
RULE OF LAW, GENDER JUSTICE, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The abstract discusses how Mahatma Gandhi's principles of Ahimsa (non-violence), truth (Satya), and self-reliance (Swaraj) offer a critical moral framework for modern India to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the paper highlights a significant disconnect, arguing that current practices deeply violate both Gandhian ideals and constitutional mandates. For instance, governmental actions like "bulldozer justice" and extrajudicial "encounters" are seen as a serious departure from the rule of law, undermining SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Furthermore, despite constitutional rights and the goal of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), India's poor ranking on the Global Hunger Index reveals a failure in equitable resource distribution. Achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality) is also challenged by high rates of crimes against women and low political and judicial representation, contradicting Gandhi's vision of true independence. The paper concludes that for India to meet the 2030 Agenda, it must return to its Gandhian roots building institutions based on non-violence, fairness, and compassion ensure that sustainable development is a lived reality and not just a policy framework.

1. Introduction

The concept of sustainable development gained global recognition through the United Nations' efforts to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. In 2016, the United Nations launched the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, introducing 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at ensuring peace and prosperity for people and the planet.

The idea of sustainable development first emerged in 1987 through the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)¹, also known as the Brundtland Commission, which defined it as "Development should satisfy present needs while ensuring that future generations are not deprived of their ability to meet their own. This definition emphasized that economic and social development must proceed in harmony with environmental sustainability.

In this paper, I aim to explore the relationship between the rule of law, the United Nations' sustainable development goals, and Gandhian philosophy, focusing on how Gandhi's ideas of truth, non-violence, and self-reliance can guide modern societies toward achieving sustainable development.

2. Gandhian Principles for Achieving UN Sustainable Goals

Gandhi's principles of Ahimsa (non-violence) and self-reliance are among the most prominent moral pathways toward achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). However, in today's context, India seems to have forgotten the essence of Gandhi's teachings. A clear example is reflected in SDG Goal 2: Zero Hunger.²

While this goal aims to ensure food security and end hunger, it is also connected to the

Right to Life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution³. Yet, as per the Global Hunger Index 2024, India ranked 115th out of 127 countries, placing it in a category of nations facing serious hunger crises. Ironically, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) has reported food stock

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press 1987) 27.

² United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022* (United Nations 2022) Goal 2: "Zero Hunger" <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/> (unstats.un.org in Bing) accessed 12 June 2026.

³ Constitution of India 1950, art 21.

surpluses,⁴ showing a major disconnect between food availability and access.

This contradiction highlights the failure to uphold Gandhian ideals of equitable resource distribution and moral responsibility toward the poor. To address this gap, adopting Gandhi's vision of employment generation, skill development, and self-sufficiency could serve as an effective means to achieve sustainable and inclusive development in India.

3. Violation of Rule of Law and Gandhian Principles in Modern India

India today stands as one of the nations where the violation of the rule of law can be visibly observed through certain governmental actions such as bulldozer justice, encounters, and inhuman acts in police custody. These practices reflect a deep departure from Mahatma Gandhi's principles of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Just Law, which emphasize fairness, reasonableness, and moral governance.

Gandhian principles are clearly reflected in the Indian Constitution, especially under Articles 14 and 21⁵, which guarantee equality before the law and the right to life and personal liberty. However, the ground reality shows a serious gap between constitutional promises and state practices.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and National Human Rights Commission of India recorded 155 custodial deaths in judicial custody and 155 in police custody and 2,152 in judicial custody within a single year (2021-22)⁶. The Tamil Nadu custodial death case ⁷stands as a stark reminder of how justice and fairness often fail in the world's largest democracy. Ironically, during the colonial era, Indians were oppressed under foreign rule; yet, today, our own institutions are causing suffering through excessive and inhumane force.

In relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which calls for peace, justice,

⁴Sandip Das, 'Record Rice Stocks May Help Offset Likely Dip in Output' (The Financial Express, 31 May 2026) <https://www.financialexpress.com/policy/economy/record-rice-stocks-may-help-offset-likely-dip-in-output/4255677/> accessed 12 June 2026.

⁵ Constitution of India 1950, arts 14 and 21.

⁶ National Human Rights Commission, *Annual Report 2023–2024* (NHRC 2025) 23 https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Annual_Report_2023_2024.pdf accessed 12 June 2026.

⁷ The Times of India, 'Sathankulam Custodial Deaths of Father-Son Duo: Madurai Court Awards Death Sentence to 9 Cops' (12 April 2026) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/sathankulam-custodial-deaths-nine-cops-sentenced-to-death/articleshow/130061312.cms> accessed 12 June 2026.

and strong institutions, India's situation raises serious questions. Nearly 74% of the prison population consists of undertrials⁸ and as of January 2025, there were a total of 5,06,660 prisoners in India. Nearly 3.75 lakh prisoners were undertrials comprising 74.2% of total prison population individuals, furthermore NALSA report held that High proportion of undertrial prisoners were reported in States- Bihar (87%) and Uttar Pradesh (77%) and U.Ts. - Dadra & Nagar Haveli (100%), Jammu & Kashmir (96.6%), Delhi (88.3%)⁹. Not yet convicted but denied bail due to systemic delays and inequality. The case of Professor G.N. Saibaba¹⁰, who spent almost nine years in jail before being declared not guilty, illustrates the deep institutional failure that undermines public faith in the judiciary and policing system.

Another example of this failure is the rise of “bulldozer justice”, where properties are demolished without a fair trial or due process, often targeting specific communities. Such actions violate the very foundation of equality before law. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has also condemned this practice as a violation of human rights, especially when it disproportionately affects minority groups.

The former Chief Justice of India, Justice B.R. Gavai, rightly emphasized that “India does not run with bulldozers, but with the rule of law.”¹¹ Similarly, former Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud stated that “no civilized legal system recognizes justice through bulldozers.”

Yet, despite these warnings, the government often defends such actions as necessary to maintain law and order. While ensuring security is important, a democratic nation must run by the rule of law, not the rule of men. Gandhi's vision of moral governance, fairness, and compassion must guide India once again, reminding us that true justice cannot exist without humanity and reason.

Today, our country relies heavily on the concept of instant justice or speedy justice. While nobody is against the idea of delivering justice quickly, the real problem arises when, in the

⁸ National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India 2023* (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2025).

⁹ National Legal Services Authority, *Functioning of the Under Trial Review Committees: January to March 2025* (NALSA 2025) 10 <https://nalsa.gov.in/under-trial-prisoner-report/> accessed 12 June 2026.

¹⁰ Sushovan Patnaik, ‘A Decade in Incarceration: How Justice Failed Professor G.N. Saibaba’ (Supreme Court Observer, 14 March 2024) <https://www.scobserver.in/journal/a-decade-in-incarceration-how-justice-failed-professor-gn-saibaba/> accessed 12 June 2026.

¹¹ The Times of India, “Not Bulldozer Justice”: CJI Gavai Says Legal System Governed by Rule of Law; Cites His Own Ruling’ (3 October 2025) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/not-bulldozer-justice-cji-gavai-says-legal-system-governed-by-rule-of-law-cites-his-own-ruling/articleshow/124303501.cms> accessed 12 June 2026.

name of instant justice, the country witnesses' violations of basic human rights.

We must recall Gandhian principles of just law and ahimsa to understand this issue. Without a fair trial in a court of law to prove an accused person guilty, subjecting them to inhuman acts such as extrajudicial encounters is a grave injustice. Interestingly, these so-called encounters are often targeted towards the poor and economically backward sections of society.

For instance, a former minister from Karnataka has been booked in several cases involving offences against women, including rape and sexual harassment. But the court awarded life imprisonment¹². As, like that Every accused person must be granted a fair and reasonable opportunity to defend themselves in the court of law. "Law is not an instrument meant to punish only certain categories of people in society; it applies equally to all, including politicians and the wealthy. This embodies the very concept of the Rule of Law. Yet, in a democratic nation, police and enforcement authorities have often failed to uphold this principle a glaring example being the extrajudicial encounters in the Disha case."

The four accused in the 2019 Disha rape and murder case were killed in a fake encounter while in police custody and the 10 cops involved in it should be booked for murder, the Supreme Court-appointed commission to inquire into the killings has said in its report submitted to the apex court. "It found that three of the accused were minors and faulted the police for tampering with or concealing evidence."¹³

For instance, the State of Uttar Pradesh alone has reportedly contributed to over 15,000 encounters since 2017¹⁴. This raises a serious question—what is happening in a country where the rule of law, once upheld by the government to ensure fairness, reason, and equality, now

¹² The Hindu, 'Former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, Grandson of Former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, Sentenced to Life Imprisonment for Rape of Employee in Karnataka' (The Hindu, 2 August 2025) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/former-jds-mp-prajwal-revanna-grandson-of-former-prime-minister-hd-deve-gowda-sentenced-to-life-imprisonment-for-rape-of-employee-in-karnataka/article69886625.ece> accessed 12 June 2026.

¹³ Mahesh Buddi, 'Disha Encounter Fake, Book 10 Cops for Murder: SC Panel' (The Times of India, 21 May 2022) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/disha-encounter-fake-book-10-cops-for-murder-sc-panel/articleshow/91697316.cms> accessed 12 June 2026.

¹⁴The Hindu, 'Over 15,000 Police Encounters Since 2017, 256 Hardened Criminals Eliminated, 31,960 Criminals Arrested in Uttar Pradesh' (The Hindu, 16 October 2025) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/uttar-pradesh/over-15000-police-encounters-since-2017-256-hardened-criminals-eliminated-31960-criminals-arrested-in-uttar-pradesh/article70162995.ece> accessed 12 June 2026. & Hindustan Times, 'UP: Over 15,000 Police Encounters Since 2017, 256 Hardened Criminals Eliminated, 31,960 Criminals Arrested' (Hindustan Times, 16 October 2025) <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/up-over-15-000-police-encounters-since-2017-256-hardened-criminals-eliminated-31-960-criminals-arrested-101760446569727.html> accessed 12 June 2026.

appears to be eroding? The Supreme Court, in the case of *Prakash Kadam v. Ramprasad Vishwanath Gupta*¹⁵, observed that if any police officer commits a fake encounter, they are liable for the death penalty. In light of these remarks by the Apex Court, it becomes essential to examine what kind of encounters are taking place in the country and whether they align with the principles of justice and legality.

The fundamental question before us is whether the actions of the government against the Naxals are valid in a Gandhian country.”

To this query, we must consider the opinions of great jurists. *Nariman once said that for every action, the country divides into two opinions.* This statement perfectly fits the present scenario. Although there may be multiple perspectives, finding the most appropriate answer requires a careful examination from legal, social, and Gandhian viewpoints. First, from Gandhi’s perspective, peace and non-violence are the foundation of just governance. Gandhi often emphasized that peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved through understanding. In this context, the government has failed to understand the historical evolution of Naxalism in India.

Historically, Naxalism began as a radical peasant revolt in the village of Naxalbari, West Bengal, in 1967. The movement was led by communist leaders seeking redistribution of land and protection of rights for the poor and tribal communities. Their aim was not to gain political power but to achieve social and economic justice for the oppressed.¹⁶

Without the Naxalite movement, it is doubtful whether tribal communities today would enjoy even the limited rights over land that they currently have. As former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR) once said, “The Naxals are patriots of the country.” This statement reflects recognition of their sacrifices for the marginalized sections of society.

Although the methods of Naxalites may have been wrong, inhuman actions by the government in the name of Operation Kagaar are equally wrong. In my personal view, revolt is born when society faces oppression. As Bhagat Singh famously said, “They can crush my body, but they

¹⁵ *Prakash Kadam v Ramprasad Vishwanath Gupta* (2011) 6 SCC 189.

¹⁶ Vajiram Editor, ‘Naxalism in India: Origin, Causes, Challenges and Measures’ (Vajiram & Ravi, 1 May 2026) <https://vajiramandravi.com/upsc-exam/naxalism-in-india/> accessed 12 June 2026.

cannot crush my ideas.” From a Gandhian perspective, violence by the state is always wrong, and from a legal perspective, every action of the government must be tested under the Constitution.

To understand this legally, we can recall the words of tribal rights activist Soni Sori, who said, “Operation Kagaar is the newest in a line of assaults on Adivasis.¹⁷” According to reports from the South Asia Terrorism Portal, about 140 people were reportedly killed by security forces in Chhattisgarh in the first three months of 2025, and 235 in 2024.

Under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, every person has the right to life and personal liberty, which includes the right to innocence and the right to a fair trial. The government cannot bypass the courts and take the law into its own hands in the name of security operations.

The Supreme Court, in the *Salwa Judum case*¹⁸, ruled that a state-sponsored policy of arming civilians was a violation of constitutional rights, particularly Article 21. This case drew attention when the then Home Minister criticized former Justice Sudarshan Reddy, who was part of the bench. Regardless of political opinions, the Court’s reasoning stands firm: every citizen, even a Naxal suspect, remains under constitutional protection.

There are many lawful ways to control insurgency arrest, dialogue, and addressing the root causes of alienation but the government has failed to adopt these. Interestingly, the Home Minister has announced that India will become “Naxal-free by 2026.” While this may be possible through the use of advanced weapons and military power, it would come at a cost the destruction of Ambedkar’s Constitution and the Gandhian principles of peace, reason, and justice.

4. Gender Equality and the Gandhian Way of Achieving It

Gender equality is not merely about empowerment or performance, but about treating all genders equally and with dignity. Traditionally, the concept of gender was limited to male and female, but in the modern era, new identities such as LGBTQIA+ have evolved and are increasingly recognized as part of the social and legal framework. In India, the recognition of

¹⁷ Soni Sori, ‘Operation Kagar Is the Newest in a Line of Assaults on Adivasis’ (The Hindu, 14 September 2025) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/operation-kagar-is-the-newest-in-a-line-of-assaults-on-adivasis-soni-sori/article69969451.ece> accessed 12 June 2026.

¹⁸ *Nandini Sundar and Others v State of Chhattisgarh* (2011) 7 SCC 547.

the “third gender” marks a significant step toward inclusivity and justice.¹⁹

The Gandhian approach to achieving gender equality emphasizes truth (Satya), nonviolence (Ahimsa), and self-reliance (Swaraj). Gandhi believed that women and men are equal partners in building a just and moral society. True equality, in his view, could only be achieved when both genders respect and complement each other’s roles rather than compete.

However, achieving gender equality in democratic India remains a major challenge due to persistent social barriers such as lack of education, child marriage, domestic violence, and other offences against women. Despite being one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) adopted by the United Nations, gender equality continues to face resistance rooted in traditional beliefs and patriarchal structures. Therefore, adopting the Gandhian way through moral reform, education, and non-violent transformation offers a peaceful and sustainable path to achieving true gender justice.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “The day a woman can walk freely on the roads at night, that day we can say that India has achieved true independence.”

If we look at the present scenario, the question arises has India really achieved that true independence?

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2023, approximately 4.5 lakh crimes against women were recorded across the country. Shockingly, India reports 51 cases of crimes against women every hour²⁰. The recent RG Kar Medical College case²¹ clearly reflects the present condition of women in a democratic nation like India.

One of the most tragic examples remains the Bilkis Bano case. Bilkis Bano,²² “During the 2002 Gujarat riots, who was pregnant at the time, was brutally gang-raped.”. Seven members of her family, including her three-year-old daughter, were killed while they tried to escape. The court

¹⁹ *National Legal Services Authority v Union of India* (2014) 5 SCC 438.

²⁰ National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India 2023* (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2025).

²¹ Tarun Choudhury, ‘The RG Kar Medical College Rape-Murder Case: A Complete Judicial Chronicle from Crime to Continuing Constitutional Oversight’ (Legal Services India, 17 December 2025) <https://www.legalservicesindia.com/the-rg-kar-medical-college-rape-murder-case-a-complete-judicial-chronicle-from-crime-to-continuing-constitutional-oversight/> accessed 12 June 2026.

²² Vaishnavi Sinha, ‘Bilkis Bano Case: Timeline of Events from 2002 to SC Verdict’ (Hindustan Times, 8 January 2024) <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/bilkis-bano-case-timeline-of-events-from-2002-to-sc-verdict-101704694459166.html> accessed 12 June 2026.

convicted eleven individuals and sentenced them to life imprisonment. However, in 2022, the Gujarat government granted them remission, releasing them prematurely. The public at large strongly opposed this decision, and finally, the Supreme Court struck down the government's action, directing that the convicts return to prison.²³ This case is not the end it is merely one example among many that expose the persistent injustice faced by women in India.

As Swami Vivekananda rightly said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing."

4.1 Child Marriage: A Continuing Barrier

Another major barrier to gender equality is child marriage. India still has one of the world's largest numbers of child brides. Approximately one in four women in India is married before the age of 18, and the number is even higher in rural areas compared to urban regions.

However, there has been a gradual decrease in child marriages due to widespread awareness and strict legal measures. According to NCRB report, 785 cases were registered under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2020, 1,050 cases in 2021, and 1,002 cases in 2022. With continued awareness and enforcement, India can move closer to achieving true gender justice.²⁴

4.2 Women in Judiciary: Representation and Reality

Women's representation in the judiciary remains a pressing concern. Currently, the Supreme Court of India has only two-woman judge²⁵. Despite the collegium system claiming to prioritize merit, women's representation must be considered essential to fulfilling the constitutional goal of equality and empowerment.

No woman has yet been appointed as the Chief Justice of India, though it is hoped that Justice B.V. Nagarathna may achieve that milestone by 2027. As Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud rightly pointed out, even basic infrastructure like toilets for women judges in district courts is

²³ *Bilkis Yakub Rasool v Union of India and Others* (2024) 1 SCC 1.

²⁴ Ministry of Women and Child Development, 'Child Marriages' (Press Information Bureau, 11 August 2023) <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1947773®=48&lang=2> accessed 12 June 2026. & National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India 2023* (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2025).

²⁵ Live Law News Network, 'In Justice V Mohana, Supreme Court Gets a Woman Judge Appointment After 5 Years; Two Women Judges in SC Now' (Live Law, 2 June 2026) <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/in-justice-v-mohana-supreme-court-gets-a-woman-judge-appointment-after-5-years-two-women-judges-in-sc-now-536527> accessed 12 June 2026.

lacking an alarming reality that questions the inclusiveness of the Indian judiciary.²⁶

Further, the Supreme Court's judgment mandating three years of legal practice as a qualification for entry-level judges may unintentionally reduce the number of women candidates in the judiciary, as many women law graduates face socio-economic barriers in continuing practice.

4.3 Women in Politics: Representation and Reforms

Political representation of women in India also remains limited. Although the percentage of women members in the Lok Sabha has increased from 5% to 10%, it still lags far behind countries like the United Kingdom, where nearly 40% of the members of the House of Commons are women.²⁷

Recently, the 108th Constitutional Amendment Act (2023) provided for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.²⁸ However, its implementation is expected only by 2029. Until then, the wait continues to see if this step will truly transform India's political landscape.

True independence, as envisioned by Gandhi, cannot be achieved until every woman in India feels safe, respected, and empowered not just in law, but in everyday life. Legal reforms, social awareness, and gender-sensitive governance must go hand in hand to ensure that equality is not a constitutional promise alone but a lived reality.

5. Quality education and proper sanitation

Gandhi's foremost aim of education was to promote holistic development, encompassing physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. He emphasized that education should nurture a well-rounded individual capable of facing life's challenges with resilience and

²⁶ Ananya Singh, 'Sad to Say that Some District Courts Do Not Have Washrooms for Women Lawyers and Judges: CJI Chandrachud' (Law Beat, 30 March 2024) <https://lawbeat.in/news-updates/sad-districts-courts-do-not-have-washrooms-women-lawyers-judges-cji-chandrachud> accessed 12 June 2026. & SCC Times, 'A Call for Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure in India's Judicial System' (SCC Online Blog, 21 March 2025) <https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2025/03/21/a-call-for-gender-sensitive-infrastructure-in-indias-judicial-system/> accessed 12 June 2026.

²⁷ Isabel Buchanan, Elliot Bridges, Shadi Danechi, Paul Bolton, Esme Kirk-Wade, Andy Powell and Sonja Stiebahl, *Women in Politics and Public Life* (House of Commons Library Research Briefing, 9 March 2026) <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01250/> accessed 12 June 2026.

²⁸ The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) (India).

wisdom. He believed that education should serve as a means to empower individuals not only academically but also morally, socially, and spiritually.

But the quality of education depends on the establishment of strong educational institutions, such as great universities like Nalanda. Unfortunately, India has lagged behind in building such institutions. The universities we have today often face problems like inadequate infrastructure and shortage of essential resources.

More than 5,400 teaching positions are vacant across central universities²⁹, but imagine how many positions may be vacant in traditional universities. A 2024 report by World Population Review ranked India 101st in quality education.³⁰

According to data released by the Bureau of Immigration (BoI), approximately 7.6 lakh Indian students pursued higher education abroad in 2024, compared to 8.95 lakh in 2023³¹. Although the figure reflects a marginal decline, it nevertheless demonstrates the continuing aspiration of Indian students to seek educational opportunities overseas. The trend becomes even more significant when viewed over a longer period, as the number of students studying abroad has increased substantially during the last five years. This persistent outflow of students underscores the need for India to strengthen its higher education system by establishing world-class educational institutions, enhancing research infrastructure, and improving academic standards so that students can access quality education within the country itself.

Another important goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) is sanitation. The problem of sanitation has always been a major issue in India, particularly for people living in slum areas who lack even basic health and hygiene facilities. We often forget that the Constitution guarantees rights to them as well. This issue becomes even more serious when we consider the conditions of tribal communities many of whom still do not have access to clean water or adequate healthcare facilities. Providing sanitation in the Gandhian way

²⁹ India Today Education Desk, '5,400 Teaching Posts Vacant in Universities Across the Country' (India Today, 13 March 2025) <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/5400-teaching-posts-vacant-in-universities-across-the-country-govt-2693049-2025-03-13> accessed 12 June 2026.

³⁰ World Population Review, 'Education Rankings by Country 2026' <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/education-rankings-by-country> accessed 12 June 2026

³¹ TOI Education, 'Over 7.6 Lakh Indian Students Went Abroad Last Year, Reveals Government Data: STEM, AI, and Ambition Driving the Exodus' (The Times of India, 20 August 2025) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/study-abroad/over-7-6-lakh-indian-students-went-abroad-last-year-reveals-government-data-stem-ai-and-ambition-driving-the-exodus/articleshow/123399661.cms> accessed 12 June 2026.

involves a focus on personal responsibility, community-led initiatives, and linking cleanliness to self-respect and dignity.

Conclusion

The vision of sustainable development cannot be fulfilled without moral and constitutional integrity. Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of Ahimsa, Satya, and Swaraj remain timeless principles that can guide India toward a just and humane society. True progress lies not only in economic growth but in ensuring equality before law, dignity for women, access to quality education, and basic sanitation for all. The increasing prevalence of extra-legal state actions, inequality in justice, and lack of gender and educational equity reveal a widening moral deficit in modern governance. To achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, India must return to its Gandhian roots building strong institutions based on non-violence, compassion, and fairness. Sustainable development, in essence, is not merely a policy framework but a way of life grounded in truth, justice, and respect for every individual.