

Indian democracy's 70 years a 50-50 success story: Ramachandra Guha

'India's greatest achievement has been holding free and fair elections'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Noted historian and writer Dr. Ramachandra Guha has described "Indian democracy's 70 years a 50-50 success story" in his speech made at Jammu during the 2017 Balraj Puri memorial lecture 'India at 70: A Historian's report card' over the weekend.

"As far as political democracy is concerned, India's greatest achievement has been holding free and fair elections whereas on the negative side there have been increasing curbs on freedom of expression and a decline in the autonomy of public institutions," Mr.



Ramchandra Guha ■

Guha said.

Describing India's survival "a miracle", Dr. Guha said: "We have falsified the pundits, but we still have much work ahead of us in the area of nation building."

He said Indian experience has been better with the loosening of linkages

between caste and occupation and the link between family and marriage. "Women and Dalits are still discriminated and exploited but are less unfree now than at any time in the past 5,000 years," he added.

Linguistic pluralism

Within the domain of cultural freedom, he said, "The sustenance of linguistic pluralism is perhaps independent India's greatest achievement."

However, he noted that India's record in ensuring the freedom to worship a god or gods of your choice (or no god at all) has been mixed. "Muslims are freer to

practice their faith in India than, for example, Muslims in China. But they suffer disproportionately in times of communal rioting. Even in times of peace they can be shunned or stigmatised," Dr. Guha said.

Referring to the country's economics, the acclaimed historian said, "In the 70 years, there has a decline in poverty and destitution, with Nehru, Indira and Modi, and all other PM's in between have seen this as their central goal".

However, on the negative side, there is also a trend of jobless growth and environment degradation within the country, he added.