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ADDRESSING THE GAP- LACK OF LAWS RELATED TO SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST MALES IN INDIA

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I. ABSTRACT

Sexual offences are a grave violation of human rights, bodily autonomy, and individual dignity. Yet we see a significant gap in laws related to sexual offences against males and transgender people. In India, the legal system predominantly focuses on female victims of sexual offences, leaving a significant gap in justice for male victims. Sexual offences against males remain overlooked and underreported crimes in India due to deep-rooted patriarchal mindsets and societal biases.

The *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita* continues to define rape and sexual offences in gender-specific terms and reinforces the conception that only women can be victims of sexual offences. This research paper critically analyses the absence of legal provisions for male survivors, analyzing historical, legal, and societal perspectives. A comparative analysis with legal frameworks of other countries like the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, etc. shows a progressive shift towards gender-neutral sexual offences laws.

In contrast, Indian law still criminalizes non-consensual sexual acts primarily based on the victim's gender. This research paper delves into the historical background, evolution, comparison with laws of other countries, theories, statistical analysis, and future implications of the lack of laws related to sexual offenses against males in India and highlights the urgent need for legislative reforms to ensure gender-neutral sexual offences laws.

II. KEYWORDS

Sexual offences, male victims, rape laws, gender-neutral laws, *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita*

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III. INTRODUCTION

Sexual offences in India have long been viewed through the gender-biased lens, with legal remedies only available to female victims of such offences. The absence of gender-neutral sexual offences laws renders male victims vulnerable and unprotected, fostering stigma and legal invisibility. While International Legal Systems across different countries evolve with inclusivity, India continues to be shackled by patriarchal and archaic legal frameworks that fail to acknowledge male victimization. This research paper critically examines the absence of laws addressing sexual offences against men, drawing comparisons with other countries and proposing necessary reforms.

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To critically examine the lack of legal reforms and judicial precedents related to sexual offences against males in India.
- To assess and analyze the societal and psychological impacts of legal invisibility and underprotection of male survivors.
- To propose reforms for a gender-neutral legal framework addressing sexual offences.

V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the reasons behind the lack of laws related to sexual offences against males in India?
- What legal challenges are faced by male victims due to a lack of legal protection against sexual offences?
- What can be done to reform the Indian Legal Framework to include male victimization?

VI. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- The reasons behind the lack of gender-neutral laws may include the deep-rooted patriarchal mindset, stigma, societal bias, lack of legislative intent, and underreporting of such cases by male victims.

- There are various challenges faced by male victims like lack of gender-neutral laws, no recognition of rape of males, societal ostracization, psychological trauma, the burden of proof on victims, etc.
- To ensure equal protection of male victims, several steps like amendment of Section 375 of BNS, the introduction of gender-neutral sexual offences laws, judicial and police sensitization, awareness of social protection, strengthening support systems, etc. must be done.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed in this research paper is Doctrinal in nature with a comprehensive examination of existing legal provisions, judicial precedents, and scholarly works. Doctrinal research also known as library-based research, is a distinct approach to legal research that comprehensively analyses statutes, case laws, and scholarly legal works. This methodology is well suited for analyzing the theoretical and conceptual spheres of law and offering a well-established interpretation of legal Doctrines and principles.

Primary sources like legislation, and judicial precedents form the basis for the research while secondary sources like journals, commentaries, legal digests, and articles provide further insight and a discerning outlook. The research process entails identifying, collecting, and critically examining these sources to construct a logical and coherent understanding of the legal issue under research. Through this Doctrinal research, this research paper aims to comprehensively analyze the legal framework, assess the shortcomings in sexual offences laws, and suggest reforms to provide gender-neutral protection to victims of sexual offences.

VIII. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research paper draws upon several key provisions of the Constitution of India, the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita*, 2023 namely Article 14, Section 375, Section 377 (IPC), Section 63 (BNS) and POCSO Act. It refers to criminal law articles from renowned platforms like the Hindu, legal service India, International Bar Association, and Journal of Forensic Medical Science and Law to understand and

explain the dynamics of sexual offences against males in India and discrepancies in Indian laws in addressing this issue. This paper also examines the landmark judgment of **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018) 10 SCC 1** which declared Section 377 of IPC unconstitutional as it was violating of Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Indian Constitution but it'll continue in the cases of non-consensual sexual acts and sexual acts involving minors.

The literature entailed in this paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the Indian legal system with respect to laws related to sexual offences. The paper critically analyses the lack of sexual offences laws related to rape and sexual acts against males while providing a brief comparison with the sexual offences laws of different countries and suggesting ways to reform the Indian laws to address sexual offences against males in India.

IX. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO SEXUAL OFFENCES

Sexual offences are criminal acts that involve inappropriate, unwanted, non-consensual, and coercive sexual behavior that violates a person's privacy, dignity, bodily autonomy, and integrity. It is considered a great violation of the basic human rights of a person worldwide. There is a wide range of sexual offences from sexual assault and harassment to rape and exploitation. Sexual offences often cause emotional, and psychological trauma and physical harm to the victims.

Sexual offences are legally defined under various statutes as acts including sexual assault, harassment, rape, exploitation, voyeurism, or any other form of forceful and coercive sexual activity. In India, sexual offences are primarily governed by the **Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita**, previously the **Indian Penal Code**, the **Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act**, and other related laws.

A. Historical Evolution of Sexual Offences laws in India

The laws related to sexual offences in India have evolved significantly over time. Colonial influences, socio-cultural changes, and Judicial influences have shaped laws related to sexual offences. During Ancient India, when laws were derived from Manusmriti, Dharmashashtra, and Arthashastra, these texts provided strict

punishment for sexual offences and were concerned about protecting Women's dignity than bodily autonomy. During the medieval period, under Islamic rule, the laws were based on Sharia principles whereas sexual laws were based on religious doctrines with stringent procedures and strong evidential basis to establish guilt.

The first codified laws on sexual offences were introduced in the British colonial period in 1860 under the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** drafted by **Lord Macaulay**. The IPC's gendered framework reflected righteous morality, reinforcing women as the sole victims of sexual offences and excluding male and non-binary victims. The key provisions for sexual offences under the IPC were **Section 375**, which defined rape as an offence committed by men against women with a gender-specific approach, and **Section 377** which criminalized unnatural natural offences such as, sexual intercourse between same-sex individuals and sexual intercourse with animals, primarily used against homosexuality than addressing male victimization. After independence there were no major changes in the IPC and sexual offences against men remained unaddressed.

The advent of the 21st century resulted in some landmark reforms like the **Justice Verma Committee** recommended gender-neutral rape laws but the proposal was rejected by the parliament keeping the rape laws only for women victims. Some new offences like stalking, voyeurism, and acid attack were included under Section 374 but they also focused solely on female victims. In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court **read down Section 377**, legalizing consensual same-sex relationships. In 2023, the IPC was replaced by the *Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)* but the sexual offences remained gender specific. The equivalent section of rape in BNS, i.e. Section 63 continues to define rape as an offence against women, neglecting male and transgender victims. However, the Indian legal system has a long way to go as marital rape is still not fully decriminalized in India leaving victims of such offence unprotected and with no legal recourse.

B. Comparison with Other Countries

Despite legal and judicial advancements, the Indian legal system still lacks a gender-neutral approach to addressing sexual offences. India's sexual offences laws remain

gender-biased, not recognizing that men, boys, and transgender individuals can also be victims of sexual offences. Unlike countries like the UK, Canada, and the US, India doesn't have gender-neutral sexual offences laws. A comparative analysis of sexual offences laws of other legal systems of the world showcases key differences and highlights the need for reforms in Indian laws.

The **United Kingdom** has gender-neutral rape laws, The Sexual offences Act, of 2003 defines rape as a nonconsensual act of penetration Of the vagina, anus, or mouth with a penis but also includes other nonpenile acts under different provisions. The UK also criminalizes sexual exploitation, and child sexual offences recognizing both men and women as potential victims. While India's BNS defines rape only in terms of female victims, the UK permits men, women, and transgender people to seek justice within the same legal framework. India's laws also don't consider oral or anal rape against males as rape but the UK has provisions for this as well.

The **United States** also has gender-neutral laws. The updated FBI definition of rape for Uniform Crime Reporting removed gender specificity and defined rape as "the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any part of body or oral penetration with a sex organ, without consent." Many states in the country have gender-neutral sexual offences laws recognizing male and transgender victims. In India rape is defined as an offence committed by a man against a woman whereas the US federal law and most states define rape as a gender-neutral offence including same-sex sexual violence. Marital rape is criminalized in all 50 states of the US while it remains partially legal in India, with the exception of separated spouses.

Canada's Criminal Code defines sexual offences without gender distinction with gender-neutral sexual offences laws recognizing male and LGBTQ+ victims as well, whereas India's BNS only focuses on female victims. Marital rape is explicitly criminalized in Canada. Canada has strong victim support systems focusing on victim protection through support systems, restraining orders, and victim compensation while India lacks specialized support systems for male survivors.

Australia has comprehensive and survivor-centric laws, with the Criminal Code Act, of 1955 defining rape and sexual assault without gender restrictions. Australian laws

also recognize psychological coercion as a form of sexual violence, not just physical force. India lacks gender-neutral sexual assault provisions, while Australia protects all victims by providing legal aid and support services for all victims, irrespective of gender. Australia has an affirmative consent model that shifts the burden of proof onto the accused making prosecution easier for victims, Unlike in India where the burden is on the victim to prove nonconsent.

C. Types of Sexual Offences under the Indian Legal Framework

Sexual offences in India can be classified into different types based on the nature of the act and the legal provisions covering them. Some key categories of sexual offences in India include the following.

- **Rape:** Rape is defined under Section 63 of the BNS. It includes nonconsensual sexual intercourse or penetration by a man with his penis or any other object into the vagina, anus, mouth, or urethra of a woman, involving force coercion, or deceit. It also includes nonconsensual oral sexual acts by a man against a woman.
- **Outraging the modesty of a woman:** Section 74 of the BNS criminalizes the act of assault or use of criminal force to any woman intending to outrage or knowing it is likely to be resulting in an outrage of modesty of women. The term 'modesty' refers to a woman's sense of decency, honor, propriety, and reserve in speech, conduct, and actions. Acts like inappropriate touching, indecent gestures, forcible disrobing, etc. Constitute outraging the modesty of a woman.
- **Sexual harassment:** It is defined under Section 75 of the BNS. It includes unwelcome physical contact and advances, demand or request for sexual favors, showing pornography to a woman against her will, and making sexually colored remarks.
- **Molestation:** It is generally defined as acts that involve physical advances or inappropriate touching without consent.
- **Child sexual abuse:** It is defined under the POCSO Act, 2012. It includes any form of sexual offences committed against minors.

- **Marital rape:** It is defined as forced sexual relations within a marriage without the consent of another spouse. It is not yet criminalized in India.
- **Voyeurism:** It is defined under Section 77 of the BNS. It includes watching, taking pictures, recording, or disturbing private acts of a person without their consent.
- **Stalking:** It is defined under Section 78 of the BNS. Repeated following, contacting someone with sexual intent, and causing distress is called stalking. It also includes monitoring the use of the internet, email, or other form of electronic communication by women.
- **Trafficking for sexual exploitation:** Forcing individuals into sexual slavery, prostitution, or exploitation is called trafficking for sexual exploitation.

X. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS AND PRE-REQUISITES TO DETERMINE A CASE OF SEXUAL OFFENCES

Sexual offences are severe criminal activities that violate individual dignity, bodily integrity, and physical autonomy. The legal framework and Provisions governing these offences may differ from place to place but there are some basic essential elements and prerequisites to establish a case of sexual offences. These elements are essential in determining the validity of allegations, applicability of legal provisions, and burden of proof in the criminal proceedings and trial.

For an act to be recognized as a sexual offence, it must satisfy the following essential elements:

- **Lack of Consent:** Consent is the most discerning element in determining whether an act constitutes a sexual offence. It must be free, informed, voluntary, and unambiguous. Sexual offences are basically constituted when there is a lack of consent by the other party. Mere silence or lack of resistance doesn't amount to consent. There are some factors like force, threat, coercion, fraud, misrepresentation, or inability to consent that can negate consent.
- **Intention (Mens Rea) and knowledge:** Mens Rea or criminal intent is a necessary element to constitute an offence. The accused must have had a deliberate intent or knowledge that the act was non-consensual. However,

there are some strict liability cases like statutory rape or child sexual abuse cases, where the intent doesn't matter.

- **Physical Force, Threat, or Coercion:** While force is a common factor in sexual offences, its absence doesn't negate the occurrence of a sexual offence. In several cases like- child sexual offences, sexual coercion at workplaces, and cases when the victim was incapacitated, intoxicated, or unconscious, force is not necessary to constitute a conviction.
- **Nature of The Act:** The nature of the act, whether it was a sexual act or assault is crucial in classifying the offence. Different provisions criminalize different sexual acts based on their nature or type of the act involved like penetrative sexual assault i.e. Rape, non- penetrative but inappropriate or unwelcome sexual contact i.e. Sexual Assault, verbal or non- physical misconduct like stalking, obscene gestures, etc. i.e. Harassment, sexual acts with minors, irrespective of consent i.e. Child Sexual Abuse. Under Indian law, only penile-vaginal penetration is classified as rape, unlike the gender-neutral provisions in other countries like the US and Canada.

Before a Sexual offence case can proceed, there are certain prerequisites that must be satisfied to ensure a free and fair trial.

- **Age of the Victim:** Different countries have different age thresholds for sexual consent and statutory protection. In India, under the POCSO Act, any sexual act with a person below the age of 18 years is automatically an offence irrespective of consent.
- **Timely Reporting and Medical Examination:** A timely First Information Report (FIR) and medical examination strengthens a victim's case. Medical evidence like DNA analysis, injury reports, and forensic samples play a crucial role in corroborating victim's claims. However, a delay in reporting doesn't invalidate a case as many victims and survivors face psychological barriers and trauma before coming forward.
- **Psychological impacts and Trauma consideration:** The courts and police officers must be sensitive to the victims and must bear in mind the

psychological trauma and impacts, particularly in cases of child abuse and repeated sexual violence. Special provisions like in-camera proceedings, victim anonymity, and witness protection help in preventing re-traumatization during the trial.

- **Corroboration of Evidence:** Victim testimony can be alone sufficient if found credible by the court. However, additional evidence and testimonial proof like- Forensic evidence (DNA, semen, bodily fluids), Eye Witnesses, CCTV footage, call recordings, and medical and psychological reports help corroborate the account of the offence and help strengthen the case of the victim. The Indian Evidence Act was amended in 2013 to prohibit questions about victim's moral character and sexual history during cross-examination.

XI. DEFENCES AND EXCEPTIONS TO SEXUAL OFFENCES IN INDIAN LAW

Sexual offences are strictly penalized under Indian law, however, there are some defenses that an accused can invoke. These defenses are based on consent, mistaken identity, false accusations, lack of intent, a plea of alibi, etc. It's up to the discretion of the Court to correctly scrutinize these defenses to prevent misuse.

- **Consent:** Consent is a key factor in establishing a case of sexual offenses and it is, therefore, a primary defense also. If the accused proves that the sexual act was consensual, then there is no case of a sexual offence. However, consent obtained through force, fraud, coercion, misrepresentation, or when the victim is intoxicated or a minor, doesn't amount to any defense.
- **Mistaken Identity or False Allegations:** The accused may claim that there was a false Implication or they were wrongly identified due to personal enmity, revenge, fabrication of allegations, etc. However, the courts require strong corroborating evidence to prove such claims.
- **Absence of Mens Rea (criminal intent/ guilty mind):** In cases of sexual offences like sexual harassment, molestation, and stalking, the accused can plead that there was no intention on his part to commit the offence. For

example, accidental touching in a crowded place may not amount to sexual harassment unless intent is proved.

- **Plea of Alibi:** If the accused can prove that they were somewhere else at the time of the commission of the offence, it serves as a complete defense and there can be no case against him.

The Indian law, under the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, recognizes two exceptions.

- **Medical examination Exception:** Under Exception 1 of Section 63, the BNS states that “A medical procedure or intervention shall not constitute rape.” A registered medical practitioner performing lawful medical procedures including genital examination is not sexual assault, provided that the act is done in good faith, for the benefit of the victim, and consent is taken from the patient or the guardian.
- **Marital Exception to Rape:** Under Exception 2 of Section 63, The BNS states that “Sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under eighteen years of age, is not rape.” This Exception doesn’t apply when the couple is legally separated. However, this Exception is currently under challenge in Delhi High Court.

XII. COMMITTEES AND REPORTS THAT SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR GENDER-NEUTRAL SEXUAL OFFENCE LAWS

- **The 172nd law commission report, 2005:** the 172nd law commission of India Report, *Review of rape laws (2005)*, suggested the reformation of laws in accordance with the changing nature of sexual offences in India. It sought to address the rampant abuse of the penile penetration rule, by replacing the offence of rape with sexual abuse, to address gender-neutral victims. However, it failed to crystallize into substantive laws.
- **The Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 2012:** The recommendation of the 172nd Law Commission report was reaffirmed by the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 2012. It sought to replace the offence of rape with that of sexual assault

and to make the offence gender-neutral in order to address victims irrespective of their gender.

- **The Justice Verma Committee, 2013:** The Justice Verma Committee also recommended gender-neutral rape laws, however, its recommendations were ignored in the final Amendments.
- **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):** the NHRC has also advocated for recognition of male sexual victimization on several instances as it is a grave violation of male human rights when there is no recognition and legal protection for male victims of sexual offences.

XIII. LANDMARK JUDGEMENT FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST MALES

- **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018):** This is a landmark case where the Supreme Court decriminalized homosexuality, affirming the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. In this case, the Supreme Court read down Section 377 of IPC which criminalized unnatural offences like homosexual physical relations and sexual offences against animals, implying that consensual sex with the same gender and transgender individuals is no longer punitive, however, the Section still applied in cases of non-consensual sex, rape of men, transgender individuals and animals. It took the form of a provision providing legal protection to male victims.

XIV. DOCTRINES / THEORIES BEHIND LACK OF SEXUAL OFFENCES LAWS FOR MALE VICTIMS

- **The Feminist Legal theory:** According to this theory, females have been discriminated against for a long time and lack an equal status as males in society, therefore it focuses on women and their protection against various offences, specifically sexual and provides stringent provisions to prevent exploitation and violation of female sexual offences victims. However, this theory is open for expansion to include male victimization. The feminists work towards achieving an equal societal status of men and women but are

often misunderstood as wanting women to be superior to men. Thus the Feminist Theory can be helpful in protecting male victims as they also have an unequal societal status as compared to female victims.

- **The Male lawmaker's theory:** As a large or almost all portion of lawmakers are generally males (currently only 15% of Lok Sabha MPs and 13% of Rajya Sabha are women) with India as a highly patriarchal society, they don't want to accept the fact that men can also be vulnerable and need legal protection in cases of sexual offences. According to them, it is an absurd thought that a man can also be raped or a woman can rape a man and therefore there is no need to address male victimization in cases of sexual offences.

XV. AMENDMENTS AND REPEALING OF LAWS RELATED TO SEXUAL OFFENCES IN INDIA

- **Reading down of Section 377, IPC:** In the landmark judgment of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, The Supreme Court read down Section 377, IPC, which criminalized unnatural offences like same-sex sexual offences and legitimized homosexuality in India. The Section however retained and still applied to cases of non-consensual homosexual acts and sexual acts against males, addressing male victimization and providing legal protection.
- **Repealing of IPC and Introduction of BNS:** With the Repealing of IPC and Introduction of BNS in 2023, there is no equivalent provision to Section 377, IPC in BNS. It leaves a significant gap in addressing and legal protection of male victims. It completely negates and neglects the male victims, leaving them unprotected and with no framework for justice against their perpetrators.

XVI. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL OFFENCES IN INDIA

According to current Statistical data, more than 27% of men and 32% of women have been sexually victimized at some point in their lives. It shows that sexual offences are a huge problem for men as well as women. Almost one in three men have experienced sexual harassment involving physical contact in their lifetime. Victimization has

various negative physical and psychological effects on the victims, such as short-term and long-term injuries, PTSD, dread, anxiety, low self-esteem, suicidal tendencies, etc. Male victims have fewer resources and face more shame than female victims.

According to a National Commission for Women study in 2022, 1.4% of men in India have experienced sexual harassment. 3000 cases of sexual assault on men were filed in 2022, showing a significant increase with 2500 cases documented in 2021. According to a survey by the Delhi-based Centre for Civil Society, approximately 18% of Indian adult men surveyed reported being forced to have sex, of which 16% claimed female perpetrators and 2% claimed male perpetrators.

According to the Internet, there are very few cases of sexual offences against males in India. If we search on platforms like e-SCR, Court butchery, and other case-finding tools, there are no results for cases of sexual offences against males in India. In Indian society, the idea of a woman sexually harassing a male is absurd and unfathomable. The lack of data and statistics related to male victimization contributes to public skepticism, fostering the belief that males can't be raped or sexually violated.

A. Future Implications

Sexual offences against males in India are very often not reported due to obvious cultural reasons and lack of legal remedy and protection. Even if some survivors come forward and report the crime, the Indian legal framework lacks sensitivity failing to acknowledge it properly and providing strict punishment. The lack of proper justice can be seen in cases of female victims of sexual offences making it way too far-fetched for justice to male victims.

Instead of providing proper justice, the Indian law doesn't always acknowledge the experience of male victims, perpetuating myths like, 'men cannot be raped', 'male victims are not affected by rape' etc. As per Section 63 of BNS, rape is something a man can do to a woman and not otherwise. It fails to recognize that even males can be raped and a woman can be a perpetrator as well as a man.

According to society, rape, and sexual offences are explicitly patriarchal crimes resulting from male power and privilege. There is an increasing need to recognize and

understand that making sex offences gender-neutral will not dilute the intensity of the crime, rather its applicability and scope of prosecution and justice will enhance by including male and transgender victims of these offences.

B. Criticism

Firstly, the conservative societal attitude one of the main reasons for the lack of laws related to sexual offences against males in India is the conservative societal mindset of people in India. Instead of showing sympathy, concern, and sensitivity, sexual offences victims are often viewed with repulsive, shameful, and negative connotations. It is worse in cases of male victims as they are seen with more repulsive mind-set and often classified as feminine or weak making it more difficult for them to come forward.

Secondly, deep-rooted Patriarchy in India, it is often said out loud that ' A MAN CAN NEVER BE RAPED BY ANY OTHER MAN OR WOMAN' People have this outlook because of the age-old and deep-rooted Patriarchy. Society has nurtured this image of men as being mighty, predominant, and invincible beings against whom not many wrongs can be done acts like rape and sexual offenses can only be done against women and not men. The idea that men can never be subject to such offences negates the recognition of male victimization. Male victimization is seen as emasculating in Indian society and is perceived to be non-existent.

Thirdly, lack of sensitivity Indian society lacks sensitivity and sympathy toward male victims of sexual offences. The very few victims who gather enough courage to come forward and report such offences are often ridiculed and seen with shameful looks by society. The lack of laws deters male victims from coming forward as they fear that the police wouldn't take their report seriously and they would be subjected to stigma and bias. There is a grave need to promote sensitization of male victimization to foster legal protection and prevent male victims of sexual offences.

XVII. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

India is a democratic republic with core ideas like Equality, Freedom, and Justice envisaged in both its Preamble to the Constitution and the Constitution of India. India

is a highly just and fair country promoting equality before the law, equal rights, opportunities, and justice but still lacking in the domain of gender-neutral sexual offences and recognizing male victimization is such a shame. India is a developing country and rapidly reaching the threshold of a developed country, it must overcome the societal stigma, orthodox mentality, and patriarchal mindset to see through such heinous crimes and recognize that victims of sexual offences cannot be gendered and laws need to be gender-neutral.

Several Steps can be taken to ensure gender-neutral protection of sexual offences victims. India needs to introduce gender-neutral laws related to sexual offences, Amendment and Additions to the provisions related to sexual offences in the BNS are highly recommended and much needed.

The lack of awareness and sensitization towards male victimization needs to be overcome to reduce the stigma regarding male victims. To properly address and prevent male victimization, proper support mechanisms like helplines, counseling services, and victim support camps should be organized. Furthermore, encouraging judicial, police, and medical practitioners sensitivity training should also be done for careful and better handling of male victims.

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