
The Role of the Supreme Court in Protecting Constitutional Rights: An Evaluation of Recent Landmark Judgments.

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Abstract

The Supreme Court is not just evaluated by pricy language or counting successful petitions but assessing its impact and importance. A judgement might recognize a significant right but leave its institutional ramifications undetermined; a procedurally narrow ruling may confer prompt and significant protection. This paper focuses on six selected decisions on marriage equality, electoral finance, safeguards while arresting, rights concerning climate, accessibility to the internet and menstruation and school health delivered between October 2023 and January 2026. It also looks at later orders or judgments, as necessary, to understand remedial development. The differentiation between doctrinal recognition, enforceable relief, and demonstrated implementation. The study shows that these selected cases reveal multiple types of constitutional protection: invalidation of law that is incompatible, insistence on participation through information, mandating compliance with procedure, removal of barriers to access, and direction to take continuing institutional action. Their shared evaluative query revolves around the Court's linkage of the right it recognizes to a rationalized and administratively understandable remedy. To assess either judicial action or inaction, it is necessary to examine that connection.

Keywords: Supreme Court of India; fundamental rights; constitutional remedies; judicial review; equality; implementation.

Introduction

The Supreme Court has the constitutional authority to invalidate unlawful state action and to enforce fundamental rights through the invocation of Article 32¹. The judgments of the Supreme Court also state a principle of law, which is binding on all Courts under Article 141² of the Constitution. The formal powers of the Supreme Court, however, do not determine how effectively a particular decision will safeguard the interest of a person under exclusion, detention or denial from essential services. An evaluation must assess what the judgement decides, what relief follows and what remains dependent on other institutions.

The author has selected a purposively sample of six principal decisions *Supriyo*, *Association for Democratic Reforms*, *Prabir Purkayastha*, *M K Ranjitsinh*, *Pragya Prasun* and *Dr Jaya Thakur*. The choices were made from 17 October 2023 to 30 January 2026 and were chosen for variation in the rights asserted and remedies considered, and not as a ranking of the Court's work. The remedial record is clarified in the December 2025 environmental follow up and March 2024 electoral-bonds compliance order³. Earlier precedents provide context rather than broaden the chosen sample.

It relies on doctrines and interpretation. It inquiries on whether the legal basis is clearly identified, whether remedy addresses the proven harm, as well as who will implement what. It differentiates between majority holdings and separate opinions⁴, as well as between judicial directives and evidence of compliance. Due to the absence of field interviews or a comprehensive set of implementation data for the study, it cannot conclusively assess the overall social impact of the court. A more refined contribution is the account of the relationship between recognition and remedy across constitutional settings.

2. A framework for evaluating rights protection

One should not confuse three levels of protection. Recognition means that interest occupies the field of Constitution. The parties' legal position may be invalidated, released, disclosed or directed positively by relief. Has the required change actually occurred? Discoveries made at one level must not be construed as evidence at the next level. As an illustration, the experience of accessibility enshrined within the Constitution itself does not mean that the accessible interface⁵ has become a usable interface.

This difference stems from the range of constitutional remedies. Some infringements can be addressed through the setting aside of orders while others may require the reconsideration by an institution of a decision or the alteration of an ongoing practice. *Maneka Gandhi* and *Puttaswamy*⁶ provide great background connecting liberty, fairness, dignity and autonomy. The wide scope does not eliminate the requirement to clarify the specific duty imposed in a later case. The language provides a rationale for scrutiny, not a worldwide instruction about each remedial detail.

¹ Constitution of India 1950, art 32.

² Constitution of India 1950, art 141.

³ *M K Ranjitsinh v Union of India* 2025 INSC 1472; *State Bank of India v Association for Democratic Reforms* 2024 INSC 195.

⁴ For the importance of distinguishing the several judicial opinions, see *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India* 2023 INSC 920.

⁵ *Pragya Prasun v Union of India* 2025 INSC 599. The distinction between a judicial direction and verified implementation is the author's methodological qualification.

⁶ *Maneka Gandhi v Union of India* (1978) 1 SCC 248; *Justice K S Puttaswamy (Retd) v Union of India* (2017) 10 SCC 1.

It must be considered whose perspective the remedy adopts. A complaint mechanism that is technically available might not be accessible to users' meaningful use. On the other hand, a comprehensive judicial instruction may disregard that of an existing statutory institution. In essence, the relevant question is whether the arrangement makes the right practically claimable while allocating the responsibility intelligibly⁷. This is a legal institutional inquiry, it does not need to presume that

(i) courts should manage public services

(ii) administrative complexity defeats enforceable rights.

3. Relationship autonomy and the limits of judicially conferred status

In *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India*⁸, the five-judge Bench refused to convert the Special Marriage Act into a gender-neutral marriage regime. The court rulings clarified that the freedom to select a romantic partner is distinct from a demand that the Court create and declare a legal incident. The result cannot be accurately characterised as the rejection of all constitutional protection for queer relationships. Furthermore, broad statements regarding dignity cannot be seen as mandating the grant of marriage equality.

The views varied significantly on civil unions and adoption. CJI Chandrachud and Justice Kaul took positions on relevant positive entitlements that did not command a majority⁹, while the opinions forming the majority resisted any judicial creation of the legal status requested. This division expresses why constitutional evaluation must recognize the relief that received adequate court support. The result would be mischaracterized if we were to merge snippets from disparate opinions.

The question that mattered institutionally was how far the Court could interpret an interlocking or interconnected statutory scheme¹⁰. The rulings expressed unease over the repercussions of altering one legal arrangement while still leaving issues regarding succession, maintenance and adoption unattended to. Although exclusion is made legitimate through institutional complexity, this countervailing position makes the opposite claim. The two accounts speak to competing views about what remedial authority there is, not about whether the people concerned have dignity.

The case therefore demonstrates a disconnect between freedom from interference and access to a structured legal institution¹¹. Recognizing choice of partners is important for freedom, but does not guarantee the benefits associated with marriage. An evaluation that notes just doctrinal acknowledgment minimizes the compensatory limitation; an appraisal that notes just rejection misses the protections and distinctions expressed. The importance of the decision lies in the separation of constitutional freedom, legal status and institutional responsibility.

4. Electoral information and the relationship between invalidation and disclosure

⁷ For a concrete allocation of continuing institutional responsibilities, see *Dr Jaya Thakur v Government of India* 2026 INSC 97, paras 177–182.

⁸ *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India* 2023 INSC 920.

⁹ *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India* 2023 INSC 920, opinions of D Y Chandrachud CJI, S K Kaul, S Ravindra Bhat, Hima Kohli and P S Narasimha JJ.

¹⁰ *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India* 2023 INSC 920; Special Marriage Act 1954.

¹¹ *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India* 2023 INSC 920.

The judgement on the electoral-bonds in *Association for Democratic Reforms v Union of India*¹² states the scheme's nondisclosure arrangements unconstitutional under Article 19(1)(a) in February 2024. According to it, letting the statutory cap on the corporate political contributions violated the Article 14, the court examined the purported objectives of the scheme and the interests of charity and the voters' right to know. The constitutional analysis was about the legal design and effects and not an adjudication that every donation was illegal.

The remedial dimension was strangely important. If the plan were invalidated without taking into account the information about transaction which have already taken place, part of the identified information injury would have been left unaddressed. Consequently, the Court instructed disclosure via the Election Commission and the State Bank of India. A further order on 11 March further extended time to the Bank¹³ and reiterated requirement for disclosures. The order of the series shows the difference between the declaration of the right to information and the process of making information available.

The ruling links democratic engagement with the informative conditions through which individuals make decisions. The government does not tell citizens what political choice to make. Accessing transaction data won't enable us to determine a specific explanation for each contribution¹⁴, nor does disclosure ensure the absence of improper influence. To reach these conclusions would require standalone evidence and, where wrongdoing is alleged, due process. When constitutionalism is transparent, it can be subjected to scrutiny, not an evidence substitute.

The case illustrates a close relationship between the right claimed and the remedy¹⁵ that has been sought in the present framework. Although less frequently discussed, the time dimension is also relevant: information can come after decisions have been made already. The ruling thereby gives rise to a more general analytical question of whether delayed remedy at the final stage actually redresses injury whose impact depends on timely knowledge by the public. The issue is not one of the operation of constitutional remedies, but hypothetical outcomes of elections.

5. Arrest safeguards: effective liberty through procedural requirements

The case *Prabir Purkayastha v State (NCT of Delhi)*¹⁶ dealt with a communication of grounds of arrest under UAPA. The Court said that as the requirement of written grounds was linked to Article 22(1) the arrest and remand were defective. It dismissed the claim that filing a charge sheet could retrospectively cure the constitutional violation.

The decision was about legality of custody not adjudicating guilt/innocence in relation to the allegations.

The ruling relied on *Pankaj Bansal*¹⁷, which had spoken to written pw's of arrest in the money-laundering context. A person is advised to consult his Counsel, oppose remand and seek relief. That is why information

¹² *Association for Democratic Reforms v Union of India* 2024 INSC 113, para 216.

¹³ *State Bank of India v Association for Democratic Reforms* 2024 INSC 195. The Court rejected SBI's request for time until 30 June 2024 and directed disclosure by 12 March 2024; the Election Commission was to publish by 15 March.

¹⁴ The cited rulings order invalidation and disclosure; they do not determine the motive or legality of every individual contribution: *Association for Democratic Reforms v Union of India* 2024 INSC 113; *State Bank of India v Association for Democratic Reforms* 2024 INSC 195.

¹⁵ *Association for Democratic Reforms v Union of India* 2024 INSC 113, paras 216–219.

¹⁶ *Prabir Purkayastha v State (NCT of Delhi)* 2024 INSC 414.

¹⁷ *Pankaj Bansal v Union of India* 2023 INSC 866.

has practical function. To call the requirement a technicality would be to misunderstand its relation to meaningful access to a judge. It is of no help to challenge detention where the basis in fact is inaccessible to the detained person.

The solution also needs accurate description. The release resulting from an unlawful arrest is not an acquittal¹⁸ and the orders made by us in this case take account of the stage reached. The law of constitution regulates the exercise of coercive power but does not decide every subsequent question. The difference safeguards the integrity of both liberty review and the criminal processes: procedural protections must be enforced without misrepresentation of what their enforcement speaks to on the merits.

Consequently, this case demonstrates that it is not always necessary to identify a new substantive right. When content is effectively given to an express procedural guarantee, it changes a person's immediate legal position. The wrongful conviction and imprisonment of the 'Scorpions' whistleblower¹⁹ raises a spectre of additional institutions being involved. The verdict lays out the standard; a separate study would be necessary to assess the frequency and quality of compliance.

6. Climate-related rights and the need for technically responsive relief

In the case of *M K Ranjitsinh v Union of India*²⁰, the Court, while reassessing various directions affecting transmission infrastructure in the habitats of Great Indian Bustard, linked protection against adverse effects of climate change with Articles 14 and 21. The dispute didn't put environmental protection against development simply. The emphasis was on species conservation as well as renewable energy related infrastructure both of which were made relevant to environmental responsibilities. The climate rights issue wasn't only about a technical problem of engineering. Nonetheless, the Court neither ordered a national emissions budget nor settled every conceivable climate claim. It set up a committee of experts to examine appropriate measures. Aman Kumar's scholarly discussion²¹ situates the decision within the evolution of climate-rights adjudication. The actual order, however, remains essential to appreciating its limited remedial setting. The overall entitlement and the special relief that is awarded must therefore be interpreted differently.

In December 2025 follow-up²², expert recommendations and objections regarding protected areas and power-line mitigation were examined. The repeated iterations suggest that environmental enforcement may have to be an evolving process rather than a single one stop command. It is possible to modify the means without abandoning the constitutional principle if there is further evidence. Similarly, the participation of experts does not exempt the court from having to explain which recommendations become legally effective, and how competing concerns are weighed.

This means that case's contribution is twofold: a recognition of a constitutional interest, and a development in the process of enforcement that is more sensitive to evidence. The importance of Limits complement each other equally.

¹⁸ *Prabir Purkayastha v State (NCT of Delhi)* 2024 INSC 414, operative directions.

¹⁹ *Prabir Purkayastha v State (NCT of Delhi)* 2024 INSC 414. The cited decision concerns Prabir Purkayastha's arrest and remand. It does not substantiate this separate reference to a "Scorpions" whistleblower or wrongful conviction.

²⁰ *M K Ranjitsinh v Union of India* 2024 INSC 280.

²¹ Aman Kumar, 'M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others v. Union of India and Others. 2024 INSC 280' (2025) 119(1) *American Journal of International Law* 147.

²² *M K Ranjitsinh v Union of India* 2025 INSC 1472.

The lawsuit does not show that all environmentally menacing undertakings must be banned nor that the chosen measures are already achieving the desired ecological results. We need evidence on compliance and effects in the field²³ to determine whether it was implemented.

7. Digital accessibility: converting formal availability into practical access

In the case of *Pragya Prasun v Union of India*²⁴, decided with *Amar Jain* in April 2025, excluding persons with specific disabilities from digital-identification procedures. The Court linked digital accessibility with constitutional protection and the obligation of statutory reasonable accommodation, and issued directions to related institutions and regulators. The practical problem was that an apparently common verification procedure assumed abilities that some users did not have.

The judgment shows a movement from asking whether it was offered to everyone in name to whether everyone can use the process by which it can be accessed. A uniform design does not necessarily equal treatment in effect. The statutory accommodation framework²⁵ provides an institutional grounding for this reasoning rather than restricting it to an abstract promise. The object is not exempt from legitimate verification, but an effective means of satisfying it without unnecessary exclusion.

The remedy thus connects constitutional principle to design interface, alternative procedures²⁶ & regulatory responsibility. This is not to say that there is an unrestricted claim to free internet access or that all identity conditions may be dropped. Accurate delineation avoids an accessibility ruling from being blown up into propositions the Court did not decide. It also clarifies what an implementation should look to examine, namely, whether the impacted person can carry out the relevant process with dignity and independence, not just whether there is an accessibility statement from the provider.

8. Menstrual health, education and continuing institutional duties

*Dr Jaya Thakur v Government of India*²⁷ dealt with menstrual hygiene in schools through the lens of Articles 14, 21 and 21A and the education-law framework in January 2026. The directives refer to facilities, availability of menstrual absorbents, awareness and institutional regulation. The reasoned placed dignity in the material conditions of participation, rather than taking formal admission to school as a full answer to exclusion.

The implementation design has special significance. As per the Judges decision anonymous feedback of students²⁸ shall be sought and feedback must be taken at periodic intervals by district education officers and the child-rights commissions will supervise the same. It maintained the case through ongoing mandamus. Mechanisms through which students' needs can enter compliance mechanisms are identified by these characteristics. They also distinguish a rights-related administrative obligation from a general appeal for social awareness that is unenforceable.

²³ *M K Ranjitsinh v Union of India* 2025 INSC 1472. The judgment supplies directions and the expert record; demonstrated ecological outcomes require separate evidence.

²⁴ *Pragya Prasun v Union of India* 2025 INSC 599.

²⁵ Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, ss 2(y), 3, 40, 42 and 46.

²⁶ *Pragya Prasun v Union of India* 2025 INSC 599, operative directions.

²⁷ *Dr Jaya Thakur v Government of India* 2026 INSC 97, paras 172–179.

²⁸ *Dr Jaya Thakur v Government of India* 2026 INSC 97, paras 177–182.

The ruling does not prove that its direction has been carried out in every school. As much, the constitutional age range in Article 21A²⁹ should not be silently equated with every class covered in the larger directions of the litigation. The doctrinal significance of equality, health-related dignity and access to educational opportunities is linked to institutional obligations for implementation. The evaluative question is whether those responsibilities produce usable, maintained and non-stigmatising facilities, not simply whether construction or procurement has been formally reported.

9. Comparative findings: recognition, relief and institutional responsibility

The Court used significantly different remedial forms in the chosen cases. *Supriyo* revealed the limitations regarding a judicial creation of status³⁰; refer ADR invalidation with disclosure; *Prabir Purkayastha* imposed a procedural pre-condition of lawful custody; the environmental, digital-access and school-health judgment required forms of continuing institutional action. Legal reason and injuries contribute to the differences. A straightforward scaling that equates more judicial intervention with greater constitutional protection does not receive any support from them.

Participation has a constitutional significance which recurs in the documents. People who vote need information³¹; the person arrested needs intelligible grounds; a person with a disability needs an accessible process³²; and the student needs conditions to attend with dignity. The right becomes practically applicable when access-controlling institution has a corresponding duty. The recognition of duty being more impactful than adding a new sprawling formulation in the language of Article 21. As for the second finding, it concerns the specificity of a remedy. A judgment is said to be assessable if the institution responsible is named and the action required is described³³. Just because something is specific, doesn't mean it's micromanaged: a court can achieve an enforceable outcome while allowing lawful operational decisions to the relevant authority. In cases where there is reasonably sufficient scientific or administrative uncertainty, a reasoned review of the evidence may be more appropriate than a judicial prescription which is firmly fixed, insulated from later correction.

²⁹ Constitution of India 1950, art 21A; Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. Article 21A addresses children aged six to fourteen; the school-related remedial directions must be read on their own terms.

³⁰ *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India* 2023 INSC 920.

³¹ *Association for Democratic Reforms v Union of India* 2024 INSC 113, para 216.

³² *Pragya Prasun v Union of India* 2025 INSC 599.

³³ *Dr Jaya Thakur v Government of India* 2026 INSC 97, paras 177–182.

In the end, review must maintain uncertainty about results. An affidavit of compliance, a judicial declaration and independently verified change of practice are three different types of evidence³⁴. The current sample substantiates conclusions on reasoning and remedial design of the Court; it does not assist in a numerical assessment of social transformation. Doctrinal study is still important despite this limitation. It pinpoints the time when the legal analysis must be supplemented with implementation research and not supplemented with unsupported inference.

Choosing landmark decisions causes you to add a methodological limitation. Cases that are especially highlighted are not typical of the Court's regular rights cases³⁵. The prominence of a claim or dispute may reflect either its novelty, the size of the remedy sought, or public importance. As a result, this research cannot derive the frequency of successful rights being enforced.

We can say that the contribution is more specific: it recognizes that the relationships between recognition, procedure and implementation. Checking these relations on broader corpus would need transparent inclusion criteria³⁶ and disclosure of subsequent proceedings, including in cases where relief was rejected or never carried out effectively.

10. Conclusion

Recent constitutional court cases reveal many instances of how the Supreme Court protects rights by restricting state power, facilitating informed participation, enforcing procedure, requiring institutions to remove barriers. The six selected decisions also demonstrate that the recognition of and relief to be granted may not be the same and that even specific directions may have to be implemented outside the court room.

The Court's function is best assessed by reference to the connection between the right to which the exercise of power relates, the legal authority exercised, and the remedy ultimately ordered. A broad statement is not evidence of efficacy, while a narrow procedural ruling can provide immediate relief. When one pays careful attention to the holdings, separate opinions, institutional duties and evidence of compliance produced by judicial intervention, one ends up with a more defensible evaluation than either unqualified celebration or categorical criticism.

³⁴ *Dr Jaya Thakur v Government of India* 2026 INSC 97; *M K Ranjitsinh v Union of India* 2025 INSC 1472. This is the author's distinction between judicial materials and independent implementation evidence, not a judicial finding of nationwide compliance.

³⁵ For the wider institutional setting, see Nick Robinson, 'Expanding Judiciaries: India and the Rise of the Good Governance Court' (2009) 8(1) *Washington University Global Studies Law Review* 1.

³⁶ Nick Robinson, 'Expanding Judiciaries: India and the Rise of the Good Governance Court' (2009) 8(1) *Washington University Global Studies Law Review* 1. The proposed broader-corpus method is the author's research recommendation, not a finding supplied by the cited article.

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