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Contours of Privacy Jurisprudence in India: Insights from The Justice K.S. Puttaswamy Judgment

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ABSTRACT

The judgment in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India* (2017) marks a watershed moment in the development of privacy jurisprudence in India. The Supreme Court, through a unanimous nine-judge bench, recognized privacy as a fundamental right protected under Article 21 and Part III of the Constitution. This recognition shifted the contours of constitutional interpretation by affirming that privacy is not an isolated right but a core component of liberty, dignity, and autonomy. The Court emphasized that privacy has multiple dimensions, including informational privacy, bodily integrity, decisional autonomy, and the right to be left alone. By overturning earlier precedents that denied such recognition, the judgment aligned Indian constitutional law with international human rights standards. It also provided a constitutional framework to evaluate issues like data protection, state surveillance, and technological intrusions in the digital era. Importantly, the Court clarified that privacy is not absolute and may be restricted by law if such restriction meets the tests of legality, necessity, and proportionality. Thus, the Puttaswamy ruling not only established privacy as a fundamental right but also laid down guiding principles for balancing individual rights with legitimate state interests, thereby shaping the future trajectory of privacy jurisprudence in India.