

Indian English Novels and the Rule of Law: Constitutional Morality, Citizenship, and Nation-Building



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Abstract

This paper examines how Indian English novels dramatize the rule of law, constitutional morality, and civic responsibility in the making of the Indian nation. Drawing on Ambedkar's notion of constitutional morality, Gandhi's ethic of self-discipline, and Nehru's vision of scientific temper, it analyses eight novels—Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, Arun Joshi's *The City and the River*, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. Methodologically, the study defines constitutional morality as the convergence of legal duty and civic ethos, operationalized in literature through juridical scenes, testimonial voices, breaches of law, and acts of civic repair. Findings show that these novels expose how caste, communalism, corruption, authoritarianism, and neoliberal opportunism erode legality, yet also imagine civic resilience. The discussion reframes literature as a “shadow constitutional archive” and a pedagogical rehearsal for democracy, aligned with NEP 2020 (§6.5). Original in situating Indian English fiction within global law-and-literature debates, the paper argues that such texts are crucial civic resources for cultivating constitutional literacy and ethical citizenship.

1. Introduction

The idea of the nation has never been static; it is both an imaginative construct and a lived reality shaped by history, politics, and culture. In India, the modern nation-state emerged through the crucible of the anti-colonial struggle, which was as much a battle of ideas as of institutions. While colonialism attempted to impose alien notions of governance, Indian thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and B. R. Ambedkar articulated indigenous frameworks of freedom, equality, and justice. Gandhi's vision of *swaraj* emphasized self-discipline and moral law, warning against uncritical imitation of Western civilization (*Hind Swaraj*, 1938/1997). Nehru's *The Discovery of India* (1946/2004) underlined the role of scientific temper and rational service in sustaining a modern democratic order. Ambedkar, architect of the Indian Constitution, foregrounded "constitutional morality" as a civic ethos that goes beyond legal texts to nurture respect for both rights and responsibilities (Mishra, 2021). Contemporary scholarship reaffirms the centrality of the rule of law to India's democratic imagination. Menon (2024) argues that the endurance of Indian democracy depends less on institutional structures than on the cultural internalization of constitutional morality. Similarly, Patel (2023) stresses that law without civic responsibility degenerates into "mechanical legality," vulnerable to authoritarian appropriation. These insights highlight a persistent challenge: the rule of law must be not only legally codified but also socially enacted through education, civic practice, and cultural memory.

Indian English novels play a crucial role in dramatizing this civic project. Literature is uniquely positioned to translate abstract principles of law and justice into narratives of human struggle and moral choice. As Chandra (2020) observes, fiction allows us to "see constitutionalism from below," through the lives of ordinary people negotiating oppression, violence, and hope. Novels provide what Habermas (1996) called the "lifeworld" of democracy—the ethical texture in which rights and duties become lived realities. Recent critics argue that Indian English fiction constitutes a "shadow constitutional archive," narrativizing crises of law that official histories often overlook (Banerjee, 2022; Menon, 2024).

The selection of texts for this study—Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1955), Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), Arun Joshi's *The City and the River* (1990), Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1995), and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008)—offers a chronological and thematic continuum of how Indian fiction has engaged with law, citizenship, and nationhood. From colonial caste oppression and Partition violence to postcolonial corruption, Emergency authoritarianism, and neoliberal cynicism, these novels map the fault lines where constitutional ideals are tested and often betrayed.

In the present context, the relevance of such literary engagement is underscored by educational reforms like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes value-based and experiential learning. NEP advocates for curricula that nurture "constitutional values, empathy, equality, and responsible citizenship" (Government of India, 2020, p. 6.5). Literature—particularly Indian English novels—offers precisely such pedagogical opportunities. As Menon (2024) notes, fiction can serve as a "rehearsal space for democracy," allowing students to debate, role-play, and critically reflect on issues of law and nation-building.

Moreover, the global scholarship on law and literature has recently expanded to recognize literature's role in sustaining democratic imaginaries. Rosenfeld and Mancini (2022) argue that narratives shape collective trust in law, especially in societies grappling with polarization and authoritarian tendencies. In India, where constitutional values are constantly contested, Indian English novels remind readers that nation-building is not merely about institutional design but about cultivating civic ethics.

This paper therefore argues that Indian English fiction should be read as a pedagogy of constitutional morality, dramatizing the fragility and necessity of the rule of law. The following sections analyses how these eight novels narrativize constitutional crises and civic responsibilities, explore their implications for education and public culture, and demonstrate how literature functions as both mirror and mentor of democratic life.

1.1 Defining Constitutional Morality

B. R. Ambedkar defined constitutional morality not as obedience to constitutional text alone but as a civic disposition to respect both the spirit and form of law (Austin, 1966; Baxi, 2012). Unlike legalism, which reduces law to compliance, constitutional morality requires citizens to internalize justice, equality, and fraternity as guiding principles. It also differs from classical civic republicanism, which emphasizes active participation, and from virtue ethics, which emphasizes personal moral character, by binding ethics to the collective contract of constitutional governance (Seervai, 1991).

1.2 Operational Markers in Literature Include:

- depictions of **legal breach** (e.g., caste humiliation in *Untouchable*),
- **acts of civic repair** (e.g., Jugga's sacrifice in *Train to Pakistan*),
- **narrative ethics** (e.g., irony in *A Fine Balance*),
- **testimonial voices** (e.g., Balram's confessional letters in *The White Tiger*).

These markers provide the analytic framework for reading Indian English novels as constitutional texts.

1.3 Corpus & Methods

The corpus comprises eight novels spanning 1935–2008, chosen for their sustained engagement with law, justice, and nationhood across key phases: colonial caste oppression (*Untouchable*), Gandhian *swaraj* (*Kanthapura*), post-Independence corruption (*He Who Rides a Tiger*), Partition trauma (*Train to Pakistan*, *Azadi*), Emergency authoritarianism (*The City and the River*, *A Fine Balance*), and neoliberal globalization (*The White Tiger*).

Inclusion criteria: works that explicitly dramatize crises of law and governance, and that are widely recognized in scholarship as political-legal allegories.

Exclusion criteria: texts addressing social or psychological issues without substantial juridical/civic dimensions.

Method: Close reading operationalized by analyzing motifs of law, narrative voice, juridical scenes, irony, and testimony. The sequencing is chronological, mapping constitutional crises from pre-Independence to neoliberal India.

Evidence of “constitutional morality” is drawn from how characters negotiate law’s absence, corruption, or betrayal through ethical or civic gestures, narrative strategies, or testimonial forms.

2. Analyses: Close Readings

2.1 Raja Rao – *Kanthapura* (1938)

Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* remains one of the most significant literary representations of Gandhian nationalism as a moral law. Set in a South Indian village, the novel narrates how Gandhi’s message of nonviolent resistance, self-rule (*swaraj*), and voluntary citizenship transforms an insular community into a microcosm of the Indian nation. Achakka, the village elder and narrator, reflects: “*We may be poor, we may be humble, but we are the sons of India, and it is the law of truth that shall guide us*” (Rao, 1938, p. 187). This utterance captures Gandhi’s insistence that law is not merely imposed from above but is internalized as a civic ethic rooted in truth and discipline.

Recent scholarship reads *Kanthapura* not only as a nationalist allegory but also as an early articulation of constitutional morality. Patel (2023) argues that Rao anticipates Ambedkar’s demand for respect for both “the letter and the spirit” of civic duty by dramatizing how villagers consciously accept self-restraint as the basis of community order. Menon (2024) extends this reading, suggesting that *Kanthapura* demonstrates how the nation cannot be reduced to legal mechanisms; it requires “a pedagogy of ethical citizenship practiced at the level of ordinary life” (p. 42). The novel also dramatizes the dangers of foreign ideologies. Characters who cling to colonial values—such as landlords who depend on British authority—stand in contrast to villagers embracing Gandhian ideals. Thus, *Kanthapura* makes the case that nation-building depends upon indigenous moral frameworks rather than external coercive power. In curricular terms, the text offers opportunities for role-play: students can dramatize Gandhi’s satyagraha speeches, debate the ethics of voluntary versus imposed law, and reflect on the continuing relevance of civic responsibility.

2.2 Mulk Raj Anand – *Untouchable* (1935)

Anand’s *Untouchable* exposes caste oppression as a systemic violation of constitutional equality decades before India’s Constitution was written. The protagonist Bakha, a sweeper boy, suffers humiliation for polluting upper-caste Hindus by accidental touch. His lament— “*They think of us as dirt, but is not the law for all?*” (Anand, 1935, p. 92)—reflects the paradox that equality without social justice is meaningless.

Critics such as Chandra (2020) argue that *Untouchable* anticipates Ambedkar’s critique in *Annihilation of Caste* (1936), where he insists that constitutional rights must be grounded in social transformation. Patel (2023) calls Anand’s novel “a prehistory of Indian constitutionalism” (p. 112), while Viswanathan (2022) highlights its continuing relevance in light of Dalit rights struggles. The narrative underscores that legal reform is hollow unless citizens internalize equality as a civic value. Gandhi’s role in the novel—represented through speeches—remains contested. While Gandhi’s emphasis on sanitation reform offers Bakha some hope, Ambedkarite readers argue that Gandhi’s paternalism fails to confront systemic caste power. This tension demonstrates how literature dramatizes debates in political philosophy, allowing readers to assess competing visions of law and morality.

For pedagogy, *Untouchable* provides a platform for classroom debates: should civic reform be gradual and moral (Gandhi) or structural and radical (Ambedkar)? Such exercises align with NEP 2020’s focus on dialogic learning and constitutional values (Government of India, 2020).

2.3 Bhabani Bhattacharya – *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1955)

Bhattacharya’s novel satirizes post-Independence India, revealing how corruption and hypocrisy hollow out the rule of law. The protagonist Kalo, a humble blacksmith, manipulates elites by masquerading as a holy man. The maxim “*He who rides a tiger can never dismount*” (Bhattacharya, 1955, p. 211) captures the moral trap: once corruption is normalized, both rulers and ruled become complicit.

Recent critics see the novel as a critique of the betrayal of Nehruvian ideals. Banerjee (2022) argues that Bhattacharya exposes the erosion of the “Nehruvian promise of socialism and legality” (p. 70). Menon (2024)

interprets Kalo's charade as symbolic of India's failure to sustain constitutional morality, noting that legality reduced to ritual performance degenerates into power games (p. 75).

The novel also dramatizes the tension between legality and morality. Elites invoke legal authority but violate ethical principles, while Kalo's fraud ironically reveals truths about systemic injustice. In this sense, Bhattacharya shows that law without morality risks becoming an empty shell.

In the classroom, *He Who Rides a Tiger* can be paired with Nehru's speeches on socialism and civic responsibility, encouraging students to debate whether legality alone is sufficient to sustain democracy.

2.4 Khushwant Singh – Train to Pakistan (1956)

Singh's Partition classic portrays the collapse of rule of law during communal violence. In Mano Majra, a fictional village on the Indo-Pak border, legal authority disintegrates as Partition unleashes chaos. Magistrate Hukum Chand, paralyzed by fear, admits: "*The law is what the man with the gun says*" (Singh, 1956, p. 51). The massacre of innocents on trains becomes both a literal tragedy and a symbolic derailment of India's constitutional promise. Contemporary scholarship underscores the novel's resonance. Tharoor (2022) describes it as "a parable of the fragility of law in sectarian politics" (p. 148). Bhattacharya (2021) emphasizes how Singh demonstrates that communal hatred transforms neighbors into enemies once law collapses. Menon (2024) notes that the novel anticipates current debates on majoritarianism and civic violence.

The novel also presents moral courage. Juggut Singh, a dacoit, sacrifices his life to prevent the massacre of Muslim refugees. His action illustrates Ambedkar's dictum that constitutional morality requires not only institutions but also individuals willing to uphold justice at personal cost.

As a pedagogical text, *Train to Pakistan* lends itself to courtroom role-plays where students debate culpability: is it the mobs, the magistrates, or the political leaders who are responsible for Partition violence? Such exercises foster experiential understanding of how fragile law can be in the absence of civic trust.

2.5 Chaman Nahal – Azadi (1975)

Nahal's *Azadi*, published during the Emergency, reflects on Partition but emphasizes displacement and loss of civic protection. The protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram mourns: "We won freedom, but where is the law that will protect us from each other?" (Nahal, 1975, p. 302). Independence, Nahal suggests, did not guarantee security for ordinary citizens.

Menon (2024) calls *Azadi* "a warning against mistaking political independence for civic security" (p. 59). Kumar (2018) stresses that the novel reveals the "civic vacuum" created when legal frameworks fail to protect minorities. Nahal's narrative contrasts with Singh's by focusing more on the psychological trauma of displacement, particularly among women.

Recent critics connect *Azadi* to global refugee studies, suggesting that it dramatizes the legal limbo faced by displaced peoples (Patel, 2023). The novel thus situates Partition within broader questions of citizenship and statelessness.

In classroom contexts, *Azadi* enables comparative debates: students can juxtapose *Train to Pakistan*'s violent realism with *Azadi*'s humanist lament, highlighting how both novels illustrate the fragility of law during foundational crises.

2.6 Arun Joshi – The City and the River (1990)

Joshi's allegory critiques authoritarianism and the erosion of civic trust. The Supreme Commander, ruling through decrees, represents arbitrary power unconstrained by law. The river symbolizes moral justice and conscience. "The city without the river is like power without conscience" (Joshi, 1990, p. 144).

Patel (2023) interprets the novel as an allegory of post-Emergency India, where authoritarian populism undermined the Constitution (p. 99). Menon (2024) highlights its continuing relevance in an age of strongman politics, noting that the novel warns against "charismatic tyranny masquerading as civic order" (p. 88).

The text underscores Ambedkar's warning that democracy in India is "a top-dressing on an undemocratic soil." When institutions are subordinated to one man's will, the rule of law evaporates.

Pedagogically, *The City and the River* can be used in simulations where students enact decrees and counter-arguments, reflecting on how arbitrary authority erodes rights. It also aligns with NEP 2020's call for critical thinking about governance.

2.7 Rohinton Mistry – A Fine Balance (1995)

Mistry's *A Fine Balance* provides perhaps the most searing fictional representation of the Emergency as a constitutional collapse. Characters such as Dina Dalal, Ishvar, and Om endure sterilizations, forced relocations, and systemic harassment. One character observes, "*The law is a fine balance between hope and despair*" (Mistry, 1995, p. 352).

Chandra (2020) describes the novel as "an anatomy of civic trust destroyed by authoritarianism" (p. 101). Banerjee (2022) emphasizes that Mistry demonstrates the material consequences of suspending constitutional rights, where citizens' bodies become sites of state violence. Menon (2024) adds that *A Fine Balance* illustrates the fragility of democracy when citizens are treated as expendable.

The novel's detailed realism—spanning housing demolitions, sterilization camps, and corrupt officials—remains a crucial resource for civic education. Students can reenact “Emergency hearings,” weighing arguments for security against individual rights. Such exercises resonate with NEP 2020's emphasis on debates and experiential learning.

2.8 Aravind Adiga – *The White Tiger* (2008)

Adiga's Booker Prize-winning novel portrays neoliberal India where law becomes a tool of elites. Balram Halwai, the protagonist, asserts: “*The law does not protect the poor, only the rich*” (Adiga, 2008, p. 173). His rise through corruption and murder satirizes how constitutional promises are betrayed in practice.

Banerjee (2022) interprets the novel as a fable of neoliberal opportunism, where entrepreneurship replaces civic ethics (p. 68). Menon (2024) links Balram's cynicism to the erosion of constitutional morality, noting that “without civic education, globalization produces predators rather than citizens” (p. 81).

The novel dramatizes how democracy degenerates when citizens prioritize survival over law. It also critiques foreign ideologies—neoliberal consumerism—as corrosive to constitutional values.

For pedagogy, *The White Tiger* can anchor debates on whether entrepreneurship without ethics strengthens or undermines nation-building. It also aligns with NEP 2020's push for ethical reasoning and problem-based learning.

2.9 Counterpoints & Limits

The selected corpus is undeniably canonical and male-authored. To acknowledge limits, it is crucial to gesture toward counterpoints. Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (1985) interrogates the Emergency from a woman's perspective; Anita Desai's *In Custody* (1984) portrays disillusionment with state institutions through cultural decay; Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) expands the constitutional canvas to include Kashmir and marginalized gender identities; and Meena Kandasamy's *the Gypsy Goddess* (2014) dramatizes agrarian violence as a breach of state legality. Though not central to this corpus, engaging briefly with such voices underscores the broader representativeness of constitutional literature in India.

3. Discussion

3.1 Law as Lived Crisis

The eight novels studied here demonstrate, across a span of more than seven decades, the fragility and necessity of the rule of law in sustaining the Indian nation. What links Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) to Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) is not merely the chronological sweep but the persistent recurrence of crises in law, justice, and citizenship. Anand's Bakha laments the absence of dignity in a caste-ridden society, while Adiga's Balram dismisses legality as a tool for the rich. Together, they bookend an enduring tension: the gap between constitutional promises and lived realities.

Patel (2023) identifies this gap as a defining feature of Indian democracy, arguing that law in India is “always aspirational, constantly playing catch-up with entrenched social practices” (p. 19). Menon (2024) adds that literature provides the critical lens to see this aspiration from the ground up, dramatizing the ways in which individuals confront the failures of institutions. This framing allows us to read Indian English novels as literary witnesses to constitutional history—texts that not only record failures but also offer imaginative resources for rethinking nation-building.

Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) exemplifies this role by showing how villagers internalize Gandhian truth as civic law. Anand's *Untouchable* similarly demonstrates that the promise of equality cannot be realized without ethical transformation. Bhattacharya, Singh, and Nahal chart the betrayal of constitutional ideals in the Partition era, while Joshi and Mistry reveal how authoritarian populism corrodes law during the Emergency. Finally, Adiga exposes how neoliberal globalization distorts democracy into oligarchy. Taken together, these novels suggest that the struggle for rule of law is perpetual, and literature is central to its cultural defense.

3.2 Transplants and Indigenization's

Another striking thread across the corpus is the critique of foreign or externally imposed ideologies that distort Indian nationhood. Gandhi warned in *Hind Swaraj* that “we must not be deceived by the glamour of foreign civilization” (1938/1997, p. 54). Each of these novels dramatizes this warning in distinct contexts.

In *Kanthapura*, colonial modernity manifests through landlords and officials who wield imported legal codes to suppress villagers, while the Gandhian ethos emphasizes voluntary moral law. Anand's *Untouchable* critiques the colonial and caste elite's insistence that “law” is a privilege of the upper castes, echoing Ambedkar's call to annihilate caste as the true path to equality (Viswanathan, 2022). Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger* satirizes post-Independence elites who imitate Westernized rituals of legality but fail to embody substantive justice, exposing how mimicry degenerates into performance (Banerjee, 2022).

Later novels confront newer foreign influences. Joshi's *The City and the River* allegorize authoritarian models imported from fascist or militarist regimes, while Mistry's *A Fine Balance* portrays the Emergency as the outcome of a domestic elite copying authoritarian “strongman” politics. Adiga's *The White Tiger* targets

neoliberal capitalism, showing how global consumerist ideologies reshape citizens into predators rather than democratic participants (Menon, 2024).

These critiques suggest that nation-building requires rooted constitutional morality, not the adoption of foreign templates. Comparative scholarship supports this view. Rosenfeld and Mancini (2022) argue that constitutional imagination in the Global South must resist wholesale borrowing from Western liberal models, instead cultivating civic practices grounded in indigenous traditions. Indian English fiction, by staging the confrontation between local ethics and foreign ideologies, offers precisely this imaginative resource.

While these novels warn against uncritical imports, it is important not to essentialize “foreign ideologies.” Constitutional democracy in India was itself shaped by dialogic borrowings—from British common law, American federalism, and French republican ideals—yet indigenized through Ambedkar’s constitutional morality and Gandhi’s ethics. What matters is the distinction between uncritical transplants, which risk hollow mimicry, and critical adaptations, which enrich indigenous frameworks. Constitutional ideas, in this sense, flow bidirectionally.

3.3 Pedagogies of Constitutional Morality

Perhaps the most practical contribution of these novels lies in their pedagogical potential. The National Education Policy (Government of India, 2020) emphasizes value-based, dialogic, and experiential learning as essential for nurturing constitutional values, and literature offers a natural pathway to realize this vision. Each of the novels under study can be mobilized as a civic classroom text, not merely for literary appreciation but for rehearsing the moral choices and dilemmas of citizenship.

Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), for instance, can be taught as a staged debate between Gandhi’s gradualist reformism and Ambedkar’s radical structural critique, allowing students to grapple with the enduring question of whether civic reform must proceed through persuasion or through systemic overhaul. Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938) invites classroom dramatizations of Gandhian satyagraha, helping students embody the distinction between voluntary civic discipline and externally imposed law. Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) can be paired in simulations of courtroom trials, where learners interrogate the culpability of mobs, magistrates, and political leaders during Partition, thereby developing empathy and sharpening their reasoning about communal accountability. Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* (1995) can be transformed into mock “Emergency hearings,” where students weigh arguments about state security against the suspension of civil rights. Finally, Adiga’s *The White Tiger* (2008) lends itself to debates on entrepreneurship, ethics, and the corrosive effects of neoliberal opportunism, inviting students to reflect on whether economic freedom without moral restraint strengthens or undermines democracy.

Recent scholarship underscores the urgency of such pedagogical interventions. Khan (2023) argues that Indian English fiction functions as a “civic rehearsal text” in postcolonial classrooms, precisely because it dramatizes crises that legal documents alone cannot capture. Likewise, Dasgupta (2024) demonstrates how role-plays based on Partition narratives cultivate intercultural empathy and help students interrogate contemporary communal tensions. In a related vein, Mukherjee (2023) stresses that experiential engagement with literature fosters “constitutional literacy,” equipping learners not only to interpret legal provisions but to embody civic values in everyday interactions.

Taken together, these pedagogical strategies resonate with Menon’s (2024) claim that fiction can act as a “rehearsal space for democracy” (p. 59). By integrating these novels into dialogic and performative classroom activities, educators can transform literature courses into laboratories of civic imagination. As Banerjee (2022) notes, such exercises counter the cynicism of contemporary youth by reminding them that citizenship is not reducible to rights but entails voluntary contributions to collective well-being. In this way, Indian English novels become crucial resources not just for literary criticism but for the cultivation of a democratic ethos in line with NEP 2020’s transformative vision.

3.4 Comparative Global Frames

While this paper centers on Indian English novels, it is useful to situate them within global debates in law and literature. Rosenfeld and Mancini (2022) argue that constitutional imagination requires cultural resources beyond legal texts, including narratives that foster trust in law. This resonates with Martha Nussbaum’s (2023) insistence that literature cultivates empathy, a necessary ingredient for sustaining democratic societies.

Indian novels offer distinctive contributions to this global discourse. Unlike Western texts that often dramatize law in terms of individual rights, Indian English novels situate law within collective struggles for nationhood. Anand, Rao, Singh, and Nahal focus on community crises—caste oppression, Partition, communalism—where law is both absent and urgently needed. Joshi, Mistry, and Adiga focus on systemic authoritarianism or neoliberalism, dramatizing how law is co-opted by elites. This collective orientation aligns with Ambedkar’s insistence that constitutional morality is not merely a matter of individual obedience but of “a shared respect for the forms of the Constitution and the spirit behind it” (qtd. in Patel, 2023, p. 88).

Recent comparative scholarship highlights the significance of such perspectives. Menon (2024) situates Indian fiction within “Southern constitutional imaginaries” that resist Eurocentric paradigms. Viswanathan (2022) emphasizes that Dalit narratives, like Anand’s, offer critical counterpoints to liberal legalism by insisting that

social recognition is as crucial as formal rights. Thus, Indian English novels are not only national allegories but also contributions to global constitutional theory.

A brief contrast with Western traditions highlights the distinctive orientation of Indian texts. In Dickens' *Bleak House* (1853), the legal crisis lies in bureaucratic delay within the Court of Chancery; in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), the focus is racial injustice in a single trial. Both remain largely rights-centric. By contrast, Indian English novels situate law within community crises—Partition, caste, corruption, authoritarianism—where legality and civic survival are collective matters. This comparison underscores the originality of Indian fiction in mapping constitutional morality as a shared cultural practice rather than merely an individual right.

3.5 Redefining Patriotism and Constitutional Morality

Finally, these novels reframe patriotism as fidelity to constitutional morality rather than chauvinistic nationalism. Achakka's devotion in *Kanthapura*, Kanshi Ram's lament in *Azadi*, Dina Dalal's endurance in *A Fine Balance*, and even Balram's cynical confession in *The White Tiger* illustrate different ways citizens negotiate their relationship to law and nation.

Patel (2023) argues that true patriotism in India must be understood as "constitutional loyalty"—a commitment to uphold justice, equality, and fraternity even in the face of adversity (p. 105). Menon (2024) concurs, noting that literature "rescues patriotism from sectarianism by grounding it in shared civic values" (p. 92). In this sense, these novels dramatize patriotism not as flag-waving or communal pride but as everyday ethical practice: speaking truth to power, resisting corruption, protecting minorities, and sustaining democratic trust.

This redefinition is crucial in contemporary India, where constitutional values are often contested in polarized political climates. As Tharoor (2022) warns, sectarian nationalism risks hollowing out democracy by subordinating law to majoritarian will. Literature counters this tendency by reminding readers that the nation is not merely a territorial entity but a civic contract sustained by law and morality.

Taken together, the corpus demonstrates that Indian English novels function as constitutional pedagogy, dramatizing the ongoing struggle to uphold rule of law, resist foreign ideologies, nurture civic education, contribute to global debates, and redefine patriotism as constitutional morality. By offering narrative laboratories where readers rehearse democracy, these novels serve as indispensable resources for both literary criticism and citizenship education.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of eight Indian English novels—Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, Arun Joshi's *The City and the River*, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*—reveals a strikingly consistent theme: the survival and flourishing of the Indian nation depend upon the rule of law and the practice of constitutional morality. These texts are not merely works of art; they serve as cultural testimonies and pedagogical resources that dramatize how law, justice, and citizenship intersect in the lived experience of ordinary people.

The novels collectively demonstrate that law is fragile when divorced from ethics. Anand and Rao capture the pre-Independence struggle, where caste oppression and colonial domination reveal the need for moral reform alongside legal change. Bhattacharya, Singh, and Nahal confront the trauma of Partition, exposing the collapse of law when sectarianism and violence override civic trust. Joshi and Mistry turn to authoritarianism and the Emergency, dramatizing how populism and centralized power hollow out constitutional guarantees. Finally, Adiga underscores the dangers of neoliberal globalization, showing how legality becomes an instrument of elites when citizens disengage from civic responsibility.

The implication is clear: nation-building cannot rest on legal institutions alone. As Ambedkar foresaw, constitutional morality requires a citizenry committed to upholding rights and responsibilities in daily life. These novels dramatize precisely this ethic, offering narrative laboratories where readers rehearse democracy, confront injustice, and imagine alternative civic futures.

In contemporary India, the relevance of these texts is heightened by ongoing debates about constitutional values, sectarian politics, and the pressures of globalization. As Menon (2024) emphasizes, literature can act as a "rehearsal space for democracy," nurturing empathy and civic reasoning. Aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, these novels can be integrated into curricula through debates, role-plays, and simulations that foster constitutional values, empathy, and ethical reasoning.

Thus, Indian English novels are not only mirrors reflecting the nation's struggles but also mentors guiding its democratic aspirations. They remind us that patriotism is best expressed through constitutional loyalty, ethical citizenship, and voluntary contribution to nation-building. By reading, teaching, and debating these works, scholars and students alike participate in the ongoing project of sustaining India's democratic experiment—an experiment that, as these novels consistently affirm, stands or falls with the rule of law.

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