

Effects of Divorce on Children

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Family life is the corner stone of the society and civilization, which enables the persons to share their happiness and sorrows with others. Family life is outcome of marital bond, and it provides sound love and tranquility to spouses as well as children. Divorce breaks this beautiful and soothing shelter, it becomes difficult for children to become a balanced citizen in broken homes. Divorce shakes the very foundation of domestic set up, when the family is broken, all blessings associated with this centre are vanished, life of affected children totally changed and they become the victim of stresses mental as well as physical. They lose their interest in social life; avoid enjoying playing and other activities. They do not fully involve in their studies, ratio of drop out from schools becomes higher and children which are studying at school don't show good results. Due to mental and physical stress their body frequently welcomes the diseases. They suffer lack of affection and parental care, this loss damages their personalities, they could not become good citizens and sometimes become criminal and ratio of crimes in society increases, their lives as well as other members of the society become unsafe, in this way their stressful attitude transfer to the whole society. If we want to develop a peaceful society we have to make our houses center of peace and tranquility. Islam gives such injunctions to make the marital life safe and secure, Islam orders the spouses to be polite and patient to each other and ignore mutual shortcomings. In sever situations though allows divorce yet it imposes restrictions to this right and in case of unavoidable divorce it orders its followers to behave in good manners. This paper will highlight the effects of different kinds caused by divorce. Graphs and flow chart will depict the situation. At the end this paper will suggest the parameters, advised by Islam to reduce divorce.

Separations and divorces are often trauma for children. "In 1991 Amato and Keith examined the results of 92 studies involving 13,000 children ranging from preschool to young adulthood to determine what the overall results indicated. The overall result of this analysis was that children from divorced families are on "average" somewhat worse off than children who have lived in intact families. These children have more difficulty in school, more behavior problems, more negative self-concepts, more problems with peers, and more trouble getting along with their parents. A more recent update of the findings indicates that this pattern continues in more recent research.¹ Another way to examine this issue is illustrated by findings of Mavis Hetherington (1993). Hetherington, like many others, finds these average differences,

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but she also looked at some of her measures and examined the degree to which children in divorced and intact families had more severe problems. On a measure of behavioral problems, Hetherington (1993) reports that 90% of adolescent boys and girls in intact families were within the normal range on problems and 10% had serious problems that we would generally require some type of professional help. The percentages for divorced families were 74% of the boys and 66% of the girls in the normal range and 26% of the boys and 34% of the girls were in the problematic range. Amato (1999) estimates that about 40% of the young adults from divorced families were doing better than the young people from non-divorced families.²

Despite this general finding across many studies, there are important qualifications of these findings. First, the actual differences between the two groups are relatively small (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991). In fact, the children in the two types of families are more alike than different. Amato (1994) reminds us that average differences do not mean that all children in divorced families are worse off than all children in intact families. These results mean that as a group of children from divorced families have more problems than children of intact families.”³“It is immediately important to further clarify these percentages. Historically divorce research has been relatively short-term, generally exploring the first two years post-divorce, which is clearly the period of greatest upheaval and, therefore, the time when all parties, parents and children, look the worst. Hetherington, a research psychologist, not only has been following some families for 30 years but many for ten years or more. Also, where most research has just looked at divorced families, Hetherington compared divorced families to non-divorced families, providing much more refined data. This article will report on a number of her findings along with some of my own observations.

The importance of comparing the two types of families becomes immediately apparent when discussing the negative outcome rates for children. Since 10% of the children from non-divorced families in Hetherington's research had significant problems, the "true cost" of divorce is an additional 15% of children with significant problems. Again, this is one of those good-bad news pieces of data. It reduces the negative impact of

divorce on children to a rate much lower than has been typically reported and tells parents that divorce will not permanently mar the lives of most of their children. Nevertheless, 15% of children from divorced families represent millions of struggling lives. As we proceed, I will try to help the reader understand factors that contribute to both the good and bad outcomes.”⁴

Loss of parental love and care

- Marital life creates a very caring and loving shelter for children, which provides peaceful environment for them, parents are a rich source of love care and tranquility, which are always busy in matters regarding to their offspring. In case of divorce, children lose this loving and caring center, this damages the very sound personality of these small flowers. Richard Eyre and Linda has analyzed the statistics of previous forty years which show that the children living in intact families are more safe from addiction, girls do not get pregnant, they do not leave schools, lesser chances of getting suicide and other problems, they have more opportunities to become good students as well as pleasant personalities.⁵ Kelly and Emery (2003) report that on average, nonresidential fathers see their children only 4 times per month following divorce and about 20% of children have no contact with their fathers 2-3 years after divorce. In contrast, non-residential mothers visit their children more frequently and are less likely to cease contact. The amount of contact between the nonresidential father and their children is not the determining factor; it is the quality of the father-child relationship that matters. There is a growing body of evidence that illustrate how nonresidential fathers affect their children. First, when a nonresidential father has frequent contact and there is minimal conflict, children are faring better; however, when there is conflict, frequent visits are related to poorer adjustment of children .⁶(Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). In a study that looked at results across a helped with homework, set appropriate limits and expectations and demonstrated warmth, children fared better. In other words, good parenting by noncustodial parents matters. In short, children benefit from continued relationships with nonresidential parents.⁷“Children who have a natural attachment for their parents also fear losing other secure relationships-friends, pets, siblings, neighbors, and

so on. Sometimes children are simply attached to their surroundings, and moving into new surroundings can cause an understandable negative reaction. Even though many divorces follow years of tension between husband and wife, the tension level typically increases during and shortly after a divorce. And parents who try to turn their children against other spouse create an absolutely impossible situation for that child.”⁸

Financial hardships

Divorce causes economic losses because single parent has less opportunities to meet the needs of children, due to divorce unit of family up sets which provides lot of necessities, because it is proved that” the family additionally provides such other socially beneficial functions as the rearing and socialization of children, along with such humanitarian activities as caring for its members. On the economic side, the family provides food , shelter, clothing and physical security for its members”⁸ American president indicated this reality in his interview, he said single mothers, like my mother, left no stone unturned to rear their children yet these children had to face five times more difficulties than children living in intact families. Children living with single parent, mostly do not complete their studies and get married though they have no money to meet the needs of the family, it is proved with statistic that children of intact families show better results than children living with legal parents, so it is the need of the day to make such policies which would strong the marital relation.”⁹Due to limited economic resources, children in single-parent families may have more difficulties. Following divorce, custodial parents (mostly mothers) generally have less income than most two-parent families. There is a common belief that many of the difficulties experienced by children are the result of the economic difficulties experienced in these families. The overall evidence is not as strong in support of this hypothesis as might be expected. Generally, studies have not found that income improves children's well-being. It is important to note the divorced families economic circumstances do not account completely for the well-being of children. Researchers have statistically controlled for income differences between intact and divorced families and all of the differences between children in these two types of families do not disappear. In other words, there are still some other factors

affecting children's well-being above and beyond money. One of the ways that lower income may impact children is through disruptions that may result from less money. Many divorced families change residence which may result in changes in schools, child care, friends, and other supportive relationships. In short, less money often leads to more disruptions which may lead to more problems for children.¹⁰ Especially, where mother has not her own economic sources to meet the desires of the day, children are more affected.

Depression and stress

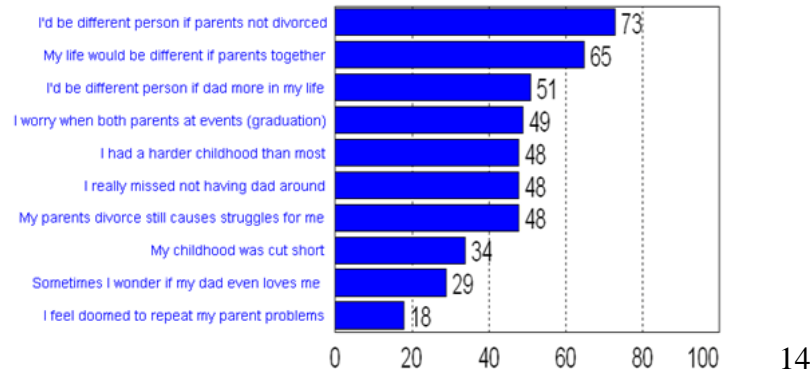
Children need very soft caring and loving atmosphere to become healthy and pleasant persons but this deep love and care is not available in single-parent families, because parents are also suffering from a number of problems such as financial hardships, adjustment to new situations and emotional ebb and flows. In general, the accumulation of multiple stressors and changes create difficulties for children. There are only a few studies that have explored this hypothesis, but the results seem to support it. Recently, Crowder and Teachman (2004) found that the more often children in single parent families moved the more likely they were to drop out of school. In general, the more stressful experiences that children encounter during divorce the more difficulty they will have. There is also evidence that indicates that children whose parents divorce more than once are worse off than children who only experience one parental divorce.¹¹

Emotional effects

Parents perform various valuable functions for their children, perhaps important of all, they provide emotional and psychological security, particularly through the warmth, love and companionship which is very precious for offspring as well as spouses, in case of divorce these blessings are vanished. The many and often unavoidable changes that accompany divorce can undermine a child's sense of security and make them fearful of the future – about “what's next?” Will we be poor, will we have enough to eat, will I have to go to a new school, will I still see my friends? In short, they will fret about all the things that are important in their world. From a child's perspective, the unimaginable has happened – a parent is no longer at home. Children may be deeply afraid that the parent is going to

“disappear” too and leave them alone in the world. The most damaging effect of divorce on children is the emotional trauma caused by parents who fight or belittle each other in front of their children. Children feel expected to take sides but cannot do this without being disloyal to the other parent. However, by not taking sides they fear disapproval and rejection by both. They are trapped in a no-win situation where it is “wrong” to love both parents. “The end of a marriage is usually brutally painful to all involved. The first two years is typically characterized as a period of craziness for the whole family, with marked mood swings, abnormal behavioral patterns, and poorer mental and physical health. For children whose parents have hidden their problems from the children (often from each other), it is especially traumatic and inexplicable, with these children experiencing a greater sense of loss. However, children whose parents had high levels of conflict often found the calmer, more stable single-parent home a relief and not nearly as traumatic. In fact, children from non-divorce, high-conflict homes turned out to have similar outcomes to children from divorced homes, i.e., higher levels of problems while growing up and higher rates of marital problems as young adults”.¹² This situation will make the children sad. “Children, like adults in times of adversity or trauma, go through a series of emotions following learning of their parent’s divorce. The child will grieve for the loss of their family and the daily presence and attention of their two parents, the only source of love and stability they have ever known. Often children will be in denial and pretend that the divorce is not happening, that it will just simply go away and everything will go back to normal. Once the reality of the situation sets in and they begin to realize it is not a dream, then sadness sets in and they will go through a mourning period. This often deepens into a depression, evidenced by apathy, mood swings, changes in behavior and eating habits and eventually this will turn into anger. They will become angry at their parents; possibly more so at the one they think is responsible. They might become angry with themselves, thinking that the divorce is their fault.”¹³ You may not be able to fully protect your children from the pain of divorce, and you probably shouldn't try. Children are entitled to their feelings. Children need to be allowed to grieve. Still, as I tell you how in *The Truth about Children and Divorce*,

you can promote your children's resilience and do much to ease their pain.



Conflict between parents

Another risk that causes children's difficulty is conflict between parents prior to, during and after the divorce that contributes to lower well-being. There have been a number of studies examining this issue. Generally, it has been found that children in high conflict families (either intact or divorced) fare worse than children in low conflict families. Some studies have found that children in non-conflict single parent families are doing better than children in quarrelsome two-parent families. There is also evidence that children begin to have difficulties prior to divorce and that some of these difficulties are associated with the conflict present prior to divorce. Post-divorce conflict has a strong influence on children's adjustment. Children in those families that can cooperate and reduce conflict are faring better.¹⁵

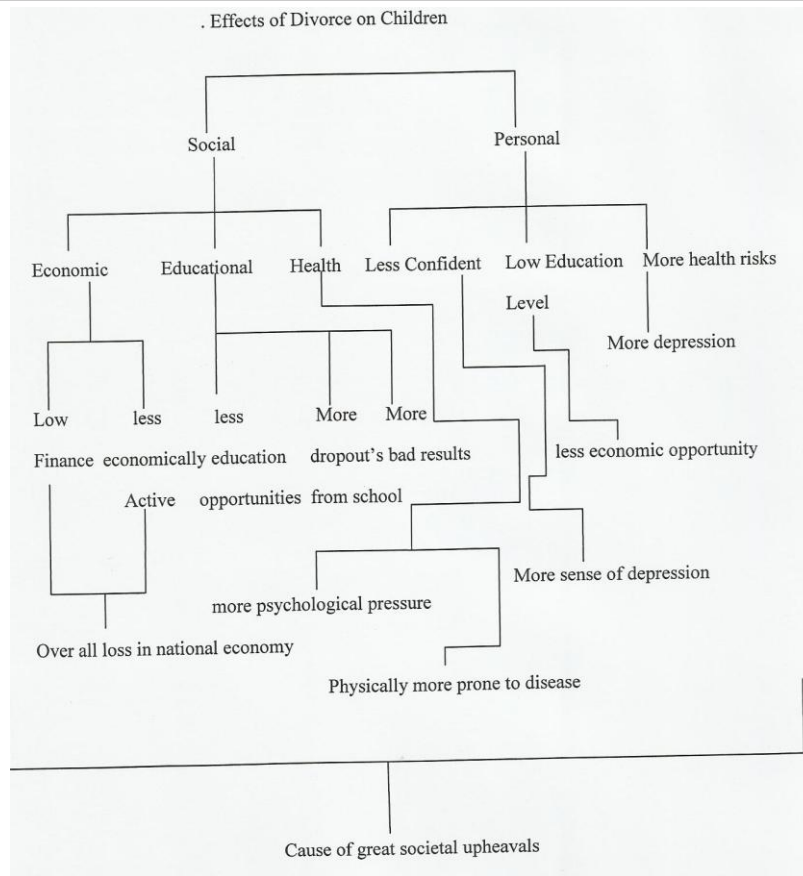
A divorce is often a traumatic experience. No matter if you are a child, an adult, initiated the divorce or not, you go through an emotional roller-coaster of chaos, guilt, frustration and helplessness. All divorces are different but they've got one thing in common, they are all painful more or less and for a longer or shorter period of time. With the divorce come a lot of changes. New routines replace the old ones. You might lose some ¹members of your family and get new ones. Maybe you have to move out of your home and the financial situation will not be the same. One thing that does not change is the fact that a divorce is something that adults initiate. A couple's intimate relationship is son who are

so caught up in their own emotional processes, that the needs of the children are forgotten. It is important to tell your children it's not their fault. It's also very important that the children are not used in the battle. It is not unusual that children have to act as messengers between the parents. As a child you are very loyal to both your parents. You often feel guilty for spending time with one parent when you know the other one is on his/her own. As a parent you have to put your own needs aside and let your child know that you understand that s/he needs both her/his parents and that you don't mind them spending time with the other one. It is also very important not to say bad things about your ex-partner. A child knows s/he's a product of two p parents. When criticizing your ex you are also criticizing your child.¹⁶

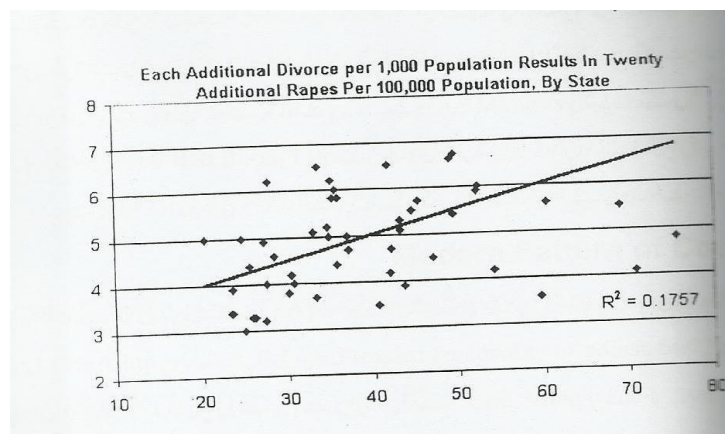
Social drawbacks

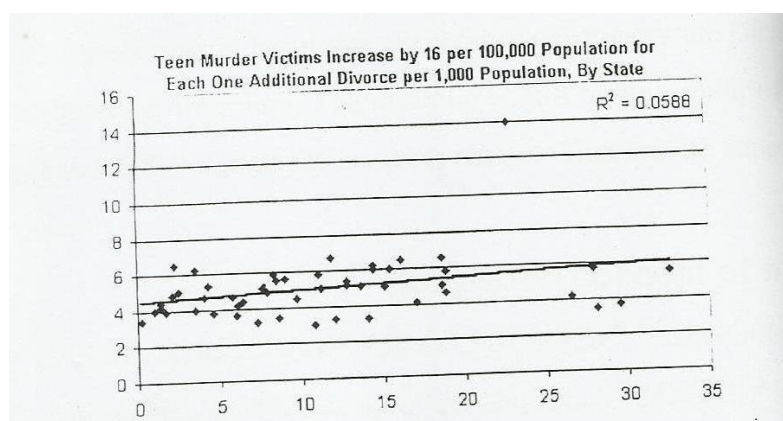
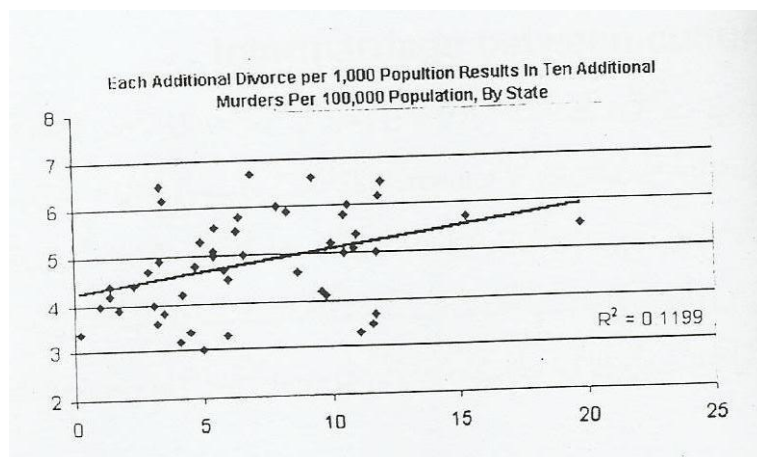
Parental love and care make children useful personalities, when children lose this satisfactory atmosphere, they could not become perfect citizens, and they suffer and face lot of societal problems. Some of them become criminal and shatter the peace of society. The social drawbacks of divorce on children usually result in the following:

- They face more health problems
- They face more psychological pressure
- They are more prone to violence or have a more violent behavior.
- The dropout rate of these children from school is higher as compared to the children belonging to the normal families.
- These children have a greater potential to commit suicide.
- They also provide strong reasons for gender imbalance in the society. Such children are also a cause of great upheaval in the society



In short divorce indirectly influences the whole society, crime rate increases and it leads the people to prison. These graphs indicate toward this situation.





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However, in some situations, divorce has positive effects on children, actually they are associated with the environment before divorce, if the conflict between parents was severe, it would have positive effect because dissolution of marriage has released the children from panic relations, while the dissolution of low-conflict marriages appears to a strong negative influence on offspring. “In summary, divorce has the potential to be a stressful process for children, process that places children at risk for a variety of behavioral, emotional, and academic problems. When the home environment is highly stressful, divorce may lower the level of stress to which children are exposed, however, leading to improvements in children’s well-being. On the other hand, when the home environment is relatively benign, divorce is likely to

increase the level of stress to which children are exposed, leading to a deterioration in children's well-being."18 Actually breakage of marital bond is a great loss not only for children but also every member of the family. Joan K. Jackson says "in a family, a division occurs and roles interlock. For the family to function smoothly, each person must play his role in a predictable mannered according to the expectations of others in the family. When the family as a whole is functioning smoothly, individual members of the family also tend to function well. Everyone is aware of where he fits, what he is expected to do, and he can expect from others in the family. When this organization, is disrupted repercussions are felt by each family member. A crisis is under way."19

Islamic steps to reduce the ratio of divorce

Islam takes marriage seriously, since its concern has been always to ensure that the marriage bond stays relatively stable and durable, so the new generation could flourish in proper and soothing environment and become balanced personalities to play a healthy role in nation building. The prospective parents have to be pious and of good moral conduct. Both have to be kind, sympathetic, considerable patient and loving, caring to one another, this encourages peace and harmony in domestic life.

All mighty Allah orders a pious person to be soft and kind for his spouse and says in Quran, "And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them, perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good."20

The Holy Prophet (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) on the occasion of the Hajja-tul-Wida addressing a very large gathering said: "Listen to me, O people! Treat your women nicely as they are under your control. You have no authority to maltreat them except when if they misbehave."21

If a man doesn't like his wife, Islam forbids him to hate and ignore her.

The Holy Prophet (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) has explained this point by saying

"A Muslim should not hate his wife, if he dislikes some habits of his wife, if is just possible that he may like some other traits in her."22

In order to ensure discipline and stability in domestic life men have been given more responsibility over women. The Holy

Prophet (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) has taught that a mumin should be an embodiment of virtues and of excellent moral conduct and behavior and that the best of you in this respect are the kindest of you to their wives.

The Holy Prophet (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) has observed

“The most perfect of the believers in faith is the best of them in moral excellence, and the best of you the kindest of you to their wives.”²³

The kind and benevolent treatment of The Holy Prophet (Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) towards his wives is a practical example for all the believers. He never even thought of giving physical punishment to his wives.

Islam has given special injunction due to her nature, she has been given special temperament and attributes for her specific duties, Messenger of Allah ordered to be soft and caring for her and ignore her shortcomings.²⁴

“In principle, Islam regards marriage as a lifelong commitment. However, sometimes there do, arise situations wherein marriage ceases to fulfill its purpose. Hence, divorce can be invoked by either side or both of them in order to accommodate the realities of an unsuccessful marriage. It must be stressed that divorce can only be exercised as the last resort after all efforts for reconciliation between the spouses are exhausted. Therefore, in Islam divorced is considered a necessity if the married partners are not happy. However, divorce is heavily disapproved of and discouraged.”²⁵

The Quran discourages divorce in the following verses: ‘And (remember) when you (Muhammad) said to the man (Zaid, Muhammad’s adopted son) whom and yourself have favoured: keep your wife and have fear of Allah.’²⁶ In this verse there is an implicit disapproval of divorce.

In other verses the Quran clearly discourages Muslims from having recourse to a hasty divorce. Divorce was also discouraged by the Prophet, who is reported to have said:

“Of all things licit, the most hateful to God is divorce”²⁷

The Quran not only discourage divorce, but it prohibits the slandering of one’s wife in order to take back her dowry ‘if you wish to have a wife in the place of a(divorced) one, do not take

from her the dowry you have given her even if it be a talent of gold. That would be improper and grossly unjust; for how can you take it back you have lain with each other and entered into a firm contract?"²⁸

Although Islam prefers to keep the marital link stable and intact, this does not mean the wedlock cannot be brought to an end if there are compelling circumstances. Indeed, Islam recognizes if the marriage is not working, it is in the interest of both sides to terminate it on good terms.

Imam Ibn Alhamam said "It is obvious that divorce is forbidden without any reason, because it terminates the blessings of marriage, divorce ceases all physical and spiritual outcomes of the contract."²⁹

Though Islam permits divorce in unavoidable situations, yet it imposes some restrictions to minimize the chances of breakage. Islam lays emphasis to restore this life and in case of differences encourages an amicable solution by mutual understanding and arbitration. By appointing one mediator from each side it is ensured that the matter neither remains restricted between the couple nor does it go outside the affected families. But sometimes all these efforts fail and the continuation of marriage may lead to more bitterness and conflicts, Quran says

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَا حَكْمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ

"If you fear a breach between a man and his wife, appoint an arbiter from his people and other from hers. 30 If they wish to be reconciled, Allah will bring them together again-Allah is Knowing Wise'.

This is a safe and respectable way to settle down the differences and marital discord which can damage the very sound foundations of marital life, reconciliation will safeguard the spouses as well as their offspring.

According to Islamic teaching, divorce is the right of husband because he spends money to maintain marital life, due to their obligations man is "Quawwan" in marital sphere, he is caretaker and guardian of family, so he would be conscious about family welfare and abstaining from divorce. Allah said in Quran

الَّذِي فِي يَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ -

"He in whose hand is the wedding-knot"³¹

The right of divorce has been given to man, as by nature he has more tolerance, forbearance, prudence and deliberation than a

woman, so he will measure the demerits of divorce carefully and will try to save the marital bond to secure the future of new generation.

To safeguard family life, Islam gives three chance to rethink about decision of termination, although this life starts with only one yes or acceptance of offer of Nikah, Al mighty Allah said in holy Quran, *الطَّلَاقُ حَرَامٌ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي حِلٍّ مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ وَكُنْتُمْ حُرًّا مُحْرَقًا أُولَئِكَ حِزْبٌ إِيَّاكَ فَاسْتَأْذِنِي بَأْسَانِي*

“Divorce may be pronounced twice, and then a women must be retained in honor or allowed to go with kindness.”³²

In this worse, Allah explains that divorce may be pronounced twice, during which period reconciliation can take place, hence it is revocable type of divorce, still the couple can resume their marital life if they wish to do so. Divorce also must be pronounced when the wife is in a state of purity, otherwise it is regarded as invalid. The reason for not allowing the husband to divorce his wife during the state of impurity is that the husband is physically separated from her and this might induce him to press ahead with the separation. While if she is in state of purity, he is physically close to her and in this case he might be persuaded to reconsider his decision. Anyway, if divorce takes place, the wife has to observe iddah or the waiting period. The reason for making the waiting period obligatory is to ensure some things one of these is to give the spouses more time to reconsider their attitudes and resolve their differences.

Also it is strongly denounced by the Prophet, who is reported to have reacted angrily when he heard that somebody had divorced his wife by the triple pronouncement of talaq in a single sitting and said ‘How you would play with the book of Allah while I am alive and amidst you?’ He then ordered the man to take back his wife.³³

In short, Islam appreciates the cooperation and homogeneity among spouses, so the new generation could be brought up in favorable circumstances it provides check and balances in marital relationship to make the chances of divorces lesser. If there is unavoidable situation Islam guides the related persons to be humble and caring for departing spouse and settle down the issues of children with cooperation and came and in this way we can minimize these effects.

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