

WOMEN IN ISLAM

The Quran instructs Muslims to: *“Marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one, or any slave girls you may own.”* Surah 4:3

Here, Muhammad authorises and recommends polygamy. *“Two, or three, or four...”* But then, almost as an afterthought, Muhammad recommends monogamy for those males who may have some kind of personality problem that prevents them from treating more than one wife *“with equity.”* Muhammad’s policy seems to be polygamy for the strong, monogamy for the weak.

The Quran expressly permits sexual relations with multiple wives, and with slave girls *“whom their right hands possess”* Surah 70:30.

The Quran also assures slave owners, who force their slave girls into prostitution, that *“if anyone compels them, yet, after such compulsion, is God oft forgiving...”* Surah 24:33.

Polygamy Degrades Women

Christians reject polygamy because it inhibits and in fact exterminates, exclusive, devoted love. Love between a man and a woman ought to be exclusive, otherwise it is degraded in essence to mere physical lust. No woman who loves her husband and wishes to be fully loved in return can tolerate *“another wife.”*

Monogamy gives recognition, status and value to a woman. The Lord Jesus taught that *“Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”* Matthew 19:8-9

The Lord Jesus taught: *“At the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate.’”* Luke 19:4-6

If Muhammad came to confirm the teachings of the Lord Jesus, as he claimed, why then did he undermine this principle of one man and one woman for life? And why did he make divorce in Islam so much easier (a mere verbal pronouncement) than any of the prophets of the Old Testament had ever tolerated?

The Example of the Caliphas

Muhammad had at least 16 wives and 2 concubines. Muhammad’s successor Caliph Umar married 7 women and had 2 slave girls, Fakhriyya and Lahiyya, as concubines. The Caliph Uthman married 8 women. The Caliph Ali, to whom Muhammad had denied permission to marry a second wife beside his own daughter Fatima, after her death married 10 wives and maintained 19 slave girls as his concubines. Muhammad’s grandson Hassan (of whom Muhammad declared: he is the master of the youth of paradise) married 70 women and had at least 31 children. According to Bukhari in the Hadith, Muhammad sometimes had sex with all of his wives in a single night, and Muhammad boasted of himself that he had been given the power of forty men.

Muhammad is quoted in the Hadith as declaring: *“Do not ask a husband why he beats his wife...according to the same principle, do not ask a husband why he takes a second wife.”*

“Temporary Marriages”

Muhammad also authorised temporary marriages *“for three nights”* or more. These could be contracted for some money, or a dress, or a handful of dates. Thereafter the husband could desert the *“wife”* leaving her without any rights or obligations - even with regard to any offspring who would have no claim to inheritance or support.

By approving of polygamy, mistresses and *“temporary marriages”*, Islam denies the value of a genuine marriage based on exclusive, lifelong, devoted love. It also erodes the concept of a Biblical family. Monogamy alone gives the recognition, status and value that a woman needs, and the stability for raising children in the fear of the Lord.

“Deficient in Intelligence”

Although many Muslims are self-congratulatory about Islam’s treatment of women, Muhammad once said to a group of women: *“I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you...is not the evidence of two women equal to the evidence of one man?...Isn’t it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menstrual period?...This is the deficiency in your religion.”* The Caliph Ali declared that women are evil,... *“men, never ever obey your women. Never let them advise you on any matter concerning your daily life.”*

“Capricious” and “Corrupting”

The Caliph Umar ordered Muslims to prevent the women from learning to read and write and to resist *“their capricious ways.”* The Caliph Umar once rebuked his wife for interrupting his conversation saying: *“You are a toy; if you are needed, we will call you.”*

Muhammad taught that a woman is *awrat*. When she goes outside (the house) *“the devil welcomes her.”* To Muhammad women needed to cover themselves with a veil, not in order to preserve their own chastity, but to preserve the chastity of the men prone to be scandalised by the spectacle. Muhammad forbade women to talk except by the permission of their husbands. Women were forbidden to use the middle of the road, to be greeted or to greet. The *“fire worshipper”*, the Jew, and the pig are listed alongside the woman as things that corrupt prayer. If a woman walks in front of a man while he is praying, his prayer is not acceptable. He then has to perform ablutions again and repeat his prayer.

Physical Abuse of Women

In Islam, physical violence against one’s wife, far from being a crime punishable by law, remains divinely ordained and practically advised (Surah 38:44 and Surah 4:15). *“As to those women on whose part he fears disloyalty and ill conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means of (annoyance).”* Surah 4:34

Even Islamic councils in Western countries specify how to beat one’s wife. For example, the *Australian Minaret* published by the Australian Federation of the Islamic Councils declared: *“This weapon of the woman is her femininity...then beating is her remedy. So the Quranic command: Banish them to their couches and beat them, agrees with the latest psychological findings in understanding the rebellious woman. This is one of the scientific miracles of the Quran, because it sums up volumes of the science of psychology about rebellious women.”*

Ahmad Ahmad in *"The Individual Guarantee In The Islamic Law"* writes: *"If admonishing and sexual desertion fail to bring forth results and the woman is of a cold and stubborn type, the Quran bestows on man the right to straighten her out by right of punishment and beating, providing he does not break her bones nor shed blood. When your wife belongs to this quarrelsome type and requires this sort of punishment to bring her to her senses!...by the scourging which deters."*

Selling Children

The Washington Times (21/01/02) in an article entitled: *"Sale of Children thrives in Pakistan"* reported that girls as young as five years old are being auctioned off to the highest bidders. These Afghan girls are sold for between \$80 and \$100 and generally land up in prostitution or harems.

Female Mutilation

Jean Sasson in *"Daughters of Arabia"* reports on Islam's widespread practice of amputating the clitoris and sometimes part of, or even all of, the vulva from the genitalia of Muslim women, affirmed in a hadith by Muhammed himself, has led to the mutilation of millions of women worldwide.

Discrimination Under Saudi's Sharia

The US State Department's country report on Practices in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (AD 2000) reports that: *"The testimony of one man equals that of two women...women play no formal role in government and politics and are actively discouraged from doing so...the government does not keep statistics on spousal abuse or other forms of violence against women, (which) appear to be common problems. Hospital workers report that many women are admitted for treatment of injuries that apparently result from spousal abuse...women are not admitted to a hospital for medical treatment without the consent of a male relative...Women may not undertake domestic or foreign travel alone...in public a woman is expected to wear an abaya (a black garment that covers the entire body) and to cover her head and face...daughters receive half the inheritance awarded to their brothers...some women participate in al-mesyar (or "short daytime visit") marriages, in which the women relinquish their legal rights to financial support and night time co-habitation. Additionally, the husband is not required to inform his other wives of the marriage, and any children resulting from such a marriage have no inheritance rights...Men may divorce without giving cause..."* In addition women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to drive cars. Divorced foreign women are prevented from visiting their children. Children are always awarded to the husband or to the deceased husband's family. All these laws in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are based on the Islamic Sharia law.

Stoning to Death a Victim of Rape

The New York Times (17 May 2002) reported on the stoning to death of a young woman who had been raped by her husband's brother. The judge defended his action by saying that he had merely followed the Quran based law that mandated this judgement. The fact that the woman, Zafran Bibi, was raped, was of no consequence. The woman had accused her brother-in-law of raping her and this was a confession to a crime of *"having intercourse outside of marriage."* *The New York Times* noted that this case fitted a *"familiar pattern"*.

Death of a Princess

When ATV in Britain and PBS in the United States were about to air a documentary based on the execution of a Saudi Arabian princess, *"Death of a Princess"*, unprecedented pressure came from the British foreign office, from the US State Department, the Saudi Arabian royal family, and oil companies to cancel the show.

Judicial Gang Rape

On 4 July 2002 the *Los Angeles Times* reported a bizarre example of Islamic justice in Pakistan. A male youth had been seen walking with a girl from another tribe. The local tribal council ruled that

this outrage had to be punished. Quoting Sharia law, the local council of elders decided to punish the young boy by decreeing that his 18-year-old sister be gang raped!

Raped in the Name of Allah

In 1998 Muslim men in Indonesia gang raped dozens of Chinese women in shops, homes and in the streets shouting in Arabic "*Allah Akbar*" (Allah is Great!) (*Chinese Woman Forced to Watch Gang Rape and Burning to Death of Her Sisters*" June 1998 quoted in *Secrets of the Koran* by Don Richardson)

Murder in the Family

On 25 February 2004, *Associated Press* reported an incident of a Kurdish refugee from Iraq who was jailed in England for having slit his 16 year old daughter's throat because she was "*too Westernised and had a non-Muslim boyfriend.*" Also two cousins from a Pakistani family in England were sentenced to life for murdering a relative on the day that she was to marry a divorcee.

Burned Alive in Afghanistan

The Economist (20 March 2004) reported on the phenomenon of Afghan women setting themselves alight: "*Mallali Nurzi had been thrashed by her mother-in-law once too often. She headed sobbing to the kitchen, poured petrol over herself and struck a match. Drawn by the screams, Mallali's daughter found her mother in a blur of orange flame, but the 26 year old Afghan woman still took 24 hours to die. It is hard to imagine a more agonising end, which makes the growing instances of self-immolation in Afghanistan especially horrifying. According to a local human rights group, at least 56 people have set themselves ablaze in Herat, a city in Western Afghanistan in the past year. Virtually all of them were young and married or soon to be married women, including a bride to be of 13 years...The problem may be widespread, with several hundred young women igniting themselves in Western Afghanistan every year. Mallali's grieving father, a former Army colonel, says he knows of over 80 such suicides over the past two years...there is not a village in the province where a young woman has not burnt herself to death...*"

Battered in Saudi Arabia

BBC News Online (16 April 2004) reported on the story of Rania Al-Baz who allowed newspapers to show pictures of her swollen and disfigured face to highlight domestic abuse in Saudi Arabia. Rania said that her husband, Mohammed Al-Fallatta, beat her so hard that he broke her nose and fractured her face in thirteen places. "*It is considered a husband's right that his wife should obey him, this can involve coercion or violence and we know that the majority of cases of this kind go unreported and unnoticed*", Abeer Mishkhas of the Saudi English language newspaper *Arab News*, told BBC News Online.

Forced Back into a Burning Building

Newsweek (22/07/02) reported on a fire at a girls school in Mecca where every window was covered with iron bars and every door was locked. As the girls attempted to escape - breaking through a locked door - Muslim police converged on the scene to force the girls back into the burning building! Apparently many, in their haste to escape, had failed to put on the obligatory head coverings! Fifteen girls were trampled to death and forty were injured in this incident.

Abuse, Assault and Blaming the Victim

Jan Goodwin in "*Price of Honour: Muslim Women lift the Veil of Silence on the Muslim World*" documents many horrors experienced by women in the Middle East. Goodwin relates hundreds of instances of Muslim women beaten and abused in their homes and assaulted and humiliated in public. She reports that many "*working women in Cairo have complained of being sexually assaulted*

on buses by men who take the opportunity... to knead, rub and fondle female commuters.... since being manhandled is so shameful (to report) decent women suffer in silence rather than be accused of having encouraged the man.” When one woman, Shahinaz was raped on a bus in Egypt, “Fundamentalists began saying it was the girl’s fault. She was wearing a skirt... not a hijab. The media also began to blame her... Even women said it was her fault... she was working, not staying at home!” Observers note that many Muslim men tend to perceive themselves as not responsible to exercise restraint because the woman is responsible not to tempt them! Thousands of Western women have complained of being groped, jeered at, insulted and assaulted by Muslim men in the Middle East.

Serial Polygamy

Iben-Saud of Saudi Arabia reported having had over two hundred wives, but maintained that since he had never had more than four at any one time, he had never sinned in this respect.

The Guardian, London (8 October 2004) reported on Kamarudin Mohammad, a 72-year-old Malaysian policeman who had just had his 52nd wedding. “*I am not a playboy*”, he said. Divorce is simple in Malaysia’s Muslim majority community, since a husband can end his marriage by just telling his wife “*I divorce you*” three times. Mohammad has been a good Muslim, never having more than four wives at any one time. His marriages have lasted on average a 193 days each. But Mohammad claims that he is capable of commitment, because one of his marriages lasted 20 years.

A Taboo Subject

The degrading and deplorable abuse of women in Islam should, you would expect, excite the outrage of women’s rights groups worldwide. However, inexplicably, this has not been the case. The disgraceful abuse of women in Islam is, frankly, a taboo subject in most Western circles. Perhaps Islam’s frivolous view of marriage is closer to the permissiveness of humanism than the Christian principle of the wife being her husband’s closest and most intimate companion and lifelong marriage partner.

“Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, Who is great and awesome, and fight for your... daughters, your wives and your homes.” Nehemiah 4:14

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