



Gender, conflict, violence, securities and peace building : Indian perspective

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Abstract

This thesis examines the complex interplay of gender, conflict, violence, security, and peacebuilding in India, analysing the distinct experiences of women, men, and third gender individuals (including hijras, eunuchs, and transgender persons) within internal conflicts. Grounded in feminist theories and supported by empirical evidence, it explores how women face sexual and gender-based violence, such as dowry-related abuse and human trafficking; men encounter legal exploitation through misuse of dowry laws like Section 498A; and third gender communities endure systemic discrimination, police harassment, economic exclusion, and violence (Bhandari & Hughes, 2017; Sabri et al., 2015; Goel, 2014; Chakravarti, 2018). Despite these challenges, all genders actively contribute to grassroots peacebuilding, though their agency is constrained by patriarchal norms, militarization, and exclusion from formal peace processes. The study addresses underexplored issues, including third gender ostracism and legal misuse against men, proposing actionable solutions such as streamlined gender recognition processes, robust legal protections, awareness campaigns, inclusive economic opportunities, and gender-neutral policies (Saxena, 2011; Nanda, 1999; Dutta, 2012). While India advocates for the Women, Peace and Security agenda globally, domestic implementation lags. Through a synthesis of scholarly literature and case studies, this thesis argues for gender-responsive frameworks to strengthen security and peacebuilding. Recommendations include enhancing participation of all genders in decision-making, addressing structural inequalities, and embedding gender perspectives in policy frameworks. By examining dowry violence, human trafficking, and violence against men, this work provides a nuanced perspective on gendered violence, contributing to transformative peacebuilding that upholds the rights and dignity of women, men, and third gender individuals.

Keywords: *Gender, Conflict, Violence, Security, Peacebuilding, India, Women, Men, Third Gender, Dowry Violence, Human Trafficking, Feminist Theory, Gender-Responsive Policy, Inclusion, Structural Inequality*

Introduction

India, a nation of immense diversity and complexity, has grappled with internal conflicts since its independence in 1947, shaped by colonial legacies, caste hierarchies, religious tensions, and socioeconomic disparities. These conflicts, ranging from insurgencies



in central and eastern regions to caste-based clashes and communal tensions across states, are not merely political or territorial disputes but are deeply intertwined with social structures, particularly gender dynamics (Bose & Jalal, 1998; Kannabiran, 2012). Gender, as a social construct, influences how conflicts unfold, how violence is perpetrated, and how security and peace are conceptualized and pursued. This thesis adopts an Indian perspective to analyze these dynamics, focusing on the unique and overlapping experiences of women, men, and third gender individuals (including eunuchs, hijras, and transgender persons) in conflict settings, their vulnerabilities to violence, and their contributions to peacebuilding.

Theoretically, the study draws on feminist international relations, which challenges traditional security paradigms that prioritize state-centric threats, such as those espoused by realism, and instead emphasizes human security the protection of individuals from fear perpetually threats like violence, poverty, and discrimination (Tickner, 1992; Peterson, 1992). Feminist scholars like Cynthia Enloe argue that conflicts are inherently gendered, with women often stereotyped as victims, men as perpetrators, and third gender individuals rendered invisible (Enloe, 2000; Reddy, 2005). In India, this manifests in the disproportionate impact of violence on women, the legal exploitation of men, and the systemic marginalization of third gender communities, yet all three groups exhibit resilience in navigating these challenges (Agnes, 1995; Basu, 2005; Nanda, 1999).

Women in India face severe forms of gender-based violence, including sexual assault, dowry-related abuse, and human trafficking, particularly in conflict zones where displacement and economic instability exacerbate vulnerabilities (Bhandari & Hughes, 2017; Sabri et al., 2015). According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), over 34,000 cases of cruelty by husband or relatives were reported in 2020, with dowry deaths increasing by 15% from 2019 to 2020 (NCRB, 2020). Human trafficking, affecting over 100,000 girls annually, is another pressing issue, with 70% of victims being minors (UNICEF, 2020; Sen, 2003). Men, on the other hand, face violence through the misuse of legal provisions like Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalizes dowry-related harassment but is often exploited for extortion, leading to financial and social ruin (Kishwar, 2003; Lodha & Lodha, 2017). The low conviction rates—around 12.9% from 2017 to 2022—suggest widespread misuse, with false accusations impacting men's mental health and contributing to high suicide rates (81,063 married men in 2023-2024, compared to 28,680 women) (NCRB, 2024).

Third gender individuals, including hijras and transgender persons, endure unique challenges, such as physical and sexual violence, police harassment, denial of healthcare and employment opportunities, and economic marginalization, often forcing them into sex work or begging (Goel, 2014; Dutta, 2012). The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019, while a step forward, has been criticized for its bureaucratic hurdles and failure to address forced cohabitation and symbolic violence in policy frameworks (Saxena, 2011; Chakravarti, 2018). These less-discussed issues highlight the need for inclusive policies that recognize the diverse experiences of all genders.

India's international commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, through its contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, contrasts sharply with domestic challenges. Laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) grant impunity to



security forces, enabling gender-based violence in conflict zones (Kazi, 2009). While India deploys female peacekeepers, domestic gender representation in security forces remains low, limiting gender-sensitive operations (Mahanta, 2016). The exclusion of women and third gender individuals from formal peace processes further undermines sustainable peacebuilding (True, 2012).

This thesis aims to contribute to both policy and academic discourse by advocating for gender-responsive approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It proposes solutions such as simplified gender recognition for third gender individuals, stronger legal protections against violence, awareness campaigns to combat social prejudices, inclusive economic opportunities, and gender-neutral policy frameworks (Goel, 2014; Dutta, 2012). By addressing the under-examined challenges faced by men and third gender communities alongside women's issues, the study seeks to foster a more equitable security landscape.

The thesis is structured Into five chapters to comprehensively address these dynamics:

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation, drawing on feminist international relations and human security paradigms to analyze how gender shapes conflict, violence, and peacebuilding. It explores the intersectionality of gender with caste, class, and religion, highlighting subnational variations in conflict risk and the impact of patriarchal norms on all genders (Tickner, 1992; Caprioli, 2005; Nanda, 1999).

Chapter 2: Gender and Conflict in India

Focusing on India's diverse internal conflicts, this chapter examines how women, men, and third gender individuals experience and contribute to conflict dynamics. It analyzes historical roots, such as the Partition, and contemporary issues, including caste-based violence and insurgencies, and their gendered implications (Bose & Jalal, 1998; Menon, 2012; Reddy, 2005).

Chapter 3: Violence and Security Issues

This chapter delves into the forms of violence affecting each gender, with case studies on dowry violence and human trafficking. It explores how traditional security paradigms marginalize human security and how legal impunity exacerbates vulnerabilities. Resilience mechanisms, such as community networks, are also discussed (Agnes, 1995; Sabri et al., 2015; Saxena, 2011).

Chapter 4: Violence on Men

This chapter addresses the often-overlooked issue of violence against men, particularly the misuse of Section 498A, which leads to extortion and false accusations. It examines the impact of legal exploitation on men's mental health and the role of notorious rackets in perpetuating this issue, while highlighting the unintended consequences for genuine female victims (Kishwar, 2003; Lodha & Lodha, 2017).

Chapter 5: Peacebuilding Efforts



The final chapter explores the roles of women, men, and third gender individuals in grassroots peacebuilding, the challenges of exclusion from formal processes, and opportunities for inclusive policies. It emphasizes the need for education, empowerment, and legal reforms to ensure sustainable peace (Kannabiran, 2012; Dutta, 2012).

This thesis argues for transformative peacebuilding that prioritizes the voices and rights of all genders, addressing structural inequalities and integrating gender perspectives into policy frameworks. By examining dowry violence, human trafficking, and legal misuse against men, it offers a balanced perspective on gendered violence in India, contributing to a more inclusive understanding of security and peace.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation for analyzing the intersections of gender, conflict, violence, security, and peacebuilding in India, with a focus on the experiences of women, men, and third gender individuals (including eunuchs, hijras, and transgender persons). Drawing on feminist international relations, human security paradigms, and intersectional perspectives, it explores how gender shapes conflict dynamics, perpetuates violence, and influences peacebuilding efforts. The framework highlights the unique challenges faced by each gender group, women's exposure to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), men's vulnerability to legal exploitation, and third gender communities' systemic marginalization, while emphasizing their agency in navigating these challenges (Tickner, 1992; Nanda, 1999; Basu, 2005). It also addresses India's socio-cultural and political context, where patriarchal norms, colonial legacies, and subnational variations amplify gendered vulnerabilities (Chakravarti, 2018; Kazi, 2009).

Feminist Approaches to Conflict and Security

Feminist international relations challenge traditional security theories, such as realism, which prioritize state sovereignty and military power over the lived experiences of individuals (Tickner, 1992; Peterson, 1992). Realism's focus on state-centric threats, like territorial disputes or external aggression, often overlooks intra-state conflicts and everyday insecurities, such as domestic violence, economic deprivation, and discrimination, which disproportionately affect marginalized groups (Enloe, 2000). Feminist scholars argue for a human security approach, as outlined in the 1994 UNDP report, which encompasses freedom from fear (violence) and want (poverty, lack of opportunity) (Mahanta, 2016). This paradigm aligns with feminist calls to redefine security to include gendered threats, such as dowry-related abuse for women, false legal accusations for men, and social exclusion for third gender individuals (Bhandari & Hughes, 2017; Kishwar, 2003; Goel, 2014).

In India, patriarchal norms deeply entrenched in cultural and social structures reinforce rigid gender roles: men are cast as protectors and breadwinners, women as passive dependents or symbols of family honor, and third gender individuals as societal outcasts, often denied basic rights (Nanda, 1999; Chakravarti, 2018). These norms shape conflict dynamics by legitimizing violence as a masculine domain and marginalizing women and third gender communities as passive or irrelevant actors (Menon, 2012). However, conflicts can disrupt these roles, creating opportunities for agency. Women may take on leadership roles in communities during crises,



such as mediating disputes or managing resources, but post-conflict backlash often reinstates patriarchal control, limiting their gains (Kannabiran, 2012). Men face societal pressure to uphold masculinity, sometimes through violence or economic dominance, but are also vulnerable to exploitation through legal mechanisms like false dowry cases (Basu, 2005). Third gender individuals, including hijras and transgender persons, challenge binary gender norms but face exclusion, harassment, and violence due to their non-conformity (Reddy, 2005; Saxena, 2011).

Feminist theories emphasize intersectionality, recognizing that gender interacts with caste, class, religion, and region to shape experiences of conflict and insecurity (Crenshaw, 1989; Chakravarti, 2018). In India, lower-caste women face compounded vulnerabilities to SGBV, while upper-caste men may leverage economic power to navigate legal challenges, and third gender individuals from marginalized communities face heightened exclusion (Kannabiran, 2012; Goel, 2014). This intersectional lens is critical for understanding the diverse impacts of conflict across India's heterogeneous society.

Gender and Violence in Conflicts

Violence in conflicts is inherently gendered, reflecting and reinforcing power dynamics. Sexual violence, including rape and trafficking, is often used to humiliate and control communities, targeting women as symbols of honor (Enloe, 2000). In India, SGBV is prevalent in conflict zones, exacerbated by displacement and economic instability (Agnes, 1995). For example, dowry-related violence, which resulted in 6,516 deaths in 2022, is linked to patriarchal expectations and economic pressures, particularly in conflict-affected areas where families demand dowry to offset losses (NCRB, 2022; Bhandari & Hughes, 2017). Human trafficking, affecting over 100,000 girls annually, thrives in conflict-induced poverty, with minors comprising 70% of victims (UNICEF, 2020; Sen, 2003).

Men, while often perpetrators, also face gendered violence. Direct exposure to combat or insurgent violence is common, but legal entrapment through misuse of laws like Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (now Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) is a significant issue (Basu, 2005; Kishwar, 2003). False accusations of dowry harassment lead to extortion, social stigma, and mental health crises, with 81,063 married men committing suicide in 2023-2024, often linked to such pressures (NCRB, 2024). Third gender individuals experience both symbolic and physical violence, including police harassment, sexual assault, and denial of healthcare and employment, pushing many into sex work or begging (Saxena, 2011; Dutta, 2012). The continuum of violence, as described by Cockburn (2004), connects peacetime inequalities—like patriarchal control over women's mobility or third gender exclusion—to wartime atrocities, amplifying vulnerabilities across all genders.

These violences are not isolated but interlinked with societal structures. Patriarchal control restricts women's mobility, increasing trafficking risks, while men's economic dominance is weaponized against them in legal disputes (Butalia, 2000; Basu, 2005). Third gender individuals face systemic rejection, with policies like the 2019 Transgender Act criticized for forcing cohabitation with families who often abuse them, further entrenching their marginalization (Goel, 2014; Dutta, 2012).



Peacebuilding and Gendered Agency

Peacebuilding extends beyond ending violence to addressing structural inequalities and fostering sustainable reconciliation (Lederach, 1997). The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, formalized through UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, emphasizes women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery, as well as protection from SGBV and integration of gender perspectives in peace processes (True, 2012). Studies show that peace agreements with women's involvement are more durable, yet in India, women are largely excluded from formal negotiations despite leading grassroots efforts (Kannabiran, 2012; Paffenholz, 2016). Women's groups mediate community disputes and advocate for non-violence, but their contributions are often undervalued (Mahanta, 2016).

Men's roles in peacebuilding are typically assumed, with their involvement in community dialogues or security forces seen as normative (Basu, 2005). However, their vulnerabilities, such as legal exploitation, are rarely addressed in peace agendas, perpetuating a one-dimensional view of male agency (Kishwar, 2003). Third gender individuals, despite their marginalization, demonstrate agency through advocacy for inclusion and rights, forming collectives to challenge societal norms (Reddy, 2005; Dutta, 2012). Yet, their exclusion from formal peace processes reflects broader societal biases (Saxena, 2011).

Gender-responsive security sector reform is critical for effective peacebuilding. This includes training security forces on gender sensitivity, increasing female representation, and recognizing third gender rights (Hudson, 2010). India's security sector, however, remains male-dominated, with women comprising less than 10% of police forces and third gender representation virtually absent (Goel, 2014). This limits the ability to address gendered violence effectively, as seen in the impunity granted by laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in conflict zones (Kazi, 2009).

Indian Context: Intersectionality and Subnational Variations

In India, gender intersects with caste, class, religion, and region, creating diverse experiences of conflict and violence. Subnational studies demonstrate that districts with higher gender inequality, measured by female literacy, autonomy, and economic participation are more prone to conflict (Caprioli, 2005). For example, states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with low female-to-male literacy ratios, report higher incidences of violence, including dowry deaths and communal clashes (NCRB, 2022; Bhandari & Hughes, 2017). Male surpluses, resulting from sex-selective abortions, contribute to violence, as young, unmarried men ("bare branches") are more likely to engage in insurgencies or riots (Hudson & den Boer, 2002). Third gender individuals face cultural biases rooted in colonial-era stigmatization, with their exclusion from mainstream society amplifying vulnerability to violence and economic deprivation (Nanda, 1999; Reddy, 2005).

Laws like AFSPA, enforced in conflict zones, grant security forces impunity, enabling SGBV against women and harassment of third gender individuals (Kazi, 2009). Men, too, face



arbitrary arrests under such laws, compounded by domestic legal challenges like 498A misuse (Basu, 2005). Feminist decolonial approaches critique how colonial legacies and state nationalism perpetuate gender hierarchies, marginalizing women and third gender communities while exploiting men's societal roles (Chakravarti, 2018; Menon, 2012).

This theoretical framework guides the subsequent analysis by emphasizing the need for inclusive, gender-responsive policies to address the multifaceted challenges faced by women, men, and third gender individuals in India's conflict landscape. It advocates for solutions that dismantle patriarchal structures, enhance participation across all genders, and integrate human security principles to foster sustainable peace.

Chapter 2: Gender and Conflict in India

This chapter examines the complex interplay between gender and conflict in India, focusing on the experiences of women, men, and third gender individuals (eunuchs, hijras, and transgender persons) within the country's diverse internal conflicts. It traces the historical evolution of these conflicts, from ancient matriarchal traditions disrupted by invasions to modern-day insurgencies, caste-based clashes, and communal tensions, highlighting their gendered dimensions. The analysis explores how patriarchal norms escalate conflicts, the distinct experiences of each gender group, including the historical practice of castration among 'Khoja sepoys', and the gender-blind nature of state responses, drawing on feminist theories and empirical evidence (Bose & Jalal, 1998; Chakravarti, 2018; Reddy, 2005). By addressing the historical and contemporary challenges faced by women, men, and third gender individuals, this chapter underscores the necessity for inclusive, gender-responsive approaches to mitigate violence and foster sustainable peace.

Historical Overview of Conflicts

India's conflict landscape is deeply rooted in its historical trajectory, shaped by invasions, colonial legacies, and socioeconomic disparities. In the Vedic period (circa 1500–500 BCE), society exhibited matriarchal elements, with women like rishikas (female seers) contributing to the Vedas and queens like Prabhavati Gupta wielding political authority (Thapar, 2002; Altekar, 1956). Similarly, third gender individuals were respected, as seen in the Mahabharata, where Bhishma refused to attack Shikhandi, a third gender figure used as a shield by the Pandavas, reflecting their revered status (Nanda, 1999; Vanita & Kidwai, 2000). Men, as warriors, embodied ideals of honor and protection.

The Shak-Hun invasions (circa 2nd century BCE–4th century CE) introduced patriarchal practices, with nose rings -akin to those on livestock but made of gold for women-symbolizing control over female autonomy (Roy, 1999; Chakravarti, 2018). During this period, male warriors faced brutal practices, including castration by Hun and Shak rulers to prevent adultery with royal women while kings were at war, reducing men to servile roles (Sen, 2010). Muslim invasions (12th–16th centuries) further entrenched patriarchal norms, introducing parda pratha (veiling) to protect women from abduction and practices like johar and sati pratha to "save" women from rape and enslavement in harems (Sarkar, 2001; Mani, 1998). These practices tied women's honor to family control.



The British colonial period (18th–20th centuries) exacerbated gender disparities by imposing patriarchal laws, prioritizing male heirs. The case of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi illustrates this, as British policies denied women inheritance rights (Forbes, 1996; Sen, 2010). Third gender communities, once respected, were criminalized under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, labeling hijras as “deviant” and pushing them to the margins (Reddy, 2005). The Khoja sepoys, Indian soldiers in the Mughal and early colonial armies, faced unique gendered violence. Some Khoja sepoys, particularly those serving in elite households, were castrated to serve as eunuchs, guarding harems and preventing sexual interactions with women, a practice rooted in Mughal traditions but continued under early British rule (Shortt, 1873). This castration, performed by barbers or community leaders, was a form of social control, stripping men of masculinity and agency to ensure loyalty (Hinchy, 2019). The 1947 Partition involved mass gender-based violence, with 75,000 women abducted and raped, setting a precedent for gendered tactics (Butalia, 2000). Post-independence, insurgencies, caste clashes, and communal tensions persist, with distinct impacts on women, men, and third gender individuals (Agnes, 1995; Basu, 2005; Saxena, 2011).

Gender Norms and Conflict Escalation

Patriarchal norms are central to conflict escalation, legitimizing male dominance and marginalizing women and third gender individuals. Women are positioned as passive victims or symbols of honor, making them targets for violence to assert power (Menon, 2012). Men are expected to embody masculinity through protection or aggression, while third gender individuals are stigmatized as societal anomalies (Nanda, 1999; Reddy, 2005). Subnational studies show that districts with lower female literacy, like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, report higher conflict incidence, reflecting how gender inequality fuels violence (Caprioli, 2005). Third gender exclusion from education and employment pushes many into begging or sex work (Saxena, 2011).

Demographic imbalances, particularly male surpluses due to sex-selective abortions, contribute to conflict. Young, unmarried men as “bare branches” these unmarried men are prone to joining insurgencies or riots (Hudson & den Boer, 2002). Men face societal pressure to uphold masculinity but are vulnerable to legal victimization through false dowry accusations (Basu, 2005). Third gender individuals, including those historically linked to Khoja sepoy castration, face violent backlash for challenging binary norms (Dutta, 2012). Intersectionality amplifies these dynamics, with lower-caste women facing compounded risks, upper-caste men leveraging privilege, and third gender individuals from marginalized communities facing caste and economic exclusion (Chakravarti, 2018; Goel, 2014).

Experiences Across Genders in Conflict

Women’s Experiences: Women endure SGBV, including rape, trafficking, and dowry-related violence, exacerbated by displacement. Rape is used to humiliate communities during communal clashes, with cases from the Partition to recent riots (Butalia, 2000). Dowry violence, with over 34,000 cases reported in 2020, escalates in conflict zones, with a 15% increase in dowry deaths from 2019 (NCRB, 2020; Bhandari & Hughes, 2017). Trafficking, affecting over 100,000 girls annually (70% minors), thrives in conflict-induced poverty



(UNICEF, 2020; Sen, 2003). The COVID-19 pandemic increased domestic violence by 20% in some states, as women were confined with abusers (Sabri et al., 2015).

Men's Experiences: Men face direct violence in conflicts, such as combat or mob attacks, but also suffer legal exploitation. False accusations under Section 498A lead to extortion and stigma, with 81,063 married men committing suicide in 2023–2024 (NCRB, 2024; Kishwar, 2003). The “blue drum case” in Meerut, where a wife and her lover killed her husband and stuffed his body in a drum, highlights extreme violence against men (Times of India, 2023). Cases of women achieving high government posts with husbands' support, only to divorce them for other officers, reflect exploitation (Lodha & Lodha, 2017). Stereotypes like “men must not cry” dismiss male vulnerability, with emerging trends of boys being raped by women in pubs and teenage male students exploited by female teachers, signaling a new “gothic” system of sexual violence against men .

Third Gender Experiences: Third gender individuals, once revered in the Mahabharata era, now face severe marginalization. From Bhishma's respect for Shikhandi, their status has plummeted to begging in trains, often met with violence or sexual abuse (Nanda, 1999; Vanita & Kidwai, 2000). Society and families reject them, viewing their gender as shameful, leading to ostracism and economic exclusion. Many are denied education, healthcare, and jobs, forcing them into sex work or begging, with 60% reporting income loss during COVID-19 . Historically, Khoja sepoys underwent castration to serve as eunuchs in Mughal and early colonial households, a practice that persisted in elite settings like Vellore, where castrated men guarded royal women (Shortt, 1873). Today, forced castrations, often orchestrated by “hijra mafia,” target vulnerable boys, with an estimated 1,000 young men castrated annually, many auctioned for profit (Bhola, 2016). These individuals face police harassment and public abuse, with societal rejection amplifying their vulnerability in conflict zones ”Dutta, 2012).

Women's Experiences in Conflict

Women in India's conflicts face multifaceted vulnerabilities, primarily through SGBV, including rape, trafficking, and dowry-related violence, which are exacerbated by displacement and economic instability. Rape is a common tactic in conflict zones, used to demoralize communities and assert power. During communal clashes, women are targeted to humiliate religious or ethnic groups, with documented cases of mass rapes in post-Partition riots (Butalia, 2000). Dowry violence, a pervasive issue, intensifies in conflict-affected areas, with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reporting over 34,000 cases of cruelty by husband or relatives in 2020, and a 15% increase in dowry deaths from 2019 to 2020 (NCRB, 2020). In states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, economic stress in conflict zones fuels dowry demands, leading to brutal outcomes, such as women being burned alive or tortured (Bhandari & Hughes, 2017).

Human trafficking, another form of SGBV, thrives in conflict-induced poverty. UNICEF estimates over 100,000 girls are trafficked annually, with 70% being minors, lured by false job promises in states like West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh (UNICEF, 2020; Sen, 2003). Displacement from conflicts increases women's vulnerability, as they are separated from



support networks and exposed to exploitation. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened these issues, with lockdowns increasing domestic violence by 20% in some states, as women were confined with abusers and had limited access to helplines or shelters. For example, in conflict-affected areas, women faced heightened abuse due to economic stress and restricted mobility, with NGOs reporting a surge in distress calls during 2020–2021 (NCRB, 2022).

Despite these vulnerabilities, women demonstrate resilience through community networks and grassroots activism. In caste-affected regions, women's collectives mediate disputes and provide support, though their efforts are often undervalued (Kannabiran, 2012). However, societal stigma and lack of access to justice which evidenced by low conviction rates (12.9% for dowry cases) hinder reporting and recovery (NCRB, 2022).

State Responses and Gender Blindness

India's counter-insurgency strategies, such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), prioritize military security over human security, enabling impunity for SGBV against women. AFSPA, enforced in conflict zones, grants security forces unchecked powers, leading to documented cases of rape and assault with little accountability (Kazi, 2009). For instance, in areas under AFSPA, women have reported sexual violence by security personnel, with perpetrators rarely prosecuted due to legal protections (Mahanta, 2016). This impunity exacerbates women's insecurity, time remains elusive.

State policies often fail to address women's specific needs in conflict settings. Rehabilitation programs for displaced populations rarely prioritize female-headed households, focusing instead on male-centric economic recovery (Kannabiran, 2012). The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) of 2005 aim to protect women, but enforcement is weak, with only 12.9% conviction rates in dowry cases and limited access to shelters or legal aid in conflict zones (NCRB, 2022; Agnes, 1995). Feminist critiques argue for repealing impunity laws like AFSPA, increasing female representation in security forces (currently less than 10%), and implementing gender-sensitive policies to address women's vulnerabilities (Chakravarti, 2018; Mahanta,

This chapter highlights the critical role of gender in shaping India's conflict dynamics, emphasizing women's disproportionate exposure to violence and their resilience in navigating these challenges. It underscores the need for gender-responsive approaches, including stronger legal enforcement, increased female participation in peace processes, and policies that address the root causes of patriarchal violence to foster sustainable peace.

Chapter 3: Violence and Security Issues

This chapter examines the multifaceted nature of violence and security issues in India, with a focus on violence against men, the societal impact of homosexuality, and specific forms of gender-based violence (GBV) affecting men, women, and third gender individuals (eunuchs, hijras, and transgender persons). It explores how patriarchal norms, legal frameworks, and evolving social dynamics contribute to violence, including emerging forms such as women perpetrating violence against men and the exploitation of young boys in various settings. The chapter also addresses the controversial narrative that the introduction of homosexuality undermines traditional notions of masculinity, alongside case studies on dowry violence and



human trafficking, highlighting the need for gender-neutral and inclusive policies to address these complex issues (Agnes, 1995; Basu, 2005; Reddy, 2005).

Forms of Gender-Based Violence

Violence Against Men: Men in India face significant but underreported forms of GBV, including domestic violence, legal exploitation, and sexual assault. A 2019 study in rural Haryana found that 33% of married men aged 21–49 experienced domestic violence, often psychological or physical abuse by spouses, with educated earning wives identified as a risk factor for bidirectional violence (Malik & Nadda, 2019). The misuse of Section 498A (now Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) leads to false accusations of dowry harassment, causing financial ruin and social stigma, with 81,063 married men committing suicide in 2023–2024, often linked to such pressures (NCRB, 2024; Kishwar, 2003). The “blue drum case” in Meerut, where a wife and her lover murdered her husband and stuffed his body in a drum, exemplifies extreme physical violence against men (Times of India, 2023). Emerging trends include women exploiting young boys in pubs and teenage male students by female teachers, with cases of women hiring male gigolos for parties signaling a shift toward a “gothic” system of sexual violence against men (Kishwar, 2003; Basu, 2005). These acts challenge the stereotype that men cannot be victims, with societal norms like “mard ko dard nahi hota” (men don’t feel pain) discouraging reporting (Lodha & Lodha, 2017).

Women’s Experiences: Women face severe SGBV, including rape, domestic abuse, and trafficking, exacerbated in conflict zones. The NCRB reported 34,000 cases of cruelty by husband or relatives in 2020, with dowry deaths increasing by 15% from 2019 (NCRB, 2020; Sabri et al., 2015). Rape is often used as a weapon in communal clashes, with 31,677 cases registered in 2021, 89% committed by known perpetrators (NCRB, 2021). Trafficking affects over 100,000 girls annually, with 70% being minors, driven by conflict-induced poverty (UNICEF, 2020; Sen, 2003).

Third Gender Experiences: Third gender individuals, once revered as seen in the Mahabharata with Bhishma’s respect for Shikhandi, now face severe marginalization. From respected roles, they are reduced to begging in trains, often facing physical and sexual violence, police harassment, and familial rejection (Nanda, 1999; Vanita & Kidwai, 2000). Forced castrations, historically practiced on Khoja sepoys in Mughal and early colonial households to guard harems, persist in modern forms, with an estimated 1,000 young men castrated annually by “hijra mafia” for profit (Bhola, 2016; Shortt, 1873). Economic exclusion pushes 60% into sex work or begging, with heightened vulnerability during crises like COVID-19 (Saxena, 2011; Goel, 2014).

Homosexuality and Societal Impact: The decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018 via the Supreme Court’s partial repeal of Section 377 was a landmark step, granting the LGBTQ+ community the right to express their sexual orientation under privacy laws (Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, 2018). However, conservative narratives argue that homosexuality undermines “normal healthy society” by challenging traditional masculinity, viewing it as a threat to patriarchal structures. This perspective, rooted in heteronormativity, fuels violence against men who have sex with men (MSM), with a 2024 study in six Indian



cities reporting that over 50% of MSM face physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, or relational violence, particularly those with feminine attributes (BMC Public Health, 2024). Corrective rape, intended to “convert” homosexual men to heterosexuality, is a significant issue, with 15 reported cases in Telangana over five years (Crisis Intervention Team, Telangana). These acts, driven by homophobia, contribute to high suicide rates among MSM, exacerbated by societal stigma and lack of family support.

Child Rape in Educational and Religious Institutions: Sexual violence against children in educational and religious institutions is a growing concern, affecting both boys and girls. A 2007 government survey found that 57.3% of children reporting severe sexual abuse, including rape or sodomy, were boys, compared to 42.7% girls (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007). Boys in religious seminaries and schools face abuse by authority figures, often unreported due to shame and institutional cover-ups. For example, a 2018 case in Ghaziabad involved a 20-year-old boy sexually assaulted by five men, registered under Section 377 due to the lack of male-specific rape laws (iPleaders, 2020). These incidents highlight the vulnerability of young boys in settings meant to be safe, with perpetrators exploiting power dynamics and societal taboos around male victimization.

Women Perpetrating Violence Against Men: Emerging forms of violence include women raping young boys in pubs and hiring male gigolos for parties, reflecting a shift in gender dynamics. Reports of female teachers exploiting teenage male students are increasing, with cases often dismissed due to stereotypes that men cannot be victims (Kishwar, 2003). These acts, while less documented, contribute to a new “gothic” system where sexual violence against men is normalized, often tied to neo-feminist narratives that challenge traditional gender roles but can veer into exploitation (Basu, 2005). The lack of legal recognition for male sexual assault victims exacerbates underreporting, with only 1.4% of men reporting rape compared to 18.3% of women (CDC, 2010).

Security Paradigms and Gender

Traditional security paradigms prioritize territorial integrity, sidelining human security concerns like GBV (Tickner, 1992). Men face insecurity through legal exploitation and societal pressure to conform to masculine ideals, while women and third gender individuals experience persistent threats of SGBV and exclusion (Menon, 2012; Goel, 2014). India’s peacekeeping efforts include female units, but domestic security forces lack gender diversity, with women comprising less than 10% of police and third gender representation nearly absent (Mahanta, 2016). Gender-neutral definitions of consent and coercion in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (e.g., Sections 112, 200, 350) mark progress, but implementation lags, leaving men, women, and third gender individuals vulnerable (International Bar Association, 2024).

Resilience and Coping Mechanisms

Women form self-help groups to support SGBV survivors, men rely on men’s rights organizations like Save Indian Family Foundation, and third gender collectives like hijra gharanas advocate for rights (Chakravarti, 2018; Saxena, 2011). However, stigma, reinforced by phrases like “men don’t cry”, limits men’s reporting, while third gender individuals face rejection, hindering access to support (Kishwar, 2003; Goel, 2014).



Dowry Violence: Dowry-related violence affects women, with 6,516 deaths reported in 2022, concentrated in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra (NCRB, 2022; Bhandari & Hughes, 2017). Cases include a Delhi woman burned alive (Hindustan Times, 2022), a Hyderabad woman killed for insufficient dowry (The Hindu, 2022), and Nikki Bhati's death in Noida in 2025 (NDTV, 2025). Men face false 498A accusations, with 80% of cases estimated to be false, leading to suicides and financial ruin (Lodha & Lodha, 2017). Third gender individuals, excluded from dowry dynamics, face violence when begging or in sex work (Dutta, 2012).

Human Trafficking: Trafficking primarily targets women and third gender individuals, with 100,000+ girls trafficked annually, 70% minors (UNICEF, 2020; Sen, 2003). In 2025, 56 women were rescued in West Bengal (New Indian Express, 2025). Third gender individuals are trafficked into sex work, with forced castrations exacerbating vulnerability (Bhola, 2016). Men face forced labor in conflict zones, though less documented (Sen, 2003).

These issues demand gender-neutral laws, better enforcement, and societal shifts to dismantle stereotypes and ensure equitable protection for all genders.

Impunity and Legal Challenges

Legal frameworks in India often perpetuate GBV rather than mitigate it. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), enforced in conflict zones, grants security forces impunity, enabling SGBV against women and harassment of third gender individuals with little accountability (Kazi, 2009). For example, documented cases of rape by security personnel in areas under AFSPA rarely lead to convictions, perpetuating a cycle of violence (Mahanta, 2016). The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) of 2005 aim to protect women but face enforcement challenges, with only 12.9% conviction rates in dowry cases due to systemic biases and inadequate legal aid (NCRB, 2022; Agnes, 1995).

Men face legal challenges through the misuse of 498A, with low conviction rates (12.6–12.9% from 2017–2022) and high pendency (92%) indicating widespread false accusations (NCRB, 2022; Basu, 2005). This not only harms men but also undermines genuine women's cases, as courts become skeptical (Kishwar, 2003). The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019, intended to protect third gender individuals, is limited by bureaucratic hurdles, such as complex gender recognition processes and forced cohabitation clauses that expose them to familial abuse (Dutta, 2012; Saxena, 2011). These legal shortcomings highlight the need for reforms that balance protections across genders.

Chapter 4: Violence on Men

This chapter examines the often-unspoken issue of violence against men in India, tracing its historical roots from the early Khoja sepoy period to the present day. It highlights the diverse forms of violence, physical, sexual, psychological, and legal, that men have faced, emphasizing the societal and cultural factors that obscure these experiences. Despite the prevailing narrative that men are primarily perpetrators of violence, this chapter underscores the urgent need to recognize men as victims, addressing dire situations that demand equitable responses and solutions. Drawing on historical evidence, contemporary data, and societal



trends, it explores how patriarchal norms, legal biases, and evolving gender dynamics contribute to violence against men, advocating for gender-neutral policies and increased awareness to foster justice and support (Basu, 2005; Kishwar, 2003; Hinchy, 2019).

Historical Context: Violence Against Men in Early India

Violence against men in India has historical precedents, often tied to power dynamics and societal control. During the Mughal era and early colonial period (16th–18th centuries), the ‘Khoja sepoy’ Indian soldiers serving in elite households, faced a unique form of gendered violence: castration. This practice, rooted in Mughal traditions and continued under early British rule, was designed to ensure loyalty and prevent sexual interactions with royal women in harems. Castration, performed by barbers or community leaders, stripped men of their masculinity and agency, rendering them eunuchs to serve as guards or administrators (Shortt, 1873; Hinchy, 2019). This act of physical mutilation was not only a form of violence but also a profound assault on identity, relegating men to a marginalized status. Such practices were justified as measures of control, reflecting how men’s bodies were weaponized to enforce patriarchal and political hierarchies.

In pre-colonial and colonial India, men also faced violence in conflict settings. During wars and invasions, such as the Shak-Hun invasions (2nd century BCE–4th century CE), male warriors were targeted for castration or execution to weaken opposing forces or prevent rebellion (Sen, 2010). These acts, though less documented, highlight how men were subjected to gendered violence to assert dominance. Colonial policies further exacerbated violence against men, with forced conscription and mass killings targeting men of military age as potential combatants, a form of structural violence rooted in assumptions about male roles in combat (Mouthaan, 2011). These historical practices laid the groundwork for a cultural narrative that overlooks men as victims, normalizing their suffering as part of their societal roles.

Contemporary Forms of Violence Against Men

In modern India, violence against men manifests in physical, sexual, psychological, and legal forms, often underreported due to societal stigma and patriarchal expectations. The following sections detail these forms, highlighting their prevalence and impact.

Physical and Domestic Violence: Domestic violence against men is a growing but underrecognized issue. A 2019 study in rural Haryana found that 52.4% of married men aged 21–49 reported experiencing gender-based violence, with 33% facing intimate partner violence (IPV), including physical abuse by spouses (Malik & Nadda, 2019). Cases like the 2023 “blue drum case” in Meerut, where a wife and her lover murdered her husband and stuffed his body in a drum, illustrate extreme physical violence (Times of India, 2023). Alcoholism among women, though less prevalent, is a risk factor, with studies noting bidirectional violence in households where educated, earning wives exert physical or verbal abuse (Malik & Nadda, 2019). Societal norms, such as “mard ko dard nahi hota” (men don’t feel pain), discourage men from reporting abuse, as they fear shame or disbelief (Kishwar, 2003).

Sexual Violence: Sexual violence against men, particularly young boys, is an unspoken crisis. A 2007 government survey revealed that 57.3% of children reporting severe sexual abuse



(rape or sodomy) were boys, compared to 42.7% girls, often in educational or religious institutions (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007). A 2018 case in Ghaziabad involved a 20-year-old boy sexually assaulted by five men, registered under Section 377 due to the lack of male-specific rape laws (iPleaders, 2020). Emerging trends include women perpetrating sexual violence against young boys in pubs or through exploitation by female teachers, with cases often dismissed due to stereotypes that men cannot be victims (Kishwar, 2003). The rise of male gigolos hired for women's parties reflects a new "gothic" system of sexual exploitation, where men are objectified and coerced (Basu, 2005). The absence of gender-neutral rape laws exacerbates underreporting, with only 1.4% of men reporting sexual assault compared to 18.3% of women (CDC, 2010).

Legal Exploitation: The misuse of Section 498A, intended to protect women from dowry harassment, is a significant form of legal violence against men. Men's rights groups estimate that 80% of 498A cases are false, leading to financial ruin, social stigma, and mental health crises (Lodha & Lodha, 2017). The NCRB reported 81,063 suicides by married men in 2023–2024, often linked to legal harassment (NCRB, 2024). Low conviction rates (12.6–12.9%) and high pendency (92%) indicate systemic abuse, with men facing extortion through false accusations (NCRB, 2022; Basu, 2005). Cases where women, supported by husbands to achieve high government posts, divorce them for other officers further highlight financial and emotional exploitation (Lodha & Lodha, 2017).

Homosexuality and Violence: The decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018 (Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India) marked progress, but conservative narratives argue that homosexuality undermines "normal healthy society" by challenging traditional masculinity. This perception fuels violence against men who have sex with men (MSM), with a 2024 study reporting that over 50% of MSM in six Indian cities face physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, or relational violence, particularly those with feminine attributes (BMC Public Health, 2024). Corrective rape, intended to "convert" homosexual men, is a severe form of violence, with 15 reported cases in Telangana over five years (Crisis Intervention Team, Telangana). Homophobia-driven attacks, often to preserve family "izzat" (prestige), contribute to high suicide rates among MSM, exacerbated by societal and familial rejection (BMC Public Health, 2024).

Unspoken Nature and Dire Situations

The violence against men remains largely unspoken due to patriarchal norms that emphasize male stoicism and invulnerability. Stereotypes like "men don't cry" or "men must be strong" create barriers to reporting, as men fear emasculation or disbelief (Kishwar, 2003). The lack of legal recognition for male victims of domestic or sexual violence, unlike protections for women under PWDVA or Section 498A, reinforces silence. For example, India's rape laws are not gender-neutral, leaving male victims without legal recourse (International Bar Association, 2024). This systemic neglect creates dire situations, with men facing psychological trauma, financial ruin, and suicide. The high suicide rate among married men (64,791 in 2020 compared to 27,742 for women) underscores the severity, with family problems, including false accusations, cited as a primary cause (NCRB, 2020).



Exploitation of Section 498A: Men Extortion

Section 498A, intended to protect women from dowry harassment, is often misused, leading to extortion and false accusations against men (Basu, 2005; Kishwar, 2003). From 2017-2022, conviction rates were 12.6-12.9%, with 92% cases pending, suggesting misuse (NCRB, 2022). In Delhi, 2021-2024 conviction rates were 0.2% (NCRB, 2024). Men's rights groups claim 80% cases are false, driven by financial motives or marital disputes (Lodha & Lodha, 2017).

Rackets involving lawyers and intermediaries exploit 498A, coaching complainants to exaggerate claims for alimony or settlements (Kishwar, 2003). Alimony laws, under the Hindu Marriage Act, burden men, even when wives are employed (Agnes, 1995). In 2023-2024, 81,063 married men committed suicide, linked to harassment from false cases, compared to 28,680 women (NCRB, 2024; Basu, 2005).

This misuse harms innocent women, as courts grow skeptical, deterring genuine victims (87% of abused women don't report, per NFHS 2019-2021) (Bhandari & Hughes, 2017). In conflict zones, economic stress amplifies marital breakdowns, increasing extortion risks (Mahanta, 2016).

Solutions and Equal Responses

Solutions include mandatory pre-arrest investigations, gender-neutral laws, and mediation to reduce misuse while protecting genuine victims (Kishwar, 2003; Lodha & Lodha, 2017).

Addressing violence against men requires a multifaceted approach that challenges societal norms and legal biases. First, gender-neutral legislation is essential. Laws like Section 498A should be reformed to prevent misuse, and rape laws must include men as potential victims, as advocated in a 2024 Delhi High Court PIL (International Bar Association, 2024). Second, community-based support centers tailored for men, offering counseling, legal aid, and safe spaces, can break stigma and encourage reporting. Organizations like the Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF) provide such support but need broader reach (Lodha & Lodha, 2017). Third, education programs in schools should raise awareness about violence against boys, addressing issues like sexual abuse in educational and religious institutions through age-appropriate workshops (Ghosh & Kumar, 2024).

Fourth, workplace wellness programs should include confidential counseling to address abuse, recognizing that professional settings are not immune (Ghosh & Kumar, 2024). Fifth, crisis helplines like SIFF's SIF One app should be promoted to provide immediate support for men in distress (Wikipedia, 2007). Sixth, research and data collection are critical to quantify the prevalence of violence against men, informing evidence-based policies (Ghosh & Kumar, 2024). Finally, public awareness campaigns should challenge stereotypes, encouraging men to seek help and dismantling narratives that equate homosexuality with a threat to masculinity. Engaging men as allies in gender equality, as seen in community outreach programs, can reduce homophobic violence (South India Journal of Social Sciences, 2024).

Chapter 5: Peace building Efforts



This chapter explores the critical roles of women, men, and third gender individuals (eunuchs, hijras, and transgender persons) in grassroots peacebuilding efforts in India, while addressing their exclusion from formal peace processes and advocating for inclusive policies. It emphasizes the need for education, empowerment, and legal reforms to dismantle structural inequalities and foster sustainable peace. By examining gendered violence, such as dowry violence, human trafficking, and legal misuse against men, this thesis argues for transformative peacebuilding that prioritizes the voices and rights of all genders, integrating gender perspectives into policy frameworks to create a more equitable security landscape (Kannabiran, 2012; Dutta, 2012).

Roles Across Genders in Grassroots Peacebuilding

Grassroots peacebuilding in India showcases the resilience and agency of women, men, and third gender individuals despite systemic challenges. Women have been pivotal in community-led initiatives, particularly in conflict-affected areas like Bihar and Tamil Nadu, where caste-based violence and insurgencies persist. Women's collectives, such as self-help groups in rural areas, mediate disputes, provide support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and advocate non-violent resolutions. For instance, organizations like the Gulabi Gang in Uttar Pradesh empower women to confront domestic violence and social injustices, fostering community cohesion (Kannabiran, 2012). These efforts challenge patriarchal norms that cast women as passive, demonstrating their capacity to lead peace initiatives.

Men also contribute significantly to grassroots peacebuilding, often through community dialogues and reconciliation efforts. In conflict zones, male community leaders facilitate negotiations between rival groups, leveraging their societal roles to de-escalate tensions (Basu, 2005). However, their vulnerabilities, such as legal exploitation through false accusations under Section 498A, are rarely addressed in peacebuilding frameworks, limiting their ability to advocate for systemic change (Kishwar, 2003). Men's rights groups, like the 'Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF)', have emerged to support men facing legal harassment, advocating for fair treatment and raising awareness about male victimization, though their efforts are often polarized (Lodha & Lodha, 2017).

Third gender individuals, despite severe marginalization, demonstrate remarkable agency in peacebuilding. Hijra collectives and transgender advocacy groups, such as the Kinnar Maa Trust, work to challenge societal stigma and promote inclusion. In urban areas, they organize awareness campaigns and provide safe spaces for marginalized communities, contributing to social harmony (Reddy, 2005). Their advocacy for legal recognition and economic opportunities, as seen in protests against the bureaucratic hurdles of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019, reflects their commitment to transformative change (Dutta, 2012). These grassroots efforts highlight the potential of all genders to drive peacebuilding when given opportunities to participate.

Challenges of Exclusion from Formal Peace Processes

Despite their contributions, women, men, and third gender individuals face significant exclusion from formal peace processes in India. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS)



agenda, formalized through UN Security Council Resolution 1325, emphasizes women's participation in conflict resolution, but in India, women are rarely included in high-level negotiations or policy-making. For example, peace talks in conflict zones like Jammu and Kashmir often exclude women, resulting in gender-blind agreements that fail to address SGBV or women's socioeconomic needs (True, 2012; Mahanta, 2016). This exclusion stems from patriarchal norms that prioritize male leadership, relegating women to informal roles.

Men, while assumed to be active in peace processes due to their societal roles, face challenges when their vulnerabilities are ignored. Legal misuse, such as false 498A cases, is absent from peacebuilding agendas, despite its impact on men's mental health and social stability (Kishwar, 2003). Third gender individuals are almost entirely excluded from formal processes, with no representation in peace negotiations or security sector reforms. The lack of third gender inclusion in police or governance structures, where women comprise less than 10% of personnel and third gender representation is nearly absent, hinders gender-sensitive approaches (Goel, 2014). This exclusion perpetuates structural inequalities, undermining sustainable peace.

Opportunities for Inclusive Policies

The challenges of exclusion present opportunities for transformative policies that integrate all genders into peacebuilding. Education is a cornerstone for change. Gender-sensitive curricula in schools can challenge stereotypes, such as "men don't cry" or the stigmatization of third gender identities, fostering empathy and inclusion (Caprioli, 2005). Programs targeting boys and girls to recognize GBV, including violence against men and third gender individuals, can reduce stigma and encourage reporting (Ghosh & Kumar, 2024).

Empowerment through economic and social inclusion is critical. For women, vocational training and access to microfinance, as seen in self-help groups, enhance agency and reduce vulnerability to SGBV (Kannabiran, 2012). Men need support systems, such as counseling centers and legal aid, to address domestic violence and legal exploitation, with organizations like SIFF advocating for such initiatives (Lodha & Lodha, 2017). Third gender individuals require simplified gender recognition processes and economic opportunities, such as job quotas, to move away from precarious livelihoods like sex work or begging (Dutta, 2012).

Legal reforms are essential for equitable peacebuilding. Repealing impunity laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which enables SGBV and harassment, would enhance accountability (Kazi, 2009). Gender-neutral laws, such as amending Section 498A to prevent misuse and introducing male-inclusive rape laws, would protect all genders (International Bar Association, 2024). The Transgender Persons Act needs streamlined processes to ensure third gender rights without bureaucratic barriers (Saxena, 2011).

Case Studies: Grassroots Initiatives

Women's Mobilizations: In conflict-affected areas, women's groups like the Meira Paibis in Manipur have protested against AFSPA and militarized violence, advocating for human rights and peace. These mobilizations address socioeconomic issues, such as displacement and poverty, which fuel GBV like dowry violence and trafficking (Chakravarti,



2018). By fostering community networks, these initiatives empower women to lead peacebuilding efforts.

Men's Advocacy: Men's rights groups, such as SIFF, conduct awareness campaigns and provide legal support for men facing false 498A accusations. Their efforts highlight the need for legal reforms to balance protections for women with safeguards against misuse, contributing to social stability by addressing men's vulnerabilities (Lodha & Lodha, 2017).

Third Gender Advocacy: Transgender collectives in Tamil Nadu, supported by NGOs, have secured welfare boards and voter ID recognition, advocating for inclusive policies. These efforts challenge societal rejection and promote economic empowerment, reducing vulnerability to violence and fostering inclusion (Dutta, 2012).

Conclusion

This thesis has critically analyzed the central role of gender in shaping India's conflict cycles, illuminating the distinct yet interconnected experiences of women, men, and third gender individuals (eunuchs, hijras, and transgender persons) across conflict, violence, and peacebuilding processes. By examining specific forms of gender-based violence (GBV)—including dowry-related abuse, human trafficking, and legal misuse against men—it underscores the urgent need for transformative peacebuilding that prioritizes the voices and rights of all genders to dismantle structural inequalities and foster sustainable peace. The analysis reveals how patriarchal norms, legal biases, and societal stigma perpetuate violence, necessitating comprehensive reforms aligned with India's commitments to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This conclusion proposes a robust framework of solutions, integrating legal reforms, social media advocacy, regulation of harmful content, restrictions on pub culture, and parental engagement to address GBV and promote inclusive peacebuilding.

Women face severe sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including rape, dowry-related abuse, and trafficking, exacerbated by conflict-induced displacement and economic instability. The National Crime Records Bureau reported 34,000 cases of cruelty by husband or relatives and 6,516 dowry deaths in 2022, with states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar showing high prevalence due to entrenched patriarchal expectations (NCRB, 2022; Bhandari & Hughes, 2017). Men, often overlooked as victims, endure significant violence through legal exploitation, particularly false accusations under Section 498A, contributing to 81,063 suicides among married men in 2023–2024 (NCRB, 2024; Kishwar, 2003). Emerging forms of violence, such as sexual assaults by women in pubs or educational settings, further challenge stereotypes about male invulnerability (Basu, 2005). Third gender individuals, historically revered in texts like the Mahabharata, now face physical and sexual violence, police harassment, and economic exclusion, with forced castrations and societal rejection pushing them into precarious livelihoods like sex work or begging (Reddy, 2005; Bhola, 2016). These gendered violences, rooted in societal norms and legal gaps, highlight the need for a human security approach that transcends traditional state-centric paradigms (Tickner, 1992).

Grassroots peacebuilding efforts demonstrate remarkable resilience across all genders. Women's collectives, such as the Gulabi Gang and Meira Paibis, mediate disputes and advocate



for non-violence, challenging patriarchal constraints (Kannabiran, 2012). Men's rights organizations, like the Save Indian Family Foundation, provide legal support and raise awareness about male victimization, addressing issues like false 498A accusations (Lodha & Lodha, 2017). Third gender collectives, such as the Kinnar Maa Trust, campaign for inclusion and economic opportunities, countering societal stigma (Dutta, 2012). However, exclusion from formal peace processes, due to patriarchal biases, legal shortcomings, and societal marginalization, limits their impact. Laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) enable impunity for SGBV, while weak enforcement of the Dowry Prohibition Act and bureaucratic hurdles in the Transgender Persons Act exacerbate vulnerabilities (Kazi, 2009; Saxena, 2011).

To address these challenges, a comprehensive framework of solutions is proposed. First, legal reforms are critical for equitable protection. Repealing AFSPA will enhance accountability for SGBV and harassment, particularly in conflict zones (Kazi, 2009). Amending Section 498A to include safeguards against misuse will protect men without undermining its purpose, while gender-neutral rape laws, as advocated in a 2024 Delhi High Court PIL, will recognize male and third gender victims (International Bar Association, 2024). Streamlining gender recognition under the Transgender Persons Act will reduce bureaucratic barriers, ensuring access to rights (Dutta, 2012). Second, education and social media campaigns are essential for societal change. Gender-sensitive curricula in schools should challenge stereotypes like "men don't cry" and normalize third gender identities, fostering empathy (Caprioli, 2005). Social media campaigns on platforms like X, Instagram, and YouTube can amplify survivor stories and educational content, collaborating with influencers and NGOs to promote non-violence and equality (Ghosh & Kumar, 2024).

Third, regulating harmful content is vital to curb the normalization of violence. Banning pornography and vulgar content across all media - online, television, and print, through stringent enforcement of the Information Technology Act will reduce objectification and toxic masculinity that harm all genders (Saxena, 2011). Fourth, curbing pub culture addresses emerging violence, such as women exploiting young boys in nightlife settings. Regulatory measures, including stricter licensing, age verification, and public awareness campaigns, can mitigate risks (Kishwar, 2003). Fifth, parental engagement through workshops in schools and community centers should encourage open communication with children about consent, safe socializing, and recognizing predatory behaviors, reducing exposure to harmful environments (Ghosh & Kumar, 2024). Sixth, economic empowerment through vocational training for women, counseling and legal aid for men, and job quotas for third gender individuals will enhance agency and reduce vulnerability to GBV (Kannabiran, 2012; Lodha & Lodha, 2017).

Future research should explore intersectional dynamics, how caste, class, and religion amplify gendered violence, and evaluate interventions like gender-sensitive training and legal aid to ensure efficacy. By implementing legal reforms, leveraging social media, regulating content, curbing pub culture, and fostering parental engagement, India can align its WPS commitments with domestic action, creating a transformative peacebuilding model that ensures equitable protection and fosters a just, inclusive society for all genders.



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