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ENFORCEMENT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN INDIA: A LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

This paper provides an in-depth examination of the legal framework governing women's rights in India, analyzing its constitutional foundation, statutory components, and enforcement mechanisms. Grounded in the constitutional tenets of equality, non-discrimination, and personal liberty, the Indian legal system is reinforced by specific laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005; the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013; and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, among others. The evolving status of women in Indian society is supported by an expanding set of laws aimed at promoting gender equality and protecting women from violence and discrimination. Nevertheless, despite this progressive legal framework, challenges in implementation and societal barriers persist. This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the key laws established for the protection and welfare of women in India, evaluates their judicial interpretation, and underscores the systemic issues that impede their effectiveness. The study concludes that bridging the gap between legislative intent and actual enforcement necessitates a holistic approach that includes strengthening institutions, enhancing legal literacy, ensuring victim-centered justice delivery, and encouraging societal change. It argues that genuine gender equality can only be achieved when progressive laws are enforced justly, effectively, and in conjunction with ongoing cultural transformation.

Keywords: The Constitution of India, Rights of Women, Safeguards, Protection Laws, BNS, 2023

Introduction

The rights of women constitute a vital aspect of the larger human rights dialogue. In India, although constitutional protections lay the groundwork for gender equality, women still encounter various challenges stemming from patriarchal traditions. Over the years, the Indian legal framework has introduced numerous statutory measures to tackle these issues. This paper intends to critically analyze the key legislative provisions for women in India and evaluate the

extent to which these laws have resulted in significant change. The Indian legal framework has implemented multiple laws and constitutional provisions designed to safeguard and empower women. These laws tackle matters such as violence, discrimination, workplace safety, marriage rights, property rights, and reproductive health. The objective is to achieve gender equality, uphold the dignity of women, and foster social justice.

International Legislation Concerning Women's Safety

International law has gradually developed to acknowledge the safety of women as a crucial element of human rights, rooted in the principles of equality, dignity, and non-discrimination. The international legal framework that addresses this matter is based on a mix of legally binding treaties, conventions, and protocols, along with non-binding yet significantly impactful declarations, resolutions, and guidelines. These instruments, which have been adopted under the auspices of the United Nations, regional organizations, and specialized agencies, collectively establish global standards and inform national policies aimed at safeguarding women from violence, exploitation, and abuse in both public and private domains. The range of these protections goes beyond simply prohibiting discriminatory practices; it encompasses affirmative responsibilities for states to prevent violence, investigate and prosecute offenders, protect survivors, and offer pathways for redress and rehabilitation.

Universal Human Rights Instruments

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948**

The UDHR is acknowledged worldwide as the essential human rights document that provides legitimacy to subsequent treaties. It asserts that every individual is born free and equal in dignity and rights¹ and Every individual is entitled to the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration, without any form of distinction, including but not limited to race, color, gender, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, birth, or any other status.² Guarantees the rights to life, liberty, and personal security, These principles are essential to international standards concerning the safety of women.³

- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966**

Each State Party to this Covenant guarantees that it will respect and ensure the rights

¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, art. 1.

² Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, art. 2.

³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, art. 3.

recognized in this Covenant for all individuals within its territory and under its jurisdiction, without any distinction, including but not limited to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, or any other status.⁴ The States Parties to this Covenant guarantee that both men and women have equal rights to enjoy all civil and political rights outlined in this Covenant.⁵ Every individual possesses the inherent right to life. This right must be safeguarded by legal provisions. No one shall be unjustly deprived of their life.⁶ No individual shall endure torture or any form of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Specifically, no one shall be subjected to medical or scientific experimentation without their voluntary consent.⁷ Every individual is treated equally under the law and has the right to equal legal protection without discrimination. In this regard, the law will forbid any form of discrimination and ensure that all individuals receive equal and effective protection against discrimination based on any criteria, including race, color, gender, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, birth, or any other status.⁸

The Human Rights Committee's efforts have led to the interpretation of the ICCPR in relation to matters such as gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and systemic inequality. By imposing binding obligations on States, the Covenant acts as a robust protector of women's civil and political rights, guaranteeing equal participation, legal safeguards, and personal security on a global scale.

- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966**

The ICESCR addresses women's safety from a socio-economic perspective, recognising rights such as just and favourable working conditions, safe and healthy workplaces, access to adequate healthcare, and protection from exploitation (Articles 7 and 12). These safeguards are essential to eliminating unsafe working conditions, which often disproportionately affect women, particularly in informal sectors.⁹

The States Parties to this Covenant acknowledge the right of every individual to enjoy just and favorable working conditions that ensure, specifically:¹⁰

⁴ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, art. 2(1).

⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, art. 3.

⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, art. 6(1).

⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, art. 7.

⁸ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, art. 26.

⁹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966.

¹⁰ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, art.7.

Compensation that guarantees all workers, at a minimum, the following:¹¹

Equitable wages and equal pay for work of equal value, without any form of discrimination, particularly ensuring that women receive working conditions that are not inferior to those of men, with equal pay for equal work¹²

A decent standard of living for themselves and their families, in line with the provisions of this Covenant:¹³

Safe and healthy working environments:¹⁴

Equal opportunities for all individuals to advance in their employment to a suitable higher position, based solely on seniority and competence:¹⁵

Rest, leisure, reasonable limits on working hours, periodic paid holidays, and compensation for public holidays.¹⁶

- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This international treaty came into effect on September 3, 1981, following its ratification by the twentieth country. By the time the Convention marked its tenth anniversary in 1989, nearly one hundred countries had committed to its terms.¹⁷

States Parties are required to implement appropriate measures across all areas, especially in the political, social, economic, and cultural sectors, including enacting legislation, to ensure the complete development and progress of women. This is aimed at guaranteeing their ability to exercise and enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms equally with men.¹⁸ States Parties are required to implement all necessary actions, including enacting laws, to eliminate all types of trafficking in women and the exploitation of women's prostitution.¹⁹ States Parties are required to implement all necessary measures to guarantee that women have the same opportunities as men, without any form of discrimination, to represent their Governments at the international

¹¹International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, art.7 (a).

¹²International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, art.7 (a) (i).

¹³International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, art.7(a) (ii).

¹⁴ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, art.7(a) (ii) (b).

¹⁵ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, art.7(a) (ii) (c).

¹⁶ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, art.7(a) (ii) (d).

¹⁷ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979

¹⁸ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979, art.3.

¹⁹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979, art.6.

level and to engage in the activities of international organizations.²⁰

- **UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW), 1993**

For the purposes of this Declaration, the phrase "violence against women" refers to any act of gender-based violence that causes, or is likely to cause, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. This includes threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether it occurs in public or private life²¹

Constitutional Provisions for Women²²:

The Constitution of India ensures gender justice through several provisions:

Equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.²³

This article asserts that all individuals, irrespective of their social, economic, or political standing, are equally accountable to the law. This principle emphasizes that even government officials and authorities are not exempt from the law, thus fostering legal consistency and deterring arbitrary actions by the state.²⁴

- **Equality Before Law**

This principle, rooted in English Common Law, indicates that no individual holds any special privilege. It requires that all individuals, regardless of their status or identity, adhere to the same legal standards. This concept underscores that no one, including public officials or authorities, is exempt from the law. Equality before the law guarantees a fair environment and prevents arbitrary actions by the state.²⁵

- **Equal Protection of the Laws**

Derived from the U.S. Constitution, this principle goes beyond simple legal uniformity to foster genuine equality. It guarantees that individuals in similar circumstances are treated equally under the law. Although it forbids unjust discrimination, it also allows for reasonable classifications when needed to attain fairness and justice.²⁶

²⁰ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979, art.8.

²¹ UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW), 1993, art.1.

²² The Constitution of India.

²³ India Const. art. 14.

²⁴ India Const. art. 14.

²⁵ Aishwarya Agrawal, Article 14 of Indian Constitution, Law Bhoomi.com, (Sept. 05, 2025, 02: 54 PM), https://lawbhoomi.com/article-14-of-indian-constitution/#Equality_Before_the_Law.

²⁶ Aishwarya Agrawal, Article 14 of Indian Constitution, Law Bhoomi.com, (Sept. 05, 2025, 02: 54 PM), https://lawbhoomi.com/article-14-of-indian-constitution/#Equality_Before_the_Law.

Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth: ²⁷

- Article 15(1) and 15(2) forbid the State from discriminating against any citizen based solely on religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any combination of these factors.²⁸
- Article 15(3) grants the State the authority to create special provisions aimed at protecting and advancing the rights of women and children.²⁹
- Additionally, Article 15(4) permits the State to implement specific measures to enhance the interests and welfare of socially and educationally disadvantaged classes.³⁰

Equality of Opportunity³¹

- The Indian Constitution states equal opportunity in public employment by forbidding discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste, descent, place of birth, or residence. Although it does not explicitly address protection from violence, its non-discrimination principle guarantees that women have equal access to public employment, thereby aiding in their empowerment.³²
- The Indian Constitution is not merely a single article; rather, it serves as a directive principle of state policy that delineates the guidelines for the state to adhere to in order to promote the welfare of all citizens, encompassing both men and women. Important provisions concerning the safeguarding and rights of women include the assurance of equal rights to sufficient means of livelihood (Art. 39(a), equal remuneration for equal work (Art. 39(d)), and protection against economic exploitation and health abuses, particularly for workers, including men, women, and children (Art. 39(e)).³³
- The Constitution of India stipulates that the State is responsible for establishing provisions that guarantee just and humane working conditions, as well as maternity relief. This Directive Principle of State Policy requires the State to promote equitable work environments, which encompass safe working conditions, fair compensation, and the overall well-being of workers, while also offering assistance to pregnant women and working mothers through maternity benefits.³⁴

²⁷ India Const. art. 15.

²⁸ The Constitution of India.

²⁹ The Constitution of India.

³⁰ The Constitution of India.

³¹ India Const. art. 16.

³² India Const. art. 16.

³³ India Const. art. 39.

³⁴ India Const. art. 42.

- The Constitution of India establishes a fundamental duty for every citizen to foster harmony and a sense of brotherhood among all individuals in India, surpassing differences in religion, language, region, or social divisions, and to reject any practices that undermine the dignity of women.³⁵

Reservation of Seats for Women in Panchayats and Municipalities

- The Constitution of India requires that at least one-third (33.33%) of seats for direct elections and the positions of Chairpersons in both Panchayats (local self-government in rural regions) and Municipalities (local self-government in urban regions) be reserved for women.³⁶

Key Legislative Measures for Women

1. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 has been in effect since 2006. This legislation is designed to safeguard wives or female live-in partners from violence perpetrated by their husbands, male live-in partners, or their relatives.

Additionally, the law provides protection to women who are sisters, including adopted sisters, as well as mothers. Under this Act, domestic violence encompasses both actual abuse and threats of abuse, which can be physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or economic in nature.

Moreover, harassment related to unlawful dowry demands directed at the female victim or her relatives is also included in the definition of domestic violence.

Coverage of Women in Live-in Relationships Under the Act

Supreme Court Guidelines Regarding Live-In Relationships in India³⁷

What defines your live-in relationship to be regarded as akin to marriage?³⁸

In the pivotal ruling of Indra Sarma vs VKV Sarma, the Supreme Court outlined several criteria

³⁵ India Const. art. 51A(e).

³⁶ India Const. art. 243D.

³⁷ Varsha, Rights Of A Woman In A Live-In Relationship In India: : Legal Status And Landmark Judgments (Sept. 07, 2025, 15: 02 PM), <https://bnblegal.com/article/rights-of-a-woman-in-a-live-in-relationship-in-india-legal-status-and-landmark-judgments/#:~:text=Right%20To%20Shared%20Household%20In,to%20a%20shared%20household%20also.%E2%80%9D>.

³⁸ Varsha, Rights Of A Woman In A Live-In Relationship In India: : Legal Status And Landmark Judgments (Sept. 07, 2025, 15: 02 PM), <https://bnblegal.com/article/rights-of-a-woman-in-a-live-in-relationship-in-india-legal-status-and-landmark-judgments/#:~:text=Right%20To%20Shared%20Household%20In,to%20a%20shared%20household%20also.%E2%80%9D>.

for a live-in relationship that are crucial in determining if a relationship resembles marriage.³⁹

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 is a piece of legislation in India aimed at eliminating the custom of dowry, which is defined as any property or valuable security exchanged in the context of marriage. This act forbids the demand, giving, or receiving of dowry, categorizing it as a punishable offense, with consequences that may include imprisonment and fines. Furthermore, it specifies that any dowry received should be for the benefit of the wife or her heirs, and any agreements related to dowry are rendered void.⁴⁰

2. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is a significant piece of legislation in India that safeguards women from sexual harassment by promoting a secure working environment. It requires the establishment of internal complaints committees in all workplaces to address grievances, sets up District-level Local Complaints Committees for the unorganized sectors, and clarifies what constitutes sexual harassment, thereby affirming women's rights to equality, dignity, and life. The Act outlines a procedure for lodging complaints, carrying out investigations, and taking measures against offenders, applicable to both organized and unorganized sectors throughout India.⁴¹

Vishakha Guidelines:

In 1997, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India issued a significant ruling in the case of Vishaka & Others v. State of Rajasthan, establishing clear guidelines for organizations to adhere to when handling complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace. These directives, referred to as the Vishaka Guidelines, were created to provide a framework for the prevention and resolution of workplace sexual harassment, given the lack of statutory legislation at that time.⁴²

³⁹ Varsha, Rights Of A Woman In A Live-In Relationship In India: : Legal Status And Landmark Judgments (Sept. 07, 2025, 15: 02 PM), <https://bnblegal.com/article/rights-of-a-woman-in-a-live-in-relationship-in-india-legal-status-and-landmark-judgments/#:~:text=Right%20To%20Shared%20Household%20In,to%20a%20shared%20household%20also.%E2%80%9D>.

⁴⁰ The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

⁴¹ The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

⁴² Vishaka and Ors. v. State of Rajasthan and Ors. AIR 1997 SC 3011 (India).

Regarding workplace sexual harassment, the Supreme Court highlighted that the Vishaka Guidelines should remain effective until a formal legislative framework is established to tackle the issue. The Court also noted that international conventions and standards are crucial in interpreting constitutional rights related to gender equality, the right to work with dignity, and personal liberty, as outlined in Articles 14, 15, 19(1)(g), and 21 of the Constitution. These constitutional provisions inherently offer protection against sexual harassment.⁴³

3. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

The Act governs the employment of women in specific workplaces during a defined period before and after childbirth, offering maternity and related benefits. It is applicable to mines, factories, circuses, industries, plantations, and shops or establishments that have ten or more employees, excluding those covered under the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948. State governments also have the authority to extend its applicability to other establishments. The Act does not impose any wage limit for eligibility.⁴⁴

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 is designed to govern the employment of women in factories, shops, and commercial establishments with ten or more employees, providing them with specific periods of leave before and after childbirth. Under the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, the duration of maternity leave for working women was extended from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for the first two children. Additionally, the amendment introduced provisions for work-from-home arrangements and mandatory crèche facilities in certain establishments.⁴⁵

4. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971, legalizes abortion in India under specific conditions. It permits registered medical professionals to carry out pregnancy terminations with the objective of preventing unsafe abortions and lowering maternal death rates. The Act was most recently amended in 2021 to broaden the scope of safe abortion access, particularly in sensitive cases such as rape or incest. The amendment expanded access to safe abortions by increasing the permissible gestation period to 24 weeks in special cases and ensuring confidentiality.⁴⁶

⁴³Vishaka and Ors. v. State of Rajasthan and Ors. AIR 1997 SC 3011 (India).

⁴⁴ Cleartax.in, <https://cleartax.in/s/maternity-benefit-act>. (Last Visited Aug. 5, 2025)

⁴⁵Vvgnli.gov.in, <https://vvgnli.gov.in/sites/default/files/Maternity%20Benefit%20Act%2C%201961> (Last Visited Aug. 5, 2025)

⁴⁶DrishtiIAS.com, <https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-news-analysis/medical-termination-of-pregnancy-mtp->

5. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956

The amendment granted daughters equal rights to ancestral property, establishing them as coparceners by birth, akin to sons. The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act of 2005 represents a crucial legal reform that modified the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 to provide daughters with equal rights in ancestral property. This amendment guarantees that daughters possess equal rights in ancestral property, thereby aligning property inheritance laws with the tenets of gender equality. The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act of 2005 introduced a significant transformation in inheritance laws by conferring equal coparcenary rights to daughters in Hindu joint family property, similar to those of sons. Consequently, daughters became coparceners at birth, enjoying equal rights and responsibilities concerning ancestral property. The amendment promoted gender equality in inheritance among Hindus, as well as among Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. It is applicable retrospectively to living daughters, regardless of whether they were born prior to the amendment.⁴⁷

Role of the Judiciary in Advancing Women's Rights

- **Charu Khurana v. Union of India and Others**⁴⁸

This ruling upholds the principles of anti-discrimination and equal pay for a private entity, grounded in its formation under general regulatory standards, thus strengthening the universal enforcement of Articles 14 and 16 in instances of gender discrimination.⁴⁹

- **Anuj Garg v. Hotel Association of India and Others**⁵⁰

This ruling established the anti-stereotyping principle. It determined that if the rationale for a discriminatory provision based on sex relied on "stereotypes" regarding the roles of men and women in society, then the classification was deemed unconstitutional.⁵¹

- **Lt. Colonel Nitisha and Others v. Union of India and Others**⁵²

This case is crucial for comprehending indirect discrimination and its role in fostering systemic discrimination in India. For the first time, the Supreme Court acknowledged "indirect discrimination" as a breach of the right to equality.⁵³

amendment-act-2021 (Last Visited Aug. 5, 2025)

⁴⁷ Clear Tax.com, <https://cleartax.in/s/hindu-succession-act> (Last Visited Aug. 6, 2025)

⁴⁸ MANU/SC/1044/2014

⁴⁹ https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Womens-Book_Accessible.pdf

⁵⁰ MANU/SC/8444/2007

⁵¹ https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Womens-Book_Accessible.pdf

⁵² MANU/SC/0216/2021

⁵³ https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Womens-Book_Accessible.pdf

- **Secretary, Ministry of Defence v. Babita Puniya**⁵⁴

The case represented a significant triumph for women striving to establish their position and contributions within the Indian Army by securing the right to Permanent Commissions on an equal footing with men.⁵⁵

- **C.B. Muthamma v. Union of India and Others**⁵⁶

This judgment was a significant milestone as it was the first to affirm that women have the right to be free from discrimination in employment due to their marital status.⁵⁷

- **Neera Mathur v. Life Insurance Corporation of India and Another**⁵⁸

This case underscores the entitlement of women to be free from discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy. The Court emphasized the discriminatory aspect of mandating female candidates to reveal personal information, including menstrual cycles and pregnancies, which infringes upon their dignity and privacy.⁵⁹

Misuse of Laws: A Critical Concern

- While laws enacted for the protection of women serve an essential purpose in addressing systemic gender-based violence and inequality, there is a growing discourse around their misuse. Some legal provisions, particularly those that presume the woman as the aggrieved party, have reportedly been misused in certain cases for personal, retaliatory, or monetary gains. This concern does not undermine the genuine struggles of women but highlights the need for balanced application and safeguards against false accusations.
- Section 498A of the IPC (Now Section 85 of the BNS): Cruelty by Husband or Relatives. Originally intended to curb dowry-related harassment and cruelty, it is a non-bailable and cognizable offence. However, The Supreme Court in *Rajesh Sharma v. State of UP* (2017) noted instances where this section had been used as a weapon rather than a shield, leading to harassment of the husband and his family.
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:
Though the Act is crucial for providing civil remedies to women facing abuse, it has been observed that: Some complaints are exaggerated or fabricated, Interim relief (such

⁵⁴MANU/SC/0194/2020

⁵⁵ https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Womens-Book_Accessible.pdf

⁵⁶MANU/SC/0580/1979

⁵⁷ https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Womens-Book_Accessible.pdf

⁵⁸MANU/SC/0064/1992

⁵⁹ https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Womens-Book_Accessible.pdf

as residence orders or maintenance) can be misused to pressurize the respondent.

- Other Areas of Concern

False rape allegations: In some instances, rape laws have been misused to settle personal scores, extract money, or in cases of broken relationships.

- Child marriage and maintenance claims: Legal provisions aimed at child protection or financial support have occasionally been manipulated to file false age or dependency claims.
- While protective laws for women have been instrumental in advancing gender justice, their occasional misuse poses a threat to the credibility of the legal system. It is essential to strike a balance between protecting victims and safeguarding the rights of the accused. Strengthening procedural safeguards, ensuring judicial oversight, and promoting legal literacy among both men and women can help maintain the integrity and intended purpose of these laws.

Recommendations

- To bridge the gap between legislation and reality, the following measures are recommended:
- Comprehensive Legal Awareness Campaigns to inform women of their rights.
- Gender Sensitization Programs for law enforcement, judiciary, and public officials.
- Efficient Legal Aid Mechanisms to ensure access to justice for marginalized women.
- Use of Technology for secure reporting and case tracking.
- Enhanced Monitoring Systems to evaluate the implementation of women-centric laws.
- Balancing Protection and Fairness
- Effective investigation and due process to distinguish genuine cases from false ones.
- Penalties for frivolous or malicious complaints to deter misuse.
- Counseling and mediation where applicable, especially in family law cases.
- Gender-sensitivity training for police and judiciary to handle complaints with balance and impartiality.

Conclusion

India possesses a well-developed legal framework aimed at promoting gender justice. However, the success of these laws depends not only on their existence but also on their enforcement and the societal context in which they operate. Legal reforms must be

accompanied by social change, capacity building, and institutional accountability to ensure true empowerment and protection for women. The legal landscape governing women's rights in India reflects a strong constitutional mandate, reinforced by comprehensive legislation and international obligations. Constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination, coupled with targeted laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, collectively aim to safeguard women's dignity, safety, and autonomy. Despite this robust framework, the gap between legislative intent and practical enforcement remains significant. Challenges such as procedural delays, inadequate gender sensitisation among enforcement authorities, socio-economic constraints, and entrenched patriarchal norms continue to impede effective protection. Under reporting of offences, driven by fear of stigma, victim-blaming, and limited access to legal resources, further weakens the system's capacity to deliver justice. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-dimensional strategy strengthening institutional mechanisms, ensuring prompt and sensitive justice delivery, enhancing legal awareness, and fostering gender equality through education and societal reform. Sustainable change demands not only policy refinement but also the dismantling of deep-rooted biases that perpetuate discrimination. The true realisation of women's rights in India will be measured not by the existence of laws alone, but by their consistent, impartial, and effective implementation. Achieving this vision necessitates a concerted effort from the State, civil society, and citizens alike to create an environment where equality, dignity, and justice for women are not aspirational ideals but lived realities.

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