Book Review

(‘’10 Judgments That Changed India’’)

by

Zia Mody

Introduction:

The subject book titled ("10 Judgments’ That Changed India “)by Zia Mody (2020) examines and discusses ten significant decisions delivered by the Supreme Court of India which according to the author has been able to shape modern India. The book under review consists of ten chapters; each chapter focused one case, from (Kesavananda Bharativ. State of Kerala 1973, which popularly established the Constitution’s “basic structure” doctrine) to (Aruna Shanbaug vs. Union of India ,2011, on passive euthanasia). Similarly, the cases such as (Maneka Gandhi 1978, personal liberty), the (*Shah Bano* case (1985, Muslim personal law),(*Vishaka v. Rajasthan* 1997, workplace harassment), among others.

Summary;

The main focus of the author at each case is on the factual controversy, the litigants’ to the suit, pro and contra arguments , and the reasoning and final decision of the supreme court of India in clear interpretation. The writing is very simple and is intended for both common reader and legal professionals. Soli Sorabjee’s foreword praises the authors approach, suggesting that Mody presents case(“in context, highlighted the cultural and social aspects”) and using analysis “in simple language that is not only subject specific but reader-friendly as well”. The prologue also explains that the selected judgment collectively explains the “central role” of the Supreme Court in reshaping India’s democracy. Overall, the summary of the book’s content remains illustrative, rather than analytical, outlining what each chapter has focused upon.

The author clearly writes with great respect for the judiciary of India. The author's confident assertion is that these cases have "dispelled" the long-standing notion of a feeble/week Indian judiciary. The Supreme Court's "dominant and active role" in governance is underlined in the prologue. The narrative has been shaped keeping in mind this perspective; the Court is shown as the central figure and generally has a positive tone. Mody also very shortly acknowledges that "Supreme Court bowed to political pressure during war time" yet these acknowledgments are short and not examined extensively.

Critical Analysis and Reflections;

The judgments selected for the writing are diverse in nature and content and are being carefully examined. Mody discussed a variety of topics, including constitutional crises (Maneka Gandhi and Kesavananda Bharati), fundamental rights (Shah Bano and Vishaka), social justice (Olga Tellis on pavement dwellers), corporate accountability (Union Carbide), reservation policy (Indra Sawhney), and some more. She very beautifully explains how she incorporates other important judgments – A.D.M. – in the prologue. Jabalpur (1976) and Minerva Mills (1980) into her discussions, demonstrating author's academic precision. Even though the selected judgments are well-justified for that time period, the book only covers cases that occurred after 2011 (such as digital privacy in 2017

Reference to the context and celerity of language are the two major components of the subject writing. Each chapter begins with an explanation of the dispute's historical or social context. Before going into detail about the final decision, for instance,(the Kesavananda chapter examines the politics of the Emergency and the land-reform struggles of the 1960s). As promised in the foreword, this context-driven approach helps readers understand why each case was of paramount importance. Mody's writing is simple, clear and free of verbosity; she with clear intentions wrote for non-specialists. Under scoring this accessibility, the foreword even describes her analysis as "catchy" and useful for common people.

On the critical side, the author has been able to maintain neutrality. Though she has been able to maintain the balance for both the majority and dissenting viewpoints, however she has not been able to express her own viewpoint in clear words. The judges' decisions are explained in the text, but their reasoning is rarely criticized. As a result, rather than being an argumentative essay, it reads more like a history of legal milestones. For example, the(Shah Bano) chapter describes the political backlash and the subsequent override by Parliament, but Mody herself does not offer any editorial commentary on these events; rather, they are presented as a component of the narrative rather than being thoroughly examined.

Evaluation;

The book has an engaging style. The catchy chapter titles (such as "Basic Instinct," "Killing Me Softly," and soon) make the writing more approachable and reader friendly. A common reader will be drawn in by the combination of seriousness with humor at times. Sorabjee, points out that woman play major roles in four out of ten cases, and Mody does draw attention to those narratives (Maneka Gandhi, ShahBano, Vishaka, and Shanbaug) to stress upon issues relating to gender discrimination. Even though it in a way simplifies some of the doctrinal depth, the narrative style is however a strength which is reader friendly. She also includes a

vocabulary and a few footnotes from time to time, indicating that the intention of the author is to entertain as well as educate her readers.

Personal Insights and Application;

My personal understanding of how the law affects society was greatly enhanced by reading (“10 Judgments That Changed India.") The writing is very easy to understand; I felt like I was reading history rather than complicated legal prepositions. For instance, (Kesavananda's explanation clarified the significance of the "basic structure" doctrine). Similarly, stories about ordinary people, such as (Bhopal workers and Vishaka street vendors), has been able to attract sympathy with the consequences of these decisions in the context of daily life of common people.

It has to be appreciated that how the book connects each famous case to rights of common people. I also feel better prepared to use these cases as solid examples in class or discussions. A lesson learned from (Sorabjee's mention of anti-corruption movements) in the

Prologue was that the book stressed upon the importance of fundamental rights and the role of courts.

After reading this book, one must feel better to understand complicated constitutional issues. Its clarity makes me realize that being an informed citizen I must understand judicial decisions. Practically, the book has been able to inspire me to continue studying the law and putting these principles into practice in day to day life.

Conclusion;

In a nutshell, the book (“10 Judgments That Changed India") has been able to successfully elaborate on vital constitutional cases. Instead of criticism, its strength lies in explanation and context. The chapters shed light on each judgment's significance in detail and link them to social issues in a wider spectrum. The author's confidence in India's constitutional system is reflected in the respectful and optimistic tone toward the Supreme Court of India, despite the fact that it may disappoint those who are looking for a harsher critique. Overall, the book delivers on its promise to explain important decisions in simple terms, and that too in a positive form.

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