

1. **harassment** (noun) – persecution/abuse, aggressive intimidation, persistent annoyance.
2. **resort to** (verb) – use, utilize, turn to.
3. **at the cost of** (phrase) – by sacrificing/losing/giving up something.
4. **fairness** (noun) – impartiality, equitability, justness, even-handedness.
5. **complainant** (noun) – petitioner, plaintiff, litigator.
6. **import** (noun) – importance, significance, moment.
7. **live up to** (phrasal verb) – satisfy, fulfil, achieve.
8. **victimisation** (noun) – enslavement, exploitation, oppression.
9. **ad hoc** (adjective) – emergency, extemporary/spontaneous, makeshift.
10. **allegation** (noun) – charge, accusation, indictment.
11. **substance** (noun) – significant subject, important matter/content, valid message.
12. **testify** (verb) – give evidence, be a witness, give one's testimony.
13. **quite** (adverb) – absolutely, utterly, outright.
14. **intimidating** (adjective) – frightening, overawing, or threatening.
15. **testimony** (noun) – evidence, proof, attestation/witness.
16. **impervious to** (adjective) – unaffected by, invulnerable to, resistant/unresponsive to.
17. **imbalance** (noun) – disparity, variation, disproportion.
18. **perhaps** (adverb) – maybe, it could be, possibly.
19. **ought to** (modal verb) – must, should.
20. **pull out** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, leave, get out.
21. **grievance** (noun) – complaint, criticism, objection/protest.
22. **starker** (comparative adjective of **stark**) – clear, distinct, evident.
23. **put through** (phrasal verb) – to make someone to experience something difficult or unpleasant.
24. **alleged** (adjective) – claimed, professed, purported.
25. **disciplinary** (adjective) – enforcing discipline.
26. **personnel** (noun) – employees, staff, workforce.
27. **devise** (verb) – form, formulate, frame.
28. **envisage** (verb) – foresee, predict, forecast.
29. **homily** (noun) – lecture, discourse, talk.
30. **alarming** (adjective) – worrying, disturbing, shocking/distressing.
31. **propensity** (noun) – (natural) tendency, inclination, predisposition.
32. **reputation** (noun) – character, status, position.
33. **abuse** (noun) – misuse, misapplication, mishandling.
34. **greatness** (noun) – eminence, reputation, status/majesty.
35. **disjoin** (verb) – separate, disunite, untie.
36. **remorse** (noun) – deep regret, penitence, sorrow/guilt.
37. **egregious** (adjective) – shocking, horrible/terrible, very bad.
38. **hallowed** (adjective) – holy, sacred, revered/divine.
39. **compassion** (noun) – care, concern, empathy.
40. **renowned** (adjective) – famous, celebrated/distinguished, acclaimed.

Prisoner of procedure: on CJI sexual harassment case

The in-house panel resorted to its power at the cost of fairness to the complainant

It was a test of great import that one of India's great institutions failed. The main question was whether the Supreme Court would live up to the standards of fairness it expects of all authorities while inquiring into a former woman employee's complaint of sexual harassment and victimisation against the Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi. An *ad hoc* committee, following an informal procedure, has concluded that the allegations have "no substance", but the findings will not be made public. The report cannot be reviewed judicially. No one else, not even the complainant, knows what evidence was examined and who else testified apart from herself. All that is known is that she was heard, and questioned, at two sittings. She later withdrew from the inquiry, saying she was denied the help of a lawyer or a representative, that she found the questions from a panel of three sitting Supreme Court judges quite intimidating, and that she was not clear how her testimony was being recorded. There is no doubt that the committee remained impervious to the power imbalance in the situation. Perhaps she ought not to have pulled out from the probe, despite these grievances. The panel's conclusion would have been even starker had she been present to hear how Justice Gogoi defended himself; and who among the court officials, if any, answered her specific and documented charges about the administrative harassment she was put through following the alleged incident of sexual harassment. The most relevant parts of the complaint were the transfer orders and disciplinary inquiry against her, the role of the court administration in dismissing her, and that of the Delhi Police in arresting her on a complaint of alleged bribery and initiating disciplinary action against her husband and his brother, both police personnel. It is not known if any of these officials were examined.

The manner in which the court dealt with the complaint on the administrative side has been less than fair. It is true that the in-house procedure devised in 1999 envisages only a committee of three judges to deal with allegations against serving **Supreme Court** judges. The fact that a special law to deal with sexual harassment at the workplace is in force since 2013 appears to have made no difference. The court could not bring itself, even in the interest of appearing fair, to adopt a formal procedure or allow the complainant to have legal representation. For all its judicial homilies on fairness, when it comes to dealing with its own the Supreme Court has come across as a prisoner of procedure and displayed an alarming propensity to mix up its institutional reputation with an individual's interest. "The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power," wrote Shakespeare. The decision by the 'in-house committee' is an egregious instance of a hallowed institution abusing its own greatness by letting its power speak, and not the compassion for which it is renowned.