



9. Divorce: Causes and Treatments

Delivered by His Eminence
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...It is well-known that marriage in Islaam is a strong tie that binds a man and woman together. It is a bond that brings peace and happiness to the soul. Allaah, the Most Exalted, said,

﴿ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا ﴾

“Also among His signs is that He created for you spouses from your own kind so that your souls may find tranquility with them.”¹ In addition, one of the supplications that Allaah, the Most Majestic, mentioned is,

﴿ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا ﴾

“Our Lord, grant us from our wives and children a source of comfort to our eyes, and make us leaders for the people of taqwaa.”² Out of Allaah’s infinite wisdom, He prescribed directives that give great importance to preserving the togetherness of families, encourage upholding the bond of marriage, and encourage husbands to live with their wives in an acceptable manner, even if the husbands may dislike something about the wives for some mundane reason. Allaah, the Most Exalted, said,

﴿ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ ﴾

﴿ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴾

“Ensure that your life with your wives is one of kindness, love, and fulfilment of their rights. If you dislike something about them for any mundane reason, you must bear that patiently because it may well be that you dislike something when, in fact, Allaah brings about much goodness by it.”³ Allaah, the Most Exalted, also described the bond of marriage as a solemn promise. He said,

﴿ وَأَخَذَتْ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴾

“...and they (the women) had taken from you (the men) a solemn promise.”⁴ The fact that marriage was characterized this way dictates that it be a bond of continuity, tranquility, and stability. Therefore, it is necessary for both spouses to avert everything that poses a threat to those objectives. They must overlook whatever marital differences may arise and possibly ruin the strong bond that is to exist between them.

Servants of Allaah, the default is that a wife requesting separation, or for marriage to be dissolved, is impermissible. Such a request must only be resorted to when remaining in her marriage becomes impossible after exhausting all of the methods for conflict resolution prescribed by Islaam.

Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah (may Allaah have mercy upon him) commented that the default ruling which applies to divorce is prohibition. It is only permitted in circumstances that require it. There

¹ Soorah ar-Room (30):21.

² Soorah al-Furqaan (25):74.

³ Soorah an-Nisaa' (4):19.

⁴ Soorah an-Nisaa' (4):21.



is an authentic hadeeth in which Jaabir narrated that the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “Iblees sets his throne over water and then sends forth his troops. The ones among them who hold highest status with him are the ones who cause the worst strife. One of them comes and says, ‘I did such-and-such,’ but iblees tells him, ‘You did not accomplish anything.’ Then another comes and says, ‘I did not leave the person I was assigned to until I managed to separate him from his wife,’ and iblees draws that one near himself and says to him, ‘You have excelled in your task.’”⁵ Furthermore, in the context of censuring sorcery and black magic, Allaah – the Most Exalted – said,

﴿فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ﴾

“People who refused to take heed of the warning went ahead and learned magic from the two angels sent as a test, and one type of it could place such hatred between spouses that they would eventually separate.”⁶ There is also a hadeeth in the Sunan collections in which the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “Women who ask for divorce and seek separation without any valid reason commit nifaaq (i.e. they disobey Allaah inwardly although they may outwardly display obedience to Him).”⁷ Consequently, divorcing a wife is only permitted up to a maximum of three times. After the third, it is impermissible for a husband to remarry the divorced wife unless she was subsequently married to a different husband. Furthermore, since divorce is only permitted in a situation of necessity, a single divorce under those conditions suffices and the default ruling of prohibition applies to anything more than that.⁸

Servants of Allaah, the foregoing is further emphasized by texts of the Sunnah that warn against contravening Islaam’s directives in ways that may lead to divorce.

Abou Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “A person is not one of us if he turns a wife against her husband, or a slave against his master.” This was collected by Abou Daawood.⁹

Thawbaan (may Allaah be pleased with him) stated that Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “Any woman who requests a divorce from her husband for a reason other than experiencing serious legitimate harm will be barred from even smelling the fragrance of Jannah.” This was collected by Abou Daawood, at-Tirmitheeh, and ibn Maajah.¹⁰

Abou Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “It is impermissible for a woman to stipulate that a man divorce a wife he is already married to and marry her instead so that, as a result, she can overturn what the wife had and take it for herself. Rather, she is only entitled to what has been decreed for her.” This was collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim.¹¹

My dear brothers, with that being said, we must realize that divorce today in various Muslim societies has gone beyond its proper understanding and purpose according to Islaam. Divorce in Islaam is prescribed as a solution for exceedingly difficult problems that arise between spouses, and as a last resort for treating them. However, we find that some people’s usage of divorce has now become a problem in and of itself. It has become like a toy in the hands of those who manipulate others aimlessly, and a word easily uttered by the reckless who do not see any point to married life and do not give it any

⁵ Saheeh Muslim (2813).

⁶ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):102.

⁷ Jaami’ at-Tirmitheeh (1186), Sunan an-Nasaa’ee (3461). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.

⁸ Majmoo’ al-Fataawaa (33/81).

⁹ Sunan Abee Daawood (2175). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.

¹⁰ Jaami’ at-Tirmitheeh (1187), Sunan Abee Daawood (2226), Sunan ibn Maajah (2055). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.

¹¹ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree (5152), Saheeh Muslim (1408).



significance. Such individuals are people who get married one day and divorce the next, completely belittling the gravity of this bond that comes with responsibilities prescribed by our Lord.

Dear Muslims, it is very unfortunate to see that the rate of divorce has greatly increased in the past few years and, thus, become a common phenomenon. Divorce cases have become widespread and the frequency of cases in which couples seek separation has unmistakably grown. The percentages of those seeking divorce or annulment of marriages has reached alarming proportions and this heralds significant dangers for Muslim communities.

Upon examination, we find that there is a vast array of domestic problems that may upset life between spouses and, ultimately, lead to divorce.

Among the causes is the spouses not making the appropriate choice when getting married. One of them might embark upon marriage without knowing anything about their partner's conduct or religious practice, and then be unpleasantly surprised after living with them.

Other causes include falling short in adherence to Islaam; being negligent in fulfilling Allaah's rights, especially obligatory prayers; not using recitation of the Qur'aan and prescribed words of thikr to protect oneself; and committing sins and finding that acceptable. All of these lead to ills and disputes between spouses, and divorce can result.

It is also no secret that there are reports of men who consume intoxicants such as alcohol, or are addicted to drugs, and then physically injure their wives, verbally abuse them, kick them out of the home, and also declare them to be divorced.

Another marital problem that arises is failing to fulfil certain responsibilities. For instance, a husband may fail to take care of running the home and provide things that are needed; and, instead, occupy himself with social gatherings, spend nights out with friends, travel often without need, and then end up neglecting the rights of those who are under his care. Likewise, a wife may not take care of her home and, instead, occupy herself with her phone and social media for most of her time, and then end up neglecting the rights of her husband and family. We should also point out here some people overdo using social media, become addicted to it, and repeatedly visit harmful websites on the internet. These then lead to major ills which affect the individual's beliefs, morals, and conduct. This includes instances where a man may be attracted to a woman other than his wife, let his heart become attached to her, and then engage in an illicit relationship with her. Consequently, the man ends up scorning his wife, avoiding her, and then eventually divorcing her. Likewise, there are instances where wives end up betraying their husbands by engaging in private conversations over social media and the internet with unrelated men, and it only gets worse if those matters become exposed. We seek refuge with Allaah from such things.

Another problem that exists is the lack of stability in life between spouses, and also lacking a proper understanding of what marital life is supposed to be. In such a scenario, the spouses fail to fulfil each other's rights, and they lose harmony between themselves. Instead, their life becomes permeated by an atmosphere of enmity, argumentation, and conflict. Further compounding the situation is when either of the spouses starts to treat matters of divorce lightly. The husband may start to threaten his wife with divorce, wielding that as a weapon against her; and the wife may repeatedly start asking for divorce and perhaps even provoke her husband until he eventually divorces her. Other similar contraventions of Islaam's teachings occur as well.

A further problem that may lead to divorce is for unbefitting and unwise things to be done as it relates to marital life. This includes one spouse thinking ill of the other, overdoing having doubts about them, and going to excesses in matters of jealousy. It also includes a spouse insulting the other about their age or regarding something about their body. It includes a husband preventing his wife from keeping ties with her parents or visiting them, when he has no justifiable reason in Islaam to do so. It further includes a husband being miserly by not providing the financial support he is obligated to give



his wife such as shelter, food, drink, clothing, and medicine. Things beyond those are non-essentials and he is not obliged to provide them so long as he is providing all of the foregoing obligatory forms of support. In addition, there are wives who exhaust their husbands with requests that are beyond the husbands' ability to provide, and there are also wives who look down upon their husbands because the wives may be better educated, have better jobs, or be from families of higher social status.

Yet another problem is psychological and behavioural issues from which some spouses suffer, and which lead to constant conflicts. They may lead a husband to dislike his wife and avoid her, and he may be unwilling to seek treatment that could enable him to remain in a relationship of love, affection, and harmony with his wife. A related issue is that some people's nature may be one of anger, short-sightedness, or not handling things well when it comes to situations that require wisdom. There are many times when disputes arise between spouses over trifling things, like a husband requesting something from his wife, but she forgets or delays; or like a wife asking her husband to purchase something and he ends up occupied with something else or delays as well. These and other similar matters are things that a person should not allow to incite him or make him lose his composure such that he then acts irrationally and aggravates disputes, which lead to blameworthy consequences.

A further problem is a man not giving consideration to a woman's nature – whether physically, psychologically, or intellectually – or the various changing circumstances a woman may experience. For instance, after giving birth, a woman's appearance and body may change somewhat. However, there are husbands who mock their wives due to that, and even crush their emotions to the point that the wives would prefer to be divorced rather than remain with husbands who treat them in such an ill manner.

Another problem is when the family of either the husband or wife interferes with private matters between the spouses, or perhaps even pits one of them against the other, which ends up aggravating existing differences they may have and then result in divorce.

A further problem is watching programs and movies that portray marital life as romantic utopia without any sort of problems, or portray it as a life of endless problems, stress, and anguish which demand divorce right away. Both of these extremes are unrealistic and incorrect.

Yet another problem which may be somewhat subtle is for women to continue taking birth control pills to the extent that doing so adversely affects their health. Doctors known for their integrity have mentioned that women can be affected by that in their mood and it also cause them to experience more fatigue than normal. This can lead to marital conflicts and increased disputes, possibly resulting in divorce.

Another problem is that some wives aspire to have a very high standard of living and remain discontent with what they have. They look at those who have more and perhaps even become influenced by irresponsible women who flaunt and brag about what they own. This may cause some wives to no longer give consideration to the privacy of their homes and marital lives. They may spread pictures of their furnishings, attire, and food by way of Snapchat or other platforms and, as a result, initiate problems with their husbands. In some cases, this can ruin homes and contribute to family problems that may end in divorce.

Servants of Allaah, the aforementioned are some of the domestic problems that may lead to divorce. The point of mentioning them is to learn from the errors of others, learn necessary lessons, and avoid falling into the same mistakes. A discerning individual takes heed of what happens to others, and he learns lessons from their experiences that benefit him in his life later on...



...It is normal for differences to occur between spouses in domestic matters and day-to-day life.



This is a reality that is consistent with the nature of life in this world, which is not continually pleasant. Even within the pure household of the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection), there were certain issues that caused fatigue and there were instances of jealousy that usually occur between women. Spouses must not imagine that having a happy life together means a life that always remains problem-free. Rather, it means being able to solve problems, limit the occurrence of problems, and not allow problems to affect their relationship.

Servants of Allaah, contemporary social realities have produced numerous reasons because of which people may avoid marriage. Shaytaan leads some young women to avoid and refuse marriage because they do not want to assume responsibilities; or because they do not want a husband controlling their professional lives, restricting their independence by preventing them from going out without approval, or preventing them from working in the jobs they have. This type of thinking comes about due to the incorrect actions of certain husbands, their violating Islaam's limits in terms of how they deal with their wives, and their outright contravention of their Lord's directives. In contrast to their actions, the guardianship prescribed by Islaam dictates that a husband do what is required to set things for right his wife. The planning and care involved in that are a responsibility the husband is to fulfil, and they serve as a privilege granted to women. It is guardianship that puts a woman under the care of someone who treats her well, looks out for her best interests, defends her, and does all that is necessary to bring about her happiness and comfort. Perhaps this understanding would rectify the misconception some women have in thinking that guardianship in Islaam is equivalent to subjugation of women and annulment of their identities.

Another reason due to which some young women may avoid marriage is the fear that they will end up like other women who were divorced after failed marriages and looked down upon because of that. This type of thinking is incorrect. There are many young women who get married, live in stability, are happy with their husbands, enjoy their lives, and – by Allaah's grace – have never gone through any sort of separation; on the contrary, they have only led marital lives of affection and mercy.

Servants of Allaah, divorce has very negative effects upon women. After divorce, many women feel sad and depressed. However, a strange phenomenon has found its way into some people's lives, and it is something that opposes the innate disposition that humans are created with. There are instances where certain women hold a party on the occasion of their divorce and they invite their families, relatives, and friends. This is done as an expression of their happiness about being divorced by who they were previously married to.

Dear Muslims, when individuals who strive for reform and reconciliation express disapproval about the multitude of divorce cases, that should not be understood to mean that they are trying to eliminate the occurrence of divorce, or that they claim that society will reach perfection by having every marriage be successful. That is not to be understood at all. Even the most virtuous generations of Islaam did not have such things. What is required is for us to recognize that the problem that exists. The greatest threat to marital life is treating the matter of divorce lightly and not giving any mind to the very negative consequences it has. Divorce has led to the collapse of many homes, splitting of many families, severing ties of kinship, and incurring sins. It is necessary for us to know the reasons behind the problem's existence, and to treat the problem properly. Communities – at the organizational and individual levels – are to contribute to that treatment in their respective capacities. Individuals working for reform are to raise people's awareness about the extent to which this dangerous matter is belittled, and then work towards effective treatments.

Dear Muslims, one of the practical solutions for the phenomenon of rising divorce rates is to offer educational and training seminars for those who will be embarking upon marriage. Preemptive prevention is better than subsequent treatment. Addressing problems before they arise, by way of



educating potential spouses properly, reduces the occurrence of divorce. When valuable information, sincere advice, soundly-grounded counsel, and pertinent education are offered, they bring about major benefits for people in their lives ahead after they get married. This contributes to forming families that are built upon solid foundations which guarantee successful marriages by Allaah's permission.

Another treatment is striving to reconcile between spouses when differences occur. Doing that is, in fact, a major means of obeying and drawing nearer to Allaah, the Most Exalted. He said,

﴿لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَن أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾

“There is no good in much of what individuals discuss privately, unless it involves giving charity, commanding what is right, or reconciling between people. If someone does those hoping to please Allaah, We will grant him a magnificent reward.”¹² In addition, the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) once asked the Companions, “Should I not inform you about something even more virtuous than the rank of fasting, prayer, and charity?” They replied, “Of course.” He said, “Reconciling between people. As for making problems between people, that shaves things away. It does not shave away hairs; rather, it shaves away a person's religious practice.” This was collected by Ahmad, at-Tirmitheer, and Aboo Daawood.¹³ This hadeeth contains encouragement to rectify relationships, and it shows that initiating problems between people damages both mundane and religious matters.

Something which must be emphasized is that correct intervention when it comes to resolving disputes – especially between spouses – is something encouraged, and the absence of sincere and wise individuals who work for reconciliation is a factor that contributes to spouses separating.

¹² Soorah an-Nisaa' (4):114.

¹³ Musnad al-Imaam Ahmad (27508), Jaami' at-Tirmitheer (2508), Sunan Abee Daawood (4919). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.