

FROM THE MINBAR

DIVORCE (TALAQ) IS NOT A SOLUTION: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Khutbah delivered by Imam Dr. Zijad Delic at SNMC on October 14th, 2011 corresponding to Zul Qa'adah 16th, 1432 H.

BACKGROUND

Indeed all praise is for God, Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings of God be upon Muhammad (S), his family, Khulafai Rashidin, all his Companions, and all those who follow in their footsteps until the Last Day. All praise is for God! We praise Him. We seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. We seek God's refuge from evils of ourselves and from our evil actions. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except God, alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (S) is His Messenger.

My dear brothers and sisters in Islam ~ *As Salamu 'Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu.*

INTRODUCTION

One among the aims of the Friday Khutbah in the Canadian context is to deal with the challenges of the Muslims and how to resolve them from an Islamic perspective.

Today's Khutbah will address the issue of Talaq or divorce which has become common among Canadian Muslims and is in rapid increase. There is a need to caution myself and you all never to allow ourselves to come to the situation which demands from us that we seek for divorce from a person whom, once upon a time, we used to love.

DEFINITION

Yes, divorce maybe a small word, but its impact is far-reaching and long-lasting. It is one of the major battles Canadian Muslim family is going through at the dawn of 21st century.

Even though psychologists, sociologists, and jurists (imams/shuyukh) have written on the dangers of divorce and how divorce exposes husbands, wives, and children to severe distress and suffering, from which their homes had once served as a shelter, many think that the solution for the existing marriage problem (often minimal) is only in divorce.

MARRIAGE OR DIVORCE

Before I talk about divorce, reasons for couples seeking divorce and possible solutions for divorce, let me mention the following: Often in marriages couples feel that they are made for each other. They feel as they became one soul. In such times wife's concerns are husband's concerns. They are having one opinion on almost all subjects. His wish is her wish. Her wish is his too. They work together for the common goal and interest of the family unit. They want to spend much of the time together. They enjoy this togetherness. They wish that the

time does not pass so fast. In such times she ignores his weakness and drawbacks and he ignores her



MARRIAGE OR DIVORCE

weakness or behaviors which irritate him. That is the time they feel that God is happy with them. They feel that they are in the right place at right time. Divorce is far away from their mind...

Unfortunately, it is not always this way. Sometimes couples have disputes about different matters: in-laws, money, friends, kids, obligations... That is the time things go out of hand. Things go bad! They accuse each other of things they have done and things they have not done. They think that they are in the wrong boat. His concerns are not hers any more. His opinion differs from hers. Her behaviors irritate him. She also has the same feelings and thinks that he is a terrible husband. That is the time they cannot tolerate each other anymore. Shouting as well as more misunderstanding are on the rise. He is not willing to step in her shoes for a while and see the things from her perspective. But he wants her to see the things through his viewpoint which is very difficult than hers. Thus, they argue and fight. These are the terrible times in their marriage. They do not see the future together...Divorce is the word they see as the only solution.

Could it be that we are wrong in taking this matter lightly? Let us consider the following: When a ship is going through a terrible storm, does the captain say: Abandon ship? Everyman to himself? No! The captain and other crew will work together so that they can pull through that storm. For every test, every stormy weather, there will be an end. The same, for every social problem there is a solution.

Let us consider the second example: If a car broke down, do we throw it away? Or do we try to find out the problem and try to repair it? The same goes with every stormy marriage. It needs not to end in divorce. There are many ways to salvage it; many ways to repair it and many ways to work on marriages so that we could maintain them successfully. Yes, marriage should be more precious than anything material...

Almighty God says: *"If you fear a break between a husband and wife, then appoint (two) arbitrators, one from his family and the other from hers; if they both wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation. Indeed Allah is Ever All-Knower, Well-Acquainted with all things."* (An Nisa 35)

It is no secret that the dissolution of the family, the cornerstone of the Canadian Muslim community, has become widespread and our lived reality.

Divorce generates fear among responsible men and women alike. Why? Simply, it is a reality that has shattered the lives of many couples, their children who at an early age are forced to endure severe challenges as well as many extended families.

In some cases, divorce is a kind of "solution -- halal," but, at best, it is the most detestable of permitted acts. This is according to Allah, who holds all wisdom and is the Most-Merciful Lord of the Heavens and the Earth: *"The most detestable halal in the sight of Allah is divorce."* (Abu Daud)

REASONS FOR DIVORCE

While every warring couple could cite multiple reasons for the break up, there is always one major factor that leads to the death of a marriage. Some of these factors are detectable and even preventable before the marriage.

Here are some reasons for Divorce among the Canadian Muslims: Incompatibility (religious -- lack of practice or extreme practice or general

This Issue 'From The Minbar' presents



DIVORCE IS NOT A SOLUTION:
An Islamic Perspective



In next issue: 'Family in Islam'

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incompatibility – culture, education, upbringing, etc) was the most cited reason for divorce (25.71%). This has been followed by abuse (13.12%), financial disputes (10.41%), family / in-laws interference (10.20%), betrayal/unfaithfulness/immorality (8.79%), and others.

#1: Incompatibility

Incompatibility could be due to Different understanding of religion/culture; place of birth; educational, etc. Compatibility or lack thereof between potential spouses can be determined with good scrutiny prior to official union. The compatibility factor becomes more pronounced when one spouse was born and raised in Canada and the other in the Muslim world. It is also fair to say that ‘incompatibility’ is also a convenient excuse or scapegoat some couples use to end their marriage due to relatively minor lifestyle inconveniences they go through after marriage.

#2: Abuse

Emotional abuse is the most common form of abuse mentioned by both genders. Verbal, physical, financial, spiritual and sexual types of abuse are also a reality.



#3: Financial disputes

It seems that many couples in the community do not have shura in their homes. They do as they please. Among successful couples, there is an understanding that one person is the driver, the other the navigator. This helps them cooperate and work together to reach their destination safely.

#4: Family/In-laws

Very often parents and other family members do not help at all the young couple to develop their relationship organically and independently of the family. On the contrary they add oil on fire and make the first and formative years of young-couple’s marriage difficult.



#5: Unfaithfulness/betrayal/immorality

There used to be a greater sense of fear and shame about unfaithfulness in the Muslim community. It is not the same today. A lack of ethical barometers as well as religiosity and spiritual connection makes it more likely that a person will cheat on their spouse.

SOLUTIONS TO DIVORCE

There are various solutions to help avoid the pitfalls of marriage crises resulting in divorce. Here are some:

#1: Early education

There is a need for more mass education in the Muslim community about marriage, its purpose, what to expect and how to make it work through

Friday sermons, seminars, study circles, Islamic Awareness Week events, books and other outlets. This has to be one of the main agendas of every Canadian Muslim community. We need to have incorporated in our curriculum the matters related to the rules or Adab or Akhlaq of marriage as well as gender relations.

#2: Properly understanding each other's worldview before marriage

People when looking for a spouse hide a lot of things about themselves. It is of great importance that more details are known to both before they enter marriage. At least they should know worldview of each other before they become husband and wife.

#3: Premarital counseling

No Imam should marry a couple without first requiring they complete Islamic premarital education. The Imam should not be like a pizza delivery person, just do the Nikah and leave. Imams are to talk to them (the couple) and give them guidance. I have tried it and it works. Almost all couples that took this course with me live much healthier marriages than those who did not take it. The research supports my approach. The premarital counseling would be much more effective if it continues into marital life as well.

Imam’s participation in premarital counseling is an urgent need in the Canadian Muslim community and especially premarital counseling that educates Muslim men and women on their Islamic rights and responsibilities in marriage. Those who internalize more these rights and responsibilities are expected to succeed in their marriages.

#4: Prenuptial agreements

Muslim community in Canada should make sure to offer all couples who plan to wed Islamically a prenuptial agreement. Imams, since they have the authority to legally marry Muslim couples, put conditions in it accordingly, making expectations, rights, rules and responsibilities clear from the start of marriage. This clarity helps avoid many conflicts that crop up after the wedding. It also has legal weight. Anything that gives people clearer expectations helps avoid conflict.

#5: Early intervention

Most of couples who come to me for help wait too long to get needed help... They almost come when they have destroyed all bridges between themselves.

Early intervention is the key to working through problems that could easily save many marriages. Talking to both religious authorities and counselors to get an outsider's perspective may be all some couples need to reconcile if this is done at the outset of difficulties.



#6: Create an Islamic atmosphere in your home

Couples have to create

an atmosphere of Taqwa in their relationship (awareness of God). Thus, before we build a relationship with each other (or others in general), we need to have a relationship with the Creator, otherwise, there will not be self-policing (accountability) in the marriage.

CONCLUSION

Successful marriage does not just happen! It takes two patient, generous, forgiving and respectful individuals and their families to bring needed harmony and success into life of two people. If there are challenges, that is the time when husband and wife need to cooperate even more. Divorce in most of the case I have worked on is not a solution.

Allahumma Amin.

WANT TO AVOID DIVORCE?

BE FAITHFUL!

BE PATIENT!

BE KIND!

BE MERCIFUL!

BE FORGIVING!

BE GENEROUS!

YES, BE RESPECTFUL!!!

AN ACTION ITEM

If YOU like this Khutbah and what we, at your SNMC, do, PLEASE:

Support our activities & projects

Please Donate ONE Prayer Spot for \$2,500 and be the ONE who will build the Masjid and the Center so that it could help us and our children maintain Islamic Identity and build strong Canadian National Identity, Insha Allah.



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