



Muslim and Hindu Women's Inheritance Rights in Bangladesh: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the status of Muslim and Hindu women's inheritance issues in Bangladesh through empirical research. The empirical study aims to investigate the perceptions of ordinary people (both men and women) regarding inheritance issues, in conjunction with expert observations, and to assess the impact of such perceptions on women's empowerment and the country's development agendas. Based on the empirical findings, the study suggests some workable solutions that the Government may consider to ensure gender equality and fulfill its commitments under the SDGs.

Keywords: Muslim and Hindu Women, Inheritance, Gender Equality, Empowerment, SDGs

INTRODUCTION

The most recent census of Bangladesh reveals that women comprise 8.33 crores of the population, compared to 8.17 crores of men (Female Population of Bangladesh, 2022). Despite this demographic advantage, women's representation in property ownership remains significantly lower (Solotaroff et al., 2019). The religious laws of Bangladesh govern the process of property devolution through inheritance. Due to the applicability of the religious laws, Muslim women receive less property than their male counterparts do, and Hindu women do not get any absolute ownership over the property. Although a list of justifications is provided in favor of the discriminatory treatment of women's community, such as the different roles of men and women and men's obligation to pay dower and maintenance (Khan et al., 2016), it is argued by many that the distribution of less property to the women constitutes a violation of the equality between man and woman.

The principles of *sharia* law, especially the *Hanafi* law of the *Sunni* school, regulate Muslim women's inheritance issues in Bangladesh. In most cases, Muslim women get a half share of what their male counterparts inherit from the deceased person's property. There are instances where women do not inherit property, despite their male counterparts receiving it.

Hindu traditional religious law regulates succession issues for Hindu women. In a few cases, they inherit only a limited interest (the right to enjoy the property during their lifetime) in their relatives' property but cannot exercise ownership over it. The distressing fact is that in most cases, both Muslim and Hindu women do not get their entitled property rights as guaranteed under the existing religious laws.

The existence of such discriminatory rules appears to be in direct conflict with the constitutional norms and the obligations of Bangladesh as a signatory to several international instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As a part of commitments under SDGs, the country is also under an obligation to ensure equality in all spheres of life, including property rights. Some positive steps on behalf of the Government are also seen, for example, the adoption of the National Women Development Policy, 2011, which asks for giving women rights to wealth and resources earned through income, succession, and other means (National Women Development Policy 2011, para 25.2). However, any initiative by the Government to reform the existing laws on family matters, including property rights,

often faces opposition from the masses, particularly religious leaders (Hossain & Jamil, 2023). Moreover, another justification often given is the general acceptability of these rules to the public from a religious perspective (Hossain & Jamil, 2023). Therefore, it has become imperative to understand the perspective of the general public, comprising different segments, to determine the feasibility of any reform initiative that would grant equal inheritance rights to women in this regard.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several scholarly works exist on the position of women under religious laws that govern all family matters, including inheritance rights, in Bangladesh.

Regarding the position of Muslim women, one of the authoritative works of the 1990s is T. Monsoor's (1999), where the author raises questions about the appropriateness of equality-based legal reform in the socio-religious context of Bangladesh (Tamanna, 2003). However, the work primarily deals with Muslim women's rights in a number of family matters such as marriage, dissolution of marriage, dower, and maintenance, except for the issue of property rights (inheritance rights). Another work by the same author of 2008 touches on the issue of inheritance rights of Muslim women; the focus of the study was on identifying the gaps between the legal texts and practical implementation of the laws in Bangladesh and suggestions for better implementation of the existing legal rights of women (Monsoor, 2008). Another recent study, conducted exclusively on the property rights of Muslim women by I. Khan and others, is a doctrinal work that justifies the Sharia rules of property distribution and depicts social practices as a barrier to the property deprivation of Muslim women (Khan et al., 2016).

Regarding the position of Hindu women in all family matters, including inheritance issues, there are few studies. For example, the Law Commission of Bangladesh conducted a study in 2012 on the possibility of reforming Hindu personal laws, which also addresses the issue of women's inheritance rights. The study depicts positive responses from Hindu men and women regarding the inheritance of property rights by Hindu women. However, the study did not focus on getting equal inheritance rights for women (Law Commission of Bangladesh Report, 2012). M. Zahur made a qualitative study in 2016 highlighting the discriminatory status of Hindu women relating to property rights (Zahur, 2016). S Huda conducted another comprehensive study (including a survey of 175 Hindu personnel) in 2019 on the overall status of Hindu women in reference to family matters, including property rights (Huda, 2019). The study focused on the current status of property rights for Bangladeshi Hindu women, specifically

their lack of property or limited interest in inherited property, in comparison to Hindu women in India following the passage of the Hindu Succession Act of 1956.

J. Hossain and I. Jamil did two latest studies on the unequal inheritance rights in Bangladesh between genders in 2022 and 2023 (Hossain & Jamil, 2022); however, the focus of the studies was from a policy perspective. The first study examined the socio-political drivers and political power behind the non-implementation of a gender-equal inheritance policy in Bangladesh, while the second highlighted the religious contestations, debates, and the multiplicity of practices that challenge the formulation of gender-equal inheritance policies in Bangladesh.

By evaluating the above-mentioned literature, it can be concluded that the present study addresses the same issue but from a different lens. It is purely an empirical study that tries to depict the present status of Bangladeshi Muslim and Hindu women's inheritance rights, the impact of religious-based distribution rules on women, especially on their economic empowerment and the country's overall development agenda, and the public perception on women's getting equal inheritance rights with men by statutory reforms in the coming days.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach includes a series of processes, from general analysis to detailed data collection, evaluation, and interpretation procedures. A mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods, has been employed here. To collect empirical data, the researchers conducted both online and offline surveys, preparing two separate question sets for the respondents. The questionnaire for women participants consisted of 16 questions (Appendix I), while the questionnaire for men participants had 11 questions (Appendix II). The question pattern included gender-specific and religion-specific questions, as required by this study. In addition, some common questions were asked of all participants, as they relate to everyone, regardless of gender or religion.

The researchers' target was to elicit the objective and unbiased opinions of the masses. For clarification, the data collectors conducted both private and group sessions to gather the public's view. Almost half of the audience in the offline survey were females, and the rest were males. The researchers ensured that most people were well aware of the questions, and therefore, sufficient clarifications of the questions' meaning were provided to them beforehand (where needed).

The data collection methods were also a hybrid approach. Firstly, the researchers circulated the online response form through digital platforms (Google Forms) and gathered responses. Meanwhile, on-site data collection was conducted in the chosen area for offline responses. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources.

For primary sources, the researchers collected data from two regions. For responses, the researchers have chosen two rural areas and one urban area. The areas are chosen in such a way that respondents from both religious communities can be reached. The researchers visited two Upazilas (Chowgacha and Keshabpur) of Southern District Jashore to gather perspectives of the masses (both Men and Women). For urban responses, the researchers were confined to Dhaka. Along with the mass population, a KII was conducted to gather an expert's view on the matter by asking open-ended questions (Appendix III). The online respondents had no fixed area and participated from all over the country. Therefore, primary data were collected via questionnaires, interviews, and group sessions. For secondary sources, the researchers used available literature on the inheritance issue from both Bangladesh and other countries. Books, journals, case laws, statutes, international legal instruments, and websites were the primary sources of secondary data.

In this research, simple random sampling and convenient sampling were used. The reason was to gather the perceptions of the masses, particularly to bring out the perceptions of women across urban and rural areas. The offline empirical study areas were two villages in Jashore District and Dhaka. The sampling criteria for selecting the respondents were:

- a) Age of Majority
- b) Having a Muslim or Hindu faith

RESULTS/FINDINGS

This section presents the outcome of the empirical study. To better understand, the questions asked of the participants have been divided into categories for men and women. Moreover, the questions have been summarized and classified under separate headings. Some of the questions were common for both genders, and others were specifically tailored for either male or female participants.

Men's Perception of Existing Inheritance Rules and Their Impacts

I. Knowledge of Inheritance Rules

In the offline survey, of the Muslim male (hereinafter MM) respondents, 58% had a substantial understanding of the inheritance law, and 27% had very little understanding of the same. In contrast, 51% of the Hindu men (hereinafter referred to as HM) were aware of the inheritance rules, and 33% had a partial understanding of the same.

Further, among the online respondents, 58% of MM claimed that they knew about inheritance, whereas the percentage was 51% of HM respondents.

II. Opinion on Discrimination

As far as the issue of inheritance rules being discriminatory to women is concerned, among offline respondents, the overwhelming majority of 78% of MM considered it to be not discriminatory, while a small minority of 22% considered it to be discriminatory. In contrast, 56% of HM respondents believed it to be discriminatory, whereas 44% believed it to be not discriminatory.

The response is similar to the online survey. 71% of the MM consider the current rule of distribution to be not discriminatory, whereas 29% of them consider that there is discrimination. In contrast, 79% of the HM responded positively by saying in favor of discrimination, and only 21% found no discrimination.

III. Opinion on Statutory Amendment

Regarding the reformation of the statute, 69% of MM were against the introduction of equal inheritance law, and only 26% of the respondents were in favor of such an introduction. Meanwhile, 43% of the HM are against equal inheritance rights for Hindu and Muslim women, and only 35% would support providing equal inheritance rights. The rest, 22%, are undecided.

In the online survey, only 41% of the MM expressed that they would accept such a reform, whereas 54% indicated that they would not welcome such reform. A small number of participants declined to answer the question. Surprisingly, 76% of HM supported equal inheritance, while only 21% were opposed to it.

Women's Perception of Existing Inheritance Rules and Their Impacts

I. Knowledge of Inheritance Rules

Muslim women (hereinafter MW) appear to fall behind when it comes to the knowledge of inheritance, as 41% of MW are ignorant, whereas 41% possess only partial knowledge.

However, Hindu Women (hereinafter HW) are a bit ahead of the MW, as 33% possess knowledge about the same, with 18% having partial knowledge.

In the online survey, 68% of the MW claimed that they know about inheritance law, whereas 28% stated that they know very little. Around 3% of the MW claimed to have no knowledge regarding inheritance. On the other hand, 63% of the HW claimed to know about the rules of inheritance, and 23% stated that they know very little. 13% of the HW claimed to have no knowledge on the issue.

II. Opinion on Discrimination

In the offline survey, 37% of all female respondents expressed their complete ignorance of the matter, while 31% thought it to be not discriminatory, and 32% held it to be discriminatory. Here also, HW are far ahead of MW in thinking the existing system to be discriminatory for them, as 54% of HW think it to be discriminatory, whereas the same is at 22% among MW. In fact, 41% of the MW does not know the distribution rules, let alone understand them to be discriminatory.

In the online survey, around 51% of MW stated that they think the rules are unequal, whereas 40% stated that they disagree with the notion. On the other hand, 90% of HW think that the rules of inheritance are discriminatory, and 7% have no knowledge of the rules of inheritance. Interestingly, no HW said that the rules are not discriminatory.

III. Opinion on Statutory Amendment

In the offline survey, 58% of all women expressed their desire for an amendment to the inheritance rules to ensure equality in the distribution, and 42% did not welcome such an amendment. More specifically, 52% of MW are in favor of an amendment, whereas the ratio is 73% for HW.

Similar responses were found in the online survey: 73% of the MW support such amendments and 24% are against them, whereas 97% of Hindu women support such statutes, and only 3% are against them.

IV. Opinion on Seeking Legal Recourse

A question was posed as to whether the women were willing to pursue legal recourse when necessary, and the response was positive. In the offline survey, 52% of all women said that they would bring legal action to claim their right to the property, whereas 48% showed no such

interest. MW were a little ahead of HW in showing interest, the percentage being 56% and 42%, respectively. There is a common belief that Bangladeshi women are reluctant to claim their inheritance rights due to religious reasons, which was contradicted in the offline survey. 64% of all women found no contradiction between religion and claiming the right to property, whereas only 25% deemed it against religious mandates. 81 % of MW considered it not to be sinful, whereas 62% of the HW considered it sinful.

In the online survey, 81% of women were willing to pursue legal action for inheritance rights, and 18% declined to do so. About 80% of both MW and HW expressed their willingness to pursue legal recourse. Regarding the belief that claiming inheritance rights is against religion, 76% of MW did not hold such a belief, and only 22% opined to have such a belief. Conversely, 83% of HW dismissed the idea, while 17% entertained the belief.

V. Experience in Claiming Inheritance Rights

Inquiry regarding facing problems in property matters was challenging as the women hesitated to provide personal details. In the offline survey, 42 women shared that they either faced such problems in the past or are facing them in the present. In the online survey, only 21 respondents shared their experience of facing problems in claiming their rightful inheritance, mostly from their maternal side. Maternal relatives often decline to give inheritance rights to the women in the family. Some of the respondents expressed that they often relinquish their claim in the inherited property, fearing a family feud. They also shared that claiming inheritance rights often draws social stigma from the neighborhood. While most of them declined to suggest any solution, some identified patriarchy and outdated social structures as primary reasons for depriving women of their rightful share. They advocated for changes in legislation and their effective implementation.

Impact on Development (opinion of both men and women)

Regarding women's economic development, 55% of all respondents agreed with the notion that unequal distribution of inherited property hinders economic development whereas 45% disagreed. In this regard, the opinions of the MW and HW differ. 49% of MW agreed about the impact on development whereas 66% of the HW agreed about the impact. In contrast, 51% of MW did not find any impact on development, whereas only 34% of HW expressed the same.

With regard to the national economy and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 53% of all women respondents believed that the current rules of inheritance are not

conducive to women's emancipation and economic empowerment. Again, the opinions of the MW and HW differ. The majority of the MW (54%) did not consider that the present situation compromises SDG attainment, whereas a majority of HW (66%) deemed the present situation to be a hurdle towards SDG attainment.

In the online survey, 60% of all women expressed facing challenges to their economic development due to unequal inheritance rules, whereas 37% shared no such challenges. Among MW, 57% expressed the view in favor of facing challenges, with 40% not having so. On the other hand, 77% of HW stated that unequal inheritance hindered their economic development. With regard to the SDGs, 63% of women opined unequal inheritance hinders SDG achievement, while 33% disagreed. 61 % of MW expressed concern about SDG attainment, while 36% disagreed. Conversely, 80% of HW believe unequal inheritance hinders SDG attainment, while only 10% did not think so.

Interestingly, when the same question was posed to men, the majority (61%) did not consider that unequal distribution of inherited property could cause hardship for women in participating in the national economy and SDG attainment, and only 39% believed otherwise. This is a clear instance of how the mindsets of men and women vary.

Opinion on Joint Property (both men and women)

Recognizing the importance of joint conjugal property, both men and women were asked questions to find out their opinions. Surprisingly, 479 respondents (out of a total of 725) expressed their support for such a system. Only 115 did not agree with such a system, and 131 had no opinion on this. A majority of 82% of MW supported the system, whereas the percentage was 68% for the Hindu women.

In the online survey, 68% of all women supported this system, and 15% were against it. Moreover, 65% of the MW supported the concept of joint property, whereas 17% were against it, and around 16% made no comment on the issue. On the other hand, 80% of the HW supported the concept of joint property, and only 3% were against it. Around 10% of the HW made no comment on the issue.

Expert Appraisal on the Matter Received Through KII

Along with the survey that helped us understand the public sentiment, experts were also consulted to obtain scholarly opinions. Our experts included judges, lawyers, human rights

activists, and academics who are conversant with and experienced in family law and related fields. Twenty experts were interviewed using the KII questionnaire format (see Annexure III).

Most experts opined that the current national legislative framework that regulates the inheritance rights of Muslim and Hindu women in Bangladesh is outdated, inequitable, discriminatory, gender-biased, and inconsistent with constitutional principles. However, a few of them were not critical of the existing system and rather justified the reduced property allocation, stating the fewer financial obligations of the women along with their right to dowry and marriage gifts that they receive.

One expert underscored the need for a comprehensive reinterpretation of the Muslim inheritance rules and significant reforms of the Hindu inheritance rules. Many experts pointed out a few factors that militate against the realization of women's right to inheritance, including widespread toxic masculinity, deep-rooted patriarchy, and social stigma. Moreover, they expressed their concern about a phenomenon where women have to let go of their right to inheritance in order to protect their relationship with their family members.

Concerning Bangladesh's reservation to Article 2 of CEDAW, most of the experts suggested the withdrawal of this reservation, considering the current socio-economic context. However, three experts considered it prudent to leave it to the executive authorities for now. Despite this, all the experts agreed that the unequal distribution of inherited property hinders the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a great deal, particularly the goal of gender equality.

Regarding women's self-reliance and independence in socio-economic contexts, most experts agreed that the lesser share in the inherited property significantly affects the empowerment of women and makes them dependent on men. However, they refused to consider this the only factor that led to the women's vulnerability and stated that various social anomalies play a role. One expert stated that, irrespective of the inadequacy, there is a failure to implement the existing legal framework, which contributes to the vulnerability.

The concept of 'joint property' seems to garner support from the public, yet experts remain concerned due to the lack of clarity regarding its contents. They agree that decisions on this matter should be guided by public opinion. Moreover, they think that such a system should not be mandatory but rather based on the choice of the couples, with certain terms and conditions in place to protect the sanctity of the marriage.

Regarding the issue of India's success in ensuring equal inheritance for women, the experts pointed out that India could do so only for the Hindu community, and the same model can be followed for the Hindu community of Bangladesh. However, they also signified the consideration of the different socio-legal-political-cultural dynamics of each country. All the experts unanimously agreed that the challenges to the introduction of equal inheritance are socio-political rather than legal. They identified patriarchal notions, gender stereotypes, populist political strategies, and religious biases as hindrances to equal inheritance laws. The fact that all the civil and criminal laws are uniform and only personal matters, such as inheritance law, are regulated by religious laws shows an attempt to maintain a deeply ingrained patriarchy within the society. Experts have stated that religion is being misinterpreted and misused to fulfill ulterior motives and political agendas.

Lastly, the experts maintained that there should be legislative reform to grant equal or uniform inheritance rights irrespective of gender. However, they recognized the current socio-economic context and suggested that there should be a mass awareness campaign to garner public support for the issue. Therefore, legislative reform must be supported by public opinion and political willingness. In this regard, experts stressed the importance of synergic efforts from the researchers, NGOs, INGOs, academics, and judiciary.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

The responses have been collected from offline surveys, online surveys, and the experts. In this portion, we will analyze the data we received and try to extract the trend and pattern from the responses. Our first question was regarding the knowledge of inheritance. Irrespective of religion and gender, every individual should be aware of their respective inheritance laws. If people are not aware of their rights, it is very unlikely that they will be able to claim those rights. Alarming, we have observed that only 38 percent of the respondents claimed to have substantial knowledge of inheritance. Moreover, women, who are regarded as the main victims of unequal inheritance, are far less aware of knowledge than men. However, the HW seem to be comparatively more aware than their Muslim counterparts. In the online response, there is a completely different picture as around 71 percent of all respondents are aware of the inheritance. The women are still less aware than their male counterparts, albeit by a short margin.

Our survey provides some form of evidence to the general notion that the majority of people do not find problems with the distribution of inheritance. In both the offline and online

responses, the majority of Muslim respondents do not consider the practice of inheritance to be discriminatory. A huge portion of the MM does not consider the inheritance to be discriminatory (78 percent and 71 percent in offline and online surveys, respectively). The opinions of MW in the offline survey were closely divided, with 32% deeming it discriminatory and 31% not deeming it so. In the online survey, 51% of MW considered the practice discriminatory and 40% did not. When it comes to the Hindu community, the majority of them, irrespective of offline and online responses, considered the practice to be discriminatory. The data suggest that women, in general, believe that the unequal distribution of inheritance is discriminatory. On the other hand, the experts in our KII agree that the unequal distribution of inherited property is an instance of discrimination that goes against the obligation of Bangladesh under national and international law.

The opinion on the acceptance of the amendment of the law to provide equal inheritance reflects the view on discrimination. The majority of MW and HW of both offline and online responses supported such an amendment. There was, however, no change with regard to the opinion of the MM, as the majority of the MM respondents in both offline and online surveys were against such an amendment. The response of the Hindu Community was consistent with their opinion on discrimination as well. The majority of them, irrespective of gender and the medium of survey, supported the amendment. The only opposition to the statutory amendment seems to come from the MM. This result lends support to the experts' opinion on the issue, who suggested that prevalent toxic masculinity and oppressive patriarchy are primary reasons behind the existence of unequal inheritance rules.

Even with equal inheritance rules, women need to be willing to seek legal redress in case of denial of legal rights. Our survey suggests that women are willing to seek legal recourse. For example, 56% of the MW in the offline survey and 81% of the MW in the online survey straightforwardly stated that they are ready to take legal redress in case they are deprived of their inheritance rights. Similar readiness can also be seen among the HW on both offline and online surveys.

One of the key assumptions is that the unequal distribution of inheritance financially cripples women in general and therefore hinders their economic development and the achievement of sustainable development goals. We tried to understand whether this assumption is reflected in people's views as well. The offline data suggest that the opinions of the MW are closely divided, as 49% of them stated they consider that such unequal distribution of inherited

property hinders economic development, whereas 51% do not believe so. However, the majority of the HW consider that such unequal distribution causes a hindrance to economic development. The opinion of the MW and HW on the hindrance towards SDG goals is almost similar. The patriarchal notion among MM is visible in both offline and online data, as the majority of them do not consider that the unequal distribution of property hinders economic development. However, a progressive attitude is seen among the HM, and the majority of them consider that the unequal distribution of inheritance hinders the economic development of women and the achievement of SDG goals. The experts' opinions also align with the view that unequal distribution of property makes women economically vulnerable and hinders their development. However, they expressed that the unequal distribution is not the only reason behind such hindrance, and there are plenty of socio-legal issues that are reasons behind this.

In some countries, there is a practice of joint conjugal property, which allows married couples to hold the property together. Our offline data show a positive response to this issue, as 65% of all the participants were in favor of this practice. Moreover, 82% and 68% of MW and HW, respectively, supported the practice. The online response was quite similar, as 68% of all women were in favor of the practice. Such a positive attitude towards joint property can allow women to hold the same interest in property as men.

The most important finding of the survey is that objections to equal inheritance rights for men and women came from Muslim men. On the other hand, women's position with regard to equal inheritance is very positive. The majority of both the MW and HW believe that the current unequal distribution of property is a significant hindrance to their economic development and the achievement of the nation's SDG goals, and they would welcome an amendment to the law that incorporates rules of equal inheritance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research employed an empirical methodology to examine the current outlook on inheritance rights among Muslim and Hindu women in Bangladesh, as well as the possibility of reform in the existing legislation. The finding suggests a consensus among the women and the Key Informant Interviews (KII) that the current rules of inheritance are inequitable, leading to discrimination between men and women. However, perspectives diverge between MM and HM, with the latter perceiving the existing framework as discriminatory. Moreover, it has been observed that unequal inheritance hinders women's empowerment, thereby affecting the national economy. Therefore, it is imperative that the proper distribution of the inheritance

property is ensured. However, Muslim men seem to be in favor of the continuance of the status quo as they disagree with the notion that the existing system is inherently iniquitous and discriminatory.

In light of the aforementioned empirical findings, the researchers propose the following recommendations for the relevant authority to ensure equal inheritance rights for Muslim and Hindu women. These suggestions are advisory and should be contextualized within the socio-economic realities of the region.

The recommendations are outlined below:

- I. **Education and Outreach:** Organize a targeted campaign to ensure that people of all religious communities, and especially women in rural areas, are cognizant of the inheritance rules.
- II. **Review International Commitments:** Reevaluate Bangladesh's reservation to the CEDAW, considering Bangladesh's broader international obligations.
- III. **Interpretive Research:** Carry out thorough research on Islamic law to understand its core principles and their implications, using methodologies such as neo-Taqlid and Neo Ijtihad.
- IV. **Media Engagement:** Take advantage of the electronic and print media to circulate the importance of gender equality and fight the discriminatory practices that exist in society.
- V. **Community Collaboration:** Engage the religious and community leaders to streamline the inclusive interpretation of the religious texts that promote the principle of equality and non-discrimination.
- VI. **Secular Legislation:** Consider the enactment of secular legislation in accordance with the commitment to secularism and Bangladesh's commitment to the SDGs in order to establish equality in the inheritance law.
- VII. **Legal Advocacy and Research:** Encourage the Supreme Court to make a modern and progressive interpretation of the religious laws and support legal reforms through empirical research, aligning with secular principles and SDGs.

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