

Emerging Dimensions of Women Rights for Inheritance in India

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Abstract - Traditional Indian women may be taught from an early age that their husband's house is theirs, but this is not the case in law. In the 21st century, women's Inheritance rights are still far from gender equality, despite the fact that women were once forced to commit sati in order to avoid having to share their husband's Inheritance with his family. In every marriage, there is an overt or hidden endeavour by the spouses to accumulate assets. These assets can be held alone by the husband or wife, or jointly by both of them. An Indian family, the smallest unit in a society, has been affected by socio-cultural developments in recent years. The growth of women's education has led to an increase in the number of educated women who use their skills outside the home in paid employment. Formerly reluctant to leave the comfort of her own home, Indian women are now fighting for equal access to higher education and the workforce. It is becoming increasingly clear that unless both husband and wife work, they cannot run a decent household. This is due to the economic stresses that families face, especially middle-class families, which are in the majority. Demand for new consumer products in India is fueled in part by commercials on television, which encourage women to work for money in order to elevate their social status. However, currently it is a need rather than a choice for women to work for pay in order to raise the family's standard of living. New legal issues have arisen as a result of this, such as how to divide up the household's assets amongst the two couples' separate incomes, their joint contribution to household expenses, and the purchase of real estate meant for joint use. Even though she was educated and capable of earning, a housewife may find that she is unable to get any of the domestic assets that she had worked so hard to keep for her husband, who was out at work to generate money for the family. For a country with such a large population of divorced couples, it is regrettable that there is no established and specific rule for determining the respective Inheritance rights of the spouses when the marriage terminates by divorce.

Keywords - Women Rights, India, women's Inheritance rights, Indian family, divorce

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INTRODUCTION

The numerous personal laws in the country recognise the obligation of a husband to support his dependent wife, but the right of a wife to claim as a part owner of an Inheritance acquired and possessed jointly by the husband and wife during marriage is not acknowledged. Even today, the value of a woman's contribution to the family's financial well-being and the acquisition of family assets is not taken into account. In order to devote their time to family duties, notably child rearing, most married women have no outside source of income. Many of these women also choose not to work for many years after marriage or only work part-time. Because of this, they rely on their spouses for their financial well-being. In most circumstances, the husband's income is used to pay for the acquisition of both moveable and immovable Inheritance during marriage. It is customary to register a marital residence and any household goods in the husband's name. Women are harmed by the unfairness of assessing ownership based on a person's financial

contribution. In many nations, the need for recognition of the wife's contribution in the form of work is increasing. When deciding who owns an immovable Inheritance, the wife's economic contribution through housework should be granted legal recognition instead of continuing the outdated test of real cash contributions. An examination of Indian women's economic rights within the family structure is the focus of this chapter. The importance of post-divorce maintenance and Inheritance division cannot be overstated because they represent the status and contribution of women within marriage. The right to live in the marital residence and the right to a monetary settlement upon the dissolution of the marriage are two distinct rights that are implied in the marriage contract. Even though maintenance is an economic right, it is only guaranteed to those who can prove they have the means to support themselves. Maintaining a person who is competent to support himself is not a right. When it comes to economic rights, the right to live in the marital home and the right to a financial settlement, or division of

assets after the end of a marriage, are essential. A woman's entitlement to her marital house and Inheritance can be seen as a form of economic empowerment and the end of her life-long dependent on her husband, while maintenance can be seen as a necessity for basic survival. Marital status does not confer any rights on the wife with regard to her husband's Inheritance, and hence she is not entitled to a share of the marital estate after the marriage ends. Title and financial contributions are the only important elements in assessing Inheritance claims. A woman's non-financial contributions to the household throughout their marriage are not recognised under our matrimonial statutes. As a result, the husband's acquisition of Inheritance is recognised as his exclusive Inheritance. No consideration is given to the wife's unpaid work as a housewife in building up the family's assets when determining her portion of those assets. When it comes to awarding acknowledgment for a woman's contribution to building family assets and developing specific standards for establishing a woman's part of the marriage Inheritance, India trails well behind the majority of other countries.

Matrimonial Inheritance Law in India

I) Notion of Matrimonial Inheritance

Separation of Inheritance is a common rule in Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Parsi law in the majority of Indian states. The concept of joint ownership between husband and wife in Hindu law appears to date back to the Vedic period, as evidenced by mediaeval Hindu legal documents. For all intents and purposes, a widow of a deceased husband should have been entitled to at the very least half of his fortune under this theory of joint ownership. However, Hindu jurists have not come to this conclusion.

i) Women's Joint Ownership in Hindu Law

By Altekar's reckoning, a long-standing Hindu belief was that husband and wife should share ownership of the home and its assets. At the time of marriage, the husband was obligated to swear an oath that he would never violate his wife's economic rights or interests. However, the truth is that the husband's commitment was little more than a formality with no real significance. Furthermore, Altekar points out that joint ownership between a husband and wife was only a "legal fiction" and that the husband was the sole owner, with no recourse for his wife. It was forbidden for the wife to spend any significant amount of money during their marriage without the permission of her husband. When the husband sold or mortgaged the wife's Inheritance, the Hindu jurists failed to preserve even her entitlement to maintenance. Despite the fact that these actions were viewed as morally repugnant, no legal action was taken to address them.

ii) Joint Ownership and Negation of the Inheritance Rights of Woman

If the Inheritance was jointly owned by the couple, it begs the question of how the wife lost her rights to

ownership and inheritance upon the death of her husband under Hindu law. Apasthamba proposed the identity of husband and wife in religious affairs and Manu IX, 45 proclaims that a husband is one with his wife,' says Kane, clearly summarising the position. However, the ancient sages did not recognise this marital identity for secular or legal reasons.

Her right to inherit as a natural corollary of her shared ownership was only gradually recognised by Hindu law writers in later times. While married, Brihaspati claimed, a man could not be considered dead. In Dayabhaga, Jimutvahana, the author of Dayabhaga, lays out the widow's entitlement to inherit in a logical and forceful manner. So how can it be said that the right of the widowed wife is nullified? No, she is not entitled to use as much of the money as she thinks is necessary for her upkeep.

iii) Matrimonial Inheritance Regime

As part of a matrimonial Inheritance system, which includes rules governing the rights of the spouses to their marital Inheritance during marriage, there are also rules for dividing the marital Inheritance after divorce or legal separation. Marriages that end in death for either spouse would not be affected by inheritance law, which deals with a surviving spouse's rights in a deceased spouse's Inheritance. Marital Inheritance law is well-established and regarded a delicate area of civil procedure in most countries, particularly in the western hemispheric region. The customary divorce was the only form of divorce available to Hindus before the 1955 Hindu Marriage Act, and as a result, problems about the rights of spouses to marital Inheritance never came up except in cases of inheritance. If a woman left her husband among the lower echelons of society, she was expected to pay him back any money she had acquired during or after the marriage. All other parts of society made exceptions for exchanges of gifts and presents between friends and family members. In this case, the rules weren't set in stone, therefore the husband got the lion's portion of the marital estate. In accordance with the Hindu Marriage Act, both the husband and the wife are entitled to file a petition for divorce. Divorce is rarely a viable choice for women with little or no financial or educational independence because of the social stigma attached to it. Although the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 (hence referred to as the HMA,1955) had divorce provisions, the law was no longer concerned with the distribution of matrimonial Inheritance because it included divorce as a remedy to end the married status of the spouses. Inheritance that is jointly owned by a married couple and presented to them prior to marriage can be disposed of by the court in whatever manner it deems 'fair and reasonable' to do so.

iv) Disposal of Inheritance under Section 27 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

For the application of Section 27 following three conditions are important:

- a) The application should be filed before the disposal of the main matrimonial proceeding. When the main petition is dismissed no relief under this Section can be granted;
- b) The Inheritance should have been presented at or about the time of marriage;
- c) The Inheritance must belong jointly to husband and wife.

Right to Matrimonial Home/ Residence

Men and society as a whole benefit much from the establishment of the institution of marriage. It is no longer true that a marriage is indissoluble. Marriages are becoming more and more vulnerable as a result of the shifting economic landscape. Girls are becoming more informed and educated as more pursue higher education and careers. They are less reliant on one another financially. Conflicts of ego or interference from in-laws or other third parties can cause difficulties in adjusting. Frequently, the families are devastated. The law provides for divorce in order to lessen the pain of those couples who are unable to continue together. There are many issues that arise when a couple divorces, including issues for the couple as well as for their children, their spouses, and society as a whole. Divorce leaves a wife with no place to live and no means of support, which is a very real and significant situation. There isn't anything in place to allow her to remain in the marital residence. All females have no parents, or no parents who are ready to assist them after divorce. State-run shelters for these women and children are virtually non-existent. Where does a lady go after a divorce in these situations? What legal recourse does she have if her husband attempts to evict her from the marital residence? 69 Nothing is said in the legislation, and nothing is implied either. The Bombay High Court was asked to rule on the matter. After five years of marriage, a wife was forcibly evicted from her husband's home in 1984. After a brief period of reconciliation, the couple decided to part ways once more. Re-entering her marital house was denied to her. Outside the home, she stayed for a night. It wasn't long before she was back in the house, and she had obtained temporary restraining orders that prevented her husband and in-laws from evicting or interfering with her access. The spouse appealed this decision to the High Court. The Judge overturned the lower court's decision because the wife's re-entry into the residence constituted to forcibly capturing the premises. He reversed the decision. For the wife's sake, it was contended, she had a right to live in the house because it was her matrimonial residence, and her absence from it for a period of time should not invalidate that right. 'If this argument was accepted in all its consequences, it would be difficult to avoid public disruption on a very vast scale,' the Supreme Court ruled. Currently, a wife is accused of invading her supposed marital residence. Then there will be others, including people making all kinds of assertions,

whether true or false, credible or dubious, dishonest or otherwise. Even in the name of women's rights or the protection of the deserving, a law-abiding state cannot allow this to happen.

This conclusion does not fill me with joy. There is no rational basis for comparing the claim of a wife to the entitlement of 'others' to live in her marital home. When we talk about the matrimonial household, we simply mean the relationship between a husband and wife and "others," who may or may not be lying about their relationship. Here, it is appropriate to mention the English law that protects a spouse from being forced to move out of their marital home. The Matrimonial Homes Act, 1967, and the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act, 1976, both give these safeguards. An ex-right spouse's to live in the marital house is safeguarded under the former Act. In the event that a spouse is evicted or expelled from the home or any portion of it, they have a right to enter and occupy it with the permission of the Court if they are not already in possession. Thus, the Act protects the wife who does not own any Inheritance. If a husband and wife are joint owners of a home, the wife has the legal right to reside there.

An interesting English case, *Gurasz v Gurasz*, had a couple who were married for fifteen years before the wife decided to leave the house they owned together. The wife said that her husband had been abusive to her and their children on a regular basis and that she had decided to leave because of it. She could not locate another place to live after she left, so she filed a request under Section 1 of the Matrimonial Homes Act, 1967 for an order allowing her entry and occupancy of the marital home and terminating the husband's legal entitlement. The husband argued that because he and his wife were joint owners of the house, the court had no authority to grant the order sought by the husband. The husband was ordered by the county court judge to leave the marital residence and the woman and children were allowed to return. This decision was upheld on appeal. The Domestic Violence Act of 1976 allows a county court to issue an injunction mandating the other party to allow the applicant to enter and reside in the marital home, among other things. The husband can be ordered to leave the house if his wife is harassed or beaten, or, if he turns out to be his wife, to allow her to enter and reside in the marital home. India's regulations in this area are weak, and a woman who has been divorced is left with few options. The Supreme Court and Delhi High Court's rulings on the subject of marital residence might be referred to in this context. a residence owned or allocated to the wife is not the marital home over which the husband has any right, dominion, or occupation was held in *B.R.Mehta v Atma Ram*. Cases of rent law lawsuits brought the matter to light. A landlord's Inheritance can be evacuated if the tenant "has built, gained vacant possession of, or has been assigned" a house, according to proviso (h) of Section 14(1) of the Delhi Rent Control Act, 1958. The Supreme Court had to decide whether or not giving a house to a

government employee's wife deprived the tenant's spouse of the right to keep the rented Inheritance. The additional rent controller, rent control tribunal, and even the High Court ruled that the husband had obtained vacant possession of the Inheritance under proviso 'h' and hence was not allowed to keep the contested premises after the wife got housing. While this decision was upheld by the Delhi High Court in a case known as *Revti Dutt V Kishanlal*, it was overturned by the Supreme Court in a decision based on the Delhi High Court's observation.

A spouse who goes to live with his wife in her home has no legal right to do so and can be evicted from the Inheritance at any moment by the owner, who in this case is the wife. Until recently, there was no law that allowed a husband and wife to be considered one person. Does this imply that a wife's home isn't even her husband's? That being the case, where can a couple make their home together? As long as the couple gets along, there shouldn't be any issues. However, if there are even the slightest tensions or misunderstandings, one spouse threatens the other with eviction, severe issues are sure to occur. In *B.R.Mehta and Revti Devi*, divorced or separated women who do not have a home of their own are likely to be worse off as a result of such interpretations.

i) Wife's Right of Residence:

Section 18 and Section 3(b) of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act recognise the wife's right to domicile as part of her entitlement to maintenance. In addition to protecting the tenant's interests, rent control legislation also safeguards the rights of individuals who are legally authorised to live in the Inheritance. In two judgments, the apex court addressed an important issue involving the right of a wife to defend herself in eviction proceedings brought by the landlord against her husband. The appellant in *B.P. Achala Anand* was legally married to the respondent. The marital residence was a rented Inheritance owned by the husband. He left his wife and children and went to live in a lodge when their relationship became strained. Divorce proceedings were started in 1991, and a decree of divorce by mutual consent was issued on December 3, 1998. Under the Karnataka Rent Control Act, 1961, landlords can evict tenants if they are unable to pay their rent on the grounds of self-sufficiency and rent arrears. A broken relationship with the wife plus the fact that he wasn't actually living there meant that the husband wasn't really interested in contesting. As a result, the wife requested inclusion in the eviction proceedings as a means of defence. Her application was dismissed by the lower court, but the appeals court upheld it. Subject to her making a Rs. 10,000/ deposit toward arrears, the wife was allowed to be listed as a defendant. There was a partial eviction of the tenants by a trial court, which was followed by an appeal to the High Court by the aggrieved landlord. Since there was no landlord-tenant relationship between the "husband" and the "wife," the tenancy alone belonged to the "husband," according to the High Court. As a result,

the partial eviction judgement was overturned and an eviction order was issued under Karnataka Rent Control Act section 21(1)(a). Hence her request for special leaves from the husband. The most important question was whether a woman who has been evicted from her husband's home has the right to fight the eviction because her legal right to residence is a corollary of her right to support. However, family members may seek relief to oppose the proceedings, and the court may allow this request if it is satisfied that tenant was not acting in defence of or harming these individuals through cooperation, connivance, or carelessness. This was the court's conclusion. *Dr. Abdur Rahim Undre v. Smt. Padma Abdur Rahim Undre and M/s Bharat Heavy Plates and Vessels Ltd.* were cited by the Court when discussing a wife's right to live in the marital home. Analyzing previous case law, the court found that an abandoned wife who has been or is entitled to be occupying the marital home may contest an eviction suit brought by a tenant against her husband, provided that (i) the tenant has given up or is not interested in contesting, thereby prejudicing the interests of wife who is residing there; and (ii) the scope and scope of contest or defence taken by the wife would not be prejudiced.. In the event of divorce, the wife loses her status as a wife and loses her right to occupy the house as part of her right to maintenance. "Divorce is the dissolution of a married connection and ends the status of wife as such," the court stated. It would depend on the terms and conditions of the order of divorce and the provision for support (including residence) that was established, whether or not she has the right to stay in the marital home. Divorced wives who were housed in the marital home of their ex-husbands in the tenanted premises would be entitled to defend their tenancy rights and rights of occupation in the same manner as the husband tenant and certainly not higher or larger than that.

ii) Protection of Matrimonial Residence under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

For most married women, the right to live in the marital house is a lifeline, and as such, it is included in the marriage contract. However, because this privilege was not legally protected, a husband might, at his own discretion, force his wife out of the home. Devoid of statutory protection, the right relied on skillful legal representation, empathetic judges, and a few creative court decisions. For decades, women's organisations in India fought for a law that would guarantee them this right. Under the 2005 Protective of Women from Domestic Violence Act, this privilege received statutory status as a shared household. This law, which went into effect on October 26, 2006, was passed by Parliament primarily to provide a civil remedy aimed at protecting women from domestic abuse and preventing it from occurring in society as a whole. Part of this strategy includes the provision of, among other things, "the right of a woman to stay in her marriage home or shared household regardless of

whether she has any ownership or rights in such home or household." 85 In order to guarantee this privilege, a magistrate issues a 'residence order'. As a safeguard for the protection of women from domestic abuse, the Act contains a rather detailed definition of the expression 'shared household', which appears to be a model for married home. This concept of "domestic violence" is similarly broadened in scope. Domestic violence encompasses any act (omission, commission, or conduct) that results in the aggrieved person being subjected to any form of physical, sexual, verbal, or economic abuse by anyone in a "domestic relationship." Deficiencies in economic or financial resources, as well as household goods and amenities, may constitute domestic violence under this law. Respondent is defined as any adult male who is or has been in a domestic relationship with the aggrieved party and against whom the aggrieved party has sought any redress under the Act of Protection from Domestic Violence. Married women, as well as their sisters and daughters, are protected by the Act. Except for married women who can file a complaint against the female relatives of their spouse, the Act only covers situations in which men subject a woman to domestic violence. Both a daughter and a sister have the right to voice their grievances with their fathers. The law protects a woman's right to live in a married or shared household, regardless of whether she has any Inheritance or other rights there. In order to protect this privilege, a court must issue a residency order, which cannot be issued against a woman. In such situations, if she needs to be housed elsewhere, her husband would be responsible for her expenses. Because of this, the Act protects a married woman's right to remain in her marital residence until a legally recognised order of divorce has been given. Due to this, the PWDVA does not grant a woman ownership or interest in inheritance. Moreover, the woman is not shielded from outsiders by it (for instance, the landlord). Due to the fact that divorce dissolves the marital link, enforcing it becomes even more difficult.

Contribution of the Homemaker: Evolving Jurisprudence

i) Housewife's contribution in household work

Work performed by individuals for the benefit of their own homes or for the benefit of others that is not compensated can be viewed as unpaid work. By satisfying human needs with restricted resources, these activities are productive. To some extent, all of these activities — from housework to child and elder care to volunteer community work to work in political or social organisations — could theoretically be replaced by market goods or services, whether through self-employment, participation in family businesses, or other means. With this "third person" criteria, unpaid employment is distinguished from consumption and from time and effort dedicated to one's own education⁹⁹. Unpaid activities such as sleeping and recreational activities are also exempt from this criteria. Work performed for no monetary compensation is a form of 'mode of provision' for human needs, in which time is used as an input

(typically in conjunction with the utilisation of purchased products and/or consumer durables as capital equipment). The Human Development Report of 1995 revealed the unequal allocation of paid and unpaid employment between men and women. According to a study of 31 countries, not only do women carry a larger share of the burden of work than males (53 percent in developing countries compared to 51 percent in industrial countries), but they also spend two-thirds of their time working unpaid and one-third in paid jobs. They're the opposite for men in industrialised countries. In poor nations, men spend about one-fourth of their working time doing unpaid jobs. - Men and women are not equally burdened by the burdens of unpaid and paid labour. Because of this, 'men obtain the lion's share of cash and acclaim for economic output – while most of women's labour remains underpaid, unrecognised and unappreciated'. The family unit is a physical location where social life is created and reproduced. Gender inequality and sexual discrimination persist in families, making women more susceptible in their interactions with their families than males. The need for family-oriented work is on the rise. Men labour outside the home while women do housework as part of the family's economic duty. In some cases, women go out to work, allowing them to achieve equality. As a result, financial duties within families are not distributed fairly. Women also enhance their family's income by working on the farm or in other jobs outside the home. Posner argues that the household is not simply a producer but also a consumer. In essence, a family encourages the division of labour while also benefiting from it. In most families, the husband works in the market and earns money, which the wife turns into concrete and intangible outputs by devoting her time and energy to it. The most significant input is 'time,' which is then converted into a variety of products, both tangible and intangible. Regardless of whether or not the woman is making money, her time is the most valuable resource. As a result, the spouse is relieved of some of his responsibilities around the house. In other words, housework done by a housewife or even an earning wife increases the family's actual income. The homemaker is not considered a productive worker in the economic meaning of the term by tradition and by law. In other words, the compensation she receives for the services she provides isn't meant to be financially rewarding; rather, it isn't economic. If she's going to be happy, the rest of the family will be happy because she's happy. Her reward is therefore a vicarious one. Nonetheless, the economists would argue that she is paid in terms of products and services for her work. In return for her chores, she has access to products and services, which is seen as a sign of her social position. It also influences her feeling of self-determination in the family and society at large, and finally, in her financial planning. On the other hand, even though she is exempt from paying taxes, she is not eligible for social security, pensions, or other forms of retirement income. In other words, if she decides to stop working, she won't be eligible for any

kind of old-age benefits in the financial sense. When she becomes unable to work in her later years, her financial security will be founded on the emotional bonds she has formed with the people in her family. This is not the case for a housewife who has a career outside the home. Despite the fact that she is compensated for her employment, her responsibilities around the house remain the same. Even though the quantity of her work is hardly reduced, her social position is slightly improved due to her remunerative work outside the house. This may be one of the main reasons why the number of women who limit themselves to housework is declining. They prefer to break into the market and establish their own economic identity.

ii) Position in India

A married couple in India is not one person and their Inheritance is not owned by the same person, hence there is no joint ownership. An inheritance in which both spouses have a common interest, either because it was acquired together or because of a desire to regard it as common inheritance, can still be separated from other properties. Matrimonial inheritance law, among other things, is concerned with determining a spouse's part of the marital estate at the time of death or divorce. Most countries' legislatures on matrimonial inheritance rights have addressed the hitherto unaddressed question of quantifying the contribution of the homemaker, and courts have repeatedly addressed it, but in India, strangely and regrettably, the courts have avoided addressing the subject at all. Legislation addressing important difficulties in the partition of matrimonial inheritance has not been attempted. However, there have been sporadic attempts to estimate the homemaker's value in insurance cases. Legal precedent regarding the role of homemakers in insurance claims and other matters is being forged at a glacial rate. At issue was whether housewives' services to their families should be valued in money in order to determine the amount of compensation they are entitled to under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. It was the court's opinion that, ... taking into mind, the numerous services supplied by the housewives for managing the complete family even on a low estimation should be Rs. 3,000 per month and Rs. 36,000 per year. All housewives between the ages of 34 and 59 who were active in life would fall under this category.... Elderly females aged 62 to 72 were given Rs. 20,000 per year, multiplied by suitable age-specific multiplier multiplied by Rs. 50,000 per year, in addition to typical sums awarded in such circumstances, by a judge in the case. In tort cases involving medical malpractice, this method of calculating the worth of a woman's housework has been used. Compensation of Rs. 12,000 was awarded by the court in *Sobhag Mal Jain v. State of Rajasthan* to be recouped from the irresponsible doctors. The law of strict liability was applied in a previous case when high-intensity electricity cables snapped, resulting in the death of a person. The Gauhati High Court in *Surjya Das v. Assam State Electricity Board*, when such an event occurred and the petitioner's wife was

electrocuted, computed the level of compensation taking her monthly earnings to be around Rs. 1500, since she was a daily wage worker. This was done without regard to the State's 1999 minimum wage, which was in effect at the time of the accident. Unfortunately, the Court did not provide any explanation of how it came at this conclusion. When calculating compensation, it is important to remember that in circumstances where women are earning, their participation to the family chores should be taken into account as a separate element from the loss of earning.

CONCLUSION

Indian women's inheritance rights, these rights are decided by a variety of factors, including their religion, marital status, where they live in India, whether or not they are tribal, and so on. What unites Indian women is that, despite the Constitution's guarantee of equality for all, their inheritance rights remain unaffected by these differences, making them vulnerable to discrimination and arbitrary decisions. Additionally, Hindu women's inheritance rights are highly fragmented on a number of other variables, including as religion and geographic location. Hindu women's inheritance rights differ depending on their family position and marital status, including whether they are daughters, wives, widows, or mothers. When looking at a certain type of inheritance, such as land, a house, or marital inheritance, it is important to know what kind of inheritance one is looking at. Hindu Women's Inheritance Rights Act 1937 was passed to alleviate their suffering and allow them to retain ownership of their inheritance for the duration of their lives. There is no absolute right to inherit, even for women who have been granted that right by the law of inheritance. Inheritance was given to them for their care because they had no legal right to alienate the inheritance or make a bequest of it as its owner. For the most part, women could only exercise ownership rights over a limited amount of inheritance in the United States. The term 'stridhan' refers to inheritance that she has complete control over, with the ability to both enjoy and sell it. Gifts or bequests of inheritance given to a maiden or widow by non-relatives, although such bequest excludes married women, since in that case the inheritance would be under the control of the husband, are included. Her stridhan is the inheritance that a maiden or widow acquires as a result of her hard work. Stridhan, on the other hand, consists primarily of personal objects like clothing and jewellery, with only a small percentage being in the form of real estate. Although women may have had some immoveable inheritance, it was kept as women's estate rather than absolute inheritance.

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