

## POLYGAMY IN ISLAM

### WHO PRACTICES POLYGAMY?

Polygamy has been practiced by mankind for thousands of years. Many of the ancient Israelites were polygamous, some having hundreds of wives. King Solomon (peace be upon him) is said to have had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. David (Dawood) had ninety-nine and Jacob (Yacub, peace be upon them both) had four.

*(The reader should note that such biblical references don't hold water as we refer to the Qur'an for evidences of previous prophets of **Allah(swt)** – Ahmad Deedat is a well know scholar who has a greater insight with regard to this and we recommend that you take up the validity of such biblical quotes with him).*

Advice given by some Jewish wise men state that no man should marry more than four wives. No early society put any restrictions on the number of wives or put any conditions about how they were to be treated. Jesus was not known to have spoken against polygamy. As recently as the seventeenth century, polygamy was practiced and accepted by the Christian Church. The Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) has allowed and practiced polygamy in the United States.

Monogamy was introduced into Christianity at the time of Paul when many revisions took place in Christianity. This was done in order for the church to conform to the Greco-Roman culture where men were monogamous but owned many slaves who were free for them to use: in other words, unrestricted polygamy.

Early Christians invented ideas that women were "full of sin" and man was better off to "never marry." Since this would be the end of mankind these same people compromised and said "marry only one."

In the American society many times when relations are strained, the husband simply deserts his wife. The he cohabits with a prostitute or other immoral woman without marriage. Actually there are three kinds of polygamy practiced in Western societies: (1) serial polygamy, that is, marriage, divorce, marriage, divorce, and so on any number of times; (2) a man married to one woman but having and supporting one or more mistresses; (3) an unmarried man having a number of mistresses. Islam condones but discourages the first and forbids the other two.

Wars cause the number of women to greatly exceed the number of men. In a monogamous society these women, left without husbands or support, resort to prostitution, illicit relationships with married men resulting in illegitimate children with no responsibility on the part of the father, or lonely sisterhood or widowhood.

The truth of the matter is that monogamy protects men, allowing them to "play around" without responsibility. Easy birth control and easy legal abortion has opened the door of illicit sex to woman and she has been lured into the so-called sexual revolution. But she is still the one who suffers the trauma of abortion and the side effects of the birth control methods. Taking aside the plagues of venereal disease, herpes and AIDS, the male continues to enjoy himself free of worry. Men are the ones protected by monogamy while women continue to be victims of men's desires. Polygamy is very much opposed by the male dominated society because it would force men to face up to responsibility and fidelity. It would force them to take responsibility for their polygamous inclinations and would protect and provide for women and children.

Among all the polygamous societies in history there were none which limited the number of wives. All of the relationships were unrestricted. In Islam, the regulations concerning polygamy limit the number of wives a man can have while making him responsible for all of the women involved.

"Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one or one that your right hands possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice." (Qur'an 4:3)

This verse from the Qur'an allows a man to marry more than one woman but only if he can deal justly with them.

While the provision for polygamy makes the social system flexible enough to deal with all kinds of conditions, it is not necessarily recommended or preferred by Islam. Taking the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is instructive. He was married to one woman, Khadijah, for twenty-five years. It was only after her death when he had reached the age of fifty that he entered into other marriages to promote friendships, create alliances or to be an example of some lesson to the community; also to show the Muslims how to treat their spouses under different conditions of life.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was given inspiration from Allah about how to deal with multiple marriages and the difficulties encountered therein. It is not an easy matter for a man to handle two wives, two families, and two households and still be just between the two. No man of reasonable intelligence would enter into this situation without a great deal of thought and very compelling reasons (other than sexual).

The bottom line in the marriage relationship is good morality and happiness, creating a just and cohesive society where the needs of men and women are well taken care of. The present Western society, which permits free sex between consenting adults, has given rise to an abundance of irresponsible sexual relationships, an abundance of "fatherless" children, many unmarried teenage mothers; all becoming a burden on the country's welfare system. In part, such an undesirable welfare burden has given rise to bloated budget deficits, which even an economically powerful country like the United States cannot accommodate. Bloated budget deficits have become a political football which is affecting the political system of the United States.

In short, we find that artificially created monogamy has become a factor in ruining the family structure, and the social, economic and political systems of the country.

It must be a prophet, and indeed it was Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who directed Muslims to get married or observe patience until one gets married. 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud reported Allah's messenger as saying, "Young man, those of you who can support a wife should marry, for it keeps you from looking at strange women and preserves you from immorality; but those who cannot should devote themselves to fasting, for it is a means of suppressing sexual desire." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Islam wants people to be married and to develop a good family structure. Also Islam realizes the requirements of the society and the individual in special circumstances where polygamy can be the solution to problems. Therefore, Islam has allowed polygamy, limiting the number of wives to four, but does not require or even recommend polygamy.

In the Muslim societies of our times, polygamy is not frequently practiced despite legal permission in many countries. It appears that the American male is very polygamous, getting away with not taking responsibility for the families he should be responsible for.

- With the increase of Gay people many women are left alone. Islam takes care of women's needs lawfully.
- According to statistics, there are more women than men, Women live longer than men. Therefore: Women left unmarried. Islam takes care of that.