

NarcSafe

Safety & Exit Reference — India

This is a reference, not advice. The information here is general. Your situation is specific. A trained domestic-violence lawyer or counsellor who knows the details of your circumstances can guide you in ways a document cannot. Where this reference and a qualified professional disagree, follow the professional.

If you are in immediate physical danger, call **112** (national emergency) or **181** (women's helpline) right now. If you cannot speak, dial and leave the line open — many call centres are trained to recognise silent calls from someone in danger.

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Save this PDF somewhere your partner cannot reach — a trusted friend's email, a USB drive, a work computer.

Reviewed periodically. Compare against the latest version at the source.

How to use this document

Read it once through, slowly, when you have privacy. Make a mental map of what fits your situation. Then come back to specific sections as they become relevant.

Leaving is rarely a single decision. It is usually a hundred small ones, made over weeks or months. This document is meant to give you vocabulary, structure, and Indian-specific starting points — not a timeline.

A note about the most dangerous moment. Research consistently shows that survivors are at highest risk in the period immediately after announcing or attempting to leave. If you suspect this may be true for you, please **plan in private**. Do not announce. Do not tell people who might tell them. Build your exit, then act.

This reference focuses on the Indian legal and social context. It speaks especially to women, because that is the legal framework available in India (the Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is gendered in its protection). Men, queer, and trans survivors also experience narcissistic abuse — and face additional barriers in India's legal frameworks. Many of the practical, financial, and digital-safety steps in this document apply regardless. The legal sections will be most applicable to women.

Before you begin

Three principles to carry through every section that follows.

1. Plan in silence.

Until you have a safe place to land, a way to support yourself for at least a few weeks, and (if possible) a lawyer or counsellor who knows your situation, do not announce. Statements like “I think I want a divorce” spoken in anger or during an argument are often what triggers retaliation. Anger is allowed; announcement should wait for the plan.

2. Trust the part of you that notices.

If you are reading this document, some part of you already knows. The self-doubt — the “am I overreacting?” — is often itself the result of gaslighting. The loop is the evidence. You do not need certainty to start preparing. You can prepare and choose not to use it, far more easily than you can scramble when you have not prepared.

3. The goal is safety, not justice.

There may come a time when you want accountability — legal consequences for the abuser, recognition from family, an apology. That time, if it comes, is not now. Right now the goal is to get yourself somewhere safe with the resources you need to stay there. Justice is a separate, longer project.

Documents to gather quietly

Originals where possible; clear photographs or scans where not. Store copies somewhere outside the home — a trusted friend's email, a workplace locker, a cloud account on a device the abuser does not have.

Identity

- Aadhaar card (and digital Aadhaar PDF from uidai.gov.in)
- PAN card
- Passport (yours and your children's)
- Voter ID
- Driving licence
- Ration card (if jointly held, note the household details)
- Birth certificates — yours and your children's

Financial

- Bank account details — passbooks, account numbers, IFSC codes
- ATM and debit cards, credit cards (note the numbers separately in case the cards are taken)
- Cheque books
- Investment proofs — FDs, mutual funds, insurance policies (LIC and otherwise)
- Salary slips (last six months)
- Income tax returns (last three years if available)
- Loan documents — what you owe, what is in your name, what is jointly held
- Property papers, rental agreements, lease documents

Relationship and household

- Marriage certificate (if married)
- Children's school records, vaccination records, medical records
- Photographs of any injuries — with date stamps where possible
- Photographs of damaged property — broken phones, holes in walls, smashed objects
- Any threatening messages — text, WhatsApp, email — saved or screenshotted to somewhere they cannot reach
- Any voicemail or audio of rages, threats, or abusive behaviour

Medical and legal

- Medical records — especially any related to injuries, depression, anxiety, substance use
- Prescriptions and ongoing medication details

- Any past police complaints, FIRs, or court orders
- Any prior protection orders, restraining orders, or DV Act applications

One practical tip: photograph each document with your phone. If your phone may be searched, send the photos to a trusted friend or to a private email the abuser does not know about, then *delete the photos and clear the recently-deleted folder*. Do this for one document at a time, naturally, over weeks — not all at once.

Financial first steps

Financial autonomy — even small amounts — is one of the strongest predictors of being able to leave and stay gone. Start before you need it.

A separate bank account

Open an account at a bank where you do not already hold a joint account. A private-sector bank or a small finance bank can be opened with Aadhaar e-KYC online. Use a phone number and email the abuser does not have access to. Set the postal address to a trusted friend or to your workplace — never to the home you share, where statements may arrive.

Building reserves quietly

- Move small amounts from any account you control — nothing large enough to trigger questions
- If you have any source of income (salary, freelance, family gift), reroute small portions to the new account
- Keep some cash physically separate from the home — with a trusted friend, in a workplace locker, in a safety-deposit box if accessible
- Be cautious about UPI apps — they often appear in shared phone notifications. Consider a separate phone or a UPI app the abuser does not know you use.

Knowing what you owe and own

- Make a list of all loans in your name, jointly held loans, EMIs you are obligated for
- Check your CIBIL score — free once a year at cibil.com. Knowing your credit position matters before separation.
- Note assets in your name only, jointly held, or held in your husband's name. Jointly held assets and matrimonial property have legal protections under the DV Act.
- If you have stridhan — gold, gifts, dowry items legally belonging to you — the law protects your right to it. Document what you have and where it is.

Stridhan matters. Section 14 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, and Section 27 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, both recognise stridhan as the woman's absolute property — including gold, jewellery, and gifts received before, during, or after marriage. If your stridhan is being withheld, that is itself a legal matter and a form of economic abuse under the DV Act.

Digital safety

An abusive partner who suspects you are planning to leave will often surveil your phone, email, and online activity. The following steps reduce that surface.

Phone

- Check who has access to your phone PIN or biometrics. If anyone does, change them.
- Review installed apps — look for stalkerware (apps with vague names that you do not remember installing). Common ones include mSpy, Cocospy, FlexiSpy, Hoverwatch. If you find one, do not delete it immediately — deletion may alert the abuser. Document it first.
- Turn off location sharing in WhatsApp, Google Maps, Find My iPhone, Apple Find My, Find My Device.
- Disable location services for apps that do not need it (Settings → Privacy → Location Services).
- Check shared Apple ID or Google account — if your account is linked to a family group, your location and purchases may be visible.
- Consider a cheap second phone — a basic Android with a new SIM from a number the abuser does not know — for calls related to safety planning.

Email and accounts

- Create a new email at a provider you have never used — ProtonMail (encrypted, free) is a good choice for sensitive communications.
- Set strong, unique passwords on your primary email, social media, and bank accounts.
- Turn on two-factor authentication — ideally via an authenticator app (Google Authenticator, Authy), not SMS, since SIM access can be controlled.
- Sign out of shared cloud accounts (iCloud, Google) on the abuser's devices — only if it is safe to do so.
- Use private browsing or incognito mode for any searches related to leaving, legal aid, or shelter. Browser history is one of the most commonly checked surfaces.

Smart home and shared devices

- If you have an Alexa, Google Home, or similar device — these can be used to listen.
- Connected cars: many modern cars can be tracked through the manufacturer's app. If the car is in the abuser's name, assume tracking is possible.
- Shared streaming accounts (Netflix, Prime, YouTube) leak what you have been watching. If you are researching abuse content, do it elsewhere.

One thing you cannot easily undo. If you are being monitored, the moment you change a password or remove a tracking app, the abuser may notice. Plan the digital cleanup to happen *close to the moment you leave* — not weeks before.

Legal framework in India

India's legal protections for survivors of domestic abuse are real, though imperfect and unevenly implemented. The key statutes:

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA)

The PWDVA is a civil law — not criminal. It covers physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse. You do not need to be married to claim under it; live-in partners, sisters, mothers, and daughters of the abuser are all covered. Crucially, the abuser does not need to be convicted of anything for the protections to apply.

Under the PWDVA you can apply for:

- **Protection order** — prohibits the abuser from contacting you, entering your workplace, school, or any place you frequent
- **Residence order** — secures your right to live in the shared household, or requires the abuser to provide alternative accommodation
- **Monetary relief** — maintenance, medical expenses, loss of earnings, compensation for damage
- **Custody order** — temporary custody of children
- **Compensation order** — for physical injuries, mental distress

Applications are made to the Magistrate's court via a Protection Officer (PO), or directly. The case is supposed to be disposed of within 60 days — in practice this is often longer, but interim relief can be granted at the first hearing.

Section 498A IPC (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita: Section 85)

Criminal provision covering cruelty by husband or his relatives. Can lead to arrest, criminal prosecution. Often the route when there is dowry-related abuse, severe physical violence, or harassment that has driven the wife to self-harm.

Maintenance — Section 125 CrPC (Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita)

Allows a wife (including a divorced wife who has not remarried), children, and parents to claim maintenance from a person who is neglecting them despite having means. This is a faster route than matrimonial maintenance in some cases.

Stridhan and dowry

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 makes giving and receiving dowry illegal. Section 27 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 deals with the disposal of property presented at or about the time of marriage. Stridhan is the woman's absolute property and withholding it is illegal.

Where you can go

Sakhi One Stop Centres

Government-run centres available in nearly every district. Provide integrated medical, legal, police, counselling, and short-stay accommodation under one roof — free of cost. Designed specifically for women survivors of violence.

Call 181 — the Women’s Helpline — to find the nearest OSC. The helpline operates 24x7 in most states.

Swadhar Greh

Shelter homes run by state governments under the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Intended for women in difficult circumstances — survivors of violence, deserted women, women released from prison, victims of trafficking. Provide shelter, food, clothing, medical care, vocational training. Contactable via 181 or your local district administration.

Non-governmental organisations

Many established NGOs provide legal aid, counselling, and shelter referrals. A non-exhaustive list by region:

- **Mumbai:** Majlis Legal Centre, SNEHA, Akshara Centre, Lawyers Collective
- **Delhi:** Jagori, Saheli, Shakti Shalini, Centre for Social Research, Multiple Action Research Group
- **Bengaluru:** Vimochana, Parihar (police-NGO collaboration), Enfold Proactive Health Trust
- **Chennai:** International Foundation for Crime Prevention and Victim Care (PCVC), Vidiyal
- **Hyderabad:** Bhumika Women’s Collective, Roshni
- **Kolkata:** Swayam, Sanlaap
- **Pune:** SOFOSH, Stree Aadhar Kendra
- **Ahmedabad:** AWAG (Ahmedabad Women’s Action Group), Anandi

These are starting points. Each city has more. Searching “legal aid for women + [city]” in a private browser, or calling 181, will surface local options.

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA)

Every district in India has a DLSA, mandated under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to provide free legal aid to women, children, SC/ST, and economically disadvantaged persons. Find your nearest DLSA at nalsa.gov.in. A women’s rights lawyer through the DLSA is free.

A trusted relative or friend

If you have someone whose home is unknown to the abuser, this is often the safest first destination. Avoid family members or friends whose loyalty might be split — the “flying monkey” pattern is real and

common in joint-family contexts.

India helplines

Save these numbers somewhere accessible — in your phone, on paper, in your wallet. All are toll-free.

Number	What it is	When to call
112	National Emergency	Police, ambulance, fire. Immediate physical danger.
181	Women's Helpline (Sakhi)	24x7. Connects to nearest One Stop Centre — medical, legal, counselling, shelter.
1091	Women in Distress (police)	Police helpline specifically for women's safety.
1098	CHILDLINE	Children in difficulty (if your children are at risk).
9152987821	iCall	Mental-health counselling. Free. Mon–Sat 8am–10pm.
1860-2662-345	Vandrevala Foundation	24x7 mental-health helpline. Free. Multiple Indian languages.
9820466726	AASRA	24x7 suicide-prevention helpline. Free.
1800-258-1102	Snehi	Mental-health helpline, Delhi-based, all-India reach.

If you cannot speak when you call: dial 112 or 181 and leave the line open. Many emergency call centres in India are trained to recognise silent calls and will attempt to trace and respond. If a silent call cannot be traced, tap softly on the receiver in any rhythm — even acknowledgement of the call is information for the responder.

A closing note

If you have read this far, you are doing serious work for yourself, regardless of what you do next. Not every survivor leaves. Not every survivor needs to leave at the same speed. Reading is not committing.

The patterns you may have lived inside — gaslighting, intermittent reinforcement, devaluation, the trauma bond that feels like love — are real, well-documented, and not your fault. Naming them does not require you to act on them today. It only requires that you keep noticing.

Whatever path you take next — staying and protecting yourself within, leaving slowly, leaving tomorrow, returning to test, returning to leave again — the noticing is what keeps you. Trust it.

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A reference from a companion tool, not legal advice or a substitute for professional support. Compare against the current laws and resources in your state.