particularly the enrolment of voters, created facts on the ground and constrained the extent to which the work that was done over two years, in anticipation of the new constitution, could simply be reversed. Moreover, the experimentation with the draft constitution in the context of the making of the universal franchise, as well as the contestations over a place on the electoral roll and its relationship to citizenship, informed the making of India's constitution. Chapter 5 explores this shaping of the constitution from below.

Despite the Secretariat of the Constituent Assembly's imperative to be inclusive, and its efforts to redress breaches in the enrolment process, various forms of disenfranchisement occurred. Moreover, the work of the preparation of the rolls was done in anticipation of the constitution. The Secretariat took some inclusionary actions, such as the registration of partition refugees as voters, that were pending on finalising their citizenship status. The citizenship articles were only adopted in August 1949, when the rolls were largely ready. There were other late constitutional decisions that had an effect on the rolls. Chapter 6 explores the limits of inclusion in the making of the universal franchise,

and the consequences of settling some constitutional decisions on the electoral rolls.

Making the draft electoral roll on the basis of universal franchise in the context of the unfolding grim tragedy of partition, ultimately enrolling 49 per cent of India's population, the vast majority of whom were poor and illiterate, in anticipation of the constitution, required a rich political imagination. The conclusion brings together and recapitulates how such a democratic political imaginary was made resonant as a result of the interrelationship between the preparation of the roll and citizenship and constitution making. The production of a gigantic registry of India's would be citizenry, through a qualitative engagement of officials at all levels with the people throughout the country, made the universal franchise a political and social fact that contributed to the creation and survival of a democratic collective imaginary in the world's largest democracy.

In *More than Real*, David Shulman shows that in the South Indian language Telugu of the fifteenth-century 'one gets exactly what one imagines', and that 'what is real is real because it is imagined'.⁵³ The kernel of making real the universal franchise began, as the next chapter explores, in an exercise in political imagination.

⁵³ Shulman, *More than Real*, p. 151.