

## POLYGAMY IN ISLAM

1. Polygamy is a situation where a man possesses more than one wife at a time. As a matter of fact, Islam recognizes only the union of man and one woman as a valid form of marriage.
2. However, under exceptional cases, it allows the man to marry more than one wife but it does not allow a woman to have more than one husband (polyandry).
3. The permission to marry more than one wife is got from the holy Qur'an.

Allah says in **Q (4:3)**; *“If you fear that you cannot treat orphans with fairness, then you may marry such women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you cannot do justice, then marry one only or those you possess. This will make it easier for you to avoid injustice.”*

4. From the above verse, Muslims have a liberty to marry as many as four wives at maximum but note must be taken that it is not a rule or an article of faith for them.
5. Furthermore, the verse allows polygamy on condition that the man will be able to deal justly between the wives in matters such as feeding, dressing, housing and division of time.
6. Anyone who lacks assurance to this justice must marry only one wife. The Prophet PBUH said;

*“Anyone who marries two wives and does not treat them equally shall come on the Day of Judgement dragging his part of the body which shall be hanging down.”*

7. The fair treatment of wives mentioned by the prophet PBUH in the above hadith relates to the rights of the wives but not love because for it, he said that it is hard to divide it equally.
8. However, the husband should not expressly show them that he loves one wife more than the other as this may bring grudges among them.

## CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH POLYGAMY IS ALLOWED IN ISLAM

1. According to Q (4:3), polygamy is allowed only when one has orphans to look after and he fears that they will not be treated well. In this case, one can marry the mother of the orphans or one of the orphans or some other elderly woman so that the orphans' welfare is catered for, hence polygamy.
2. If a man has a number of female orphans to look after but he is unmarried and there is a danger of him falling in love with one of them. In this case, he is allowed to marry one or more of them to avoid committing Zina with them, thereby betraying his trust with Allah.
3. If a man is married and his wife fails to treat the orphans properly, he is allowed to marry one of the female orphans so that she can look after her fellow orphans in a separate home.
4. If the young relatives of the man like brothers and sisters become orphans and finds out that his existing wife cannot look after them properly, he can marry a suitable mature woman who can treat them like a mother.

5. If the man is afraid that the orphans under his care being strangers, he may not treat them fairly as he should have done. He may establish direct relationship with them by marrying one of them.
6. If a man has a large number of orphans under his care and he finds out that he cannot do full justice to them without marrying another wife, he is permitted to do so to the limit of four only.
7. However, although the subject matter of **Q (4:3)** talks about polygamy in relation to orphans only, it is important to note that there are other situations which may give rise to polygamy. In this case, polygamy is seen as a solution to social and moral evils. These include;
8. There are certain women who are barren and yet men marry to get children. Since barrenness can be known after marriage, the barren woman should not be divorced or neglected because if it is done, she may go in for prostitution in search of a child. The solution for the man is to marry another wife and at the same time keeping the barren one to also enjoy her conjugal rights.
9. There are some men whose sexual desires are too strong for one woman to bear. Since this one is found out after marriage to a particular woman, it should not necessarily call for divorce but for the man to have another woman so as his sexual lust is shared among them, hence polygamy.
10. Certain women naturally have long menstrual periods or chronicle diseases which may not permit sexual intercourse yet the husband may find it hard and suppressive of his sexual desires during these periods. The only solution besides patience is having another woman.
11. There are situations when women outnumber men especially after wars. Under such circumstances, it is in the interest of Islam and for the women in particular to accept and become co-wives to a man instead of spending their entire lives without being married.
12. If a Muslim man converts to Islam with more than four wives, he cannot stay with them but Islam advises that he chooses four from them and then divorces the rest.
13. If the woman is too harsh to the man and there is no peace in the home. So the unhappy husband is allowed to look for another wife to give him comfort and satisfied marriage life whereas the woman is allowed to ask for divorce if the man is harsh to her.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF POLYGAMY**

1. Polygamy allows more women to get married instead of remaining single for most of their lives.
2. If there are more than two wives, then in the absence of the husband, the wives can help each other out with household duties and taking care of the children.
3. It creates social relationship between the husband and different families.
4. It brings responsibility and commitment in the husband.
5. It prevents prostitution among barren women.

6. A husband who does justice among his wives gets rewards from Allah.
7. It brings respect to the man.
8. It brings about increase in Muslim community.
9. It promotes sexual satisfaction among men.
10. It creates care for parents in old age due to many children born.
11. It gives men opportunity to have children of different characters from different women.
12. Many wives and the children they produce are a source of labour and income in the family.

### **DISADVANTAGES OF POLYGAMY**

1. It leads to transmission of diseases.
2. It increases financial burden in the family.
3. It leads to injustices among wives by unfair husbands.
4. It leads to shirk among wives fighting for more love from the husband.
5. It creates disunity among the children especially after the death of the father.
6. It creates jealousy among wives.
7. In case of broken marriages, bitter relationships emerge with the divorced wife.
8. It is one of the causes of street children especially due lack of maintenance.
9. It may result in adultery among wives if the husband fails to satisfy them sexually.
10. It leads to divided attention and love among couples.

### **HOW HAVE MUSLIMS MISUSED THE INSTITUTION OF POLYGAMY**

1. Many Muslims fear to practice polygamy even though they have genuine reasons for it.
2. Other Muslims are influenced to practice polygamy even when they cannot afford it.
3. Some men show economic unfairness to their wives.
4. Some Muslims exceed the maximum number of four wives allowed in Islam.
5. Some women practice social evils in their marriages as a result of polygamy like witchcraft.
6. Some women divorce when their husband marry a second wife.
7. Some men give their wives little time and do not satisfy them sexually.
8. Sometime children are neglected and mistreated by step mothers.
9. Some Muslims marry two sisters at ago which is forbidden in Islam.
10. In some polygamous families, men are controlled by their wives.
11. Some men marry polytheists in the process of practicing polygamy.
12. Some women neglect religious duties because their husbands have acquired second wives.
13. Some Muslims have misinterpreted the institution of polygamy in Islam by making it a compulsory act to the Muslims.

Fighting and hatred among wives is common among polygamous families