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## THE DIVORCE ACT, 1869

### ACT NO. IV OF 1869

*[26th February, 1869]*

#### **An Act to amend the law relating to Divorce and Matrimonial Causes. \***

WHEREAS it is expedient to amend the law relating to the divorce of persons professing the Christian religion, and to confer upon certain Courts jurisdiction in matters matrimonial;

Preamble

It is hereby enacted as follows:—

#### I.—PRELIMINARY

1. This Act may be called the Divorce Act, and shall come into operation on the first day of April, 1869.

Short title  
Commencement  
of Act

2. This Act extends to the whole of Bangladesh.

Extent of Act

Nothing hereinafter contained shall authorise any Court to grant any relief under this Act except where the petitioner or respondent professes the Christian religion,

Extent of power  
to grant relief  
generally, and  
to make decrees  
of dissolution,  
or of nullity

or to make decrees of dissolution of marriage except where the parties to the marriage are domiciled in Bangladesh at the time when the petition is presented,

or to make decrees of nullity of marriage except where the marriage if solemnised, before <sup>1</sup>[the 26th day of March, 1971, has been solemnised in Pakistan] and if solemnised on or after that date has been solemnised in Bangladesh and the petitioner

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\* Throughout this Act, except otherwise provided, the words “Bangladesh”, “Government”, “High Court Division” and “Appellate Division” were substituted, for the words “Pakistan”, “Provincial Government” or “the said Government”, “High Courts” or “High Court” or “a High Court” and “Supreme Court” respectively by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of the Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

<sup>1</sup> The words, figures and commas “the 26th day of March, 1971, has been solemnized in Pakistan” were substituted, for the words, commas and figures “the 15th day of August, 1947, has been solemnized in India” by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of the Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

is resident in Bangladesh at the time of presenting the petition, or to grant any relief under this Act, other than a decree of dissolution of marriage or of nullity of marriage, except where the petitioner resides in Bangladesh at the time of presenting the petition:

Provided that nothing in this paragraph shall be deemed to authorize any Court to grant any relief under this Act where the petitioner or respondent is a Muslim.

Interpretation clause	<b>3.</b> In this Act, unless there be something repugnant in the subject or context,—
	<sup>1</sup> [* * *]
"District Judge"	<sup>2</sup> [(2) "District Judge" means a Judge of a Principal Civil Court of a district.]
"District Court"	(3) "District Court" means, in the case of any petition under this Act, the Court of the District Judge within the local limits of whose ordinary jurisdiction, or of whose jurisdiction under this Act, the husband and wife reside or last resided together:
"Court"	(4) "Court" means the High Court Division or the District Court, as the case may be:
"Minor children"	(5) "minor children" means, in the case of sons of <sup>3</sup> [fathers domiciled in Bangladesh], boys who have not completed the age of sixteen years, and, in the case of daughters of <sup>3</sup> [fathers domiciled in Bangladesh], girls who have not completed the age of thirteen years: in other cases it means unmarried children who have not completed the age of eighteen years:

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<sup>1</sup> Clause (1) was omitted by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of the Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Clause (2) was substituted, for clause (2) by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of the Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

<sup>3</sup> The words "fathers domiciled in Bangladesh" were substituted, for the words "Native fathers" by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of the Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

- (6) "incestuous adultery" means adultery committed by a husband with a woman with whom, if his wife were dead, he could not lawfully contract marriage by reason of her being within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity (whether natural or legal) or affinity: "Incestuous adultery"
- (7) "bigamy with adultery" means adultery with same woman with whom the bigamy was committed: "Bigamy with adultery"
- (8) "marriage with another woman" means marriage of any person, being married, to any other person, during the life of the former wife, whether the second marriage shall have taken place within Bangladesh or elsewhere: "Marriage with another woman"
- (9) "desertion" implies an abandonment against the wish of the person charging it: and "Desertion"
- (10) "property" includes, in the case of a wife, any property to which she is entitled for an estate in remainder or reversion, or as a trustee, executrix or administratrix; and the date of the death of the testator or intestate shall be deemed to be the time at which any such wife becomes entitled as executrix or administratrix. "Property"

## II.—JURISDICTION

4. The jurisdiction now exercised by the High Court Division in respect of divorce *a mensa et toro*, and in all other causes, suits and matters matrimonial, shall be exercised by such Courts and by the District Courts subject to the provisions in this Act contained, and not otherwise: except so far as relates to the granting of marriage-licenses, which may be granted as if this Act had not been passed. Matrimonial jurisdiction of High Court Division to be exercised subject to Act. Exception

**5 and 6.** [Omitted by the Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973), section 3 and 2nd Schedule.]

Court to act on principles of English Divorce Court

**7.** Subject to the provisions contained in this Act, the High Court Division and District Courts shall, in all suits and proceedings hereunder, act and give relief on principles and rules which, in the opinion of the said Courts, are as nearly as may be conformable to the principles and rules on which the Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes in England for the time being acts and gives relief:

Provided that nothing in this section shall deprive the said Courts of jurisdiction in a case where the parties to a marriage professed the Christian religion at the time of the occurrence of the facts on which the claim to relief is founded.

Extraordinary jurisdiction of High Court Division

**8.** The High Court Division may, whenever it thinks fit, remove and try and determine as a Court of original jurisdiction any suit or proceeding instituted under this Act in the Court of any District Judge within the limits of its jurisdiction under the Act.

Power to transfer suits

The High Court Division may also withdraw any such suit or proceeding, and transfer it for trial or disposal to the Court of any other such District Judge.

Reference to High Court Division

**9.** When any question of law or usage having the force of law arises at any point in the proceedings, previous to the hearing of any suit under this Act by a District Court or at any subsequent stage of such suit, or in the execution of the decree therein or order thereon,

the Court may, either of its own motion or on the application of any of the parties, draw up a statement of the case and refer it, with the Court's own opinion thereon, to the decision of the High Court Division.

If the question has arisen previous to or in the hearing, the District Court may either stay such proceedings, or proceed in the case pending such reference and pass a decree contingent upon the opinion of the High Court Division upon it.

If a decree or order has been made, its execution shall be stayed until the receipt of the order of the High Court Division upon such reference.

**III.— DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE**

**10.** Any husband may present a petition to the District Court or to the High Court Division, praying that his marriage may be dissolved on the ground that his wife has, since the solemnisation thereof, been guilty of adultery.

When husband may petition for dissolution

Any wife may present a petition to the District court or to the High Court Division, praying that her marriage may be dissolved on the ground that, since the solemnisation thereof, her husband has exchanged his profession of Christianity for the profession of some other religion, and gone through a form of marriage with another woman;

When wife may petition for dissolution

- or has been guilty of incestuous adultery,
- or of bigamy with adultery,
- or of marriage with another woman with adultery,
- or of rape, sodomy or bestiality,
- or of adultery coupled with such cruelty as without adultery would have entitled her to a divorce *mensa et toro*,
- or of adultery coupled with desertion, without reasonable excuse, for two years or upwards.

Every such petition shall state, as distinctly as the nature of the case permits, the facts on which the claim to have such marriage dissolved is founded.

Contents of petition

**11.** Upon any such petition presented by a husband, the petitioner shall make the alleged adulterer a co-respondent to the said petition, unless he is excused from so doing on one of the following grounds, to be allowed by the Court:—

Adulterer to be co-respondent

- (1) that the respondent is leading the life of a prostitute, and that the petitioner knows of no person with whom the adultery has been committed;
- (2) that the name of the alleged adulterer is unknown to the petitioner although he has made due efforts to discover it;
- (3) that the alleged adulterer is dead.

Court to be satisfied of absence of collusion

**12.** Upon any such petition for the dissolution of a marriage, the Court shall satisfy itself, so far as reasonably can, not only as to the facts alleged, but also whether or not the petitioner has been in any manner accessory to, or conniving at the going through of the said form of marriage, or the adultery, or has condoned the same, and shall also inquire into any countercharge which may be made against the petitioner.

Dismissal of petition

**13.** In case the Court, on the evidence in relation to any such petition, is satisfied that the petitioner's case has not been proved, or is not satisfied that the alleged adultery has been committed,

or finds that the petitioner has, during the marriage, been accessory to, or conniving at, the going through of the said form of marriage, or the adultery of the other party to the marriage, or has condoned the adultery complained of,

or that the petition is presented or prosecuted in collusion with either of the respondents,

then and in any of the said cases the Court shall dismiss the petition.

When a petition is dismissed by a District Court under this section, the petitioner may, nevertheless, present a similar petition to the High Court Division.

14. In case the Court is satisfied on the evidence that the case of the petitioner has been proved,

Power to Court to pronounce decree for dissolving marriage

and does not find that the petitioner has been in any manner accessory to, or conniving at, the going through of the said form of marriage, or the adultery of the other party to the marriage, or has condoned the adultery complained of,

or that the petition is presented or prosecuted in collusion with either of the respondents,

the Court shall pronounce a decree declaring such marriage to be dissolved in the manner and subject to all the provisions and limitations in sections 16 and 17 made and declared:

Provided that the Court shall not be bound to pronounce such decree if it finds that the petitioner has, during the marriage, been guilty of adultery,

or if the petitioner has, in the opinion of the Court, been guilty of unreasonable delay in presenting or prosecuting such petition,

or of cruelty towards the other party to the marriage,

or of having deserted or wilfully separated himself or herself from the other party before the adultery complained of, and without reasonable excuse,

or of such wilful neglect or misconduct of or towards the other party as has conduced to the adultery.

No adultery shall be deemed to have been condoned within the meaning of this Act unless where conjugal co-habitation has been resumed or continued.

Condonation

15. In any suit instituted for dissolution of marriage, if the respondent opposes the relief sought on the ground, in case of such a suit instituted by a husband, of his adultery, cruelty or desertion without reasonable excuse, or, in case of such a suit instituted by a wife, on the ground of her adultery and cruelty, the Court may in such suit give to the respondent, on his or her application, the same relief to which he or she would have been entitled in case he or she had presented a petition seeking such relief, and the respondent shall be competent to give evidence of or relating to such cruelty or desertion.

Relief in case of opposition on certain grounds

Decrees for  
dissolution to  
be *nisi*

**16.** Every decree for a dissolution of marriage made by the High Court Division, not being a confirmation of a decree of a District Court, shall, in the first instance, be a decree *nisi*, not to make absolute till after the expiration of such time, not less than six months from the pronouncing thereof, as the High Court Division by general or special order from time to time directs.

Collusion

During that period any person shall be at liberty, in such manner as the High Court Division by general or special order from time to time directs, to show cause why the said decree should not be made absolute by reason of the same having been obtained by collusion or by reason of material facts not being brought before the Court.

On cause being so shown, the Court shall deal with the case by making the decree absolute, or by reversing the decree *nisi*, or by requiring further inquiry, or otherwise as justice may demand.

The High Court Division may order the costs of counsel and witnesses, and otherwise arising from such cause being shown, to be paid by the parties or such one or more of them as it thinks fit, including a wife if she has separate property.

Whenever a decree *nisi* has been made, and the petitioner fails, within a reasonable time, to move to have such decree made absolute, the High Court Division may dismiss the suit.

Confirmation  
of decree for  
dissolution by  
District Judge

**17.** Every decree for a dissolution of marriage made by a District Judge shall be subject to confirmation by the High Court Division.

Cases for confirmation of a decree for dissolution of marriage shall be heard (where the number of the Judges of the High Court Division is three or upwards) by a Court composed of three such Judges, and in case of difference the opinion of the majority shall prevail, or (where the number of the Judges of the High Court Division is two) by a Court composed of such two Judges, and in case of difference the opinion of the senior Judge, shall prevail.

The High Court Division, if it thinks further enquiry or additional evidence to be necessary, may direct such enquiry to be made or such evidence to be taken.

The result of such enquiry and the additional evidence shall be certified to the High Court Division by the District Judge, and the High Court Division shall thereupon make an order confirming the decree for dissolution of marriage, or such other order as to the Court seems fit:

Provided that no decree shall be confirmed under this section till after the expiration of such time, not less than six months from the pronouncing thereof, as the High Court Division by general or special order from time to time directs.

During the progress of the suit in the Court of the District Judge, any person, suspecting that any parties to the suit are or have been acting in collusion for the purpose of obtaining a divorce, shall be at liberty, in such manner as the High Court Division by general or special order from time to time directs, to apply to the High Court Division to remove the suit under section 8, and the High Court Division shall thereupon, if it thinks fit, remove such suit

and try and determine the same as a Court of original jurisdiction, and the provisions contained in section 16 shall apply to every suit so removed;

or it may direct the District Judge to take such steps in respect of the alleged collusion as may be necessary to enable him to make a decree in accordance with the justice of the case.

<sup>1</sup>[17A. The Government may appoint an officer who shall, within the jurisdiction of the High Court Division <sup>2</sup>[\* \* \*], have the like right of showing cause why a decree for the dissolution of a marriage should not be made absolute or should not

Appointment  
of officer to  
exercise duties  
of King's  
Proctor

<sup>1</sup> Section 17A was substituted by section 17A of the Government of India (Adaptation of Indian Laws) Order, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> The words "in that Province" were omitted by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of the Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

be confirmed, as the case may be, as is exercisable in England by the King's Proctor; and the Government may make rules regulating the manner in which the right shall be exercised and all matters incidental to or consequential on any exercise of the right.

<sup>1</sup>[\* \* \*]]

#### IV.—NULLITY OF MARRIAGE

Petition for  
decree of  
nullity

**18.** Any husband or wife may present a petition to the District Court or to the High Court Division, praying that his or her marriage may be declared null and void.

Grounds of  
decrees

**19.** Such decree may be made on any of the following grounds:—

- (1) that the respondent was impotent at the time of the marriage and at the time of the institution of the suit;
- (2) that the parties are within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity (whether natural or legal) or affinity;
- (3) that either party was a lunatic or idiot at the time of the marriage;
- (4) that the former husband or wife of either party was living at the time of the marriage, and the marriage with such former husband or wife was then in force.

Nothing in this section shall affect the jurisdiction of the High Court Division to make decrees of nullity of marriage on the ground that the consent of either party was obtained by force or fraud.

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<sup>1</sup> Second paragraph of section 17A was omitted by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of the Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

**20.** Every decree of nullity of marriage made by a District Judge shall be subject to confirmation by the High Court Division, and the provisions of section 17, clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4, shall, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to such decrees.

Confirmation of District Judge's decree

**21.** Where a marriage is annulled on the ground that a former husband or wife was living, and it is adjudged that the subsequent marriage was contracted in good faith and with the full belief of the parties that the former husband or wife was dead, or when a marriage is annulled on the ground of insanity, children begotten before the decree is made shall be specified in the decree, and shall be entitled to succeed, in the same manner as legitimate children, to the estate of the parent who at the time of the marriage was competent to contract.

Children of annulled marriage

**V.—JUDICIAL SEPARATION**

**22.** No decree shall hereafter be made for a divorce *a mensa et toro*, but the husband or wife may obtain a decree of judicial separation, on the ground of adultery, or cruelty, or desertion without reasonable excuse for two years or upwards, and such decree shall have the effect of a divorce *a mensa et toro* under the existing law, and such other legal effect as hereinafter mentioned.

Bar to decree for divorce *a mensa et toro*; but judicial separation obtainable by husband or wife

**23.** Application for judicial separation on any one of the grounds aforesaid may be made by either husband or wife by petition to the District Court or the High Court Division; and the Court, on being satisfied of the truth of the statements made in such petition, and that there is no legal ground why the application should not be granted, may decree judicial separation accordingly.

Application for separation made by petition

**24.** In every case of a judicial separation under this Act, the wife shall, from the date of the sentence, and whilst the separation continues, be considered as unmarried with respect to property of every description which she may acquire, or which may come to or devolve upon her.

Separated wife deemed spinster with respect to after acquired property

Such property may be disposed of by her in all respects as an unmarried woman, and on her decease the same shall, in case she dies intestate, go as the same would have gone if her husband had been then dead:

Provided that, if any such wife again cohabits with her husband, all such property as she may be entitled to when such co-habitation takes place shall be held to her separate use, subject, however, to any agreement in writing made between herself and her husband whilst separate.

Separated wife deemed spinster for purposes of contract and suing

**25.** In every case of a judicial separation under this Act, the wife shall whilst so separated, be considered as an unmarried woman for the purposes of contract, and wrongs and injuries, and suing and being sued in any civil proceeding; and her husband shall not be liable in respect of any contract, act or costs entered into, done, omitted or incurred by her during the separation:

Provided that where, upon any such judicial separation, alimony has been decreed or ordered to be paid to the wife, and the same is not duly paid by the husband, he shall be liable for necessaries supplied for her use:

Provided also that nothing shall prevent the wife from joining at any time during such separation, in the exercise of any joint power given to herself and her husband.

#### **REVERSAL OF DECREE OF SEPARATION**

Decree of separation obtained during absence of husband or wife may be reversed

**26.** Any husband or wife, upon the application of whose wife or husband, as the case may be, a decree of judicial separation has been pronounced, may, at any time thereafter, present a petition to the Court by which the decree was pronounced, praying for a reversal of such decree, on the ground that it was obtained in his or her absence, and that there was reasonable excuse for the alleged desertion, where desertion was the ground of such decree.

The Court may, on being satisfied of the truth of the allegations of such petition, reverse the decree accordingly; but such reversal shall not prejudice or affect the rights or remedies which any other person would have had, in case it had not been decreed, in respect of any debts, contracts or acts of the wife incurred, entered into or done between the times of the sentence of separation and of the reversal thereof.

#### VI.—PROTECTION-ORDERS

**27.** Any wife to whom section 4 of <sup>1</sup>[the Succession Act, 1925], does not apply, may, when deserted by her husband, present a petition to the District Court or the High Court Division, at any time after such desertion, for an order to protect any property which she may have acquired or may acquire, and any property of which she may have become possessed or may become possessed after such desertion, against her husband or his creditors, or any person claiming under him.

Deserted wife may apply to Court for protection

**28.** The Court, if satisfied of the fact of such desertion, and that the same was without reasonable excuse, and that the wife is maintaining herself by her own industry or property, may make and give to the wife an order protecting her earnings and other property from her husband and all creditors and persons claiming under him. Every such order shall state the time at which the desertion commenced, and shall, as regards all persons dealing with the wife in reliance thereon, be conclusive as to such time.

Court may grant protection-order

**29.** The husband or any creditor of, or person claiming under him, may apply to the Court by which such order was made for the discharge or variation thereof, and the Court, if the desertion has ceased, or if for any other reason it think fit so to do, may discharge or vary the order accordingly.

Discharge or variation of orders

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<sup>1</sup> The words, comma and figure “the Succession Act, 1925” were substituted, for the words, comma and figure “the Indian Succession Act, 1865” by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

Liability of husband seizing wife's property after notice of order

**30.** If the husband, or any creditor of, or person claiming under, the husband, seizes or continues to hold any property of the wife after notice of any such order, he shall be liable, at the suit of the wife (which she is hereby empowered to bring), to return or deliver to her the specific property, and also to pay her a sum equal to double its value.

Wife's legal position during continuance of order

**31.** So long as any such order of protection remains in force, the wife shall be and be deemed to have been, during such desertion of her, in the like position in all respects, with regard to property and contracts and suing and being sued, as she would be under this Act if she obtained a decree of judicial separation.

#### **VII.—RESTITUTION OF CONJUGAL RIGHTS**

Petition for restitution of conjugal rights

**32.** When either the husband or the wife has, without reasonable excuse with drawn from the society of the other, either wife or husband may apply, by petition to the District Court or the High Court Division, for restitution of conjugal rights, and the Court, on being satisfied of the truth of the statements made in such petition, and that there is no legal ground why the application should not be granted, may decree restitution of conjugal rights accordingly.

Answer to petition

**33.** Nothing shall be pleaded in answer to a petition for restitution of conjugal rights which would not be ground for a suit for judicial separation or for a decree of nullity of marriage.

#### **VIII.—DAMAGES AND COSTS**

Husband may claim damages from adulterer

**34.** Any husband may, either in a petition for dissolution of marriage or for judicial separation, or in a petition to the District Court or the High Court Division limited to such object only, claim damages from any person on the ground of his having committed adultery with the wife of such petitioner.

Such petition shall be served on the alleged adulterer and the wife unless the Court dispenses with such service, or directs some other service to be substituted.

The damages to be recovered on any such petition shall be ascertained by the said Court, although the respondents or either of them may not appear.

After the decision has been given, the Court may direct in what manner such damages shall be paid or applied.

**35.** Whenever in any petition presented by a husband, the alleged adulterer has been made a co-respondent, and the adultery has been established, the Court may order the co-respondent to pay the whole or any part of the cost of the proceedings:

Power to order adulterer to pay costs

Provided that the co-respondent shall not be ordered to pay the petitioner's cost,—

- (1) if the respondent was, at the time of the adultery, living apart from her husband and leading the life of a prostitute, or
- (2) if the co-respondent had not, at the time of the adultery, reason to believe the respondent to be a married woman.

Whenever any application is made under section 17, the Court, if it thinks that the applicant had no grounds or no sufficient grounds for intervening may order him to pay the whole or any part of the costs occasioned by the application.

Power to order litigious intervenor to pay costs

**IX.—ALIMONY**

**36.** In any suit under this Act, whether it be instituted by a husband or a wife, and whether or not she has obtained an order of protection, the wife may present a petition for alimony pending the suit.

Alimony *pendente lite*

Such petition shall be served on the husband; and the Court, on being satisfied of the truth of the statement therein contained, may make such order on the husband for payment to the wife of alimony pending the suit as it may deem just:

Provided that alimony pending the suit shall in no case exceed one-fifth of the husband's average net income for the three years next preceding the date of the order, and shall continue, in case of a decree for dissolution of marriage or of nullity of marriage, until the decree is made absolute or is confirmed, as the case may be.

Power to order permanent alimony

**37.** The High Court Division may, if it thinks fit, on any decree absolute declaring a marriage to be dissolved, or on any decree of judicial separation obtained by the wife,

and the District Judge may, if it thinks fit, on the confirmation of any decree of his, declaring a marriage to be dissolved, or on any decree of judicial separation obtained by the wife,

order that the husband shall, to the satisfaction of the Court, secure to the wife such gross sum of money, or such annual sum of money for any term not exceeding her own life, as having regard to her fortune (if any), to the ability of the husband, and to the conduct of the parties, it thinks reasonable, and for that purpose may cause a proper instrument to be executed by all necessary parties.

Power to order monthly or weekly payments

In every such case the Court may make an order on the husband for payment to the wife of such monthly or weekly sums for her maintenance and support as the Court may think reasonable:

Provided that if the husband afterwards from any cause becomes unable to make such payments, it shall be lawful for the Court to discharge or modify the order, or temporarily to suspend the same as to the whole or any part of the money so ordered to be paid, and again to revive the same order wholly or in part, as to the Court seems fit.

**38.** In all cases in which the Court makes any decree or order for alimony it may direct the same to be paid either to the wife herself, or to any trustee on her behalf to be approved by the Court, and may impose any terms or restrictions which to the Court seem expedient, and may from time to time appoint a new trustee, if it appears to the Court expedient so to do.

Court may direct payment of alimony to wife or to her trustee

**X.—SETTLEMENTS**

**39.** Whenever the Court pronounces a decree of dissolution of marriage or judicial separation for adultery of the wife, if it is made to appear to the Court that the wife is entitled to any property, the Court may, if it thinks fit, order such settlement as it thinks reasonable to be made of such property or any part thereof, for the benefit of the husband, or of the children of the marriage, or of both.

Power to order settlements of wife's property for benefit of husband and children

Any instrument executed pursuant to any order of the Court at the time of or after the pronouncing of a decree of dissolution of marriage or judicial separation shall be deemed valid notwithstanding the existence of the disability of covertures at the time of the execution thereof.

The Court may direct that the whole or any part of the damages recovered under section 34 shall be settled for the benefit of the children of the marriage, or as a provision for the maintenance of the wife.

Settlement of damages

**40.** The High Court Division, after a decree absolute for dissolution of marriage, or a decree of nullity of marriage,

Inquiry into existence of ante-nuptial or post-nuptial settlements

And the District Court, after its decree for dissolution of marriage or of nullity of marriage has been confirmed,

may inquire into the existence of ante-nuptial or post-nuptial settlements made on the parties whose marriage is the subject of the decree, and may make such orders, with reference to the application of the whole or a portion of the property settled, whether for the benefit of the husband or the wife, or of the children (if any) of the marriage, or of both children and parents, as to the Court seems fit:

Provided that the Court shall not make any order for the benefit of the parents or either of them at the expense of the children.

#### **XI.—CUSTODY OF CHILDREN**

Power to make orders as to custody of children in suit for separation

**41.** In any suit for obtaining a judicial separation the Court may from time to time, before making its decree, make such interim orders, and may make such provision in the decree, as it deems proper with respect to the custody, maintenance and education of the minor children, the marriage of whose parents is the subject of the such suit, and may, if it thinks fit, direct proceedings to be taken for placing such children under the protection of the said Court.

Power to make such orders after decree

**42.** The Court, after a decree of judicial separation, may upon application (by petition) for this purpose make, from time to time, all such orders and provision, with respect to the custody, maintenance and education of the minor children, the marriage of whose parents is the subject of the decree or for placing such children under the protection of the said Court, as might have been made by such decree or by interim orders in case the proceedings for obtaining such decree were still pending.

Power to make orders as to custody of children in suits for dissolution or nullity

**43.** In any suit for obtaining a dissolution of marriage or a decree of nullity of marriage instituted in, or removed to, High Court Division, the Court may from time to time, before making its decree absolute or its decree (as the case may be), make such interim orders and may make such provision in the decree absolute or decree,

and in any such suit instituted in a District Court, the Court may from time to time, before its decree is confirmed, make such interim orders, and may make such provision on such confirmation,

as the High Court Division or District Court (as the case may be) deems proper with respect to the custody, maintenance and education of the minor children, the marriage of whose parents is the subject of the suit;

and may, if it thinks fit, direct proceedings to be taken for placing such children under the protection of the Court.

44. The High Court Division, after a decree absolute for dissolution of marriage or a decree of nullity of marriage,

Power to make such orders after decree or confirmation

and the District Court, after a decree for dissolution of marriage or of nullity of marriage has been confirmed,

may, upon application by petition for the purpose, make from time to time all such orders and provision, with respect to the custody, maintenance and education of the minor children, the marriage of whose parents was the subject of the decree, or for placing such children under the protection of the said Court, as might have been made by such decree absolute or decree (as the case may be), or by such interim orders as aforesaid.

**XII.—PROCEDURE**

45. Subject to the provisions herein contained, all proceedings under this Act between party and party shall be regulated by the Code of Civil Procedure.

Code of Civil Procedure to apply

46. The forms set forth in the Schedule to this Act, with such variation as the circumstances of each case require, may be used for the respective purposes mentioned in such schedule.

Forms of petitions and statements

47. Every petition under this Act for a decree of dissolution of marriage or of nullity of marriage, or of judicial separation shall state that there is not any collusion or connivance between the petitioner and the other party to the marriage;

Stamp on petition. Petition to state absence of collusion

- Statements to be verified            the statements contained in every petition under this Act shall be verified by the petitioner or some other competent person in manner required by law for the verification of plaints, and may at the hearing be referred to as evidence.
- Suits on behalf of lunatics            **48.** When the husband or wife is a lunatic or idiot, any suit under this Act (other than a suit for restitution of conjugal rights) may be brought on his or her behalf by the committee or other person entitled to his or her custody.
- Suits by minor            **49.** Where the petitioner is a minor, he or she shall sue by his or her next friend to be approved by the Court; and no petition presented by a minor under this Act shall be filed until the next friend has undertaken in writing to be answerable for costs.
- Such undertaking shall be filed in Court, and the next friend shall thereupon be liable in the same manner and to the same extent as if he were a plaintiff in an ordinary suit.
- Service of petition            **50.** Every petition under this Act shall be served on the party to be affected thereby, either within or without Bangladesh, in such manner as the High Court Division by general or special order from time to time directs:
- Provided that Court may dispense with such service altogether in case it seems necessary or expedient so to do.
- Mode of taking evidence            **51.** The witnesses in all proceedings before the Court, where their attendance can be had, shall be examined orally, and any party may offer himself or herself as a witness, and shall be examined and may be cross-examined and re-examined, like any other witness:

Provided that the parties shall be at liberty to verify their respective cases in whole or in part by affidavit, but so that the deponent in every such affidavit shall, on the application of the opposite party, or by direction of the Court, be subject to be cross-examined by or on behalf of the opposite party orally, and after such cross-examination may be re-examined orally as aforesaid by or on behalf of the party by whom such affidavit was filed.

**52.** On any petition presented by a wife, praying that her marriage may be dissolved by reason of her husband having been guilty of adultery coupled with cruelty, or of adultery coupled with desertion without reasonable excuse, the husband and wife respectively shall be competent and compellable to give evidence of or relating to such cruelty or desertion.

Competence of husband and wife to give evidence as to cruelty or desertion

**53.** The whole or any part of any proceeding under this Act may be heard, if the Court thinks fit, with closed doors.

Power to close doors

**54.** The Court may from time to time adjourn the hearing of any petition under this Act, and may require further evidence thereon if it seems fit so to do.

Power to adjourn

**55.** All decrees and orders made by the Court in any suit or proceeding under this Act shall be enforced and may be appealed from, in the like manner as the decrees and orders of the Court made in the exercise of its original civil jurisdiction are enforced and may be appealed from under the laws, rules and orders for the time being in force:

Enforcement of and appeal from orders and decrees

Provided that there shall be no appeal from a decree of a District Judge for dissolution of marriage or of nullity of marriage, nor from the order of the High Court Division confirming or refusing to confirm such decree:

Provided also that there shall be no appeal on the subject of costs only.

No appeals as to costs

Appeal to  
Appellate  
Division of the  
Supreme Court

**56.** Any person may appeal to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court from any decree (other than a decree *nisi*) or order under this Act of a High Court Division made on appeal or otherwise,

and from any decree (other than a decree *nisi*) or order made in the exercise of original jurisdiction by Judges of High Court Division or of any Division Court from which an appeal shall not lie to the High Court Division,

When the High Court Division declares that the case is a fit one for appeal to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

### **XIII.—RE-MARRIAGE**

Liberty to  
parties to marry  
again

**57.** When six months after the date of an order of High Court Division confirming the decree for a dissolution of marriage made by a District Judge have expired,

or when six months after the date of any decree of High Court Division dissolving a marriage have expired, and no appeal has been presented against such decree to the High Court Division in its appellate jurisdiction,

or when any such appeal has been dismissed,

or when in the result of any such appeal any marriage is declared to be dissolved,

but not sooner, it shall be lawful for the respective parties to the marriage to marry again, as if the prior marriage had been dissolved by death:

Provided that no appeal to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has been presented against any such order or decree.

When such appeal has been dismissed, or when in the result thereof the marriage is declared to be dissolved, but not sooner, it shall be lawful for the respective parties to the marriage to marry again as if the prior marriage had been dissolved by death.

**58.** No clergyman in Holy Orders of the Church of England shall be compelled to solemnise the marriage of any person whose former marriage has been dissolved on the ground of his or her adultery, or shall be liable to any suit, penalty or censure for solemnising or refusing to solemnise the marriage of any such person.

English clergyman not compelled to solemnise marriages of persons divorced for adultery

**59.** When any minister of any church or chapel of the said Church refuses to perform such marriage service between any persons who, but for such refusal would be entitled to have the same service performed in such church or chapel, such minister shall permit any other minister in Holy Orders of the said Church entitled to officiate within the diocese in which such church or chapel is situate, to perform such marriage service in such church or chapel.

English minister refusing to perform ceremony to permit use of his church

**XIV.—MISCELLANEOUS**

**60.** Every decree for judicial separation or order to protect property obtained by a wife under this Act shall, until reversed or discharged, be deemed valid, so far as necessary, for the protection of any person dealing with the wife.

Decree for separation or protection-order valid as to persons dealing with wife before reversal

No reversal, discharge or variation of such decree or order shall affect any rights or remedies which any person would otherwise have had in respect of any contracts or acts of the wife entered into or done between the dates of such decree or order and of the reversal, discharge or variation thereof.

All persons who in reliance on any such decree or order make any payment to, or permit any transfer or act to be made or done by, the wife who has obtained the same shall, notwithstanding such decree or order may then have been

Indemnity of persons making payment to wife without notice of

reversal of  
decree or  
protection  
order

reversed, discharged or varied, or the separation of the wife from her husband may have ceased, or at some time since the making of the decree order been discontinued, be protected and indemnified as if, at the time of such payment, transfer or other act, such decree or order were valid and still subsisting without variation, and the separation had not ceased or been discontinued,

unless, at the time of the payment, transfer or other act, such persons had notice of the reversal, discharge or variation of the decree or order or of the cessation or discontinuance of the separation.

Bar of suit for  
criminal  
conversation

**61.** After this Act comes into operation, no person competent to present a petition under sections 2 and 10 shall maintain a suit for criminal conversation with his wife.

Power to make  
rules

**62.** The High Court Division shall make such rules under this Act as it may from time to time consider expedient, and may from time to time alter and add to the same:

Provided that such rules, alterations and additions are consistent with the provisions of this Act and the Code of Civil Procedure.

All such rules, alterations and additions shall be published in the official Gazette.

**SCHEDULE OF FORMS**

**No. 1.—PETITION BY HUSBAND FOR A DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE WITH DAMAGES AGAINST CO-RESPONDENT, BY REASON OF ADULTERY.**

(See sections 10 and 34)

In the High Court Division of

To the Hon'ble Mr. Justice [*or* To the Judge of       ].

The                    day of        186.

The petition of A. B., of

**SH EWETH,**

1. That your petitioner was on the        day of        one thousand eight hundred and       , lawfully married to C. B., then C. D., spinster, at       .

2. That from his said marriage, your petitioner lived and cohabited with his said wife at        and at       , in       , and lastly at        in       , and that your petitioner and his said wife have had issue of their said marriage, *five* children, of whom two sons only survive, aged respectively *twelve* and *fourteen* years.

3. That during the three years immediately preceding the day of        one thousand eight hundred and       , X. Y. was constantly, with few exceptions, residing in the house of your petitioner at        aforesaid, and that on divers occasions during the said period, the dates of which are unknown to your petitioner, the said C. B. in your petitioner's said house committed adultery with the said X. Y.

4. That no collusion or connivance exists between me and my said wife for the purpose of obtaining dissolution of our said marriage or for any other purpose.

Your petitioner, therefore, prays that this (Hon'ble) Court will decree a dissolution of the said marriage, and that the said X. Y. do pay the sum of taka 5,000 as damages by reason of his having committed adultery with your petitioner's said wife, such damages to be paid to your petitioner, or otherwise paid or applied as to this (Hon'ble) Court seems fit.

(Signed) A. B.

*Form of verification*

I, A. B., the petitioner name in the above petition, do declare that what is stated therein is true to the best of my information and belief.

\_\_\_\_\_

**No. 2.—RESPONDENT'S STATEMENT IN ANSWER TO NO. 1.**

In the Court of                      the                      day of

Between A. B., petitioner,

C. B., respondent, and

X. Y., co-respondent.

C. B., the respondent, by D. E., her attorney [or vakil], in answer to the petition of A. B., says that she denies that she has on divers or any occasions committed adultery with X. Y., as alleged in the third paragraph of the said petition.

Wherefore the respondent prays that this (Hon'ble) Court will reject the said petition.

(Signed) C. B.

**No. 3.—CO-RESPONDENT'S STATEMENT IN ANSWER TO NO. 1**

In the High Court Division of

The                                      day of

Between A. B., petitioner,  
 C. B., respondent, and  
 X. Y., co-respondent.

X. Y., the co-respondent, in answer to the petition filed in this cause, saith that he denies that he committed adultery with the said C. B., as alleged in the said petition.

Wherefore the said X. Y. prays that this (Hon'ble) Court will reject the prayer of the said petitioner and order him to pay the costs of and incident to the said petition.

(Signed) X. Y.

**No. 4.—PETITION FOR DECREE OF NULLITY OF MARRIAGE**

(See section 18)

In the High Court Division of

To the Hon'ble Mr. Justice [or To the Judge of ].

The day of , 186 .

The petition of A. B., falsely called A. D.,

**SHEWETH,**

1. That on the day of , one thousand eight hundred and , your petitioner, then a spinster, eighteen years of age, was married in fact, though not in law, to C. D., then a bachelor of about thirty years of age, at some place in Bangladesh.

2. That from the said day of , one thousand eight hundred and , until the month of , one thousand eight hundred and , your petitioner lived and cohabited with the said C.D., at divers places, and particularly at aforesaid.

3. That the said C. D. has never consummated the said pretended marriage by carnal copulation.

4. That at the time of the celebration of your petitioner's said pretended marriage, the said *C. D.* was, by reason of his impotency or malformation, legally incompetent to enter into the contract of marriage.

5. That there is no collusion or connivance between her and the said *C. D.* with respect to the subject of this suit.

Your petitioner therefore prays that this (Hon'ble) Court will declare that the said marriage is null and void.

(Signed) A. B.

*Form of Verification:* see No. 1

**No. 5.—PETITION BY WIFE FOR JUDICIAL SEPARATION ON THE GROUND OF HER HUSBAND'S ADULTERY.**

(See section 22)

In the High Court Division of

To the Hon'ble Mr. Justice [or To the Judge  
of ].

The day 186 .

The petition of *C. B.*, of , the wife of *A. B.*

**SHEWETH,**

That on the day of , one thousand eight hundred and *sixty* , your petitioner, then *C. D.*, was lawfully married to *A. B.*, at the Church of , in the

2. That after her said marriage, your petitioner cohabited with the said *A. B.* at and at , and that your petitioner and her said husband have issue living of their said marriage, *three* children, to wit, *etc.*, *etc.*

3. That on divers occasions in or about the months of *August, September and October*, one thousand eight hundred and *sixty* , the said *A. B.*, at aforesaid, committed adultery with *E. F.*, who was then living in the service of the said *A. B.* and your petitioner at their said residence aforesaid.

4. That on divers occasions in the months of *October, November and December*, one thousand eight hundred and *sixty* , the said *A. B.*, at aforesaid, committed adultery with *G. H.*, who was then living in the service of the said *A. B.* and your petitioner at their said residence aforesaid.

5. That no collusion or connivance exists between your petitioner and the said *A. B.* with respect to the subject of the present suit.

Your petitioner therefore prays that this (Hon'ble) Court will decree a judicial separation to your petitioner from her said husband by reason of his aforesaid adultery.

(Signed) C. B.

*Form of Verification: see No. 1*

**No. 6.—STATEMENT IN ANSWER TO NO. 5**

In the High Court Division of

*B.* against *B.*

The day of

The respondent, *A. B.*, by, *W. Y.*, his attorney [or vakil], saith,—

1. That he denies that he committed adultery with *E. F.*, as in the third paragraph of the petition alleged.



The                    day of                    , 186                    .  
The petition of *A. B.* (wife of *C. B.*) of

**SHEWETH,**

1. That on the                    day of                    , one thousand eight hundred and                    , your petitioner, then *A. D.*, spinster, was lawfully married to *C. B.*, at

2. That from her said marriage, your petitioner lived and cohabited with her said husband at                    until the                    day of                    , one thousand eight hundred and                    , when your petitioner separated from her said husband as hereinafter more particularly mentioned, and that your petitioner and her said husband have had no issue of their said marriage.

3. That from and shortly after your petitioner's said marriage, the said *C. B.*, habitually conducted himself towards your petitioner with great harshness and cruelty, frequently abusing her in the coarsest and most insulting language, and beating her with his fists, with a cane, or with some other weapon.

4. That on an evening in or about the month of                    one thousand eight hundred and                    , the said *C. B.*, in the highway and opposite to the house in which your petitioner and the said *C. B.* were then residing at                    aforesaid, endeavored to knock your petitioner down, and was only prevented from so doing by the interference of *F. D.*, your petitioner's brother.

5. That subsequently on the same evening, the said *C. B.*, in his said house at                    aforesaid, struck your petitioner with his clenched fist a violent blow on her face.

6. That on one Friday night in the month of                    , one thousand eight hundred and                    , the said *C. B.*, in                    , without provocation, threw a knife at your petitioner, thereby inflicting a severe wound on her right hand.



**No. 10.—PETITION FOR REVERSAL OF DECREE OF SEPARATION**

(See section 24)

In the High Court Division of

To the Hon'ble Mr. Justice [or To the Judge of ].

The day of , 186 .

The petition of A. B., of .

**SHEWETH,**

1. That your petitioner was on the day of lawfully married to .

2. That on the day of , this (Hon'ble) Court, at the petition of , pronounced a decree affecting the petitioner to the effect following, to wit,—

*[Here set out the decree.]*

3. That such decree was obtained in the absence of your petitioner, who was then residing at

*[State facts tending to show that the petitioner did not know of the proceedings; and, further, that had he known he might have offered a sufficient defence].*

or

That there was reasonable ground for your petitioner leaving his said wife, for that his said wife.

*[Here state any legal grounds justifying the petitioner's separation from his wife.]*

Your petitioner, therefore, prays that this (Hon'ble) Court will reverse the said decree.

(Signed) A. B.

*Form of Verification: See No. 1*

**No. 11.—PETITION FOR PROTECTION-ORDER**

(See section 27)

In the High Court Division of

To the Hon'ble Mr. Justice [or To the Judge of ].

The day of , 186 .

The petition of *C.B.*, of

the wife of *A. B.*

**SHEWETH,**

That on the day of she was lawfully married to *A. B.* at

That she lived and cohabited with the said *A. B.* for years at , and also at , and had had children, issue of her said marriage, of whom are now living with the applicant, and wholly dependent upon her earnings.

That on or about , the said *A. B.*, without any reasonable, cause, deserted the applicant, and hath ever since remained separate and apart from her.

That since the desertion of her said husband, the applicant hath maintained herself by her own industry [or on her own property, as the case may be], and hath thereby and otherwise acquired certain property consisting of [*here state generally the nature of the property*].

Wherefore she prays an order for the protection of her earnings and property acquired since the said day of, from the said *A. B.*, and from all creditors and persons claiming under him.

(Signed)

*C. B.*

**No. 12.—PETITION FOR ALIMONY PENDING THE SUIT**

(See section 36)

In the High Court Division of

*B.* against *B.*

To the Hon'ble Mr. Justice [or To Judge of ].

The day of , 186 .

The petition of *C.B.*, the lawful wife of *A. B.*

**SHEWETH,**

1. That the said *A. B.* has for some years carried on the business of , at , and from such business derives the net annual income of from taka 4,000 to 5,000.

2. That the said *A. B.* is possessed of plate, furniture, linen and other effects at his said house aforesaid, all of which he acquired in right of your petitioner as his wife, or purchased with money he acquired through her, of the value of taka 10,000.

3. That the said *A. B.* is entitled, under the will of his father, subject to the life-interest of his mother therein, to property of the value of taka 5,000 or some other considerable amount.

Your petitioner, therefore, prays that this (Hon'ble), Court will decree such sum or sums of money by way of alimony, pending the suit, as to this (Hon'ble) Court may seem fit.

(Signed)

*C. B.*

*Form of Verification: See No. 1*

**No. 13.—STATEMENT IN ANSWER TO NO. 12**

In the High Court Division of

*B.* against *B.*

*A. B.*, of \_\_\_\_\_, the above  
named respondent, in answer to the  
petition for alimony, pending the suit of  
*C. B.*, says—

1. In answer to the first paragraph of the said petition, I say that I have for the last three years carried on the business of \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_, and that, from such business, I have derived a net annual income of taka 900, but less than taka 1,000.

2. In answer to the second paragraph of the said petition, I say that I am possessed of plate, furniture, linen and other chattels and effects at my said house \_\_\_\_\_ aforesaid, of the value of taka 7,000, but as I verily believe of no larger value. And I say that a portion of the said plate, furniture and other chattels and effects of the value of taka 1,500, belonged to my said wife before our marriage, but the remaining portions thereof I have since purchased with my own moneys. And I say that, save as hereinbefore set forth, I am not possessed of the plate and other effects as alleged in the said paragraph in the said petition, and that I did not acquire the same as in the said petition also mentioned.

3. I admit that I am entitled under the will of my father, subject to the life-interest of my mother therein, to property of the value of taka 5,000, that is to say, I shall be entitled under my said father's will, upon the death of my mother, to a legacy of taka 7,000, out of which I shall have to pay to my father's executors the sum of taka 2,000, the amount of a debt owing by me to his estate, and upon which debt I am now paying interest at the rate of five per cent. per annum.

4. And, in further answer to the said petition, I say that I have no income whatever except that derived from my aforesaid business, that such income, since my said wife left me, which she did on the                    day of                    last, has been considerably diminished, and that such diminution is likely to continue. And I say that out of my said income, I have to pay the annual sum of taka 100 for such interest as aforesaid to my late father's executors, and also to support myself and my two eldest children.

5. And, in further answer to the said petition, I say that, when my wife left my dwelling-house on the                    day of last                    , she took with her, and has ever since withheld and still withholds from me, plate, watches and other effects in the second paragraph of this my answer mentioned, of the value of, as I verily believe, taka 800 at the least; and I also say that, within five days of her departure from my house as aforesaid, my said wife received bills due to me from certain lodgers of mine, amounting in the aggregate to taka                    , and that she has ever since withheld and still withholds from me the same sum.

(Signed)                    A. B.

**No. 14.—UNDERTAKING BY MINOR'S NEXT FRIEND TO BE ANSWERABLE FOR RESPONDENT'S COSTS.**

(See section 49)

In the High Court Division of

I, the undersigned, A. B., of                    , being the next friend of C. D., who is a minor, and who is desirous of filing a petition in this Court, under the Indian Divorce Act, against D. D. of                    , hereby undertake to be responsible for the costs of the said D. D. in such suit, and that, if the said, C. D. fail to pay to the said D. D. when and in such manner as the Court shall order all such costs of such suit as the Court shall direct him (or her) to pay to the said D. D., I will forthwith pay the same to the proper officer of this Court.

Dated this                    day of                    ,                    186                    .

(Signed)                    A. B.

\_\_\_\_\_