

**The discourse on gender equality in India often lacks sufficient attention to men's issues. Critically examine the legal, social, and institutional challenges faced by men in areas such as domestic violence, mental health, and paternal rights, highlighting the need for more research and data. Recommend policy reforms and institutional measures to create a more balanced and evidence-based approach to gender justice.**

**(15 M, 250 words)**

### **Introduction:**

While the focus on women's empowerment is essential, **men's rights** in India often go unnoticed. Issues like **false accusations in domestic violence cases**, **limited mental health support**, and **restricted paternal rights** are seldom addressed. The recent tragic case of **Atul Subhash**, a techie in Bangalore who was accused under **Section 498A** (dowry harassment) and subsequently **took his own life**, underscores the pressing need for reforms in these areas.

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### **Challenges Faced by Men in India**

1. **Domestic Violence:** Men in India face significant hurdles when seeking legal protection from domestic abuse. Laws like the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** provide protection for women, leaving **male victims** without recourse. The **Atul Subhash case**, where false accusations were made under **Section 498A** of the IPC, highlights the **misuse of gender-specific laws** that harm men. Atul's tragic death after enduring false allegations is a stark reminder of the emotional toll these laws can have on innocent men.
  2. **Mental Health:** Men are often conditioned to suppress their emotions, leading to **neglected mental health**. This societal expectation contributes to men accounting for **72.5% of suicides** in 2022, as per **NCRB data**. The stigma around mental health issues, often dismissed with phrases like "**man up**," deters men from seeking help, with **Atul Subhash's case** further highlighting how such pressures can lead to tragic outcomes.
  3. **Paternal Rights:** Family laws in India, such as the **Guardians and Wards Act, 1890**, favor mothers in **child custody** cases, marginalizing fathers. Despite occasional court decisions granting joint custody, **paternal rights** remain limited, and fathers often face barriers to equal involvement in child-rearing.
  4. **Misuse of Gender-Specific Laws:** **Section 498A (dowry harassment)** is sometimes misused, causing **emotional and financial harm** to innocent men. The **Rajesh Sharma vs. State of UP (2017)** case highlighted this issue, leading to **safeguards** against false accusations. The **Atul Subhash** case is another tragic example of how such laws can be used to harass men without justification.
  5. **Institutional Neglect:** Men lack dedicated institutions or helplines to address their issues. Unlike the **National Commission for Women**, there is no statutory body for **men's rights**, leaving their concerns underrepresented in public discourse.
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### **Policy Reforms for Gender Justice**

1. **Gender-Neutral Laws:** Amend existing laws like the **Domestic Violence Act** and **Section 498A** to make them **gender-neutral**, ensuring **equal protection** for both men and women against abuse and false allegations.
2. **Paternal Rights in Child Custody:** Implement **shared parenting laws**, ensuring fathers have **equal custody rights**. Countries like **Australia** have successfully integrated this approach.

3. **Men's Mental Health Support:** Integrate **mental health services** into workplace wellness programs and launch **awareness campaigns** focused on men's mental health to reduce the stigma around seeking help.
  4. **Addressing False Allegations:** Strengthen mechanisms to **penalize false allegations** in domestic violence and harassment cases, protecting innocent men from harm.
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### **Institutional Measures for Gender Justice**

1. **Establishment of Men's Welfare Commissions:** Create statutory bodies at the national and state levels to advocate for **men's rights**, providing legal aid, counseling, and support, similar to the **Men and Boys Coalition** in the UK.
  2. **Specialized Helplines and Shelters:** Set up **gender-neutral helplines** and shelters for **male victims** of domestic violence, following examples like **MAVA (Men Against Violence and Abuse)** in India.
  3. **Judicial Training and Sensitization:** Train judicial and law enforcement officials to adopt a **gender-neutral perspective** when handling cases of abuse and custody, ensuring **fair treatment** for both genders.
  4. **Inclusive Workplace Policies:** Mandate organizations to implement **inclusive workplace policies**, such as **paternity leave** and mental health support for men, inspired by **Sweden's parental leave policy**.
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### **Conclusion:**

A balanced approach to **gender justice** must address the challenges faced by men. **Gender-neutral laws**, enhanced **mental health support**, and **shared parenting laws** are crucial for achieving equality. The tragic case of **Atul Subhash** serves as a reminder of the emotional and psychological toll of ignoring men's rights in the broader gender discourse. As **Martin Luther King Jr.** said, "**Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.**" A truly inclusive system promotes fairness, respect, and **harmony** in society.