The Indian Journal for Research in Law and Management

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2026

Editor-in-Chief – Dr. Muktai Deb Chavan; Publisher – Alden Vas; ISSN: 2583-9896

TITLE: LANDMARK SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENTS IN INDIA

~Sadia Muskan

ABSTRACT:

The Supreme Court of India has played a transformative role in shaping the country's legal and constitutional framework. Through its landmark judgments, the Court has not only interpreted laws but has also responded to the changing needs of society by protecting rights, promoting justice, and ensuring accountability. This study examines several significant judicial decisions dealing with environmental protection, pensionary rights, corporate governance, securities regulation, and social welfare. Each case reflects the judiciary's commitment to balancing individual interests with public welfare while upholding constitutional values. These judgments demonstrate how the Supreme Court continues to strengthen the rule of law and adapt legal principles to contemporary challenges. The analysis of these cases provides valuable insight into the evolving nature of Indian jurisprudence and highlights the crucial role of the judiciary in safeguarding democracy and justice

INTRODUCTION:

The Indian Supreme Court is vital to the development of the nation's legal system and the defence of constitutionally protected rights. It has rendered a number of significant rulings over the years that have impacted social, political, and constitutional developments in India in addition to providing legal interpretations. These rulings have improved democracy, protected fundamental rights, advanced justice, and made clear the roles and authority of different institutions.

Significant rulings represent the changing demands and ideals of society and act as guiding examples for subsequent cases. These decisions have had a long-lasting effect on Indian jurisprudence, establishing the boundaries of state power and safeguarding individual liberties. Examining these examples enables us to comprehend the role that the judiciary plays in maintaining justice and the rule of law.

LANDMARK CASES NAME:

1. Container Corporation of India Ltd. v. Ajay Khera & Ors.

The case is based on the Environment Pollution Control Authority's (EPCA) suggestions, which stress how important it is to quickly switch heavy-duty diesel vehicles to choices that are better for the environment, especially those that meet the Bharat Stage VI (BS-VI) emission standards. The Court agreed that alternative fuel technologies aren't perfect for long-distance travel and supported using BS-VI heavy-duty diesel vehicles as a cleaner short-term option.

Fact:

Former Executive Director of Central Warehousing filed an original application before the National Green Tribunal regarding rising pollution due to the Inland Container Depot (for short, 'the said ICD') at Tughlakabad. The application asserts that the specified ICD is used by trucks/trailers not designated for Delhi, but instead for transportation to and from locations outside of Delhi.

Respondent requested the National Green Tribunal to the appellant:

- To shift the operations of the said ICD at Tughlakabad which was not bound for Delhi to other locations
- To prohibit entry of containers/trailers at the said ICD which was not bound for Delhi only to utilise CNG run/battery

The Container Corporation (appellant) highlighted that modification in the ICD's usage would cause an increase in cargo transportation by road from ports across India to Delhi and subsequently cause pollution due to longer distances covered by the trucks. NGT passed interim orders as per the need and suggested restrictions to the use of diesel vehicles especially in the context of satellite terminals.

The Supreme Court first put a hold on the NGT's order in the Tughlakabad ICD pollution case and recommended the Environmental Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) to submit a report containing suggestions.

Supreme court decision:

In the Tughlakabad ICD pollution case, the Supreme Court replaced the NGT's instructions with new ones:

- Heavy-duty diesel vehicles will be gradually replaced with BS-VI vehicles. The Union of India needs to develop a program within six months.
- Better infrastructure for cleaner cars: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways would look into CNG, hybrid, and electric fuel sources for heavy-duty vehicles.
- Optimizing: ICDs around Delhi: Within six months, the Container Corporation would devise a plan to use nearby ICDs better and set up central labs close to them.
- Better parking management at Tughlakabad ICD: The Container Corporation would follow KPMG's February 2021 suggestions within six months.

These above steps are meant to reduce air pollution by switching to cleaner cars and improving logistics and ICD operations. This important decision significantly reduces pollution and improves how cargo is handled in the area.

2. Vinod Kanjibhai Bhagora v. State of Gujarat & Anr.

The Supreme Court after interpreting the Pension Rules stated that it is imperative to give a holistic meaning to Rule 25. The court stated that the interpretation as stated by the respondents is very restrictive and makes the said provision applicable only to such persons who have been 'expressly' absorbed by the State Government from the Central Government. The court enunciated that the appellant had obtained an NOC from the government before participating in the recruitment drive following which he had tendered a formal resignation upon his selection.

Fact:

The said case involves a postal assistant (appellant) working with the Central Government in Gandhinagar from 12.08.1983 to 16.07.1973. To participate in the recruitment of a 'Senior Assistant' in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the appellant obtained NOC from the Superintendent of Post Office, Gandhinagar during the interregnum period. Post giving his resignation in Gandhinagar postal division on 16.07.1993, the appellant joined as Senior Assistant in the State Government. He served the State Government for 23 years till his superannuation. After his retirement, the State Government only provided him with terminal benefits/pensionary benefits to the extent of the Subject Period. The appellant made a representation before the Chief Postmaster General, Gujarat Circle stating that the terminal benefits must include the period for which he served the Central Government as well. This demand was rejected stating that since he had given an unconditional resignation, the said period for which he served the Central Government as well. This demand was rejected stating that since he had given an unconditional resignation, the said period was not to be included in his benefits. The appellant then approached the High Court seeking relief but the court also rejected his plea. The said appeal has thereby been filed in the apex court by the appellant, seeking relief.

Issue:

The main issue underlying this case was to quantify the period of employment of the appellant for which he shall receive terminal/ pensionary benefits:

- Whether the period for which the appellant served in the Central Government before joining the State Government shall be included in ascertaining is terminal/ pensionary benefits?

3. Reebok India Company v. Union of India through Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs & Anr.

The Court evaluated that the option of 'conversion' made statutorily available to the relevant organisation or class/classes of organisations was not a vested right conferred to any Company and the rules being made more stringent in terms of the RoC requiring to satisfy itself in context of aspects related to the net worth of the company and whether there is any ongoing investigation or inspection against the company, was made as such to better serve the interests of all related parties to such transactions/activities.

Delhi High Court has upheld the Registrar of Companies' decision to refuse Reebok India's request to change its status to a Limited Liability Company.

Fact:

- The Petitioner in the case being Reebok India Company primarily engaged in the wholesale business of trading footwear, sports apparel and sports equipment.
- The Company holds various franchise-based stores across India.
- In the instant case, the Petitioner through a meeting of the Board of Directors and Shareholders of the company, passed a resolution to convert the company to a private limited company from its original unlimited liability, through such an entitlement conferred upon it by way of Section 18 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- However, it is required that the company while doing so, observe all such measures and steps deemed essential by law. They include considering the changing conditions of the external environment and the organisational structure and key management strategies of the company.
- W.r.t the same, the Petitioner applied for the said conversion, along with all necessary forms and documents on 21.10.2014. On 31.10.2014, it received a reply from Respondent No.1 stating that its 'e-form INC-1' was pending user clarification since it was not in compliance with Section 18 of the Act or Rule.
- In the year 2016, the Companies (Incorporation) Third Amendment Rules came into force, wherein, Rule 37 related to the conversion of an unlimited liability company into a limited liability company, by shares or guarantee and additionally, Clause (8) of Rule 37 of the rules as stated, listed out certain conditions where a company having unlimited liability would be ineligible to convert itself into a company limited by shares or guarantee, of which the company fell under.
- Thereby, through a letter/notice on 05.10.2016, the Registrar of Companies (RoC) communicated the rejection of the Petitioner companies' application without any reasons or justifications. And, though the Petitioner subsequently wrote a letter back to the concerned authority clarifying that their acts were following the requirements as per law, no follow-up was received from the RoC by the Petitioner Company.
- Aggrieved by the said communication as well as receiving no reply from the Registrar despite the attempt to follow up with the matter, the Petitioner approached this Court by filing a Writ Petition thereby challenging the communication from the RoC dated 05.10.2016.

- This Court then vide an Order dated 03.03.2020 directed that Respondent No.2 decide the application of the Petitioner afresh, by law, after giving the Petitioner an adequate opportunity to be heard.
- Under the Order passed by this Court, the Petitioner was called upon by Respondent No.2 for a hearing, in person, on 30.06.2020. The Court, after hearing the Petitioner, rejected the application of the Petitioner vide Order dated 07.08.2020.
- It is this order that is under challenge in the present Writ Petition.

Issue:

- Whether Rule 37(8) of the Companies (Incorporation) Third Amendment Rules, 2016 was ultra vires the Act and the Constitution?
- Whether the previous/subordinate Court rightfully rejected the application of the Petitioner company?

Court decision:

Furthermore, the Court observed that the impugned rules' constitutionality being challenged was undue as it only sought to protect the interests of the creditors/other stakeholders as well as the public interest. Thus, the rules are equated to be curative. However, on the same lines, the Court observed that the said rules must also apply to all of the pending applications before the Registrar and thus would apply to the application of the Petitioner company as well.

4. Vishal Tiwari v. Union of India & Ors

The primary concern of the petitions revolved around the decline in the securities market, the downfall of redressal for investors, and speculation regarding public sector banks' dealings with the Adani Group — the demand for proper investigation aimed at the protection of the investor. The petitioner highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability. The Court clarified that the Expert Committee and SEBI would work in collaboration with each other. Mr Prashant Bhushan, appearing on behalf of the petitioner broadly pressed his case for a direction to constitute an SIT to oversee the SEBI investigation into the Adani group.

This case focuses on market oversight, the requirement of proper corporate governance and investor confidence, necessitating a comprehensive examination of the allegations and regulatory responses to ensure fair and transparent market practices.

Fact:

The case was triggered by a significant decline in investor wealth and market instability following a report by Hindenburg Research on January 24, 2023, which accused the Adani Group of share price manipulation and regulatory violations. As per the report, the conditions degraded with the revelation of Hindenburg being short in position in the Adani Group. Petitioners pleaded for the formation of a committee to provide them relief.

Petitioner wanted to investigate in the context of the allegations, emphasized negligence on the part of SEBI, and blamed public sector banks in Adani Group loan disbursements. It was their plea to have a court-monitored investigation, either by a Special Investigation Team or the Central Bureau of Investigation. They also approached their plea for filing of F.I.R. against both the Hindenburg Research Founder and associates for their activities.

The primary concern of the petitions revolved around the decline in the securities market, the downfall of redressal for investors, and speculation regarding public sector banks' dealings with the Adani Group the demand for proper investigation aimed at the protection of the investor. The petitioner highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability. The Court clarified that the Expert Committee and SEBI would work in collaboration with each other. Mr Prashant Bhushan, appearing on behalf of the petitioner broadly pressed his case for a direction to constitute an SIT to oversee the SEBI investigation into the Adani group.

This case focuses on market oversight, the requirement of proper corporate governance and investor confidence, necessitating a comprehensive examination of the allegations and regulatory responses to ensure fair and transparent market practices.

Issue:

- Whether there can be a judicial review of SEBI's regulatory framework?
- Whether the court can transfer the matter of investigation from SEBI to a Special Investigation Team (SIT)?

Arguments of the Parties:

Petitioner

1. The Petitioner assailed SEBI's failure to make out a prima facie case against the Adani Group for multiple grounds including non-compliance with important regulations and resulting legal violations are seen as self-inflicted restrictions.

2. The Petitioner also contended that certain Foreign Portfolio Investments in the Adani Group of Stocks, which as per the investigative findings of the OCCRP (Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project) were facilitated primarily through two Mauritius-based funds, were violative of Rule 19A-of the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Rules, 1957.

3. The Petitioner also asserted that intimations/disclaimers regarding the unethical act of price manipulation as engaged in by the Adani Group were made available by the Directorate of Revenue through a letter dated 31/01/2014, which was duly received by SEBI, yet no adequate actions were taken by it in light of the same.

4. The Petitioner also stated that SEBI had wilfully delayed the submission of required reports before this Hon'ble Court.

5. The Petitioner prayed for: revocation of amendments to SEBI's FPI policy, which is restricting not only itself but also the ED (Enforcement Directorate) and the CBDT from giving clear findings to the matters as stated, amendments to SEBI's Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) Regulations since they altered the meaning of 'related party' therein.

Respondents:

1. The Respondents submitted before this Hon'ble Supreme Court that Twenty-two out of the originally assigned twenty-four investigations to SEBI have been conducted and duly completed by it.

2. The Respondents urged the Court to consider that the delay by SEBI in filing the necessary reports as instructed by the Court, was only for ten additional days which was unintentional and not willful/deliberate.

3. Moreover, the Respondents requested that this Court recognise the efforts made by SEBI in adopting various steps/measures as identified by the Expert Committee to improve its practices and procedures.

4. The OCCRP (Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project) report relied on by the petitioner lacks documentary support and specific crucial/essential facts as to the source of the report, have been concealed.

5. The Respondents also submitted that the amendments made to the regulatory framework in question have thereby developed the existing regulatory framework in nuanced ways which were well thought out and only then put into application.

Analysis of the Supreme Court's Decision:

In the present case, the Supreme Court was compelled to scrutinise the various facts of the case in a manner unprecedented to law. The Supreme Court also witnessed jurisprudence of an unprecedented nature being utilised by the Petitioner in the said case, while challenging the amendments to regulations by SEBI and in turn called for their revocation. Diving into the details of the ruling herein reveals that there were various fundamental components to it, which are,

1. Scope of Judicial Review

Firstly, SEBI being a statute-based, executive authority by its very nature, has functions which undeniably involve regulating the financial sector, preventing the utilisation of unfair practices and securing the general interests of the public among other things. It is for such reasons that SEBI is thereby conferred with limited legislative powers in respect of drafting rules and regulations wherever necessary, to carry out these functions as, entrusted to it by its parent legislation.

In the instant case, directions about both the regulatory and delegated legislative powers of SEBI are being sought by the petitioners, seeking to revoke the amendments made by it to the SEBI (Foreign Portfolio Investments) Regulations, 2014 and the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015

1. Why wasn't the investigation transferred out of the hands of SEBI?

While forming an opinion on the said question, another question appeared before the Court which was "whether, as per the facts of the present case, the transfer of investigation from SEBI to another agency is warranted?"

Although the Supreme Court very well possesses powers under Articles 32 and 142 of the Indian Constitution to transfer the investigation from SEBI to any other investigative agency such as the CBI or a SIT (which has to be constituted by the Court) the Bench deciding the Case thought that such powers should be used after observing utmost care and caution and therefore be used sparingly in extraordinary cases.

To answer this question the Court relied on the fact that SEBI had indeed conducted a comprehensive investigation into the matters assigned to it. SEBI was entrusted with the responsibility of conducting 24 in-depth investigations of which the reports for 22 of the 24 were submitted on 14/08/2023 and the remaining 2 on 25/08/2023. The delay of 10 days in making such a submission was condoned by this Hon'ble Court.

Moreover, the Supreme Court observed that the Petitioner's Reliance on the OCCRP report and the letter by DRI is misconceived and that therefore, the Petitioner's contentions that SEBI was "lackadaisical in its investigation" did not arise out of the reference to the letter sent by the DRI in 2014.

5. Shalini Dharmani v. State of Himachal Pradesh & Ors.

The Hon’ble Supreme Court directed the State of Himachal Pradesh to re-evaluate the entire aspect concerning the importance of granting Child Care Leave laws, while also making sure that the objectives of the Rights of People with Disabilities Act are also covered to ensure that even the working mothers of differently abled children are properly safeguarded under the Act.

Background of the case:

Shalini Dharmani, further referred to as the petitioner, is an assistant professor in Government College, Nalagarh's Department of Geography (hereinafter referred to as 'the said college'). The petitioner's fourteen-year-old son suffers from a rare genetic disorder namely Osteogenesis Imperfecta for which he had to go through various treatments and surgeries throughout his life. For the same reason, the petitioner's son needs constant care, treatment and attention for him to lead a healthy life. However the petitioner, that is the mother of the son had no more authorized leaves. "On further request for leave, however, the petitioner was denied leave by the Principal of the said college on 16th November 2018 because the Government of Himachal

Pradesh had not enacted legislation on "Child Care Leave, making her ineligible for leave from the college.

Thereafter, the petitioner under Article 226 approached the High Court of Himachal Pradesh by filing a writ petition seeking the Hon'ble Court's direction for the adoption of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972, particularly Rule 43-C (hereinafter referred to as the 'said rule'). However, the Hon'ble High Court cited the ground that the said rule of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972 was deleted by the State, and denied the said petition. Subsequently, the petitioner filed a Special Leave Petition opposing the judgement of the Himachal Pradesh High Court dated 23-04-2021. A Special Leave Petition allows a party who is aggrieved by the decision of other courts to directly appeal to the Supreme Court of India.

Legal Provisions Applied

The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India applied the following legal provisions in this present case:

1. The Central Civil Service (Leave) Rules, 1972

Rule 43-C: Permits mothers employed under Government service for paid child care leave during their entire service tenure for a maximum period of two years. Such a leave may be granted for more than one spell.

2. The Constitution of India, 1950

In this case, the Hon'ble Supreme Court cited Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India and stated that the same protects the involvement of women employees in the workforce as a constitutional entitlement and not as a privilege.

3. Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act

Supreme Court's Direction:

The Hon'ble Supreme Court directed the State of Himachal Pradesh to re-evaluate the entire aspect concerning the importance of granting Child Care Leave laws, while also making sure that the objectives of the Rights of People with Disabilities Act are also covered to ensure that even the working mothers of differently abled children are properly safeguarded under the Act.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court directed for the constitution of a committee to look after every facet of the present matter. Such a committee shall be presided over by the Chief Secretary of the State of Himachal Pradesh, further, the committee shall include:

i) State Commissioner who is appointed under the RPWD Act

ii) Secretary in the Department of Social Welfare

iii) Secretary in the Department of Women and Child Development.

The said committee shall also communicate with the Secretary of the Department of Women and Child Development and the Secretary of the Social Welfare Department of the Union Government.

CONCLUSION:

The landmark judgments discussed in this study illustrate the Supreme Court's enduring role as the guardian of the Constitution and the protector of citizens' rights. Whether addressing environmental concerns, ensuring fair pension benefits, regulating corporate conduct, strengthening investor confidence, or protecting the rights of working mothers and children with disabilities, the Court has consistently sought to deliver justice in a manner that reflects both legal principles and social realities. These decisions not only resolve individual disputes but also establish important precedents that guide future legal developments. As society continues to evolve, the Supreme Court's judgments remain instrumental in promoting fairness, equality, accountability, and good governance. Understanding these landmark cases enables law students and legal professionals to appreciate the dynamic relationship between law and society and the judiciary's vital contribution to India's democratic framework