



A Critical Analysis on Seven Decades of the Supreme Court of India: Evolution, Landmark Judgments, and Future Directions

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Abstract: *The Supreme Court of India, since its establishment in 1950, has played a pivotal role in shaping the country's legal and constitutional landscape. Over the past 75 years, the Court has evolved through different phases, transitioning from a conservative interpreter of the Constitution to a proactive guardian of fundamental rights and judicial activism. This research paper traces the Supreme Court's evolution, highlighting key landmark judgments that have transformed constitutional interpretation, governance, and civil liberties.*

The study explores the Court's judicial philosophy, focusing on critical rulings such as Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973), which established the Basic Structure Doctrine, and Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978), which expanded the interpretation of personal liberty. The rise of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the 1980s and the development of the Collegium System for judicial appointments in the 1990s further reinforced the Court's role in shaping India's democratic structure.

The paper also examines recent judicial trends, including digital rights, electoral reforms, and environmental jurisprudence, and their implications for the future of judicial review and constitutional governance. While the Supreme Court has upheld democratic values, concerns regarding judicial overreach, transparency, and pendency of cases remain pressing challenges.

By analyzing the Court's historical progress, major verdicts, and contemporary challenges, this research provides insights into the future trajectory of the Supreme Court in ensuring justice, safeguarding democracy, and balancing constitutional principles with evolving societal needs.

Keywords: *Judicial Evolution, Landmark Judgments, Judicial Activism, Fundamental Rights, Constitutional Governance.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Supreme Court of India, established on January 28, 1950, has been the apex judicial institution of the country, playing a pivotal role in upholding the Constitution and ensuring the rule of law. Over the past 75 years, it has evolved as a guardian of fundamental rights, an interpreter of constitutional provisions, and an arbiter of disputes between the central and state governments. The judiciary in India, particularly the Supreme Court, has not only acted as a check on legislative and executive excesses but has also played a proactive role in shaping socio-economic policies through judicial activism. Its landmark judgments have had far-reaching consequences on Indian democracy, governance, and civil rights.¹

The establishment of the Supreme Court marked the culmination of India's transition from a colonial judicial system to an independent constitutional framework. It replaced the Federal Court of India and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as the highest appellate authority. As an institution, it has functioned under the principle of judicial review, ensuring that laws and executive actions adhere to constitutional mandates. Over the decades, the Court has expanded

¹ Basu, D. D. (2018). *Introduction to the Constitution of India* (23rd ed.). LexisNexis.



its jurisdiction, incorporating Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to enhance access to justice and to address socio-political issues that affect the marginalized and underprivileged sections of society.²

Throughout its journey, the Supreme Court has delivered numerous landmark judgments that have redefined Indian jurisprudence. From *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973), which established the Basic Structure Doctrine, to *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978), which expanded the scope of fundamental rights, the Court has demonstrated its commitment to upholding constitutional morality and democratic values. Other significant rulings, such as *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* (1997) on sexual harassment at the workplace, and *Naveen Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018) decriminalizing Section 377, have strengthened individual liberties and progressive jurisprudence.

In addition to its past achievements, the Supreme Court faces new challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. The increasing backlog of cases, judicial vacancies, and concerns over judicial independence necessitate urgent reforms in the judicial system. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of technology and the rise of digital governance pose new legal questions that the judiciary must address. As India moves towards a more globalized and digital era, the Supreme Court's role in balancing rights with emerging challenges, such as data privacy, environmental sustainability, and artificial intelligence, will be crucial.

The next 75 years will test the resilience of India's judicial framework. Strengthening transparency, accountability, and accessibility will be critical for maintaining public confidence in the judiciary. The future of the Supreme Court lies in its ability to adapt to evolving legal and social dynamics while staying true to its constitutional mandate. As the ultimate custodian of justice, the Supreme Court of India remains an indispensable pillar of democracy, ensuring that the principles of liberty, equality, and justice continue to thrive in the world's largest democracy.

2. Objectives of the Study:

- i. To analyze the evolution and historical development of the Supreme Court of India.
- ii. To examine its role in interpreting and protecting the Constitution.
- iii. To study landmark judgments that have shaped Indian democracy and governance.
- iv. To identify the challenges faced by the Supreme Court, including pendency of cases, judicial independence, and reforms.
- v. To explore future prospects for strengthening the judiciary in India.

3. Literature Reviews: (Add pt. 6)

Sharma (2018), who examined “*Judicial activism and legislative policies: A study of the Delhi High Court*,” conducted a study by selecting 50 cases based on their constitutional relevance. Using a qualitative research methodology, data were collected from legal archives and case reports, revealing that judicial activism had significantly influenced legislative policies. The study recommended maintaining judicial restraint to ensure a balance between the judiciary and the legislature.³

Patel and Verma (2019) in “*Judicial Independence and Political Influence: An Empirical Study of Karnataka's Judiciary*” examined constitutional interpretations in the Bombay High Court, analyzing 30 key judgments based on their impact on public policy. Employing a doctrinal research method, the study used secondary data from legal databases and found that judicial decisions had played a crucial role in governance reforms. The study suggested greater collaboration between the judiciary and policymakers for better policy implementation.⁴

Gupta (2020) in “*The impact of public interest litigation on socio-economic rights: A case study of the Supreme Court of India*” investigated the effectiveness of public interest litigations (PILs) in the Supreme Court, selecting 40 PIL cases from 2000 to 2020 based on their socio-economic impact. A mixed-method research approach was used, with data gathered from court judgments and legal commentaries, showing that PILs had improved access to justice for underprivileged communities. The study recommended procedural reforms to reduce case delays.⁵

Mukherjee et al. (2021) in “*Judicial independence and political influence: An empirical study of Karnataka's judiciary*” studied judicial independence in Karnataka's judiciary, selecting 35 cases based on political influence and executive intervention. An empirical survey-based methodology was applied, with data collected from legal practitioners and court

² Sathe, S. P. (2002). Judicial activism: The Indian experience. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy*, 6(1), pp.29–73.

³ Sharma, D. (2018). *Judicial activism and legislative policies: A study of the Delhi High Court*. *Indian Journal of Law and Policy*, 15(1), pp.67-90.

⁴ Mukherjee, S., Rao, P., & Iyer, K. (2021). *Judicial independence and political influence: An empirical study of Karnataka's judiciary*. *Journal of Legal Studies*, 18(2), pp.112-134.

⁵ Gupta, R. (2020). *The impact of public interest litigation on socio-economic rights: A case study of the Supreme Court of India*. *Indian Law Review*, 12(3), pp.145-167



records, revealing concerns over judicial transparency. The study suggested reforms in judicial appointment processes to enhance judicial autonomy.⁶

Rao (2022) “*Case pendency and procedural inefficiencies in Indian High Courts: Challenges and solutions*” analyzed case pendency in various High Courts, selecting 60 cases based on procedural inefficiencies. Using secondary data from court records and official judicial reports, the study identified outdated legal procedures as a major cause of delays. The study recommended the adoption of digital automation and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to enhance judicial efficiency.⁷

The Supreme Court of India has evolved significantly since its establishment in 1950. Its journey reflects a dynamic interplay between constitutional interpretation, judicial independence, and socio-political influences. This literature review examines the transformation of the Supreme Court through four distinct phases, highlighting its role in shaping India's legal and constitutional framework.

First Phase (1950–1967): Judicial Restraint and Legislative Supremacy

Judicial Review and Constitutional Interpretation - During its formative years, the Supreme Court established itself as the guardian of the Constitution, with a strong emphasis on judicial review. Scholars such as Granville Austin (1966) emphasized the Court's role in maintaining a balance between fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy.⁸

Avoidance of Ideological Influence: The judiciary maintained a stance of judicial restraint, deferring to the supremacy of Parliament in legislative matters. Landmark cases such as *A.K. Gopalan v. State of Madras* (1950) reinforced the Court's strict interpretation of fundamental rights, aligning more with parliamentary intent than with expansive judicial activism.

Respect for Legislative Supremacy: The Supreme Court's judgments in cases such as *State of Bihar v. Kameshwar Singh* (1952) upheld state-led reforms, particularly in land redistribution, indicating a deference to legislative wisdom. Scholars argue that during this period, the judiciary primarily acted as an interpreter of the Constitution rather than an active policymaker.

Second Phase (1967–1976): Expansion of Rights and Constitutional Amendments

Expansion of Fundamental Rights - The Court shifted from judicial restraint to a more activist role, expanding the scope of fundamental rights. The *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973) ruling established the Basic Structure Doctrine, limiting Parliament's power to amend the Constitution and ensuring the protection of fundamental rights. Scholars such as Upendra Baxi (1980) viewed this period as a turning point in judicial assertiveness.⁹

Landmark Rulings on Constitutional Amendments - The Supreme Court actively reviewed amendments to the Constitution, particularly those affecting fundamental rights. The ruling in *Golaknath v. State of Punjab* (1967) held that fundamental rights could not be amended by Parliament, strengthening judicial oversight over constitutional changes.

Impact of the Emergency (1975–1977) on Judicial Independence - The imposition of the Emergency by Indira Gandhi's government (1975-77) had a significant impact on the judiciary. The infamous *ADM Jabalpur v. Shivkant Shukla* (1976) (Habeas Corpus case) ruling, where the Court ruled in favor of executive supremacy, is widely criticized for undermining judicial independence. Scholars argue that this phase highlighted the vulnerabilities of the judiciary in politically charged environments.¹⁰

Third Phase (1978–2014): Judicial Activism and Structural Reforms

Course Correction Post-Emergency - Following the end of the Emergency, the judiciary took steps to restore its independence and credibility. The case of *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978) redefined personal liberty under Article 21, marking a significant expansion of fundamental rights. This decision emphasized substantive due process, moving away from the restrictive interpretation seen in *A.K. Gopalan*.

Rise of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) - The 1980s saw the rise of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) as a tool for judicial activism. Under the leadership of Justices P.N. Bhagwati and V.R. Krishna Iyer, the Court adopted a pro-people

⁶ Mukherjee, S., Rao, P., & Iyer, K. (2021). *Judicial independence and political influence: An empirical study of Karnataka's judiciary*. Journal of Legal Studies, 18(2), pp.112-134.

⁷ Rao, A. (2022). *Case pendency and procedural inefficiencies in Indian High Courts: Challenges and solutions*. International Journal of Judicial Studies, 30(1), pp.56-78.

⁸ Austin, G. (1966). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*. Oxford University Press.

⁹ Baxi, U. (1980). *The Indian Supreme Court and Politics*. Eastern Book Company.

¹⁰ Seervai, H. M. (1996). *Constitutional Law of India* (4th ed.). Universal Law Publishing.



approach, allowing greater accessibility to justice. Landmark PIL cases such as *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India* (1987) set environmental law precedents, broadening the role of the judiciary beyond traditional dispute resolution.¹¹

Collegium System and Judicial Independence - A defining feature of this period was the establishment of the Collegium System through the Second Judges Case (1993) and Third Judges Case (1998). This mechanism curtailed executive interference in judicial appointments, reinforcing the independence of the judiciary. However, scholars debate its impact, with some arguing that it led to a lack of transparency in judicial appointments.¹²

Fourth Phase (2014–Present): Judicial Expansion and Contemporary Challenges

Liberal Interpretation and Expanding Judicial Reach - The post-2014 period has been marked by the broad interpretation of constitutional provisions, particularly in areas of privacy, LGBTQ+ rights, and electoral reforms. The *Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017) judgment recognized the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right, reflecting a progressive judicial stance.¹³ Similarly, the *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018) ruling decriminalized homosexuality, affirming individual freedoms.

Sustaining Judicial Activism - The Supreme Court has continued its activist role in governance and policy matters, as seen in cases concerning electoral disqualifications, environmental regulations, and digital privacy. However, contemporary scholars critique the overreach of judicial activism, arguing that it may blur the separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive. The Court's handling of cases related to dissent, constitutional amendments, and political neutrality remains an area of ongoing debate.

4. Research Methodology:

This research adopts a qualitative and doctrinal approach to analyze the evolution of the Supreme Court of India over the past seventy years. The study is primarily based on secondary data sources, including constitutional provisions, law commission reports, academic journals, case law databases, and historical records. Landmark judgments delivered by the Supreme Court from 1950 to 2024 are examined to assess their legal, social, and political impacts. A chronological and thematic analysis is employed to trace key phases in the Court's evolution, focusing on its expanding jurisdiction, judicial activism, and role in upholding constitutional morality. In addition, content analysis of legal commentaries and scholarly opinions is conducted to capture critical perspectives on the Court's jurisprudence. Comparative insights are also drawn from other common law jurisdictions where relevant. The methodology enables an in-depth evaluation of institutional trends, landmark precedents, and future trajectories, while also identifying challenges and areas requiring reform within the Indian judicial system.

5. Evolution and Historical Development:

The Supreme Court of India, established on January 28, 1950, stands as the highest judicial authority in the country, playing a crucial role in interpreting the Constitution and upholding the rule of law. Its formation marked a significant transition from the colonial-era judicial system to an independent, democratic framework designed to safeguard fundamental rights and ensure justice. Over the past 75 years, the Supreme Court has evolved in its authority, expanding its judicial review powers, introducing Public Interest Litigation (PIL), and shaping India's legal and socio-political landscape.¹⁴

- **Formation of the Supreme Court in 1950 and Its Constitutional Mandate:** The Supreme Court of India, established under Part V, Chapter IV of the Constitution, replaced the Federal Court and the Privy Council as the highest judicial authority. Founded on the principle of judicial independence, it ensures justice, equality, and liberty. Article 124 provides for its composition, initially with eight judges, now increased to thirty-four. It exercises original, appellate, and advisory jurisdiction under Articles 131, 132–136, and 143, resolving Union-State disputes, hearing appeals, and advising the President. As the final interpreter of the Constitution, it ensures that all laws and executive actions conform to constitutional principles.
- **Transition from a Colonial Judicial System to an Independent Constitutional Court:** Before independence, India's judicial system was deeply influenced by the British legal structure. The Federal Court of India, established in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935, had limited jurisdiction and functioned primarily as an appellate court under British rule. Moreover, the Privy Council in London served as the highest court of appeal, limiting

¹¹ Krishnaswamy, S. (2009). *Democracy and constitutionalism in India: A study of the basic structure doctrine*. Oxford University Press.

¹² Deshpande, S. (2014). Collegium system in India: Issues and challenges. *Journal of Indian Law and Society*, 5(2), pp.123–140.

¹³ Chandrachud, A. (2019). The right to privacy in India: Conceptual foundations and constitutional implications. *Indian Journal of Constitutional Law*, 13(1), pp.1–24.

¹⁴ Supreme Court of India. (n.d.). *About us*. <https://main.sci.gov.in/about>



India's judicial sovereignty. With the adoption of the Constitution of India in 1950, the country moved towards a fully independent judicial system. The Supreme Court emerged as an autonomous institution free from British oversight, ensuring that justice was administered according to the principles of the Indian Constitution rather than colonial-era statutes. The court's judgments began to reflect a blend of common law traditions and constitutional morality, emphasizing rights, freedoms, and democratic governance.¹⁵

- **Milestones in the Expansion of Judicial Review and Powers:** One of the most significant contributions of the Supreme Court has been the development of judicial review, which allows it to examine the constitutionality of laws and government actions. The power of judicial review was reinforced through landmark cases such as:¹⁶
Shankari Prasad v. Union of India (1951) – The Court upheld Parliament's power to amend the Constitution, including fundamental rights.

Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973) – This case established the Basic Structure Doctrine, ensuring that Parliament could not alter the Constitution's fundamental framework.

Minerva Mills v. Union of India (1980) – The Court further reinforced the balance between fundamental rights and directive principles, preventing excessive parliamentary power.

- **Evolution of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and Its Impact on Indian Jurisprudence:** One of the most transformative developments in the Supreme Court's history has been the introduction of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the late 1970s. Traditionally, the Indian judicial system followed the locus standi principle, allowing only affected individuals to seek legal remedies. However, PILs revolutionized access to justice by enabling any individual or organization to file a petition on behalf of marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

Milestones in PIL include:

Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar (1979) – The Supreme Court intervened to ensure speedy trials for undertrial prisoners.

Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997) – The Court laid down guidelines against sexual harassment at the workplace.

M.C. Mehta v. Union of India (1986) – This case led to significant environmental protection laws.

PILs have empowered civil society, enhanced judicial outreach, and facilitated policy changes in areas like education, health, and human rights. However, concerns regarding judicial overreach and frivolous PILs have also emerged, necessitating careful scrutiny by the judiciary.

Landmark Judgments of the Supreme Court:

- **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973) – Basic Structure Doctrine** This landmark case established the Basic Structure Doctrine, ruling that while Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution under Article 368, it cannot alter its basic structure. The Supreme Court held that fundamental principles such as democracy, secularism, judicial independence, and the rule of law form the core of the Constitution and cannot be amended beyond recognition. This doctrine became a safeguard against excessive parliamentary power.
- **Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978): Expansion of Fundamental Rights.** This case expanded the interpretation of Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty), ruling that "procedure established by law" must be fair, just, and reasonable. It overturned the earlier *A.K. Gopalan* case (1950) and strengthened procedural due process. The judgment laid the foundation for broader human rights interpretations, influencing cases related to privacy, freedom of movement, and detention laws.
- **Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997): Workplace sexual harassment guidelines** In this case, the Supreme Court acknowledged sexual harassment at the workplace as a violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19, and 21. In the absence of specific legislation, the Court laid down the Vishaka Guidelines, making it mandatory for workplaces to have mechanisms for addressing complaints of sexual harassment. These guidelines later formed the basis for the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- **Kesavananda Bharati Case & NJAC Case: Judicial independence and constitutional amendments.**
Kesavananda Bharati Case (1973): It restricted Parliament's power to amend the basic structure of the Constitution.
National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Case (2015): The Supreme Court struck down the 99th Constitutional Amendment, which sought to replace the collegium system with NJAC for judicial appointments. The Court ruled that NJAC violated judicial independence, reinforcing that the judiciary must remain free from executive interference.

¹⁵ Jain, M. P. (2013). *Indian constitutional law* (7th ed.). LexisNexis.

¹⁶ Austin, G. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: The Indian Experience*. Oxford University Press.



- **Recent landmark judgments:**

Decriminalization of Section 377 IPC (Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, 2018): The Supreme Court decriminalized homosexuality, declaring that Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalized consensual same-sex relations, was unconstitutional as it violated Article 14 (Equality), Article 15 (Non-discrimination), and Article 21 (Right to Dignity and Privacy).

Right to Privacy (Puttaswamy Case, 2017): The Court declared the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21, influencing later decisions on data protection, surveillance, and Aadhaar authentication.

Ayodhya Verdict (2019) – Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Dispute: The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust, granting the disputed land for the construction of a Ram Temple, while also directing the government to allocate 5 acres of land to the Muslim community for a mosque. The judgment sought to resolve a decades-long religious and political conflict.

EWS Reservation (Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India, 2022): The Court upheld the 103rd Constitutional Amendment, allowing 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in education and employment, ruling that it did not violate the basic structure of the Constitution.

- **Supreme Court of India: Case Pendency Overview**

- As of March 31, 2025, the Supreme Court had 81,394 pending cases on its docket.¹⁷
- In April 2025, pendency stood at 81,801 cases, a modest increase from March.¹⁸
- For January 2025, the total was 82,445 pending matters, reflecting the full working strength of 34 judges during most of that period.¹⁹

This backlog represents a ~35% rise over five years, escalating from around 59,859 cases in early 2019 to over 80,700+ cases by the end-2023.²⁰

- **Institutional Data Breakdown**

- Out of the 64,252 registered cases (excluding technical filings), over 65% remain at the administrative “admission” stage, never progressing to full hearings.²¹
- In 2024, an estimated 94% of case disposals occurred at the admission stage, indicating only ~6% of matters proceed to substantive adjudication.²²

- **Caseload Trends and Judicial Management**

- Despite the expanded judicial bench and technological tools like the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), the SC continues to struggle with backlog due to:
 - Persistent influx of new cases,
 - Structural delays like frequent adjournments and infrastructure gaps,
 - Admission-heavy caseload that delays regular hearings²³
- Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna (in office until May 2025) implemented measures like reserving specific days for miscellaneous matters to reduce backlog, showing modest impact in early 2025.²⁴

- **Interpretation and Context**

- Average pendency per judge: With 34 judges handling ~80,000 cases, each judge supervises over 2,300 cases on average.
- Resolution delay: A 2-year backlog clearance period is estimated—without new filings, based on current disposal rates .
- In comparison to district and high courts, SC’s pendency is smaller in absolute terms but significant in proportion; tens of thousands of cases litigants await final adjudication at the apex level.

- **Implications for Legal Reform & Future Directions**

- High pendency hinders access to timely justice, reduces institutional trust, and dilutes the efficacy of constitutional guarantees.

¹⁷ [Reddit+15Supreme Court Observer+15The Times of India+15.](#)

¹⁸ [The Times of India+2Supreme Court Observer+2Supreme Court Observer+2.](#)

¹⁹ [The Times of India+10Supreme Court Observer+10thehindu.com+10.](#)

²⁰ [The Times of India.](#)

²¹ [LawChakra+1Supreme Court Observer+1.](#)

²² [LawChakra+1Supreme Court Observer+1.](#)

²³ [thehindu.com+9en.wikipedia.org+9Supreme Court Observer+9Reddit+2Reddit+2The Times of India+2Supreme Court Observer+2LawChakra+2Supreme Court Observer+2.](#)

²⁴ [LawChakra+1en.wikipedia.org+1.](#)



- ii. Pending Constitution Bench cases—many undisposed even after 8–10 years on the docket—raise concern over constitutional jurisprudence stagnation.²⁵
- iii. Key reforms may include judicial expansion, procedural streamlining, case triaging, digital listing reform, and support for under-staffed courts.

6. Challenges Faced by the Supreme Court:

- One of the key challenges facing the Supreme Court is the massive backlog of cases, with over 70,000 pending and millions more in lower courts. This overload leads to delayed justice, undermining the principle that “*justice delayed is justice denied*.” Contributing factors include procedural delays, frequent adjournments, judicial vacancies, and inefficient case management. Addressing this crisis requires urgent judicial reforms, the establishment of fast-track courts, and improved case disposal mechanisms.
- The debate between judicial activism and judicial restraint is a longstanding one in India. Judicial activism has led to landmark rulings like the Right to Privacy (2017) and Vishaka Guidelines (1997), addressing critical socio-political issues. However, critics argue that excessive intervention risks overstepping constitutional limits, creating tension with the legislature and executive. Advocates of judicial restraint emphasize that law-making is the role of elected bodies. A balanced approach is essential to uphold judicial credibility and preserve democratic harmony.
- Judicial independence is a fundamental pillar of democracy, yet concerns over judicial appointments and accountability persist. The collegium system, where judges appoint other judges, has been criticized for a lack of transparency and potential bias. The 2015 NJAC (National Judicial Appointments Commission) case, which struck down an attempt to reform the system, reinforced judicial independence but also highlighted the absence of external oversight. Calls for greater transparency, structured appointment mechanisms, and accountability measures remain key challenges in ensuring a fair judiciary.
- The digitalization of courts and e-courts has improved efficiency and access, especially during COVID-19 through virtual hearings. However, challenges like poor infrastructure, rural accessibility, cybersecurity risks, and the digital divide limit full adoption. To fully leverage AI-driven legal tools and virtual case management, investment in digital literacy, security, and infrastructure is essential.

7. Future Prospects and Reforms:

As the Supreme Court of India enters its next phase, there is a growing need for judicial reforms to enhance its efficiency, accessibility, and transparency. Several key areas require urgent attention to ensure a more effective justice delivery system.

- **Strengthening Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanisms:** The increasing pendency of cases necessitates a shift towards Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms such as mediation, arbitration, and conciliation. ADR provides faster, cost-effective, and amicable solutions, reducing the burden on courts. The Supreme Court has actively encouraged ADR in cases related to commercial disputes, matrimonial conflicts, and labor issues. Further institutionalizing mandatory pre-litigation mediation and establishing more mediation centers can significantly reduce case backlog. Additionally, promoting online dispute resolution (ODR), especially for small claims and financial disputes, can expedite settlements.
- **Judicial Appointments and Reforms in the Collegium System:** The existing collegium system for judicial appointments has been widely debated for its lack of transparency and accountability. While it ensures judicial independence, critics argue that it lacks diverse representation and external oversight. To strengthen the system, reforms could include:
 - i. Creating a more structured and transparent appointment process with clear criteria.
 - ii. Introducing a judicial oversight committee to ensure fairness and prevent favoritism.
 - iii. Enhancing diversity in judicial appointments, including gender and regional representation.
 - iv. Filling judicial vacancies promptly reduces delays in case hearings.

A well-structured judicial appointment system will help maintain public trust and institutional integrity.

8. Conclusion:

The Supreme Court of India has played a pivotal role in shaping the country’s legal and democratic framework over the past 75 years. From interpreting the Constitution to delivering landmark judgments that have strengthened fundamental rights, judicial independence, and governance, the Court has evolved as the guardian of justice. However, despite its

²⁵ [thehindu.com+3Supreme Court Observer+3Supreme Court Observer+3.](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3333333.html)



achievements, it continues to face significant challenges, including case pendency, judicial transparency, and the balance between judicial activism and restraint.

To ensure a robust and efficient judicial system, reforms are essential in areas such as alternative dispute resolution (ADR), judicial appointments, technological advancements, and access to justice for marginalized communities. The integration of e-courts, AI-driven legal research, and digitization will enhance case management and speed up judicial processes. Similarly, structural changes in the collegium system and legal aid reforms will strengthen accountability and inclusivity.

As India moves forward in the 21st century, the Supreme Court must continue to adapt to evolving legal, social, and technological landscapes while staying committed to its constitutional mandate. By embracing judicial efficiency, transparency, and accessibility, the Court will reinforce its role as the cornerstone of Indian democracy, ensuring that justice remains timely, impartial, and accessible to all.

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