

## **Issues with Indian Abortion Law**

### **What is the issue?**

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India's abortion law must be amended to take into account the agency of women.

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### **What is the need?**

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- Many women, when denied legal abortions, turn to unqualified providers or adopt unsafe methods of termination.

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- Various estimates indicate that unsafe abortions account for 8% of maternal deaths in India.

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- 15.6 million abortions took place in India in 2015 out of which about 11.5 million took place outside health facilities.

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### **What is the Abortion law of India?**

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- Abortion has been legal in India under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, since 1971.

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- According to the Act, abortion can be provided at the discretion of a medical provider under certain conditions.

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- Currently, the Act allows abortion up to 20 weeks.

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- When the Act was introduced, policymakers had two goals

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1. To control the population resulting from unintended pregnancies (which even today are to the tune of 48%)
  2. To reduce the increasing maternal mortality and morbidity due to illegal, unsafe abortions
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### **What are the concerns?**

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- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act has limitations that pose barriers to women and girls seeking legal abortions.
  - A woman's right to decide for herself, did not and still does not fall within the intent or ambit of the MTP Act.
  - When it comes to foetal abnormalities and pregnancies resulting from rape, this limit of 20 weeks is proving to be a hurdle for both the woman and the provider.
  - Women seeking an abortion after the legal gestation limit often have no option but to appeal to the courts for permission to terminate the pregnancy.
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### **What are the pending measures in this regard?**

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- In 2014, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recognised these barriers and proposed certain amendments to the Act.
  - Consequently, the MTP (Amendment) Bill, 2014, was submitted, proposing some changes.
  - They include -
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- i. increasing the gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for rape survivors and

other vulnerable women

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ii. removing the gestation limit in case of foetal abnormalities

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- In 2017, these amendments were returned to the ministry with the mandate to strengthen the implementation of the MTP Act as it stands.

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- The amendments are yet to be revised and returned to the PMO.

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**Source: Indian Express**

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