



# MANEKA GANDHI V. UNION OF INDIA (1978)

*Constitutional Interpretation & Basic Structure*

## PRELIMS SNAPSHOT

- ◆ 1. Prelims Snapshot (Fact Box)
- 📅 Year: 1978
- ⚖️ Case: Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India
- 👤 Bench Strength: 7 Judges
- 📖 Key Articles Involved: Article 14, Article 19, Article 21
- 🧠 Doctrine Evolved: Due Process is part of Article 21; Fundamental Rights are interlinked
- 💬 Famous Line: "No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except by a just, fair and reasonable law."

## CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

The case began when Maneka Gandhi's passport was impounded by the government under the Passport Act, 1967, without giving any reason or a chance to be heard. She filed a writ petition alleging violation of her Fundamental Rights, particularly the right to personal liberty and travel abroad under Article 21.



This case became a turning point in reinterpreting personal liberty, especially post-Emergency.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RAISED**

- Can a law curtailing liberty be arbitrary or unjust if passed by Parliament?
- Is Article 21 limited to “procedure established by law” or must that procedure be just, fair, and reasonable?
- Are Articles 14, 19, and 21 mutually exclusive, or should they be read together?

## **VERDICT & RATIO DECIDENDI**

The Supreme Court unanimously ruled:

- Article 21 is not satisfied by any law; it must be reasonable, just, and fair
- The procedure under Article 21 must meet the standards of Articles 14 and 19
- Fundamental Rights form an integrated scheme; they cannot be read in isolation



- The right to travel abroad, while not explicitly listed, is part of personal liberty
- This overruled A.K. Gopalan (1950) and became a cornerstone for civil liberties jurisprudence.

### **DOCTRINE / PRINCIPLE EVOLVED**

- Due process of law is now implied in “procedure established by law” under Article 21
- Rights under Articles 14, 19, and 21 are interconnected and mutually reinforcing
- Laws impacting liberty must pass tests of non-arbitrariness, fairness, and reasonableness





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# MAJOR SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENTS

## IMPACT & LEGACY

- Significantly expanded the scope of Article 21 to include rights like:
- Right to travel
- Right to privacy
- Right to legal aid
- Right to a fair trial
- Became the foundation for modern rights jurisprudence in India
- Cited in landmark rulings like Puttaswamy (2017) and Anuradha Bhasin (2020)
- Marked the judiciary's return to activism after the Emergency



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# MAJOR SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENTS

## RELEVANCE FOR UPSC

- GS Paper 2:
  - Evolution of Fundamental Rights
  - Role of judiciary in protecting liberty
  - Constitutional safeguards against state overreach
- GS Paper 4 (Ethics):
  - Fairness, justice, integrity of institutions
- Essay Paper:
  - Excellent for topics on Liberty and Governance, Justice and Rights in a Democracy, Judicial Role in Protecting Citizens
- UPSC Interview:
- Relevant in discussions on due process, liberty vs. national interest, and judicial interpretation

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