

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH MOST GRACIOUS EVER MERCIFUL
SPEECH DELIVERED BY MAULVI ABDUL HAMEED TAHIR, THE
REGIONAL MISSIONARY FOR ASHANTI REGION ON THE TOPIC:
THE BLESSINGS OF POLYGAMY

Our most revered Amir & Missionary –In-Charge, Ahmadiyya
Muslim Mission Ghana, Alhaj Noor Muhammad Bin Salih,
brothers and sisters in Islam,

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullah, Wabarakatuhu.

I am grateful to the organizing Committee of this conference
who in consultation with the Amir & Missionary –In-Charge,
have entrusted me with a speech on the topic:

The Blessings of Polygamy

وَأَنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُفْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثَلَىٰ وَثَلُثَ وَرُبِعَ ۚ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ
[Al-Nisa 4.4] أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ۗ (النساء)

Amir chairman ,Marriage is an institution in Islam, aimed at helping a person become more
spiritual and connected with Allah. By having an outlet for those natural desires, a person can
freely and calmly pursue the real goal in life – which is the worship of Allah. Whether it is a
monogamous marriage or a polygamous marriage, this objective remains the same. The
importance of marriage in Islam is highlighted by the following saying of the Holy Prophet
Muhammad [saw]:

**“When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear Allah regarding the
other half”**

Polygamy is allowed, though not mandatory, as a remedial measure for certain situations that
may arise from time to time.

At this instance it also seems necessary to mention that prior to Islam, Women were
dishonored, Slavery, incestuous marriages, concubines were generally practiced. There was no
limit to polygamy among the Arabs, or among any nation of the world for that matter. Every

individual was permitted to keep as many wives as he so desired. However, in addition to specifying other conditions, in terms of number as well, Islam placed a restriction of up to **four (4)** at most.

As such, it is ascertained from history that, as for those Muslim converts who had more than four wives, they were ordered to divorce the rest. For example; **when Ghailan bin Salamah Saqafiyy became a Muslim he had ten wives, out of whom, six were divorced on order.**(Tirmidhi)

The first thing to note on this issue is that, polygamy is not ordered as a general rule for all Muslims to follow. Instead, it is a provision – something allowed – for special circumstances. The Fourth Caliph, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) explains it as follows:

‘...first this provision in Islam of marrying more than one is not a generality. It pertains to certain situations when it becomes necessary for both preserving the health of society and the rights of women to have this provision available.’ (Islam’s response to contemporary issues)

Prior to fully understanding these secondary reasons for polygamy, we should understand what the Holy Qur’an defines as the purpose of marriage itself. There are four objectives given in the Holy Qur’an for marriage:

1. Protection against physical, moral and spiritual ailments
2. Continuation of human life
3. Companionship and peace of mind
4. Growth of relations of love and compassion

It is important to note that nowhere does the Holy Qur’an state the purpose of marriage as a pursuit of lust and sensuality. That is not a purpose of marriage in Islam, whether it is with a single wife or multiple wives. Hence, any notion that Islam is making a provision here for men to lead lustful lives is a complete misconception.

REASON FOR POLYGAMY IN ISLAM

History bears witness to the fact that the Islamic society founded by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) was initially a monogamous one. However, with the increase in numbers and strength of the Muslim community its enemies made futile attempts to annihilate it by waging war. Many Muslims lost their lives in defense of their faith thereby leaving many widows and orphans with no near relatives to look after them. The Holy Prophet was inspired by Allah to remedy the situation. He received the following revelation:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَنِّي وَثَلَاثَ وَرُبْعَ ۖ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ
أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۗ ﴿٤٦﴾

"And if you fear you will not be just in dealing with the orphans, then marry of other women as may be agreeable to you, two, or three or four; and if you fear you may not be able to do justice then marry only one or what your right hands possess." (Quran 4:4).

This verse was revealed after the battle of Uhud when seventy out of seven hundred Muslims had died in battle leaving behind widows and orphans. The *primary* occasion then for the provision of polygamy is in wartime situations. During times of war, the number of men in the society is reduced due to war casualties. Consequently, there is an increase in the number of widows and orphans. For such situations, Islam gives the provision of polygamy, so that the widows and orphans can continue to have the possibility of a family life after the passing of the husband or father.

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) then explains:

'...it is evident from a study of the Holy Qur'an that a special situation of a post-war period is being discussed. It is a time when a society is left with a large number of orphans and young widows, and the balance of male and female population is severely disturbed. A similar situation prevailed in Germany after the Second World War... There were a large number of virgins, dejected spinsters and young widows for whom it was impossible to get married.' (Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues page 98.)

Again it was revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw):

"And marry widows from among you, and your male slaves and female slaves who are fit for marriage. If they be poor, Allah will grant them means out of His bounty; and Allah is Bountiful, All knowing." (24:33).

In the light of these verses the Holy Quran emphatically states that preference should be given to widows over other categories of women when further marriages arise as their social circumstances are considered to be more serious than others. The Holy Prophet himself set an example worthy of emulation by marrying mostly elderly and aging widows. The Holy Quran, as well as the life of the Holy Prophet, destroys the wrong notion that polygamy serves only for the purpose of satisfying sexual gratification. It is rather a sacrifice which is demanded of the faithful for their moral and spiritual upliftment.

There are also other situations to give cause for polygamous marriages such as an ailing wife or her inability to procreate children. Hazrat Promised Messiah (as):

In the present era certain women have also become involved in somewhat peculiar innovations in the faith. They deeply frown on the Islamic teaching of multiple marriages, as if they no longer consider it a part of faith. They are unaware that the Law of God contains every remedy. If the injunction of multiple marriages did not exist in Islam, such cases which compel men to enter a second marriage would remain unaddressed by the Shariah. Suppose a woman becomes insane or leprous or falls victim to any other disease which forever renders her disable or if such a circumstance arises where, although she is deserving of

compassion, she loses her capacities. As the husband is also worthy of compassion since he is unable to live a life of celibacy, it would be cruel, in such a case, to the faculties of a man to prohibit him from entering into a second marriage. In actuality, it is in view of these factors that the divine law of God has left this door open for men. Similarly, in pressing circumstances, God has also opened an avenue for women. If a husband becomes incapacitated, a woman may ask a judge to allow her a *Khula*, which is also a form of divorce.

Furthermore, the four purposes of marriage listed above can apply both in the case of a monogamous marriage and a polygamous marriage. For instance, if the purpose of marriage is to guard oneself against evils, and this purpose is not being fulfilled with one wife, the husband is given the permission to marry a second wife. Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad (ra) explains this scenario as follows:

'...one purpose of marriage is ihsan, i.e., that by this means a person may be safeguarded from various ailments, evils and illicit deeds. However, it is possible that a person is confronted with circumstances whereby he is unable to uphold his righteousness and purity, whilst maintaining relations with a sole lady, who happens to undergo periods of menstruation, pregnancy, delivery, suckling, and other forms of ailments, etc. Then, even if by an extraordinary effort he is able to safeguard himself from practical indecency, in the least, one aspect of impurity continues to dominate his thoughts, or perhaps there is a risk of him becoming afflicted by some physical ailment. Hence, the correct remedy for such a person is none other than polygamy. In other words, for such a person, the very same purpose which was the motivating factor for one marriage, shall become the catalyst for another marriage in this case.' (*The Life & Character of the Seal of Prophets (sa)*– Volume II Page 253)

“Just as Islam has defined rights for men based on their requirements, it has likewise established different rights for women. While elucidating this aspect of Islamic teaching, the Promised Messiah^(as) stated:

“It is well known that Islam permits a man to marry up to four wives at a time; and this is a permission, not a compulsion. Every man and woman is well aware of this doctrine. When marrying a Muslim man, women have the right to lay down the condition that the husband will, in no circumstance whatsoever, marry another woman. If this condition is laid down before marriage, the husband will certainly be guilty of breach of contract if he goes on to marry another. However, if a woman does not prescribe any such condition, and is content with the law as it is, an outsider has no right to interfere. In such a case, the [Urdu] proverb seems relevant: “If the husband and wife are happy, the judge has nothing to do.” Every sensible person can understand that God has not made polygamy obligatory, He has only declared it lawful. If a husband desires, for some genuine reason, and under Divine law, to avail this permission, and his wife is not happy about it, she has the option to demand a divorce and be rid of this anxiety. And if the other woman, whom he wishes to marry, is not happy, she too has the easy option to decline the offer of such a suitor. No one is under

compulsion. But if both women agree to this second marriage, what right then does an Arya have to interfere?’ (Chashma-e-Ma’rifat, Ruhani Khazain Vol. 23, p. 246)”

Requirement of Justice

Those who do take to this recourse are reminded to treat each of their wives with justice, as the Holy Qur’an states:

‘And if you fear that you will not be fair in dealing with the orphans, then marry of women as may be agreeable to you, two, or three, or four; and if you fear you will not deal justly, then marry only one or what your right hands possess. That is the nearest way for you to avoid injustice.’

It should be noticed in this verse that ‘fair dealing with the orphans’ is among the primary motivations in Islam for allowing multiple marriages, albeit connected with a strict condition. Prior to the decision to marry a second wife, the man must first ensure that he will deal with his wives and any orphans with justice. If he is not able to ensure that, he should stick to monogamy.

As mentioned above, it has tied the practice to the condition that only if a person is able to maintain justice should he practice polygamy; otherwise, he should in all cases, suffice with one wife alone. In this respect, justice does not merely infer equality amongst various wives, rather, implies the fulfillment of all those rights which fall upon an individual in the case of polygamy. So it is only for an individual can be able to administer justice.

In dealing with justice, with the exception of a person’s heart-felt love (which a person has no control over), he must treat his wives with absolute equality in terms of his time, attention, wealth and apparent treatment. If one contemplates, this very limitation is in itself a grand sacrifice, which a husband is compelled to offer, especially when due to a difference in the individual characteristics and aptitude of his wives, a person loves one more than the other. Yet despite this, he is compelled to distribute all of his things equally amongst his wives, as if they were measured on a scale. This sacrifice is not only one of the husband, rather his wives equally share in this sacrifice as well.

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمِيلِ فَتَدْرُوبُوا كَالْمُعَلَّفَةِ ۖ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٣٠﴾

And you cannot keep perfect balance between wives, however much you may desire it. But incline not wholly to one so that you leave the other like a thing suspended. And if you amend and act righteously, surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.(4:130)

In the same regard, the Holy Prophet(saw) said:

Narrated by Abdullah ibn Abbas: "Whoever has two wives and does not treat them justly will come on the Day of Judgement dragging one side of him."

This emphasizes the difficulty of achieving fairness in a polygamous marriage.

If a husband who has multiple wives feels that his liking is increasing for one as compared to other wives, even then he should treat them outwardly good. A husband of multiple wives should not make his affection so obvious as to stimulate jealousy and hatred which may lead to continuous hostility between the wives.

On one another occasion, Aishah stated,

"Allah"s Prophet would divide his time on equal basis amongst us and used to pray, O Allah, it"s my distribution in what I own, so please do not grasp me to fault for the distribution (of love) which only You have power over."

Both occurrences are examples of the strong love that the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) had for one of his wives as compared to the others. As based on Prophet's example, all husbands with multiple wives should do equal division in things which are under their control, precisely material goods and time.

Islām expects that, when such circumstances arise as are necessary for the practice of polygamy, all people shall sacrifice their desires and physical comforts for a greater good, without hesitation. Furthermore, that when the occasion calls for it, they shall demonstrate that their lives are not only limited to their own persons, or their own homes; rather, that they are members of the vast humanity of the world, for the sake of which one should not hold back from sacrificing his individual interest.

Some persons have expressed their view that polygamy is the only solution for the increased problem of prostitution. Dr. Le Bon, a French sexologist, has written:

"A return to polygamy, the natural relationship between the sexes, would remedy many evils: prostitution, venereal diseases, abortion, the misery of illegitimate children, the misfortune of millions of unwanted women, resulting from the disproportion between the sexes, adultery and even jealousy."

As Ahmadi Muslim, taken into account all that I have mentioned, the system of polygamy in Islam is not a rule; rather, it is an exception, which has been instituted whilst taking into account very specific circumstances, in order to attain the lawful purposes of marriage and cater for the legitimate needs of humanity. Hence, prior to voicing an opinion against this practice, one should contemplate that in the entire world, can an individual never be faced with such circumstances where polygamy proves to be a necessary remedy; and the benefit of a person's own being, or his family, or his nation, or his country demands that he marry a second wife?