

Satsang with Sri Swami Veditatmananda
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Divorce

Question

In America, the divorce rates are very high. Has everyone who has divorced their spouse committed a sin?

Answer

Yes, the divorce rates in the West seem to be higher than in countries like India. We find that the divorce rates of Indians living in the West are also higher than that of Indians in India. In the West also, nobody wants divorce. It is extremely painful. They seem to divorce as a last resort.

There appear to be two primary reasons for the higher rates of divorce in the West: greater freedom, and intolerance. The divorce rates are high in the USA because people have the freedom to divorce. In India, the social freedom is not there, and the social acceptance of divorce is not there. The divorce rates are a lot less in India, because people don't have the freedom to divorce and also because they are more tolerant. Adjusting to others, tolerating others etc. has a lot of value in India. In India, people put up with things; they adjust. In the Western society where the sense of individuality and self-assertion is emphasized, the preparedness for putting up with people, situations, and things is limited. In a country like India, the social structure is more emphasized. People assert themselves less and work within the social customs and norms. That is why they put up with things. That's how they are brought up to be. On the other hand, a person in the West is brought up asserting himself or herself, and therefore the willingness to adjust is very limited.

No, I would not call divorce a sin. No particular action can be called a sin. It is the intention that lies behind the action that matters. If it is the result of not being able to build up the relationship or have a comfortable relationship, and there is no choice, then it is not a sin. If this was motivated by another agenda, then it is a different matter. If the person got married with the intention of getting divorced after getting some benefits, then it is definitely cheating somebody. When there is a violation of faith, we call it sin. Violating somebody's faith in that I myself create faith in somebody by my promises or behavior and then violate them, is called a sin. Otherwise, no action by itself, including an action of divorce can be called a sin¹.

¹ Transcribed and edited by Jaya Kannan, KK Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.