

Women Rights Under Various Family Laws In India

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	<p>This Paper explores the various Personal Laws and discusses the legal standing and rights of women with regard to inheritance, divorce, and marriage. The research looks at the differences between different religious groups and how they relate to family laws, which are based on numerous religious traditions. It also demonstrates how these laws all contribute to gender inequality and limit women's autonomy. Women's rights under India's many personal laws are examined in this article. Hindu personal law grants women the right to inherit property and to sue for divorce, and their standing has lately improved. Muslim personal law allows polygamy and divorce but only provides women half of the wealth of the male heirs. There are equivalent rights under Christian and Parsi personal laws with regard to divorce and inheritance.</p> <p>Keywords: : Women, Rights, Personal Laws, Hindu law, Muslim Law ,Christian Law, Parsi Law, Special Marriage Act.</p>

INTRODUCTION

“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved, and it is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.”

- Swami Vivekananda

Different types of people are governed by different types of personal laws, like Hindu law, Muslim law, Christian law, and Parsi law. Personal laws cover various aspects related to Marriage, Divorce, Inheritance, and Adoption.

Matrimonial Rights of Women under Personal Laws are as follows:

1- Matrimonial Rights of Hindu Women in Hindu Personal Law-

Hindu law is governed by the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. It applies to Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs who live in India. Hindu law provides different rights to women, which are related to marriage, inheritance, and property.

1. Right to Marry

A Hindu woman who is 18 years old or above has right to marry a Hindu person of her choice.

Gullipilli Sowria Raj v. Bandaru Pavani¹

The Supreme Court held that a marriage between a Hindu and a Christian, solemnized under the Hindu Marriage Act without conversion, is invalid, reinforcing that both parties must be Hindus for the Act to apply.

2. Right to Stridhan

Stridhan refers to the property that a Hindu woman receives **before, during, or after marriage** as gifts from her family, husband, in-laws, friends, or other relatives. It is considered her **absolute property**, and she has full control over it.

1. AIR 2009 SC 1085

Ramesh Chandra v. State of U.P.²

The court upheld that the refusal to return the Stridhan is a criminal offence under Section 406 IPC.

Maya Gopinathan v. Anoop S.B. And Another³

The Supreme Court revisited the principles governing disputes regarding stridhan property and misappropriation thereof in the context of matrimonial discord.

Considering the prolonged legal battle and the escalation in the cost of living, the Supreme Court exercised its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to award Rs Twenty Five Lacs as compensation to the appellant, ensuring her financial security and well-being.

3. Right to Maintenance and Alimony

A Hindu woman has the right to claim financial support from her husband during and after marriage.

Section 18 of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 – A wife can claim maintenance during Separation.

Section 144 of the BNSS (2023) – A wife can claim maintenance if the husband neglects or refuses to maintain her.

Section 24 & 25 of the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 – Provide for maintenance and Alimony after divorce.

Parvin Kumar Jain v. Anju Jain⁴

Parvin Kumar Jain v. Anju Jain (2024) is a landmark case of the Supreme Court regarding the issue of permanent alimony in the context of an irretrievably broken marriage. The case centres around the determination of alimony for the wife after years of separation and the financial capacity of the husband.

The 2-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Prasanna B Varale awarded a one-time permanent alimony of Rs. 5 Crores to the wife and Rs. 1 Crore for the maintenance of the son. The Court ruled that alimony should not penalize the husband but ensure a reasonable standard of living for the wife.

A Hindu woman has an equal right to property in her matrimonial and parental homes.

Hindu Succession Act, 1956 (Amended in 2005) – Grants daughters equal rights in ancestral property.

Vineeta Sharma v. Rakesh Sharma⁵

A daughter has an equal coparcenary right, irrespective of her father's death before 2005.

Tej Bhan(D) v. Ram Kishan (D)⁶

The Supreme Court's judgment in this case serves as a pivotal moment in addressing the long-standing ambiguities surrounding Hindu female property rights under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. By acknowledging the chaotic state of judicial interpretations and seeking a larger bench's intervention, the Court emphasizes the necessity for legal clarity and uniformity.

The anticipated comprehensive ruling is poised to significantly enhance the protection of Hindu females' property rights, ensuring that the legislative intent of empowering women is effectively realized. This judgment not only highlights the judicial system's self-awareness in rectifying interpretative discrepancies but also paves the way for a more equitable and predictable legal framework in matters of succession and property rights.

5. Right to Divorce

A Hindu woman can seek divorce on several grounds. Under **Section 13(2) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**, certain grounds for divorce are available **exclusively to women**.

Legal Provisions:

Section 13 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 – Grounds for divorce include adultery, cruelty, desertion, conversion, mental disorder, venereal disease, renunciation, and irretrievable breakdown of marriage.

Section 13B of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 – Allows for divorce by mutual consent.

2. 2018 102 AllCriC 759

3. 2024 STPL(Web) 299 SC

4. SLP(C)No.21710/21711 (2024)

4. Right to Property and Inheritance

5.[2020] 10 S.C.R. 135

6.9 December 2024 INSC

Shyam Sunder v. Santa Devi⁷

The Court Upheld that cruelty, both mental and physical, is a valid ground for divorce.

Sapna Negi v. Chaman Singh⁸

Constitution of India – Article 142 – Supreme Court can depart from the procedure as well as the substantive laws, as long as the decision is exercised based on considerations of fundamental, general, and specific public policy.

It has the discretion to dissolve the marriage on the ground of its irretrievable breakdown, and this discretionary power is to be exercised to do 'complete justice' to the parties, when it is satisfied that the facts established show that the marriage has completely failed and there is no possibility that the parties will cohabit, and continuation of the formal legal relationship is unjustified. [In this case, the SC dissolved marriages between parties].

6. Right to Child Custody

A Hindu woman has the right to seek custody of her children after divorce.

Section 6 of the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 – The mother is the natural guardian of a child below five years.

Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 – The child's welfare is the primary concern in custody decisions.

Githa Hariharan v. Reserve Bank of India⁹

The Supreme Court ruled that the mother can be the natural guardian of a child.

Roxann Sharma v. Arun Sharma¹⁰

The Supreme Court of India decided that the custody of a child below five years should ordinarily be with the mother.

2- Matrimonial Rights of Muslim Women Under Muslim Law-

Muslim women have specific matrimonial rights under **Islamic law (Shariah)** and **statutory laws in India**, such as **The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937** and **The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939**.

1. Right to Marriage (Nikah) with Free Consent

A Muslim woman has the right to choose her husband and must give free consent for the marriage to be valid. A Muslim girl is considered eligible for marriage after attaining puberty, which is generally presumed to be at 15 years.

- **The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937** – Recognizes marriage as a **civil contract** requiring consent.
- If a marriage occurs without consent, the woman can seek annulment (**Faskh-e-Nikah**).

Muskan Khan and another v. State of Haryana and others¹¹,

The Court noted, as per the Principles of Mohammedan Law, that any Muslim of sound mind who has attained puberty is competent to enter into a contract of marriage

2. Right to Mahr (Dower)

Under **Muslim law**, a husband must give **Mahr (Dower)** to his wife as a financial security.

- **Types of Mahr:**

Prompt Mahr – Given at the time of marriage.

Deferred Mahr – Payable later, often in case of divorce or husband's death.

- A wife has the right to **refuse conjugal relations** until she receives her Mahr.

Rabia Khatoon v. Mukhtar Ahmed¹²

It was held that if the suit for restitution of conjugal rights is brought up after the consummation of marriage with the free consent of the wife, then the decree will be passed on the condition of payment of prompt dower.

7.2004 AIR SCW 5857

8. 2024 INSC 822

9.1999 AIR SCW

3. Right to Maintenance (Nafaqa)

A Muslim woman has the right to be financially maintained by her husband during the marriage. "The father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing."

- **Section 125 of Cr.P.C.** – A divorced Muslim woman can seek maintenance from her husband.

Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum and Ors¹³

The Supreme Court ruled that divorced Muslim women are entitled to maintenance under **Cr.P.C. 125**.

4. Right to Divorce (Talaq)

A Muslim woman has the right to **seek divorce** under Islamic law. A Muslim girl **married before puberty** can **repudiate the marriage upon attaining puberty, before turning 18** and before consummation:

- **Talaq-e-Tafweez** – A wife can be given the right to divorce in the **Nikahnama**.
- **Khula** – The wife can seek divorce by returning the Mahr.
- **Faskh** – She can approach a **Qazi or court** for annulment on valid grounds.
- **Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939** – Lists grounds for a Muslim woman to obtain a **judicial divorce** (e.g., cruelty, desertion, impotence etc).
- **Triple Talaq (Talaq-e-Biddat)** was **banned** under the **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019**. (SHAYARA BANO V. UNION OF INDIA AND OTHERS 2017 INSC 785)

Mir Khursheed Rasool v. State of Maharashtra¹⁴

In this case, the dispute between the husband and wife was resolved amicably through a process of settlement. Respondent 2 lodged an FIR under Sections 498A, 406, 504, and 34 of the IPC related to the marriage. She received Streedhan property and one-time maintenance of Rs. 5 lakh. She withdrew all her cases, and the petition was allowed based on mutual consent of the talaq.

5. Right to Inheritance and Property

- A Muslim woman **inherits property** from her parents, husband, and children under **Islamic inheritance law**.
- Under **Islamic inheritance law**, women inherit property, but their share is usually **half that of a male counterpart** (e.g., a daughter receives half of a son's share).

Amina v. Hassan Koye¹⁵

A Muslim woman claimed property rights in her father's estate, which her male relatives denied.

The court upheld her right to inherit under **Muslim personal law**, stating that customs cannot override religious law.

Significance: Affirmed the Quranic inheritance rights of Muslim women.

6. Right to Child Custody (Hizanat)

- A Muslim woman has a right to **custody of her children (Hizanat)** after divorce.
- The mother retains custody of minor children, but the father remains the **natural guardian**.

Shazia Aman Khan and Another v. The State of Orissa and Others¹⁶

In a seminal adjudication, the Supreme Court of India has rendered a landmark judgment in the matter at hand, wherein the Hon'ble Court has accorded primacy to the welfare of the child amidst the custodial contention, elevating the considerations of the child's well-being above the dictates of biological lineage.

Background of the case:

The litigation concerned a 14-year-old female minor who had resided with the appellants, namely Shazia Aman Khan for over a decade. Subsequently, the biological father, one of the respondents, lodged a private complaint seeking custody subsequent to the closure of a prior abduction allegation against the appellants due to insufficient evidentiary support.

Muslim Women's Rights under the "Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025"

Section 3(2) The creation of a waqf-alal-aulad shall not result in the denial of inheritance rights of heirs, including women heirs, of the waqif or any other rights of persons with lawful claims.

10. AIR 2015 SC ALL LR 234

11. CRWP-11016-2024

12. AIR 1996 ALL 548

13. 1985 AIR 945

14. WRIT PETITION NO. 5697 OF 2022

15. 1985 CRILJ 1996.

16. 2024 INSC 163

17. 1985 AIR 935

18. 1 December, 2022 SLP (C) No. 19922 of 2023]

19. (2019) 3 SCC 39, AIR 2018 SC 4898.

20. 1986 AIR 1011, 1986 SCR (1) 371

3-Matrimonial Rights of Christian Women Under Christian Law in India

In India, Christian women's matrimonial rights are governed by **personal laws** and **statutory laws**, mainly:

- **The Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872** (Governs Christian marriages)
- **The Divorce Act, 1869** (Governs divorce and maintenance)
- **The Indian Succession Act, 1925** (Governs inheritance and property rights)
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** (Protects against domestic abuse)

1. Right to Choose a Spouse (Marriage)

Christian women have the **right to marry with free consent**.

- **The Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872** – Requires that the bride must be **at least 18 years old** and the groom **21 years old** for a valid marriage.
- **Marriage must be solemnized by a priest or minister** in the presence of witnesses.

Jordan Diengdeh v. S.S. Chopra¹⁷

The court noted that Christian personal law does not regulate interfaith marriages

But such Marriages can be solemnized under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

Established that Christian women can marry outside their religion under secular laws. Encouraged legal reforms for interfaith marriage rights.

2. Right to Maintenance

A Christian woman has the right to get **financial support from her husband**.

Section 36 of the Divorce Act, 1869 – A wife can claim interim maintenance during divorce proceedings.

Section 37 of the Divorce Act, 1869 – Provides for permanent alimony and maintenance after divorce.

Section 125 of Cr.P.C. – Allows Christian women to claim **maintenance** if the husband neglects her.

Dr. Rajiv Verghese v. Rosy Chakkramakkil Francis¹⁸

This judgment stands as a significant precedent in safeguarding a wife's right to maintain the same standard of living she enjoyed during her marriage. This ruling reinforces the principle of fairness and dignity, ensuring that a wife is not financially disadvantaged while awaiting the outcome of matrimonial disputes.

3. Right to Divorce

Christian women have the **right to file for divorce** under **the Divorce Act, 1869**.

Grounds for divorce include: Adultery, Cruelty (Mental or Physical), Desertion for Two Years, Conversion to Another Religion, Mental Disorder or Venereal Disease, Non-Resumption of Cohabitation After Two Years of Judicial Separation.

Joseph Shine v. Union of India¹⁹

On September 27, 2018, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court

unanimously struck down Section 497 IPC and Section 198(2) CrPC as unconstitutional. The judgment emphasized that the law treated women as property of their husbands, undermining their dignity and autonomy. It also noted that criminalizing adultery infringed upon the right to privacy and personal liberty.

4. Right to Property and Inheritance

The Indian Succession Act, 1925, governs **inheritance** for Christian women.

Section 33 of the Indian Succession Act –

A widow has the right to:

One-third of her husband's property if he has children.

Half of the property if there are no children but surviving relatives.

The entire property, if there are no close relatives.

Mary Roy v. State of Kerala²⁰

The Supreme Court ruled that **Christian women are entitled to equal inheritance** in their father's property.

1. Right to Child Custody

After divorce, child custody is decided **in the best interest of the child**.

The Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 – Grants **custody rights to the mother** for minor children.

Courts generally favor mothers for custody of young children, especially those below **five years of age**.

Phillips Alfred Malvin v. V.J. Gonsalves²¹

The court ruled that both parents have equal custody rights, but the primary caregiver (usually the mother) gets preference. The child's comfort, education, and emotional well-being were prioritized. Impact:

- Reaffirmed that Christian fathers do not get automatic custody.
- Stressed that custody should always favour the child's best interest.

4- Matrimonial Rights of Parsi Women Under Parsi Law in India

Parsi women's matrimonial rights are governed by:

- 1. The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936** (amended in 1988) – Governs marriage and divorce among Parsis in India.
- 2. The Indian Succession Act, 1925** – Governs inheritance and property rights.

1. Right to Marry and Free Consent

- A Parsi woman has the **right to choose her spouse** and must give **free consent** for the marriage to be valid.
- Minimum Age for Marriage: Bride – 18 years Groom – 21 years
- **Marriage Must Be Solemnized by a Parsi Priest** in the presence of **two Parsi witnesses** and recorded in the marriage register.
- **Marriage Within the Community:** Traditionally, Parsi women who marry outside the community **lose certain religious and inheritance rights**, though recent court rulings have challenged this.

Goolrokh M. Gupta v. Burjor Pardiwala & Ors²².

Goolrokh M. Gupta, a Parsi woman, married a Hindu man under the **Special Marriage Act, 1954**. The **Valsad Parsi Anjuman Trust** (a local Parsi trust in Gujarat) **barred her from entering fire temples and participating in her parents' last rites**, arguing that she was no longer a Parsi after marriage. The **Gujarat High Court ruled** that she had effectively converted to Hinduism upon marriage.

The Supreme Court **disagreed with the Gujarat High Court** and stated that:

A woman **does not lose her religion** after marriage. Gender equality must be maintained within religious customs. The matter was sent back for further legal resolution, but it set a precedent for women's religious rights.

2. Right to Divorce Under Parsi Law

The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936. A Parsi woman can file for divorce on the following grounds: Adultery, Cruelty (Physical or Mental), Desertion for Two Years, Non-Consummation of Marriage (Impotency), Unsound Mind or incurable mental illness, Venereal Disease (Sexually Transmitted Disease), Conversion to Another Religion, Imprisonment for Seven Years or More.

- A Parsi woman can file for **Judicial Separation or Nullity of Marriage** if the marriage was obtained by **fraud, force, or misrepresentation**.
- **Remarriage** is allowed after a final divorce decree.

Minoo Rustomji Shroff v. Union of India²³

Bombay High Court in this case ruled that delegates are not required to support the presiding judge in non-contentious proceedings like divorce by mutual consent under Section **32-B of the Act**.

3. Right to Maintenance

The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936 & CrPC Section 125. A Parsi woman has the right to claim maintenance from her husband **during and after the marriage**.

- **Section 39** – Allows the court to order **permanent alimony** after divorce.
- **Section 125 CrPC** – If a husband neglects his wife, she can claim **monthly maintenance**.

21. AIR 1999 Ker 187.

22. SLP(C)No.18889/12

23.2005 (4) BomCR 147, 2005

24. SLP (CRL)NO.3345 OF 201325.(1982) 2 SCC 544

26- WRIT PETITION NO. 1981 OF 2020

27. (Crl.) 208 of 2004

28. AIR1995KER252

29. (2017) 8 SCC 746

Jaiminiben Hirenghai Vyas & Anr v. Hirenghai Rameshchandra Vyas & Anr²⁴

The Supreme Court held that Section 125 of the Cr.P.C., therefore, impliedly requires the Court to consider making the order for maintenance effective from either of the two dates, having regard to the relevant facts. For good reason, evident from its order, the Court may choose either date. It is neither appropriate nor desirable that a Court simply states that maintenance should be paid from either the date of the order or the date of the application in matters of maintenance. Thus, as per Section 354 (6) of the Cr.P.C., the Court should record reasons in support of the order passed by it, in both eventualities.

The Guardians and Wards Act 1890 – After divorce, custody is granted based on the child's best interest.

Generally, **mothers are given custody of minor children**, but the father may have visitation rights.

Thirty Hoshie Dolikuka v. Hoshiam Shavaksha Dolikuka²⁵

The Supreme Court of India emphasized that in custody disputes, the child's welfare is paramount, superseding the legal rights of the parents. The Court stated that any matter concerning a minor must be considered and decided solely from the perspective of the child's welfare and interest.

4. Right to Property and Inheritance

- A Parsi woman has **equal inheritance rights** to men.
- **Section 50 of Indian succession Act 1925** – A widow gets **an equal share** of her husband's property, along with children.
- If there are no children, the widow gets **half the property**, and the rest goes to the deceased husband's relatives.
- If a Parsi woman dies without a will, her property is equally divided among her heirs.

Important Issue: If a **Parsi woman marries a non-Parsi, she may lose certain inheritance rights** in her father's property due to community customs, but recent legal challenges have questioned this discrimination.

Madhu Yeshwant Mahajan v. Union of India²⁶

Parsi women who married non-Parsis often faced restrictions in inheriting property or being recognized as members of their family's lineage. The case highlighted unequal treatment in succession laws, which allowed Parsi men but not women to retain inheritance rights after marrying outside the community.

5- Matrimonial Rights of Women Under the Special Marriage Act, 1954

The **Special Marriage Act, 1954 (SMA)** is a secular law that allows interfaith and inter-caste marriages in India. It **overrides personal laws** and ensures equal rights for both spouses, including women.

1. Right to Marry Without Religious Restrictions

Under Section 4 of the Special Marriage Act, A woman can marry **any person, regardless of religion or caste**. **Free consent** is mandatory. **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution** (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) protects an individual's right to choose their spouse.

Minimum Age for Marriage: Bride – 18 years, Groom – 21 years

The marriage is registered by a **Marriage Officer** and does not require religious ceremonies.

Lata Singh v. State of U.P.²⁷

The Supreme Court upheld the **right of an adult woman to marry a person of her choice** without interference from family or society.

2. Right to Divorce

A woman can file for divorce on the following grounds: Adultery, Cruelty (Mental or Physical), Desertion for Two Years, Mental Disorder or Insanity, Husband's Imprisonment for Seven Years or More, Non-Resumption of Cohabitation for One Year After Judicial Separation Mutual Consent Divorce – If both parties agree to end the marriage, they can file for a mutual consent divorce, with a minimum waiting period of one year.

Ammini E. J. v. Union of India (1995)²⁸

The Kerala High Court upheld **a woman's right to divorce if the husband committed rape or sodomy**, even if within marriage.

30. AIR ONLINE 2020 SC 915.

31. 2017 SC 75

32. AIR 1999 SC 114

33. AIR 2009 SC (SUPP) 2060

Amardeep Singh v. Harveen Kaur (2017)²⁹

The Supreme Court ruled that the **six-month waiting period is not mandatory** if both spouses genuinely want a quick divorce.

3. Right to Maintenance & Alimony

Section 36 & 37A of Special Marriage Act 1954- woman has the right to claim maintenance from her husband during and after divorce.

- ☐ Interim Maintenance (Section 36) – Financial support during divorce proceedings.
- ☐ Permanent Alimony (Section 37) – Financial support after divorce.
- ☐ Section 125 CrPC – If the husband refuses to maintain his wife, she can seek maintenance through the court.

Rajnesh v. Neha (2020)³⁰

- ☐ The Supreme Court provided clear guidelines for deciding alimony, ensuring fairness to divorced women.

Shailja & Anr. v. Khobbanna (2017)³¹

The Supreme Court held that **a woman's earning potential does not disqualify her from claiming maintenance**. The Court emphasized that financial dependency should be considered practically, not just based on theoretical earning capacity.

4. Right to Child Custody

Under the Guardians and Wards Act 1890, the Court decides the Custody on the basis of **welfare of the child**.

- Mothers are usually granted **custody of minor children**, especially if they are below **five years of age**.
- Fathers may get **visitation rights** or **shared custody**.

Githa Hariharan v. Reserve Bank of India (1999)³²

The Supreme Court ruled that a mother is equally entitled to be a natural guardian.

5. Right to Property and Inheritance

Under the Indian Succession Act, 1925, there is Equal inheritance.

- ☐ A wife has the right to inherit her husband's property equally with children. If a woman dies, her property is divided equally among her legal heirs, including her husband.

Om Prakash v. Radhacharan (2009)³³

The Supreme Court clarified that **daughters have equal rights to ancestral property** under the Hindu Succession Act, which is relevant if a woman married under the SMA was originally governed by Hindu law.

CONCLUSION

In India, women have strong rights that are defined by several family laws, such as the Special Marriage Act, the Hindu Marriage Act, the Muslim Personal Law, the Christian Marriage Act, and the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act.

Indian family laws have changed over the years to protect these rights of women and make them just, equal, and secure in the relationship they enter into. These rights are being further strengthened through progressive interpretations in courts of law, enabling women to live independently and with dignity.

The Special Marriage Act, 1954 (SMA) empowers women with equal rights in marriage, divorce, and post-divorce settlements. Two other important Laws were also enacted to provide rights to women. A woman can file petition for a divorce on different grounds including cruelty, adultery, desertion and mental illness, if her husband commits rape, sodomy or bestiality. She may also file a mutual consent divorce and apply for maintenance (alimony) and child custody after divorce.

Courts have consistently upheld **women's rights under SMA** through landmark judgments, ensuring **financial security, dignity, and independence** for women seeking divorce. The Act stands as a **progressive law promoting gender equality and personal freedom in interfaith and civil marriages**.

The Supreme Court of India has played a significant role in advancing the welfare of married women through

various landmark judgments. It has upheld their rights in areas such as property, maintenance, domestic violence protection, and personal laws across different religions.