

The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting the Social Inclusion of Victims/Survivors of Violence

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Religion has a significant and commendable role in any community. It influences our lives from birth until the death. Human beings go through the religious rituals from the very childhood until to their demise. We cannot ignore the religion, its influences and presence.

Each religion has religious leaders- who deal with the religious affairs, rituals, philosophy, theology, clarification of any issue raised in connection to the religion. Thus, these people got ample influence, respect and command in society. People respect them, follow them and hear them. They give sermons in mosques, temples, pagodas, churches and in different religious gatherings. They speak to the people very often because people visit them on many different occasions.

Each and every religion focuses on the wellbeing of mankind. Enlightening, proper guidance and wellbeing are the major focuses of religion. Religion does not permit or condone any sort of injustice, inhumane activities, crimes, violence, bigotry or any activities which are not beneficial to the mankind and the society – religion consist of all good things.

Today, we are discussing about violence against women and children. They constitute a very venerable section of the society. In very recent times violence against women and children has become a great issue and concern. No doubt, it is a great concern nowadays. People are disappointed, frustrated, sometimes feeling insecurity and ultimately unhappiness. It is not happening in Bangladesh only, but also across other South Asian countries, too. The government is trying, police administrations are trying, but they are not being able to stop or restrain it.

What situation and conditions are faced by a victim of sexual violence:

- She suffers from mental traumas, becomes isolated, frustrated, abnormal in behavior.
- Society looks at them differently, with different questions and mentality.
- They could not come out from home freely- hesitation and shyness ultimately corners them in their homes.
- Harassment in obtaining legal support- support providers are not yet friendly.
- Tensions grow within the families.
- All these sufferings lead them to a miserable life.

What religious leaders can do for their social inclusion:

- They can visit the victim's home for showing their sympathy, can motivate and embolden them to get back to a normal situation/life.
- They can motivate people to change their views and mindsets towards victims in their sermons and other speeches.
- They can help in linking up social forces and organizations working on this issue.
- Strongly support the campaign against sexual violence.
- Refer the relevant and positive texts of the holy books in their sermons and speeches.
- Working together for creation of awareness against all sorts of violence against women and children.
- They can talk with the teachers, educators, social workers, development workers regarding the issues.
- They can use their platforms and worship places for the cause.
- Give focus on equal rights of men and women.
- They can also contact political, social, civil society leaders, youth leaders, intellectuals, etc. to work on these issues.