JUSTICE AND ANCIENT INDIAN JURISPRUDENCE: UNDERSTANDING THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION THROUGH ITS ILLUSTRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The original handwritten Constitution of India contains a distinctive visual programme of illustrations accompanying its Parts. This article examines those illustrations as a possible visual vocabulary through which the Constitution may be read alongside ideas associated with ancient Indian jurisprudence. It focuses on Dharma, Raj-dharma, duties of rulers, welfare, pluralism, restraint in the exercise of power, and collective welfare, and considers how those ideas may illuminate the constitutional subjects placed alongside particular illustrations. The article argues that the illustrations are neither legally operative provisions nor merely ornamental artwork. They can instead provide historical and cultural context for understanding the constitutional imagination of the document, provided that symbolic interpretation is distinguished from demonstrable evidence of the framers' subjective intent. The article therefore develops a thematic reading of the illustrations in relation to fundamental rights, directive principles, federalism, local self-government, social justice, elections, emergency powers, and constitutional change. It also compares the Indian approach with selected constitutional traditions that incorporate civilizational or indigenous concepts. The study concludes that the illustrations enrich the historical understanding of Indian constitutionalism, but their interpretive value must remain subordinate to the constitutional text, structure, and established methods of legal interpretation.[1]

[1] Lalit Kala Akademi, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Art & Calligraphy in the Constitution of India 7–8, 19–103 (2024), https://www.lalitkala.gov.in/uploads/update/6002e5c30107735f9c86d8818ffad970.pdf.

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Keywords: Indian Constitution; constitutional illustrations; ancient Indian jurisprudence; Dharma; Raj-dharma; constitutionalism.

CHAPTER-1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Constitution of India is not only a legal instrument but also a historical manuscript whose visual presentation forms part of its distinctive character. The original handwritten Constitution contains illustrations and decorative borders placed alongside its Parts. The artwork associated with the manuscript is generally attributed to Nandalal Bose and members of his artistic team, while the calligraphy was undertaken by Prem Behari Narain Raizada. The illustrations range from the Indus Valley period and Vedic imagery to depictions of the Buddha, Mahavira, medieval rulers, freedom fighters, and geographical symbols. The manuscript's visual character is therefore relevant to the historical study of the constitutional document, even though the illustrations do not themselves form operative constitutional text.[2]

The original manuscript presents the Constitution in a form that differs markedly from the modern printed editions used for legal citation. Its pages contain calligraphy, decorative borders, and illustrations placed before or around the Parts of the Constitution. The visual sequence moves across periods of Indian history and culture and includes subjects associated with the Indus Valley Civilization, the Vedic period, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, Buddhism, Jainism, the Mauryan and Gupta periods, medieval courts, the freedom struggle, and the geographical landscape of India. These images create a visual chronology that runs alongside the legal architecture of the Constitution.[3]

The central question of this article is whether these illustrations can be read together with the constitutional provisions that follow them. The argument is not that an illustration possesses the legal force of an Article, nor that every symbolic association necessarily records the subjective intention of every member of the Constituent Assembly. Rather, the illustrations may be treated as part of the historical and cultural context in which the Constitution was produced. This distinction is particularly important when a visual image is used to support a claim about constitutional meaning.[4]

[2] Constitution of India, arts. 1–395 (1950), as amended, https://www.constitutionofindia.net/read/.
[3] B. Shiva Rao, The Framing of India's Constitution: A Study (1966).
[4] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 7–8.

The paper therefore asks three related questions: first, what jurisprudential concepts from ancient Indian literature and political thought are relevant to the interpretation of the illustrations; second, how do particular illustrations correspond thematically with the constitutional Parts they accompany; and third, what are the limits of using such visual material in constitutional scholarship? The approach is primarily historical, textual, and interpretive. It reads the constitutional text together with the original manuscript and selected primary and secondary sources on Indian jurisprudence.

1.2 Statement of Research Problems

The research problem arises from the unusual position occupied by the illustrations in the original handwritten Constitution. They are neither ordinary decorative elements nor provisions that independently create legal rights, powers, or duties. Yet they accompany the constitutional Parts and present a carefully selected visual history of India. The problem, therefore, is to determine whether and to what extent this visual programme can legitimately be connected with the constitutional ideas expressed in the text. A related problem is methodological: symbolic associations can easily be presented as historical fact or as proof of the subjective intention of the framers and artists when the available evidence may establish only the existence and placement of an image.

The study consequently addresses the tension between constitutional text and constitutional imagery. It asks whether the illustrations can enrich the understanding of concepts such as justice, Dharma, Raj-dharma, welfare, equality, pluralism, restraint in public power, and collective responsibility without transforming them into an independent source of constitutional law. It also considers the historical problem created by subsequent constitutional amendments, because the illustrations correspond to the original twenty-two Parts whereas the Constitution has subsequently been reorganized and amended. The research must therefore distinguish the constitutional structure of 1950 from the Constitution as it operates today.

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1.3 Literature Review

The literature relevant to this research falls into four broad groups. The first consists of primary and official materials concerning the Constitution and its original manuscript. The Constitution of India, the Constituent Assembly materials, and institutional accounts of the original manuscript provide the legal and historical foundation for determining the relationship between the constitutional text and the illustrations. The Lalit Kala Akademi's

account of the original artwork is particularly important because it identifies the historical sequence of the illustrations and their association with the original Parts of the Constitution.

The second group comprises scholarship on ancient Indian jurisprudence and political thought. Works dealing with Dharmaśāstra, the Upanishads, the Mahābhārata, Buddhist and Jain traditions, and classical conceptions of kingship provide the conceptual vocabulary used in this study. The research does not assume that these traditions constitute a single, internally uniform jurisprudence. Instead, they are treated as diverse intellectual traditions that contain recurring discussions of duty, justice, ethical governance, social order, welfare, restraint, and the responsibilities of political authority.

The third group concerns constitutional scholarship. Writings on the framing of the Constitution, fundamental rights, Directive Principles, federalism, constitutional morality, the basic structure doctrine, emergency powers, and local self-government help identify the legal significance of the constitutional subjects placed alongside the illustrations. Judicial decisions are used principally to establish the controlling legal position rather than to attribute legal force to the artwork.

The fourth group consists of comparative and interdisciplinary scholarship on visual constitutionalism and indigenous or civilizational concepts in constitutional law. Comparative examples are useful because they demonstrate that constitutional orders may preserve cultural or indigenous concepts while still requiring those concepts to operate through legal institutions and enacted constitutional norms. The present study seeks to contribute to this literature by examining the Indian Constitution's illustrations as historical and visual context, while maintaining a clear distinction between symbolic interpretation and enforceable constitutional doctrine. The literature reviewed also reveals a gap: the artwork of the original Constitution is frequently described historically, but its relationship to ancient Indian jurisprudential ideas and the constitutional Parts it accompanies has received comparatively less systematic legal analysis. This research addresses that gap through a thematic, textually anchored study.

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1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The objective is to examine the relationship between the illustrations and the constitutional subjects with which they appear, and to identify recurring jurisprudential themes such as the supremacy of law, duties of public power, welfare, equality, pluralism, federalism, participation, and social justice. The paper does not claim that ancient Indian jurisprudence mechanically determined the content of the Constitution. Instead, it explores whether the

visual programme of the original manuscript can help reveal a civilizational vocabulary within which constitutional values were presented.

1.5 Research Questions

The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What jurisprudential ideas concerning justice, Dharma, Raj-dharma, welfare, restraint, pluralism, and public responsibility can be identified in the intellectual traditions represented by the illustrations?
2. How do particular illustrations correspond thematically with the original constitutional Parts with which they are associated?
3. Can the illustrations legitimately assist in understanding the historical and cultural context of Indian constitutionalism without being treated as operative constitutional law?
4. To what extent can the visual programme of the original manuscript illuminate constitutional commitments to fundamental rights, social justice, federalism, participation, and limitations on public power?
5. What methodological safeguards are necessary to prevent symbolic interpretation from being mistaken for evidence of framers' subjective intent?

1.6 Hypothesis

The central hypothesis of this research is that the illustrations in the original Constitution of India constitute a historically significant visual vocabulary that can illuminate, at a contextual and interpretive level, several constitutional values that resonate with concepts found in ancient and classical Indian jurisprudential traditions. The study hypothesizes that the relationship is strongest when the image, the historical tradition it represents, and the constitutional subject accompanying it disclose a coherent thematic connection.

The hypothesis is expressly limited. It does not assert that ancient Indian jurisprudence directly determined the drafting of particular constitutional provisions, that every illustration records the intention of the Constituent Assembly, or that the artwork possesses independent legal authority. Rather, it proposes that the illustrations can contribute to a richer historical understanding of Indian constitutionalism when read alongside the constitutional text, founding history, and established legal doctrine.

1.7 Research Methodology

The study combines constitutional textual analysis with historical and jurisprudential interpretation. Primary constitutional provisions are treated as the controlling legal text; ancient literature and historical materials are used as sources of intellectual context; and the illustrations are examined as visual representations. Where the manuscript makes a claim about what the framers 'wanted' an image to convey, that claim should be understood as an interpretive inference unless supported by direct documentary evidence from the Constituent Assembly or the artists involved. This methodological caution is essential to avoid converting symbolism into unsupported evidence of legislative or constituent intent.[5]

The existence of this visual programme does not mean that the illustrations should be treated as an additional source of enforceable constitutional law. Their significance is historical and interpretive. They may help scholars understand the cultural references through which the constitutional document was presented to its readers, but constitutional rights and governmental powers remain determined by the enacted text and its authoritative interpretation.[6]

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The scope of this research is interdisciplinary but constitutionally focused. It examines the original illustrated manuscript, the historical traditions represented by selected illustrations, the constitutional Parts with which those illustrations were associated, and the jurisprudential themes that emerge from placing these materials in dialogue. Particular attention is given to justice, Dharma, Raj-dharma, ethical governance, fundamental rights, Directive Principles, federalism, local self-government, social justice, elections, emergency powers, constitutional safeguards, and constitutional continuity and change. The research also uses limited comparative material to place the Indian experience alongside constitutional traditions in which indigenous or civilizational concepts have acquired constitutional significance.

The research has several limitations. First, the illustrations are interpretive objects, and their meaning cannot always be established with certainty from documentary evidence. Second, the existence of an image beside a constitutional Part does not, by itself, establish that the artist intended a specific jurisprudential proposition or that the Constituent Assembly adopted that proposition. Third, ancient Indian jurisprudence was diverse across periods, texts, regions, schools, and social contexts; it cannot responsibly be reduced to a single uniform doctrine of

[5] INDIA CONST. arts. 1–4; see also Constitution of India, supra note 2.
[6] INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 19, 21, 25–32.

justice. Fourth, the original twenty-two-Part structure must be distinguished from the Constitution as amended, including the later creation or reorganization of constitutional Parts. Fifth, the study is primarily doctrinal, historical, and interpretive rather than empirical; it does not claim to measure how citizens or judges presently understand the illustrations.

These limitations do not defeat the research question. Instead, they define the appropriate use of the illustrations. The paper treats them as historical and cultural context that may generate constitutional insight, while the constitutional text and authoritative legal interpretation remain the controlling sources of enforceable law.

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CHAPTER-2

THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS CIVILIZATIONAL VISUAL LANGUAGE

2.1 The Original Manuscript and the Illustrations

The original manuscript of the Constitution of India was illuminated by Nandalal Bose, known as the artist laureate of India, and his students from Kala Bhavan (Institute of Fine Arts), Visvabharati University, including Beohar Rammanohar Sinha, Dinanath Bhargava, Kripal Singh Shekhawat, A. Perumal, Vinayak Sivram Masoji, and others. The calligraphy was done by Prem Behari Narain Raizada using a holder and nib, and the illustrations were executed in indigenous methods using gold-leaf and stone colors. The manuscript was written on microbe-resistant parchment sheets measuring 45.7 cm × 58.4 cm and was signed by the members of the Constituent Assembly on 24th January 1950.[7]

The illustrations correspond to the original twenty-two Parts of the Constitution apart from the Preamble and the National Emblem. They represent styles from different civilizations of the subcontinent, ranging from the prehistoric Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley to the present. This visual programme creates a chronology that runs alongside the legal architecture of the Constitution, moving from the Indus Valley Civilization through the Vedic period, the epics, the Mauryan and Gupta periods, medieval courts, the freedom struggle, and the geographical landscape of India.[8]

2.2 Illustrations as a Language of Constitutional Meaning

Words have defined legal functions, whereas images can operate through association, memory, metaphor, and cultural reference. A constitutional illustration may therefore communicate an idea indirectly: a ruler may signify responsible government; a religious or philosophical figure may evoke restraint or ethical duty; a geographical scene may suggest unity, diversity, or continuity. The interpretive value of such symbolism depends, however, upon a demonstrable connection between the image, its historical meaning, and the constitutional subject beside which it appears.[9]

The visual programme of the Constitution has been described as a "visual argument" that opens a "counter-archive of imaginal foundations." The elaborate artworks of totemic animals, historical figures, and religious icons adopt the function of representing and legitimising a

[7] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 7–15.
[8] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 7–8.
[9] Indian History Collective, Illustrations from the Constitution (2026), https://indianhistorycollective.com/illustrations-from-the-constitution/.

symbolic construction of national identity and historical subjectivity, inducing fantasy and affective attachments to a mythically projected nation. This observation underscores the importance of examining the illustrations not merely as decoration but as a deliberate communicative act.

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CHAPTER-3

ANCIENT INDIAN JURISPRUDENCE AND THE IDEA OF JUSTICE

3.1 Dharma and the Rule of Law

Ancient Indian jurisprudential traditions frequently place Dharma above the individual ruler. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad describes Dharma as the power of powers and states that nothing is superior to Dharma. The passage is significant for constitutional thought because it presents normative order as superior to personal authority and associates law with the protection of the weaker against the stronger.[10]

The concept of Dharma in classical Indian traditions was part of a transcendental engagement. Dharma, or the path of duty or righteous conduct, is at the core of thinking about rule of law in Indian traditions. The rule of law entailed in the rule of Dharma was not merely a legal principle but an ethical concept which includes the moral code and the law of one's inner being. The ancient Indians divided human life according to Dharma, Artha, and Kama, forming a philosophical framework for a balanced and harmonious life. In this sense, the Trivarga of Dharma, Artha, and Kama seeks to create a society where justice, freedom, and well-being are in harmony.[11]

This idea should not be equated without qualification with the modern doctrine of the rule of law. Ancient Dharma operated within a very different social, religious, and political framework. Nevertheless, the conceptual relationship between a superior normative order and the ruler's obligation to govern within that order provides a useful comparative lens through which to consider constitutional limitations on public power. Dharma is superior to the state and the state is subservient to it. A greater sovereign than the king was the Dharma, the religious, ethical, social, political, juridical and customary law organically governing the life of the people. The true king is he who maintains Dharma.

3.2 Raj-Dharma and the Duties of the Ruler

Raj-dharma concerns the duties and responsibilities of the ruler. Classical Indian political thought did not simply portray kingship as unlimited personal sovereignty; it also developed normative expectations concerning protection, justice, welfare, and proper conduct. The Mahabharata's Shanti Parva, for example, contains extensive discussions of kingship and the duties of rulers.

[10] Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.14, in The Early Upanishads 143–44 (Patrick Olivelle trans., Oxford Univ. Press 1998).

[11] P.V. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra (1930–1962).

The Mahabharata has in the Shantiparva discourses propounded by Bhishma to Yudhishthira on the subject of rajadharma (royal duties) which show a clear appreciation of the arthashastric discussions on the nature of dandaniti and the practical art of government. The Dharmasutras prescribe a number of duties for the king, and these are supposed to have Vedic sanction. The king was to wield the sceptre of punishment, and if there was any miscarriage of justice or if the culprit escaped, the king was not only to compensate for the loss but to perform penance.[12]

Justice was the first duty of the king, and in doing justice he was not to be guided by his own likes and dislikes. The king was to act as a father to his children, and his primary duty was to protect the people from both external ecological threats and internal enemies. The exposition of Rajadharma by Bhishma is prefaced by a request filled with the awful sense of new responsibility. Rajadharma is the last refuge of the entire world of living beings. Trivarga is entwined in Rajadharma, and Moksadharma is made clear through it. What reins are to horses, what the elephant-goad is to the elephant, that the Dharma of the king is to the people, who have to be controlled by him to keep them on the safe road.[13]

The relevance of Raj-dharma to constitutionalism lies not in treating the king as equivalent to a modern democratic government, but in the idea that political authority is accompanied by duties. The Constitution similarly distributes public power through institutions and subjects its exercise to legal and constitutional limitations.[14]

3.3 The Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Ethical Governance

The Ramayana and Mahabharata contain extensive narratives concerning kingship, justice, duty, conflict, and governance. Their presence in the intellectual history of Indian jurisprudence is especially relevant to the manuscript's illustrations because the Constitution places imagery associated with Rama and with Krishna and Arjuna alongside Parts III and IV.

The Bhagavad Gita's account of duty and action is particularly relevant to the illustration preceding Part IV. Krishna's teaching concerning action without attachment to personal reward and action undertaken for the welfare of the world can be read as an ethical parallel to the Directive Principles, although the constitutional provisions themselves derive their legal authority from the Constitution rather than from the Gita. The concept of Lokasangraha—the welfare or holding together of the world—is a central concept in the Bhagavad Gita and is widely regarded as its social message due to its emphasis on the well-being of all living

[12] Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva, in The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa (K.M. Ganguli trans., 1883–1896).
[13] Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala, (1973) 4 S.C.C. 225, 292–93 (India).
[14] INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21, 32; Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India, (1980) 3 S.C.C. 625, 657–58 (India).

beings. Lokasamgraha means "holding the world together" but can also refer to the welfare or coherence of the world. Swami Vivekananda speaks of Lokasamgraha as "work for the good of others," and Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak interpreted the Gita as Karma-yoga-sastra, highlighting Lokasangraha as the most important goal.[15]

The Mahabharata Shanti Parva tells how the ruler is a servant of the people, and he is expected to protect the weaker and strive to uphold fairness. This is reflective of the contemporary constitutional concept of the state as trustee of the common good and not the master of the people.

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[15] Bhagavad Gītā 3.19–25, in The Bhagavad Gita (Eknath Easwaran trans., 2d ed. 2007).

CHAPTER-4

THEMATIC READING OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS

4.1 Union, Citizenship, and Fundamental Rights

4.1.1 The Zebu Bull Seal and the Idea of Bharat

The first illustration is associated with the Indus Valley Civilization and is placed before Part I, which concerns the Union and its territory. The illustration depicts the Indus Valley seal-mark, the bull. Read symbolically, the bull can be understood as connecting the constitutional Union with a much older historical geography. The argument should, however, remain an interpretive one: the image cannot by itself establish a legal proposition that the modern constitutional State derives its legal validity from the Indus Valley Civilization.[16]

The use of the Indus Valley seal as the opening visual motif is significant because it establishes a continuity of civilization that predates the constitutional moment by several millennia. The seal represents one of the earliest known forms of civic identity in the subcontinent, and its placement before the provisions on the Union suggests a visual argument about the antiquity and coherence of the Indian political community.[17]

4.1.2 The Gurukul and Constitutional Citizenship

The illustration associated with Part II is commonly read in relation to the ancient Gurukul. Part II of the Constitution, which deals with citizenship, opens with the illustration of an ashram with ascetic figures offering prayers and performing yajnas. The scene appears nestled in a forest setting and is described as "Scene from Vedic Ashram (Gurukul)."[18]

The conceptual connection proposed by this paper is between education, character formation, civic responsibility, and citizenship. The constitutional provisions on citizenship are legal rules concerning membership in the polity; the Gurukul image can therefore be treated as a cultural metaphor for the formation of responsible members of a political community, rather than as a source of the law of citizenship. The Vedic Age was a time when the worship of personified powers was prevalent, and the Constitution shows that era through a Gurukul or Hermitage school, suggesting that citizenship involves not merely legal status but also ethical formation.[19]

[16] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 19.
[17] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 19.
[18] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 23.
[19] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 23.

4.1.3 Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Fundamental Rights

The illustration preceding Part III depicts Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita returning to Ayodhya. In the original handwritten Constitution, Part III on Fundamental Rights carries an illustration of Ram, Sita, and Lakshman. Shri Ram symbolized justice, duty, and protection of people's rights, qualities central to the constitutional guarantees of equality before law, freedoms, religious liberty, and protection against exploitation.[20]

The paper reads this image through the concepts of duty, righteous rule, protection of the vulnerable, and welfare. Those concepts can be placed in dialogue with Part III, which guarantees equality before law, freedoms, religious liberty, and protection against exploitation. The legal force of these rights, however, comes from the Constitution itself. The visual representation of Lord Ram, Sita, and Lakshman returning from vanvas in the original Constitution, notably in Part III on Fundamental Rights, played a pivotal role in the Ram Janmbhoomi verdict—a landmark moment in legal history.[21]

4.2 Directive Principles and Ethical Governance

4.2.1 Krishna and Arjuna: Dharma, Karma, and Lokasangraha

The illustration preceding Part IV depicts Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The paper interprets the image through duty, selfless action, and Lokasangraha —the welfare or holding together of the world. These concepts provide a useful philosophical parallel to the Directive Principles, which direct the State toward social, economic, and political justice and the welfare of the people.[22]

Part IV of the Constitution pertains to the Directive Principles of State Policy, which are fundamental in governance but not enforceable by any court. Article 37 expressly characterizes the Directive Principles as fundamental in governance but not enforceable by any court. The relationship between the illustration and the Directive Principles should nevertheless be described as a comparative or interpretive correspondence rather than a claim that the Directive Principles were legally derived from the Gita.

The term Lokasamgraha means social harmony and welfare as well as world preservation. It appears explicitly twice in the Gita in chapter three, verses 20 and 25. Lokasamgraha is

[20] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 27.
[21] INDIA CONST. pt. III; INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 19, 21, 25–32.
[22] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 31.

interpreted as focusing on the benefits of the people, bringing them together, and inspiring people towards a common cause.[23]

4.2.2 Buddha and the Ethical Exercise of Public Power

The image of the Buddha's enlightenment preceding Part V can be read as a reminder that the exercise of public authority requires restraint, reflection, and freedom from narrow personal interests. Part V establishes the Union Executive, Parliament, and Judiciary. Lord Buddha graces the section on Union governance, and this placement symbolises the ideals of enlightenment—a parliamentary system, independent Judiciary, and balance of power—guiding the nation's highest institutions.[24]

The symbolic connection is therefore between ethical self-restraint and the institutional exercise of constitutional power. Buddhist political thought contributed to the idea that the collective will must conform to the universal law of righteousness (Dhamma). The ruler must uphold the Dhamma. The ideal government encouraged by Buddha is ethics-based democracy, and Buddha encouraged the kings of his times to be ethical and seek the welfare of their people.[25]

Buddha showed a clear preference for democratic and representative forms of government, which were familiar to him from his republican background. In his teachings and practices, Buddha endorsed dharmic democracy that extends beyond governance by the power of the majority to cultivate a deeply ethical society. A righteous ruler must follow the ethical precepts of no killing, no stealing, no lying. Nonviolence and equality are the bedrocks of Buddhist social justice, and good government requires moral and legal protection against the arbitrary use of power.

4.3 Federalism, Pluralism, and Local Self-Government

4.3.1 Mahavira and Anekāntavāda

The illustration preceding Part VI depicts Mahavira. Part VI, which talks about the States, has Lord Mahavir as a metaphor for a nonviolent approach to governance. The Jain doctrine of Anekāntavāda, which emphasizes the many-sided character of reality, offers a productive metaphor for a constitutional order that accommodates institutional and regional diversity.

[23] The Bhagavad Gītā 3.20, 3.25, in The Bhagavad Gita (Eknath Easwaran trans., 2d ed. 2007).
[24] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 35.
[25] INDIA CONST. pt. V; see generally The Dhammapada (Eknath Easwaran trans., 2d ed. 2007).

Ahimsa and Aparigraha may likewise be read as ethical concepts supporting restraint and non-domination.[26]

Anekantavada fosters acceptance of diverse viewpoints, which is the foundation of parliamentary debates, federal negotiations, and policy deliberations. It encourages respect for marginalized voices, ensuring pluralism in society. The main points of Mahavira's doctrine of Anekant are freedom, relativity, equality, and coexistence. Mahavira was born in a republican society, and Anekantavad in its practical form is the republican system, which in modern terms is known as pluralist democracy. The Jain philosophy of Anekantavada or non-one-sidedness accepts the legitimacy of all standpoints and looks down on those that claim a monopoly on correctness.[27]

These are interpretive parallels, not claims that Jain doctrine legally establishes Indian federalism. While they cannot substitute for firm constitutional commitments, they provide a philosophical foundation for dialogue, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence in a plural society.

4.3.2 The Mauryan Age and Unity in Diversity

The Mauryan illustration, particularly its association with Ashoka, is presented in the manuscript alongside the historical treatment of Part VII. The paper connects Ashoka's conception of Dhamma with the later constitutional reorganization of India. Ashoka's Dhamma is both religion and politics at the same time, a universal ethic for a diverse empire, or what Patrick Olivelle called a "civil religion." Ashoka's edicts called for members of all religions to be welcome throughout his empire, declared that members of different religions should exhibit restraint in speech and not insult other traditions, and articulated a universal ethic of Dhamma.[28]

Ashoka embarked on his policy of Dhamma which nobody could object to. He was aware of the huge diversity in the country and he was aware of his political compulsion to create some common pattern of behaviour and common approach to the problems of society. He pleaded for tolerance of different religious sects in an attempt to create a sense of harmony. Austin's three cores of the Indian constitution—unity, social revolution, and democracy—are part of Ashokan schemes for governing his polity about 2300 years back. Ashokan emphasis on

[26] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 39.
[27] Padmanabh S. Jaini, The Jaina Path of Purification 90–94 (1979).
[28] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 43.

ethical governance and his singular focus on Buddha's Dhamma were adopted as his Dhamma.[29]

The historical connection should be expressed cautiously: Part VII was subsequently repealed in the constitutional reorganization of the States, while the artistic association remains a symbolic interpretation rather than a causal explanation of the constitutional amendment.[30]

4.3.3 Vikramaditya, the Original Part IX, and the Later Panchayati Raj Constitution

The illustration associated with original Part IX depicts a scene from the court of King Vikramaditya. The crucial historical point is that original Part IX did not concern Panchayati Raj. In the Constitution as adopted in 1950, Part IX dealt with the territories in Part D of the First Schedule and other territories not specified in that Schedule, while Article 243 contained the relevant transitional territorial provision. The Lalit Kala Akademi's 2024 catalogue identifies the artwork as a scene from the court of King Vikramaditya, depicting the ruler and courtiers in a cultural setting. This distinction is essential because the present Constitution uses Part IX for Panchayats only after the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992."[31]

The paper reads this image as a symbol of justice, knowledge, and cultural patronage and then connects it, only by later comparison, with participatory governance. The modern constitutional framework for local self-government was inserted into Part IX by the Seventy-Third Amendment and complemented by Part IXA for municipalities through the Seventy-Fourth Amendment. Accordingly, the Vikramaditya court scene can be discussed as a broader metaphor of public deliberation and accessible authority, but it should not be presented as an illustration commissioned for a Panchayati Raj chapter that did not yet exist in the 1950 text.[32]

4.4 Knowledge, Tribal Justice, and Inclusion

4.4.1 Nalanda and Educational Empowerment

The illustration associated with Part X invokes Nalanda. The paper interprets Nalanda as a symbol of knowledge and educational empowerment and connects that symbolism with constitutional protection for Scheduled and Tribal Areas. The constitutional provisions in Part

[29] Granville Austin, The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation 1–10 (Oxford Univ. Press 1966).
[30] Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956, No. 22, 1956, India Code; INDIA CONST. pt. VII (1950) (repealed).
[31] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 51.
[32] Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, No. 73, 1992, India Code; Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1992, No. 74, 1992, India Code.

X primarily concern administration of Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas; the connection with education is therefore normative and thematic rather than a direct textual relationship.[33]

Nalanda, as an ancient centre of learning, represents the highest ideals of knowledge, inquiry, and the dissemination of wisdom. The illustration's placement before the provisions on the administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas suggests a visual argument that the inclusion of marginalized communities requires not merely administrative arrangements but also educational empowerment and access to knowledge. The constitutional framework for tribal justice in India has evolved from indigenous, community-led systems to state-controlled laws and, more recently, to constitutional recognition of pluralism.[34]

4.5 Sovereignty, Finance, and Economic Integration

4.5.1 The Orissan War Horse and the Union-State Relationship

Original Part XI is accompanied not by an Ashvamedha scene but by an illustration inspired by an Orissan sculpture of a war horse from the Konark Sun Temple. The Lalit Kala Akademi catalogue identifies the image as a scene from Orissan sculpture and describes a warrior and elaborately carved horse, while noting that the original sculpture also inspired the State Emblem of Odisha. The image therefore belongs to a different symbolic register from the Ashvamedha. Its association with Part XI can more cautiously be read through themes of political force, territorial order, movement, and the relationship between central authority and constituent political units.[35]

The modern constitutional relationship between the Union and the States is governed by the distribution of legislative, executive, and financial authority in Parts XI and XII and by the constitutional practice of federal coordination. The war-horse image should therefore be treated as a visual metaphor rather than as evidence of a direct Ashvamedha theory of federalism. Its value lies in prompting questions about power, movement, coordination, and the disciplined exercise of authority within a territorially integrated constitutional order.[36]

4.5.2 Nataraja and Economic Governance

The illustration associated with Part XII is centered on Lord Shiva in the Nataraja pose. The Lalit Kala Akademi identifies it as a Chola Bronze Nataraja rendered by Gouri Bhanja

[33] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 55.
[34] INDIA CONST. pt. X; INDIA CONST. art. 244.
[35] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 59.
[36] INDIA CONST. arts. 245–263.

according to the instructions of the Shilpa-Shastras. The catalogue explains the iconography through Shiva's five activities—creation, protection, destruction, grounding or embodiment, and release—and specifically associates the abhaya mudra with protection, peace, benevolence, and the dispelling of fear. The artwork therefore supplies a richer and better-supported basis for discussing economic governance than the unsupported suggestion that the Part XII image should principally be identified as a Swastika-and-Nataraja composition.[37]

The paper reads Nataraja's cosmic dance as a metaphor for movement, transformation, protection, balance, and release. Part XII itself concerns finance, property, contracts, and related matters. The proposed jurisprudential link is therefore that economic governance should serve public prosperity while remaining subject to constitutional discipline. This is a symbolic correspondence rather than a claim that the Constitution adopted a Shaiva theory of finance. The image can instead be read as a reminder that material order is embedded within a wider conception of protection, balance, responsibility, and change.[38]

4.5.3 Bhagiratha and the Free Flow of Trade

The Bhagiratha episode is associated with Part XIII, which concerns trade, commerce, and intercourse within India. The 13th Chapter of the Constitution has an image of Bhagiratha's penance and the descent of Ganga. Bhagiratha is a legendary king of the Ikshvaku dynasty who brings the Sacred River Ganges, personified as the Hindu River Goddess Ganga, to Earth from the Heavens. He is best known for his legend of bringing the sacred river Ganges from heaven upon the earth by performing a penance.[39]

The paper interprets the descent of the Ganga as an image of bringing a desired public good into practical reality through sustained effort. In constitutional terms, the relevant legal framework is the guarantee of freedom of trade, commerce, and intercourse, subject to constitutionally permitted restrictions. The Constituent Assembly debates on Part XIII reveal that the entire Chapter provides the maximum possible amount of liberty for trade and commerce, though some members wanted interstate trade and commerce to be almost absolutely free. The Bhagiratha image thus serves as a visual reminder that the free flow of trade is a public good that requires deliberate effort and constitutional protection to achieve.[40]

[37] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 63.
[38] INDIA CONST. arts. 264–300A; see generally Stella Kramrisch, The Presence of Śiva 439–52 (1981).
[39] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 67.
[40] INDIA CONST. arts. 301–307.

4.6 Administration, Elections, and Representative Leadership

4.6.1 Akbar's Court and Inclusive Administration

The illustration of Akbar's court is placed alongside Part XIV, which concerns services under the Union and the States and Public Service Commissions. Part XIV of the Constitution commences with a scene from the court of Emperor Akbar in which imposing masterpieces of Mughal architecture serve as a backdrop.[41]

The paper emphasizes the image's association with administrative organization, dialogue, and cultural plurality. Akbar's state was built on the principle of sulahkul, or universal tolerance. All religions were to be equally tolerated in the administration of the state. In Akbar's theory of government, the ruler's duty is to ensure justice for all the people in his care, no matter what their religion. He introduced the generous principle that the highest offices in the state should be open to both Hindus and Muslims according to merit, and that people should have complete freedom to worship their God in the way they preferred.[42]

Its jurisprudential value lies in presenting administration as an activity requiring competence, diversity, and institutional responsibility. The architect of modern India was the great Mughal Emperor Akbar who gave equal respect to people of all communities and appointed them to the highest offices on their merits irrespective of their religion or caste.

4.6.2 Shivaji Maharaj and Guru Gobind Singh: Leadership and Elections

The illustrations associated with Part XV depict Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Guru Gobind Singh. The paper interprets these figures as examples of courage, sacrifice, responsibility, and protection of the community. Shivaji vindicated his claims to the Padshahi of Hindus, and a formal coronation took place in 1674. As a civil ruler, he paid his army salary either in cash or in kind, and he united his people for self-defence.[43]

Guru Gobind Singh organized the Sikhs as a militant democracy. He instituted the pahul, a rite of initiation, and established the brotherhood of Khalsa. He decreed that anyone baptized by five of the baptized would belong to the elect Khalsa, an honour hitherto restricted to those directly initiated by the Guru. He declared that while any five of the initiated, no matter how humble, could make one a Singh, neither wealth nor social status would determine membership in the community.

[41] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 71.
[42] INDIA CONST. arts. 308–323.
[43] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 75.

Part XV, however, establishes the constitutional framework for elections and the Election Commission. The symbolic lesson proposed by the paper is that representative power should be understood as a public trust rather than merely as an instrument of personal power. The democratic and participatory elements in the legacies of Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh provide a historical vocabulary for understanding the constitutional commitment to elections and representative government.[44]

4.7 Social Justice, Language, and Emergency Powers

4.7.1 Rani Lakshmibai and Tipu Sultan

The illustration associated with Part XVI depicts Rani Lakshmibai and Tipu Sultan. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar mentions the portrait and work of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Guru Gobind Singh in Part XV of the Constitution, while Part XVI mentions the portrait of Rani Lakshmibai and Tipu Sultan and glorifies their work.[45]

The paper reads their association with resistance and political struggle as a reminder of the constitutional commitment to the representation and protection of historically disadvantaged communities. Rani Lakshmibai fought bravely against the British to save her empire from annexation, and Tipu Sultan is depicted as a strategic leader who defended Mysore against British forces. Part XVI contains special provisions concerning Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other classes. The inclusion of these figures—a queen who resisted colonial annexation and a ruler who fought against the British—signals that the constitutional commitment to social justice is rooted in a history of resistance to domination and exploitation.[46]

4.7.2 Gandhi and the Official Language

The image of Mahatma Gandhi associated with Part XVII is interpreted through the ideal of language as a means of communication and social unity rather than domination. Gandhi appears twice in the illustrations, leading the Dandi March and visiting riot-hit Noakhali in Bangladesh.[47]

The constitutional language provisions recognize Hindi in Devanagari as the official language of the Union while preserving the use of English and providing for linguistic diversity.

[44] INDIA CONST. arts. 324–329.
[45] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 79.
[46] INDIA CONST. arts. 330–342A.
[47] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 83–85.

Gandhi's own approach to language was deeply pluralistic, emphasizing communication and mutual understanding rather than linguistic hegemony. The illustration of Gandhi before Part XVII thus serves as a visual reminder that language policy should serve the cause of national unity and social harmony rather than cultural domination.[48]

4.7.3 Gandhi and Emergency Powers

The association of Gandhi with Part XVIII creates a deliberate ethical tension: emergency powers are extensive, whereas Gandhi is closely associated with non-violence and resistance to coercive domination. The paper interprets this tension as a reminder that extraordinary constitutional powers should be exercised with restraint and for legitimate public purposes.[49]

Modern constitutional law also contains safeguards against the abuse of emergency powers. The 44th Amendment of 1978 introduced important procedural safeguards, including the requirement that a proclamation of emergency must be approved by both Houses of Parliament by a special majority. The history of the Emergency of 1975–77, when fundamental rights were suspended under Article 359 and the press was gagged, serves as a cautionary reminder of the dangers of unchecked executive power. The placement of Gandhi's image before Part XVIII is thus a visual injunction: emergency powers must be exercised in the spirit of non-violence and constitutional restraint, not as instruments of authoritarian control.[50]

4.8 Constitutional Safeguards, Amendment, and Continuity

4.8.1 Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Constitutional Safeguards

The illustration associated with Part XIX depicts Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The paper interprets his image as representing integrity, sovereignty, courage, and responsibility. Part XIX is concerned with a range of constitutional protections and immunities, including provisions concerning the President and Governors.[51]

Subhas Chandra Bose believed that democracy is by no means a Western institution but a human institution. India, he believed, should become an independent Federal Republic. In his Haripura Presidential Address of February 1938, Bose explicitly identified totalitarianism as the danger a free India must guard against, and named the existence of more than one party

[48] INDIA CONST. arts. 343–351.
[49] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 87.
[50] INDIA CONST. arts. 352–360; Constitution (Forty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1978, No. 44, 1978, India Code.
[51] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 91.

and internal party democracy as the structural safeguards—stating that leaders must be elected from below rather than imposed from above.

The symbolic argument is that institutional safeguards should protect constitutional government rather than create personal privilege. Bose's commitment to elected government and his warnings against totalitarianism provide a historical foundation for the constitutional safeguards that protect democratic governance and individual rights.

4.8.2 The Himalayas, Desert, and Sea: Constitutional Continuity and Change

The geographical images associated with Parts XX, XXI, and XXII are read as metaphors for constitutional endurance, territorial security, transition, and continuing movement. The Himalayas are used in the paper as an image of constitutional permanence, the desert as a symbol of territorial security and transitional arrangements, and the boat at sea as an image of a Constitution capable of navigating change.[52]

The reference to the Himalayas also provides an opportunity to connect the paper's civilizational argument with the modern doctrine of constitutional basic structure. The analogy is necessarily metaphorical. The legal doctrine itself rests on judicial interpretation of Article 368 and the Constitution's structural limitations, particularly as developed in Kesavananda Bharati. The geographical diversity of India—from the Himalayan peaks to the Thar Desert to the coastal waters—mirrors the constitutional diversity of the Republic, suggesting that the Constitution's capacity to endure lies in its ability to accommodate diversity within a framework of unity.

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[52] Lalit Kala Akademi, supra note 1, at 95–103.

CHAPTER-5
FROM SYMBOLISM TO CONSTITUTIONAL JURISPRUDENCE

5.1 Rule of Law and Limited Government

The strongest jurisprudential connection across the illustrations is the recurring idea that authority is accompanied by duty. Dharma and Raj-dharma provide a historical vocabulary for describing limitations on rulers, while constitutionalism supplies a modern legal structure for limiting public power. The comparison is valuable precisely because it reveals a shared normative concern without pretending that the two systems are institutionally identical.[53]

The Western rule of law, as developed by Aristotle, Magna Carta, Sir Edward Coke, and A.V. Dicey, emphasizes the supremacy of law, equality before the law, and the predominance of legal spirit. The Bharatiya jurisprudence of Dharma offers a parallel but distinct framework in which normative order is superior to personal authority. Both traditions converge on the fundamental principle that no ruler is above the law.[54]

5.2 Welfare and Social Justice

The images associated with Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavira, Bhagiratha, Gandhi, and the figures representing resistance can be read together as a broad ethical vocabulary of welfare, restraint, dignity, and protection of the vulnerable. These themes resonate with the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, but the constitutional provisions remain the legal source of enforceable rights and governmental duties.[55]

The concept of Lokasangraha, with its emphasis on the welfare of all living beings, provides a philosophical foundation for the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Buddhist emphasis on ethics-based governance and the welfare of the people, the Jain commitment to non-violence and pluralism, and the Gandhian vision of service to the marginalized all contribute to a civilizational vocabulary of social justice that informs the constitutional commitment to equality and dignity.

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5.3 Federalism, Pluralism, and Participatory Governance

Mahavira, the Orissan war horse, Vikramaditya, and the illustrations connected with regional and local institutions can be understood collectively as visual representations of unity alongside diversity. Modern Indian federalism is constitutionally structured through

[53] INDIA CONST. arts. 14, 21, 32; Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India, (1980) 3 S.C.C. 625, 657–58 (India).
[54] A.V. Dicey, Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution (8th ed. 1915).
[55] INDIA CONST. pts. III–IV.

legislative, executive, financial, and institutional arrangements rather than through any ancient model. The civilizational comparison nevertheless provides a framework for asking how Indian constitutionalism accommodates multiple communities and levels of government.

The Anekantavada doctrine of Jainism, with its emphasis on the many-sided character of reality and the legitimacy of multiple viewpoints, offers a philosophical foundation for federal negotiation and cooperative governance. Ashoka's Dhamma, as a universal ethic for a diverse empire, provides a historical precedent for the constitutional accommodation of pluralism. The Vikramaditya court scene, with its emphasis on dialogue and diverse participation, serves as a visual metaphor for the deliberative ideals of Panchayati Raj.[56]

5.4 Constitutional Morality and the Limits of Civilizational Interpretation

A civilizational reading must also confront its own limits. Ancient Indian traditions are internally diverse, historically contested, and capable of supporting competing interpretations. Nor can the presence of an illustration establish that the Constitution adopts the entire religious, social, or political system associated with the figure depicted. The scholarly task is therefore selective and critical: to identify concepts that illuminate constitutional questions while preserving the distinction between historical tradition and constitutional law.

This caution is especially important because constitutional interpretation in India is ultimately anchored in the Constitution's text, structure, and judicially developed principles. Cultural history may illuminate constitutional meaning, but it cannot be used to displace express constitutional guarantees or the constitutional commitment to equality, liberty, dignity, and secular democratic government. The most defensible position is to treat the illustrations as part of the historical and cultural context of the Constitution rather than an independent source of enforceable law.

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[56] S.R. Bommai v. Union of India, (1994) 3 S.C.C. 1, 41–42 (India).

CHAPTER-6
COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

6.1 United States: Classical Republican Influences

The United States Constitution has frequently been studied in relation to classical republican and Roman institutional influences, including the Senate and ideas of mixed government and checks and balances. The Founding Fathers were knowledgeable about the constitutions of the Greek poleis, of Carthage, and of Rome. The Constitution and the Federalist papers are permeated by a high seriousness and by a desire and power to generalize political experience for the benefit of all.

The Constitution is firmly rooted in classical Roman concepts of law and philosophy. American Republicanism presents the primary republican narratives in their American context, and the ratification debates confirm how much Americans owed to Rome's example and the Latin authors who dominated their colonial grammar-school curriculum. The comparison is useful because it demonstrates that constitutional orders may carry historical and civilizational references without those references becoming freestanding legal rules.

6.2 South Africa: Ubuntu and Transformative Constitutionalism

South African constitutional discourse provides a closer contemporary example of a constitutional order engaging with an indigenous ethical concept. Ubuntu has been discussed in constitutional jurisprudence in connection with dignity, reconciliation, community, and restorative justice. The Constitutional Court of South Africa has invoked ubuntu in cases concerning transitional justice, dignity, equality, restorative justice, and the development of living customary law.[57]

Ubuntu is a concept that permeates the Constitution generally and more particularly Chapter Three, which contains the Bill of Rights. It is part of the heritage of South Africa and has been used to enrich constitutional jurisprudence. The flexibility of ubuntu has the potential to enrich the evolving constitutional jurisprudence of South Africa, and the general viewpoint is in favour of affording ubuntu a greater role in constitutional adjudication.

The comparison supports the proposition that constitutional interpretation can engage with indigenous intellectual traditions without treating them as substitutes for the enacted constitutional text. Like the Indian illustrations, ubuntu functions as a cultural and ethical

[57] S v. Makwanyane & Another, 1995 (3) SA 391 (CC) (S. Afr.), https://www3.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/1995/3.html.

resource that illuminates constitutional values without displacing the legal authority of the constitutional document.

6.3 New Zealand: Māori Perspectives and Legal Recognition

New Zealand offers another example in which indigenous perspectives have influenced contemporary legal institutions. The legal recognition of Te Urewera and Te Awa Tupua illustrates how a legal system can accommodate Māori conceptions of relationships between people, land, and the natural world. The Te Urewera Act 2014 recognizes the inherent spiritual value of Te Urewera and the relationship Tūhoe have with it. The Act declares Te Urewera a legal entity with all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person.[58]

The Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017 declares Te Awa Tupua to be a legal person who has all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person. The legislation recognizes the status of Te Awa Tupua and establishes a framework for its protection and governance. The comparison is not identical to the Indian constitutional experience, but it demonstrates the broader possibility of constitutional and legal systems engaging with indigenous worldviews. Like the Indian illustrations, these legal innovations show that modern legal systems can accommodate indigenous concepts without abandoning their commitment to constitutional governance.[59]

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[58] Te Urewera Act 2014, § 11 (N.Z.), https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0051/latest/DLM6183966.html.

[59] Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017, § 14 (N.Z.), https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2017/7/en/latest/.

CHAPTER-7
CRITICAL ANALYSIS

7.1 Are the Illustrations Evidence of Framers' Intent?

The paper's central interpretive proposition should not be overstated. The placement of an illustration beside a constitutional Part is evidence of deliberate artistic design, but it is not, without more, evidence of a legally authoritative intention concerning the meaning of that Part. Claims about the framers' specific purposes should therefore be supported by archival material, Constituent Assembly debates, correspondence, or statements by the artists. Where such evidence is unavailable, the article should describe the connection as a scholarly interpretation.[60]

The search for intention is justified as a search for the meanings that the framers had in mind for the words used. However, the Constitution was the product of extensive deliberation, negotiation, amendment, and institutional design. The fact that an artist selected a particular historical or philosophical image does not establish that the entire Assembly agreed upon a single jurisprudential meaning for that image. Nor does the absence of a recorded debate about an illustration establish that the image was legally insignificant. The safest scholarly position is therefore to treat the illustrations as evidence of the document's visual and cultural presentation, while requiring separate evidence for claims about subjective constitutional intent.

7.2 Avoiding Presentism

A second difficulty is presentism—the tendency to interpret ancient concepts entirely through modern constitutional categories. Dharma is not simply 'rule of law'; Raj-dharma is not simply 'constitutional accountability'; and Anekāntavāda is not simply 'federal pluralism.' Each analogy must preserve the historical difference between the traditions being compared. The value of the comparison lies in identifying meaningful resonances while acknowledging conceptual discontinuities.

The doctrine of contemporanea expositio est optima et fortissimm has no application when interpreting an ongoing statute like the Constitution. The Constitution of India is a unique document that encompasses philosophy, politics, society, and law, requiring an interpretative model distinct from ordinary legal interpretation. Constitutional interpretation in India is

[60] Constituent Assembly Debates (India); see also B. Shiva Rao, The Framing of India's Constitution: A Study (1966).

influenced by Western methods, including textualism, originalism, structuralism, and purposivism, but it also draws on indigenous traditions of Dharma-Nyaya and constitutional morality.

7.3 Illustrations as Context, Not Operative Law

The most defensible conclusion is therefore that the illustrations form part of the historical and cultural context of the Constitution rather than an independent source of enforceable law. Their value is greatest when they help explain the intellectual atmosphere of the document, generate comparative questions, and illuminate the relationship between constitutional principles and Indian cultural memory. They should not be used to override clear constitutional text or established doctrine.

A source may be constitutionally significant without being legally operative. Constitutions are read through multiple forms of historical and institutional context, including founding debates, political practice, historical circumstances, and later judicial interpretation. The illustrations occupy a different category: they form part of the material presentation of the original constitutional manuscript, but they do not prescribe powers, create rights, or establish enforceable duties. Their principal scholarly value is therefore contextual. They can generate questions about how justice, authority, community, welfare, and political responsibility were imagined in the constitutional moment.

7.4 Constitutional Interpretation and Historical Context

The interpretive value of the illustrations becomes clearer when constitutional interpretation is distinguished from constitutional history. A court deciding a dispute under the Constitution ordinarily begins with the constitutional text, its structure, precedent, and the institutional principles developed through adjudication. Historical materials may assist that inquiry, but an image appearing in the original manuscript cannot acquire independent legal force merely because it is visually striking or culturally significant. The distinction protects the constitutional text from being displaced by uncertain symbolic meanings while still allowing scholars to investigate the intellectual environment in which the Constitution was presented to the public.

This distinction also matters for claims about the Constituent Assembly. The Constitution was the product of extensive deliberation, negotiation, amendment, and institutional design. The fact that an artist selected a particular historical or philosophical image does not establish that the entire Assembly agreed upon a single jurisprudential meaning for that image. Nor does the

absence of a recorded debate about an illustration establish that the image was legally insignificant.

7.5 The Constitutional Value of a Non-Operative Source

This approach also prevents an overly romantic account of civilizational continuity. Indian constitutionalism contains both continuities and deliberate departures from earlier social and political arrangements. The Constitution establishes universal citizenship, equality before law, enforceable fundamental rights, representative institutions, judicial review, and a democratic framework that cannot simply be identified with ancient kingship or classical religious texts. At the same time, the Constitution was produced in a society with a long intellectual history, and the choice to surround the legal text with historical imagery makes that history relevant to scholarship. The relationship is therefore best described as dialogue rather than derivation.

The images in the Constitution continue the narration of the unilinear nation, and the visual presentation of the Constitution provided a cultural context to the guiding principles of independent India. The constitutive images adopt the function of representing and legitimising a symbolic construction of national identity and historical subjectivity. This understanding of the illustrations as a visual narration of national identity is consistent with treating them as contextual and interpretive rather than operative.

7.6 Contribution to Constitutional Jurisprudence

The paper's contribution lies in placing visual constitutional history within a jurisprudential framework. Discussions of the original Constitution often emphasize its calligraphy and artistic character, while discussions of ancient Indian jurisprudence frequently examine Dharma, kingship, and classical texts independently of the Constitution's material form. Bringing these strands together permits a more cautious question: not whether ancient Indian jurisprudence legally governs the Republic, but how the visual form of the constitutional manuscript may have situated modern constitutional principles within a broader historical vocabulary.

The answer suggested here is deliberately limited. The illustrations can illuminate themes, comparisons, and historical associations, but they cannot override constitutional language or settled doctrine. This limitation is not a weakness of the argument; it is what makes the argument legally defensible. By distinguishing symbolic interpretation from authoritative legal meaning, the paper avoids both extremes: treating the illustrations as meaningless decoration on one hand, and treating them as hidden constitutional provisions on the other.

CHAPTER-8
CONCLUSION

The original Constitution of India presents a distinctive relationship between legal text and visual representation. Its illustrations connect the constitutional document with episodes, personalities, philosophical traditions, and geographical symbols drawn from different periods of Indian history. Read carefully, these images provide a rich field for jurisprudential inquiry into concepts such as Dharma, Raj-dharma, welfare, restraint, pluralism, social justice, and responsible leadership.

The central argument of this paper is not that the Constitution is legally derived from ancient Indian jurisprudence, nor that every illustration proves a particular intention of the framers. Rather, the illustrations can be understood as part of a visual constitutional vocabulary that situates the modern Republic within a much longer historical narrative. The strongest interpretation is therefore one of constitutional continuity at the level of values and cultural reference, combined with institutional and legal discontinuity where the modern Constitution deliberately establishes new democratic structures and enforceable rights.

Ancient Indian jurisprudence can consequently enrich constitutional scholarship when used critically. Dharma may provide a comparative language for thinking about limits on power; Raj-dharma can illuminate the idea of public duty; the epics can provide narratives of ethical governance; and Jain, Buddhist, and other traditions can offer perspectives on restraint and pluralism. Yet these comparisons must remain historically sensitive. The Constitution's commitments to equality, liberty, dignity, secular democracy, representative government, and judicially enforceable rights cannot be reduced to ancient categories.

The most defensible conclusion is therefore that the illustrations are historically significant interpretive context, not substitutes for constitutional text, judicial doctrine, or democratic constitutional practice. Their value lies in opening a jurisprudential conversation between India's civilizational memory and its modern constitutional order. Properly bounded in this way, the study of the illustrations contributes to constitutional history and jurisprudence without turning symbolism into law.

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