

Shayara Bano, who started it all

Good news: Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan's co-founder Zakia Soman speaks to the media in New Delhi. PTI

"I have felt the pain of having my home broken. I don't want other women to feel that way. It is a historic day for Muslim women and for their improvement," said Shayara Bano moments after the Supreme Court declared its judgment setting aside instant triple talaq.

For Ms. Bano, the original petitioner, the SC's verdict setting aside the unilateral practice was nothing short of a personal triumph. Though she regularly faced domestic harassment, after 13 years of marriage and two children, Ms. Bano's life was shattered in October 2015 when she received a speed post from her husband, Rizwan Ahmed, a property-dealer based in Allahabad. The letter contained a pronouncement of instant divorce — "talaq, talaq, talaq".

In 2016, spurred by activism against triple talaq, Ms. Bano approached the Supreme Court with the demand that the talaq-e-biddat pronounced by her husband be declared void. She also contended that such a unilateral, abrupt and irrevocable form of divorce be declared unconstitutional.

Like Ms. Bano, Aafreen Rehman from Jaipur was also overjoyed at the verdict.

"I am very happy with the decision. It is a positive way forward," said Ms. Rehman, also a petitioner. Ms. Rehman, who was married in August 2014 through a matrimonial site, was divorced through triple talaq communicated to her through post.

Forward-looking verdict

Several women's groups issued a joint statement saying that "In arguing that the practice of triple talaq is both, un-Koranic and Un-Constitutional, it [the Supreme Court judgment] is an important departure from earlier judgments on all women's rights, because it is based on the tenets of equality, dignity and secularism as enshrined in the Constitution."

Zakia Soman, one of the petitioners and co-founder of Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, which was at the forefront of the campaign, described the verdict as "historic" and "music to the ears" of Muslim women.

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