

WHO PRACTICES POLYGAMY? (PART 1 OF 2)

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Description: Polygamy in Islam in comparison with other religions and modern society. Part 1: Polygamy in history and modern Western society.

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By: Mary Ali (edited by IslamReligion.com)

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Polygamy has been practiced by mankind for thousands of years. Many of the ancient Israelites were polygamous, some having hundreds of wives. King Solomon is said to have had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. His father, David had ninety-nine, and Jacob, from whom the tribes of Israel descended, had four^[1]. Advice has been given by some Jewish wise men stating 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, himself, was not known to have spoken against polygamy. As recently as the 17th century, polygamy was practiced and accepted by some sects of the Christian Church. The Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints) have allowed and practice polygamy in the United States, even today.

Monogamy was introduced into Christianity at the time of Paul when many revisions took place in Christianity. This was done in order that the church conform to the dominant Greco-Roman culture where men were monogamous but owned many slaves, who were free for them to use: in other another word, they as good as practiced unrestricted polygamy^[2].

Early Christians invented ideas that women were “full of sin” and man was better off to “never marry.” Since this would spell the end of mankind if put into practice, these same people compromised and said “marry only one.”

Many times in the American society when relations are strained, the husband simply deserts his wife. He may then cohabit with a prostitute or with another immoral woman without going through the legalizing ritual of marriage. Women sometimes do the complementary act, deserting their husbands and then living with a new partner in an immoral relationship. More common, however, is the practice of ‘living together’ immorally before marriage, possibly trying out several partners before settling on someone to marry.

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 for them being taken 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? Society has many practices that exploit and suppress women, and this is what has led to the formation of women's liberation movements, from the suffragettes of the early twentieth century to the feminists of today, and which still drive these movements to continue their campaigns for equal treatment socially, as well as before the law.

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 for illicit sex to 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.

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.

Footnotes:

[1] For a detailed list of biblical figures who practiced polygamy, you may visit: (<http://www.biblicalpolygamy.com/>).

[2] "About the only important peoples of ancient times that showed little or no traces of it [(polygamy)] were the Greeks and the Romans. Nevertheless, concubinage, which may be regarded as a higher form of polygamy, or at least as nearer to pure monogamy, was for many centuries recognized by the customs and even by the legislation of these two nations." The Catholic Encyclopedia: (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09693a.htm>)

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