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Media Discourse, Legal Consciousness and Women's Inheritance Rights: A Study of Perception and Awareness Mapping in Greater Noida

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ABSTRACT

The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 brought a significant change to inheritance law for women by conferring equal coparcenary rights on daughters in ancestral property, thereby advancing gender justice and the objectives of women's empowerment. The success of a reform of this kind, however, depends not only upon the statute itself but also upon the level of public awareness and acceptance of it. Media discourse is instrumental in that process, shaping legal knowledge and the reception of the law by the public. The study draws on media discourse analysis and legal consciousness, and situates the enquiry within Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5. It employs a small mixed-method design that combines doctrinal analysis of the substituted section 6 and the case law interpreting it with a convenience-sample questionnaire administered to women professionals and media users in Greater Noida, alongside observation within a focus group and a comparison of traditional and digital sources of awareness. Twelve completed responses were received and analysed, and the quantitative findings are accordingly exploratory rather than representative. Within those limits, respondents report social media as both the most common first source of information about inheritance rights and the medium they consider most effective for raising awareness, while pressure within the family emerges as a recurrent reason why women hesitate to claim. The study argues that media operates as an agent of legal empowerment rather than as a passive mirror reflecting social norms, and it offers suggestions for strengthening media engagement in the dissemination of legal rights so as to narrow the gap between formal entitlement and the substantive equality the Act was intended to secure.

Keywords: inheritance rights, legal awareness, legal literacy, legal consciousness, media discourse, women's empowerment

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 represents a major reform of the Indian legal system. It was aimed at promoting gender equity by giving daughters an equal right in ancestral property, and in doing so it unsettled a long-standing and deeply embedded patriarchal arrangement in the law of the Mitakshara coparcenary. Despite that progressive intention, the success of the legislation depends substantially on whether society is aware of it.

Media discourse plays a significant part here as a mediator between law and society. Media, encompassing print, electronic and digital platforms, functions not only as a channel for the dissemination of information but also as a site at which legal meaning is construed, debated and circulated. Through news reporting, editorials, television debate and engagement on social platforms, media contributes to shaping public perception and to awakening legal consciousness about property rights.

A. Media discourse

Media discourse refers to the ways in which media texts, news reports, debates and social media posts construct and communicate meanings about social reality. It shapes public understanding by framing an issue in a particular way. According to Fairclough (1995), media discourse is a form of social practice that both reflects and constructs power relations in society and in law. Van Dijk (1998) emphasises that media discourse influences public cognition and the formation of ideology.

B. Legal consciousness and legal awareness

Ewick and Silbey (1998) show that legal consciousness is formed through everyday interaction with institutions and through ordinary exposure to legal meaning rather than through formal legal education alone. It determines how individuals perceive legal reform and whether that reform is translated into actual social change. Awareness is therefore the threshold condition. Without it a legislative reform remains unutilised, and the entitlement the statute creates is simply not claimed.

C. Gender justice

Gender justice denotes equality and fairness in rights, responsibilities and opportunities irrespective of gender. The Amendment Act of 2005 is a step towards gender justice in property rights, and media plays a part in either reinforcing or unsettling the social norms that surround those rights.

D. Dissemination of legal information

Dissemination here means the distribution of legal knowledge to the public through the various channels and modes of media. The way media frames a legal change affects public understanding of that change. Legal knowledge and legal literacy are essential to a democratic polity and to its development, and without them legal remedies remain largely symbolic. Legal literacy involves not merely knowing of a right but the capacity to act upon it, and access to information is essential to that capacity. Access to legal literacy programmes is nevertheless uneven, and rural areas continue to face greater difficulty in obtaining legal information than urban ones. Agnes (2011) emphasises that legal reform alone cannot secure gender equality, since a constitutional claim has to be worked out against social practice.

E. Research gap

Four gaps are apparent in the existing work. Empirical study of the effect of media discourse on awareness of the 2005 Amendment remains limited. Comparative analysis of traditional against digital media is largely absent. Rural populations receive insufficient attention. Interdisciplinary work joining law and media studies is scarce.

In a country as diverse as India, the dissemination of a reform of this kind meets barriers of legal illiteracy, regional disparity and patriarchal social structure. Traditional and digital media can each serve as a bridge across that gap. Through news reporting, debate and vernacular content, media translates complex statutory provisions into accessible narratives and so fosters legal literacy. Examining the influence of media in disseminating the 2005 Amendment is therefore essential to understanding how legal reform translates into social change. This study situates media as an agent capable of increasing the awareness and acceptance on which the realisation of the Act depends.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

A. Research questions

The study asks to what extent media coverage shapes social belief about equal property rights; what roles traditional and digital media respectively play in disseminating information about women's inheritance rights; whether there are gaps or biases in the media representation of the 2005 Amendment; and how media influences public awareness of it.

B. Research objectives

The objectives are to examine the role of media in disseminating legal awareness about the 2005 Amendment; to analyse the nature and framing of media discourse on women's property rights;

to assess the influence of media on social attitudes towards gender equality; and to identify the challenges that attend the media dissemination of legal information.

C. Hypotheses

Three propositions are advanced. Positive media framing of women's inheritance rights is associated with more favourable social attitudes towards gender equality. Media exposure increases legal awareness of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005. Digital platforms are more effective than traditional media in disseminating information about the Act among younger audiences. Given the size of the sample described below, these propositions are treated as working expectations to be explored rather than as hypotheses formally tested.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 is a landmark in the development of personal law in India. By making daughters coparceners in joint family property it was expected to advance the socio-economic position of women and to secure equality in the matter of inheritance.

A. Legal evolution and the amendment of 2005

Before the amendment, the rights of a Hindu woman in family property were confined largely to maintenance and to *stridhan*, and she was excluded from the coparcenary of the Hindu undivided family. The LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA (2000) had recommended reform of the Mitakshara coparcenary so that a daughter would take by birth on the same footing as a son. The Amendment Act gave effect to that recommendation by substituting section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with effect from 9 September 2005. It also omitted section 23, which had prevented a female heir from seeking partition of a dwelling house occupied by the family, and section 24, which had disqualified certain widows from succeeding to an intestate on their remarriage.

B. Judicial clarification

The judiciary has played a crucial part in giving content to the amendment. In *Prakash v. Phulavati* the Supreme Court held that the substituted section 6 operated prospectively, so that the benefit was available only where both the coparcener father and the daughter were living on 9 September 2005. In *Danamma @ Suman Surpur v. Amar* a Bench granted the daughters a share although their father had died in 2001, a result that sat uneasily with the earlier decision. The conflict was resolved in *Vineeta Sharma v. Rakesh Sharma*, in which a three-judge Bench held that the right of a daughter under the substituted section 6 arises by birth, that it does not

depend on the father being alive on the date of commencement, and that it is available whether the daughter was born before or after the amendment.¹ The effect is that the benefit of the law reaches a far wider group of women, and that a family cannot rely on the date of a father's death to defeat a daughter's claim. These rulings bear not only on ancestral property but also on intestate succession and on the management of family property, and they reinforce a woman's legal capacity to own, control and dispose of property independently.

C. Socio-cultural barriers and surviving limitations

Notwithstanding the reform, the literature suggests a considerable gap between entitlement and realisation. The legal framework changed; the patriarchal structure within which property is actually transmitted largely did not. Social pressure on women to relinquish a share persists, as does the fear of damaging relations with brothers. Accounts of growing awareness in states such as Uttar Pradesh are accompanied by accounts of low legal literacy that hinders effective implementation. Awareness is also reported to be higher in some southern states, where state amendments had already made unmarried daughters coparceners before 2005.

Commentators point in addition to limitations that survive the amendment. Section 15 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 continues to provide that property inherited by a female Hindu from her husband or father-in-law devolves, where she dies intestate without a son or daughter, upon the heirs of the husband, which is said to subordinate her standing as an independent propositus. Section 2(2) excludes members of a Scheduled Tribe from the operation of the Act unless the Central Government otherwise directs, with the result that tribal women receive no benefit from the 2005 reform at all. Both provisions are treated in the literature as substantial gaps in a statute presented as a measure of gender equality. Taken together, the literature indicates that a progressive step has been only partly effective, because legal awareness is thin and the social structure the reform addresses has proved durable.

D. Media discourse and public perception

Media discourse on the Act has moved from portraying the 2005 reform as a watershed to a more critical assessment of its effectiveness in the light of the recent rulings. Coverage of *Vineeta Sharma* was substantial and has shaped the way the shift is described, with daughters presented as coparceners by birth. What the literature indicates, however, is that reporting has

¹ *Vineeta Sharma v. Rakesh Sharma*, (2020) 9 SCC 1, held that *Prakash v. Phulavati*, (2016) 2 SCC 36, was not good law, and partly overruled *Danamma @ Suman Surpur v. Amar*, (2018) 3 SCC 343, to the extent that it required the coparcener father to be living on 9 September 2005. The daughter's right is traced to birth and may be claimed with effect from 9 September 2005, subject to the saving in the proviso to section 6(1) for any disposition, alienation, partition or testamentary disposition effected before 20 December 2004.

been event driven rather than educational, clustered around judgments rather than sustained, and that comprehension across social groups is correspondingly uneven.

E. Theoretical framework

Legislation of this kind does not by itself transform social convention. Its impact depends on how it is disseminated, how it is interpreted and how society receives it. Five bodies of theory inform the present enquiry.

Agenda-setting theory explains why some issues become visible in public life while others do not. McCombs and Shaw (1972) found a close correspondence between the salience of an issue in media coverage and its salience for the public. Where women's property rights and the cases decided under the Act are frequently reported, the subject becomes part of what the public attends to; where they are not, it remains invisible.

Presentation matters as much as salience, and this is where framing theory applies. Entman (1993) describes framing as a matter of selection and salience. The same statute can be presented as a step towards gender equality, with the emphasis on empowerment and justice, or as a source of disruption within the family and of legal complication. The frame shapes opinion in an evaluative rather than an informational register.

Media discourse theory directs attention to how reality is constituted through narrative and through particular uses of language (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). Legal consciousness theory, following Ewick and Silbey (1998), supplies the link between exposure and claim, since what a person does with a right depends on how law figures in her ordinary understanding of her own situation. Diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 2003) treats the spread of a new legal norm as a communication process unfolding over time through particular channels within a social system, which is a useful way of describing how knowledge of the amendment has travelled unevenly.

F. Summary of previous research

Research on women's inheritance rights in India has concentrated on legislation, social attitude and the problems of implementation. Early work set out the long history of disadvantage produced by patriarchal inheritance and observed that the constitutional guarantee of equality did not prevent customary practice from depriving women of property. That work prepared the ground for the 2005 amendment. Legal scholars then analysed the amended provisions, noting that daughters had been placed on the same footing as sons as coparceners by birth, and a substantial body of case commentary followed the judicial interpretation of the scope of the

amendment. Such studies analysed the legal position thoroughly, but gave comparatively little attention to whether women knew of the law at all.

A further strand addressed awareness directly. Surveys in rural and urban settings reported that women generally had limited knowledge of the law, and that even educated women were often unaware of their entitlement in ancestral property. Cultural barriers and the prospect of family conflict made them reluctant to invoke it. Legal empowerment, on this evidence, requires social acceptance as well as knowledge.

A third strand examined the consequences of ownership. Panda and Agarwal (2005) found, on the basis of a household survey in Kerala, that women owning immovable property faced a significantly lower risk of marital violence than propertyless women and exercised markedly greater autonomy in household decisions. That finding indicates that inheritance rights carry developmental consequences well beyond the transfer of an asset.

Media and communication scholars have examined how legal information reaches citizens. Newspapers, television and radio have each been found to serve as sources of legal awareness, radio proving particularly useful for reaching populations with low levels of literacy. Digital media has added further channels, and social platforms, online news and government portals now carry legal information at low cost to younger audiences in particular. Development communication research treats media as capable of educating citizens, altering attitudes and inducing behavioural change, and campaigns of that kind have succeeded in the fields of health and education. There is reason to expect that a comparable strategy would assist in raising awareness of inheritance rights.

Gender and media studies have analysed how women's issues are portrayed. The findings indicate that women's legal rights receive less attention than political or economic subjects, and that inheritance disputes tend to be reported as family matters rather than as questions of gender justice. Media narratives, on this account, help constitute public perception and may either reinforce or question patriarchy. Rural communication research shows marked differences in access to legal information, with rural women relying on interpersonal channels, local leaders and self-help groups rather than on mass media, and suggests that media strategies work best when combined with communication at the grassroots. Digital literacy has become a further concern, since access to the internet has expanded without removing inequalities of age, gender, education and economic position.

G. Critical appraisal of the existing literature

Valuable as this body of work is, several limitations stand out. The role of media communication in spreading information about the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 has received little attention. Research is framed either in terms of legal implication or in terms of women's empowerment, and work at the intersection of media communication and the right to inherit remains scarce. Legal scholarship largely follows the doctrinal method, in which statutory text and judicial interpretation receive the attention. Such analysis is indispensable, but it does not reach the questions of public awareness, communication process and media influence, and little is therefore known about how citizens come to learn of their inheritance rights.

A second limitation is methodological. Qualitative analysis, legal interpretation and secondary data predominate, so that evidence on the effectiveness of media in raising awareness is inadequate. Several studies investigate the awareness of women without asking where that awareness came from. They report low levels of awareness without establishing whether respondents had encountered inheritance rights through newspapers, television, social media, education, family networks or government campaigns, which limits what can be said about channels of communication.

A third concerns geography. Most studies are conducted in particular states or localities, and evidence drawn from a narrow setting will not represent a national trend. Given the linguistic, cultural and economic diversity of India, awareness and patterns of media consumption differ widely, and comparative studies are needed. There is also a tendency to treat women as a homogeneous group, when age, education, income, community and locality shape both media exposure and awareness of rights. An intersectional approach is required.

Studies of media coverage attend mostly to the quantity rather than the quality of that coverage. Scholars may count how often an issue has been covered, but few examine framing, the clarity of the message, the language used or the way an audience interprets it. Since presentation affects perception, understanding how media presents inheritance rights matters as much as knowing how often it does so. In relation to digital media, there is an assumption that internet access produces awareness. Access does not guarantee accurate understanding, and users may encounter partial or incorrect information; few studies examine the credibility and effectiveness of legal communication online.

Longitudinal work is also lacking. Most studies offer a snapshot of awareness at a single point in time, and few ask whether awareness has improved since the amendment was adopted. The role of government communication requires further investigation, as the current literature

contains little evaluation of the awareness programmes run by government agencies, legal services authorities or women's commissions, and an analysis of how those institutions communicate could offer useful insight into the success of their policies. Audience reception has attracted little study, although the effects of media can be explained only partly through content analysis, since an audience interprets a message actively through its own experience, cultural background and social context.

The theoretical resources available have not been fully used. Agenda-setting, framing, cultivation, diffusion of innovations and uses and gratifications each provide a basis for analysing legal communication, yet they have seldom been applied to inheritance rights. The measurement of empowerment raises a further difficulty: many studies treat awareness as an indicator of empowerment without empirical warrant, when a woman may know of her legal rights and still be unable to claim them. How exposure and awareness translate into empowerment is itself in need of investigation. A comparative international perspective is absent, and study of how media has raised awareness of inheritance reform elsewhere could illuminate the Indian position. Finally, much of the literature was written before the technologies that now dominate the information environment. The spread of smartphones, social platforms and digital governance in India has changed that environment, and the present situation calls for fresh research.

H. Gap addressed by the present study

The review makes plain that a considerable body of research addresses the property rights of women, legal reform and media communication, but that the particular contribution of media to spreading knowledge of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 has received little consideration. There is a need for empirical work exploring the ways in which media conveys legal information, how audiences interpret it, and how it bears on the comprehension of inheritance rights. The present study is a small contribution towards that end.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive design combining doctrinal and empirical approaches. The doctrinal component examines the provisions of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, the decisions interpreting the substituted section 6, the report of the LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA that preceded the reform, and the secondary literature on media and legal awareness. The empirical component assesses the awareness and perception of women regarding inheritance rights and the part media plays in conveying information about them.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered online, together with observation within a focus group of women professionals and media users in Greater Noida. Respondents were recruited by convenience sampling from professional and academic networks accessible to the researcher. No sampling frame was used, and no attempt was made to stratify the sample by age, income, community or locality.

The sample is small, and this governs everything that follows. Twelve completed responses were received, and every percentage reported in this paper is a proportion of those twelve. A single respondent accounts for 8.3 per cent of the sample and two respondents for 16.7 per cent. The design was originally intended to reach a larger group, and an earlier draft of this study referred to fifty participants; the response data on which the analysis actually rests comprise twelve returns, and twelve is the figure used throughout.

Three consequences follow, and they should govern how the findings below are read. The results cannot be generalised to women in Greater Noida, still less to any wider population, and the mapping this study offers is an exploratory one rather than a representative survey of the city or of any group within it. No inferential statistic is reported, because none would carry meaning at this sample size, and no formal test of the propositions set out above is attempted. Percentages are given alongside raw counts throughout, so that the reader can see at every point how few responses lie behind each figure.

Media exposure was treated as the independent variable, and awareness and understanding of inheritance rights as the dependent variables. Responses were analysed using simple frequencies and percentages, and the answers to open questions were read thematically to identify recurring concerns. What the study offers, within these limits, is an indication of the channels through which a small group of educated urban women encountered the law, and of the barriers those women identify to claiming under it.

V. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The survey was completed by twelve respondents. The tables below reproduce the response distributions in full. The number of respondents is given in every case alongside the percentage, and the size of the sample should be kept in view throughout.

A. Profile of respondents

The respondents were a highly educated group. Seven of the twelve held a postgraduate qualification and three were graduates, so that ten of the twelve had completed a degree. One had studied to Class 12 and one to Class 10. The sample therefore says nothing at all about

women with little or no formal education, who are precisely the group for whom the awareness deficit described in the literature is most acute.

Highest qualification	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Postgraduate	7	58.3
Graduate	3	25.0
Class 12	1	8.3
Class 10	1	8.3
Undergraduate	0	0.0
Total	12	100.0

Table 1: Educational qualification of respondents ($n = 12$). Percentages are rounded and do not sum exactly to 100.

B. Awareness of inheritance rights

Awareness within this educated group was moderate rather than high. Six respondents described themselves as somewhat aware of their inheritance rights and four as highly aware, while two reported that they were not aware at all. That two women in a sample composed almost entirely of graduates and postgraduates reported no awareness is consistent with the finding in the literature that formal education does not by itself carry knowledge of inheritance entitlement, although with twelve responses the observation can be no more than suggestive.

Level of awareness	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Highly aware	4	33.3
Somewhat aware	6	50.0
Not aware	2	16.7
Total	12	100.0

Table 2: Self-assessed awareness of inheritance rights ($n = 12$).

C. Sources of first information

Asked where they had first learned about inheritance rights, respondents were able to select more than one source.² Social media was named by five of the twelve, television and newspapers by four, family and college by two each, and property dealers and school by one each. No respondent named friends. Digital platforms thus led the traditional press within this group, though not overwhelmingly. The appearance of property dealers as a source is worth noting: for at least one respondent, the first encounter with the law came through a commercial transaction rather than through education, family or media.

² The questions reported in Tables 3 and 4 permitted more than one answer. The percentages given there are proportions of the twelve respondents rather than of the responses recorded, and they consequently sum to more than 100 per cent.

First source of information	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Social media	5	41.7
Television and newspapers	4	33.3
Family	2	16.7
College	2	16.7
Property dealers	1	8.3
School	1	8.3
Friends	0	0.0

Table 3: First source of information about inheritance rights ($n = 12$; multiple responses permitted).

D. Perceived effectiveness of media

Respondents were markedly more decided about which medium works best than about where they had in fact learned. Eleven of the twelve identified social media as the most effective medium for spreading awareness of inheritance rights. Educational institutions were named by three, and television, newspapers and legal campaigns by two each. The gap between the five who first learned through social media and the eleven who regard it as most effective suggests a perception of digital reach running ahead of the respondents' own experience, which is itself a matter worth pursuing in a larger study.

Medium considered most effective	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Social media	11	91.7
Educational institutions	3	25.0
Television	2	16.7
Newspapers	2	16.7
Legal campaigns	2	16.7

Table 4: Medium considered most effective for spreading awareness ($n = 12$; multiple responses permitted).

E. Discussion of inheritance within family and community

Inheritance is not much discussed. Nine of the twelve said that they discuss inheritance rights within their family or community only sometimes, two said never, and one said frequently. A right that is not spoken of within the household is unlikely to be asserted within it, and this result lends some support to the account in the literature of inheritance as a subject kept out of family conversation.

Frequency of discussion	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Frequently	1	8.3
Sometimes	9	75.0
Never	2	16.7

Frequency of discussion	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Total	12	100.0

Table 5: Frequency of discussion of inheritance rights within family or community (n = 12).

F. Family pressure as a barrier to claiming

Respondents were asked whether women hesitate to claim their inheritance because of pressure within the family. Seven of the twelve agreed or strongly agreed, four were neutral and one disagreed. The distribution is consistent with the accounts in the literature of social pressure on women to relinquish a share in order to preserve relations with brothers, although the number of neutral responses is itself notable in a sample of this kind and may reflect reluctance to characterise one's own family.

Response	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Strongly agree	1	8.3
Agree	6	50.0
Neutral	4	33.3
Disagree	1	8.3
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	12	100.0

Table 6: Agreement with the statement that women hesitate to claim inheritance because of family pressure (n = 12).

G. Interest in learning more

There is appetite for information. Six of the twelve said that they would like to learn more about inheritance rights and three more answered that they might, while three said that they would not. Even allowing for the small number of responses, the balance suggests that a communication strategy directed at educated urban women would meet a receptive rather than an indifferent audience.

Response	Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	6	50.0
No	3	25.0
Maybe	3	25.0
Total	12	100.0

Table 7: Whether respondents would like to learn more about inheritance rights (n = 12).

H. Barriers and suggestions reported by respondents

The open responses identified patriarchal tradition, lack of legal awareness, fear of family conflict, social pressure and economic dependence as the principal obstacles to women

exercising their inheritance rights. Family support was repeatedly described as decisive, and supportive family members were credited with helping women overcome the social and emotional difficulty that attends a claim. Most respondents agreed that digital media contributes significantly to creating awareness of women's inheritance rights, which reflects a degree of trust in media as an instrument of legal education. Respondents recommended awareness campaigns through schools, colleges, workshops, legal literacy programmes and social platforms. Most expressed support for equal inheritance rights for daughters, and several described positive experience of family attitudes towards women's ownership of property and financial autonomy. These are the views of twelve women and are reported as such, but they align closely with the barriers identified in the wider literature.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Within the limits set by twelve responses, this study indicates that media, and digital media in particular, is an important route by which educated urban women encounter the law of inheritance, and that it is the route those women themselves regard as most effective. It indicates in addition that the subject is seldom discussed at home and that pressure within the family is widely recognised as a reason why women hesitate to claim. The two observations belong together. A right that reaches a woman through a public medium but is never spoken of in her household is a right that may be known without ever being asserted.

The doctrinal position is now settled. *Vineeta Sharma* placed the daughter's coparcenary right on the footing of birth and removed the uncertainty that had followed the earlier decisions. What remains unsettled is the social realisation of that right, and the material presented here suggests that the obstacle lies less in the availability of information than in the conditions under which a woman is able to act upon it.

Three suggestions follow. Legal literacy campaigns should work through the digital channels on which respondents already rely, treating social platforms as the primary rather than the supplementary medium. Coverage of inheritance should be sustained rather than tied to the reporting of judgments, since event-driven attention produces awareness that fades. And awareness work should address the family as the site at which the decision is actually taken, since the barrier respondents identified most consistently was pressure within the household rather than ignorance of the law.

These are indications drawn from a small and unrepresentative group, and they are offered as such. The proper next step is a larger study, stratified by education, income and locality and extended to women outside the professional and media networks from which this sample was

drawn, capable of testing whether the pattern reported here holds more widely. Positive portrayal of women's inheritance rights in media can help shape social attitudes and build knowledge of those rights, and campaigning for legal literacy remains necessary if the legal consciousness on which the actual realisation of these rights depends is to be awakened.

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