

Who Practices Polygamy? (part 2 of 2)

Description: Polygamy in Islam in comparison with other religions and modern society. Part 2: Polygamy in Islam.

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Among all 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 can 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 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.

"You will never be able to do perfect justice between wives even if it is your ardent desire, so do not incline too much to one of them (by giving her more of your time and provision) so as to leave the other hanging (i.e. neither divorced nor married)." (Quran 4:129)

The Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, was given inspiration from God 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.

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, and many unmarried teenage mothers; all of them becoming a burden on the country's welfare system. In part, it is such an undesirable welfare burden that 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 the Prophet Muhammad, who directed Muslims to get married or observe patience until one gets married. Abdullah b. Mas'ud reported God's Messenger as saying:

"Young men, 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." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*)

Islam wants people to be married and to develop a good family structure. Also, Islam also realizes the requirements of the society and the individual where polygamy can be the solution to many problems. Therefore, Islam has allowed polygamy, but has limited the number of wives to four.

In the Muslim societies of our times, polygamy is not frequently practiced despite legal permission in many countries. It appears that males without recourse to limited, responsible polygamy are, in contrast, frequently polygamous in an unregulated way, getting away with not taking responsibility for the families they should be responsible for.

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

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