

Polygamy and rights of women in Islaam

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question: We would like Your Eminence to advise us with regard to polygamy and the rights of women in Islaam.

Shaykh Bin Baaz (May Allaah the Most High have mercy on him): The noble Qur'aan and the sacred Sunnah permit polygamy, and Muslims concur on its lawfulness. Allaah (Exalted be He) states: [...then marry (other) 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 (the slaves) that your right hands possess. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice.]¹ The Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) practiced polygamy, as he had nine wives. Allaah benefited the Ummah (nation based on one creed) through these women by their conveying knowledge, good morals, and noble manners. Likewise, prophets Daawood and Sulayman (i.e. David and Solomon, (Peace be upon them)) practiced polygamy; they had many wives simultaneously, by the Will of Allaah and His Legislation. Also, many of the Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet) and those who graciously followed them practiced polygamy as well. Polygamy was a well-known practice in previous civilized nations and during Jaahiliyyah (pre-Islaamic period of ignorance). With the advent of Islaam, the Sharee'ah (Islaamic law) limited the number of wives to four. The Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) was permitted to have more than four wives due to certain wisdom and interests. Thus, when polygamy is practiced with fairness, it brings many benefits: preserving the chastity of man and his being the cause of preserving the chastity of a number of women, the protection of women's welfare, and the multiplication of progeny which results in the growth of the Ummah, the increase of its power and number of people worshipping Allaah.

It will also be a cause for the Prophet's (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) boasting of them before other nations on the Day of Resurrection. There are many other interests that are known to those who glorify the Sharee'ah and consider its advantages, its wisdom, and people's dire need for it with contentment, love, glorification, and insight. However, the ignorant who gloomily view the Sharee'ah and subserviently look east and west, approving of all that comes from them, is far from perceiving the merits of the Sharee'ah, its wisdom, benefits, and protection of the interests of male and female Slaves. Muslim scholars stated that polygamy is among the merits of Sharee'ah and is an

¹ سورة النساء – Soorah an-Nisaa [4:3]

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aspect of its maintenance of the interests of society and a remedy for its problems. Some enemies of Islaam see this aspect and admit the excellence of polygamy, despite their enmity towards it, in acknowledgment of the truth and the pressing necessity to allow it. Here is a quote mentioned by the author of Al-Manar, vol. 4, p. 360, from a London publication: *"Many of our young women have gone astray and despite this calamity, those who examine the cause of such phenomenon are few. As a woman, my heart aches out of deep pity and love for them. Yet, how could my grief, anguish and lamentation benefit them, even if all people share my feelings. People's commiserating will not remedy this deterioration, rather we must find a viable solution."* How insightful was the scientist who diagnosed this malady and prescribed a certain remedy for it, namely permitting men to marry more than one wife. She asserted: *"In this way, this problem would be removed and our young women will become honourable homemakers. This misfortune is indeed a result of legislating that European men marry no more than one woman. This restriction has turned our young women astray and driven them to seek male occupations. If men are not allowed to marry more than one woman, this problem will only increase. What kind of thinking or estimation can encompass the number of married men who have illegitimate children, now turning into dependents and a shame on society! If polygamy were lawful, such children and their mothers would not suffer the current agony and ignominy, and their children's honour would have been preserved. For indeed women competing with men (at work) will bring destruction upon us. Do you not see that her nature assigns for her professions that differ from those of men, and vice versa! Therefore, through polygamy, every woman would be able to have a home and become a mother of legitimate children".* On page 362, the author of "Al-Manar" quoted another female writer to have said: *"If our young women work in homes as servants or housewives, then it is better than working at laboratories where they become contaminated by tubercles that take the splendour of their life forever. I wish our country were like Muslim countries; where decency, chastity, and purity are the dress of servants and bondwomen while enjoying luxurious living and good treatment by the house masters. Good treatment similar to that they apply to their own children with no harm..."*

Yes, it is a shame on British countries that they have allowed their young women to become symbols of vice by permitting them to intermix freely with men. Why do we neglect seeking what agrees with a woman's nature as ordered in divine religion and do not leave the types of work that are intended for men to men; in an attempt to protect her safety and honour!" Gustave Le Bon also said: *"Polygamy is a good custom as far as the social system of the East is concerned. It has enabled those who practice it to strengthen and invigorate their family relations. Thanks to this custom, through which woman enjoys more respect and happiness that cannot be found in Europe."* The writer Bernard Shaw said: *"If any religion has a chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred years, it is Islaam."* These are excerpts of what I read from those who oppose Islaam regarding its advantages and that of polygamy. This should serve as a lesson for all those endowed with sound understanding, and it is the Help of Allaah (Alone) that we seek.