



Consistency. Right Direction. Discipline.

Supreme Court Judgements and Cases



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Supreme Court Cases & Judgments for UPSC GS-2 (Mains-Ready Notes)

1. BASIC STRUCTURE, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS & JUDICIAL REVIEW

1. Kesavananda Bharati vs State of Kerala (1973)

Essence: Parliament can amend Constitution but cannot alter Basic Structure.

Use: Constitutional amendment, checks & balances, judicial review.

2. Minerva Mills vs Union of India (1980)

Essence: Limited amending power part of Basic Structure; judicial review is basic structure.

Use: Balance between Part III & Part IV, legitimacy of judicial review.

3. I.R. Coelho vs State of TN (2007)

Essence: Laws placed in 9th Schedule after 1973 are subject to judicial review.

Use: Protection against arbitrary immunity.

4. S.R. Bommai vs Union of India (1994)

Essence: Secularism is Basic Structure; judicial review of President's Rule.

Use: Federalism, Governor misuse, Centre-State relations.

2. FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

5. Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India (1978)

Essence: Expanded Article 21, "due process of law", reasonableness.

Use: Administrative fairness, procedure established by law.

6. Puttaswamy (Privacy) Judgement (2017)

Essence: Right to Privacy = Fundamental Right under Article 21.

Use: Data protection, Aadhaar, surveillance debates.

7. Navtej Singh Johar vs Union of India (2018)

Essence: Decriminalised homosexuality; dignity, equality, privacy.

Use: Rights-based approach, vulnerable groups.

8. Joseph Shine vs Union of India (2018)

Essence: Adultery law Section 497 struck down; equality for women.

Use: Gender justice, patriarchy in laws.

9. Triple Talaq Case – Shayara Bano vs Union of India (2017)

Essence: Instant triple talaq unconstitutional.

Use: Religious freedom vs basic rights, women empowerment.

10. Common Cause vs Union of India (2018)

Essence: Legitimised passive euthanasia & living will.

Use: Right to die with dignity under Article 21.

3. RESERVATIONS, SOCIAL JUSTICE, EWS, OBC

11. Indra Sawhney (Mandal Case, 1992)

Essence: OBC reservations valid; 50% cap; creamy layer established.

Use: Reservation policy, backwardness criteria.

12. Jarnail Singh Case (2018)

Essence: Extended creamy layer to SC/ST promotions.

Use: Equality vs affirmative action.

13. EWS Quota Case – Janhit Abhiyan vs Union of India (2022)

Essence: 103rd Constitutional Amendment (10% EWS quota) upheld.

Use: New dimension of affirmative action beyond caste.

4. FEDERALISM, CENTRE–STATE RELATIONS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

14. S.R. Bommai (repeated because vital)

Essence: Limits misuse of President's Rule.

Use: Federalism.

15. State of West Bengal vs Union of India (1962)

Essence: Centre has broader powers; states are not sovereign.

Use: Federal structure debate.

16. NCT Delhi vs Union of India (2018 & 2023)

Essence: Elected government has administrative control except on police, land, public order.

Use: Cooperative federalism, LG vs CM tussle.

17. Kihoto Hollohan (1992) – Anti-defection

Essence: Speaker's decisions are subject to judicial review.

Use: Defections, ethics in politics.

18. B.P. Singhal vs Union of India (2010)

Essence: Governor cannot be removed arbitrarily.

Use: Neutrality of constitutional offices.

5. JUDICIARY, JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS, JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

19. Second Judges Case (1993)

Essence: Collegium system evolved; judicial primacy.

20. Third Judges Case (1998)

Essence: Expanded collegium to 5-judge body.

Use: Appointments debate.

21. NJAC Judgment (2015)

Essence: Struck down NJAC; judicial independence part of Basic Structure.

Use: Separation of powers, checks and balances.

6. ELECTIONS, POLITICAL FINANCE & GOVERNANCE

22. Lily Thomas vs Union of India (2013)

Essence: MPs/MLAs lose membership immediately upon conviction.

Use: Criminalisation of politics.

23. Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) vs Union of India (2002)

Essence: Candidates must disclose assets & criminal records.

Use: Electoral transparency.

24. NOTA Judgement (2013)

Essence: Introduced NOTA as a democratic right.

Use: Voter choice, political reforms.

25. Electoral Bonds Judgment (2024)

Essence: Electoral Bonds unconstitutional; transparency mandatory.

Use: Political funding reforms, RTI, corruption.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE LAW, TRANSPARENCY, GOOD GOVERNANCE

26. Vineet Narain vs Union of India (1997)

Essence: Created “CBI independence” guidelines; “Caged parrot” doctrine.

Use: Independent investigation, rule of law.

27. Prakash Singh vs Union of India (2006)

Essence: Police reforms: DGP tenure, State Security Commission etc.

Use: Criminal justice reform, depoliticisation.

28. Rajbala vs State of Haryana (2015)

Essence: Upheld educational qualifications for Panchayat elections.

Use: Local governance reforms.

8. ENVIRONMENT, TRIBUNALS & DIRECTIVES

29. Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum (1996)

Essence: Introduced Precautionary Principle & Polluter Pays.

Use: GS2 (environment governance).

30. MC Mehta series of cases

Essence: Established strict liability, environmental governance norms.

Use: Sustainable development in governance.

9. SOCIAL ISSUES, CHILDREN, WOMEN, VULNERABLE GROUPS

31. Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan (1997)

Essence: Guidelines for sexual harassment at workplace.

Use: Gender justice, workplace safety.

32. NALSA vs Union of India (2014)

Essence: Recognised transgender persons as third gender.

Use: Inclusive governance.

33. Lalita Kumari vs Govt of UP (2013)

Essence: Mandatory FIR in cognizable offences.

Use: Police accountability.

A. CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY • BASIC STRUCTURE • DEMOCRATIC ETHOS

34. Sabarimala Case – Indian Young Lawyers Assn. (2018)

Essence: Exclusion of women violates Article 14, 25; constitutional morality & religious patriarchy.

Use: Women's rights vs religious practices.

35. Madras Bar Association vs Union of India (2021)

Essence: Struck down parts of Tribunal Reforms Ordinance; tribunal independence is basic structure.

Use: Tribunals, separation of powers.

36. Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association vs Union of India (2023)

Essence: Upheld independence of judiciary, criticised executive delay in appointments.

Use: Judicial independence, Collegium debate.

B. FEDERALISM, DEMARCATION OF POWERS, STATES' RIGHTS

37. Karnataka Reservation Case (2024)

Essence: SC struck down 100% local quota; excessive reservation unconstitutional.

Use: Limits on state power in reservation.

38. Mohd. Hanif Quareshi vs State of Bihar (1958)

Essence: Upheld ban on cow slaughter; reasonable restrictions on freedom of trade.

Use: Directive Principles vs Fundamental Rights.

39. State of Rajasthan vs Union of India (1977)

Essence: Centre cannot dismiss state governments without objective reasons.

Use: Federalism, misuse of Article 356.

C. PARLIAMENT, EXECUTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY & RTI

40. Raj Narain vs State of UP (1975)

Essence: "Right to know" is a fundamental right.

Use: RTI, transparency.

41. CIC vs Supreme Court of India (2019)

Essence: Collegium under RTI, but with limitations.

Use: Transparency in judiciary.

42. Subramanian Swamy vs Union of India (2016)

Essence: Criminal defamation upheld as constitutional.

Use: Freedom of speech limits.

43. Common Cause vs Centre (2017 - Police Appointments)

Essence: Independent police appointments mandatory.

Use: Governance reforms.

D. SERVICES, BUREAUCRACY & ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

44. T.S.R. Subramanian vs Union of India (2013)

Essence: Fixed tenure for civil servants; no oral instructions.

Use: Civil service reforms.

45. Vineeta Sharma vs Rakesh Sharma (2020)

Essence: Daughters have equal coparcenary rights.

Use: Gender equality in laws.

46. Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)

Essence: Right to livelihood under Article 21.

Use: Welfare state, eviction, displacement.

47. Shreya Singhal vs Union of India (2015)

Essence: Struck down Section 66A of IT Act as vague.

Use: Digital rights, free speech.

E. ELECTIONS, POLITICAL REFORMS & ANTI-CORRUPTION

48. PUCCL vs Union of India (2003) – VVPAT & Paper Trail

Essence: Introduced voter-verified paper trail.

Use: Transparency in electoral process.

49. Abhiram Singh vs C.D. Commachen (2017)

Essence: Use of religion, caste, language for votes is corrupt practice.

Use: Electoral ethics.

50. People's Union for Civil Liberties vs Union of India (2013 – Phone Tapping)

Essence: Surveillance must follow procedure; privacy protected.

Use: Privacy, governance, digital rights.

F. SOCIAL JUSTICE, MINORITIES, WOMEN, CHILDREN, LGBTQ+

51. Hadiya Case (2017 - Right to Choose Partner)

Essence: Right to marry a person of one's choice is part of Article 21.

Use: Women's autonomy, interfaith marriages.

52. Shah Bano Case (1985)

Essence: Muslim women entitled to maintenance under CrPC.

Use: Gender justice, uniform civil code debate.

53. Githa Hariharan vs RBI (1999)

Essence: Mother can be natural guardian; equality in guardianship laws.

Use: Gender equality.

54. Jeeja Ghosh vs Union of India (2016)

Essence: Rights of persons with disabilities strengthened.

Use: Inclusive governance.

55. Tehseen Poonawalla vs Union of India (2018 – Mob Lynching)

Essence: Strict anti-lynching guidelines issued.

Use: Law & order, majoritarianism.

G. TECHNOLOGY, DATA, DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

56. Aadhaar Case – Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (2018)

Essence: Aadhaar valid but with restrictions: no mandatory linking except PAN.

Use: Data privacy, welfare, exclusion.

57. Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India (2020)

Essence: Internet shutdowns must be temporary, proportional, and reviewable.

Use: Digital rights, governance in conflict zones.

58. Shafhi Mohammad vs State of Himachal Pradesh (2018)

Essence: Admissibility of electronic evidence; 65-B certificate not always mandatory.

Use: Digital evidence, policing.

H. PUBLIC HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT & WELFARE

59. Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity (1996)

Essence: Right to health is part of Article 21; state must provide emergency medical treatment.

Use: Health policy, negligence by state.

60. Subhash Kumar vs State of Bihar (1991)

Essence: Right to clean water and environment under Article 21.

Use: Environmental governance.

61. MC Mehta vs Union of India (Ganga, Vehicular Pollution, Oleum Gas)

Essence: Established absolute liability, environment as public trust.

Use: Environment governance (GS2+GS3).

I. MINORITIES & RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

62. Bijoe Emmanuel vs State of Kerala (1986)

Essence: Students cannot be compelled to sing national anthem; freedom of conscience.

Use: Freedom of religion, minorities.

63. T.M.A. Pai Foundation (2002) & P.A. Inamdar (2005)

Essence: Minority institutions' rights to administer educational institutions.

Use: Minority rights, education reforms.