



Editor's Column

A post-graduate in Sociology, Shayara Bano, a 37-year-old Muslim woman from Uttarakhand has filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the legal validity of triple 'talaq'. Her petition states that divorce through triple 'talaq' be declared unconstitutional as it allows Muslim men to treat women as 'chattel'.

Challenging the petition, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has said that the Supreme Court has no jurisdiction to undertake the exercise as the Muslim Personal Law is "inextricably interwoven with the religion of Islam," based on Quran, and not on a law enacted by the Parliament. However, the Supreme Court has initiated suo motu proceedings to examine the need for protecting the rights for Muslim women.

It is relevant to mention here that such form of divorce in one sitting does not find sanction in the Quran, and the Prophet himself had denounced the husband's absolute right to divorce, stating that divorce was the most reprehensible of all things permitted.

Needless to say, 'talaq' has devastated the lives of innumerable women and children, depriving them of roofs over their heads as well as crucial financial support.

FOCUS End Triple Talaq

It is well known that earlier also, there was considerable resistance from the religious circles, when the Hindu laws were being reformed and codified between 1955 and 1956; there was opposition from the church leaders when the Christian divorce laws of 1889 were liberalised by the Parliament in 1991,

but the government remained firm and ushered in the much-needed reforms in the Hindu and Christian laws. Then, why make exceptions in case of Muslim laws?

Indeed, the time has come to test whether gender discrimination on the basis of patriarchal interpretation of Muslim Personal Laws can be given precedence over gender justice. The National Commission for Women, on its part, fully endorsing Shayara Bano's stand reiterates that equality for women in all religions should be non-negotiable.

After all, triple 'talaq' has been banned in many Muslim countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Tunisia, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Bangladesh. If Muslim countries can bring about reforms in their family laws, why not India?

Important Decisions

- The Delhi High Court has enhanced the sentence awarded to a rape convict by the sessions court from three to seven years of imprisonment saying that sexual offences against women are increasing and such crimes have to be dealt with strictly and no leniency should be shown to the offenders. The court said, "rape is a heinous crime not only against the individual but also against the society at large. Therefore, considering the age of the prosecutrix at the time of commission of the offence.... it is not a fit case where a sentence less than the minimum of 7 years should be awarded."
- The Prime Minister launched the stand up India scheme, under which 125,000 bank branches will provide loans between 10 lakh to 1 crore to SC/ST and women entrepreneurs. Every branch has to provide at least one loan. The scheme will add 250,000 new entrepreneurs.
- The Indian Navy has begun granting permanent commission to women officers while also considering a policy to allow them on warships in the country's male-dominated armed forces.
- The Supreme Court's ruling in favour of Mumbai dance bars came as a relief not only to the Mumbai girls but also to many village girls in far-off States. After closure of dance bars in Mumbai, a number of women returned to their villages with a considerable amount of money and built houses. But to sustain themselves they were compelled to choose prostitution. The girls now hope to earn enough so that they will never have to go back to the flesh trade.

Complaints received by NCW in May, 2016

Month	Complaints received	Number of complaints on which action taken	Closed
May, 2016	2319	2134	961

NCW had taken up suo moto cognizance of 11 cases in May, 2016

Women Political Empowerment Day

The Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) celebrated the Women Political Empowerment Day, sponsored by UNICEF, the Asia Foundation and Water Aid on 24th and 25th April, 2016, on the theme "Panchayats and Sustainable Development Goals" commemorating reservation for women in local governments through Constitutional Amendments in 1993. About 300 delegates from across the country participated in the celebration.

Three elected women representatives, Ms Hansa Devi from Dewal village of Uttarakhand, Ms. D. Myla, from Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu and Ms Dinja Jakesika from Rayagada district of Odisha were conferred Outstanding Women Panchayat Leader Awards.

In her inaugural address, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam, the chief guest, spoke at length as to how women's will and determination count, irrespective of their caste or religion, while entering public life. She lamented that even today, for policy formation and development, women are hardly brought on board during the planning phase.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Monica Lanzetta Mutis, Ambassador of Colombia, cited that in Colombia 52 percent of the population are women and 30 percent of seats of every political party from the municipalities to the Senate are reserved for women.

Dr. George Mathew, Chairman ISS, in his concluding remarks over the 2-day programme, highlighted the significance of celebrating women's political empowerment following 33 percent reservation of seats for women in Panchayats. Others who spoke on the occasion included Dr. Ash Narain Roy, Director ISS, Dr. Bidyut Mohanty, Head, Women Studies ISS, Ms. Swati Maliwal among others. Ms Rebecca. R.Tavares, Representative, UN Women, delivered the valedictory address.



(From left) Dr. George Mathew, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam, the three awardees, Ms. Monica Lanzetta Mutis, Dr. Ash Narain Roy, Dr. Bidyut Mohanty

Discussion on Women Entrepreneurship Programme

The Chairperson attended a panel discussion on "Capacity Building to address Challenges in Women Economic Empowerment", at the launch event of Walmart India's Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme: An initiative to equip women with professional skills to build robust business.



NCW Chairperson addressing the women entrepreneurship programme

National Consultation

NCW Chairperson attended the national consultation on "Global Plan of Action on the role of Health Systems in addressing violence against women :implications to India", organised by WHO country office in Bangalore. She also attended a panel discussion on "Capacity building to address challenges to women economic empowerment", during Women's Business Enterprise National Council's National Conference and Business Fair organised by WE Connect International India in New Delhi.

Seminar on Hindu Jurisprudence

A 3-day-national seminar on 'Hindu Jurisprudence' was organized by India Foundation with the support of Indian Council for Philosophical Research (ICPR) at IIC in New Delhi.

Delivering the keynote address at the valedictory session, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam maintained that condition of women in the country has witnessed "significant" positive changes in the recent past but a lot still needs to be done". She said that laws made until 1980 had constantly looked at women as objects and poor economic status of women was also responsible for restricting them to their households. She called for equal opportunities for women, rather than equality.



Chairperson addressing the gathering

Woman Extraordinary

Morammbai Tanwar, a woman from rural Rajasthan was married at the age of 12 and divorced two years later. Thereafter, she completed her education till class 10, went to Gurgaon to learn computer, worked at the Panchayat Samiti for a year and gained a sound understanding of village administration. Later, she entered the political arena and became the only woman Block Pradhan of Manohar Thana Panchayat Samiti, at Jhalawar district, in Rajasthan.

Setting an example, she built a toilet in her community, and taught people the importance of cleanliness. Above all, the husband who left her years ago, stands by her today and she is helping him to complete his B.Ed.

Morammbai Tanwar's is a story of unflinching courage and impeccable honesty in the face of extreme adversity, a woman, who in the real sense empowered herself.

Training programme for Elected Women Representatives

The National Commission for Women in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, has developed capacity building modules for empowering elected women representatives at Panchayat and Zila Parishad levels that aims at developing their capacities in administrative skills. The training module focused on understanding the socio-legal and constitutional frameworks to safeguard and secure the rights of women ; state-sponsored schemes and welfare programmes as well as knowledge of institutions, structures at the village, block and district level.

The three-day training programme attended by 40 elected women representatives was inaugurated by NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam at Jhalawar district in Rajasthan. Member Rekha Sharma, Member Secretary Preeti Madan, Ms Richa Ojha, Ms. Avni Bahri and officials of Jhalawar district were present.

While launching the programme, the Chairperson emphasised that the training would empower women politically and they would learn administrative processes required for effective governance at Panchayat levels .She stressed the need for networking among women representatives as a key component as it would help women to use their collective strength more effectively.



At the training program (from left) Member Secretary Preeti Madan, NCW Chairperson (Centre), Member Rekha Sharma and others.

Mind of a Stalker

Identifying a stalker or stalking

Six signs of a stalker: Won't take no for an answer; has an obsessive personality; loner with few personal relationship; lacks guilt, embarrassment or discomfort; low self-esteem, sociopathic, doesn't learn from past behaviour.

You are being stalked if you are subjected to: frequent and intrusive texts, calls or emails, unwanted attention, gifts or flowers, following or hanging around your home, school or office, threats to harm you or your family, friends or pets, damage to property or threats about it.

Members' Visits

❖ Member Sushma Sahu attended a Hindi Advisory Committee Meeting at Vigyan Bhawan chaired by the Minister of Women and Child Development. She attended a Jan Sunwai and a National Convention on "Realising Rights of Maternity entitlements and child care" at the Constitution Club in New Delhi. Ms. Sahu along with counsellor Sarvesh Kumar Pandey visited district jails at Haridwar and Dehradun to ascertain the living conditions of women prisoners as per the provisions of the jail manual. She also met the jail Superintendent and other jail officials. Ms. Sushma Sahu along with counsellor Smita Jha visited Nirmal Chhaya Nari Niketen at Jail Road and Asha Kiran Shelter Home for mentally challenged at Rohini and met the officials to enquire about the facilities provided to the inmates.



Member Sushma Sahu with the inmates of Asha Kiran

❖ Member Alok Rawat visited Sulabh Gram at Palam Dabri Road, New Delhi, including Sulabh International Social Service Organization. Interaction was held with a group of Vrindavan widows and also with groups of women liberated from the social evil of manual scavenging from various parts of the country like Tonk and Alwar in Rajasthan, Mithila region in Bihar, Nuh and Mewat areas of Haryana as well as from Varanasi, Kolkata, etc. The technologies introduced by Shri Bindeshwari Pathak, founder, Sulabh International were also seen and discussed.



Member Alok Rawat being greeted by Vrindavan widows

❖ Member Rekha Sharma visited Dasadiya village at Faridabad to enquire into the rape of a nineteen year old girl by a gang of armed robbers. The robbers beat up the family members and decamped with their belongings. The Member met the family members and also took up the matter with the Haryana Chief Minister. Member Rekha Sharma visited Badshapur in Gurgaon with Ms Avni Bahri (JTE) legal, to enquire into a report alleging "woman drugged, raped by men near Gurgaon". Taking suo motu cognizance of the rape and murder of a law student in Kerala, NCW set up an enquiry committee headed by the Chairperson with Ms. Rekha Sharma as a member. The team met the District Collector, Superintendent of Police, DIG and the victim's family. Later, the Chairperson, Member Rekha Sharma and Member Secretary met the Chief Election Commissioner, Delhi, to apprise him of the Kerala murder case. The Member attended the 4th meeting on South Asia Initiative to End Violence against children organised by the Ministry of WCD. Ms. Sharma initiated an interactive meeting between NCW and representatives of nine State Commissions for Women to learn about each others problem and offer solutions. Members Laldinglani Sailo, Sushma Sahu and Member Secretary Preeti Madan were also present. The different sessions discussed; procedures for taking suo motu cognizance; handling of complaints; problems arising out of NRI marriages; need for creating awareness through education, publicity and sensitization; strategies to conduct seminar, workshops, awareness camps, capacity building of functionaries dealing with women-related laws and cyber crimes.



Members Rekha Sharma and Laldinglani Sailo (Centre) with others at the interactive meeting

❖ Member Laldinglani Sailo and Ms. M. Lilabati, co-ordinator, North East Cell, visited the special unit set up for the North East people at Nanakpura in New Delhi. They also held discussions with Mr. Robin Hibu, Joint Commissioner, Delhi police, in charge of the special unit.

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