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**Abstract:** Public interest litigation (PIL) came into prominence in Indian jurisprudence in the 1970s as a means of addressing outstanding violations of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. From being a tool for assisting vulnerable individuals and social groups gain access to justice, PIL has, since the late 1990s, been transformed into a far more complex device that shapes subjectivities as well as state practices across the spectrum of social activism. This essay argues that the changed meanings and effects engendered by PIL reflect larger shifts in Indian politics and society since the onset of economic liberalization in the early 1990s. In particular, they signify that the formation of a judicial public sphere based on science and law, when embedded within the political economy of emerging urban land markets and labour deregulation and a discourse of 'world-class cities', is fraught with contradictions that undermine its original progressive intent.

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Amita\\_Baviskar/publication/287000112\\_Public\\_interest\\_and\\_private\\_compromises\\_The\\_politics\\_of\\_environmental\\_negotiation\\_in\\_Delhi\\_India/inks/5884aa284585150dde482b1d/Public-interest-and-private-compromises-The-politics-of-environmental-negotiation-in-Delhi-India.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Amita_Baviskar/publication/287000112_Public_interest_and_private_compromises_The_politics_of_environmental_negotiation_in_Delhi_India/inks/5884aa284585150dde482b1d/Public-interest-and-private-compromises-The-politics-of-environmental-negotiation-in-Delhi-India.pdf)