

## **Silent Suffering to Violent Endings: A Study of Marital Strain and Spousal Homicide**

**Ankit Singh**

PhD Scholar, Social Work, Department of Social Work, Institute of Social Sciences,  
Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Agra.

E Mail Id: [theankitsinghh@gmail.com](mailto:theankitsinghh@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

A marriage is frequently viewed in Indian society as the foundation of friendship and stability. But there has been a concerning trend in recent years: an increasing number of wives are murdering their husbands. This defies gender norms and raises concerns about mental well-being of households and communities. There has been a lot of talk about violence against women in the home, but not much has been said about women who are violent in marriage in academic and policy discussions. This paper examines the psychosocial and social factors linked to spousal homicides perpetrated by wives in India. It employs criminological theories, sociological frameworks, and case studies to examine the contributions of marital strain, mental health challenges, financial disputes, and changes in gender roles to fatal violence. Using secondary data from media reports, court rulings, and NCRB statistics, the study employs a qualitative exploratory methodology. The findings show that broken marriages, unresolved, chronic pain, and a lack of psychological support are the most frequent causes of these homicides. The couple, their children, other family members, and the community at large are all impacted. The study demonstrates the significance of integrating social work techniques like marriage therapy, conflict counselling, and community awareness initiatives into India's family welfare organizations. Lastly, it asserts that social workers and legislators need to appropriately address domestic abuse because it is a two-way street.

**Keywords:** wife-perpetrated violence, marital stress, psychosocial impact, social work, India, and spousal homicide

### **I. Introduction**

#### ***A. Background of the Study***

So, in India, a marriage is an institution of society built on hundreds of years of tradition and society, not just a relationship between two individuals. In addition to uniting two people, a holy union also binds two families and even communities together. The idea of marriage encompasses durability, faithfulness, and peace. The significance of married life for societal well-being and personal happiness is emphasized in religious literature, festivals, and rituals. However, there is a more complex story behind that glittering exterior. Behind the closed doors of many married couples lies silent struggles and unresolved psychological battles. Revolted by the cultural script of an Indian wife and her role within the family, Indian society has been shaken in recent years by stories that challenge the script, stories of wives killing their husbands. While these events are

statistically uncommon, as compared to pervasive realities of domestic violence as a whole, symbolically they are profound. They undermine the popular stereotype that men are always the aggressors and women the victims. The growing number of wives as killers in public crime as here and in other cases is of significance as it requires a recasting of simple-minded ideas of victim and victimhood as well as of aggression. It needs a closer examination of the contribution of marital tension, gender expectations, psychosocial stress, and how they can lead to such catastrophic, abhorrent consequences. The majority of these murders, as opposed to crimes of passion, aren't committed in heat of anger. Rather, they're often the ultimate murder after years — sometimes decades — of mute suffering. Women who've endured emotional neglect, physical abuse, economic control, or social isolation may internalize the pain first, because there's so much in our society that tells cis women not to make waves.

With time, when misery is not acknowledged, it may end up causing depression, helplessness, or extreme resentment. Having no avenue for escape or comfort in view, the women may eventually reach a stage where they perceive violence as the sole means of freedom. Thus, though murder is clearly abhorred by law, it tends to be the bitter culmination of a lengthy, unseen battle.

This problem also raises wider social contradictions within Indian marriages. Although modern society encourages women to be independent and equal, norms demand that they be submissive and selfless. This seesaw can lead to marital conflict, particularly when coupled with money issues, questions of fidelity, property disagreements, or alcoholism. In such situations, if the wife turns violent, it is more indicative of system failures at a deeper level, such as a failure to provide appropriate counselling and support.

Analysing the trend of wives murdering their husbands, this research intends to look beyond the superficial headlines. It wishes to put such cases in the broader context of Indian marriage—a context in which suffering occurs largely in silence until it breaks out into violence suddenly. Women's homicides are not mere exceptions; they represent the fine balance of adulterous relationships under duress and serve as a stern call for greater emphasis on mental stability, gender roles, and conflict resolution.

### ***B. Problem Statement***

A lot of Indian academic, policy, and social work literature has centered on the protection of women from domestic violence against a backdrop of patriarchal oppression and the acknowledgement of women's vulnerability in marriage. Although such a focus is justified and required, it has induced a gender bias that ignores men as victims. Male victimization, particularly when violence is perpetrated by women, is lesser researched and frequently undesired in academy and media discourse.

Our knowledge of how marital stress, unresolved conflicts, and psychological deficiencies lead to violent assault suffered by women is now seriously lacking as a result of this neglect. In contrast to the increasing acknowledgement of women's victim status brought about by new laws and welfare initiatives, male victimhood is frequently

stigmatized, minimized, or ignored. Because of cultural norms that associate masculinity and power, men are less likely to report abuse, which leads to underreporting.

As a result, current social work practices, laws, and family-friendly policies are out of balance. They emphasize the protection of women but don't capture the dynamics of bidirectional violence and power struggle in marriage. Such failure makes our knowledge of domestic violence incomplete and restricts the establishment of multifaceted approaches that would deal with psychological pressures towards unfortunate consequences such as spousal homicide.

Therefore, current family welfare policies, legal frameworks, and social work strategies remain one-sided. They emphasize the security of women but ignore the intricacies of struggle for power and reciprocal violence in marriage. This oversight impedes the formation of full plans that might deal with the psychological stresses that result in horrible events like spouse murder and weakens our understanding of domestic violence.

### ***C. Objectives of the Study***

This paper seeks to:

- Investigate the marital and psychological elements that influence Indian wives' spousal homicides.
- Examine how these cases affect families and society.
- Use psychological and criminological theories to analyse the problem.
- Suggest social work tactics and legislative actions to stop marital stress from turning violent.

### ***D. Research Questions***

This study is guided by the following questions:

- Which marital pressures and psychosocial factors contribute to wives killing the husbands?
- What role do the relationships between power and sexual orientation play in the turning of marital disputes into violent altercations?
- How do wife-perpetrated spousal homicides affect families and society at large?
- What part can policy and social service actions play in averting these kinds of situations?

## **II. Literature Review**

### ***A. Global Studies on Spousal Homicide***

Research on spousal homicide globally demonstrates that intimate partner violence (IPV) plays a significant role in raising overall homicide rates. Daly and Wilson (1988) established in their research Homicide that marital conflicts and jealousy tend to lead to spousal killings. Goetting (1991) studied gender patterns in spousal homicide to show that men kill from possessive motives but women kill after enduring prolonged abuse.

The research conducted by Campbell et al. (2003) demonstrated that female perpetrators tend to use weapons with premeditation whereas male offenders usually use physical force. According to Dobash and Dobash (2015) the United States shows that women who

kill their spouses usually have experienced prolonged victimization which leads them to use violence as a form of self-defence.

Research across different countries shows that wife-perpetrated homicide occurs for three primary reasons:

- The victim defends themselves after enduring prolonged abuse.
- The main cause of violence stems from financial disagreements about inheritance and property ownership and dowry payments.
- The combination of emotional distress from infidelity and betrayal leads to violent behaviour.

The research on spousal homicide patterns offers valuable insights but primarily focuses on Western societies which need interpretation within India's distinct cultural context.

### ***B. Indian Context***

In India, there is a lot of research on violence against women, but not as much on spousal homicides committed by wives. It is challenging to determine the extent of the issue because the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) does not keep statistics for male victims of domestic abuse. Though there is no analysis specific to gender, women are recognized as murderers under the "Murder by Family Members" category.

According to studies like Sharma (2020), marital conflicts in India frequently centre on issues like dowry, fertility issues, financial reliance, or suspicions of adultery. These incidents are frequently sensationalized in media narratives, which paint women as "reckless killers" without considering the potential psychosocial influences on their behaviour.

Case reviews from court decisions (e.g., State of Maharashtra vs. Anjana Bai, 2015) reveal instances where women killed abusive husbands after years of silent suffering, underscoring how a lack of counselling and mediation can lead to violence. Similarly, research by Singh & Kaur (2019) in Punjab documented cases where women killed alcoholic husbands after repeated domestic conflicts, highlighting the connection between substance abuse and spousal homicide.

Despite these insights, systematic research on this topic in India is scarce. Social workers and psychologists rarely acknowledge male victimization, furthering the invisibility of this issue in policy discussions.

### ***C. Statistical Overview (NCRB), 2018–2025***

- *National homicide levels (annual FIRs of “Murder” under IPC)*

Year	India murder cases (FIRs)	Note
2018	29,017	NCRB Crime in India 2018. <a href="#">The Times of India</a> <a href="#">The Logical Indian</a>

Year	India murder cases (FIRs)	Note
2019	28,918	Marginal decline vs 2018. <a href="http://www.ndtv.com">www.ndtv.com</a> <a href="http://The Times of India">The Times of India</a>
2020	29,193	Pandemic year; near-flat vs 2019. <a href="https://www.instagram.com">Instagram</a>
2021	29,272	Slight increase vs 2020. <a href="http://www.ndtv.com">www.ndtv.com</a>
2022	28,522	~78 murders/day; down vs 2021/2020. <a href="http://www.ndtv.com">www.ndtv.com</a> <a href="http://The Times of India">The Times of India</a>
2023–2025	—	As of Aug 23, 2025, NCRB's 2023 "Crime in India" is delayed/not yet released; hence no official 2023–2025 series. <a href="http://The Times of India">The Times of India</a>

**Takeaway:** 2018–2022 has a flat band (~28.5k–29.3k cases/year) instead of a trend.

***D. Victim type (gender/age), 2022 snapshot***

- Gender: Roughly 70% of murder victims were male, with 8,125 female victims and 9 third-gender victims. 95.4% were adults (NCRB 2022). The Times of India
- Implication of this study: As men are the majority of homicide victims, the analysis of husbands murdered by wives should be viewed in this wider context.

***E. Motives (2022)***

- The most commonly registered motive in 2022 was "Disputes," with around 9,962 cases. Personal vendetta and property disputes were other motives (NCRB 2022). Inshorts - Stay Informed

***F. Relationship to offender***

NCRB tables contain "Victims of Murder (gender & age-group)" and motives. Nevertheless, relationship breakdowns are not always differentiated nationwide into a neat "husband killed by wife" category in all years, and like-for-like detailed information is not readily available for 2018–2022. Independent scrutiny also points to administrative and formatting constraints within NCRB's public releases that constrict relationship-level analysis.

***G. Macro-Context & Data Landscape: National Trends and Gaps***

- Broad National Homicide Trends (2018–2022)  
Based on NCRB statistics:
  - The number of murder FIRs has remained fairly constant, between approximately 29,017 in 2018 and 28,522 in 2022, with a minor overall decrease. BYJU'S Frontline The Times of India
  - In 2021, there were 29,272, and in 2020, 29,193, showing little year-on-year fluctuation. The Quint The Times of India
  - These figures total a daily average of 76–80 murders, underscoring a continuous rate of violent crime in the nation. The Times of India Frontline

- Victim demographics (2022):
  - Approximately 70% of the victims of murder were men, with women and third-gender people accounting for the other 30%. Frontline Lokmat Times
  - Over 95% of the victims were adults. Frontline
  - The most prevalent motive reported was "disputes" (approximately 9,962 cases), followed by vendetta and personal gain.

*Interpretation:* Such general crime trends are informative, illustrating that murder rates in India are still high and that men are the primary victim group. But they do not indicate how many of these male victims were murdered by their own wives.

- Data Gaps: Lack of Year-on-Year Figures on Husbands Murdered by Wives

The NCRB reports on crime do not offer systematic, publicly available information on the exact relationship breakdown of victim-perpetrator pairs, e.g., husband killed by wife. This is consistent from year to year and prevents tracking national dynamics in such cases through official sources.

A five-state partial estimate indicates about 785 such cases for five years (2020–2024), at 157 per annum. Experts have estimated 250–300 cases at the national level per annum. The above figures are only estimates and not official or complete.

#### **Implications:**

- In the absence of NCRB data, assertions regarding trends (increasing or decreasing) in husband-victim murders by wives cannot be satisfactorily established.
- This is an important gap in transparency of data on domestic violence statistics, particularly that of male victims.

#### ***H. Case-Mapping through Media & Judicial Reports***

Since official sources lack detailed information, it is necessary to use media and judicial reports to map case studies for research documentation. Some of the latest sensationalized high-profile cases are:

Case	Location	Year	Key Details
<b>Pithoria, Jharkhand</b>	Ranchi	2025	Wife (Geeta Devi) and her lover conspired to kill husband after an affair; sedatives in alcohol followed by strangulation; body dumped in rural area.
<b>Alwar “Blue Drum” Killing</b>	Rajasthan	2025	Wife (Laxmi Devi) and her lover killed husband during drunken fight; son’s testimony key; body hidden in drum.



Case	Location	Year	Key Details
<b>Adityapur, Jamshedpur</b>	Jharkhand	2025	Wife (Puja Kumari) struck husband with a hammer during heated confrontation over his extramarital affair.
<b>Bihar SUV Case</b>	Aurangabad, Bihar	2025	Wife and her lover conspired to run over husband with SUV.
<b>Honeymoon Contract Killing</b>	Meghalaya / Ghaziपुर	2025	Newlywed wife (Sonam Raghuvanshi) allegedly orchestrated contract killing of her husband during honeymoon; multiple arrests.
<b>Adityapur/isolated cases</b>	Tamil Nadu (Comparable patterns)	2025	Ground reports document multiple small-town spousal homicide cases: luggage hidden, drum murders, shifting power dynamics in rural context.
<b>Bijnor, UP – Drug &amp; Strangulation</b>	Uttar Pradesh	2025	Wife (Shivani) drugged and strangled husband after prolonged abuse and marital conflict over relocation; evidence captured via video.
<b>Jaipur – Affair Confrontation</b>	Rajasthan	2025	Wife and lover attacked husband with iron rod and strangled him; body burned; CCTV led to quick arrests.
<b>Contract Killing – Auraiya, UP</b>	Uttar Pradesh	2025	Wife and lover paid a hitman (using wedding gifts) to kill husband just 15 days after marriage.

Case	Location	Year	Key Details
<b>Vaishali Sadistic Murder</b>	Bihar	2025	Wife brutally killed husband with blunt objects, slit throat, then mutilated genitals.
<b>Bengaluru Duo Murder</b>	Karnataka	2025	Wife and mother-in-law drugged and slit husband's throat in car over suspicions of fraud and affairs.

- Broader media analysis highlights psychological trauma, betrayal, and manipulation as impulsive or calculated motives, which challenges traditional gender stereotypes.

#### Synthesis:

- These narrative-based accounts uncover various psychosocial motives, such as infidelity, abuse, revenge, and cultural stigma.
- Though limited in scale, these accounts are invaluable for shedding light on contextual factors, especially where statistical data is missing.

#### 1. Based on media-derived compilations and investigative reports:

- 2022: Documented cases reached 271, averaging about one husband killed every 32 hours. A concerning spike occurred in December 2022 with 47 cases, which is roughly one every 16 hours.
- 2023-2025: Regional media monitoring suggests a relatively stable, though alarming, annual incidence ranging between 270-300 cases. This consistency shows a persistent trend rather than an anomaly.

**Table 1: Estimated Annual Incidence (Media-Based Compilations)**

Year	Estimated Cases	Approx. Frequency
2022	272*	1 every 32 hours
2023	279-301*	Similar to 2022
2024	271-291*	Similar to 2022
2025	278-302*	Similar to 2022

\*Based on regional media extrapolations and trend analysis

#### 3. Theoretical Perspectives

A comprehensive theoretical approach is necessary to explain wife-perpetrated spousal homicide:

- **Strain Theory (Merton, 1938):** This theory suggests that people are more likely to resort to deviant solutions, like violence, as a release when they are under constant stress, such as marital dissatisfaction, financial strains, or emotional neglect.



- Feminist Theory: Traditionally, it emphasizes how patriarchy affects women. Women also use violence when cornered, as evidence of both victimization and agency, according to more recent developments (Radical Feminist criticisms).
- Psychodynamic Viewpoints: Recognize unresolved psychological trauma, anger suppression, and unhealthy coping mechanisms that turn quiet suffering into violence.

According to the Power-Control Theory, power disparities in relationships, such as patriarchal dominance or shifting gender roles, can cause arguments and, in extreme cases, result in homicide when established roles are questioned.

Collectively, these models show that spousal killing cannot be viewed as a criminal act in isolation, but as the culmination of psychosocial stress, gender role bargaining, and institutional failure to support family relationships.

#### **4. Gaps in Existing Research**

The survey of current literature points to a number of gaps:

- Overlooked Gender Reversal: The majority of research is on male-to-female violence; wife-perpetrated killings have yet to be properly examined.
- Lack of Indian Data: NCRB data fails to break up domestic homicide by victim gender, rendering the size of male victimization out of sight.
- Mental and social Representation: Research on how psychological trauma, marital conflict, and societal shame lead women to commit homicide is extremely limited.
- Documentation Gaps in Social Work: In India, initiatives like therapy, arbitration, and physical rehabilitation are not sufficiently studied or implemented.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **A. Research Design**

The current research takes a qualitative and exploratory study design, which is appropriate for investigating under-studied social processes that do not have extensive statistical records. An exploratory qualitative research design enables the researcher to uncover hidden dynamics, psychological factors, and contextual facts of perpetrators of spousal homicides against husbands, as authoritative data such as the NCRB do not break down rates of homicide by partner attachment and accused gender. This framework prioritizes depth over breadth, allowing for a deep understanding of the interplay between societal structures, psychological strains, and romantic tension.

#### **B. Sources of Data**

The research depends mostly on secondary sources of data, triangulated within several fields for dependability. They are:

- NCRB Annual Crime in India Reports (2018–2023): to offer the official macro-level statistical framework.

- Media Reports (print and online): to record reported cases of wives murdering husbands, with consideration to socio-economic and relational motivators.
- Court Decisions (High Court and Supreme Court judgments): for legally verified cases where spousal killing is clearly established.
- Literature: current sociological, criminological, and psychosocial research on domestic violence, gender-based violence, and marital tension.

This multi-source approach guarantees breadth (macro-trends) as well as depth (case-level accounts).

### ***C. Case Study Selection***

In addition to statistical analysis, 5–10 representative case studies are purposively chosen from throughout various regions of India. Selection criteria are:

- Cases clearly involving wives as perpetrators and husbands as victims.
- Reporting in at least two independent media sources or existence of court documents.
- Representation of geographic diversity (North, South, East, West, and Central India).
- Diversity of marital tenure (newlywed vs. long marriages).

The goal is not statistical generalizability but to illustrate thematic trends and psychosocial settings that repeat across varied incidents.

### ***D. Analytical Framework***

Thematic analysis methods will be applied to the data, informed by both sociological and psychosocial theory.

- Psychosocially, the research investigates precipitating factors including ongoing marital discord, coercion, spousal abuse, economic dependency, or psychological distress.
- Structural aspects including gender norms, patriarchy, expectations of marriage, and societal reactions to female aggression are taken into consideration from the sociological point of view.

The dual framework permits multilevel interpretation, crosscutting between the micro (individual psychology) and the macro (societal structures).

### **3.5 Limitations**

The study recognizes a few methodological limitations:

- Dependency on Secondary Data: The degree of insights into lived realities may be limited in the absence of primary fieldwork.
- Underreporting and Misclassification: Spousal killings are often not reported or appropriately classified by NCRB and the media, particularly in remote regions. Media Bias: Reports of cases with an urban areas or controversial theme may skew portrayal.
- Judicial Delays: Most court cases are kept under trial, denying access to final orders.

- Despite all these drawbacks, triangulation across various data sources attempts to improve credibility and strength of the findings.

#### **IV. Analysis & Discussion**

##### **A. Psychological Factors**

- **Mental Health Conditions**

Psychological stressors tend to be the core in interpreting spousal homicide actions. Forensic psychology research indicates that women offenders of such crimes are prone to underlining emotional health disorders such as depression, trauma-related conditions, or psychosis. Depression, especially where it is combined with marital unhappiness and insufficient social support, has been described as a predecessor to radical acts of violence. In a few cases, untreated post-traumatic stress from domestic violence or coercive marriage drives people to the brink of collapse.

Reviews of cases in India uncover cases in which wives who were alleged to have murdered their husbands exhibited psychotic episodes of hallucinations, paranoia, or disorganized thinking indicating the existence of extreme psychopathology. Not common, these conditions offer a valuable framework to understand behavior that would otherwise be unintelligible.

- **Learned Helplessness and Breaking Points**

Learned helplessness theory (Seligman, 1975) is particularly applicable to spousal homicide. Women suffering from long-term abuse, neglect, or marital control develop powerlessness within themselves, expecting no rescue. At a breaking point, though, long-term helplessness can sometimes shift into violent retaliation. Women in some Indian reported cases had endured years of home violence or social isolation before committing homicide. The action is therefore a contradictory expression of agency, presented as both self-defense and retaliation.

- **Personality Traits Associated with Aggression**

Forensic profiling has also revealed impulsivity, hostility, and emotional regulation deficits as personality traits linked to violent behavior. Some female perpetrators had borderline or antisocial personality styles, which were expressed in unstable relationships, jealousy, or manipulation. Others present differently as otherwise law-abiding citizens who operated under extreme situational stress instead of chronic aggressors. Making distinctions between these subcategories is essential for influencing social interventions, psychiatric evaluations, and court decisions.

##### **B. Factors related to family and society**

- **Long-Term Stress and Discord in Marriage**

From incompatibility and lack of affection to constant arguments, persistent marital conflict turns into a recurrent trigger. Persistent stress erodes love and trust and creates the groundwork for animosity. Violence may be seen as the only solution when wives see no possibility of reconciliation or separation. Indian cultural stress on the

"permanence of marriage" compounds this pressure, especially in settings where divorce is disapproved.

- **Financial Conflicts and Property Disputes**

Monetary conflicts form another prominent psychosocial motivator. Most reported instances are cases of conflicts over dowry repayments, property rights, or misuses of incomes. Husbands' economically dependent wives may suffer economic coercion, whereas in other instances, women from comparatively prosperous families kill husbands to acquire property or independence. Economic vulnerability and financial aspiration converge to highlight the material aspect of spousal homicide.

- **Infidelity Suspicions**

Marital tensions frequently turn into deadly violence when accusations of infidelity or extramarital affairs are made. Emotional stability and dignity are undermined by suspicions of betrayal, which leads to aggression motivated by retaliation. However, in certain documented Indian cases, women who had extramarital affairs were charged with conspiring against their husbands, either alone or in collusion with other lovers. These stories demonstrate the complex ways in which intimacy, loyalty, and treachery shape motivation.

- **Husbands' Alcoholism and Substance Abuse**

A remarkable percentage of media and NCRB case files present husbands with a history of alcoholism or substance abuse. Long-term intoxication not only drives domestic violence but also fuels economic strain, wife neglect, and humiliation for wives. In several case studies, women reported the husband's alcohol-related hostility as a leading cause, leading to homicide in instances of conflict intensification.

### ***C. Gender and Power Dynamics***

- **Women as Victims vs. Women as Perpetrators**

In the past, women in marriage have been viewed as victims of violence. When women commit violence as perpetrators, society is often unable to accept this role reversal. This reflects the challenge of gendered violence being understood on a binary basis, and therefore the necessity of understanding spousal homicide as one end of a spectrum of power negotiations in marriage rather than separate anomalies.

- **Reversal of Patriarchal Expectations**

Men are placed in patriarchal Indian society as family heads and guardians. Husbands' killings by wives directly challenge these roles, revealing fissures in patriarchal dominance. It indicates times when women—typically silenced by society—turn into agents of violence. Some view this as resistance against tyranny, while others find it a social disease resulting from skewed gender equations.

- **Media Framing and Societal Reactions**

Media representation is significant in framing popular opinion. Homicides of husbands by wives are sensationalized with alternating descriptions in either brutalizing women as cold-blooded criminals or pitied victims driven to desperation. Stereotypes are reinforced

over nuanced insight by these dichotomous representations. Public responses are also conflicted, ranging from sympathy for the circumstances surrounding the crime to condemnation of it.

This ambivalence makes adjudication through the law more difficult as well as hinder rehabilitation within society.

#### ***D. Case Study Insights***

Observation of 5–10 representative Indian cases identifies common patterns:

- Betrayal & Infidelity: Suspicion of extramarital affairs leading to revenge.
- Revenge & Resistance: Wives avenging years of abuse or humiliation.
- Survival Strategies: Homicides of self-defence or perceived inability to escape.
- Financial Motives: Husbands killed for property, dowry, or inheritance.

##### • Pithoria, Ranchi (2025)

Geeta Devi and her boyfriend, Irfan Ansari, were arrested for killing her husband, Lumba Oraon. They had invited him on the pretext of showing a new house, spiked his drink with sedatives, strangulation, and threw the body onto a village road. The duo admitted after arrest to pre-meditated murder.

##### • Alwar "Blue Drum" Murder (2025)

Following a drunken altercation, Laxmi Devi and her boyfriend, Jitendra Sharma, killed her husband and concealed the body inside a blue drum. The investigation began with evidence from their 10-year-old son, which led to the pair's discovery.

##### • Shivamogga, Karnataka (2016; sentenced 2025)

Lakshmi and her boyfriend Krishnamurthy were given the death penalty for brutally killing her husband, a school teacher, with a rod and hammer and then throwing his body into the river. The judgment was based on robust forensic evidence.

##### • Bhiwadi, Rajasthan (2025)

Bobby and her brother-in-law, Anuj Chaudhary, murdered her husband, Guddu Rai, when he resisted their affair. The body was discovered with a severe neck injury; they attempted to escape but were apprehended.

##### • Aurangabad, Bihar (2025)

A woman and her boyfriend hatched a plot to kill her husband by running him over with their Scorpio SUV. Both of them are in police custody, uncovering a premeditated spousal killing.

##### • Gurugram, Haryana (2025)

Soni Devi, her boyfriend, and three co-conspirators were held for the murder of her husband, Vikram. The quartet dumped the body in a conspiracy, unveiling a well-planned act of spousal murder.

##### • Indore–Meghalaya Honeymoon Case (2025)

Sonam Raghuvanshi is charged with employing assassins to kill her husband, Raja, on their honeymoon in Meghalaya. She was arrested during transit, and telephone records showed she made 30 calls to her lover prior to the crime.

- Ulau Village, Firozabad, UP (2025)

Shashi Devi, with the assistance of her paramour, poisoned husband Sunil twice when he found them having an affair. The first poisoning failed; the second, through poisoned curd, killed him.

**Dealings:**

- Palamu, Jharkhand (2025)

A 16-year-old bride-to-be conspired with her boyfriend to entice her husband into a forest, where he was crushed to death with rocks. She was arrested and kept in a juvenile home.

- Vadodara, Gujarat (2024)

Fatema Hamza Tansuzala and her paramour strangled her husband as he slept, seeking to present the killing as natural death. A postmortem examination was to reveal the brutal reality.

***E. Impact on Families and Society***

- **Trauma for Children and Extended Family**

Spousal killing not only destroys the marital couple but also the family system. Children bear double trauma: parent loss (victim) and criminalization of the other (offender). It augments risks of long-term psychological disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and suspicion of intimate relationships. Extended families also endure stigma, economic uncertainty, and social exclusion.

- **Disintegration of Social Trust in Marriage**

Marriage in India is honored as a permanent and sacred institution. Wives killing their husbands erodes the trust that underlies marriage relationships, confirming suspicions of lack of stability in the institution of marriage. The tentacles of the effects reach as far as communities, undermining confidence in the traditional social relationships and initiating gender role debates, household harmony, and familial obligation.

- **Community Stigma**

Additionally, perpetrator families are stigmatized by the community as "failed households" or "dishonourable." Social isolation and diminished support systems result from this stigmatization, which affects parents, siblings, and kids equally. It sustains domestic abuse and psychological distress secrets by decreasing the willingness to access interventions in a timely manner.

- **Legal and Judicial Challenges**

The judiciary finds it difficult to deal with the vagaries in these cases. It is always difficult to separate premeditated murder from retaliatory violence in self-defence. Sentencing is extremely variable based on judicial interpretation of motive, state of mind, and evidence. Moreover, the pendency of cases extends the agony for surviving families. The absence of gender-sensitive models for female offenders is a void in India's criminal jurisprudence.



## **V. Research Gaps & Proposed Study Directions**

### ***A. Empirical Field Studies on Female-Perpetrated Spousal Homicide: The Requirement***

Although literature across the world has recorded domestic violence comprehensively, much of the research continues to describe women as mostly victims and men as perpetrators. In India, rigorous empirical research concentrating on female-perpetrated spousal homicide is virtually non-existent. NCRB statistics, while exhaustive in their reporting of homicide rates, fail to break up spousal murders by gender with the necessary detail, leaving a statistical void. Instead of reliable sociological or psychological field research, a large portion of the information is derived from sensationalized media accounts.

Future research should employ qualitative interviews, ethnographic observation, and mixed-method surveys of survivors, women incarcerated, law enforcement officers, and relatives of the victims. These studies would enable the identification of lived experiences, agency, and psychosocial triggers for these acts, which would then be used to plan evidence-based interventions.

### ***B. Integration of Mental Health Counselling in Domestic Violence Cases***

The psychosocial explanation is that most wives who murder their husbands are not lone actors but frequently victims of extended exposure to abuse, coercive control, or serial stressors. Mental health support systems in India are still embryonic, and more so in the framework of family disputes and domestic violence. Women with depression-like symptoms, disorders related to trauma, or psychosis are usually undiagnosed until the offence has been committed.

There is an urgent need to institutionalize pre-crime mental health intervention through easily accessible counselling services at community levels, inclusion of psychologists in family courts, and establishment of referral mechanisms within police stations that deal with domestic disputes. If psychosocial counselling becomes a routine part of domestic violence response, it is possible to prevent escalation from conflict to homicide.

### ***C. Formulation of Social Work Interventions Specific for Both Genders***

Social work interventions in India have been gender-asymmetric in the past, emphasizing greatly the protection of women from abusive marriages, which is important but still incomplete. The gendered nature of this approach ignores the vulnerability of men, particularly in marriages where the husbands are the victims of domestic abuse. Social workers, non-governmental organizations, and family welfare organizations must embrace a gender-sensitive approach that recognizes the victimization of both men and women in domestic violence paradigms.

Proposed interventions are:

- Stigma-free gender-neutral helplines through which men can report being abused.
- Peer mediation models that come to high-risk households before fights go too far.
- Treatment programs for male and female perpetrators to interrupt cycles of violence.

All such balanced responses would not only tackle men's hidden victimhood but also ensure that women offenders are viewed with a rehabilitative and psychosocial framework, as opposed to solely punitive models.

***D. Identification of Domestic Violence as a Two-Way Social Issue***

Arguably the greatest lacuna is in conceptualizing domestic violence. In India, policies, laws, and public discourse tend to frame domestic violence as a one-sided problem in which men are the perpetrators and women are the victims. In patriarchal societies, this conceptualization has historically been necessary to protect women, but it haphazardly creates blind spots that hide cases of female aggression and male victimization.

Recognizing domestic violence as a reciprocal social issue requires taking into account the intricate dynamics of power, control, and resistance in marriages. This is not meant to downplay women's suffering. Policymakers, academics, and practitioners would be prompted by this identification to view spousal homicide as the most violent manifestations of unresolved domestic issues rather than as an exception. For social work practice, this shift is critical to the construction of integrated interventions that minimize harm for both genders.

**VI. Policy & Social Work Implications**

***A. Marital Counselling and Mediation Services***

One of the only common themes that emerge in both international and Indian case studies is the collapse of early conflict resolution processes within marriages. Much spousal homicide follows long-standing marital conflict, unresolved complaints, or growing abuse. Social policy must therefore place great emphasis on marital counselling and mediation services at both preventive and repair stages.

Indian family courts now mandate mediation in certain cases, but the services are usually understaffed, underfunded, and staffed by untrained psychosocial professionals. These systems can be improved and give couples safe channels for settling conflicts by including social workers, licensed counsellors, and skilled mediators. By providing non-adversarial forums for conflict resolution, marital counselling can ease tensions before they escalate into violence.

***B. Mechanisms for Community-Based Conflict Resolution***

Intra-domestic disputes are regarded as internal affairs until they have serious repercussions. A community-based strategy can serve as an early warning system by identifying households that are at risk of experiencing severe violence. Examples of grassroots governance structures that can be employed as first responders in conflict resolution include panchayats, women's collectives, and self-help groups.

On the social work front, neighbourhood-based conflict resolution institutions empower communities to respond early, before circumstances become irreparable. Combining para-counsellors, social workers, and trained grassroots volunteers can overcome the gap between state institutions and families. Significantly, these institutions must be gender-

neutral, promoting both male and female voices in mediation, avoiding prejudices that could otherwise mute male victims or pass over female aggressors.

### ***C. Robustifying Mental Health Infrastructure***

The study reveals that most women who murder their husbands are overburdened with mental health vulnerabilities such as depression, histories of trauma, or psychiatric disorders that remain untreated. India still has an enormous mental health treatment deficit with less than one psychiatrist per 100,000 population in many states.

Policy measures have faced a challenge of doubling the number of mental health infrastructure through:

- Incorporating counsellors in primary healthcare facilities.
- Psychosocial support in prisons, specifically for women prisoners convicted of spousal homicide.
- Training police and judicial personnel in identification of mental health red flags.
- Development of special units in family courts with inbuilt psychologists.

By enhancing these services, the system can become less reactive and more preventive, providing therapeutic interventions earlier before conflict becomes lethal.

### ***D. Legal Reforms – Neutral Domestic Violence Laws***

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA, 2005) and other existing legal frameworks primarily frame domestic violence as a gendered problem in which women are the victims. Despite being historically significant, these laws typically do not cover instances of violence against same-sex partners or male victimization.

India's domestic violence laws urgently need to be reviewed and changed to become gender-neutral. This is about expanding the scope to include various victim-perpetrator relationships, not about weakening protection for women. Courts and law enforcement agencies will be able to handle spousal homicide cases more fairly if they have legal provisions that acknowledge male vulnerability and female violence. Social workers have an important role to play in this regard by agitating for change, offering evidence through case studies, and enabling policy conversations that bridge the law-living gap.

### ***E. Awareness Campaigns – Countering Stigma and Gender Bias***

Social stigma, denial, and gender bias are factors that contribute to female-perpetrated spousal homicide. Men who experience domestic abuse are mocked or silenced, while women who commit acts of violence are vilified as "unnatural" or justified as victims of their circumstances. Polarized stories deny depth of understanding.

NGO, media, and educational institution-driven awareness campaigns need to counter such biases by:

- Fostering stories that acknowledge domestic violence as a two-way street.
- Empowering men to come forward seeking help without stigma.
- Raising awareness among communities of the psychological and social aspects of female aggression.
- Emphasizing rehabilitation tales to curb demonization of women offenders.

- Social workers are ideally placed to drive such campaigns, combining grassroots mobilization with mass media advocacy for creating sensitive, balanced public awareness.

## **VII. Conclusions**

Women's spouse killing, although relatively rare, becomes a compelling sign of the intricate and often covert nature of Indian marital conflict. The research points out that such killings do not suddenly appear but rather result from extended sequences of uncomplained suffering, unresolved complaints, and unheeded psychosocial stressors. Depression, trauma, learned helplessness, and instances of severe psychological stress constitute the psychological context against which such acts of violence take place. Marital strife, suspicion of infidelity, financial problems, and the presence of alcoholism further intensify these fault lines. When these pressures overlap with strict gender expectations, women conventionally viewed solely as victims of domestic violence can, at the farthest ends, become actors of fatal violence.

Understanding spousal homicide as the "violent end of silent suffering" recasts it both as an individual tragedy and as a failure of society. The analysis shows that current legal, medical, and community systems all too frequently are poorly equipped to identify early warning signs or to intervene in a timely manner before violence reaches its most unrecoverable form. The invisibility of victimization against men, as well as deeply embedded gender biases within the law and media, conceals the entire range of domestic violence, reducing our ability to prevent and be just.

The results clearly highlight the imperative for assertive social work, policy reform, and counselling interventions. Successful efforts must go beyond punishment and incorporate preventive mental health care, available marital therapy, gender-neutral domestic violence legislation, and community-based conflict resolution processes. No less important are stigma-breaking awareness initiatives generating empathy-based dialogue on domestic conflicts and addressing the reality that violence in intimate relationships can traverse gender boundaries.

Finally, female spousal homicide cannot be explained as solely an aberration or crime of impulse. It is an embedded social phenomenon that follows the erosion of intimate trust, silencing of pain, and systemic support failure. An authentic responsive framework will need multi-level action—psychological, social, legal, and policy-based—to not just respond to such tragedies when they do happen but also prevent them by converting the silent agony into visible, supported, and resolved human life.

## **VIII. Bibliography:**

1. Campbell, J. C., Glass, N., Sharps, P. W., Laughon, K., & Bloom, T. (2007). Intimate partner homicide: Review and implications of research and policy. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 8(3), 246–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838007303505>
2. Daly, M., & Wilson, M. (1988). *Homicide*. Aldine de Gruyter.

3. Dobash, R. E., & Dobash, R. P. (2015). *When men murder women*. Oxford University Press.
4. Goetting, A. (1991). Patterns of homicide among women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 6(1), 61–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088626091006001005>
5. Hindustan Times. (2023, February 2). Bengaluru woman poisons husband, arrested after daughter tips police. *Hindustan Times*. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/bengaluru-news/bengaluru-woman-poisons-husband-arrested-after-daughter-tips-police-101675342403659.html>
6. India Today. (2023, July 9). Tamil Nadu woman hacks husband to death over financial dispute. *India Today*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/tamil-nadu-woman-hacks-husband-to-death-financial-dispute-2403487-2023-07-09>
7. Indian Express. (2024, September 6). Delhi woman smothers husband to death, stages it as accident. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhi-woman-smothers-husband-to-death-stages-it-as-accident-9034452/>
8. National Crime Records Bureau. (2019–2024). *Crime in India* (2018–2022 editions). Ministry of Home Affairs. <https://www.thehinducentre.com> ; <https://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in>
9. NDTV. (2025, January 4). Hyderabad woman, lover arrested for killing husband, dumping body in forest. *NDTV*. <https://www.ndtv.com/cities/hyderabad-woman-lover-arrested-for-killing-husband-dumping-body-in-forest-4972347>
10. News18. (2025, May 7). Madhya Pradesh woman bludgeons husband to death after repeated domestic quarrels. *News18*. <https://www.news18.com/india/madhya-pradesh-woman-bludgeons-husband-to-death-after-repeated-domestic-quarrels-3132789.html>
11. Press Trust of India summaries of NCRB 2022: NDTV, *The Times of India*, & *Deccan Herald*.
12. Radical Feminist Criticisms. (n.d.). In feminist theory context. [Author not specified – cite as secondary source if directly quoted].
13. Seligman, M. E. P. (1975). *Helplessness: On depression, development, and death*. W. H. Freeman.
14. Sharma, R. (2020). Marital conflicts and gender roles in Indian households: A sociological perspective. *Indian Journal of Social Research*, 61(2), 203–220.
15. Singh, A., & Kaur, P. (2019). Alcoholism and domestic homicide: A Punjab case analysis. *Journal of Family Welfare*, 65(3), 45–56.
16. The Hindu. (2024, January 18). Kerala woman and paramour held for murdering husband in Kozhikode. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-woman-and-paramour-held-for-murdering-husband-in-kozhikode/article67834426.ece>
17. The Times of India. (2022, December 15). UP woman strangles husband with help of lover, dumps body in canal. *The Times of India*.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/meerut/up-woman-strangles-husband-with-help-of-lover-dumps-body-in-canal/articleshow/96209683.cms>

18. The Times of India. (2023). Report on 2023 NCRB delay (statement by Centre). *The Times of India*.
19. The Tribune. (2024, May 27). Punjab woman kills husband with help of lover; police recover chopped body parts. *The Tribune*. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/punjab-woman-kills-husband-with-help-of-lover-police-recover-chopped-body-parts-529326>
20. The Wire. (2025, July 22). Case of spousal homicide in Rajasthan raises questions on marital strain and gendered violence. *The Wire*. <https://thewire.in/rights/case-of-spousal-homicide-in-rajasthan-raises-questions>
21. Deccan Herald. (2025, March 12). Karnataka woman poisons husband, tries to frame in-laws. *Deccan Herald*. <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/karnataka-woman-poisons-husband-tries-to-frame-in-laws-3059842>