



## THE UNHEARD STRUGGLES ADDRESSING LEGAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES FACED BY MEN IN DOMESTIC ABUSE AND FALSE ACCUSATION CASES

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Ramnika P Singla\*

### ABSTRACT

*Domestic violence against men is a greatly overlooked problem in India, given constitutional assurances of equality and dignity. The legal system mainly treats women as victims and does not extend similar protection or legal action to male survivors. This research considers domestic violence against men using a human rights approach, with a focus on the core rights in Articles 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution, ensuring equality before the law and the right to life with dignity. Through an empirical investigation that involves the use of survey analysis, case studies, and legal research, this paper brings to the fore the occurrence of domestic violence against men, the socio-cultural obstacles in reporting, and the effects of the gender bias of the legal system. Findings indicate a high incidence of Emotional, Physical, and psychological abuse, augmented by social stigma and systemic discrimination. High-profile instances like the suicides of Manav Sharma and Subhash Atul highlight the intense mental health consequences and the necessity for legal change. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), Section 498A of the IPC, and connected legislation have been subjected to an analytical analysis that illustrates how gendered provisions breach the proscriptions of equal protection under the law. International legal regimes present a broader system, whereby domestic violence is regarded as a human rights abuse regardless of gender. The exclusion of male victims from domestic violence protections is, the study submits, not merely perpetuating legal inequality but further eroding the rule of law and basic human rights. Combating this would not entail reducing protection for women, but ensuring justice and access to support services for all the survivors. These policy recommendations suggest gender-neutral laws on domestic violence, judicial sensitization training, improved support services, and heightening societal consciousness to shatter the*

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\*LLB, THIRD YEAR, THAKUR RAMNARAYAN COLLEGE OF LAW MUMBAI MAHARASHTRA.

*silence in male victimization. The right to safety, dignity, and justice must extend to all individuals, regardless of gender. Recognizing male victimisation is not just a legal necessity but a moral and constitutional imperative to uphold human rights in India.*

**Keywords:** Human Rights, Domestic Violence, Male Victims, Gender Equality, Legal Framework.

## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence has long been understood as a gendered crime with women as victims and men as offenders. This is rooted in patriarchal societies where power has traditionally rested with men (Johnson, 2008). New research indicates a more nuanced reality where men are also victims of domestic violence<sup>1</sup>, contradicting traditional understanding of gender-based violence (Hines & Douglas, 2010; Randle & Graham, 2011). In India, where patriarchal values are prevalent, the identification of men as victims of domestic violence is strongly challenged. The Indian legal framework has established detailed safeguards for women against domestic violence, most significantly through the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) of 2005. No such legislation exists to safeguard men suffering the same abuse. This legislative vacuum mirrors and reaffirms social views that domestic violence is solely a women's issue (Khurana & Sharma, 2021). The Indian Constitution, under Articles 14 and 21, promises equality before the law and the right to life and personal liberty to all citizens irrespective of gender. The Supreme Court, in milestone decisions such as *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, has construed Article 21 to encompass the right to live with dignity. Although these constitutional safeguards, domestic violence laws are gender-specific and raise significant equal protection under the law questions (Kumar & Yadav, 2019). Domestic violence against men has come into sharper relief with recent high-profile cases in India. The suicidal deaths of Agra's Manav Sharma and Bengaluru techie Subhash Atul, both of whom mentioned spousal abuse and harassment in their last messages<sup>2</sup>, highlight the potentially deadly effects when male victims are not acknowledged by society and do not have legal recourse. These incidents, among others, have led to wider debates on the abuse of gender-specific laws and the lack of protection for men (Times of India, 2024; India Today, 2024). This paper seeks to explore the incidence and character of domestic violence against men in India, review the current legal framework from

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<sup>1</sup> Hines & Douglas, 2010; Randle & Graham, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Times of India, 2024; India Today, 2024

a constitutional perspective, determine reporting and seeking help barriers, and make recommendations for developing a more balanced response to domestic violence irrespective of the gender of the victim.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Theoretical Framework of Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence studies have traditionally been shaped by feminist theoretical perspectives, which envision such violence as a manifestation of patriarchal domination<sup>3</sup>. Although this orientation has been essential to combating violence against women, it has also at times restricted acknowledgement of male victimization (Dutton & White, 2013). More contemporary scholarship has promoted family violence approaches that explore domestic violence as a complex phenomenon within family systems involving both men and women<sup>4</sup>. Johnson's (1995, 2008) typology of domestic violence identifies various types of intimate partner violence, such as "intimate terrorism" (systematic coercion and control) and "situational couple violence"<sup>5</sup> (conflict turned violent without control). This typology explains why men and women can be perpetrators and victims depending on the context, subverting monolithic assumptions about domestic violence.

**Global Research on Male Victimization:** Foreign studies have increasingly evidenced male victimization in intimate relationships. Meta-analyses by Archer (2000) and Desmarais et al. (2012) revealed that women use physical aggression against intimate partners at rates equivalent to those of men<sup>6</sup>, although men are more likely to inflict more severe injuries<sup>7</sup>. It was reported by the UK Office for National Statistics in 2020 that about a third of victims of domestic abuse are male, whereas in the USA, the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey revealed that 1 in 10 men had experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner <sup>8</sup>(Smith et al., 2018). Male victims also experience specific difficulties, such as stigmatization, disbelief, and absence of support services (Morgan & Wells, 2016). Psychological abuse, such as emotional manipulation, controlling behaviours, and threats, seems especially common in the accounts of male victims (Hines et al., 2007). The documentary "My Wife, My Abuser," which reached the top slot on

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<sup>3</sup> Dobash & Dobash, 1979

<sup>4</sup> Straus, 2011

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, 1995, 2008

<sup>6</sup> Office for National Statistics, 2020

<sup>7</sup> Archer, 2000; Desmarais et al., 2012

<sup>8</sup> Smith et al., 2018

Netflix after premiering on Channel 5, depicts the horrifying abuse Richard Spencer experienced from his wife over 20 years while their three children looked on. This documentary highlights how female-perpetrated domestic abuse receives minimal attention in media coverage despite its serious impact (Wright, 2023).

**Research on Domestic Violence against Men in India:** Studies on domestic violence against men in India are still in short supply, although recent studies show considerable prevalence. An Indian Council of Medical Research-funded study in Rohtak, Haryana, revealed that among 1,000 ever-married men in the 21-49 age groups, 51.5% had experienced intimate partner violence at least once during their lifetime (Kumar et al., 2019). Of these, 49.6% reported emotional violence, and physical violence (0.6%) and sexual violence (0.4%) were also reported. The National Family Health Survey (2005-2006) approximated that around 6 million women had inflicted physical violence on their husbands without any provocation<sup>9</sup>. When wife's family violence is added, the figure goes up to around 30 million instances of domestic violence against men in India (Bhattacharya, 2018). Save Indian Family Foundation, a rights organization for men, cites that it receives thousands of distress calls from men facing domestic abuse every year<sup>10</sup>. Their research indicates that women use physical violence, emotional abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, and harassment with false promises of giving dowry or assailing (Sridhar, 2019).

### **Legal Environment in India-**

The legal structure of India is equipped with several safeguards for women against domestic abuse, mostly by;

- Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, making cruelty by husband or husband's relatives a criminal offence
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

The laws, although needed to safeguard women, have been faulted for their likelihood of abuse and for neglecting male victims (Singh, 2018). A number of judicial statements have reflected on the possibility of abuse of gender-specific laws. In **Rajesh Sharma & Ors v.**

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<sup>9</sup> National Family Health Survey, 2005-2006

<sup>10</sup> Sridhar, 2019

**State of U.P. & Anr (2017), the Supreme Court made guidelines against misuse of Section 498A**, although these were later amended in *Social Action Forum for Manav Adhikar v. Union of India* (2018). Despite constitutional assurances of equality under Article 14, the lack of legal safeguards for male victims of domestic violence is a glaring omission in the Indian legal system (Deshpande, 2020). These questions the constitutionality of gendered domestic violence legislation in the light of the fundamental rights assured to all citizens irrespective of gender.

## METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes an empirical research methodology to analyze domestic violence against men in India, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research methodology includes:

**Primary Data Collection:** A survey was carried out to measure public perception, awareness, and legal knowledge of domestic violence against men. Responses were analyzed to determine patterns of stigma, legal knowledge gaps, and societal attitudes towards male victims.

**Secondary Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics in the form of National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data and National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data were studied to create prevalence rates and trends of violence against men.<sup>11</sup> Non-government organisation (NGO) reports, such as those done by the Save Indian Family Foundation, were studied for understanding trends related to male victimization and law misuse.

**Analysis of Case Study:** Cases involving high-profile instances of suicide of Manav Sharma and Subhash Atul were examined to reflect the real-life impacts of domestic violence on men. Reports in the media and judicial trials were scrutinized to find systematic failures in managing male victimization.

**Legal and Constitutional Analysis:** The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), Section 498A IPC, and other related legislations were analyzed critically. Judicial interpretations and constitutional meanings of Article 14 (equality before the law) and Article 21 (right to life and dignity) were analyzed.

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<sup>11</sup> National Crime Records Bureau, 2021

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Indian courts' gender-specific domestic violence legislation was compared with international schemes that follow a more gender-neutral policy.

### Limitations

**Underreporting:** Stigma can cause men to hide abuse, so they might not report it, hence, possible underestimation from surveys.

**Data Gaps:** Official statistics on crime don't always identify male victims of domestic violence, constraining wide-ranging data analysis. This empiricist perspective offers a context and data-rich explanation of the problem, linking gaps in law recognition and popular awareness.

## FINDINGS

### Prevalence and Nature of Domestic Violence against Men-

Research indicates a significant prevalence of domestic violence against men in India. The study conducted in Rohtak, Haryana<sup>12</sup> found that 52.4% of the 1,000 married men surveyed had experienced gender-based violence, with similar percentages reporting violence from intimate partners. This suggests that male victimization is more common than generally acknowledged. The nature of violence experienced by men includes the following:

**Emotional Violence:** The most common type (49.6% of cases), involving verbal abuse, humiliation, threats, and controlling behaviour.

**Physical Violence:** Less frequent (reported in about 10% of cases), but encompassing slapping, hitting, pushing, and in a few instances, severe assault.

**Sexual Violence:** The least reported type (0.4%), perhaps because of higher stigma surrounding male sexual victimization.

**Financial Abuse:** Encompasses control of financial resources, exploitation of assets, and blocking financial independence.

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<sup>12</sup> Kumar et al., 2019

**Legal Harassment:** Specific to the Indian scenario, this comprises false charges under Section 498A and other gender-specific legislation, resulting in legal repercussions and social ostracism. Risk factors for domestic violence against men are low family income, unemployment, alcohol consumption by partner, uncontrollable anger, and ego problems. Violence is reported across all socioeconomic classes, although reporting patterns can differ by class and education.

**Constitutional Analysis and Legal Framework:** The Indian Constitution, under Article 14, ensures equality before the law and equal protection of laws to everyone. Article 21 ensures the right to life and liberty of the person, interpreted by the Supreme Court in a wide sense to include the right to live with dignity. These basic rights apply to all citizens irrespective of gender. The seminal verdict in *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* broadened the scope of Article 21 from "mere animal existence" to include dignity and quality of life<sup>13</sup>. Building upon this interpretative prism, male victims of domestic violence could similarly contend that denying them legal safeguards breaches their constitutional rights to equality and dignity.

**Despite these constitutional assurances, domestic violence laws in India continue to be gender-specific as explained below-**

**The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005:** Offers civil relief only to women suffering from domestic violence in the form of protection orders, residence orders, and monetary relief. There is no parallel protection available for male victims.

**Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code:** Criminalizes cruelty inflicted upon women by husbands or relatives, with no parallel section for male victims.

**Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** Though nominally gender-neutral in barring giving and receiving dowry, it is utilized almost entirely to shield women against dowry harassment. Such gender particularity leaves the male victims of domestic violence without any legal recourse, and in so doing, arguably breaches the constitutional principle of equality before the law. Various legal academics have claimed that this is discriminatory based on sex, as per Article 14 (Parashar, 2021).

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<sup>13</sup> *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, (1978) 1 SCC 248



## CASE STUDIES

Two recent high-profile cases have drawn national attention to the problem of domestic violence against men in India;

**Manav Sharma Case:** In February 2025, Manav Sharma was discovered hanging at his hometown house in Agra. Before his death, Sharma made an emotional seven-minute video that would go on to become a poignant testament to the plight of male victims of domestic violence. In the video, he blamed his wife for infidelity and issued an appeal for more awareness about men's ordeals. With a noose around his neck, Sharma can be heard uttering: "This is for the authorities. The law needs to protect men. My wife was involved with another man. But what can I do? It does not matter anymore." His last words underscored the perceived tilt of the legal system: "Please, someone should talk about men, they become very lonely. If law does not protect men, then there will be no man left to accuse" (Times of India, 2024). The Manav Sharma case is a prime example of how the lack of legal protection and public acknowledgement can make male victims believe that they have no choice but to commit suicide. His direct reference to the failure of the law to protect men directly relates his tragedy to systemic failures within India's response to domestic violence.

**Subhash Atul Case:** In Dec'2024, Bengaluru techie Subhash Atul also committed suicide after accusing his estranged wife of harassment. His case also led to wider debates on the possible abuse of anti-dowry laws in India. In notes left behind, Atul indicated that his wife had made false charges against him under provisions related to dowry. His case was significant in raising questions regarding how gender-specific law, intended to safeguard vulnerable women, can be used as a weapon in matrimonial cases. Commentators on his case observed: "Dowry laws, being enacted to safeguard women, should not be abused because if some women are going to abuse these laws, then it will directly deprive justice to women who require them" (India Today, 2024). Both instances accentuate the deadly implications that may arise from the interplay of domestic violence, unavailability of legal redress, and societal stigma associated with male victims in India. They also reflect the pressing necessity for a more nuanced strategy towards domestic violence that addresses victims regardless of gender.

### Obstacles to Reporting and Seeking Assistance-

Male victims of domestic violence have many obstacles to reporting and seeking assistance:



**Social Stigma and Gender Expectations:** Indian social norms of masculinity discourage men from acknowledging vulnerability or victimization. The social belief that "men don't cry" presents great psychological deterrents to disclosure.

**Fear of Ridicule:** Male victims fear they will be mocked or not be believed by the police, neighbours, friends, and relatives.

**Fear of False Counter-Allegations:** Men might not report abuse because they fear that they will be falsely accused of being the abuser, especially with the gender bias in the legal system.

**Custody Concerns:** Fathers might suffer abuse to keep in touch with their children, fearing that reporting will result in loss of custody or access.

**Absence of Support Services:** Though various shelters, helplines, and support services are available for female victims, there are no such equivalent resources for men in India.

**Bias in Legal System:** The belief that the legal system is biased in favour of female complainants dissuades male victims from approaching formal mechanisms of justice. These obstructions also cause wide underreporting of domestic violence against men. There are no records by the National Crime Records Bureau regarding male victims of domestic violence, yet again accentuating their lack of presence in official talk.

### **Male Victim's Impact-**

The effects of domestic violence on male victims mirror those for female victims in various ways:

**Physical Consequences:** Injuries, chronic pain, exhaustion, and somatic complaints.

**Psychological Impacts:** High levels of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal thoughts.

**Economic Impacts:** Economic abuse and financial domination may result in economic dependence and diminished financial security.

**Social Isolation:** Perpetrators tend to isolate victims from their support systems, diminishing their capacity to access help.

**Effects on Children:** Children who witness domestic violence against fathers have the same adverse psychological impacts as children witnessing violence against mothers. The National Crime Records Bureau's Suicide Report 2020 shows that most suicides in India are due to issues within the family. The number of suicides among married men (64,791) is much higher than among married women (27,742), possibly reflecting family distress accounting for male suicides. The suicides of Manav Sharma and Subhash Atul are the ultimate consequence of unresolved domestic violence against men. Their tragic deaths show how the synergy of abuse, social stigma, and the absence of legal remedy can drive male victims to take their own lives when they perceive no other means of escape from their ordeal.

## **INTEGRATION OF SURVEY ANALYSIS INTO THE RESEARCH DOCUMENT**

### **Survey Analysis: Public Perception on Domestic Violence against Men**

To gain a better insight into societal attitudes towards domestic violence against men in India, a survey was conducted to measure public awareness, attitudes, and legal awareness on this topic. The findings provide interesting insights into the stigma attached to male victims, loopholes in the legal system, and the necessity for reforms.

**Identification of Male Victimization:** The survey indicates that a large number of respondents accept that men are victims of domestic violence. This is against the conventional belief that domestic abuse is a woman's issue. Despite the above understanding, social stigma remains a significant impediment to reporting domestic abuse. Many of the respondents agreed that men reporting domestic violence experience social ostracism, ridicule, or disbelief by society and law enforcement.

**Legal Framework and Gender Bias:** The vast majority of respondents think that current domestic violence legislation in India is not gender-neutral. Most were not aware of any legal provision specifically dealing with abuse against men, reflecting a low level of legal literacy on the topic. The survey also reveals that most individuals do not perceive that there are strong safeguards in place to deter male-directed domestic abuse.

**False Allegations and Legal Harassment:** A notable concern arising from the responses to surveys is the perception that false charges of domestic violence and harassment by dowry are rampant. Most respondents favoured more stringent punishment for making false cases on the grounds of instances where men were subjected to excessive legal harassment. This is in

line with available research indicating that abuse of laws such as Section 498A of the IPC has been recognized by courts, prompting changes in judicial practices to avert false accusations.

### **Demand for Reform and Awareness-**

The survey findings highlight the massive popular demand for gender-neutral domestic violence legislation that safeguards all victims fairly. Most respondents underscored the necessity of:

- Awareness campaigns promoting male victimization in domestic abuse.
- Legislative reforms providing due process for both genders.
- Training law enforcement to deal with male victims sensitively.
- Support groups and helplines for men experiencing domestic abuse or legal harassment.

**Societal Perceptions and Stigma:** Most respondents in the survey believe that sufficient sensitization regarding men's plight in domestic violence is not available. There is clear support for policies that sensitize the public and offer support to victimized men. There are also qualitative reactions indicating increasing intolerance of gender inequalities in the judicial and social structures, with the demand for fairness and evidence-based judgments.

**Conclusion of Survey Analysis:** The survey results reinforce the core arguments presented in this research. While awareness about male victimization is increasing, significant legal and social hurdles persist. The need for gender-neutral laws, societal acceptance of male victims, and institutional reforms remains urgent. Integrating these findings into policy recommendations can contribute to a more inclusive and just approach to addressing domestic violence in India.

## **DISCUSSION**

**Constitutional Implications:** The lack of legal protection for domestic violence victims who are male poses a very serious constitutional issue. The rule of equality before the law under Article 14 implies that protection from domestic violence must be extended to all citizens equally without regard to gender. The present gender-differentiated method of drafting domestic violence laws puts male victims in a position where they are deprived of equal

protection under the law. Article 21's assurance of right to life and liberty, understood as encompassing the right to live with dignity, is also put at risk where male domestic violence victims have no recourse in law. The expansive reading by the Supreme Court in cases such as *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* presents a firm platform for maintaining that protection from domestic violence constitutes a basic right and must extend to all citizens. The Preamble to the Constitution, deemed to form an integral part of the instrument in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala*<sup>14</sup>, assures justice and equality to citizens. The legislative regime today, by not recognizing male victims of domestic violence, is not honouring these constitutional assurances to a section of the citizenry.

**Overtuning Patriarchal Presumptions:** The resistance to acknowledging a male victim of domestic violence is also rooted in patriarchal beliefs that men are stronger than women and thus cannot be victimized. This view does not consider the different types of power that can be used in intimate relationships other than physical strength, such as emotional, psychological, social, and legal power. Patriarchal norms both hurt women and men by requiring strict gender roles. For women, they may limit autonomy and reinforce subordination; for men, they may deny recognition of vulnerability and access to support. A genuinely feminist response to domestic violence would both recognize the possibility of victimization across genders while recognizing the statistical disparities in prevalence and severity. The patriarchal norm that men should be stoic, independent, and emotionally invulnerable creates serious barriers to disclosure for male victims. Men who are victims of domestic violence tend to be ridiculed and disbelieved, as their experiences challenge societal expectations of masculinity. This implies that patriarchal norms, instead of protecting men, end up victimizing male survivors of domestic violence further.

**Last Messages of Sharma and Atul:** The last messages of Manav Sharma and Subhash Atul are rich in insight into the psychological condition of male domestic violence victims in India. Sharma's clear call for the law to "protect men" is an indication of the feeling among male victims that the legal system does not recognize their experiences or offer them sufficient remedies. His declaration that "men become very lonely" indicates the male victims' sense of isolation, which typically has neither support systems within society nor resources within institutions. The apocalyptic undertone of his last message—"If law does not protect man, then there will be no man left to accuse"—evinces a deep feeling of

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<sup>14</sup> *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala*, (1973) 4 SCC 225

hopelessness about the chances for change within the system. Likewise, Atul's fear regarding misuse of dowry laws is representative of fears regarding how gendered legislation sometimes turns into a weapon of harassment instead of protection. Both men's last messages illustrate the intricate dynamics between intimate partner violence, legal susceptibility, and indifference on the part of society that mark the situation of most male victims in India.

**Balancing Gendered Realities with Equal Protection:** A sophisticated treatment of domestic violence needs to weigh acknowledgement of its gendered character (with women being the majority of victims worldwide) against the mandate of equal protection under the law. Even though statistics reflect that women are more subject to extreme physical violence and sexual abuse, this does not mean that male victims should be wholly excluded from legal protections. Gender-neutral laws do not necessarily reduce protections for women but can instead broaden the protection umbrella to cover all victims while recognizing that some varied patterns and dynamics may describe domestic violence by gender. Other nations, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, have adopted more gender-neutral responses to domestic violence without compromising protections for women.

**Misuse of Laws and False Allegations:** Fears regarding the abuse of gender-based legislation, specifically Section 498A<sup>15</sup> of the Indian Penal Code, have been recognized by the Supreme Court in the case of *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar* (2014). Though the risk of abuse does not negate the need for such laws, it indicates the need to protect against malicious complaints and ensure due process. False claims of domestic violence or dowry harassment can have disastrous implications for the accused, ranging from arrest to social ostracism and financial distress. The lack of legal recourse for male victims and the likelihood of abuse of existing laws place men in abusive relationships in a doubly vulnerable situation. A balanced strategy would uphold strong protections for true victims while putting in place measures to prevent abuse. This could involve sanctions for clearly false accusations, pre-arrest investigation, and mediation as an option for some types of complaints.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the evidence and analysis laid out, this research recommends the following:

### Legislative Reforms

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<sup>15</sup> *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar*, (2014) 8 SCC 273

**Gender-Neutral Domestic Violence Law:** Enact a comprehensive law on domestic violence that safeguards all victims in a gender-neutral manner, while preserving the recognition of varying patterns and incidence by gender.

**Gender-Specific Laws' Reformulation:** Examine and reformulate provisions in current laws based on gender to provide equal protection with necessary protection for vulnerable groups.

**If Procedural Safeguards:** Provide procedural safeguards to minimize abuse of domestic violence laws, such as requirements for preliminary investigations and penalties for demonstrably false claims.

**Recognition of Other Types of Abuse:** Provide that legislation includes emotional, psychological, financial, and legal abuse in addition to physical and sexual violence.

## **INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS**

**Training for Law Enforcement:** Offer specialized training to police officers on identifying and responding to male victims of domestic violence without prejudice or ridicule.

**Judicial Awareness:** Construct judicial education programs that tackle gender bias and ensure equal enforcement of the law irrespective of the victim's gender.

**Support Services:** Create support services for male victims such as helplines, counselling services, and emergency accommodation arrangements.

**Data Collection:** Put in place systematic data collection on domestic violence against men to improve prevalence, patterns, and needs.

## **Social Awareness and Education**

**Public Awareness Campaigns:** Initiate campaigns to increase awareness of domestic violence against men, dispelling stereotypes and promoting reporting.

**Educational Programs:** Establish educational programs that foster healthy relationships and conflict resolution skills among genders.

**Media Engagement:** Promote responsible media reporting on domestic violence that recognizes the possibility of victimization across both genders.

**Support Groups:** Organise the establishment of support groups for male victims of domestic violence to minimize isolation and stigma.

### **Research Initiatives**

**Total Prevalence Studies:** Carrying out national studies on the prevalence and nature of domestic violence perpetrated against men in India.

**Qualitative Research:** Implement qualitative research ascertaining the experiences and needs of male victims to inform service provision.

**Evaluation of Interventions:** Stringently examine the efficacy of interventions for both male and female victims of domestic violence.

**Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** Examine responses to male victimization across other cultures to isolate transferable best practices.

### **Suicide Prevention Strategies**

In the wake of cases such as Manav Sharma and Subhash Atul, specific suicide prevention methods aimed at men who are victims of domestic violence must be adopted:

**Crisis Helplines:** Provide special crisis helplines for men facing domestic abuse or suicidal thoughts.

**Warning Signs Awareness:** Educate doctors and community members to know the warning signs of suicidal tendencies among male victims of domestic abuse.

**Mental Health Services:** Enhance access to mental health services for men who are suffering from domestic abuse, paying extra attention to treating trauma and suicidal thoughts.

**Peer Support Networks:** Establish peer support networks for male survivors to avoid isolation and instil hope for recovery.

### **CONCLUSION**

**Conclusion of Survey Analysis:** The findings of the survey support the main arguments of this study. Although awareness regarding male victimization is growing, there are still major



legal and social barriers. Gender-neutral legislation, acceptance of male victims by society, and institutional changes are still needed. Incorporating these findings into policy suggestions can help in making the response to domestic violence in India more inclusive and equitable.

**Conclusion of the Paper:** Domestic violence perpetrated against men in India is a critical but largely ignored concern at the confluence of gender expectations, constitutional law, and rights guarantees. This paper has illustrated that even with constitutional promises of equality and dignity, male victims of domestic violence encounter significant impediments to acknowledgement, reporting, and reparations. The prevalence figures, though limited, indicate that domestic violence against men takes place at significant rates in Indian society. The most common forms are emotional and psychological abuse, with physical violence and sexual coercion taking place less often but significantly. Male victims are particularly challenged by social stigma, the absence of legal protections, and the lack of support services. The tragic deaths of Manav Sharma<sup>16</sup> and Subhash Atul<sup>17</sup> highlight the potentially deadly effects of such neglect. Their suicides, which were brought on by purported spousal abuse and a sense of legal helplessness, are the ultimate result of a system that does not acknowledge and respond to the needs of male victims. Their last messages are strong testaments to the desperation experienced by men who feel there is no escape from abusive circumstances. The gendered character of existing Indian domestic violence legislation also raises significant constitutional issues of equality before the law and dignity. While it is true that women have been and continue to be vulnerable to domestic violence, an equitable legal system must offer protection to all victims irrespective of gender. Addressing domestic violence against men does not mean reducing protection for women, but means broadening the conceptualization of domestic violence to understand its complexity along gender lines. By adopting gender-neutral legislation, institutional changes, and social sensitization programs, India can take steps towards a more balanced approach to domestic violence that respects constitutional norms while fulfilling the actual needs of all victims. Future studies must aim to create more extensive prevalence data, explore the specific experiences and needs of male victims in the Indian context, and assess the efficacy of interventions. Policy-making must strike a balance between acknowledging gendered patterns in domestic violence and the principle of equal protection under the law. Finally, combating domestic violence in its entirety involves overturning strict gender norms that adversely affect both men and

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<sup>16</sup> Times of India, 2024

<sup>17</sup> India Today, 2024

women. An equal society must recognize that vulnerability cuts across genders and extend sympathy to all abusers, whether male or female.

## MY OPINION

In my view, domestic violence against men is not only a legal deficiency but a societal shortcoming in need of immediate redress. The stigma surrounding male victimization is rooted deeply in patriarchal norms that ironically injure both sexes. Although protective laws for women against domestic violence are important, their biased direction leaves men exposed and without redress. The survey findings further stress the imperative of gender-neutral legislation that acknowledges the facts of all victims.

Additionally, the abuse of current laws not only hurts innocent men but also weakens the credibility of true female victims. Legal protections against false charges should not be interpreted as a challenge to women's rights but as a reinforcement of justice being fair. Judicial reforms and appropriate law enforcement training are required to ensure impartiality in this regard. Society needs to free itself from the archaic beliefs that men cannot be victims and begin taking this problem as seriously as violence against women. Awareness campaigns, media portrayal, and support systems need to be enhanced to make male victims feel safe in coming forward without fear of judgment or retaliation. Denial of this issue will only continue to cause suffering and injustice, rendering true gender equality an empty promise.

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