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## **Reproductive Rights: Abortion Laws and Women's Autonomy in India**

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**Abstract:** The Right to Reproduction (RTR) is a fundamental human right that ensures individuals can make choices about family planning and reproductive health. Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the primary right of all couples and persons to decide liberally and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the rights to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions regarding reproduction free. The struggle for women's 'reproductive rights' has resulted in the right to contraception being conceded in many parts of the world, although women still lack easy access to affordable contraceptives which are free from side-effects. Yet even today, these services are denied to women in many other parts of the world. Despite its significance, RTR faces opposition rooted in morality, ethics, and religion, with some arguing that controlling birth contradicts natural human evolution. In India, ancient texts condemned abortion, equating it with immorality and violating principles like ahimsa. The right to abortion, recognized as fundamental, allows individuals to make choices about their bodies and health. Historically criminalized under the IPC, in 1860, abortion was legalized through the MTP Act, of 1971, addressing issues like maternal health and consent, while still grappling with societal and moral pressures surrounding women's autonomy. India's legal framework on abortion and contraception remains inadequate, failing to address women's healthcare and reproductive rights. Despite laws against child marriage, high maternal deaths persist. The National Population Policy highlights contraceptive access, yet unsafe abortions contribute significantly to maternal mortality, undermining women's autonomy and reproductive health. The right to abortion is essential for safeguarding women's health, dignity, and autonomy. It enables informed decision-making regarding pregnancy and supports reproductive rights, including access to safe and legal abortion. The MTP Amendment Act, 2021, enhances these rights, promoting gender equality and addressing socioeconomic disparities. Legal abortion reduces unsafe procedures, fosters women's control over their bodies, and improves public health outcomes. Thus, abortion laws play a vital role in advancing social justice and gender equality in society. Reproductive rights are recognized internationally as fundamental human rights, underscored by frameworks like the WHO constitution and CEDAW. In India, the right to abortion is increasingly acknowledged as part of a woman's right to privacy and personal liberty, especially through landmark

judgments such as *Suchitra Srivastava v. Chandigarh Administration* and *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*. Despite a robust legal framework, challenges remain, including maternal mortality, unsafe abortions, and inadequate access to reproductive healthcare. The Indian judiciary plays a crucial role in safeguarding these rights, with rulings affirming that reproductive autonomy is essential for women's dignity and health. The Supreme Court has emphasized that decisions about pregnancy should reside with the woman, addressing societal and moral pressures that often hinder this autonomy. However, the unavailability of enforceable laws means that true reproductive rights remain elusive. Legislative reforms are essential to align with judicial interpretations, ensuring that women receive comprehensive healthcare, access to contraceptives, and protection against child marriage. For India to realize its commitment to reproductive rights, a rights-based legal framework must be established, empowering women to make informed choices about their bodies and future. The Right to Reproduction (RTR) is essential for empowering individuals in their reproductive health choices. While the MTP Act of 1971 marked significant progress by legalizing abortion, societal and moral pressures continue to impede women's autonomy. The MTP Amendment Act of 2021 expanded access and acknowledged the rights of unmarried women, reflecting a positive shift. However, persistent stigma and complex ethical debates around autonomy versus foetal rights remain challenges. For true reproductive justice, India must dismantle societal barriers, ensure comprehensive healthcare, and recognize women's rights as fundamental, fostering an equitable society where every woman can exercise her autonomy and make informed choices.

**Keywords:** Reproductive Rights, Body Autonomy, Abortion, MTP Act, Gender Equality

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## Introduction

Whenever research is sought to dig into the outcomes of any implemented law focused on preserving equality, life, liberty, and human dignity, one must trace it from its inception. However, not all rights were accessible to humankind despite being fundamental. One such right is the 'Right to Reproduction' (RTR)[1]. Movements favouring reproductive rights have witnessed protests on the grounds of morality, ethics, and religion. It's been argued by the conservatives that controlling and manipulating birth is against the natural course of human evolution and shouldn't be accessible as a human right [2]. Still today it breeds on an emotional and political horizon, where freedom of family planning, terminating an untimely pregnancy, use of contraceptives, awareness and sensitization on sexual education, and modern facilities to reproductive services remain questionable [3].

RTR as a right guarantees freedom to every individual concerning reproduction and health. Moreover, its presence as a fundamental right strengthens the right to

determination, which makes many choices for individuals and couples viable such as time for procreation, number of offspring, the duration of childbirth, and sensitizing themselves regarding pre and post reproduction period[4]. In realizing its full extent, RTR is accepted worldwide as one of the most significant fundamental rights of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Further, recognizing reproductive rights concretizes the realization of all human rights, as it encircles a woman's right to better health and life, equality, privacy, and being free from ill and degrading treatment. Moreover, violating one's reproductive rights imbalances human rights and gender justice [5-7] According to the 'cycle of life', procreation is found to be pivotal for life to thrive and constantly grow. Under sacred Hindu texts such as Shruti[ and Smriti, abortion has been defined as 'Gharbhatya' or 'Bhrunhatya', which means killing of the embryo. Moreover, in ancient times an unborn child was compared to a Brahmin which projects acute resentment towards performing an abortion [8] Further, the belief that a foetus is not a person was not accepted. The ancient Indian jurisprudence and sacred Hindu texts condemned abortion, emphasizing its immorality and the sanctity of the unborn foetus. It is believed that life begins at conception, making abortion a violation of the principles of ahimsa [9] and karma [10]. Moreover, abortion in ancient times was considered an atrocious deed and due to contemporary issues, such as financial incapacities, unplanned pregnancy, consensual differences between the partners, and absence of emotional maturity, abortions have been legalised.

Further, analyzing these externalities a pivotal notion could be determined i.e., when it comes to giving birth to a child, other factors such as family and societal influence weigh much more than a woman exercising control over her body.

Therefore, reproductive rights, including the Right to Reproduction (RTR), are globally recognized as fundamental, and societal, familial, and religious influences still challenge women's autonomy. Legalizing abortion addresses contemporary issues, but true reproductive freedom requires overcoming deep-rooted moral, ethical, and cultural barriers to ensure gender justice and equality.

### **Historical Evolution of Abortion Laws in India**

The right to abortion, being a fundamental right is favoured, allowing an individual to make choices concerning their body, health, and future. On the other hand, it is also believed that it is morally wrong and should be restricted on the same ground. Further, it is argued that it is not limited to making a choice but also the consequences of taking a life should be considered. Therefore, a right that could take a life shall be prohibited.

The roadmap of legalisation of abortion could be traced back to the times of the Britishers. The Indian Penal Code, of 1860 drafted by the Britishers considered abortion a serious offence and criminalized it under Section 312 of IPC, 1860, except performed only to save the life of the mother. Further, in the year 1960, Shantilal Shah Committee was set up to examine the need to reform the existing abortion laws in India.

Considering the recommendations of the Committee, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 was enacted, which allowed abortions and provided it a legal status, and created a safeguard for woman and their well-being. The right to abortion granted women a right of choice and gradually it transcended from being a criminal offence to a matter of discretion. Probable reasons for legalising abortion in India were found to be a risk to life which was posed to the expecting mothers who were facing issues such as declining physical and mental health, increasing physical or mental abnormalities amongst the newborn children, and pregnancies resulting from rape or contraceptive failure. Pertaining to the unresolved issues the Indian legal system enacted the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 (MTP Act), which provided abortion as a right to be exercised as a matter of choice.

In the aftermath of the MTP Act, laws relating to abortion in India have witnessed vital revamping in line with the existing societal values, the country's transitioning medical and healthcare, and changing ethics and values of the Indian populace. Though, women were allowed to exercise abortion as a matter of choice, society, and moral pressure remained the epi-center of 'woman's willingness to opt for abortion', as a sustaining issue. It raised and bred another debatable issue of a 'woman's autonomy over her own body'. With multiple perspectives supporting and denying a woman's discretion over her body in cases of abortion was in the end settled as an 'infringement of a woman's autonomy'.

Further, this issue was not only related to a woman's autonomy but also to the fundamental right of the survival of the foetus.

### **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971**

In the year 1964, on the recommendations of the Shah Committee under their report titled as 'Liberalisation of the Abortion Laws in India' for legalising abortion, in the year 1971, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 (MTP Act) was enacted. The Act permitted termination of pregnancy of up to 20 weeks in certain given circumstances. The following circumstances were a pregnancy proving to be substantially threatening to a woman's life or may cause physical and mental damage, where the child is under threat of his life or of physical or mental disability, pregnancy due to rape, and pregnancy due to failed contraceptive.

Though the MTP Act of 1971 was enacted to resolve the issue of termination of pregnancies, the changing societal mindset of the society didn't go along with the intent of the Act. Soon, the provisions of the Act were questioned for being incapable of changing society's mindset and found to be ineffective in coping with the changing scenario. However, the Apex Court exercising its inherent powers enshrined under Article 142 has permitted abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

**Table 1.1 – Comparison of amended features of the MTP Act, 1971**

Time Since Conception	MTP Act, 1971	MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021
Up to 12 weeks	On the advice of one doctor	On advice of one doctor
12 to 20 weeks	On advice of two doctors	On advice of one doctor
20 to 24 weeks	Not allowed	On advice of two doctors for special categories of pregnant women
More than 24 weeks	Not allowed	On advice of medical board in case of substantial fetal abnormality
Any time during the pregnancy	On advice of one doctor, if immediately necessary to save pregnant woman's life	On advice of one doctor, if immediately necessary to save pregnant woman's life

Source: [www.drishtiias.com](http://www.drishtiias.com)

### **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Act, 2021**

The 2021 amendment to the MTP Act 1971 altered the existing legislation manifolds. The new amendment features enhanced availability of safe and legal abortions, wider recognition of reproductive rights of women, and other incidental issues being addressed. The MTP Amendment Act, 2021 allows abortion up to 24 weeks in certain cases with the approval of two medical practitioners, the setting up of medical boards at state-level to determine the viability of the abortion after 24 weeks in cases of foetal abnormalities, allows the choice of abortion to unmarried women on the grounds of contraceptive failure with consent being dependent on age, maturity, and medical supervision. The MTP Amendment Act, 2021 extended the gestational limit for a legal abortion for victims of rape and other sexual abuses. Further, the Act provides that for pregnancies between 20-24 weeks, abortion is permissible with the consent of two medical practitioners. For abortion of pregnancies above 24 weeks, consent of the medical board is required. Further, the Act of 2021 significantly settled the need for the right to privacy of women, non-disclosure of women's identity except in good faith, and for the ends of justice.

### **Safeguarding Women's Autonomy: Abortion Laws**

India's primary legal steps towards abortion and contraception were perceived as inadequate and proved to be failures in resolving issues relating to women's healthcare, reproductive rights, and the elimination of spousal consent. Even today the pivotal concern of India's reproductive laws is managing population explosion, with an undermining focus on women's consent and autonomy. Moreover, despite the presence of laws against child marriage and maternal



healthcare policies, India still leads in child marriages and maternal deaths globally, which is a plausible reason for early and immature pregnancies and ineffective implementation of our legal policies.

India's National Population Policy (INPP) emphasizes guaranteeing adequate access to contraceptive methods, promoting and spreading awareness towards female sterilization, unauthorized and unsafe procedures, and avoiding opting for primitive abortion methods without the supervision of medical experts. Additionally, in India, abortions until 20 weeks have been justified on varied grounds to save the life of the woman under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP Act). Still, a whopping 5.6 of 10 abortions conducted annually are found to be unsafe and result in 9% of maternal deaths during pregnancies.

In line with the mis happenings relating to abortions, grave concerns such as rights attached to reproduction, female pregnancy mortality, risk mitigation of abortions, and pre- and post-maternal healthcare support, have been escalated from many international experts and bodies such as the United Nations to the Indian government.

Even after 75 years of independence, women's standing in exercising autonomy on their bodies remains unanswered about recognizing sexual welfare, reproductive rights, sex selection, and menstrual health services.

### **Importance of Abortion Laws**

When considering reproductive rights; the right to abortion comes out to be a crucial aspect as it proves to be imperative in safeguarding women's right to life vis-à-vis their health, human dignity, and bodily autonomy. The significance of reproductive rights is not limited to medical attention as it also encompasses varied social and legal aspects. Abortion laws have been drafted to protect women's health and enhance their well-being. These laws provide safe and regulated access to abortion. Abortion laws allow legal abortions to be conducted on specific grounds such as foetal abnormalities, rape, incest, or risks to the mother's health, ensuring the reduction of unwanted pregnancies. Moreover, abortion laws also play a vital role in protecting women's autonomy over their bodies. Therefore, it is directly associated with a woman's right to make decisions regarding pregnancy, personal liberty, and bodily integrity. Acknowledging these rights for women ensures a secure future, career, and life independent of societal pressure.

In countries such as India, where abortion is considered an 'act of killing', women encounter numerous penalties at both personal and societal levels. Therefore, progressive transformation in these laws affirms fostering a more equitable society. The extension of abortion services to unmarried women, under the MTP Amendment Act, 2021 eliminates instances of gender discrimination ensuring equality for all women, irrespective of marital status. Moreover, abortion laws address socioeconomic inequalities. Women who face financial and social backwardness often opt for unsafe and unmonitored abortion methods. Liberal

but regulated abortion laws create scope for legal and safe abortion options, accessible to women from all socioeconomic backgrounds and marginalized communities, where access to modern reproductive healthcare services is often limited.

Access to abortion helps women prevent unintended pregnancies that could harm their finances, education, or care giving. Abortion laws promote social justice by allowing women to control the timing and circumstances of childbearing. They also provide a framework to balance ethical and moral perspectives, as some argue life begins at conception, while others prioritize women's rights. Furthermore, abortion laws set out criteria for abortion and ensure women's health by providing a legal structure relating to secured abortion services, protecting women's rights over their bodies, and addressing broader ethical concerns in society.

Therefore, abortion laws safeguard reproductive rights, enhancing individual well-being and fostering a just, equitable society. Through these laws, women get a right to advocate for their reproductive autonomy, and governments must protect these rights through appropriate laws. Reproductive rights encompass a woman's choice to carry, give birth, and raise children.

### **Impact of Abortion Laws**

The impact of abortion rights and laws related to it were imperatively recognized in the Puttaswamy judgment check marked the reproductive rights of women as a part of Article 21 enshrined under the Constitution of India. In another landmark judgment of Suchita Srivastava Chandigarh Administration the Supreme Court of India held reproductive rights include a woman's entitlement to carry a pregnancy to its full term, to give birth, and to subsequently raise children; and that these rights form part of a woman's right to privacy, dignity, and bodily integrity. The Constitution of India recognizes many of these same rights as fundamental rights that the government must uphold, including the right to equality and non-discrimination and the right to life which is understood through jurisprudence to include the rights to health, dignity, freedom from torture, and ill-treatment, and privacy. Where abortion is legally accessible and regulated, it ensures that women can undergo the procedure safely in medical settings, reducing the risk of complications, injuries, and deaths caused by unsafe or illegal abortions. In addition, legal abortion allows for medical oversight in cases of high-risk pregnancies, substantial foetal abnormalities, or threats to the mother's health, ensuring that medical decisions are based on the well-being of the patient. By reducing the incidence of unsafe abortions and enabling medically supervised procedures, abortion laws contribute to a healthier society.

Abortion laws shape gender equality by granting women control over reproductive rights, affirming bodily autonomy, and enabling them to make decisions about pregnancy, education, and careers without the burden of unwanted pregnancies. Restrictive abortion laws limit women's choices, reinforce



gender roles, and perpetuate poverty, while legal abortion promotes equality and rights. Abortion laws influence society's socioeconomic structure by enabling women to control reproductive decisions, plan families and careers, boosting workforce participation, education, and economic empowerment, ultimately creating a more productive, equitable society. Restrictive abortion laws harm marginalized groups, worsening inequalities and limiting access to healthcare, while legal services promote poverty reduction and social mobility. Abortion laws influence societal attitudes toward reproductive rights and gender roles. Legal and accepted abortion fosters recognition of women's autonomy, while restrictions reinforce traditional norms and limit independent choices for women. Therefore, abortion laws reflect societal moral debates, balancing views on human rights and the sanctity of life, influencing personal freedom and state roles. Abortion laws impact public health, gender equality, and economic stability, promoting women's rights and shaping cultural norms for a more equitable society.

### **Legislative and Judicial Interpretations**

On the international front, reproductive rights have been recognized as a fundamental human right. As part of an individual's right, the preamble to WHO's constitution includes the right to reproduction in standardizing overall well-being. Similarly, UDHR's Article 16(1) recognizes reproductive rights as equally crucial. Further, CEDAW's Articles 11, 12, and 14 require the States to eliminate discrimination against women's healthcare, medical information, and family planning. Moreover, abusive and degrading actions on the part of various States have been criticized time and again at the international forum.

In *L.C. v. Peru* acts of gender injustice by the Peruvian government infringing Article 5 of the CEDAW was heavily criticized, wherein a 13-year-old victim of sexual assault was found to be pregnant and was denied the right to abortion. Further, Article 12(1) of the ICESCR, confers States to consent in providing adequate access to standards of physical, mental health, and reproductive rights which further, recognizes these rights on the international level, in an attempt to effectively accommodate these rights in a State's domestic legal circle.

The upsurge in talks on the right to abortion found its track through the case of *Griswold v. Connecticut*, wherein the American Supreme Court held, the right to make personal choices as an inclusive part of the right to privacy. This judgment established reproductive rights as fundamental human rights. Following the same in the *Roe v. Wade* the American Apex Court held the right of termination of pregnancy is an integral part of the right to privacy of a woman. These landmark judgments further strengthen the notion of the significance of a woman's autonomy over her body. Similarly, in the same line of action recognising abortion as a part of reproductive rights could be considered a positive step towards establishing a fulfilled women's liberty indecision-making regarding abortion. Following the same path, the Constitution of India has also acknowledged several

human rights under the category of Fundamentals Rights and has mandated the government to look for and provide for its implementation. Fundamental Rights such as the right to equality, non-discrimination and the right to life have been streamlined through numerous judicial interpretations, to include dignity, health, and well-being, and safeguard from torture, and mal-treatment.

In India, the reproductive rights of women are intrinsic to the right to life, health, well-being, and privacy. The presence of reproductive rights in the Indian domestic legal system can be found in varied laws and policies that expand to health, food, employment, and other fields. The provisions mentioned under Part IV of the Indian Constitution emphasize a state's duty to improve public health, nutrition, and living standards, protect workers' health, protect from unsuitable occupation, develop children's health, ensure safe and humane working conditions and maternity relief, early childhood care and education for all children up to six years of age. However, these duties are directive in nature and a state can't be compelled as these are unenforceable against the State.

Despite having a robust legal structure, the Indian legal scenario has witnessed numerous instances wherein the Indian government has received concerns from the international front regarding the breach of reproductive rights, maternal mortality and morbidity, unsafe abortion and poor quality of post-abortion care, lack of access to the full range of contraceptive methods and reliance on coercive and substandard female sterilization, child marriage, and lack of information and education on reproductive and sexual health. These experts and bodies have called for India to address these violations, as well as disparities in access to reproductive health care.

The unenforceability of the DPSPs against the State creates a burden of ensuring constitutional compliance with the fundamental rights enshrined under the Constitution and it majorly lies on the shoulders of the Indian judiciary.

Therefore, the Indian judiciary has to assume a significant role in delivering women their share of reproductive rights. However, the Supreme Court of India significantly changed the socio-legal perspective while categorizing abortion rights as a part of the right to privacy. In *Suchitra Srivastava vs Chandigarh Administration*, the Apex court held that a woman's reproductive rights are a part of her right to personal liberty. It was also stated that reproductive rights include, the right to privacy and body autonomy. Also, in the landmark case of *KS Puttaswamy v Union of India*, it was held by the Supreme Court that, while considering Article 21 vis-à-vis the right to privacy, it is crucial to admit that it lies in the person and covers personal autonomy of body, mind, and choice. It upheld the judgment of *Suchitra Srivastava* case and reiterated women's right to choice as a part of their right to privacy.

Though we have witnessed considerable change in acceptance of the right to abortion as a fundamental right, there still exists a huge void in understanding a woman's control over her choices and her body. Many steps have been taken by the legislature and the judiciary, to evade the denial and violation of the right to

reproduction. It has now emerged as an undeniable obligation of the government that, recognition of these reproductive and autonomy rights creates a mandate for providing various other subsidiary rights such as safe and adequate maternal healthcare, ensuring access to secured contraceptive methods, prevention of child marriages, and guaranteeing liberty of abortion in cases of forced pregnancies. It would not be an understatement to state that, the Supreme Court of India has approached the issue of reproductive rights of women and personal autonomy progressively. Through Navtej Johar case adultery and homosexuality were decriminalized and the right to sexual autonomy was recognized as part of personal liberty. Subsequently, while resolving the issue of a girl's reproductive right in the Independent Thought case the Supreme Court held that "human rights exist equally for both a girl child and a woman and should be accepted uniformly."

However, the right to health doesn't expressly find its place under the ambit of the fundamental rights but several judgments by the Supreme Court have been interpreted such as Parmanand Katara Union of India which establishes the right to health and adequate treatment as part of Article 21 i.e., the right to life under the Indian Constitution. Moreover, in Paschim Banga Khet Samity State of West Bengal, it was established as a principle of law that the State must provide sufficient medical facilities, failing to which will amount to infringement of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Moreover, in Principal Secretary the Supreme Court while recognizing a woman's body autonomy rights concerning marital rape and unwanted pregnancy allowed termination of a 22-week pregnancy. The Hon'ble Court held that the deciding factor of termination vests in the woman's bodily autonomy. Moreover, the Apex Court denoted unwanted and untimely pregnancies as disastrous to a woman's life affecting her emotionally, socially, and economically." Further, in X v Union of India, the Supreme Court referring to its earlier judgment held, that even though a woman possesses bodily integrity and autonomy rights, danger to her life is to be proved for exercising abortion.

These judgments have gradually decriminalized abortion by granting priority to a woman's reproductive rights and have progressively reversed the instances negating the right to safe abortion, and bodily autonomy vis-à-vis the right to life. Through these judgments it is now settled that the right to health includes the right to reproduction and most importantly, the decision to terminate an unwanted pregnancy now vests only with the pregnant person in India, making it a rights-based legal framework.

However, to effectively implement the positive rationale of acknowledging reproductive rights and bodily autonomy, the legislative structure should also change to eliminate future discrepancies.

## Conclusion

Right to Reproduction (RTR) is a vital component of human rights that empowers individuals to make informed choices about their reproductive health. While legal

frameworks for abortion are essential in addressing contemporary challenges, the societal, familial, and religious influences that impede women's autonomy must also be confronted. Achieving true reproductive freedom requires dismantling these deep-rooted barriers and fostering an environment that promotes gender justice and equality. As societies progress, recognizing and respecting reproductive rights will be crucial in ensuring that every individual can exercise their autonomy and dignity in making choices about family planning and reproductive health. The right to abortion in India has evolved significantly from its criminalization under colonial law to becoming a legal choice through the MTP Act of 1971. This development affirms women's autonomy over their bodies, but societal and moral pressures continue to challenge their ability to exercise this right freely. The ongoing debate between a woman's autonomy and the rights of the foetus underscores the complexity of reproductive rights. For true empowerment, it is essential to address these societal influences, ensuring that women can make informed decisions about their reproductive health without stigma or coercion, thus promoting gender equality and justice. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act of 1971 marked a significant step in recognizing women's reproductive rights, allowing for abortion under specific circumstances. However, societal attitudes and the limitations of the original Act necessitated amendments. The MTP Amendment Act of 2021 expanded access to safe and legal abortions, extended gestational limits and acknowledged the rights of unmarried women. By establishing medical boards and emphasizing privacy, the 2021 amendment reflects a progressive shift toward enhancing women's autonomy and reproductive choices. These legal changes aim to align reproductive rights with contemporary societal values and ensure justice for all women. In conclusion, the evolution of abortion laws in India reflects a critical intersection of reproductive rights, societal values, and public health. While the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act of 1971 marked a significant advancement, its limitations highlighted the persistent challenges women face regarding autonomy, consent, and access to safe healthcare. The MTP Amendment Act of 2021 has made commendable strides by expanding the legal framework for abortion and recognizing women's rights, yet deeper societal attitudes and moral complexities continue to hinder progress. Access to safe and legal abortion is essential for women's health, socioeconomic empowerment, and the broader pursuit of gender equality. Legal abortion not only protects women from the dangers of unsafe procedures but also enhances their ability to make informed choices about their reproductive lives. Ultimately, for India to realize true reproductive justice, there must be a concerted effort to dismantle societal stigma, ensure comprehensive healthcare, and uphold women's rights as fundamental human rights. By addressing these issues, India can foster a more equitable society where every woman can exercise her autonomy, contributing to improved health outcomes and enhanced opportunities for future generations. Thus,

reforming abortion laws is crucial for both individual empowerment and societal progress.

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