



GENDERED POWER IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN INDIA

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Abstract

This paper investigates the manifestation of gendered power in India's law enforcement and justice system, emphasizing how institutional structures and cultural practices reproduce patriarchal hierarchies. While constitutional and legal reforms have increased women's visibility in policing and the judiciary, gendered norms continue to constrain their roles and effectiveness. Drawing on feminist legal theory, intersectionality, and recent empirical research, the study explores how masculinized police cultures and hierarchical judicial frameworks inhibit equitable access to justice. All-women police stations (AWPS), though designed to support survivors of gender-based violence, often become marginal spaces within the broader policing apparatus, providing symbolic inclusion without substantive authority (Jassal, 2020). Moreover, the interaction of gender with caste, class, and geography further entrenches inequalities, particularly for Dalit and Adivasi women seeking redress (Rege, 2006). The paper analyzes policy developments, including the Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts and police reform reports, to assess their effectiveness in transforming institutional cultures. It argues that increasing the numerical presence of women in law enforcement is insufficient without dismantling structural barriers and addressing deep-seated biases. The study advocates for intersectional policy frameworks, gender-sensitization programs, and community-based restorative justice models as means to foster gender-equitable justice delivery. Through a comprehensive review of legal frameworks, case studies, and field-level dynamics, this research contributes to understanding the complex interplay between gender, power, and the Indian criminal justice system.

Keywords: Gendered Power, Law Enforcement, Justice System, Feminist Legal Theory, Intersectionality, Caste, and Gender Justice.

1. Introduction

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, India's law enforcement and justice system continues to reflect deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that marginalize women and gender-diverse individuals both within these institutions and in their

interactions with them. Gendered power—the institutionalized privileging of masculine norms and the subordination of feminine and non-conforming identities—shapes not only the structure and culture of police and judiciary systems but also the outcomes of justice processes (MacKinnon, 1989; Connell, 2005). Although legal reforms, affirmative action, and sensitization efforts have gained momentum over the past decade, they often fall short of producing structural transformation. Instead, symbolic gestures like women’s quotas and all-women police stations (AWPS) frequently obscure the persistence of masculine authority and gendered violence within these institutions (Jassal, 2020).

Law enforcement, especially the police, has historically been a male-dominated profession in India. As of 2023, women account for just 11% of the country’s police force (Bureau of Police Research and Development [BPR & D], 2023). Despite increasing recruitment efforts and formal commitments to gender equity, police institutions remain steeped in masculinist cultures marked by aggression, control, and hierarchy (Belur *et al.*, 2021). Female officers are often segregated into administrative roles or confined to “soft” policing duties such as handling crimes against women, thereby reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. Their limited access to decision-making roles and the frequent experience of workplace harassment exemplify the resistance of law enforcement institutions to gender-inclusive transformation (Jeyaraj & Misra, 2022).

Similarly, the judiciary—although less overtly masculinized than the police—remains governed by elite male perspectives. Women’s representation in India’s higher judiciary is extremely limited, with only a handful having ever served on the Supreme Court. Judicial interpretations of gendered violence and sexual autonomy often reflect a paternalistic logic that prioritizes social morality and family honor over individual rights (Kapur, 2018; Menon, 2004). This disconnect between formal legal equality and substantive justice is further compounded by caste, class, and religious inequalities, making the system especially exclusionary for Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, and queer individuals (Rege, 2006; Narrain & Chandran, 2016).

The intersection of caste and gender power is particularly salient in India. Cases such as the 2020 Hathrasganga rape and murder reveal how institutional actors—from police to judges—frequently collude to suppress justice when the survivor is from a marginalized caste

(Khosla, 2021). While the Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989, and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, have strengthened the legal framework for redress, implementation remains patchy and often retraumatizing for survivors (Chakraborty & Joseph, 2020). Police officers routinely delay or deny filing First Information Reports (FIRs), pressure survivors to mediate with perpetrators, and perpetuate secondary victimization. These practices underscore how state institutions act not as neutral arbiters but as active sites of gendered and caste-based oppression.

The introduction of AWPS in many Indian states was initially hailed as a progressive move. However, empirical studies show that such initiatives often become marginalized within police hierarchies and lack sufficient authority, staffing, or training (Jassal, 2020). Moreover, the relegation of gender-based crimes to women officers in AWPS reinforces the perception that issues of sexual and domestic violence are “women’s problems” rather than structural concerns. This ghettoization limits both the professional growth of women officers and the systemic accountability for gender-based crimes. As Acker (1990) explains in her theory of gendered organizations, superficial inclusion without altering the underlying organizational culture tends to reproduce existing power hierarchies.

Within the judiciary, similar patterns persist. Judicial pronouncements on rape and sexual harassment often rely on outdated notions of “modesty” and “chastity,” failing to center the survivor’s autonomy and dignity (Kapur, 2018). In some instances, courts have recommended compromise or marriage between survivors and perpetrators, or questioned the credibility of survivors based on their sexual history—practices that starkly contradict the principles of gender justice (Menon, 2004). Even landmark decisions—such as *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* (1997), *Joseph Shine v. Union of India* (2018), and *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018)—have not led to sustained reforms in courtroom procedure or judicial attitudes at the ground level.

Moreover, for LGBTQ+ and transgender persons, the situation remains particularly precarious. Despite progressive rulings such as *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014), law enforcement continues to harass, extort, and violate the rights of gender non-conforming individuals under the guise of “morality” and “public order” (Narain & Chandran, 2016). Many police personnel are unaware of or dismissive toward protections granted under the Transgender Persons (Protection of

Rights) Act, 2019, rendering it ineffective in practice. As a result, queer and trans individuals often experience the justice system not as a safeguard but as a threat.

This research draws on feminist legal theory and intersectionality as analytical frameworks. Feminist legal scholars argue that the law is not an abstract and neutral system but a socially constructed institution that reflects and reinforces male dominance (MacKinnon, 1989; Smart, 1989). In India, scholars like Kapur (2018) and Menon (2004) have critically examined how law often functions as a site of both empowerment and subjugation for women. Intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw (1991), provides a methodological lens to examine how multiple axes of identity—gender, caste, class, religion, and sexuality—interact to produce layered experiences of injustice. Applying these frameworks allows this study to move beyond binary gender analysis and foreground the complexities of marginalization within legal institutions.

The scope of this research includes both institutional (internal) and experiential (external) dimensions of gendered power in law enforcement and the judiciary. Internally, it examines recruitment, career progression, training, and workplace culture in the police and judiciary. Externally, it explores how survivors of gender-based violence interact with these institutions and the outcomes of such interactions. The study further analyzes how recent legal reforms, gender sensitization programs, and symbolic measures such as quotas and AWPS have fared in practice.

This inquiry is timely and necessary. As India embarks on policing modernization efforts and judicial digitization programs, questions of gender equity must be foregrounded rather than sidelined. Law enforcement and judicial institutions must move from mere representation toward substantive transformation—ensuring that inclusion is not just statistical but structural. Institutional change must address implicit bias, power asymmetries, and systemic discrimination to create a justice system that is truly accessible, fair, and responsive.

By addressing these questions, this paper seeks to contribute to the growing body of feminist legal scholarship that critiques institutionalized patriarchy and advocates for a gender-just legal order in India. Understanding how gendered power manifests in both subtle and overt ways is a prerequisite for designing interventions that go beyond tokenism and create real change. As this paper argues,

the future of justice in India hinges on the ability of its institutions to critically examine their own biases and reimagine justice not just as punishment or process—but as equity, dignity, and transformation.

2. Review of Literature

The dynamics of gendered power in law enforcement and the justice system in India have drawn increasing scholarly attention, especially in the context of systemic patriarchy, institutional bias, and intersectional marginalization. This review synthesizes key contributions from feminist legal theory, sociology, criminology, and public policy to contextualize the persistence of gender hierarchies within these institutions.

2.1 Feminist Legal Theory and Gendered Institutions

Feminist legal theorists have long critiqued the assumption that law is neutral or objective. MacKinnon (1989) argued that the law has historically been constructed through male experiences and priorities, embedding patriarchal values in its very structure. Smart (1989) further noted that legal discourse often marginalizes women's experiences by converting them into legal categories that depersonalize and decontextualize trauma. In the Indian context, Kapur (2018) applied these critiques to examine how the judiciary reinforces moralistic norms under the guise of legal reasoning, often failing to protect women's autonomy.

Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations is particularly instructive in analyzing police and judicial institutions. She posits that gender is not an individual attribute but a structural feature of organizations, embedded in divisions of labor, power, and culture. In Indian law enforcement, this manifests in the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, gendered task assignments, and a lack of institutional support for addressing harassment and discrimination (Belur *et al.*, 2021).

2.2 Women in Policing: Representation and Resistance

A substantial body of research has focused on the role of women in the Indian police force. As per data from the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR & D, 2023), women constitute only 11% of India's police personnel, despite policy goals targeting 33% representation. Scholars argue that inclusion efforts remain superficial and often reinforce gender norms rather than dismantle them. Belur *et al.* (2021)

found that women officers are frequently assigned to administrative or “soft” roles, such as handling crimes against women and children, which limits their operational experience and promotion prospects.

Jeyaraj and Misra (2022) further observed that even when women are recruited, they face gendered expectations, inadequate infrastructure (e.g., lack of separate restrooms or housing), and a culture that tolerates harassment. These conditions create a hostile work environment that discourages women’s long-term retention in policing. Similar trends have been documented by Rabe-Hemp (2008) and Martin (1999) in Western contexts, suggesting that the challenges women face in policing are structurally embedded rather than culturally isolated.

2.3 All-Women Police Stations: Progress or Ghettoization?

The establishment of all-women police stations (AWPS) has been heralded by some policymakers as a gender-sensitive intervention. However, empirical studies present a more nuanced picture. Jassal (2020), drawing on fieldwork in Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, argued that AWPS often operate at the margins of police hierarchies, receive fewer resources, and are treated as symbolic rather than substantive measures. Moreover, AWPS tend to be assigned only cases involving women and family disputes, which reinforces the stereotype that women are suited only for “domestic” policing.

Further critiques highlight that the existence of AWPS may discourage the mainstream police force from taking responsibility for gender-based crimes, thereby reinforcing the institutional perception that gender issues are not central to public safety but peripheral concerns (Ghosh, 2022). This kind of institutional ghettoization reflects a lack of genuine commitment to systemic reform and allows core police structures to continue operating within masculinist paradigms.

2.4 Judicial Bias and Gendered Interpretations of Law

In the judiciary, female representation remains alarmingly low. As of 2023, only three of the 34 sitting judges of the Supreme Court of India are women (Baruah, 2023). The situation in lower and high courts is similarly skewed. While judicial independence is constitutionally protected, the interpretation and application of laws often reflect the judges’ social and cultural biases. Kapur (2018) analyzed a series of judgments where courts invoked ideas of “honor,” “chastity,” or “family reputation” in rape and domestic violence cases, often to the detriment of the survivor.

Menon (2004) emphasized how legal interpretations of sexual violence in India tend to oscillate between viewing the woman as either a helpless victim or a morally suspect agent. This binary undermines the possibility of recognizing women's agency while acknowledging their vulnerability. Additionally, decisions that recommend marriage between the survivor and the perpetrator or allow compromise in cases of statutory rape highlight the paternalistic tendencies of the judiciary (Khosla, 2021).

2.5 Intersectionality: Caste, Class, and Queerness

Intersectional feminist scholars have expanded the scope of analysis by exploring how caste, class, and sexual orientation shape experiences of injustice. Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality has found resonance in Indian legal scholarship that examines how Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, and queer individuals face compounded marginalization. Rege (2006) argued that Dalit women experience a unique form of gendered violence that is often silenced in both feminist and anti-caste discourses. In high-profile cases like the 2020 Hathrasganga rape, the complicity of the police and political establishment in obstructing justice revealed the structural interplay of caste and gender in law enforcement (Khosla, 2021).

Narrain and Chandran (2016) explored how queer and trans individuals are criminalized by both law and its enforcers. Despite progressive Supreme Court verdicts such as *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) and *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018), law enforcement continues to harass and extort LGBTQ+ persons. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, has been criticized for its vague definitions, bureaucratic hurdles, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms, which leave the community vulnerable to state violence (Das, 2020).

2.6 Legal Reforms and Their Limits

Legislative changes following public outcry—such as the 2013 Criminal Law (Amendment) Act in response to the Nirbhaya case—have expanded the legal definitions of rape, stalking, and harassment. However, scholars question the efficacy of these reforms in the absence of changes to institutional culture. Agnes (2019) noted that despite legal provisions, access to justice remains a daunting process for survivors, marked by delays, hostility from police, and skepticism from judges.

Similarly, initiatives such as gender sensitization training for police and judicial officers often lack depth and continuity. A one-time workshop cannot undo years of institutional conditioning or systemic misogyny (Chakraborty & Joseph, 2020). What is needed is a structural reorientation that incorporates feminist jurisprudence into legal education and decision-making frameworks.

2.7 Comparative and Global Perspectives

Comparative studies underscore that gendered power in law enforcement is a global concern. Rabe-Hemp (2008) documented how even in countries with higher female police representation, organizational cultures often marginalize women. Heidensohn (1992) argued that policing as a profession has traditionally been constructed around ideals of masculinity—control, strength, and authority—making it inherently resistant to feminization. Indian scholars have drawn on these insights to argue that reform efforts must focus not just on inclusion but on transforming the values and structures of these institutions (Jassal, 2020; Kapur, 2018).

3. *Significance of the Study*

This study holds significant academic, legal, and social value by critically examining how gendered power dynamics shape law enforcement and the justice system in India. It contributes to existing feminist legal scholarship by uncovering how patriarchal, casteist, and heteronormative structures are embedded within institutions meant to uphold justice and equality. By analyzing gender-based disparities in representation, treatment, and access to justice, the research highlights institutionalized biases that hinder fair legal processes for women, transgender persons, and marginalized caste groups.

In a practical context, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, legal educators, human rights organizations, and law enforcement agencies aiming to implement meaningful reforms. Its intersectional approach emphasizes that justice cannot be achieved without considering the compounded effects of caste, class, religion, and sexuality on experiences within legal institutions. As India continues to enact legal reforms and gender-sensitive initiatives, this research offers a critical lens to evaluate their effectiveness and calls for more inclusive, transformative interventions.

Furthermore, the study serves as a tool for advocacy by amplifying the voices of those historically excluded from justice discourse—Dalit women, LGBTQ+ persons, and survivors of custodial violence. It encourages a shift from tokenistic gender inclusion toward substantive equity, accountability, and democratization within law enforcement and judicial spaces. Ultimately, this work contributes to the broader pursuit of social justice by challenging the status quo and envisioning a legal system that upholds dignity, diversity, and human rights for all.

4. Research Objectives

- To examine the structural and institutional manifestations of gendered power within India's law enforcement and judicial systems, with particular focus on patriarchal norms, gender hierarchies, and organizational practices.
- To analyze the representation and roles of women in policing and the judiciary, exploring the extent to which inclusion has led to substantive empowerment or has reinforced tokenism and gendered stereotypes.
- To investigate the intersectional dimensions of gender, caste, class, and sexuality in the experiences of marginalized groups within the criminal justice system, including Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, and LGBTQ+ communities.
- To assess the effectiveness of legal reforms and policy initiatives—such as gender sensitization programs, legislative amendments, and the establishment of all-women police stations—in promoting gender equity in justice delivery.
- To identify the barriers to institutional transformation and propose evidence-based recommendations for making India's law enforcement and judicial structures more gender-just and inclusive.

5. Research Questions

- How does gendered power operate structurally within Indian law enforcement and judicial institutions?
- What are the lived experiences of women serving in police forces and the judiciary, and how do these reflect broader institutional gender norms?

- To what extent do caste, class, religion, and sexuality intersect with gender to influence access to justice and experiences within the criminal justice system?
- How effective have state-led reforms (e.g., gender sensitization, all-women police stations, legal amendments) been in addressing gender inequity in the justice system?
- What institutional, cultural, and policy-related barriers hinder the realization of gender-just law enforcement and judicial practices in India?

6. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach based entirely on secondary data. It draws on scholarly literature, legal documents, government reports, and media sources to examine how gendered power operates within Indian law enforcement and the justice system. Key sources include peer-reviewed journals, feminist legal scholarship, Supreme Court judgments, reports from the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR & D), National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), and publications by NGOs such as Amnesty International India. A critical content analysis method is employed, guided by feminist and intersectional theories, to identify patterns related to gender representation, discrimination, and institutional responses to gender-based violence. Themes are coded and interpreted through the lens of power, exclusion, and systemic bias. While the study's reliance on secondary data limits direct engagement with field realities, the use of diverse and credible sources ensures analytical depth and validity.

7. Discussion

The gendered nature of law enforcement and the justice system in India reveals a deeply entrenched patriarchal structure that continues to marginalize women and other gender minorities. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and various institutional reforms, the state's justice mechanisms largely remain male-dominated, both in representation and in operational culture. This section critically explores how power, gender, and structural inequality intersect in the Indian policing and judicial apparatus, drawing on feminist, intersectional, and legal-critical frameworks.

7.1 Gender Representation and Institutional Exclusion

One of the clearest indicators of gendered power in India's criminal justice system is the underrepresentation of women in the police and judiciary. As of 2023, women make up only around 11% of the total police force (Bureau of Police Research & Development [BPR & D], 2023). Even when recruited, they are often confined to gendered roles such as dealing with women and children, handling family disputes, or working in women-only police stations—positions that reinforce stereotypes about female emotionality and caregiving, rather than enabling substantive engagement in mainstream law enforcement (Jassal, 2020; Belur *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, in the judiciary, the representation of women, particularly in higher courts, is disproportionately low. Female judges make up less than 12% of the High Court benches and an even smaller proportion in the Supreme Court (Law Commission of India, 2021). This underrepresentation contributes to a legal culture where women's perspectives on justice, violence, and gendered harms are either missing or undervalued.

7.2 Structural Masculinism and Organisational Culture

The gender imbalance in law enforcement is not merely a numerical issue but reflects deeper structural masculinism. Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations helps explain how institutions like the police and judiciary are constructed on norms of hegemonic masculinity—emphasizing hierarchy, physical dominance, emotional restraint, and a preference for procedural rationality over relational empathy. Women officers often report workplace harassment, lack of access to field roles, poor sanitation facilities, and biased promotional practices (Jeyaraj & Misra, 2022). Such experiences deter retention and advancement of women in the force. Even well-intentioned reforms such as all-women police stations have been criticized for ghettoizing women officers into marginal roles and failing to challenge the masculinist institutional culture (Ghosh, 2022).

In the judiciary, similar patterns emerge. The legal profession and judicial practice are marked by patriarchal attitudes that often surface in court language, case interpretations, and victim-blaming tendencies. Judicial decisions have occasionally reflected moralistic and gender-biased views, especially in cases related to sexual violence, honor, and marital rape (Kapur, 2018; Agnes, 2019). For instance, courts have been known to recommend marriage between the victim and the accused in

cases of statutory rape or suggest “compromise” in domestic violence disputes—reflecting a tendency to prioritize social conformity over gender justice.

7.3 Intersectionality and Marginalized Identities

The discussion of gendered power in law enforcement must also account for intersectionality. The experiences of justice and injustice are not uniform across all women. Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, and queer individuals face multiple layers of discrimination—both within the justice system and society at large. Crenshaw’s (1991) framework of intersectionality is especially relevant here, as it highlights how law enforcement disproportionately targets or neglects individuals from oppressed castes and communities. Rege (2006) and Kandasamy (2020) argue that caste-blind feminism in law tends to obscure the specific vulnerabilities of Dalit and marginalized women, who often face police apathy or brutality when reporting sexual violence.

LGBTQ+ individuals, especially trans persons, encounter systemic violence and erasure from legal discourse. Despite the landmark *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) and *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018) judgments, the on-ground treatment of queer individuals by the police remains deeply problematic (Narrain & Chandran, 2016). Reports indicate frequent profiling, custodial violence, and denial of legal recognition. Thus, the gendered power in law enforcement is not just about male versus female, but about a hetero-patriarchal, upper-caste, cis-normative system policing non-conforming identities.

7.4 Legal Reforms and Their Limits

India has undertaken several legal reforms aimed at gender justice, especially after public outcry following incidents like the 2012 Delhi gang rape. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, expanded definitions of sexual assault and introduced stricter penalties. Other reforms included the Vishaka Guidelines (1997) on workplace sexual harassment and initiatives like gender sensitization programs for police and judges. However, scholars argue that reforms have largely been reactive and legalistic, often failing to address the structural roots of gendered violence (Chakraborty & Joseph, 2020; Agnes, 2019).

For example, mandatory registration of FIRs in rape cases may exist on paper, but police often dissuade or intimidate survivors into silence. Courts may issue progressive verdicts, but implementation lags due

to patriarchal attitudes at lower judicial levels. Moreover, the legal system often centers the “ideal victim” —usually a chaste, upper-caste woman—and delegitimizes those who fall outside this norm (Menon, 2004). Without dismantling such cultural and institutional biases, legal reforms alone remain insufficient.

7.5 Challenges to Institutional Transformation

Several factors hinder meaningful institutional change. First, patriarchal social attitudes are mirrored in the state’s functionaries—judges, police officers, and administrators—who often bring personal biases into their professional roles. Second, training programs on gender sensitivity are often superficial, poorly implemented, or treated as procedural formalities. Third, political will for feminist legal reform is inconsistent, and backlash against gender justice movements has increased in recent years, particularly online and through strategic litigation.

Additionally, the increasing securitization of the state—manifested in rising police powers and national security rhetoric—has shifted focus away from accountability and inclusivity. Law enforcement agencies, rather than being reform-oriented, are often resistant to democratization or public oversight. Women officers who challenge institutional norms frequently face retaliation or isolation, further entrenching the status quo.

7.6 Toward a Gender-Just Future

Creating a more gender-equitable justice system requires more than quotas and policy guidelines. It calls for a fundamental transformation of the values, hierarchies, and epistemologies that govern legal institutions. This includes integrating feminist jurisprudence into legal education, ensuring representation of marginalized communities in judicial and police leadership, strengthening internal accountability mechanisms, and fostering solidarity across caste, class, and gender divides.

Community-led policing models, participatory judicial reform, and the recognition of non-binary gender identities in legal procedures are vital next steps. Importantly, reforms must center the voices and leadership of those most affected—Dalit women, Adivasi communities, survivors of custodial violence, queer persons, and grassroots legal activists.

8. Conclusion

The persistence of gendered power within India's law enforcement and justice systems highlights the deep-rooted patriarchal and exclusionary structures that continue to marginalize women and gender-diverse individuals. While constitutional and legislative frameworks promote equality, the lived realities of institutional bias, underrepresentation, and discriminatory practices reveal a significant gap between formal guarantees and substantive justice. Women in policing and the judiciary not only face systemic barriers to entry and advancement but are also often relegated to symbolic roles that fail to disrupt entrenched masculinist cultures. Further, intersectional identities—particularly those shaped by caste, class, religion, and sexuality—compound these injustices, often rendering marginalized communities vulnerable to both over-policing and under-protection.

Legal reforms, though important, have been largely reactive and insufficient without corresponding shifts in institutional attitudes and practices. Initiatives like gender sensitization, all-women police stations, and legislative amendments mark important steps, but their impact is often limited by poor implementation and tokenistic engagement. A true transformation demands a reimagining of institutional values: one that centers feminist and intersectional frameworks, prioritizes accountability, and actively challenges hegemonic power structures.

Going forward, the struggle for gender justice within law enforcement and the judiciary must move beyond representation to address deeper questions of power, legitimacy, and inclusion. It is imperative to amplify the voices of those at the margins—Dalit women, Adivasis, queer persons, and survivors of state violence—and to embed their experiences and leadership into institutional reforms. Only through such inclusive, critical, and sustained engagement can the justice system begin to fulfill its constitutional promise of equality and dignity for all.

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