

India: Muslim women face multiple discrimination: AIDWA

Sunday 26 December 2010, by [MENON Parvathi](#) (Date first published: 11 November 2010).

"Practice of triple talaq discriminatory and unjust towards the wife, against constitutional principles, and contrary to Islam"

Fighting for justice: A book being released at the ninth national conference of the All-India Democratic Women's Association in Kanpur on Wednesday.

Kanpur: "The triple *talaq* [\[1\]](#) is a sword hanging over the heads of married Muslim women," said Sehba Farooqui, secretary of the Delhi State Unit of the All India Democratic Women's Association, in her introduction to the resolution on the practice of triple talaq passed by the 9th national conference of the organisation on Wednesday. "A minor disagreement can result in *talaq*."

Drawing attention to a case where a wife was recently divorced by triple *talaq* through an online Skype chat, the resolution highlighted the "iniquity and absurdness" of a practice that is affecting thousands of Muslim women in the country today. The Darul-Uloom-Deoband upheld the husband's right and issued a fatwa against the wife.

The AIDWA resolution argues that not only is the practice of triple *talaq* discriminatory and unjust towards the wife and thus against constitutional principles, it is also contrary to Islam.

"Triple *talaq* said in one sitting is a part of one interpretation of the Koran. Actually, the Koran proscribes it," argues Ms. Farooqui. "There is another interpretation that *talaq* should be given over the three-month period, and we are urging that this pro-woman option be exercised."

Triple *talaq*, according to the resolution, has been proscribed or limited in a number of countries across the world, for example in Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Turkey and Tunisia, and that it is only in India that Muslim men have untrammelled freedom to pronounce triple *talaq*.

AIDWA sent a representation against the practice signed by 20,000 Muslim women to the central government and the Muslim Personal Law Board, but this was ignored.

The occasion was also marked by the release of a book entitled 'Muslim Women: AIDWA's Interventions and Struggles,' a collection of articles, reports and documents on the many levels of discrimination faced by Muslim women: in the personal sphere, as victims of communalism and terrorism, and as a section deprived of basic rights of citizenship.

For AIDWA, however, the issue of fighting for citizenship rights – for fair wages, jobs, access to civic amenities (including the public distribution system), is an area of immediate priority, said Ms. Farooqui. "In Delhi, for example, Muslim women are concentrated in exploitative home-based industries working on piece rates, where they earn between Rs.1000 and Rs. 1200 a month. They cannot afford to lose their jobs when their men are out of work, but here we have fought for provident fund provisions for such women."

The contrasts in the status of Muslim women across the country is vividly illustrated by the experiences of Tajwar Sultana, an activist who lives and works in the crowded bylanes of the Jama

Masjid area of Old Delhi, and 35-year-old Parveen Akhtar from West Tripura, who is an elected member of the Zilla Parishad. "There is absolutely no practice of triple *talaq* in my State," said Ms. Akhtar with a laugh, adding that Muslim women have come forward significantly into the political space. "In the Ashabadi Panchayat of Baksanagar block of the nine members, eight are Muslim and one Hindu. The State government has introduced many schemes for Muslim women."

Parvathi Menon

P.S.

* From The Hindu:

<http://www.hindu.com/2010/11/11/stories/2010111163121500.htm>

Footnotes

[1] From Wikipedia: "The triple talaq is a mechanism for divorce which exists in Sunni and its associated forms of Islam, while rejected by the Shia Muslims. It simply consists of the husband saying the phrase I divorce you (Arabic:talaq) to the wife, three times."