

Landmark supreme Court judgments in India

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The Apex of Justice: Understanding India's Supreme Court

The Supreme Court of India. Just the name itself carries a certain weight, a sense of finality and authority. For every citizen of this vibrant democracy, it stands as the ultimate guardian of justice, the final arbiter in the complex tapestry of our laws. But what exactly is this institution, how did it come to be, and why is it so crucial to the very fabric of our nation? Let's delve into the essence of India's highest judicial body.

A Journey Through Time:

Our Supreme Court wasn't born in a vacuum. Its roots can be traced back to the Federal Court of India, established by the British in 1937. However, with India's hard-won independence and the adoption of our own Constitution, a new era dawned. On January 28th, 1950, just two days after the Constitution came into force, the Supreme Court of India was inaugurated. Initially operating from the hallowed halls of Parliament, it later found its permanent abode in its majestic building in New Delhi in 1958. This transition marked a pivotal moment, solidifying India's commitment to a sovereign and independent judicial system.

What Does "Supreme Court" Truly Mean?

In simple terms, the Supreme Court is the highest court of law in our land. Its decisions are not mere suggestions; they are binding on every other court in India. Think of it as the peak of the judicial pyramid. Whether it's scrutinizing appeals from lower courts or tackling intricate legal questions, especially those concerning our fundamental rights and the interpretation of the Constitution, its word is the final say.

The Pillars of its Authority: Functions and Power

The Supreme Court isn't just a passive observer of the legal landscape; it actively shapes and safeguards it through a range of crucial functions:

1. **The Ultimate Interpreter:** Imagine the Constitution as the foundational text of our nation. The Supreme Court acts as its definitive interpreter, ensuring that every law passed by our lawmakers aligns with its core principles.
2. **Defender of Our Rights:** For every Indian citizen, the fundamental rights enshrined in our Constitution are sacrosanct. Article 32 empowers individuals to directly approach the Supreme

Court if they believe these rights have been violated, making it a powerful protector of individual liberties.

3. **The Appellate Authority:** When a case has journeyed through the lower courts and the High Courts, the Supreme Court serves as the final avenue for appeal in civil, criminal, and constitutional matters. It provides a crucial layer of review and ensures justice is served.

4. **An Advisor to the Nation:** In matters of significant legal and constitutional importance, the President of India can seek the expert opinion of the Supreme Court under Article 143. This advisory role highlights the Court's deep understanding of the nation's legal framework.

5. **Resolving National Disputes:** The Supreme Court also possesses the unique power to settle disputes that may arise between the Union government and individual states, or even between different states. This original jurisdiction is vital for maintaining the federal balance of our nation.

6. **Taking Suo Moto Action:** In certain critical situations, particularly those involving public interest or grave human rights violations, the Supreme Court can even step in suo motu – meaning it can take up a matter on its own initiative. This demonstrates its proactive role in upholding justice.

The Structure of the Apex Court

At the helm of this powerful institution sits the Chief Justice of India (CJI), the highest judicial officer of the country. Supporting the CJI is a team of other esteemed judges, currently capped at 33. These appointments are made by the President of India, typically based on the recommendations of a collegium of senior judges, ensuring a rigorous selection process. These legal luminaries serve until the age of 65, bringing their vast experience and wisdom to the bench.

Why the Supreme Court Matters: Its Profound Importance

The Supreme Court is more than just a legal institution; it's a cornerstone of our democracy. It acts as a vital check on the powers of the executive and the legislature, preventing any potential overreach and ensuring the delicate balance of power is maintained. It stands as a beacon of hope for the marginalized and vulnerable, safeguarding their rights and ensuring their voices are heard. The landmark judgments delivered by the Supreme Court over the years have profoundly shaped the course of Indian politics, society, and law, leaving an indelible mark on our nation's journey.

Landmark judgments that shaped india: a journey through justice

the supreme court of india. these words echo with authority, signifying the apex of our nation's judicial system. but beyond the formalities lie stories – pivotal moments where legal battles transcended courtroom walls to reshape the very fabric of indian society and governance. join us as we explore some of these monumental judgments, each a testament to the evolution of justice in our land.

1. the unbreakable foundation: kesavananda bharati v. state of kerala (1973)

a land dispute transformed into a profound constitutional dialogue. swami kesavananda bharati's challenge to kerala's land reforms birthed the groundbreaking "basic structure doctrine." in a historic 13-judge bench, the supreme court declared parliament's amending power was not absolute. it could not alter the fundamental core of our constitution – the rule of law, separation of powers, and our cherished fundamental rights remained sacrosanct. this was more than a ruling; it was a guardianship of india's constitutional ethos.

2. a voice for the vulnerable: shah bano case (1985)

the shah bano case ignited a nationwide debate on gender justice and the interplay of religious and secular laws. when a 62-year-old divorced muslim woman was denied maintenance, the supreme court ruled that all divorced women, irrespective of religion, were entitled to maintenance under general criminal law. while the judgment sparked controversy, it undeniably brought the critical issues of a uniform civil code and the rights of muslim women into national focus.

3. dignity at the workplace: vishaka v. state of rajasthan (1997)

in a time when legal frameworks addressing workplace sexual harassment were absent, the vishaka guidelines emerged as a beacon of hope. following the brutal gang-rape of a social worker, the supreme court, drawing inspiration from international conventions, laid down comprehensive guidelines to prevent workplace harassment. this proactive judicial intervention recognized sexual harassment as a violation of fundamental rights and ultimately paved the way for the sexual harassment at workplace act of 2013.

4. the inviolable right: justice k.s. puttaswamy v. union of india (2017)

in an era defined by digital interconnectedness, the question of privacy took center stage. the challenge to the aadhaar scheme culminated in a monumental nine-judge bench ruling that the right to privacy is an inherent fundamental right under article 21. this verdict has profound implications for data protection, surveillance, and the very definition of individual liberty in the digital age.

5. love unbound: navtej singh johar v. union of india (2018)

a colonial-era law, section 377 of the indian penal code, criminalized consensual homosexual relationships. the navtej singh johar case challenged this archaic provision, and the supreme court delivered a historic judgment, decriminalizing consensual same-sex relations. this was a

powerful affirmation of the constitutional values of dignity, equality, and liberty for the lgbtq+ community.

6. ending an ancient injustice: shayara bano v. union of india (2017)

the practice of instant triple talaq left countless muslim women in a vulnerable position. shayara bano's challenge led the supreme court to strike down this practice as violative of fundamental rights. this judgment paved the way for the muslim women (protection of rights on marriage) act of 2019, a significant stride towards gender justice within the community.

In Conclusion:

The Supreme Court of India is not merely a court of law; it is the ultimate guardian of our Constitution, the unwavering voice of justice, and a symbol of legal integrity. In our democratic framework, its role in upholding fairness, protecting the rights of every citizen, and ensuring the smooth functioning of our constitutional mechanisms is absolutely indispensable. It stands tall as a testament to our commitment to the rule of law and a beacon of hope for a just and equitable society.