
CONSTITUTION AS A MORAL DOCUMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Constitution of India, conceived as a transformative moral charter, is increasingly perceived as a distant and inaccessible text by a large segment of its citizenry. This paper investigates the growing chasm between the Constitution's normative ideals of justice, liberty, and equality, and their lived reality. It argues that a deep constitutional ambiguity manifested through systemic barriers like legal illiteracy, procedural complexity, and selective rights enforcement is eroding the document's moral authority and legitimacy. Drawing on qualitative empirical research, including 25 semi-structured interviews with marginalized communities in rural Maharashtra, this study analyzes how the Constitution is experienced in everyday life. The findings reveal four key themes: (1) widespread constitutional illiteracy that fosters disenfranchisement; (2) a pervasive view of justice as a commodity accessible only to the wealthy and powerful; (3) a significant gap between rights guaranteed in theory and their practical unenforceability; and (4) the function of procedural rigor as a labyrinthine barrier that excludes rather than empowers. The paper concludes that for the Indian Constitution to reclaim its moral force, it must be transformed from an elite artifact into a living document that is known, claimed, and experienced by all citizens.

Keywords: Constitutional Morality, Socio-Legal Studies, Legal Consciousness, Access to Justice, Indian Constitution, Empirical Legal Research, Constitutional Ambiguity

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Constitution is often portrayed as a sacred text, invoked by courts, celebrated in classrooms, and quoted in parliaments. It is described as a living document, breathing life into the democratic aspirations of over a billion people. And yet, for a large part of the Indian population, it remains unfamiliar, unintelligible, and in many ways, unfulfilled. This dissonance between what the Constitution promises and how it is experienced lies at the heart of a deep constitutional ambiguity, an ambiguity not just in interpretation, but in ownership, access, and moral legitimacy. Seventy-five years after its adoption, the Constitution of India continues to carry the weight of founding ideals, liberty, equality, justice, fraternity, while navigating the complexities of a deeply stratified and politically volatile society. It was drafted to be not merely a legal framework but a moral charter for a pluralistic nation, seeking to undo centuries of social oppression and institutionalize democratic values. However, this moral force is increasingly being diluted by multiple forms of exclusion, legal, linguistic, procedural, and epistemic. The result is that the Constitution, while robust in theory, is perceived by many not as a tool of empowerment but as an elite artifact, far removed from the daily struggles of citizens.

This paper critically examines this gap between constitutional idealism and lived reality, with a specific focus on how ambiguity, both textual and systemic, contributes to moral erosion. Through original empirical research conducted across rural Maharashtra, it captures how ordinary people relate to, resist, or remain indifferent to the Constitution. Their narratives, often marked by ignorance, disillusionment, and structural vulnerability, raise an uncomfortable question: Can a Constitution that is largely unread, misinterpreted, or inaccessible continue to serve as a moral foundation for the Republic? Crucially, constitutional ambiguity, the use of vague, aspirational, or selectively interpreted language becomes a double-edged sword. While originally intended to accommodate India's social complexity and foster consensus during constitution-making, this ambiguity has increasingly become a tool for political expediency. Whether it is the denial of protest rights, the curtailment of dissent, or the discretionary interpretation of fundamental rights, the ambiguity embedded within the constitutional text has allowed state power to operate with impunity

under the guise of legality. This research combines normative constitutional theory with field-based empirical data to interrogate the Constitution's moral authority in contemporary India. It

asks whether constitutional morality can survive when the majority of citizens either don't know their rights or no longer believe in them. The findings call for urgent reflection on how we teach, interpret, and live the Constitution, not merely as a legal document, but as a collective moral project.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative empirical legal methodology, underpinned by an interpretivist framework, to critically explore the disconnect between constitutional ideals and their lived realization among citizens in India. Recognizing the Constitution as not merely a legal text but a moral and social instrument, the study integrates empirical fieldwork with conceptual inquiry.

Data Collection Method: Semi-Structured Interviews:

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured individual interviews, conducted in both rural and semi-urban parts of Maharashtra. This technique was chosen for its ability to elicit in-depth, open-ended responses, allowing participants to narrate their experiences, perceptions, and interactions with legal and constitutional frameworks in their own words and cultural vocabulary.

Sample Size and Composition:

A total of 25 participants were interviewed. The sample was purposively selected to include women, daily wage earners, low-literacy individuals, Dalits, and senior citizens, groups historically underrepresented in constitutional discourse.

Interview Structure:

Interviews were loosely guided by a thematic prompt sheet, covering areas such as awareness of constitutional rights, experiences with justice institutions, perceptions of fairness, and notions of state legitimacy. However, the flexibility of the format allowed participants to steer the discussion based on their lived priorities, consistent with the grounded theory approach.

Language and Setting:

Interviews were conducted in vernacular Marathi or Hindi, depending on the participant's

comfort. Local dialects and expressions were preserved in initial transcriptions to maintain authenticity. Interviews took place in informal settings, homes, fields, and village common areas, to minimize participant anxiety and maintain the naturalistic ethos of the study.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of the study's purpose, and verbal consent was obtained prior to each interview. Anonymity was preserved by assigning pseudonyms in transcription and analysis. No audio recordings were made where discomfort was expressed, and written notes were taken with transparency and care.

Data Analysis

Following data collection, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding. Patterns were identified around key ideas such as constitutional illiteracy, commodification of justice, procedural burden, and disillusionment with rights enforcement.

THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION THROUGH ORDINARY LENS

The Constitution of India is not merely a legal document, it is a visionary blueprint for transforming a deeply unequal and diverse society into one that aspires toward justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. Adopted on 26th January 1950, the Constitution emerged from a history of colonial oppression and social fragmentation. It was intended not only to provide a framework for governance but to serve as a moral charter that would guide India into becoming a just and inclusive republic¹.

At its core, the Indian Constitution reflects both indigenous struggles and borrowed wisdom from global traditions. It embodies values from Western liberal democracies, such as the rule of law, separation of powers, representative democracy, and fundamental rights, drawing especially from the British parliamentary system, the American Bill of Rights, the French ideals of liberty and equality, and the Irish Directive Principles. These influences were not adopted uncritically but were adapted to the Indian context, shaped by the lived experiences of colonialism, caste-based discrimination, poverty, and pluralism. What makes the Constitution particularly distinctive is that it envisions a democratic society not only through elections and

¹ India Const.

representative government but also through the institutionalization of justice in every sphere of life. Democracy, according to the Constitution, is not simply a method of forming governments; it is a way of life that involves dialogue, participation, and respect for the equal worth of every individual. This expands the meaning of constitutionalism beyond legal formalism into the domain of ethics and morality².

However, despite its lofty ideals, the Constitution's moral authority is often challenged by the realities of Indian society. While the text provides a framework of justice and equality, its translation into people's lived experience remains uneven. Large sections of the population are still unaware of the rights it guarantees. For many, justice is inaccessible or unaffordable. Democracy is seen more as a symbolic ritual than a participatory process. And procedural rigidity often alienates citizens from the very institutions meant to serve them.

Our study seeks to explore these gaps and ambiguities between constitutional morality and social reality through empirical data and thematic analysis. The following sections identify and critically evaluate key themes that illustrate how the promise of constitutional justice is experienced, interpreted, and, in some cases, betrayed by the structures meant to uphold it.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Constitutional Ambiguity in Practice: Structural Barriers and The Failure of Moral Realization:

Lack of Legal Literacy and Constitutional Awareness:

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the empirical data is the overwhelming lack of awareness regarding the Constitution among ordinary citizens, particularly those in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged areas. This legal illiteracy creates a foundational ambiguity in perceiving the Indian Constitution as a moral document. While the Constitution is intended to be the bedrock of justice, equality, and freedom, it remains largely alien to the very people it seeks to empower. Many interviewees in the study revealed either a vague understanding or a complete absence of knowledge about what the Constitution is. For instance, some referred to it merely as "*a book made in Delhi*," while others confessed they had "*heard the word from their children*" but had no idea what it entailed. Several respondents were unaware of their

² Chandhoke, Neera. *We, the People and Our Constitution*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House India, 2022.

basic rights, legal protections, or democratic entitlements. The Constitution, for them, is more myth than lived reality. This disconnect has serious implications. A document that is meant to serve as a moral guide loses its normative force if it is not internalized by the population. The lack of constitutional awareness undermines civic participation and fosters a sense of helplessness. When citizens do not know what protections or rights they have, they cannot assert them or hold institutions accountable. This ignorance also makes them more susceptible to manipulation by local power structures, political agents, or bureaucratic arbitrariness. The moral authority of the Constitution is further eroded when it is seen as inaccessible or irrelevant. The document may contain noble ideals, but if these ideals are not communicated effectively to the masses, they lose their transformative potential. The Constitution then becomes an elite project, confined to textbooks, courtrooms, and parliamentary debates, rather than a living document shaping daily life.

The failure to popularize constitutional literacy also has generational consequences. Children inherit their parents' disengagement from civic knowledge, perpetuating cycles of ignorance and disenfranchisement. Educational institutions, which should ideally bridge this gap, often lack the resources or commitment to impart meaningful civic education, especially in rural government schools. As a result, constitutional ideals remain aspirational rather than operational. From a theoretical standpoint, the absence of legal consciousness among citizens challenges the democratic legitimacy of the state. If democracy is to be of the people, by the people, and for the people, it is imperative that the people are aware of the foundational document that structures their governance. The moral vision of the Constitution, emphasising dignity, justice, liberty, and equality, cannot be realized unless these values are understood and claimed by citizens themselves. Furthermore, the lack of legal literacy weakens resistance to injustice. People who do not know their rights are less likely to seek legal remedies or challenge authority. This results in a silent normalization of structural inequality, where violations of rights are endured rather than contested. In such a scenario, the Constitution, despite its moral language, becomes functionally impotent. To address this ambiguity, there must be an urgent push towards grassroots legal education. State-led initiatives, civil society interventions, and curriculum reforms are all necessary to make constitutional knowledge a part of everyday life. Mobile legal clinics, vernacular legal literacy campaigns, and participatory village-level workshops could serve as effective tools. Unless the Constitution is made accessible—

linguistically, educationally, and culturally, it cannot serve its intended moral role³.

Justice as a Commodity, Not a Right:

The second significant theme that emerges from the research is the widespread perception of justice as something that is bought, not guaranteed. For many of the respondents, justice was seen not as a right that every citizen is entitled to but as a luxury accessible only to those who possess money, power, or political connections. This transactional view of justice reveals a deep moral crisis at the heart of the constitutional promise. Participants frequently expressed cynicism about the legal system and its failure to deliver equitable outcomes. Statements like "*justice is nothing but money*," "*law exists without existence*," and "*if you have money, the law, justice and everything exists*" were recurring. Such remarks underscore how economic disparity shapes access to legal remedies. Courts and legal procedures, ideally designed to be neutral and fair, are viewed as skewed in favor of the affluent and influential. This perception, whether factually correct or not in every instance, is devastating to the Constitution's moral authority.

The Constitution upholds justice as one of its cardinal values, even placing it first in the Preamble. However, when citizens experience a justice system that is slow, expensive, and biased, it undermines their belief in this foundational ideal. The judicial backlog, procedural complexity, and lack of legal aid contribute to this alienation. For the poor, engaging with the justice system often entails unbearable costs, both financial and emotional. As one respondent noted, "*I filed a case once. It's still going on after four years. I don't go now.*" This sentiment reflects how the justice delivery system itself becomes a source of oppression rather than redress. The failure to deliver timely justice creates a vacuum where informal mechanisms often exploitative or violent, take precedence. In such a climate, the Constitution is perceived not as a shield but as a mirage. The moral intent of the document is compromised by the structural and operational deficits of the institutions meant to uphold it⁴.

Moreover, the perception of justice as purchasable leads to a normalization of inequality. If justice is available only to those who can afford it, then the Constitution's moral vision of an egalitarian society remains unfulfilled. This not only delegitimizes the legal system but also weakens democratic accountability. When people stop believing in the fairness of public

³ Empirical research on Constitution as a Moral Document (unpublished manuscript, Maharashtra Nat'l L. Univ., 2025) (on file with author).

⁴ *supra* n.3

institutions, they become disengaged, disillusioned, and vulnerable to authoritarian populism. Critically, this theme exposes the inadequacy of formal rights without mechanisms of real access. The right to constitutional remedies under Article 32⁵ becomes symbolic if people cannot afford legal representation or if courts are inaccessible due to geographic and cultural distances. Legal aid schemes, though present, are poorly implemented and often fail to inspire confidence. Consequently, people rely on private negotiation, political influence, or even extrajudicial settlements, all of which sideline the Constitution. To reclaim the moral core of justice, systemic reforms are essential. Fast-track courts, improved legal aid infrastructure, judicial accountability, and increased budgetary support for the judiciary must be prioritized. But beyond these procedural reforms, there must be a cultural shift that reestablishes justice as a shared public value, not a private commodity. Public legal education, citizen engagement in legal processes, and empathetic lawyering are necessary to revive faith in justice.

Rights in Theory, Not in Practice:

A third critical theme drawn from the empirical data is the gap between constitutional rights as they exist on paper and the ability of citizens to exercise those rights in practice. This disconnect illustrates a fundamental ambiguity in the Constitution's claim to moral authority. While the document proclaims liberty, equality, and fraternity, these principles often fail to materialize in the everyday experiences of the people, especially those living at the margins. Many participants acknowledged that they theoretically possess rights such as the right to vote, the right to freedom of speech, or the right to live with dignity⁶. However, their testimonies highlighted a common refrain: these rights are neither respected nor enforceable without socio-economic or political capital. For example, one respondent said, "*Though we have the right to freedom, we cannot use it,*" while another noted, "*Even if I have the right, I can't do anything if someone stops me.*" This inconsistency is particularly visible in contexts where individuals are vulnerable, contract workers without job security, women facing domestic violence, or poor citizens threatened during elections. In such situations, rights are abstract promises devoid of tangible protection. The moral legitimacy of the Constitution becomes questionable when its guarantees fail those who most need them.

⁵ India Const. art. 32.

⁶ Saif Samir, *Conflicting Fundamental Rights Under the Indian Constitution* (May 2021) (unpublished LL.M. thesis, Columbia Law Sch.), https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/llm_essays_theses/7.

This theme also raises important questions about the implementation gap. The Constitution guarantees a range of fundamental rights under Articles 14 to 32, yet state institutions often fall short in making these rights accessible. Bureaucratic inertia, institutional apathy, and corruption obstruct citizens from seeking redress. The result is a legal environment where rights exist more in theory than in practice, rendering them ineffective. Moreover, the instrumentalization of rights by those in power exacerbates this gap. When rights are selectively enforced or strategically denied, it fosters a sense of exclusion and deepens inequality. For instance, the denial of protest rights, arbitrary arrests, and suppression of dissent signal that the exercise of rights is conditional, rather than universal⁷. This not only weakens faith in the Constitution but also distorts its moral underpinning. Importantly, this theme intersects with other forms of social exclusion, caste, class, gender, and religion. Marginalized communities often experience a layered denial of rights. A Dalit woman, for instance, may face both caste-based discrimination and gendered violence, with little hope of legal recourse. In such cases, the constitutional promise of equal rights collapses under the weight of systemic injustice. The moral claim of the Constitution must be measured not by what it promises, but by what it delivers to its most vulnerable citizens. To bridge this theory- practice divide, state accountability mechanisms must be strengthened. Institutions like the National Human Rights Commission, legal aid bodies, and Lok Adalats must be revitalized and made more accessible. Civic engagement, public interest litigation, and social audits also serve as crucial tools to monitor and ensure rights implementation.

Procedural Rigor as a Barrier to Moral Clarity:

Another theme that emerges from the analysis is the overbearing weight of proceduralism in India's legal and constitutional framework. While procedures are vital to ensuring due process, fairness, and consistency, they often become a labyrinthine barrier that prevents citizens from accessing justice and constitutional remedies. This procedural complexity creates ambiguity about the Constitution's moral promise, as it transforms a moral guarantee into a bureaucratic ordeal. Many respondents in the study noted that even when they understood their rights or were aware of being wronged, the actual process of seeking remedy was so cumbersome and inaccessible that they were effectively deterred. Lengthy paperwork, repeated court visits, legal jargon, and the need for expensive legal representation turn the process into a privileged

⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Stifling Dissent: The Criminalization of Peaceful Expression in India* (May 25, 2016), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/05/25/stifling-dissent/criminalization-peaceful-expression-india>.

domain. As one participant put it, "*Filing a case means losing work, money, and peace.*"

This procedural opacity undermines the moral thrust of the Constitution. A moral document must not only enshrine ideals but also facilitate their realization. However, when procedures become so intricate that only the educated, the connected, or the wealthy can navigate them, the system begins to reproduce exclusion rather than resolve it. In such a system, form dominates over substance, and technical compliance overshadows moral justice. The moral crisis deepens when procedural fairness is mistaken for actual fairness. For instance, a case that stretches over decades might follow due process but fails the test of moral justice for the litigant whose life is spent in litigation limbo. The judicial backlog in India's courts, with millions of pending cases, is a testament to how procedural rigidity chokes the spirit of timely justice. In such circumstances, the Constitution's moral vision of equal access to justice becomes aspirational at best.

Moreover, this procedural entanglement disproportionately affects marginalized groups. Women, Dalits, Adivasis, and the poor face additional burdens of social and cultural capital, which are not accounted for in legal procedures. The system often fails to recognize the lived realities of its most vulnerable stakeholders. Procedural justice, when abstracted from social context, becomes another form of institutional violence. The legal system's emphasis on hierarchy, specialization, and adversarial processes also contributes to this moral opacity. Citizens who attempt to seek justice encounter a judicial culture that prioritizes rules over reasoning and efficiency over empathy. When rules are applied rigidly without understanding the human context behind them, the Constitution ceases to be a guide for justice and becomes an administrative instrument. The procedural model also creates a gap between the judiciary and the citizenry. Courts speak in language that is largely unintelligible to ordinary people. Orders and judgments are not only written in complex legalese but are also difficult to access and interpret. This fosters dependency on legal intermediaries, who may or may not act in the best interests of their clients. The Constitution, therefore, remains mediated and alien, never directly experienced by the people.

Constitutional Silence and Selective Voice

The Indian Constitution is widely celebrated as a document of profound moral vision. It speaks of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice, not only as legal guarantees but as guiding ethical

values for a democratic society⁸. However, when we look closely at how the Constitution is applied, interpreted, and experienced by people, an unsettling question arises: whose morality does it actually reflect? While it claims to be for everyone, it often speaks more clearly for some groups than for others. In doing so, it leaves many voices unheard and many injustices unaddressed. This happens because the Constitution, like any institutional structure, operates within a set of ideas and assumptions that shape what is considered valid or acceptable. Some values, like formal equality, electoral democracy, and secularism, have become deeply embedded in our legal and political systems. These values are regularly invoked in courtrooms, taught in textbooks, and referred to in public debates. They are seen as the “true” spirit of the Constitution. But other equally important concerns, like social redistribution, caste annihilation, gender autonomy, and economic justice, often receive less attention or are treated as optional aspirations rather than essential commitments⁹.

This creates a kind of selective morality, where the Constitution is read and interpreted through a narrow lens. While its text may be broad and inclusive, its actual implementation tends to favour values that align with elite interests or fit neatly within legal formalities. This is especially visible in the way courts interpret rights or how governments prioritize policies. For example, while freedom of speech and business rights are actively defended, demands for land reform or strong affirmative action are often met with hesitation or legal technicalities. At the same time, the Constitution maintains strategic silences. It may mention equality and non-discrimination, but it does not confront the structural realities of caste in a direct way. It prohibits untouchability but does not challenge the caste system itself. Similarly, it speaks of gender equality but allows personal laws that restrict women’s rights to continue in the name of religious freedom. These silences are not accidental, they reflect political compromises made during the Constitution’s drafting and the continued reluctance of institutions to challenge dominant power structures. The problem deepens when we examine who gets to speak in the name of the Constitution. Legal language is complex and largely inaccessible to most ordinary citizens. The courts, which are meant to be guardians of constitutional values, often operate in a way that excludes the lived experiences of the poor, the marginalised, and the socially oppressed. As a result, the Constitution becomes something that is spoken about by lawyers,

⁸ Rohit De, *Constructive Ambiguity in India*, in *Making Constitutions in Deeply Divided Societies* 63 (Hanna Lerner ed., Cambridge Univ. Press 2011).

⁹ Rajeev Bhargava, *Politics and Ethics of the Indian Constitution* (Oxford Univ. Press 2008).

judges, and scholars, but not by the people it was meant to empower¹⁰.

However, the Constitution is not a frozen document. It evolves through interpretation, public discourse, and collective struggle. Over the years, movements led by women, Dalits, Adivasis, and queer communities have challenged its narrow readings and forced the system to pay attention to alternative moral visions. Cases like the decriminalisation of homosexuality or the recognition of women's rights in marriage have shown that the Constitution can be pushed to speak in new ways. But these changes often come after long struggles, and they highlight just how resistant the system is to voices that fall outside the dominant framework. The real challenge is not just to include more voices, but to rethink how we understand constitutional morality itself. If the Constitution is to be a truly moral document, it must reflect the values and aspirations of all citizens, not just a privileged few. It must actively confront the social and economic inequalities that silence certain groups and deny them meaningful participation in democracy. In short, while the Indian Constitution promises universality, its moral voice is often filtered through the lens of institutional comfort, elite interpretation, and historical compromise. It speaks loudly on some matters, and stays silent on others. It empowers certain ways of thinking while sidelining others. This selective voice creates a gap between what the Constitution says it stands for and how it actually works on the ground. Recognising this gap is the first step towards making constitutional morality more inclusive, responsive, and real.

Constitutional Illiteracy in India

The empirical study, highlights this reality which was evident across multiple responses. When asked about the Constitution, several individuals displayed little or no knowledge¹¹. One respondent simply said, "What is that? I haven't heard of it," while another remarked, "I can do what I want because of it, but I do not know what it is." These statements reflect not only a lack of formal education about the Constitution but also a disconnect between the people and the document meant to empower them¹². The consequences of such illiteracy are not just abstract, they are experienced in everyday encounters with power. For instance, a woman recounted how, despite being a victim of domestic violence, her case in court failed because "the other side had money." She understood that justice should have been hers but lacked the

¹⁰ N.W. Barber, What is Constitutional Ideology?, 11 J.L. & Juris. 1 (2021).

¹¹ Adishree Singh & Richa Dwivedi, *Constitutional Literacy in India*, 10 Int'l J. Mod. Agric. 348 (2021).

¹² Empirical research on *Constitution as a Moral Document* (unpublished manuscript, Maharashtra Nat'l L. Univ., 2025) (on file with author).

constitutional and procedural literacy needed to navigate the system effectively. In this case, the Constitution was not absent, it was inaccessible. Constitutional democracy cannot function meaningfully if its citizens do not understand the values, principles, and structure of their foundational document. Without such understanding, democracy becomes ritualistic, reduced to voting every five years, while the deeper ideals of accountability, rights, and participation remain hollow. Even when citizens try to engage with their rights, procedural complexity and institutional apathy deter them. In this light, constitutional illiteracy is not merely about lack of education, it is also about lack of access, institutional neglect, and systematic exclusion from the processes that would make the Constitution a real tool for justice.

This gap is further reinforced by people's understanding of democracy as something distant or symbolic. "We vote, and then they forget us," said one interviewee, reflecting a sentiment that democratic participation begins and ends at the polling booth. Without constitutional literacy, citizens are unable to go beyond voting to claim entitlements, demand accountability, or participate in civic life. These ground-level experiences echo the findings of scholars who argue that a healthy constitutional democracy depends not only on institutional integrity but also on citizen comprehension and engagement. As long as large sections of society remain constitutionally illiterate, the gap between law in the books and law in action will persist. Constitutional illiteracy is not merely a deficit of knowledge, it is a structural barrier to justice, equality, and true democracy. A meaningful republic demands not just the existence of a constitution, but its lived experience by the people. Without bridging this gap, the Constitution remains powerful only on paper.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Indian Constitution, envisioned as a moral and legal compass, stands at a critical juncture where its normative aspirations are frequently undermined by lived realities. This research has highlighted a stark gap between the theoretical promises of the Constitution and the empirical experiences of the people it intends to serve. The ambiguity within constitutional language, coupled with a lack of legal literacy and a deeply procedural legal system, alienates large sections of the population from their rights. When citizens perceive justice as purchasable and rights as conditional, the Constitution's moral authority begins to erode. Empirical findings reveal that for many, the Constitution remains a distant and elite project, rarely encountered in practical terms. The absence of constitutional awareness leads not only to disenfranchisement

but also to resignation, an acceptance that the law serves the powerful and excludes the marginalized. Moreover, procedural complexity exacerbates this exclusion, transforming justice into a bureaucratic ordeal that few can afford to endure. Despite these challenges, the research also points toward possibility. Efforts by civil society and state institutions to increase constitutional literacy signal a growing recognition of this democratic deficit. In recent years, however, there have been growing efforts by civil society organizations, educational initiatives, and state-sponsored programs to address this gap. Campaigns such as Samvidhan Live: Be a Jagrik, run by the NGO Community, The Youth Collective, have worked to make constitutional values more relatable and participatory, especially among youth in rural and urban areas. Through role-play, storytelling, and community engagement, such initiatives have made notable strides in translating constitutional ideals into lived experience and active citizenship. While these efforts are still limited in scale, they signal a hopeful shift toward fostering a more constitutionally literate society¹³.

However, systemic reforms in education, legal aid, and judicial efficiency are urgently needed to translate constitutional ideals into everyday reality. If the Constitution is to reclaim its moral force, it must become more than a document for the courtrooms, it must live in the minds and actions of ordinary citizens. Only when the Constitution is both known and felt can it truly function as a moral document capable of transforming society.

¹³ Samvidhan Live: Be a Jagrik, ComMutiny–The Youth Collective (Dec. 1, 2018), <https://thejagrikproject.com/samvidhan-live>.

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