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Polygamy

What is Polygamy?

Polygamy, Polyandry, Polygyny: What is the difference?

Polygyny is one man married to several women.

Polyandry is one woman married to several men.

Polygamy refers to either arrangement.

Plural marriage is a synonym for any of the above and is often used as a euphemism in place of polygamy.¹

How does it affect women?

There are many opinions that exist. There are certain women who are in favor of polygamy as they feel that a big family will be better when they are concentrating on their careers. There are others who feel that it is a practice that subjugates women to humiliation and forces them to share their man and it is against the basic right in a marriage. Usually, there are rules in different religions that protect women and there are obligations that men must adhere to before they are allowed to marry again. Islam has strict rules around the same. Islam as a religion also accepts the possibility of two individuals not living happily and allows divorce.

Where in the world does it occur?

Islam allows polygamy, however this is one of the most misunderstood things in Islam. The rules around polygamy in Islam are very very strict and a man can not just get married to another on his whims and fancies. "If you fear that you will not deal fairly by the orphans,

¹ The Absalom Collection <http://www.absalom.com/mormon/polygamy/faq.htm>

marry of the women, who seem good to you,, two or three or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one or one that your right hands possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice." (Qur'an 4:3)²

The Utah Mormon church practiced polygyny. Several of today's Mormon faiths practice both polygyny and polyandry, which is consistent with the practices of Joseph Smith the faith's founder.

Although the percentage of men in the world who have more than one wife is relatively small, as many as a third of the world's population belongs to a community that allows it, says Israeli anthropologist Joseph Ginat.

There are many plural marriages in Africa, the Middle East and in Asia, said Ginat, professor of social and culture anthropology at the University of Haifa.

Many American Indian tribes allow polygamy; several experimental Christian groups practice it. And, of course, there are those famous offshoots of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

According to the United States Supreme Court, polygamy is not protected by religious freedom. Many times the Supreme Court has dealt with the issue of polygamy, always upholding its previous decision." Laws are made for the government of actions, and while they cannot interfere with mere religious belief and opinions, they may with practices. ...it is provided that plural marriages shall not be allowed. Can a man excuse his practices to the contrary because of his religious belief? To permit this would be to make the professed doctrines of religious belief superior to the law of the land, and in effect to permit every citizen to become a law unto himself. Government could exist only in name under such

² <http://www.polygamy.com/Islam/Who-Practices-Polygamy.htm>

circumstances."

–*REYNOLDS v. U.S.* 98 U.S. 145 (1878)

How did the practice develop/originate?

Polygamy has been practiced by mankind for thousands of years. Many of the ancient Israelites were polygamous, some having hundreds of wives. King Solomon(S) is said to have had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. David(S) (Dawood) had ninety-nine and Jacob(S) (Yakub) had four.

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

Early Christians invented ideas that women were "full of sin" and man was better off to "never marry." Since this would be the end of mankind, these same people compromised and said "marry only one."

A notable example of polyandry occurs in Hindu culture in the Mahabharata, where the Pandavas are married to one common wife, Draupadi. Today it is almost exclusively observed in the Toda tribe of India, where it is sometimes the custom for several brothers to have one wife. In this context, the practice is intended to keep land (a precious resource in a populous country like India) from being split up amongst male heirs. Polyandry was traditionally practiced among nomadic Tibetans, where it meant two poor brothers sharing a wife.³

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polygamy>

What are the results/effects of the practice and on whom?

The people who support it give the following opinions

Benefits For Women

Automatic childcare in a sexist society gives women more effective choice to have a career without devaluing the role of homemaker.

Being able to marry men who are already married means that women can marry men who have already proved themselves, therefore minimizing their risk.

Being able to marry the men who attract most women means they don't have to settle just for what's left after other women have the best pickings.

Having the possibility that a husband can remarry without divorce extends practical security to a woman. She needn't worry about losing her husband and income as she loses her looks, because if her husband is attracted by a younger woman, he doesn't even have to think about leaving his wife.

Polygamy removes the pressure on a husband to commit adultery, and removes damaging deceit from a marriage.

Polygamy provides a method where a woman can have a female friend for life as well as a husband.

Polygamy therefore provides more people and a better chance of meeting diverse needs.

Polygamy provides a potential for at least three adult incomes, reducing state dependance and the fear of unemployment.

Controls Placed On Men

If a man wants to have another sexual partner in a polygamous system then he has to meet his responsibilities - pay for any children produced from all his relationships without priority being given to those from a 'legal' relationship.

Polygamy removes or reduces the seduction of innocent young women - If a man promises to marry her, he cannot use his existing marriage as an excuse for not fulfilling a promise.

Polygamy reduces the number of women who are available. Currently, with more women than men, this 'cheapens' women. With less women available their 'value' goes up. In other words, polygamy makes men have to try harder and do better with women if they are to win them in competition with other men

People who are against the practice have the following opinion

They feel that polygamy enhances domestic violence. Puts forward a cult mentality (as only a few sections of society practice it). Brainwashes people into thinking that polygamy is for the benefit of women and that sexual freedom is a good thing for the growth of an individual.

They also say that these people manipulate religion and call them wedding wow breakers. They feel that it leads to incest and is an excuse for underage marriages.

Who supports and who opposes it?

Many classes of people support and oppose Polygamy. Some do it by religion, some by way of freedom, some under law, and some under logic.

There is a school of thought that says there are more men of marriageable age than women and hence the unmarried women have the option of marrying a man who is already married, become a prostitute, have sex with married men or be in polygamy. The author feels that

polygamy is better as it doesn't force the unmarried women to ruin a family, to live as a prostitute, to have sex without commitment from the man.⁴

David Friedman and Steve Sailer⁵ have argued that polygamy tends to benefit most women and disadvantage most men. Friedman uses this observation to argue in favor of legalizing polygamy, while Sailer uses it to argue against legalizing it. The idea is firstly that many women would prefer half or one third of someone especially appealing to being the single spouse of someone that doesn't provide as much economic utility to them. Secondly, that the remaining women have a better market for finding a spouse themselves. Say that 20% of women are married to 10% of men, that leaves 90% of men to compete over the remaining 80% of women.

What do I think should be done if anything?

We cannot stop people from doing what they want to do. Even now most polygamist don't register their multiple marriages. They just live together and have children and there is no law against it, and there cannot be. The only judge is god and they justify it by saying god asked us to do so. There are personals on the internet that say we are a god-fearing family and we are looking for more wives to be added to our family. There is one where they say that they have been asked by god to have a group of 7, and the advertisement seems to suggest 7

⁴ Samuel Chapman Vital Statistics about Polygamy from Polygamy.com
<http://www.polygamy.com/Statistics-UK.htm>

⁵ David D. Friedman (b. 1945), is a libertarian writer who became a leading figure in the anarcho-capitalist community with the publication of his book
Steve Sailer (born December 4, 1958) is a reporter, movie critic for *The American Conservative*, VDARE .com columnist, and founder of the Human Biodiversity Institute (1999).

wives.⁶ Some people just want to have more children, there is a personal about a person with 5 wives and 32 children and they want to have more childrenso looking for more wives.⁷

What happened to love and fidelity? I feel that it is against ones morals to enter into a polygamous relationship. There are reasons if the woman cant conceive but even then there is always the option to adopt children. By marrying another woman, the husband is isolating his first wife further and there is little relation between a child from the second wife and the first wife per se.

What possibilities do I see for coalitions between feminists to work on issues?

The differing opinions make it difficult to see any collations, but the fact is that a woman who is independent and sexually open-minded might not mind having a polygamous arrangement. It gives her the freedom to pursue what she likes without getting caught up in the day to day worries of the houseld etc – the reason is that there are many women and amongst them they have to manage one household.⁸

⁶ Personal advertisement of the Tate Family
<http://www.polygamy.com/Families/Tate.htm>

⁷ Personal advertisement of the Maltz Family
<http://www.polygamy.com/Personals/Maltz.htm>

⁸ <http://www.polygamy.com/Practical/Ultimate.htm>