

The mortality of justice at the hands of law troubles a [judges](#) conscience and points an angry interrogation at the law reformer.

The processual law so dominates in certain systems as to overpower substantive rights and substantial justice. The humanist rule that procedure should be the handmaid, not the mistress, of legal justice compels consideration of vesting a residuary power in Judges to act *ex debito justitiae* where the tragic sequel otherwise would be wholly inequitable. In the present case, almost every step a reasonable litigant could take was taken by the State to challenge the extraordinary increase in the rate of compensation awarded by the civil court. And, by hindsight, one finds that the very success, in the [review](#) application, and at the appellate stage has proved a disaster to the party. Maybe, Government might have successfully attacked the increase awarded in appeal, producing the additional [evidence](#) there. But **maybes have no place in the merciless consequence of vital procedural flaws.** Parliament, I hope, [will](#) consider the wisdom of making the Judge the ultimate guardian of justice by a comprehensive, though guardedly worded, provision where the hindrance to rightful relief relates to infirmities, even serious, sounding in procedural law. **Justice is the goal of jurisprudence processual, as much as substantive. While this appeal has to be allowed, for [reasons](#) set out impeccably by my learned brother, I must sound a pessimistic note that it is too puritanical for a legal system to sacrifice the end product of [equity](#) and good conscience at the altar of processual punctiliousness and it is not too radical to avert a breakdown of obvious justice by bending sharply, if need be, the prescriptions of procedure. The wages of procedural sin should never be the death of rights.**

Sushil Kumar Sen v. State of Bihar, (1975) 1 SCC 774

Tags: [Procedure is the handmaid not the mistress of justice](#)