



**RAPE, CONSENT, AND THE MARITAL RAPE EXCEPTION UNDER THE
BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS
OF LEGAL REFORM, GOVERNANCE, PUBLIC POLICY, AND
INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE**

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Abstract

One of the most divisive and unresolved topics in India's criminal justice system is marital rape. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 maintains the legal position that a husband's non-consensual sexual relations with his wife do not constitute rape, subject to certain exceptions, despite substantial reforms in sexual offence laws. Serious questions are raised about this legal provision's compliance with increasing ideas of individual autonomy and dignity as well as constitutional safeguards. In light of the fundamental rights guaranteed by Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Indian Constitution, this essay critically investigates the constitutionality of the marital rape exception. It questions whether maintaining such an exception upholds antiquated patriarchal notions about marriage, gender inequity, and bodily autonomy. Using a doctrinal research approach, the study examines statutes, court rulings, and comparative legal frameworks from countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, Canada, and Australia, where marital rape is illegal. The article also examines the judicial debate around the matter, including divergent court interpretations and the lack of a clear legislative position. Additionally, it assesses the sociolegal ramifications, including the influence on women's rights, societal stigma, and underreporting. The study aims to provide a critical and balanced viewpoint by discussing both reasons for and against criminalization. The study concludes that the marital rape exemption is becoming more and more at odds with modern human rights norms and constitutional morality. In addition to addressing real-world issues with thoughtfully crafted safeguards, it makes the case for immediate legal reform to bring Indian criminal law into line with the values of equality, dignity, and individual liberty.

Keywords – Law, marital rape, gender justice, Governance, Public Policy, Institutional Management, Justice Administration

1. Introduction

Rape is recognized globally as one of the gravest human right violations. To assess the marital rape exception in Indian law, this paper first examines the legal frame work under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, then analyses its constitutional validity under Article 14, 15, and 21. Although, it is an offence against human body but it affects the victim both physically and mentally to such an extent that sometimes even a whole lifetime is not enough to overcome such a trauma. Such is the severity impact of this. Marriage, historically regarded as a sacred institution, has often existed as a realm insulated from the reach of the law a sanctuary for love and familial bonds.[1]

The idea of consent is not merely factual but normative. Under the Constitution, consent must reflect genuine choice, free from coercion or subordination. The Supreme Court in *State of Karnataka v Krishnappa*[2] recognised that every woman has an inalienable right to bodily integrity and sexual autonomy. Extending this reasoning, it is illogical to assume that a married woman loses her right to refuse sexual intercourse merely because of her marital status. The jurisprudence of consent also finds resonance in *Suchita Srivastava v Chandigarh Administration*[3], where the Court affirmed that a woman's reproductive and sexual decisions fall within the ambit of personal liberty under Article 21. This principle underscores that the right to make decisions regarding one's body is fundamental and cannot be overridden by marital ties. Thus, the marital-rape exception represents an anomaly within a legal system that otherwise upholds autonomy and dignity as inviolable constitutional values.

Yet, lurking within the confines of this sanctity is a contentious issue that has long remained veiled in societal norms and legal obscurity: marital rape crime. The central question that guides this research is whether criminalization of marital rape should be encompassed within the purview of the existing legal framework and subject to punitive measures under the BNS (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023). In section 63 defines and criminalize rape, however, provides for an exception 2 that not covered by the provisions namely that sexual intercourse or sexual act by a man with wife and the wife not being under the age of 18 is not rape.

(The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 retains the definition of rape exception that previously existed in section 375 of Indian Penal Code. Both provisions define the offence of rape in similar terms and retain the same marital rape exception. Therefore, the legal position regarding marital rape remains unchanged under the new law framework). It simply means that forced sexual intercourse within the marriage in India is excluded from being classified rape. Section 67 of BNS addresses sexual intercourse by a husband with his wife during separation. It provides punishment where a husband has sexual intercourse with his wife without her consent while they are living separately, whether under a judicial decree or otherwise. Section 67 prescribes punishment of imprisonment ranging from two to seven years and fine.[4]

In 2023, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) was introduced, marking a significant legal shift in Indian criminal law. One of its major reforms was the criminalization of marital rape, explicitly recognizing that marriage does not imply automatic consent. Under the BNS, Section 64 is revised, extending the definition of rape to include non-consensual intercourse within marriage, a provision that was previously absent under the IPC. This change aligns India with global trends that recognize marital rape as a serious offense, regardless of the marital relationship.[5]

There are numerous causes because of which marital rape persists. Our society which has always been a male-dominated society is also to blame for this crime because wife is still treated by the husband as his property over whom he exercises unrestricted control. That is why marital rape is historically not recognized as a crime as it is believed that a husband has the right to do that and wife has no right to oppose it. Further, if a woman tries to oppose it no one comes out to support her, not even her own family let alone society at large. Has only persisted in India instead of decreasing. The first major reason for that is the mentality of Indian society. In India, marital rape has never been considered as a crime rather it is believed that it is the duty of every wife to satisfy her husband is every respect even at the cost of her own rights and dignity.

2. Literature review

Kaur, Simranjot & Kaur, Harmanpreet. (2026)[6] The primary focus of India's rape laws is the issue of consent. However, the courts' interpretation of consent is often fluid, oscillating between autonomy, morality, and evidentiary doubt. While the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 retains the definition of rape which evolved under Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, it also brings in a structural innovation through Section 69, which criminalizes marital rape. fraud or false promise to marry, and does not constitute rape. The BNS came into force on 1 July 2024. BNS is primarily focused on addressing the gap in Indian criminal law regarding the distinction of the absence of consent and the alleged consent vitiated by fraud.

Agarwal, Aanchal. (2026)[7] Marital rape remains one of the most silenced violations in India. It hides behind domestic walls, masked by the idea of marital duty and emotional loyalty. Even after the introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, the law continues to exempt husbands from punishment for non-consensual intercourse with their wives. This article is written from a place of empathy and reflection. It questions why the law hesitates to acknowledge that consent does not vanish after marriage. Through emotional reasoning and legal awareness, it argues that the absence of criminalisation is not just a legislative gap but a moral failure.

Shankar, Anushka. (2026)[8] discusses the legal position of marital rape in India. While rape is defined under section 375 of the Indian penal code, an exception exists in the case of marriage, which excludes such acts from being treated as an offence. This has led to ongoing debates about consent, equality, and the protection of married women. This article investigates the issues created by this exception and examines whether it is justified under constitutional principles. It also considers the need for a more balanced legal approach to address this gap.

Kodan, Drishti. (2026)[9] Marital rape remains one of the most unresolved issues in criminal and constitutional law India till date. Despite significant legislative reform through the enactment of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), the legal position of marital rape doesn't change a bit and the provisions remains unchanged. Exception 2 of Section 63 of the BNS, which substantially reproduces the earlier provision contained in Section 375 of Indian Penal Code, 1860, continues to exclude non-consensual sexual intercourse by a husband with his wife. Provided the wife is above 18 years of age, from the definition of rape. This paper critically examines the constitutional validity of the marital rape exception through the framework of Article 14, 15, and 21 of the constitution of India.

Samantray, Priyadarshini. (2026)[10] Marital rape is a hidden, pervasive and routinely neglected GBV crime in India that is given legal protection, social protection and institutional protection. Millions of married women are a victim of such crime, but it is still underreported, under prosecuted, and under-recognized. Even the exception of marital rape of the colonial era was in Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, which was referred to as a complete revamp of Indian Criminal Law.

Kriek, Shivani. (2025)[11] Every sixteen minutes, a woman in India is raped. But if the rapist is her husband, the law looks away. Behind closed doors, countless women are forced into silence their bruises hidden, their pain normalised, and their violation denied a name. This silence has a name too: marital rape. And it remains one of the darkest stains on India's promise of gender justice. Statistics tell us the scale. Stories tell us the scars. And both reveal the silence the law continues to enforce. "I stopped screaming after a while. It made no difference. In my own house, in my own bed, I became a prisoner. As if my marriage certificate was also a license for him to hurt me every night."

Jaising, Indira. (2025)[12] A recent judgment of the High Court of Chhattisgarh has exposed the absurdity of mindless law reform and the need to reimagine the institution of marriage. This judgment has further outlined the need to expunge the "marital rape exception" in the Indian Penal Code and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Patekar, Manoj & Pathak, Ashish & Shinde, Amol. (2025)[13] The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023 has made a remarkable shift in India's legal system, changing the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860. This review article critically analyses the BNS's broad-minded and victim-centric approach to sexual offenses. It explores into key legislative modifications, including the expanded definition of rape under Section 63, the particular circumstances for invalid consent in Section 28, and a classified, graded punishment framework outlined in Sections 64-71. The article highlights noteworthy reforms concerning age, particularly raising the age of consent for a married female within the marital rape exception from 15 to 18 years, and the overview of new offenses like "sexual intercourse by deceitful means." The review recognizes the legal implications of these modifications on prosecution and judicial understanding while finding hardships for enactment, such as the essentiality for wide education and a social mindset deviation. The BNS is considered as a foundational, futuristic law, pointing for a more judicious response to sexual offences in India.

Ranjan, Radha. (2024)[14] The Indian Penal Code 1860, is replaced by new criminal law known as the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita which were passed by the Indian Parliament in December 2023. The Act was published in the Official Gazette after receiving presidential approval. The date of their enactment, is July 1, 2024. "Decolonizing" British criminal laws is the declared goal of this legislation. To support this legal reform initiative, the Union Government has frequently cited the language of decolonization, justice, and citizen-centric legislation.

Varnekar, Sunil & Chutia, Upankar. (2024)[15] The act of one spouse having non-consensual sexual relations with another, known as marital rape, has long been a prevalent yet underappreciated problem in Indian society. The prohibition of marital rape is still a controversial and unresolved issue in the Indian legal system, notwithstanding recent progressive legislative developments. This essay critically analyses the pressing necessity for marital rape to be made a crime in India, taking into account the effects it would have on social justice, human rights, and gender equality. Based on an extensive analysis of extant literature, legal statutes, and case studies, this paper investigates the legal, historical, and sociocultural elements that contribute to the continued occurrence of marital rape in India.

Kushwah, Ankita & Upadhyay, Dr. (2024)[16] Marital rape, defined by non-consensual sexual intercourse within the institution of marriage, remains a pervasive but often overlooked form of gender-based violence. This research examines the legal and societal dimensions of marital rape in India, emphasizing the violation of autonomy and dignity inherent in such acts. The study critically evaluates existing laws and societal attitudes towards marital rape. Key findings reveal significant gaps in legal protections and societal perceptions that perpetuate gender inequalities and uphold patriarchal norms.

Kumar, Vidhik. (2021)[17] Rape exposes the failure of society's institutions which were established to provide better security to an individual in a society. These institutions sometimes not only failed to protect an individual from such grave assaults on their autonomy and privacy, but also sanctioned them by either providing them legitimacy by law or not illegitimizing them. States often have either provided legal sanctity to rapes within marriage or have refrained from declaring it a crime, on account of it being a private sphere not open to interference. Rape within marriage or marital rape is a global problem, and it is argued that not only it is more prevalent than rapes committed outside the purview of marriage by strangers or ex-partners, but also that it has equivalent catastrophic effects on the victims.

3. Research Objectives

- 1.To critically examine the legal framework governing rape, consent, and the marital rape exception under the BNS 2023 and to analyse the continuity and changes from the previous criminal law framework.
- 2.To assess whether the marital rape exemption is constitutional in light of Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Indian Constitution, with a focus on equality, physical autonomy, dignity, privacy, and individual liberty.
- 3.To evaluate the applicability of judicial interpretations, comparative foreign legal frameworks, and modern human rights norms concerning consent, marital rape, and spousal sexual autonomy for legislative change in India.
- 4.To investigate the institutional, public policy, and governance ramifications of keeping the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023's marital rape exception in relation to criminal justice administration, institutional accountability, law enforcement, judicial procedures, and victim protection mechanisms.

4. Research Questions

- 1.To what degree does the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 differ from the earlier criminal law framework, and how has it handled the legal ideas of rape, consent, and the marital rape exception?
- 2.Is it consistent with the Indian Constitution's Articles 14, 19, and 21 guarantees of equality, dignity, privacy, bodily autonomy, and personal liberty to maintain the marital rape exception under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023?
- 3.What conclusions on the criminalisation of marital rape and the acceptance of consent within marriage may be inferred from court rulings, comparative foreign legal frameworks, and international human rights standards?
- 4.What institutional, legal, governance, and public policy changes are required to improve victim protection, strengthen criminal justice administration, increase institutional accountability, and bring India's marital rape laws into compliance with international human rights standards and constitutional morality?

5. Research Gap

The body of current literature on marital rape in India has been confined to the discussion of constitutional law, criminal jurisprudence, feminist legal theory and human rights. The marital rape exception under the former IPC is subject of critical analysis in most of the studies and a judgment is made on its conformity to the articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Indian Constitution. These studies give great insight into constitutional morality, gender justice and bodily autonomy but rarely discuss the question in relation to Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), the main substantive criminal law of India, that has superseded the Indian Penal Code. Still, the BNS has not attracted a great deal of scholarly commentary on its overall effect on the law of rape

and consent, or whether it effectively brings about a change in that law or simply restates the previous law on the question of marital rape exception. There is also a lack of existing studies that consider the policy and institutional consequences of continuing the exception, including those in relation to the administration of the criminal justice system, policy implementation, institutional accountability, law enforcement, judicial administration, and victim-centred governance.

A supplementary gap is in the lack of legal analysis being integrated with the governance and the public policy. Most studies focus on the doctrinal aspects of the constitution, rather than the impact of legal provisions on administrative decision-making, institutional coordination, public trust and justice delivery systems effectiveness. When comparing legislative change, attention is typically paid to changes in the law but not paid to the institutional arrangements necessary for implementing changes in jurisdictions where the crime of marital rape has been criminalized.

The present study seeks to fill these gaps using an interdisciplinary approach with a mix of doctrinal legal research and governance and public policy analysis. It critically challenges the constitutional validity of the marital rape exception to BNS, and looks at its effect on institutional effectiveness, policy implementation and administrative accountability. The study makes an important contribution to legal scholarship by analyzing the recent legislative changes introduced in the context of the BNS and extends the governance and management work by outlining institutional reforms needed to enhance criminal justice administration and access to justice for the victims.

6. Research Methodology

Research Design: The study uses an interdisciplinary governance and public policy approach in addition to a qualitative doctrinal research design. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023's legislative provisions, constitutional principles, judicial precedents, and legal doctrines pertaining to rape, consent, and the marital rape exemption may all be systematically examined thanks to the doctrinal approach. In tackling sexual assault, the governance viewpoint makes it possible to assess institutional performance, policy implementation, and administrative responsibility.

Research Approach: By combining descriptive, analytical, comparative legal, normative constitutional, governance, and public policy viewpoints, the current study takes a qualitative and multidisciplinary research strategy. While the analytical technique critically assesses the constitutional legitimacy and practical ramifications of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the descriptive approach describes the legal framework controlling rape, consent, and the marital rape exemption. While normative constitutional analysis evaluates the compatibility of the marital rape exemption with Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Indian Constitution, a comparative legal approach looks at specific overseas countries to find best practices. Additionally, the governance and public policy viewpoint offers a thorough multidisciplinary study by assessing how the current legal framework affects criminal justice administration, institutional accountability, policy implementation, and survivor-centered justice.

Primary Sources: study relies on primary legal sources, including the Constitution of India, the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, related criminal laws, judicial decisions, Law Commission Reports, government policy documents.

Secondary Resources: consist of books, peer-reviewed journals, research articles, academic commentaries, comparative legal literature, and reports published by national and international organizations on rape law, consent, and gender justice.

Justification for the Doctrinal Research Method

The doctrinal research method is appropriate because the study primarily seeks to interpret legal rules, constitutional provisions, judicial precedents, and legislative intent governing marital rape.

7. Results

The BNS 2023, has essentially maintained the substantive legal situation regarding rape and consent that existed under the Indian Penal Code, including the maintenance of the marital rape exemption, according to doctrinal analysis. Except in specific statutory situations, the BNS does not criminalise non-consensual sexual relations inside marriage, while introducing structural and terminological improvements. The report also concludes that the ongoing exception raises questions about the Indian Constitution's Articles 14, 19, and 21 protections of equality, dignity, privacy, physical autonomy, and personal liberty. Several constitutional democracies have acknowledged marital rape as a criminal offence while upholding procedural safeguards to avoid abuse of the law, according to comparative study.

Table 1: Key Findings of the Study

Area of Analysis	Key Findings
Legal Framework	BNS retains the marital rape exception despite broader criminal law reforms.
Constitutional Perspective	The exception raises concerns regarding Articles 14, 19, and 21 relating to equality, dignity, and bodily autonomy.
Judicial Position	Courts have expressed divergent views, reflecting the absence of legislative clarity.
Comparative Analysis	Many democratic jurisdictions have criminalized marital rape while ensuring procedural safeguards.

Table 2: Governance and Institutional Findings

Governance Dimension	Major Observation
Criminal Justice Administration	Lack of legal recognition creates ambiguity in investigation and prosecution.
Institutional Accountability	Inconsistent institutional responses reduce accountability and public confidence.
Policy Implementation	Existing gender justice policies are not fully aligned with substantive criminal law.
Survivor Protection	Limited legal recognition affects access to justice and victim-centred institutional support.

8. Discussion

The results show that while modernising India's criminal law system, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 maintains the long-standing marital rape exemption, which creates a gap between statutory law and developing constitutional jurisprudence. From a constitutional standpoint, it seems challenging to reconcile the Supreme Court's recognition of equality, dignity, privacy, and physical autonomy with the ongoing prohibition of non-consensual sexual relations inside marriage. The paper also emphasises the wider institutional and governance ramifications of this legal stance. Lack of statutory recognition makes it more difficult to execute policies, enforce the law, and make court decisions. It also reduces institutional responsibility and leads to inconsistent criminal justice administration. Additionally, governments that have made marital rape a crime have improved survivor protection while maintaining procedural justice, according to comparative legal studies. Accordingly, the study suggests that meaningful reform should extend beyond legislative amendment to include institutional capacity-building, gender-sensitive governance, coordinated policy implementation, and robust accountability mechanisms.

9. Comparative Jurisprudence

The view that marriage ipso facto constitutes an implied consent to intercourse has steadily been debunked as societies and legal cultures grow more modern. Many years ago, most systems of law, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, Canada, and Australia, were under an illusion that it was not possible for a way in which the husband could ever be prosecuted for raping his wife. This was partly founded on prehistoric common law principles, such as those by Sir Matthew Hale, which had the effect of making marriage an implied consent to intercourse. Gargantuan legal reform everywhere in the past few decades has taken place since there was a trend towards acknowledgment of the truth that marriage doesn't always translate into an irreversible or perpetual consent. These law reforms have been historic in confirming the sexual autonomy, bodily integrity, and sexual violence-free status of women even under the institution of marriage. Marital rape has been criminalized by various states, and reform of the law along this axis has helped to demonstrate to the world at large the capacity of the law to adapt to tolerating changes so as to ensure protection of more human rights and understand what is consent.

United Kingdom: The Landmark Case R v. R

The English landmark case of R v. R (1991) was a landmark step towards increased legal consciousness

regarding marital rape. According to previous English common law, it was established that a husband could not be prosecuted for raping his wife. The basis of this provision was that a woman, in marrying a man, had necessarily granted implied consent to sexual intercourse with him during the marriage. This assumption had been based on deeply ingrained patriarchal notions regarding the character of marriage relationship and the entitlement of ownership of a husband to his wife's body. In *R v. R*, the House of Lords refused to believe that a husband could never be convicted of raping his wife. The court held that the marriage was not ongoing consent and hence that a husband could be charged with raping his wife as anyone else could be charged with rape.

United States: Marital Rape Legally Authorized Nationally

In the United States, criminalization of marital rape roughly paralleled that of the United Kingdom. Under American law, where the law had traditionally been based on common law principles for several decades, husbands were exempted from prosecution for raping wives. The exception was based on the assumed fact that marriage constituted an implied consent to intercourse. However, the feminist movement, attorneys, and pressure groups started challenging this in the 1970s. They advocated that marital rape was a crime in good faith and must be dealt with as such by the law. Marital rape was made a criminal offence for the first time in the state of Nebraska in 1976, and it resulted in a legal reform wave across the country. Marital rape had been criminalized in all the 50 states in the 1990s, even though there was varying legal tradition in this crime.[18]

Canada: Abolition of the Marital Rape Exception

Another nation that took a significant step toward the abolition of the marital rape exception in the latter decades of the 20th century was Canada. Canada, like its pre-1983 law, also followed the age-old common law rule of excluding conviction of the husband for raping his wife. But this exception was increasingly challenged by feminist activists and women's rights organizations, who argued that any such legal principle was outdated, discriminatory, and invaded the inherent rights of women. In 1983, the Canadian Criminal Code was revised to render marital rape legally criminalized, and the exception was removed from law.[19]

Australia: State-Level Reform and the Abolition of Marital Rape

In Australia, incremental abolition of the marital rape exception was a statewide process, with states and territories passing to criminalize marital rape at varying points in time. New South Wales led the criminalization of marital rape, making it a crime in 1981. The other states and territories gradually followed in the subsequent two decades, the final state being Western Australia, which removed the exemption in 1992.[20] Removal of the exemption for marital rape was part of a worldwide trend in law and society towards the acceptance of women's rights and sexual violence in all its forms.

10. Conclusion

The continued legal immunity for marital rape in India perpetuates a deeply ingrained cultural and legal myth: that marriage implicitly grants consent to sexual intercourse. This myth undermines the fundamental human rights of married women, including their autonomy, dignity, and bodily integrity. By shielding husbands from prosecution under Section 63 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the law effectively denies married women the right to refuse sex, regardless of the circumstances. The idea that marriage itself implies consent ignores the complexities of individual consent and the right of every person, regardless of their marital status, to make decisions about their body. It disregards the fact that sexual activity, whether within marriage or outside it, should be based on mutual agreement and respect.

Legal immunity for marital rape also contravenes the principles of equality and justice enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Articles 14 and 15 guarantee equality before the law and prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, among other factors. By treating married women as second-class citizens who do not have the same rights as unmarried women in terms of sexual autonomy, the Indian legal system perpetuates a form of institutionalized gender inequality. Further, Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, extends to the right of individuals to live with dignity and free from violence. Denying married women the legal protection against rape is a violation of this right, as it forces them to endure sexual violence under the guise of marital duty.

Contrary to the argument put forth by opponents of reform, criminalizing marital rape would not destabilize the institution of marriage. On the contrary, it would enhance the institution by ensuring that it is built on mutual respect, trust, and understanding. Marriage should not be a context where one partner has the unquestioned right to violate the other's bodily autonomy. Rather, it should be a partnership where both individuals are free to express their desires and limits, with their consent being central to any sexual encounter. Recognizing marital rape as a crime would strengthen marriage by ensuring that both partners are held to the same legal and moral standards, promoting equality within the relationship.

Legal reform to criminalize marital rape is, therefore, not an attack on marriage but a necessary step towards making marriage a more equitable and humane institution. Such a reform would send a strong message that the law respects the sexual autonomy of all individuals, regardless of their marital status. It would also serve as a powerful tool for shifting societal attitudes, ensuring that women are no longer seen as passive objects whose consent is presumed but must instead be treated as active agents with the right to make choices about their own bodies. The path to such reform is essential for advancing gender equality in India and creating a legal framework that protects the dignity and autonomy of all individuals, especially women.

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End Note

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