

'Talaq' pronounced in anger haunt rural women in Bangladesh

Misinterpretation of Islamic laws is creating endless problems in rural Bangladesh, especially for women who have become victims of 'talaq' pronounced by husbands in a fit of anger and who later repent and want to be reunited with their wives, say NGOs working in the field.

Motahar Akand, senior deputy director of NGO Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), says the practice can be beaten by creating awareness among the people. Akand has worked with ASK in different places across the country to prevent misuse of Islamic laws.

The custom of declaring 'talaq' thrice and the Hilla marriage - when the divorced wife has to marry a third person before being allowed to live with her husband - is not legally valid in Bangladesh that follows The Family Law Ordinance, 1961, enacted during the Pakistan era.

The Daily Star in a report from Bogra in northern Bangladesh, said that the husbands who pronounce 'talaq' in a fit of anger come to grief later as the clergy declare their marriage void and direct the villagers to ostracise the couple if they refuse to separate.

The wives undergo a greater trauma of having to marry a third person, the daily says.

According to Muslim Family Law, there are other procedures, including documentation of the divorce, to be completed before a divorce is finalised.

The utterance of 'talaq' thrice in quick succession when someone is in rage, is not recognised or accepted as the basis of a divorce by law.

The Family Law Ordinance 1961 prohibits 'hilla' marriages. Forcing people to such marriages is punishable by law. Muslim Family Law does not prohibit a man from remarrying the same woman he has divorced, and vice versa.

Experts of ASK attribute the prevalence of the Hilla marriage to 'wrong information'.

Local preachers and village headmen enjoy the right to impose their decisions on villagers, and very often force the victims to different kinds of punishment and torture.

The local administration remain ineffective to quell these problems, complain villagers, the newspaper said.

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