BLOGS

Concept of Talaq under Muslim Law

Indrasish Majumder · 24 Apr 2023

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Introduction

Talaq is a concept under Islamic law that allows the husband to unilaterally dissolve the marriage by uttering or writing the word “talaq” (divorce) three times. This practice is based on the Islamic law of divorce, which allows a husband to end the marriage if he is unhappy with it without the need for any justification.

The concept of talaq has its roots in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, who is said to have allowed it as a way to resolve marital disputes. However, it was not a common practice in the early days of Islam, as divorce was considered a last resort and the Prophet encouraged reconciliation between spouses.

Talaq as discussed under the Quran

It is important to note that the Quran does not prescribe the triple talaq method of divorce, which is a later development in Islamic jurisprudence. Instead, the Quran emphasizes the importance of treating women with kindness and compassion during and after divorce and encourages couples to seek reconciliation and mediation before resorting to divorce.

Talaq became more prevalent in the centuries that followed as Islamic societies became more patriarchal and divorce became more common. Over time, different schools of Islamic jurisprudence developed different rules and procedures for talaq, leading to variations in the way it is practiced in different parts of the Muslim world.

The recognition of Talaq in contemporary times

Today, talaq is recognized as a legal means of ending a marriage in most Muslim-majority countries, although there is considerable variation in the way it is practiced and interpreted. In some countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, talaq is considered a purely religious matter and is not regulated by civil law. In others, such as Turkey and Tunisia, talaq has been reformed or abolished as part of broader efforts to modernize and secularize legal systems.

Critics of talaq argue that it is unfair to women, as it gives the husband unilateral power to dissolve the marriage without any input from the wife. In recent years, there has been growing debate within the Muslim world about whether talaq should be reformed or abolished in order to better protect the rights of women in marriage and divorce.

Types of Talaq

Under Islamic law, there are three types of talaq:

1. Talaq-e-Ahsan: This is considered the most proper and preferred form of talaq. It involves the husband pronouncing talaq only once during a period of purity (tuhr), which is the time between menstrual cycles when the wife is not menstruating. After the pronouncement of talaq, the couple must wait for a period of iddah, which is a mandatory waiting period of three menstrual cycles, during which the husband can revoke the talaq by reconciling with his wife or by revoking it orally or in writing. If the iddah period expires without any revocation of the talaq, the divorce is considered final.
2. Talaq-e-Hasan: This form of talaq involves the husband pronouncing talaq three times, but with a mandatory waiting period between each pronouncement. The waiting period is meant to allow for reconciliation or mediation between the couple. If the couple is unable to reconcile during the waiting period, the third pronouncement of talaq finalizes the divorce.
3. Talaq-e-Biddat or Triple Talaq: This is an instant, irrevocable form of talaq that involves the husband pronouncing talaq three times in one sitting, without any waiting period or opportunity for reconciliation or mediation. This form of talaq has been controversial, with many Islamic scholars and feminist activists criticizing it as unfair to women and a violation of their rights. Several countries, including India, have banned the practice of triple talaq.

It is important to note that the three types of talaq differ in terms of their validity and permissibility under Islamic law. While Talaq-e-Ahsan and Talaq-e-Hasan are recognized as valid and permissible forms of talaq, the permissibility and validity of Talaq-e-Biddat are contested,

with some Islamic scholars considering it to be invalid and prohibited.

The UCC debate on Triple Talaq

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a proposal in India to replace the personal laws of different religious communities with a single code applicable to all citizens, regardless of their religion. The UCC debate on triple talaq centers on the practice of triple talaq, which is a form of instant divorce in which a Muslim husband can divorce his wife by simply saying “talaq” three times.

Proponents of the UCC argue that the practise of triple talaq is unconstitutional and violates the rights of Muslim women. They argue that it is discriminatory and violates the principles of gender equality and justice enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Opponents of the UCC argue that it would interfere with the personal laws of different religious communities and infringe on their religious freedom. They argue that the practice of triple talaq is a matter of personal law and should be left to the Muslim community to decide.

In 2017, the Indian Supreme Court declared triple talaq unconstitutional and struck it down as a violation of the rights of Muslim women. The Court’s decision was based on the principle that personal laws cannot override the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. The Court held that triple talaq was arbitrary, unfair, and discriminatory against women.

While the debate on the UCC continues, the issue of triple talaq has been addressed by the Indian Parliament through the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, which criminalizes the practice of triple talaq and provides for punishment for those who engage in it.

Landmark cases related to talaq in the Indian Supreme Court

Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017): In this case, the Indian Supreme Court declared the practice of triple talaq, or instant divorce, unconstitutional and a violation of women’s rights. The Court held that the practice is not an integral part of Islam and therefore cannot be protected under religious freedom.

Daniel Latifi v. Union of India (2001): In this case, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that talaq pronounced under the Muslim Personal Law must follow the principles of natural justice and that the husband must give reasons for seeking divorce. The court also stated that the talaq must be communicated to the wife and must be recognized under the law. The Court also declared that the

husband's liability does not end with the expiration of Iddat but that in cases of vagrancy and destitution of the wife, the husband must maintain her and make reasonable and fair provisions for her even beyond the customary period.

Shamim Ara v. State of U.P. (2002): The petitioner, Shamim Ara, filed a lawsuit against her husband, Abrar Ahmad, in 1979. She accused Ahmad of deserting her and failing to support her financially. In 1990, Ahmad responded by claiming that he had divorced Shamim Ara via triple talaq in 1987. The main legal issue in this case was when Ahmad's talaq was considered valid. Specifically, the question was whether it took effect when Ahmad first pronounced it in front of witnesses but outside of his wife's presence, or whether it took effect when he informed Shamim Ara of the divorce in writing in 1990. The third option was also considered, which was that the divorce was not valid. The Supreme Court ultimately held that the third option was correct. The Court reasoned that talaq delivered outside of the wife's presence and communicated to her later in writing was so unjust to Muslim wives that it should not be legally recognized. The Court's reasoning also required that this previously private proceeding be subject to court approval before it could be considered valid.

These cases have been instrumental in shaping the legal landscape around talaq in India and have helped to protect the rights of Muslim women.

In conclusion, the practice of triple talaq has been a highly controversial issue in India for many years, with proponents of the Uniform Civil Code arguing that it is a discriminatory practice that violates the rights of Muslim women and opponents arguing that it is a matter of personal law and should be left to the Muslim community to decide. However, with the Indian Supreme Court declaring triple talaq unconstitutional and the passage of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, which criminalizes the practice of triple talaq, it is clear that there is a growing recognition of the need to protect the rights of Muslim women.

Suggestions

Moving forward, there are several steps that can be taken to address the issue of triple talaq and related issues.

1. Firstly, there needs to be more awareness and education about the rights of Muslim women and the legal framework that is available to protect them.

2. Secondly, there needs to be a greater focus on promoting gender equality and justice within the Muslim community. This can be done through initiatives such as women's empowerment programmes, legal aid clinics, and awareness campaigns.
3. Thirdly, there needs to be greater engagement between the Muslim community and the government on issues related to personal law. This can involve establishing a platform for dialogue and consultation between Muslim leaders and government officials to address issues related to personal law in a constructive and collaborative manner.
4. Overall, addressing the issue of triple talaq and related issues requires a multifaceted approach that involves legal, social, and cultural dimensions. By working together to promote gender equality and justice, we can ensure that the rights of Muslim women are protected and that they have the freedom to live their lives with dignity and respect.