



**UPSC
GURUS**

**MAJOR SUPREME
COURT JUDGEMENTS**

K.S. PUTTASWAMY V. UNION OF INDIA (2018 – AADHAAR CASE)

Constitutional Interpretation & Basic Structure

PRELIMS SNAPSHOT

◆ 1. Prelims Snapshot (Fact Box)

- 📅 Year: 2018
- ⚖️ Case: K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India (Aadhaar Judgment)
- 👤 Bench Strength: 5 Judges (Constitution Bench)
- 📖 Key Articles Involved: Article 14, Article 19, Article 21; Aadhaar Act, 2016
- 🧠 Doctrine Evolved: Right to privacy must be balanced with legitimate state interests; Aadhaar upheld with safeguards
- 💬 Famous Line: "Constitutional trust demands that data be used only for legitimate state aims."

CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

Following the 2017 Puttaswamy judgment, which declared the right to privacy a fundamental right, a Constitution Bench was formed to examine the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar project.



Petitioners argued that mandatory linking of Aadhaar to services like banking, mobile SIMs, and welfare schemes violated privacy and enabled surveillance.

The core concern was whether Aadhaar's data collection and usage architecture could pass the tests of proportionality, necessity, and legality under the right to privacy.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RAISED

- Does mandatory Aadhaar linking violate the right to privacy under Article 21?
- Is the Aadhaar Act constitutionally valid, especially if passed as a Money Bill?
- Can biometric data collection be justified in a democratic setup?
- What are the reasonable limits of welfare governance in a rights-based state?

VERDICT & RATIO DECIDENDI

The Supreme Court, in a 4:1 majority, upheld the Aadhaar scheme with significant restrictions:

- Aadhaar is constitutionally valid for welfare delivery and targeted subsidies



- It is not mandatory for services like bank accounts, telecom connections, or school admissions
- Private companies cannot demand Aadhaar authentication
- The passing of the Aadhaar Act as a Money Bill was upheld, though Justice Chandrachud dissented, calling it unconstitutional
- The Court ordered stronger data protection measures, independent regulation, and restrictions on data storage and access

DOCTRINE / PRINCIPLE EVOLVED

- Reiterated the proportionality doctrine: any invasion of privacy must be backed by law, have a legitimate aim, and use the least restrictive means
- Affirmed that data minimalism, consent, and purpose limitation are central to digital governance
- Established that privacy rights can be restricted, but only under rigorous constitutional scrutiny



**UPSC
GURUS**

MAJOR SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENTS

IMPACT & LEGACY

- Provided legal legitimacy to Aadhaar, making it central to direct benefit transfers and welfare delivery
- Limited the commercial and overbroad use of Aadhaar, preventing mass profiling
- Spurred the demand for a comprehensive data protection law, leading to the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023
- Strengthened judicial oversight on technology-led governance



**UPSC
GURUS**

MAJOR SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENTS

RELEVANCE FOR UPSC

- GS Paper 2:
 - Privacy vs. welfare rights, Aadhaar governance, digital inclusion
 - Role of the state in data protection and identity management
- GS Paper 4 (Ethics):
 - Digital infrastructure, cyber laws, technology and rights
- Essay Paper:
 - Apt for essays on Sustainable Development, Pollution Control and Public Health, Industrial Accountability
- UPSC Interview:
- Useful in questions on ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance), global standards, environmental jurisprudence

**TO DOWNLOAD PDF
JOIN OUR TELEGRAM
CHANNEL**

https://t.me/UPSC_Gurus









**OR
DOWNLOAD FROM
OUR WEBSITE**

www.upscgurus.in

FOLLOW US



 **@UPSCGURUS**  **8122002172**  **UPSC.GURUS**
 **UPSC_Gurus**  **www.upscgurus.in**  **upscgurus@gmail.com**