

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 reasons.

Some people have said that the first wife must agree to the second marriage. Others have said that the couple can put it into the marriage contract that the man will not marry a second wife.

First of all, neither the Quran nor Hadith state that the first wife needs be consulted at all concerning a second marriage, let alone gain her approval.

Consideration and compassion on the part of the man for his first wife should prompt him to discuss the matter with her, but he is not required to do so or to gain her approval. Secondly, the Quran has explicitly given permission for a man to marry "two or three or four." No one has the authority to make a contract forbidding something that has been granted by Allah.

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 family structure and the social, economic, and political systems of the country.

It must be a prophet (SAW), and indeed, it was Prophet Muhammad(SAW) who directed Muslims to get married or observe patience until one gets married. 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud reported Allah's Messenger(SAW) 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 realized 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.

(In this article, "polygamy" has been used to mean "polygyny" or having two or more wives. Islam forbids "polyandry" or having two or more husbands.)

- SAW: means peace be upon him

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WHO PRACTICES POLYGAMY?

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IN THE NAME OF GOD, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

By Mary Ali

Polygamy has been practiced by mankind for thousands of years. Many of the ancient Israelites were polygamous, some having hundreds of wives. King Solomon(SAW) is said to have had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. David(SAW) (Dawood) had ninety-nine and Jacob(SAW) (Yaqub) had four. Advice given by some Jewish wise men state that no man should marry more than four wives.

Early society put no restrictions on the number of wives and put no conditions about how they were to be treated. Jesus (SAW) was not known to have spoken against polygamy. As recent as the 17th century, polygamy was practiced and accepted by the Christian Church. The Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints) have 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 men were

better off "never marrying." Since this would be the end of mankind, these same people compromised and said "marry only one."

Many times in American society when relations are strained, the husband simply deserts his wife. Then, he co-habits 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, the women left without husbands or support resort to prostitution and illicit relationships with men resulting in illegitimate children with no responsibility on the part of the father, or lonely spinsterhood, or widowhood.

Some Western men take the position that monogamy protects the rights of women. But are these men really concerned about the rights of women? The society has many practices that exploit and suppress women, leading to women's liberation

movements from the suffragettes of the early twentieth century to the feminists of today.

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 to illicit sex for women 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 birth control methods.

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

"If you fear that you will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, 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." (Quran Translation 4:3)

This verse from the Quran allows a man to marry more than one woman but only if he can deal justly with them. Another verse says that a person is unable to deal justly between wives, thus giving permission while discouraging it:

"You will never be able to deal justly between wives however much you desire (to do so). But (if you have more than one wife) do not turn altogether away (from one), leaving her as in suspense..." (Quran Translation 4:129)

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. Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) 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 he showed the Muslims how to treat their spouses under different conditions of life.

The Prophet (SAW) was given inspiration from Allah about how to deal with multiple marriages and the difficulties encountered therein.