



Influence of Freedom Fighters on Modern Indian Policies: A Document- Based Qualitative Analysis

Sameeksha Shekhar Khambe, Chabbi Ram Singh

¹Education, University of Mumbai, Ashadeep Adhyaapak Mahavidyalaya,
Nallasopara, Maharashtra, India

²Assistant Professor, University of Mumbai, Ashadeep Adhyaapak Mahavidyalaya,
Nallasopara, Maharashtra, India

Abstract- This study provides deeper insights into how moral education affects the psychological well-being of college students and offers theoretical and practical recommendations for enhancing emotion regulation and implementing psychological well-being interventions. Traditional moral development theories ascribe a significant role for emotion in moral development. It is argued here that what is needed for a clear view of the moral educational relevance of literature and the arts is a conception of moral education that does justice to the interplay between the cognitive and the affective in moral life, and that a non-relativist Aristotelian ethics of virtue holds out the best prospect for such a moral education of reason and feeling. Fear and anxiety over anticipated punishment are precursors to the internalization of moral values, for example, resulting in guilt or shame when children violate these internalized rules. This study argues that other emotions are also significant. Multiple emotions thus contribute to the development of moral self-awareness in young children, supporting the broader view that early morality is not just a punishment-based system of sanctions and rewards but also derives from young children's sensitivity to human needs and feelings and their own emotional response to these conditions.

Keywords- Traditional moral development, moral educational relevance, Fear and anxiety, psychological well-being, moral self-awareness

I. Introduction

Public policy frameworks do not emerge in historical isolation. Rather, long-lasting policy commitments typically grow out of earlier intellectual debates, institutional experiments, and moral vocabularies that shape how societies imagine justice, authority, and development. Movements for political and social transformation often serve not only as mobilizing forces but also as spaces for reflecting on governance, social change, and the limits and purposes of state power. In this sense, such movements can be understood as laboratories of policy ideas, whose competing visions are later translated—sometimes imperfectly—into constitutional principles, administrative institutions, and public programmes.

This study asks how foundational political and social thought continues to influence contemporary policy, and in what ways this influence is sustained over time. That influence can be observed at several levels. First, it appears in constitutional design, where normative commitments such as justice, liberty, equality, dignity, and fraternity are debated and institutionalized as part of a broader project of social democracy. This



perspective emphasizes that political democracy is most stable when supported by social and economic inclusion, and when public institutions actively address historical and structural disadvantages.

Second, the influence is visible in development strategies, where enduring tensions exist between locally grounded, community-oriented approaches and more centralized, state-led models of modernization. One tradition highlights self-governance, ethical limits on consumption, and work as a foundation of democratic life, while another emphasizes large-scale planning, scientific institutions, and coordinated national development. These contrasting yet complementary approaches continue to shape policy debates in many contexts.

Third, this legacy is evident in welfare and rights-based policy frameworks, where providing livelihoods, security, and dignity is treated not as charity, but as a matter of inclusion and basic entitlement. In such frameworks, public programmes are often justified in terms of social justice and collective responsibility rather than discretionary assistance.

Fourth, the influence can be seen in processes of nation-building and governance of diversity, which require institutional innovation, administrative coordination, and mechanisms for balancing unity with plurality. These challenges continue to inform debates on federal arrangements, decentralization, and intergovernmental relations.

These pathways can be illustrated through two broad examples. The first is decentralization, where constitutional and legal provisions promote local self-government and participatory institutions. Even when such principles are framed as guiding objectives rather than directly enforceable rules, their continued relevance in later institutional reforms demonstrates how ideas of local governance can persist through successive policy phases. In this way, decentralization is not merely an ethical aspiration but becomes embedded in constitutional language, institutional design, and administrative practice, even if its implementation varies across regions and over time.

The second example is rights-based welfare policy, particularly in programmes aimed at employment, livelihood security, and social protection. Such initiatives are frequently presented in terms of dignity, inclusion, and the responsibility of the state to ensure basic security for vulnerable populations. The symbolic framing of these policies—through language, narratives, and public communication—shows how policy legitimacy is often built not only on budgets and procedures, but also on moral narratives and collective memory. Programmes are thus portrayed as extensions of deeper ethical commitments rather than merely technical interventions.

Against this background, the aims of this study are threefold: (1) to identify key streams of foundational political and social thought that continue to shape contemporary policy; (2) to relate major policy domains—such as constitutional governance, social justice, development, decentralization, integration, and external relations—to these idea streams; and (3) to develop a thematic policy genealogy that



explains how influence is maintained through ongoing translation between norms, institutions, and policy narratives.

Objectives

- To determine the key freedom-fighter idea-streams that determine the current Indian policies.
- To project the policy domains to idea-streams.
- In order to produce a thematic policy genealogy on the way the influence is maintained.

Scope and delimitations

This paper focuses on national-level policy frameworks and the influence of constitutional and institutional arrangements, rather than providing a comprehensive account of all individual schemes. It traces major streams of policy thinking that have shaped governance, while also acknowledging the contribution of reformist and transformative movements that influenced debates on labour, sovereignty, and international engagement.

II. Literature Review

Freedom Struggle as a Policy Laboratory

A substantial body of scholarship on postcolonial governance has often treated movements for political transformation as a prelude to later policy development. However, research in constitutional history and political economy suggests that the period of such movements itself functioned as an important policy laboratory, where competing ideas about governance, social order, and development were debated and refined.

During this phase, multiple political imaginations emerged simultaneously. Some approaches emphasized local self-governance, community-based reconstruction, ethical restraint, and participatory civic life. Others focused on constitutional safeguards, social democracy, and enforceable rights. Still others prioritized state-led planning, scientific rationality, industrial modernization, administrative consolidation, and political integration to secure national unity.

The literature commonly groups these perspectives into three broad interpretive strands: normative constitutionalism, developmental state-building, and decentralized civic reconstruction. Taken together, these strands suggest that the foundations of public policy were shaped by a plurality of ideas rather than by any single, dominant vision. This diversity of thought continues to influence how policy goals are framed, institutions are designed, and governance strategies are debated across different periods.

Social Democracy, Constitutional Morality, and Rights

One influential stream of political thought is often examined for its impact on public policy through its emphasis on social democracy, constitutional ethics, and rights-based governance. Scholars commonly identify three major policy trajectories associated with this tradition: first, a commitment to justice through equality before the law; second, the institutionalization of political representation and protective

measures for historically marginalized populations; and third, the promotion of constitutional ethics as a guiding principle of governing practice. This approach sought to embed social transformation within durable legal and institutional frameworks, rather than relying solely on moral persuasion.

In contemporary scholarship, the idea of constitutional ethics is frequently understood as a discipline of democratic self-restraint and as a safeguard against arbitrary power. This perspective has gained increasing prominence in constitutional interpretation, judicial reasoning, and public discourse, reflecting its continued relevance for modern systems of governance.

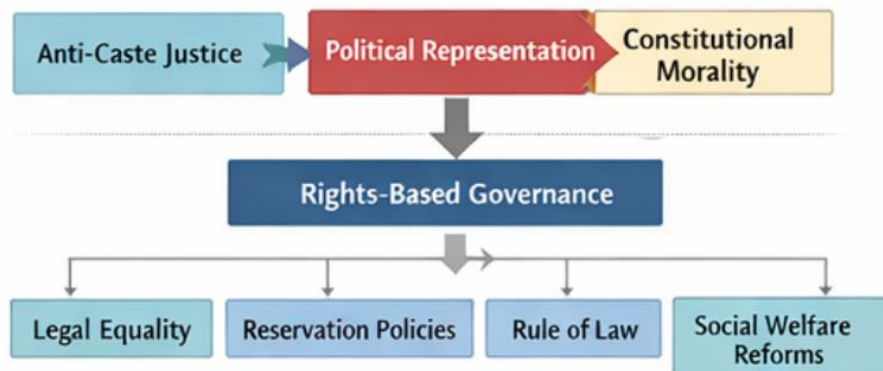


Figure 2. Social Democracy and Constitutional Morality

Decentralisation, Dignity of Labour, and the Constructive Programme

Closely associated with this policy tradition are three core ideas: decentralisation, the dignity of labour, and constructive social programmes. Its influence is reflected in support for decentralised governance through local institutions and participatory democracy, an educational approach that combines character formation with productive work, and an economic philosophy that emphasizes need, stewardship, self-reliance, and ethical limits on consumption. This tradition also advances a nonviolent political ethic, promoting a vision of governance based on persuasion, participation, and moral responsibility.

Both academic and popular accounts commonly link these ideas to constitutional commitments to local self-government, which were later strengthened through decentralisation reforms. As a result, this school of thought continues to remain relevant in contemporary debates on grassroots democracy and civic participation.

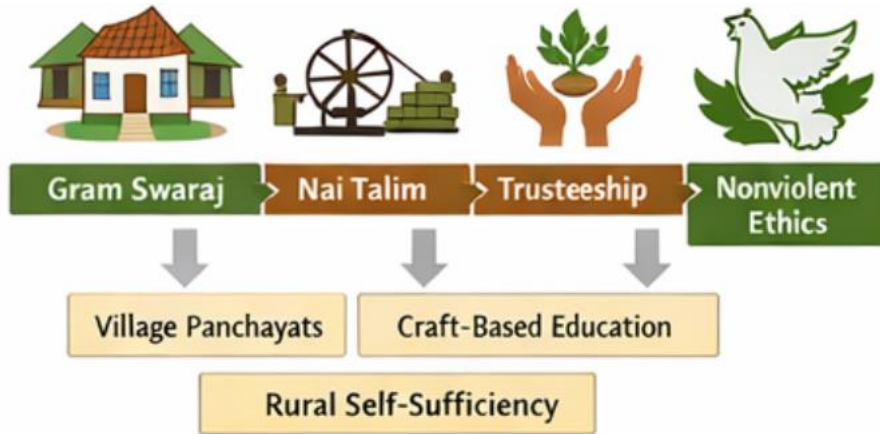


Figure 3. Decentralisation and Dignity of Labour

Planning, Institutions, and the Developmental Imagination

Jawaharlal Nehru is most often discussed in the context of the developmental state and India’s postcolonial strategy of modernisation. Nehruvian ideology was grounded in the belief that heavy industry, scientific institutions, and comprehensive economic planning were essential instruments for national transformation. The historiography of the Nehruvian legacy has highlighted both the achievements of this approach—such as the establishment of planning institutions and industrial and scientific research facilities—and the critiques it invited, particularly regarding centralisation, bureaucratisation, and a specific state-led model of modernisation (Balasubramanyam, 2010; Mukherji, 2009). In practice, the Five-Year Plans became the hallmark of post-independence development in India, with official records situating the launch of the First Five-Year Plan in 1951 as a key moment within a broader framework of state-directed development.

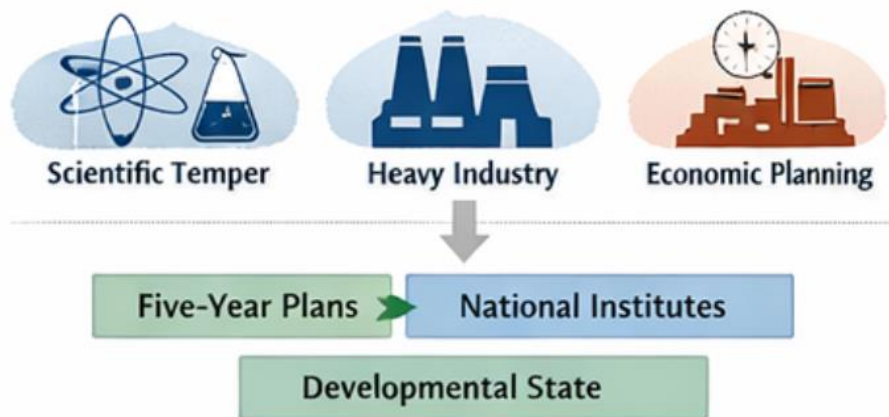


Figure 4. Developmental Imagination and State Planning

Integration, Administrative Consolidation, and Unity

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is most frequently discussed in terms of his decisive role in the integration of the princely states into the Indian Union and the subsequent administrative consolidation of these territories. Historical scholarship generally views this integration as a major policy success that required a careful combination of diplomacy, institutional innovation, and the credible use of coercive authority. The administrative acumen of V. P. Menon was instrumental in assisting Patel in transforming the ideal of national unity from a political aspiration into an administrative reality. This process of integration continues to shape contemporary debates on Indian federalism, centre–state relations, internal security, and the management of diversity within the Indian Union (Herring, 1964).

Policy Influence as Narrative and Symbolism

In addition to institutional and policy structures, researchers have increasingly examined the symbolic and narrative dimensions of policy influence. This perspective highlights how names, commemorations, and ideological references to the freedom struggle shape the construction of public legitimacy and political meaning. The practice of naming and renaming major programmes illustrates how the legacy of the independence movement continues to serve as a moral resource in contemporary governance. For instance, official justifications for the renaming of a major rural employment programme explicitly invoke principles such as dignity of labour, decentralisation, and inclusive development. Such symbolic practices indicate that the legacy of national leaders is mobilised not only through constitutional provisions and administrative arrangements, but also through narrative framing that links present policy interventions with the moral stories underpinning the nation’s political imagination.

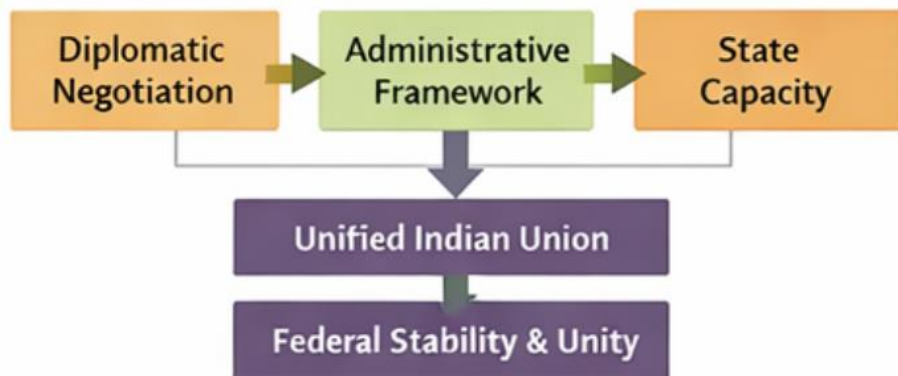


Figure 5. Integration Model and Administrative Consolidation

III. Methodology

Research Design

The current study has a qualitative research design based on a document-based study utilizing the thematic analysis. This would be suitable especially in the study of long-



term ideological effects and in tracking what can be termed as the process of policy genealogies, i.e., the mechanisms that saw ideas expressed in the freedom struggle being transformed into constitutional ideals, institutional organization and ultimately into policy programmes. A qualitative design will enable the analysis of historical ideas, normative frameworks, and policy narratives over time that just cannot be measured but instead be deeply interpreted through a text, and a meaning, a qualitative design is the best suited to analyse it.

Data Sources

This research relies upon three large sets of documentary materials. First, there are primary texts, which are main writings, statements, and political interventions of the major freedom fighters including Mahatma Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, and administrative reports of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and especially associated with V. P. Menon and incorporation of the princely states. Second, policy and constitutional texts were analysed, such as the Constitution of India (revised versions), some volumes of the Constituent Assembly Debates, and documents of the planning period, and policy statements of decentralisation, welfare and development. Third, the research will use the secondary scholarship, which will consist of journal articles and large monographs on the topic of constitution-making, political economy, decentralisation, development planning, and national integration. Combining these sources together, one can observe a complete evidentiary foundation on the topic of tracing ideological continuity and transformation.

Analytical Procedure (Thematic Coding)

A thematic coding strategy of deductive-inductive helped to analyse all documents with the help of an iterative system of reading. During the deductive phase, themes derived were social justice, decentralisation, developmental state, national unity, rights-based welfare and constitutional morality, which were established as analytical codes using the available literature based on the theories. During inductive phase, more codes were developed as a direct result of close reading of the texts like dignity, participation, discipline of power, self-reliance, scientific temper, and administrative consolidation. Taking these codes, thereafter, these were grouped into higher-order themes and systematically mapped on to the current policy areas to see the patterns of continuity, adaptation, and contestation of the ideas of freedom-fighter as compared to the modern Indian policies.

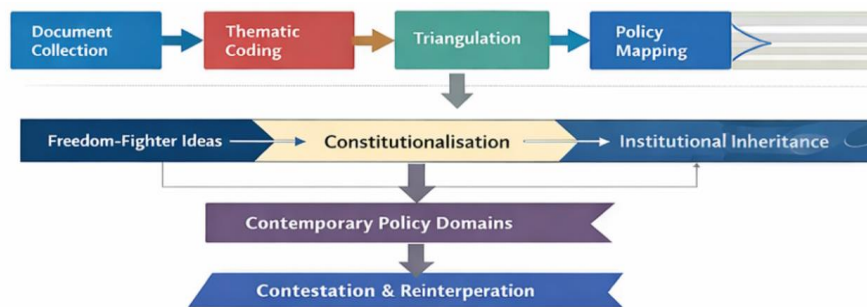


Figure 6. Methodological Framework for Tracing Policy Genealogies



Trustworthiness

Triangulation was used as one of the strategies of validation to guarantee the trustworthiness and validity of analysis. All the major themes found during the analysis were triangulated with at least three pieces of evidence: a primary text, one constitutional or policy document, and a scholarly secondary source. By so doing, this triangulated research method minimizes the possibility of interpretive bias, increases the reliability of analysis, and increases the overall rigor of the qualitative results.

IV. Result

Table 1. Mapping freedom-fighter ideas to modern policy domains (illustrative)

Freedom-fighter idea-stream	Core policy idea	Modern policy domain(s) influenced	Policy expression (illustrative examples)
Gandhian Gram Swaraj	Decentralised self-government	Local governance, rural development	Constitutional support for Panchayats and decentralisation debates linked to Article 40 and later reforms
Gandhian dignity of labour	Work as dignity and inclusion	Rural welfare, employment policy	Rights-based framing and official discourse around employment guarantee and inclusive growth
Ambedkarite social democracy	Equality + safeguards	Social justice, affirmative action, anti-discrimination	Constitutional and policy debates on representation, dignity, and rights
Ambedkarite constitutional morality	Restraint of power, constitutional methods	Rule of law, constitutional interpretation	Scholarly debate and jurisprudential uptake (e.g., constitutional morality discourse)
Nehruvian developmentalism	Planned development + scientific institutions	Economic strategy, institutions	Five-Year Plan tradition; planning institutions documented in official material
Patel/Menon integrationism	Unity via administrative consolidation	Federalism, internal security, state formation	Historical analyses of integration as nation-building policy

Thematic findings

Five themes that looked the strongest links among freedom fighters on the one hand and contemporary policy on the other were identified across the corpus:

Theme 1: Justice: a constitutional project (Ambedkar).



The contemporary Indian policy considers justice as not charity but it is a constitutional obligation, an Ambedkarite formulation and frames the dignity to institutional safeguards that are enforceable. Chakrabarty (2016) makes the case that the role of Ambedkar is the key to the constitutionalization of the Indian democratic project, suggesting that the use of long-term institutional strategies should not focus on moral appeals but on a combination of them.

Theme 2: Decentralisation as education that is democratic (Gandhi).

Decentralisation tradition views self-government as self-governance as well as civic formation. The constitutional mandate in favour of village panchayats and further restructuring of the same has made decentralisation an ongoing policy frame commonly allied with the Gandhian principles in the policy discourse.

Theme 3: Development as capacity of the state (Nehru).

Planning state developed such a policy grammar where development is coordinated, prioritised, measured and institutionalised. According to official documentation the beginning of Five-Year Plans can be found in 1951 and the definition of planning as a state duty. There are scholarly narratives that argue on the advantages and risks of this legacy such as centralisation and subsequent changes (Balasubramanyam, 2010; Mukherji, 2009).

Theme 4: Togetherness by a negotiated integration (Patel).

Unification of states with princely heads created a pattern of policy: the state power can create institutional negotiation that will result in unifying the state. According to historical scholarship, Patel was one of those who laid the groundwork of integration and national unity became not merely the symbolical statement, but the result of the administrative accomplishment.

Symbolic memory as policy legitimacy: The theme 5.

Welfare promises and life ethical accounts are owned using freedom-fighter memory policies. Government propaganda at the time of renaming of NREGA laid stress on the philosophy of Gandhi governance and inclusive development. This demonstrates that power still exists through institutions but also through the public meaning-making.

Table 2. “Policy genealogy” results matrix (themes × mechanisms)

Theme	Constitutionalisation	Institutional inheritance	Policy narrative/symbolism
Social justice & dignity (Ambedkar)	Rights, equality commitments	Courts, safeguards, welfare rationales	“Dignity,” “constitutional morality” discourse
Decentralised democracy (Gandhi)	Directive basis for local self-government	PRI structures and participatory design	“Gram Swaraj,” community decision-making
Planned development	State responsibility for welfare/development	Planning bodies; development	“Nation-building through



Theme	Constitutionalisation	Institutional inheritance	Policy narrative/symbolism
(Nehru)		bureaucracy	modernization”
National unity (Patel)	Federal consolidation logic	Integration apparatus; administrative capacity	“Unity,” “integration,” commemorations
Welfare as rights (cross-stream)	DPSP-inspired welfare frames	Rural development administration	Naming and moral framing (e.g., MGNREGA)

V. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper conceptualises influence in genealogical rather than causal terms. Instead of attributing specific policies or programmes to individual historical figures, influence is understood as a complex and long-term process through which ideas are translated into constitutional texts, institutional arrangements, and policy language, and are continuously reinterpreted over time. This approach avoids simplistic claims that a particular scheme originates from a single source. Rather, it highlights continuity through transformation: normative ideas are constitutionalised, institutionalised, and eventually expressed in evolving policy practices and discourses. Such a perspective makes it possible to analyse both persistence and change within the policy environment.

Tensions Between Competing Legacies

One of the central findings of this study is that the policy system is not shaped by a single ideological tradition, but by the interaction of multiple and sometimes conflicting legacies. A key tension exists between decentralised, community-oriented approaches that emphasise moral economy, local reconstruction, and participatory self-rule, and state-centred approaches that prioritise industrial modernisation, central planning, and large-scale development. While both perspectives coexist within the policy framework, they often come into conflict in practice—for example, when centrally designed programmes constrain local autonomy, or when weak local capacity limits effective decentralisation.

A second tension emerges between approaches that stress legally enforceable rights and constitutional procedures, and those that rely more on moral persuasion, social harmony, or voluntary compliance. The contrast between rule-based democratic discipline and pragmatic political expediency continues to shape debates on constitutional governance. A third tension relates to the legacy of political integration and administrative consolidation. Although integration has been essential for stability and nation-building, it has also generated enduring challenges concerning federal balance, centre–state relations, and the management of diversity within a unified administrative system.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study suggest several policy implications. First, commitments inherited from the freedom struggle can serve as evaluative standards for



contemporary policy. Modern programmes may be assessed not only in terms of efficiency or outputs, but also against democratic principles such as dignity, participation, social justice, and constitutional method.

Second, institutional design matters as much as policy intent. Goals related to participation may fail without adequate local capacity; objectives related to growth may falter without effective checks and balances; and commitments to justice may remain symbolic without strong mechanisms of implementation and protection.

Third, symbolic politics plays a significant role in shaping policy outcomes. The naming of programmes, narrative framing, and references to history influence public acceptance and political prioritisation. This indicates that policy legitimacy is sustained not only through material results, but also through moral narratives that connect present interventions to shared historical ideals.

VI. Conclusion

This study shows that contemporary policy is best understood as the outcome of a long process in which normative ideas, institutional arrangements, and policy discourses have evolved together over time. Rather than tracing policies to single origins, a genealogical approach reveals how ideas are transformed, institutionalised, contested, and reformulated across decades. This perspective strengthens policy analysis by reconnecting current reforms with the broader democratic promises and moral foundations that continue to shape governance today.

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