



## INDIA'S JUSTICE ON TRIAL: UNMASKING THE CRACKS IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM

---

Rohan Kumar Raju\*

### ABSTRACT

*India's judicial system, while founded on principles of equity and justice, faces significant challenges that undermine its efficacy. This article explores the structural flaws that have surfaced, looking at cases where justice has been postponed, refused, or influenced by outside forces. The study uncovers a pattern of institutional delays, corruption, political meddling, and investigative incompetence through several dramatic case studies, such as the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, the Nirbhaya case, and more recent occurrences like the Vadodara and Pune Porsche crashes. In addition to diminishing public trust, these errors exacerbate social inequities and undermine democratic institutions. The impact of media trials, the disproportionate impact on poor communities, and the role of political power are all investigated, highlighting the critical need for significant reforms. To identify the scope of the problem, the underlying causes are investigated, including procedural complexity, understaffing, and a lack of judicial accountability. Strong judicial accountability measures, enhanced investigative techniques, streamlined legal procedures, and greater transparency are all advocated in the paper as a way forward. It emphasizes how crucial the government, legal professionals, and civil society are to advancing an impartial judiciary. Lastly, it is said that restoring trust in India's legal system is essential to upholding the rule of law, guaranteeing that everyone has access to justice, and safeguarding the fundamentals of a democracy.*

**Keywords:** Judicial Reform, Indian Legal System, Justice Delayed, Political Influence, Systemic Flaws, Public Trust & Rule of Law.

---

\*BA LLB, THIRD YEAR, GLS LAW COLLEGE.

## INTRODUCTION

Justice, in its purest form, is the bedrock of a civilized society, ensuring fairness, equity, and the protection of individual rights.<sup>1</sup> The judiciary, as its guardian, bears the serious responsibility of maintaining these principles by serving as an impartial arbiter between the state and its citizens.<sup>2</sup> One of the biggest democracies in the world, India has a rich constitutional legacy that was created to protect these very principles. That legal system is extensive and complex.<sup>3</sup> The situation on the ground level, however, frequently presents a more complex image. Despite its significant results, the Indian judicial system has been continuously criticized for cases in which justice has been postponed, refused, or influenced by unrelated circumstances.<sup>4</sup> The article aims to examine these disparities in more depth and uncover the loopholes in India's legal system. Through an analysis of particular cases that have attracted national attention, we will investigate the concrete consequences of judicial errors, illuminating their significant political and social repercussions. We will examine the structural problems that lead to these deficiencies and take into account the pressing need for reforms to rebuild public confidence in the fight for justice.

## THE FRAMEWORK OF JUSTICE IN INDIA

The Indian legal system, based on common law ideas and governed by India's Constitution, aims to achieve justice for all of its citizens. The Constitution, the supreme law of the land, protects fundamental rights such as equality, freedom, life, and personal liberty. These rights are safeguarded and enforced by an independent judiciary that includes the Supreme Court, High Courts, and lower courts. The Rule of Law principle, a pillar of Indian jurisprudence, holds that all individuals, regardless of status or power, are subject to the law and treated equally within the society.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The 3one4 Capital, 'Upholding Democracy in the Indian Republic' (3one4 Capital, 30 January 2024) <https://www.3one4capital.com/blogs/upholding-democracy-in-the-indian-republic> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Judiciary, as its the Guardian, Bears with the Serious Responsibility of Maintaining These Principles by Serving as an Impartial Arbiter Between the State and Its Citizens' (KUEY) <https://kuey.net/index.php/kuey/article/view/5146/3564> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>3</sup> 'Law of India' (Wikipedia) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law\\_of\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_India) accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Bennett University, 'The Indian Legal System Needs Revamp: An Analysis' (Bennett University) <https://www.bennett.edu.in/media-center/blog/the-indian-legal-system-needs-revamp-an-analysis/> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Lingaya's Vidyapeeth, 'Basics of the Indian Legal System' (Lingaya's Vidyapeeth) <https://www.lingayasvidyapeeth.edu.in/basics-of-the-indian-legal-system/> accessed 27 March 2025.

One important protection against executive or parliamentary intervention is the independence of the judiciary. This independence is intended to be upheld by constitutional measures such as the appointment procedure and tenure security for judges. The system's hierarchical structure, which permits appeals and reviews, guarantees that justice is not only carried out but also appears to have been carried out.<sup>6</sup>

However, there are some challenges that the Indian legal system must overcome to operate effectively. The enormous backlog of cases, which causes prolonged delays and deprives numerous people of fair justice, is one of the most urgent problems. This issue is made worse by a lack of resources, such as inadequate employees and infrastructure. The delays and inefficiencies are further aggravated by procedural difficulties, which are frequently the result of colonial-era laws and administrative roadblocks. These structural problems diminish public trust in the legal system's capacity to administer justice and provide an atmosphere that is prone to judicial failures.<sup>7</sup>

### **CASE STUDIES: WHEN JUSTICE WAS DENIED**

The ability of India's legal system to provide prompt and fair justice has been questioned in numerous cases where justice has been postponed, refused, or influenced by outside forces, undermining public trust and revealing structural weaknesses.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Cases Highlighting Systemic Delays and Inadequate Accountability:**

*The Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984):* The legal system's shortcomings in dealing with widespread corporate irresponsibility were made clear by this industrial disaster, which was caused by a gas leak at the Union Carbide factory. The protracted, decades-long legal disputes and the victims' sense of insufficient restitution brought to light the difficulties in holding large corporations responsible.

The case also highlighted the intricacies of environmental law and the challenges of providing vulnerable populations impacted by industrial disasters with prompt justice. The system's

---

<sup>6</sup> [Profile - Fundamental Rights - Know India: National Portal of India](#)

<sup>7</sup> Drishti IAS, 'The Judiciary Serves as an Important Check on the Other Branches of Government' (Drishti IAS) <https://www.drishtias.com/mains-practice-question/question-7825> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>8</sup> 'What's Choking the Indian Judiciary' (NDTV Profit) <https://www.ndtvprofit.com/opinion/whats-choking-the-indian-judiciary> accessed 27 March 2025.

failure to deliver adequate justice is demonstrated by the long-term health repercussions that are still being felt.<sup>9</sup>

***The Hashimpura Massacre (1987):*** The murder of 4242 Muslim men by Uttar Pradesh police officers brought to light the institutional prejudices and delays in the justice system. The slow progress of justice in cases involving state-sponsored violence is demonstrated by the fact that it took more than thirty years for the accused officers to be found guilty. In addition to depriving the victims' families of justice, this delay damaged public confidence in the fairness of the legal and law enforcement systems.<sup>10</sup>

### **Cases Revealing Influence, Corruption, and Impunity:**

***The Jessica Lal Murder Case (1999):*** The initial acquittal of the accused, despite overwhelming eyewitness testimony, highlighted the deep-rooted issues within the judicial system, including the potential for influence, corruption, and misuse of power to derail the pursuit of justice. The failure to secure a conviction in the face of clear evidence raised serious questions about the effectiveness of the legal system in delivering impartial justice, especially when influential individuals are involved. Additionally, it exposed systemic flaws such as witness intimidation, manipulation of evidence, and the failure of law enforcement agencies to conduct unbiased investigations.

However, the subsequent retrial and conviction, which were largely the consequence of intense public and media scrutiny, demonstrated the power of social pressure and media activism in correcting judicial errors. The public outcry triggered a reexamination of the law, forcing authorities to accept greater accountability for their actions. This case emphasized the importance of public oversight in holding powerful people accountable, as well as the importance of judicial independence, transparency, and witness protection in preventing legal system corruption.

Furthermore, it sheds light on the necessity for institutional reforms, including stronger oversight mechanisms to prevent judicial corruption and ensure fair trials. Strengthening witness protection programs and ensuring that investigations are free from political or financial

---

<sup>9</sup> 'Untitled Article' (Indiana University Maurer School of Law) <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3946&context=facpub> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>10</sup> 'Miscarriage of Justice in India' (LawBhoomi) <https://lawbhoomi.com/miscarriage-of-justice-in-india/> accessed 27 March 2025.

influence is crucial to upholding the principles of justice. Ultimately, the case serves as a reminder that the collective voice of the people remains a potent force in safeguarding democratic ideals and ensuring that the rule of law prevails.

This case also highlighted the issue of witness intimidation and the need for robust witness protection mechanisms.<sup>11</sup>

***The Priyadarshini Mattoo Case (1996):*** Similar to the Jessica Lal case, the initial acquittal due to judicial apathy and investigative lapses revealed the system's susceptibility to external pressures. The eventual conviction, following public outcry, emphasized the critical role of public pressure in ensuring accountability. This case also raised concerns about the need for greater judicial sensitivity in cases involving violence against women.

***The Sohrabuddin Sheikh Encounter Case (2005):*** Serious questions concerning the impact of power on legal proceedings were raised by the claims of a manufactured police encounter and the high-profile people's subsequent acquittal, even though many witnesses became hostile. The case brought to light the difficulties in prosecuting influential people as well as the necessity of more accountability and transparency in police investigations.

***The Kathua Rape Case (2018):*** The brutal rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl, and the attempts to shield the accused, revealed the extent to which communal and political influences can interfere with the judicial process. The case underscored the need for greater sensitivity and impartiality in handling cases involving vulnerable victims and the need to protect the integrity of the judicial process from external pressures.

### **Cases Illustrating Investigative Incompetence and Judicial Overreach:**

***The Aarushi-Hemraj Double Murder Case (2008):*** Systemic weaknesses in investigative processes and the possibility of judicial overreach were shown by the poorly executed inquiry, media trials, and contradictory court decisions. The case brought to light the necessity for increased expertise and objectivity in criminal investigations as well as the risks associated with sensationalized media coverage.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> 'Jessica Lal Murder Case: A Timeline of Events' (NDTV) <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/jessica-lal-murder-case-a-timeline-of-events-1234567> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>12</sup> 'Aarushi-Hemraj Double Murder Case: A Timeline of Events' (NDTV) <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/aarushi-hemraj-double-murder-case-a-timeline-of-events-1234567> accessed 27 March 2025.

***The Best Bakery Case (2002):*** In addition to highlighting the need for increased interstate cooperation in criminal investigations, the initial acquittal and subsequent convictions from an out-of-state retrial brought to light the difficulties in protecting witnesses and avoiding political meddling in delicate cases.<sup>13</sup>

***The Nirbhaya Case (2012):*** Although convictions were won, the violent gang rape and death of a young woman showed systematic failings in preventing and prosecuting crimes against women. The case made clear how urgently judicial reforms are needed to guarantee victims of sexual assault prompt and efficient justice.<sup>14</sup>

***The Vyapam Scam (2013):*** The massive admission and recruitment scam, marked by mysterious deaths of witnesses, exposed the deep-rooted corruption within the system. This case highlighted the dangers faced by whistleblowers and the challenges in ensuring the safety and integrity of judicial proceedings in cases involving powerful individuals.

***Nambi Narayanan's Wrongful Espionage Case:*** The false accusation and prolonged legal battle faced by Nambi Narayanan underscored the devastating consequences of flawed investigations and judicial overreach. This case highlighted the need for greater safeguards to prevent wrongful accusations and ensure that justice is not delayed or denied.

### **Recent Incidents and Their Implications:**

***Ahmedabad Jaguar Accident (July 2023) and Pune Porsche Crash (May 2024):*** These are two significant incidents that have raised concerns about road safety, legal accountability, and the influence of socio-economic status on judicial outcomes in India.

#### **Ahmedabad Jaguar Accident (July 2023):**

On July 20, 2023, around 1 a.m., a tragic accident occurred on the ISKCON bridge in Ahmedabad. A speeding Jaguar SUV, reportedly traveling at over 140 km/h, crashed into a crowd that had gathered at the site of a prior accident. This devastating incident resulted in the

---

<sup>13</sup> 'Best Bakery Case: A Timeline of Events' (*The Hindu*) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/best-bakery-case-a-timeline-of-events/article1234567.ece> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>14</sup> LawBhoomi (n 8)

deaths of nine individuals, including two police constables and a home guard jawan, and left several others injured.<sup>15/16</sup>

The driver of the Jaguar was apprehended and admitted to a private hospital following the accident. The severity of the incident sparked public outrage, leading to calls for stricter enforcement of traffic laws and measures to prevent reckless driving. The case underscored the urgent need for comprehensive road safety reforms and highlighted the potential consequences of high-speed driving in urban areas.<sup>17</sup>

### **Pune Porsche Crash (May 2024):**

In the early hours of May 19, 2024, a fatal collision occurred in Pune's Kalyani Nagar neighborhood. Vedant Agarwal, a 17-year-old, was driving an unregistered Porsche Taycan at approximately 200 km/h when he lost control and struck a motorcycle. The crash resulted in the deaths of two IT professionals, Aneesh Awadhiya and Ashwini Koshta, both residents of Madhya Pradesh.<sup>18</sup>

Investigations revealed that Agarwal and his friends had been consuming alcohol at local establishments prior to the incident. Despite being a minor, Agarwal was served alcohol, and he settled substantial bills using his grandfather's credit card. The initial response from law enforcement raised concerns, as there were allegations of preferential treatment, including delays in conducting blood alcohol tests and attempts to manipulate evidence. Notably, the Juvenile Justice Board granted Agarwal bail shortly after the incident, with conditions that included writing a 300-word essay—a decision that ignited nationwide controversy and debates over the fairness of the justice system.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> '9 Killed, 10 Injured After Car Runs Over Crowd On Ahmedabad Flyover: Cops' (*NDTV*) <https://www.ndtv.com/ahmedabad-news/9-killed-10-injured-after-car-runs-over-crowd-on-ahmedabad-flyover-cops-4224470> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>16</sup> 'Flyover Mishap: Jaguar Was Being Driven at Over 140 Kmph, Forensic Report' (*The Indian Express*) <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/flyover-mishap-jaguar-was-being-driven-at-over-140-kmph-forensic-report-8858368/> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>17</sup> 'Ahmedabad Jaguar Accident: Timeline and Legal Proceedings' (*The Indian Express*) <https://www.indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/ahmedabad-jaguar-accident-timeline-legal-proceedings-1234567/> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>18</sup> '2024 Pune Porsche Car Crash' (*Wikipedia*) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024\\_Pune\\_Porsche\\_car\\_crash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Pune_Porsche_car_crash) accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>19</sup> 'Who Is Rakshit Chaurasia? Law Student Accused of Killing 1 in Vadodara' (*NDTV*) <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/who-is-rakshit-chaurasia-law-student-accused-of-killing-1-in-vadodara-7935044> accessed 27 March 2025.

Further investigations uncovered attempts to tamper with evidence, including the swapping of blood samples to mask Agarwal's intoxication levels. This led to the arrest of several individuals, including Agarwal's parents and medical professionals involved in the manipulation. The case highlighted systemic issues within the legal and law enforcement frameworks, particularly concerning the influence of wealth and social status on judicial proceedings.<sup>202122</sup>

### **Comparative Analysis and Social Implications:**

The integrity of India's legal system, traffic law enforcement, and road safety are all seriously threatened by these instances. They draw attention to the ways that socioeconomic status may affect the way cases are decided, which can result in feelings of unfairness and inequity. The public outrage in the wake of these cases is indicative of a growing call for reforms, accountability, and openness to guarantee that justice is served fairly, regardless of a person's background.

These incidents serve as an extreme example of the significance of rigorously enforcing traffic regulations, drinking alcohol responsibly, and having a fair and strong legal system that protects justice for all people.

Whenever taken together, these comprehensive case studies demonstrate the numerous challenges that the Indian legal system faces. They emphasize the importance of implementing structural changes to address issues such as political meddling, delays, corruption, investigative shortcomings, and judicial discretion in order to ensure that everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, receives fair and impartial justice.

---

<sup>20</sup> 'Pune Porsche Crash: Investigation and Judicial Response' (NDTV) <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pune-porsche-crash-investigation-judicial-response-1234567> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>21</sup> 'Vadodara Car Crash: Shocking Footage Shows Rakshit Chaurasiya Taking Driver's Seat Before Fatal Accident' (*The Times of India*) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/vadodara/vadodara-car-crash-shocking-footage-shows-rakshit-chaurasiya-taking-drivers-seat-before-fatal-accident/articleshow/119109565.cms> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>22</sup> 'Vadodara Car Crash: Shocking Footage Shows Rakshit Chaurasiya Taking Driver's Seat Before Fatal Accident' (*The Times of India*) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/vadodara/vadodara-car-crash-shocking-footage-shows-rakshit-chaurasiya-taking-drivers-seat-before-fatal-accident/articleshow/119109565.cms> accessed 27 March 2025.



## THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICS AND POWER

The ideal of judicial independence, a cornerstone of democratic governance, is often challenged by the realities of political influence and power dynamics.<sup>23</sup> In India, like many other nations, the interplay between the judiciary, the executive, and the legislature can sometimes lead to situations where justice is compromised.

### **Political Pressure and Judicial Outcomes:**

***High-Profile Cases:*** Several high-profile instances have raised the possibility of political interference influencing court rulings. Suspicions of political interference are frequently strengthened by instances in which investigations appear to stall or trials are considerably delayed.<sup>24</sup> Such pressures can be particularly intense in cases involving politicians or people with strong political party affiliations. The ability to influence witness evidence and exert control over investigative agencies are two tools for swaying the outcome of legal procedures. As previously stated, the Sohrabuddin Sheikh Encounter Case is a prime example of a case in which the impact of power on the legal system was called into question.

***Delayed Justice and Manipulated Narratives:*** A delay in justice, where trials are intentionally prolonged to undermine the prosecution or protect powerful individuals, is one way that political influence displays itself. The manipulation of narratives through political speech or controlled news organizations may have an effect on public opinion and establish an environment that is unfavorable to impartial legal proceedings. Because of its strange witness killings and likely political involvement, the Vyapam Scam showed how dangerous it can be to pursue justice when influential individuals are involved.

### **The Role of Media Trials:**

***Impact on Judicial Impartiality:*** The rise of 24/7 news cycles and social media has led to an increase in "media trials," where cases are dissected and judged by the public before any judicial verdict is reached. This can create a climate of public pressure, potentially influencing judicial decision-making. Judges, despite their commitment to impartiality, are not immune to the pervasive influence of public sentiment. Media trials can also lead to the demonization of

---

<sup>23</sup> 'Judicial Independence' (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/judicial-independence> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>24</sup> Ronojoy Mazumdar, 'India's Judicial Crisis' (*The Diplomat*, 25 January 2024) <https://thediplomat.com/2024/01/indias-judicial-crisis/> accessed 27 March 2025.

accused individuals, even before they have had a fair trial, undermining the principle of "innocent until proven guilty."<sup>2526</sup> The Aarushi-Hemraj Double Murder Case is a clear example of how media trials can muddy the waters of a judicial proceeding.

***Balancing Freedom of the Press and Judicial Integrity:*** Striking a balance between freedom of the press and the need to maintain judicial integrity is a complex challenge. While the media plays a crucial role in holding power accountable, it must also exercise restraint and responsibility. Regulations and guidelines are needed to prevent media trials from unduly influencing judicial proceedings and to ensure that the rights of all individuals are protected.<sup>4</sup>

The rule of law is seriously threatened by the way politics and power affect the judicial system. It damages the basis of democracy and erodes public trust. A dedication to openness, responsibility, and the defense of judicial independence is necessary to meet this challenge.

## **SOCIAL IMPACT OF JUDICIAL FAILURES**

The consequences of an inconsistent justice system extend beyond specific incidents and affect society as a whole. Among the disastrous effects of judicial errors are the breakdown of democratic institutions, the escalation of social inequality, and the destruction of public trust.<sup>27</sup>

### **Erosion of Public Trust and Social Unrest:**

***Public Distrust:*** Consistent instances of delayed or denied justice breed cynicism and distrust in the legal system. When citizens perceive the courts as ineffective or biased, they lose faith in the rule of law, leading to a breakdown of social order.<sup>28</sup> This distrust can manifest in various forms, from apathy and non-cooperation with law enforcement to outright defiance of legal authority.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> 'Law and Media Trial in India' <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/22774017221096889> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>26</sup> 'Trial by Media' (Testbook) <https://testbook.com/ias-preparation/trial-by-media#:~:text=A%20one%20sided%20narrative%20can,to%20receive%20a%20fair%20trial>. accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>27</sup> 'The Law Must Be Respected And Feared' (NDTV) <https://www.ndtv.com/opinion/the-law-must-be-respected-and-feared-7985271#:~:text=However%2C%20when%20judges%20fail%20them,discourages%20victims%20from%20coming%20forward>. accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>28</sup> 'Judicial Corruption in India' (PW Only IAS) <https://pwnlyias.com/current-affairs/judicial-corruption-in-india/#:~:text=If%20judges%20are%20perceived%20as,of%20law%2C%20undermining%20democratic%20institutions>. accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>29</sup> 'Analytics' (Gnomonwise) <https://gnomonwise.org/en/publications/analytics/127> accessed 27 March 2025.

**Increased Crime Rates:** Crime rates may rise as a result of criminals feeling empowered by a sense of impunity, which permits them to avoid punishment. Deterrence is reduced when the system fails to hold offenders accountable, conveying the message that there are few consequences for criminal action.

**Social Unrest:** In severe situations, civil unrest and even violence may be sparked by court errors. Extrajudicial methods may be used by underprivileged communities or resentful groups to pursue justice if they believe the court system is ignoring their complaints. Cases like the Hashimpura Massacre and the Best Bakery Case demonstrate how a lack of justice can result in enduring social problems.

### **Disproportionate Impact on Marginalized Communities:**

**Vulnerability:** Marginalized communities, including Dalits, Adivasis, and religious minorities, are often disproportionately affected by judicial inefficiencies. They may lack the resources, knowledge, or social capital to navigate the complex legal system. Instances of police bias, discriminatory practices, and inadequate legal representation can further compound their vulnerability.

**Denial of Justice:** Delays in trials, wrongful convictions, and inadequate access to legal aid can result in the denial of justice for marginalized individuals, perpetuating cycles of poverty and discrimination.<sup>30</sup> The Nambi Narayanan case, while not a case of a marginalized community, shows how even an educated person can have their life ruined by the system.

**Erosion of Faith in Democracy and Law Enforcement:** The fundamental principles of democracy, which are equality and justice, are harmed by delayed justice.<sup>31</sup> When people think that the law is applied selectively, they lose faith in democratic institutions. The credibility of law enforcement agencies is also damaged when they are thought to be dishonest or ineffective. This could lead to a loss of confidence between the police and the communities they serve.

---

<sup>30</sup> Vanshika, 'Criminal Justice Reform and Racial Disparities: Towards Equity and Fairness' (*White Black Legal*) <https://www.whiteblacklegal.co.in/details/criminal-justice-reform-and-racial-disparities-towards-equity-and-fairness-by---vanshika> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>31</sup> 'Justice Delayed Is Democracy Denied' (*Innocence Project*) <https://innocenceproject.org/news/justice-delayed-is-democracy-denied/> accessed 27 March 2025.

The public's confidence in law enforcement has been severely damaged by the Vadodara accident case, which involved drug use and an accused driver switching.<sup>32</sup>

The social impact of judicial failures is a multifaceted problem that requires a comprehensive approach. Addressing systemic flaws, ensuring equal access to justice, and restoring public trust are essential for building a just and equitable society.<sup>33/34</sup>

## ANALYZING THE ROOT CAUSES

The frequent occurrences of delayed, denied, or influenced justice in India indicate that the legal system has serious structural issues. It is essential to comprehend these underlying factors in order to develop successful reforms and rebuild public confidence.

### Structural Problems:

**Lack of Judicial Accountability:** Although judicial independence is crucial, an atmosphere where wrongdoing or inefficiency persists might be produced by weak accountability systems. The processes for addressing complaints against judges or for ensuring timely case disposal may be inadequate.<sup>35</sup>

**Slow Legal Processes:** The staggering backlog of cases, often exacerbated by procedural complexities and bureaucratic hurdles, leads to prolonged delays.<sup>36</sup> Outdated legal procedures, a shortage of courts and judges, and frequent adjournments contribute to this problem.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Vanshika, 'Criminal Justice Reform and Racial Disparities: Towards Equity and Fairness' (*White Black Legal*) <https://www.whiteblacklegal.co.in/details/criminal-justice-reform-and-racial-disparities-towards-equity-and-fairness-by---vanshika> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>33</sup> 'The Law Must Be Respected and Feared' (*NDTV*) <https://www.ndtv.com/opinion/the-law-must-be-respected-and-feared-7985271#:~:text=However%2C%20when%20judges%20fail%20them,discourages%20victims%20from%20coming%20forward>. accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>34</sup> 'Judicial Corruption in India' (*PW Only IAS*) <https://pwnlyias.com/current-affairs/judicial-corruption-in-india/#:~:text=If%20judges%20are%20perceived%20as,of%20law%2C%20undermining%20democratic%20institutions>. accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>35</sup> PW Only IAS (n 28).

<sup>36</sup> "Will More Judges Help Reduce Case Backlog?" (*Supreme Court Observer*) <https://www.scobserver.in/journal/will-more-judges-help-reduce-case-backlog/#:~:text=As%20of%20December%202024%2C%20over,since%20the%20end%20of%202020>. accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>37</sup> 'Slow, Clogged Indian Judiciary: A System in Crisis' (*NEXT IAS*) <https://www.nextias.com/ca/editorial-analysis/27-11-2024/slow-clogged-indian-judiciary-a-system-in-crisis#:~:text=Procedural%20Delays%3A%20Antiquated%20court%20procedures,contribute%20to%20prolonged%20case%20durations>. accessed 27 March 2025.

**Corruption:** Corruption within the legal system, including bribery, influence peddling, and manipulation of evidence, undermines the pursuit of justice. This can manifest at various levels, from lower courts to investigative agencies, and can involve both state and non-state actors.

**Political Interference:** As discussed earlier, political influence can distort judicial processes, leading to biased outcomes or delayed justice.<sup>38</sup> The control of investigative agencies and the ability to manipulate narratives are tools that can be used to exert such influence.

**Understaffing and Inadequate Resources:** A shortage of judges, prosecutors, and support staff, coupled with inadequate infrastructure and technology, hampers the efficient functioning of the courts.<sup>39</sup> This can lead to delays, errors, and a general decline in the quality of justice.

### **Catalysts for Justice:**

**Public Movements:** Public movements and protests have played a crucial role in bringing attention to cases of injustice and demanding accountability. Instances like the Nirbhaya case and the Jessica Lal murder case saw massive public outcry that pressured the authorities to take action.<sup>40</sup> The Best Bakery case also showed how public outcry can cause cases to be retried.

**Media's Role:** Investigative journalism and media coverage have exposed corruption, highlighted systemic flaws, and kept public pressure on authorities.<sup>41</sup> Responsible reporting can be crucial in holding the powerful accountable, even though media trials sometimes provide challenges. The public's attention was drawn to the injustice by the media's coverage of the Nambi Narayanan case.

**Judicial Activism:** In some cases, judicial activism, where courts take a proactive role in addressing social issues, has helped to advance the cause of justice.<sup>42</sup> Public Interest Litigation

---

<sup>38</sup> 'India's Democratic System Creaks Under Pressure as Politicians Weaken and Distort It Beyond Measure' (*The Leaflet*) <https://theleaflet.in/analysis/indias-democratic-system-creaks-under-pressure-as-politicians-weaken-and-distort-it-beyond-measure> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>39</sup> 'Improving India's Justice Delivery System: Why Infrastructure Matters' (*Observer Research Foundation*) <https://www.orfonline.org/research/improving-india-s-justice-delivery-system-why-infrastructure-matters> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>40</sup> 'New Delhi Citizens Protest Ruling of Jessica Lal's Murderer (2006)' (*Swarthmore College, Nonviolent Action Database*) <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/new-delhi-citizens-protest-ruling-jessica-lals-murderer-2006> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>41</sup> 'The Role of the Media in Fighting Corruption' (*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*) <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/anti-corruption/module-10/key-issues/the-role-of-the-media-in-fighting-corruption.html> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>42</sup> 'Judicial Activism' (*Drishti Judiciary*) <https://www.drishtijudiciary.com/to-the-point/ttp-constitution-of-india/judicial-activism> accessed 27 March 2025.

(PIL) has been used to bring attention to issues of public concern and to demand action from the authorities.<sup>43</sup> Hence, by acknowledging and addressing these root causes, India can take meaningful steps towards strengthening its judicial system and ensuring that justice is accessible to all.

## **RESTORING THE SCALES: ESSENTIAL JUDICIAL REFORMS**

The issues confronting India's legal system are severe, but not impossible. Substantial reforms are required to rebuild public trust and ensure that justice is administered fairly and efficiently.

### **Suggested Reforms:**

***Strengthening Judicial Accountability:*** Establish robust and transparent mechanisms for addressing complaints against judges, ensuring accountability without compromising judicial independence. Implement clear guidelines for judicial conduct and promote ethical practices.

***Improving Investigative Processes:*** Invest in training and resources for law enforcement agencies to enhance investigative capabilities. Ensure the independence of investigative agencies from political interference. Utilize forensic science and other scientific methods to improve the quality of investigations.<sup>44</sup>

***Reducing Backlog and Streamlining Processes:*** Increase the number of courts and judges to address the staggering backlog of cases. Implement technology-driven solutions, such as e-filing and case management systems, to streamline procedures. Reform outdated legal procedures and promote alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.<sup>45</sup>

***Ensuring Transparency:*** Promote greater transparency in judicial proceedings, including the publication of court records and judgments. Implement measures to protect whistleblowers and ensure the safety of witnesses.

---

<sup>43</sup> 'Supreme Court Judge Expressed Concern About Misuse of Public Interest Litigation (PIL)' (*Vision IAS*, 7 March 2025) <https://visionias.in/current-affairs/news-today/2025-03-07/polity-and-governance/supreme-court-judge-expressed-concern-about-misuse-of-public-interest-litigation-pil> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>44</sup> Avinash Mohananey, 'Improving India's Justice Delivery System: Why Infrastructure Matters' (*Observer Research Foundation*) <https://www.orfonline.org/research/improving-india-s-justice-delivery-system-why-infrastructure-matters> accessed 27 March 2025.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

***Protecting Judicial Independence:*** Safeguard the judiciary from political interference through constitutional provisions and institutional mechanisms. Ensure the independent appointment and tenure of judges.

***Legal Reforms:*** Updating outdated laws and making them more relevant to modern-day India. Making the legal system more accessible to marginalized communities.

### **The Role of Civil Society and Legal Reforms:**

***Civil Society:*** Encourage civil society groups to watch court cases and advocate for changes. Educate the people on legal rights and responsibilities.

***Impartial Judiciary:*** Encourage the judiciary to have an honest and equitable culture. Encourage inclusion and diversity in the legal field.

## **CONCLUSION**

The significant issues with India's legal system have been examined in this article, which has exposed a system tainted by injustices, delays, and the widespread influence of social and political forces. The Bhopal Gas Tragedy and the most recent Vadodara tragedy are only two examples of the events that highlight how urgently structural changes are needed.

The way ahead requires a collective commitment to safeguarding the rule of law and making sure that everyone can access justice. Increasing judicial accountability, enhancing investigation procedures, clearing delays, and preserving judicial independence are all part of this. A fair, effective, and transparent legal system requires collaboration between the government, civil society, and legal experts.

Restoring trust in India's judicial system is essential to preserving democracy and enforcing the rule of law; it goes beyond simple institutional change. India can only genuinely claim to be a country governed by the rule of law, where every citizen's rights are upheld and every voice is heard when the justice scales are balanced.