

Supreme Court of India - Museum

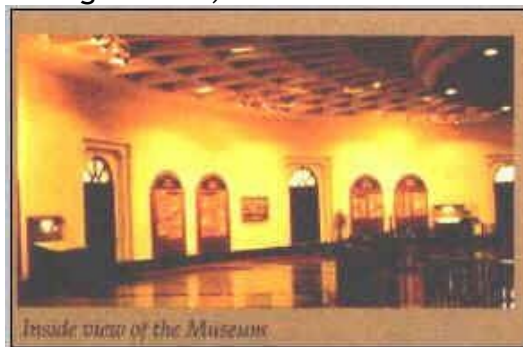
Front view of the Museum building



The concept of law has been in existence in India since time immemorial. With the passage of time, as the society progressed, the need for development of law to meet the challenges of changing time to regulate the social conduct has been increasingly felt. A clear approach to jurisprudence could be seen in Kautilya's Arthashastra which dates back to 300 B.C. Manu, Yajnavalkya, Narada and others have made substantial contribution to the development of law in subsequent historical period. A number of texts such as Nitisara of Kamandka written during Gupta period, and Nitivakyamtra of Somadeva Suri, of 10th century A.D. etc., formed the corpus of ancient law and justice. In Medieval time, the Muslim rulers introduced Islamic law, while the Britishers introduced the Western Judicial system in 19th Century A.D.



The Federal Court of India which preceded the Supreme Court had its inaugural sitting in 1937, in the Chamber of Princes, where it sat for 12 years until it was replaced by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court of India came into existence on 26th January, 1951, at the Parliament House. Its inaugural session was held on 28th January, 1950 in the Chamber of Princes. The Supreme Court functioned from the same chamber until 1958, when it shifted to the present building.



Inside view of the Museum

The Federal Court left behind a legacy of wisdom, independence and strength which the Supreme Court has maintained till today. The Supreme Court so far successfully played a key role in upholding the Constitution besides exercising necessary advisory jurisdiction. It has immensely contributed in upholding the rule of law and dispensing justice.



Ink Pot - Glass pots on wooden stand, early 20th century, High Court of Allahabad.

A rich treasure of archival materials having original records of landmark trials, judgment and other important documents and exhibits relating to judicial system have not been allowed access to the common people. Therefore, a need was felt to set up a Museum, where old photographs, documents relating to judgments of great importance, old furniture used by the Hon'ble Judges and other important artifacts etc. could be preserved and displayed for general public.



MACES - Silver, 19th Century, High Courts of Bombay, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Calcutta



Cap of Privy Councillor, 1930-1947, High Court of Madhya Pradesh

The idea to set up a Museum was first mooted by the then Hon'ble Chief Justice of India Shri M.N. Venkatachaliah in the inaugural meeting of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee on 27th September, 1994 . The Foundation Stone of the Museum Building was laid by the then Hon'ble Chief Justice of India Shri A.M. Ahmadi on 11th February, 1997 . The Museum Building was inaugurated on 27th September, 2001 by the then Hon'ble Chief Justice of India Dr. A.S.Anand.



The Museum Building is located within the campus of the Supreme Court. It is a single pillar round building with basement and ground floor. It is a beautiful piece of architecture.

The Museum is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the evolution and development of judiciary in India and the second portrays the Federal Court and Supreme Court.

The ground floor Gallery traces the history of Indian legal system from ancient period to British time. It depicts Indian legal system through various periods with the help of relevant texts, artifacts and other exhibits. An impression is created at the entrance of ground floor by

displaying the logo of the Supreme Court (Dharamchakra upheld by the Lion Capital of 3rd Century B.C.) in an appropriate ambience.

Deed of Spiritual Succession
23rd March, 1519
High Court of Andhra Pradesh

The Harappan seals and the head of a priest are displayed to focus on the existence of some sort of law in the ancient urban civilization. Other important exhibits displayed here include Ashokan edict (Girnar, Gujarat) and Nalanda Copper plate of 9th Century A.D.



Small Wig (Property of Mr. Justice Davar),

Made in England, 20th Century, High Court of Bombay

The second gallery deals with the Federal Court and the Supreme Court. Here, antique furniture of Federal Court and Supreme Court are on display along with the souvenirs, ceremonial costumes and wigs and files related to land-mark judgments delivered by the Supreme Court. The records of famous cases such as Mahatma Gandhi Murder case and Indira Gandhi assassination case etc., are also on display. The old photographs of the Chief Justices and other Judges of the Federal Court and Supreme Court are specially mounted in a chronological order.



H.K. Kania
First Chief Justice of India

Supreme Court Museum will be the mirror to the history, development and dispensation of Indian legal system.

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