

Polygyny: The wisdom of love

“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 (a captive) that your right hands possess. That will be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice” (Qur’aan 4:3)

Introduction:

Polygamy is the state of having more than one spouse.

Polygyny is a male having more than one wife.

There are different ways to please Allaah, each one of us chooses his or her own options. Some people think they are reviving a Sunnah while promoting polygyny, acquiring more *hasaanat* (good deeds) in this life in preparation for the Hereafter.

There are many reasons why a person chooses polygyny: extended family, increase in faith, companionship, security, pleasure, charity, increase in wisdom and self-worth, increase in quality of life when a wife cannot complete the needs of her husband. There are different problems linked to polygyny: less time to enjoy one’s spouse, personal sacrifices, the man may lack of fairness and financial means, jealousy of the co-wives, judgments coming from the neighborhood, legally forbidden by the local laws.

There are many reasons why a person chooses polygyny. Some men and women encourage it because it helps them grow as a person and in their faith or they believe in helping single or widowed women; some learn to accept it as it is imposed on them and work it out into their lives.

Whatever it is, nobody can force a Muslim to stay in an unhappy relationship and nobody can deny a woman her right to divorce her husband if she finds the situation unacceptable.

Polygyny is about getting families together. Most of the time, it is not an issue of overlordship and women serving men, but it is an issue of love and sharing in a close knitted community. This arrangement is especially beneficial in Western countries where it is hard to make Muslim friends or create a truly Islamic community.

However, polygyny nowadays is not the norm and many men prefer and are contented with only one wife and the women are able to make their husbands happy on their own since he is their Paradise or Hell.

Whether each individual’s choice pleases Allaah or not in both cases (monogamy or polygamy), it is question of people’s true intentions and desire to make things work in total honesty and faith. Whether polygyny or monogamy is a happy arrangement or not depends on the efforts, patience and degree of faith of each party involved. Nobody should be criticized for his or her choices, whatever they are. Nobody should make a Muslim feel guilty for disliking polygamy for himself/herself or for liking it for himself/herself; this is against the precepts of Islam. There is no compulsion in religion and Allaah knows best whatever each one of us conceals in his own heart.

Also, a Muslim should never discourage polygamy on the basis that he or she dislikes it for himself or for herself, but the Muslim community should be supportive of his brothers and sisters who have chosen it willingly.

Polygamy is lawful in Islam for those who can afford it. It is permissible, not *wajib* (encouraged or obligatory)!

There is no unique (monogamous) road to happiness and completion of our deen; each one of us must choose his or her own jihad in life freely.

Remember that “*the believers, men and women, are Awliya’ (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another*” (Al-Tawbah, 9:71) and NOT enemies.

This work has been possible to complete only with the help of sisters who have been generous enough to let me borrow their words and who have decided to share their experience. Thank you to them all.

Tawakkul tu'alallaah = I put my trust in Allah!

“Actually I agree with you sister, that we shouldn't doubt ourselves because of the actions of another. But yet, it is not always so easy to put these stupid emotions of ours on the backburner (I wish it were though) and not be affected by our husbands words and/or behavior. As much as I have felt confident in myself as a woman, my beauty, my sexuality, etc. just that he got another wife makes me doubt. But you're right, I shouldn't. It's just hard.”

Hikmah closed the book she had been reading all day long. She needed a reminder because this week she had been tried hard by Allaah. “O!” She thought in pain. “Among the tests of Allaah Ta’aalah are the commands He puts on us for which our minds cannot comprehend the wisdom. I must submit and obey. I know that I will only find true happiness in Islam when I will sacrifice what I love most, first my children, then my husband...”

I know that when the son of Prophet Muhammad passed away, the Prophet (swas) took him on his lap, embraced him and cried. Some were surprised. He replied to them *“Eyes may water and hearts may be broken but we do not say anything except what Allaah will be pleased with. He pointed to his tongue and said: Allaah will ask us about this.”* And he was the most compassionate, the most merciful of all people.

O Lord! I hear and obey, even though I do not understand the reason, because I admit my mortality, my weakness and my submission to You. I know that a true believer cannot question what You do. Ameen.”

She remembered the story of ‘Umar ibn-al-Khattab (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said to the Black Stone when he kissed it: “By Allaah, I know that you are only a stone and you can neither bring benefit nor cause harm. Were it not that I had seen the Messenger of Allaah kissing you I would not have kissed you.”

Like ‘Umar (ra) I believe in the *ghaib* (the unseen) and that which I cannot grasp. Allaah knows best.”

She heard her husband, Sayyid, moving in the room nearby. She called on him.

“Sayyid? Promise me you will come near me when you will be done with your work.”

“I promise, Hikmah.”

“How long still?”

“A hundred of emails to answer, that’s all, he said tenderly, why don’t you join me here?”

“O no, my dear, I am too cold.”

“I guess I am coming then.”

Hikmah slipped under the comforter, lying on her right side, her right hand under her cheek. She thought. “Ah! This world feels so cold! It is so hard to live in it!” She looked at the window that seemed joyously decorated under a fluorescent light. New water crystals formed around it under the action of winter shills. They looked like they would crack the glass of the window; their sharp edges revealed by the nightlights.

She felt her will weakening and dropping piece by piece into the night. She cried again for a hundred times this day. She cried for each one of her disappointments since she had lost her babies the year before and learned she would be barren for the rest of her life. And she cried even more for the latest blow that had let her weak and insensitive, the discovery that she was now a co-wife.

Sayyid slipped under the cover and cuddled against her back. The warmth of his body entered into hers like a hand reaching for her heart, welcoming. She felt protected, in harmony as if cradled in a womb.

She whispered:

“This religion sometimes feels too hard on me, Sayyid. I know that Allaah makes things easy for us. Nonetheless, sometimes I feel that everything is *haram*, that everything we do is wrong. I am sincere in my *deen*, but I am angry against you for what you did to me. You make things incredibly easy for me, you are kind and gentle, but you also make things unbearably hard. Why did you marry another woman and never let me know about it? Such a big thing in your life and you kept me out of it? This I believe I could never forgive you. However, I know I have no right to; it is not my right to refuse it to you.”

He drew her to him and delicately put his cheek against hers.

“I know what you feel, Hikmah, I know. I am sorry. I wish I would have told you before, but I was absent for many months and I did not want to commit adultery. Besides, I did not want to upset you. I did not want to cause you more pain after the loss of our children. Be patient. You will see, you will love her. Forgive me, my dear, as I always

forgive you everything. Do have mercy and Allaah will have mercy on you. You love me, don't you?"

"I don't know."

"Yes, you do."

"I feel as if you are so much of myself, even if I wanted to get rid of you, you would still live inside me, along with me, forever. This is not love; this is much bigger than love. We are one soul. I just cannot see you otherwise. A haadith says that women are the twin halves of men. That's how I feel. That's why we are still married and I did not take my right to divorce you. How can I begin to explain that to people? To my family? What will I tell them when they will ask questions?"

"You could not explain. They do not have the background."

"Do you love me more than life itself, Sayyid, as you once swore to me?"

"Yes, I do love you more than life."

"What does that mean to love someone more than life? I do not understand the meaning. Maybe I do not love life enough to answer this question."

"You do."

"Then I love you as much as life itself. I cannot do without it but I wish I did not exist at all. It would have been easier not to exist at all: I would not have had worries... No pains... I am so afraid I could stop to be a Muslim. I wish it could be a certainty: you and I and Allaah, but we do not know our destiny, we do not know Allaah's plans. I am afraid I might break!"

"We never stop hoping. We never stop praying for Paradise Firdaus."

"I have already lost so much of my confidence..."

"If you have lost it that means you have lost your confidence in Allaah. Come on, my darling, let's not think about this. What is done is done and cannot be changed. We must be grateful for what we have: a home, a life and a beautiful wife."

He smiled and pulled her closer in his arms. He added:

"We do not lose the ones we love in this life. You did not lose me as maybe you thought. Men can have up to four wives. Imagine at the pre-Islamic time, men had up to ten wives. The prophets (as) used to have many wives like Prophet Suleiman (as) who had 90 of them. The Qur'aan has put a limit on polygamy. Imagine these women

accepted it as a blessing because four were better than ten or more. They were raised with the idea that they will be co-wives because they lived in a closed knitted community, so they learned how to live respectfully and happily among other women. One of the Sahabas loved his brother so much he decided to divorce one of his wives, a part of his treasure, of what he loved most so that his brother in faith could get married to her. The notion of generosity and love were different from ours today; they were more pure and less individual. I want to create this atmosphere of unconditional love in my family, a love that is shared only for the sake of Allaah.”

“O Sayyid! Are you trying to convince me? You are in your right; I do not deny that. *“It is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, When a matter has been decided. By Allah and His messenger, To have any option about their decision, If anyone disobeys Allah and His messenger. He is indeed on a clearly wrong path.” (Quran 33:36)*

Our beloved Prophet (swas) sent away the members of an Arab tribe who came to ask if he would object if they would offer one of their girls to Ali (ra). The answer of the Holy Prophet (swas) was that he never would agree as Fatimah (ra) was the "star of his eyes" and what would hurt her, would also hurt him. He added that: “No woman may be taken as a wife together with the daughter of Allaah’s messenger.””

“That was the concern of the father towards his beloved daughter. He never discouraged anyone else from marrying other women as long as it was legal. The complete quote says: *“I heard the Prophet (swas) saying from the Mimbar – ‘Hisham Mugeera proposed to me for the marriage of his daughter to Ali Ibne Talib (ra). But I did not allow and I will not allow until Ali (ra) divorces my daughter Fatima (ra). Because Fatima is a part of my body. I hate what she hates and whatever hurts her hurts me.’”* Ali (ra) did want to marry another woman and Fatimah (ra) became very upset and went to her father, so Ali (ra) did not take on another wife while Fatimah (ra) was alive.

Fear, frustration, pain, jealousy are part of Islam, it is part of human nature. Only faith canalizes those feelings and gives them another dimension. Polygamy is natural among men. How many men take mistresses because they have strong desires or they love to be the fathers of many children; Islam authorizes it in a way nobody gets cheated. *“The believers, men and women, are Awliya’ (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another” (Al-Tawbah, 9:71)”*

“Yes, Sayyid, I know that you did not mean to hurt anybody. Our situation is different. I would enjoy having a girl friend. But I cannot help feeling jealous. I do not hate the fact that Allaah has allowed my husband to marry more than one woman, but I hate to be a co-wife.

However, Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Jihaad (holy struggling in Allaah’s Cause) is ordained for you (Muslims) though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you...” (al-Baqarah 2:216)

The accursed Iblees refused to bow before Prophet Adam (as) as ordained by Allaah. He paid a high price for his disobedience as the surah 38, Saad, proves it. I do not want to be an outcast either.”

“Listen, Hikmah, I can be fair to both of you. I also have the means to give you a decent life. I can also give my love to both of you, a sincere and true love.”

Hikmah felt like a knife slicing through her heart. What did she use to believe in? Two souls that are separated in this life, twin halves that find each other again and live only for each other. She felt like something precious had died inside her. She whispered again:

“Didn’t I lose you, really?”

“No, Hikmah. We do not lose someone we love in this life, except maybe when we die. But even when death arrives, our souls are still living somewhere. The day we meet again is just delayed. That’s not losing. Truly losing someone is to lose his or her love. There’s nothing you can do about that. Either people chose to love you or they chose not to. Either they make a room in their heart for you or they don’t. It is like choosing Allaah or rejecting His Light. If you chose Allaah, he will run towards you. And listen to His immense mercy. Cannot we be more merciful just for His sake?

“If anyone draws the length of a span near Me, I shall draw a length of fathom near him. If anyone came to Me walking, I shall come to him at a run, and if anyone meets with sins of the size of the earth, but has not associated anything with Me, I shall meet him a similar amount of forgiveness.” (Muslim)

I know that The Prophet (swas) said: *"No one truly believes until he/she wants for his/her brother/sister what he/she loves for himself/herself."*

It would have been good manners for me to let you know about my intentions. Once again, the circumstances did not allow. This does not diminish my feelings for you. Romantic love is not exclusive like filial love is not exclusive either. We have the blessing of loving many people at the same time. Let's not make it a sin but the most beautiful gift of Our Lord, an act of mercy upon us all. If you still chose me, Hikmah, I will run towards you."

"So, maybe I will forgive you, but I will never forget."

"Not forgetting is not truly forgiving. I will make *du'aa* for you to be forgiving and I will make *du'aa* for Allaah to reward you for it."

"Do you always forget things, Sayyid? I mean if I were the one who had married another man, would you forgive me?"

"First of all, you would not marry another man because a woman is like a vessel; if she married many men, she would never know who is the real father, neither will her family and the father and the child itself would have no lineage. She would bear so many children, she would have to make herself barren in order to get some rest from childbearing. Furthermore, some modern deadly illnesses have been linked to the mixing of semen in the womb.

Secondly, yes, I would forgive you because I am not one who forbids what Allaah has made permissible in His infinite wisdom."

"Thus, you are the one who loves Allaah best."

"Do not say that, darling. Only Allaah sees the hearts."

Nu'man b. Bashir that Rasulullah (swas):

"What is lawful is clear and what is unlawful is (also) clear. But between the two are doubtful matters of which many people do not know. He who protects himself from doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his faith and honour. But he who falls into doubtful matters is like a shepherd who grazes (his sheep) around a sanctuary, and (liable) to graze therein. Surely, every King has a sanctuary. Surely, the sanctuary of Allah swt is his prohibitions. Surely, in the body is a piece of flesh, and if it is sound, the whole body is sound; and if it is damaged, the body is diseased. Surely, it is the heart".
(Bukhari,Muslim)

"Marry the loving and the fertile because through you, I will compete with the nations for superiority in numbers." (Abu Dawud and others)

A few weeks later, Hikmah visited her parents' house. Her mother was sitting near her in the sofa of the living room, a brown velvety thing that was so soft it took the shape of their bodies. Hikmah's mother had let her long white hair flow on her shoulders like a reminiscence of Hikmah's scarf that covered her slender body.

"Your husband is a womanizer!" exclaimed the elder in anger: "How can he does this to you? To my daughter?"

Hikmah looked astonished, then she burst out laughing and a few tears rolled down her face. Her eyes glimmered because some of them were still caught on her eyelids. She declared, half sad and half amused:

"O, mom! You exaggerate! Sayyid, a philanderer? Him who is always careful to lower his gaze and never speak to another woman except when is needed? I am sorry to disappoint you, but you could not be more wrong. On the contrary, some men take another wife because their wife menstruates for up to ten days or they cannot touch them for forty days after childbirth or because their wife is not interested in the relationship or because they are ill or overworked. Not mine! Mine took another wife because he feared Allaah and I will be happy to help raising his children with the hope we will all enjoy companionship and friendship. A lot of couples cannot live together but with the arrival of a third person they become more respectful of each other. I hope that we can be happier together and enjoy together more quality time. Mom! You should help me through this instead of judging him! I know that polygamy is shocking out of the bonds of Islam, but one has to replace things in their context."

"Your father would never have done this to me! He is so considerate!"

“So is Sayyid! It is that he has made other choices I was not part of.”

“So you have already accepted it? It does not make you feel bad?”

“Yes, it does. I feel the pain of sharing him. I feel jealous too because I will not be the center of his life anymore as he was mine. I will now have more priorities than his happiness. I will probably feel left aside, but what I cannot give him, maybe she will, and what she cannot give him, maybe I will and already does.

Mom! The first characteristic by which the believers are distinguished from others is their complete trust in Allaah because He said: *“For men and women who have surrendered, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for truthful men and women, for enduring men and women, for humble men and women, for men and women who give charity, for men who fast and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, for men and women who remember Allaah in abundance – for them Allaah prepared forgiveness and great reward.”* (Qur’an, 33:35)

Yes, mom, for men and women who surrender, endure, humble themselves, remember Allaah a lot! I think there is something for me to learn in here. There is a lesson in faith for us all here.”

“Yes, I cannot deny that, my daughter. However, I will tell you what shocks me the most in your story. Why is it supposed to be harder for you? Aren’t you the victim here? And since we are talking about men and women. Why do women always suffer more than men? We bear children painfully, we wait for our husband’s death in jihad, we must accept co-wives when they chose to have one, and we must be patient, waiting at home and serving them with the promise of having only one husband in the Hereafter while they will be rewarded with 72 wives each! Is that fair?”

“Have you forgotten, mommy, that because of her pains, a woman has a reward. For each strike a baby gives from within its mother or for each of her discomfort, she will be rewarded? 'Abdullah Bin 'Amr reported that the Prophet (swas) said: *“If a Muslim is pricked by (as little as) a thorn in the wordly life, and he seeks its reward from Allah, some of his sins will be removed, because of it, on the Day of Judgement.”* (Bukharee) Allaah Ta’alaah has enjoined children to be dutiful first to their mothers then to their spouse and the best of believers are those who are the kindest to women! Prophet Muhammad (swas) said: *“Treat women well, for they have been created from a rib. The*

rib is most curved in its upper part, so if you try to straighten it out, it will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain intact. Therefore, follow my advice on giving women fair treatment.” (Al-Bukhari: 9, 206)”

“Yes, right! By the way, Hikmah, why should we be said crooked or having shortcomings when we are the helpers (*awliyah*) of men?” exclaimed Hikmah’s mother ironically.

“Mom, listen! In being ‘crooked’ as you said, we are helping our men! Yes, as strange as it seems. The rib is an image! Ribs have a slight curve in them. They are well adapted to their function as women are made that way to fit their role, to bow, to curve alongside men. Women are more delicate than men are. We are more emotional. We tend to have more compassion too. We have a special tenderness that we use to protect and understand our children with. Why did papa always treat me with more kindness than any of my brothers? He knew that if women were not different in their inner-feelings than men, men would turn from socializing with them. They would stop taking us as their confidants and we will stop to be their backup whenever they need to be woken up at Fajr or reminded of their manners. Daddy knew that abruptness and severity did not work with me but it disciplined my brothers. On the contrary, tactfulness and a gentle tone could make me go around the earth just for him while it spoiled my brothers.

We have been designed to be the companions of men, not their substitutes. Only women can bend enough to accept the demands men place on them as the rib does, fitting its place rightfully; they repay us by their kindness and patience.”

Hikmah smiled as to herself, adding: “I sometimes abuse Sayyid’s gentleness towards me like the wives of Prophet Muhammad (swas)…”

Hikmah’s mother looked interested even if she kept a frown that rippled the skin of her entire forehead that was a mark of her deep reflection.

“How could the *Ummahat al-Mu’mineen*, the Mothers of the Believers, as they are called in the Qur’aan (Al-Ahzab, 33:6) be abusive towards the best of all men (peace be upon him)?”

“O yes! They did mom! Listen! All the wives of Prophet Muhammad (swas) were righteous women and pure women who were assured of going to Jannah at his side. Nonetheless, they could not help feeling rivalry, jealousy and distress towards each other.

They competed with each other for the exclusive love of Rasulullaah (swas), creating sometimes very delicate situations. They even “doubted” his prophethood when they were upset.”

“Well... if that is true, I could not blame any of them even if I tried.”

“So do I, mom, so do I. May Allaah shows peace and blessings upon His Noble Messenger. Ameen. Prophet Muhammad (swas) was a bliss of love, kindness and tolerance towards his wives. In return, they could not live away from him for a minute or envisage life without him. He married Sawda, then wanted to divorce her. When she heard this, she was so upset that she ran to him and begged: *“O Messenger of Allaah, I wish no worldly thing of you. I will sacrifice the time allocated to me, if you do not wish to visit me. But, please, do not deprive me of being your wife. I wish to go to the hereafter as you wife. I care for nothing else.”* (Muslim, Rada, 47).

All his wives were at one with him, still he prayed to be more fair and equal to everyone of them because he knew that it was hard for them to live with other co-wives.

He used to pray:

“I may have unintentionally show more love to one of them than the others and this would have been injustice. So, O Lord, I take refuge in Your grace for those things which are beyond my power.” (Tirmidhi, Niah 41, 4; Bukhari, Adab, 68)

Still, his wives were jealous of each other. Safiyya, one of the wives of Rasulullah (swas) was criticized sarcastically about her Jewish origin. The Prophet (swas) did not raise his voice or admonish anybody; he just said:

“If they repeat it, give them this response: ‘My father is the Prophet Aaron, my uncle is the prophet Moses and my husband is as you see, the Prophet Muhammad, the Chosen One. What do you have more than me to be proud of?’”

He also would take *naseeha* (sincere advice) from them.

The conditions of the Treaty of Hdaybiya imposed on the Muslims by the people of Mekkah were so heavy that many of the companions wanted to reject it. Prophet Muhammad (swas) asked advise to his wife Umm Salamah (ra) who accompanied him and he acted upon what she said (Bukhari, Shurut, 15).

See, he saw his wives as part of himself, a part that completed his own self. The Mothers of the Believers educated Muslim men and women before and after his death, so they were his continuation on this earth.

Still, they tried several times to make their husband dislike other co-wives. One of the wives of the Messenger of Allaah (swas) was Zaynah bint Jahash. She was the most beautiful of all the Mothers of the Believers and “the heart of the prophet was stricken by admiration for her” (Annals of Al-Tabari, 2, 453). She used to collect a variety of honey her husband liked very much. Ayesha (ra) regarded this with a lot of anxiety and she feared to lose the love of her husband over Zaynab (ra). Ayesha (ra) reports:

“I and Hafsa made this plan that when the Messenger of Allah visits any one of us, she should tell him that his mouth reeks with "maghafeer." (maghafeer is something sweet to taste but has a pungent and unpleasant odor. Muhammed Mustafa was very sensitive on this point. He hated strong odors). It so happened that Hafsa was the wife he visited first. As soon as he entered her chamber, she said: "O Messenger of Allah! Your mouth has the odor of maghafeer." He said: "I did not eat maghafeer. But when I was with Zaynab, she gave me some honey to eat. It is possible that the honey had the odor of maghafeer. But in future, I shall not eat honey." (Imam Bukhari has quoted in his Book of Talaq (Divorce), and Book of Tafsir (of Sura Tahreem)).

But a revelation from Allaah (Qur’aan, 66:1) failed their plot.

Also, there is the story of Maryam the Copt (ra), an *ammah* who provoked extreme envy to the Prophet’s many childless wives when she gave birth to their son Ibrahim.

Ayesha (ra) felt a devouring heartburn at the news.

One day the proud new father, Muhammad (swas), walked into Ayesha's (ra) chamber, carrying his son in his arms, to show him to her. He called her attention to the great resemblance of the baby to himself. Ayesha (ra) looked at the baby, and said that she saw no resemblance at all. When the Prophet (swas) expressed delight how his son was growing, Ayesha (ra) responded tartly that any child given the amount of milk, which Ibrahim was getting, would grow just as big and strong as he. Ayesha (ra) went as far as denying all resemblance between the Prophet and his son, a denial which amounted to an accusation of adultery on the part of the innocent Maryam (ra).

The liberty the Mothers of the Believers enjoyed was so that they could criticize the Prophet (swas) so severely, it could roil up his disposition for days. Allah Ta'alah warned them that everything they would do against their husband, they would do it against themselves, and everything they would do for his pleasure would benefit them. This is a lesson that all the women should learn before they betray marital secrets or backbite against their husbands telling other women how unfair he is with them or the sins he commits. Wow to them! Allaah said after the honey episode: *"If you two turn in repentance to Him (to Allaah), your hearts are indeed so inclined, but if you back up each other against him, truly Allaah is his protector, and Jibrael, and (every) righteous one among those who believe, and furthermore the angels – will back (him) up. It may be, if he divorced you (all), that Allaah will give him in exchange consorts better than you."* (Qur'aan, 66:4-5)

"I can but bow before the examples you gave me, Hikmah, however don't you think that it is cruel for a man to take another wife when he knows that the first one is being very attached to him?"

"Mom! No, it is not cruel. My dear mommy, it is an Islamic option. I cannot have children so it is fair that he gets them the way Islam permits. *"To Allaah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (and plans). He bestows (children) male and female according to His will (and plan), or he bestows both males and females, and he leaves barren whom He will: for He is full of knowledge and power."* (Qur'an, Majid, 42:49-50)

My problem is just that I have been raised with the idea that we belong to only one man, and only one man belongs with us. That's irrational! If this were true, we would never be able to remarry and know comfort in another man's heart, or have the chance to be a good wife to somebody who needs it. Anyway, even when a woman lives in a monogamous marriage, she still complains and she feels jealous for his work, his friends or his parents with whom he might spend more time. This is not because a woman is less than a man; it is because most of the time she is at home and misses him all the time, so when he comes back from his obligations, she wants to have him all by herself. A woman needs more attention and more care than a man does. That's why she is ideal for raising children; this beautiful love she has inside her, she gives it to her children. This is also

why women are always worried about the feelings of their mate and they often ask for confirmation of that love. Remember, mom, the wives of Rasulullah (swas), how many times did they ask about his love?

Ayesha Siddiqah bint Abu Bakr (ra) often would seek reassurance from the Prophet (swas) that he loved her. *"How is your love for me?" she once asked. "Like the rope's knot," he replied, meaning that it was strong and secure. Many times after that she would ask, "how is the knot?" and he would reply: "Ala haliha" "The same as ever!"*

She once asked him, *"O Messenger of Allah, tell me about yourself. If you were between the two slopes of a valley, one of which had been grazed, while the other had been grazed, on which slope would you pasture your flocks?" "On the one that had not been grazed," replied the Prophet. "Even so," she said, "and I am not like any of your other wives. Every one of them had a husband before you, except myself." The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) smiled and said nothing."*

A woman needs to discipline her feelings, that's her jihad in this life. She needs to focus her strong emotions on something positive. Polygamy can help her to achieve this. In fact, it can help her to surrender to Allaah's will and become more pious."

"I see. That makes sense to me. I doubt if that could convince everyone but I understand how you feel, my daughter. So you do not feel hurt anymore by your own situation?"

"Not as much as before, mom. I think I can live with it now. I can learn to accept it. Actually, this is why I came here. I needed to be reminded of a few things. Instead, I reminded myself!"

"I daresay you did a great job at that!"

They smiled.

"Allaah be praised!"

"Allaah be praised!"

The Prophet (swas) said: *"Whoever revives an aspect of my Sunnah that is forgotten after my death, he will have a reward equivalent to that of the people who follow him, without it detracting in the least from their reward."*
(Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 7/443; this is a hasan hadeeth because of corroborating asaaneed).

"I consider my role as a wife and mother my profession, my children are Amana (a trust) from Allah azzawajal, my husband a Blessing, MaaSh'Allah, and my marriage a test from Him."

"It is important to note that only two wives of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) gave birth to his children. Ayesha (ra), one of his most beloved wives, never had any children. Although others of his wives never conceived he treated all his wives justly and in a kind manner. He never raised the status of a fertile wife over an infertile one."

Many years later, Hikmah was visiting her co-wife, Angie.

Angie poured the tea inside the china cups, a mist of vapor slowly raising to envelop her shoulders. Inside the cups, the smoke danced and swirled in small groups, seeming to imitate Angie's locks of hair delicately tied on top of her head. Hikmah felt happy. Her co-wife had become her blessing over time. She had advised Angie on about everything, even on how to please their husband, what kind of food he liked, when to ask him questions, etc. She was even there during the birth of Angie's children that she considered like her own. They called her "auntie" and run towards her each time they got hurt or needed special attention. She loved playing with them; she loved the familial atmosphere. She felt like everybody co-worked together towards a greater happiness. Everything was so perfect.

Hikmah thought with a dreaming smile on her face: "It is far away the time I was a romantic little girl. It is well gone the time I believed that my actions were based on utter and total loyalty to one person. How far gone is my youth and my ideal of marriage, that he would have eyes only for me, that he would make me his only closest confident and the one with which we would share all our secrets. I lived in an illusion when I thought he would never think about anyone except me, never talk to any other woman but me, not have any desire but for me. I do not care as much about all this now. I see things from Angie's eyes and how strong she must have been. She, the 'intruder', had to find her place in my heart without hurting me more. How much patience did she show; how much

accepting she had to be! She taught me a unique lesson in life. Now, I think like ibn ‘Umar that *“if I knew that Allaah had accepted even one good deed from me, death would be the most dear thing to me, because Allaah says: ‘Verily, Allaah accepts only from those who are al-Muttaqun (the pious)’ (Al-Maa’idah, 5:27)”*

I want to go to Jannah, Insha Allaah; that’s all that counts. The Prophet (swas) said: *“The most grateful people to Allaah Blessed and high, are the most thankful of them to others” (Ahmad)* and: *“Those who do not thank people do not thank Allaah” (Abu Dawud & others).*”

Hikmah picked up the cup and thanked Angie politely, then placed it on a small table nearby. With her other hand, she was holding her co-wife’s latest baby and listened happily to her prattler. She delicately removed a long strand of hair that had fallen over the baby’s face and pulled it back across her head behind her right ear, smiling. Both women were enjoying a moment of peace after the morning they had spent on their chores. Hikmah had helped Angie cleaning her house, decorating the nursery, collecting diapers and sorting clothing.

She thought: “Adh-Dhahabee related in Sayr A’laam An-Nubalaa from Asmaa bint Yazeed ibn As-Sakan (ra) that she went to the Prophet (swas) and said:

“O Messenger of Allaah, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you. I have come to you on behalf of the women. Verily Allaah has sent you to men and women. We have believed in you. We do not go out and we remain in your homes. We are your source of physical pleasure. We carry your children. A man goes out to pray jum’ah and jamaa’ah, and follows the janaazah. And if you go out for hajj, or ‘umrah, or jihaad, we look after your wealth. We wash your clothing. We raise your children. Shall we not share in the reward?” The Prophet (swas) turned to his Companions and said, *“Have you ever heard anything a woman has said better than what she has said?”*

Then he (swas) said to her, “Understand O woman, and inform the other women. Indeed a woman’s perfection of her relationship with her husband, her seeking his pleasure, and doing that which he approves of is equivalent to all of that.” Asmaa left exclaiming *“Laa ilaaha illallaah.”*”

She tightened the blanket Angie used to envelop the baby and placed the little bundle closer to her chest where her heart beat faster. She grinned with gratitude:

“Masha Allaah, sister, there is a blessing in polygyny; it helps us getting closer to Allaah and His creation.”

“Yes” agreed Angie, “I wondered! See, I am curious and I would like to know how things are going on with you. Did you notice anything different about Sayyid since we got married? Do you feel he is happier?”

“What are you worrying about, sis? You are doing fine.”

Angie smiled proudly and tried to hide her happy grin in drinking from the cup, her two hands holding around the edges as if to warm up her hands. Hikmah continued reassuringly:

“Well, if you want to know everything, he is so much more relaxed with me since he has someone else to go to. I am so glad you are here! And also he is so happy to be a father, sometimes I wonder if it is fair that you get his company once every other day. You should have him more!”

They smiled knowingly.

“Then you would be so jealous, Hikmah, that you would find a way to get him back before he had spent one hour in our house.”

“Yes,” admitted Hikmah, “we are human beings after all. We are weak, Allaahu ‘Alim. But I confess that I have come to appreciate him so much since your arrival and not take him for granted so much. It is just such a completely different mind set! I know that I am pleasing Allaah and I become stronger in my *deen* and Insha Allaah I have now a friend who will move with us if we move and will help us if you need it and vice versa.”

“Masha Alaah, Hikmah, very well said. I feel the same and I need to work harder at applying those things to myself everyday. I would have to say that polygyny is definitely a test, and whether I am passing or not, it is only for the sake of Allaah.”

“Allahu Akbar.”

“There is something I wanted to talk to you, Hikmah, but I do not know how to begin.”

“What is it?”

“Well... I was wondering as we are tackling the subject, do you feel always that happy about us? I mean that, yes, I have doubt sometimes. Even if it is hard to admit it,

sometimes I even feel like I am going crazy. If I do not struggle to forget about you, I feel like all of this is insane, that I am insane. Allaah forgives me. I mean.... Do you jump from one emotion to the other in terms of your feelings towards polygyny, sometimes even within a day, within an hour? Do you hurt sometimes? I mean, not always, but sometimes? See, lately I have been doing very well, Alhamdulillah, and my household has been lovely, but there are still moments when Shaytan tries to creep in on my chest and tempts me towards rebellion. I know that the best of jihad is against one own self and I am struggling against my emotions and feelings, but still I get upset once again despite myself and I really fight back but I cannot help feeling like I dislike the whole situation.”

“The Prophet (swas) said: *"Whoever revives an aspect of my Sunnah that is forgotten after my death, he will have a reward equivalent to that of the people who follow him, without it detracting in the least from their reward."* (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 7/443; this is a hasan hadeeth because of corroborating asaaneed).

And the Prophet (saw) also said, *"Islam began as something strange and will return as something strange so Tuba (paradise or a tree in Paradise) is for the strangers."*

“So we are the strangers, Hikmah? We are the true followers of Sunnah wa Al-Jamaah?”

“Yes, sister. Think positive always. Anyway, don’t you think that the best part of polygamy and being a co-wife makes you try harder to be a good wife?

Ayesha (ra) narrated: Allah's Messenger (saw) said: *"Be calm, oh Aisha! Allah loves that one should be kind and lenient in all matters."* (8:53 Sahih al Bukhari, #2025 Summarized alBukhari) .

And: *"The (Hell) Fire is surrounded by all kinds of desires and passions, while Paradise is surrounded by all kinds of disliked undesirable things."* (Narrated Abu Huraira. 8:494 Sahih al-Bukhari, #2110 Summarized al-Bukhari)

Why don’t we exhort ourselves to not being self-centered and think only about our desires? What we want, what we do not want? Men who marry another woman do not think only to what they desire, right? It is a decision we took the three of us and there is nothing negative about it.”

“Yes, Islam has decreed plural marriages for his ummah; it is something that Islam has allowed for the Muslim man. I know that, sister. Really? Why do we cry over this? I believe that we lack of *emaan* when we do that. It is not of us to reject part of our faith.”

“Allah says in Surah Hujuraat regarding the Bedoins: *They say: "We believe." Say: "You believe not but you only say, 'We have surrendered (in Islâm),' for Faith has not yet entered your hearts"*(49.14). Allah allowed this practice for the Muslim man and Allah didn't allow this practice for the Muslim woman. Isn't it time that we accept that wholeheartedly without any wavering in our hearts? We say that we dislike polygyny because of some defect in our *emaan*. We do not hate it from our *emaan*; we hate it from some deficiency in our hearts.”

Angie refrained from shedding a few tears that had started accumulating in her eyes.

“Do you really mean it, Hikmah? Am I a bad Muslimah because I love my husband to death and I would like to be a part of everything he does, be enough for him and because it hurts my heart to see him the husband of another woman? Have I strayed from my *deen*? See, I was raised to protect my chastity as something the most precious I have inside me. I thought every Muslim felt that way and saved themselves for their future spouse. Now, I have to admit that it is just for me, not for him! Am I being egoistic, sister? I also believed that who is not jealous has stopped loving. Am I wrong? Is loving really for the sake of Allaah stopping being jealous? See, I am not complaining and I am not judging anybody but one never sees a Muslim desiring his close relatives in an amorous way, even if they are the most desirable of all people. A spiritual man loves moderation in his desires.” Angie hesitated, then continued:

“Have you ever thought, and if Sayyid loved and married another woman besides us? A truly spiritual man stops himself from fretting about a property which is lost to him and what are other women than something that does not belong to him? Well, they could be entrusted to him... I mean, a just man is it not who hates to infringe the rights of others and who hates to see others infringe his own rights? I feel sometimes that I have the right to ask him his unconditional love, but I cannot deny that asking him to divorce you would infringe your own rights as his wife. Sometimes I am lost in sadness and it does not make any sense. I cannot change anything with my hand. It is just that before marrying him I thought I could do it because he has strong *emaan* and I thought I could never find

somebody who is that clever and who has that much knowledge about Islam. I was impressed by him; nothing would stop me from marrying him...”

“And now you have after thoughts?”

“Kind of. Not really. It just hurts... And I know this is my jihad and I will have my reward for being patient in the Hereafter and each minute I struggle against my *nafs* I actually gain a reward. That’s a great consolation, believe me, Hikmah. May Allaah be merciful unto me. Ameen.”

“Listen, Angie. There are desires Allaah Ta’alah placed in the hearts of people for a reason. It is placed there so the fact that they would feel inclined towards each other. If we didn’t have crushes and desires, there would be no need to lower the gaze. But in the case of our husband, it is *halal* for him to act upon his desires and by doing so he provided love, comfort and a home to you, sister. Yes, that hurts me and I ask Allaah to accept my good intentions and forgive me my shortcomings in life. Ameen.

The Noble Qur’aan says: “*You women are Libaas* [i.e. body cover, or screen, or Sakan, [i.e. you enjoy the pleasure of living with her- as in verse 7:189] Tafsir at-Tabarî] *for you and you are the same for them*” (Qur’aan, 2:187)

We are helping our husband to be more virtuous because he needs both of us to satisfy his desires. Men do not have as much control over their passions as we have, us, women; they are less patient.

My dear sister, I advice you, do not rebel against the decree of Allaah.

“*Allaah does not look at a woman who does not thank her husband while she cannot do without him.*” (Al-Hakim)

Our husband is a good husband; give him credit. Also, you have to put your trust in Allaah that He chose what is best for you. You do not know about it but when you first married him, I used to keep track of everything he owed me in terms of time, money, attention. He made me understand not only that it was none of my business, that I was not, as he said “a polygyny accountant”, but also whatever he spent on you would go back to me, that whatever he spent on you could be a make up for whatever he had already spent on me, that I did not see. So I decided it was best to put my trust in Allaah first, then to put my trust in my husband. Our husband fears Allaah and is fair between us. The minimum we can do for him is to obey him whatever he decides.

“When any woman prays her five, fasts her month, guards her body and obeys her husband it is said to her: Enter paradise from whichever of its doors you wish.”

(Ibn Hibban)

Now, even if I know it is my time but he is still with you, I do not have to question him about it; he will make up for it one way or the other. And even so he does not, whatever is due to you will come to you whether in this life or the next. And I ask Allaah to have mercy on the men in polygyny and to save them from being of those who will lean on the day of judgement. Ameen. And Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And adjust all matters of difference among you” (Qur’ana, Al-Anfaal 8:1).

If you want to turn enmity into love, then treat him well, if he treats you badly, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *“The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal.*

Repel (the evil) with one which is better, then verily! He between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend” (Qur’aan, Fussilat 41:34)

“And they (women) have rights (over their husbands as regards living expenses) similar (to those of their husbands) over them (as regards obedience and respect) to what is reasonable” (Qur’aan Al-Baqarah, 2:228)

Even if sometimes he needs to be reminded of his duties, just like the captain is the commander of his ship and crew, the man has the responsibility of his family. Don’t you think it is hard enough so that we add our feelings to it? Imagine if it was the woman making decisions in the case of a plural marriage; it would be chaotic!

Our husband is the one who is in charge of protecting us and he assures for us a comfortable life so that we do not need to take responsibilities in the domain of work and we do not have the worries that go along with having a job, earning money, paying the rent, etc. Our job is to make him happy and educate our children because it is in our womb that life starts. If one woman would want one thing and the other would want its opposite and if the man had to bend on each side, he would break. So, we have to obey our husband in everything, even in his decision to have other wives.”

Angie sighed, sipped on her tea, then added:

“However, the *fitnah* (trouble) of jealousy will always be there, I am afraid; it may never disappear.”

“Actually it can be a helper to us, sister, because it makes us grow fonder of him, isn’t it? I also believe the open lines of communication should be there all the time between the three of us. It is fairer. This way, nobody gets cheated. The wives of Prophet Muhammad (swas) displayed this attitude of fairness and justice towards co-wives. By their behavior, they set the highest example of control over their passion and co-existence against all odds, and they were more than two. They exercised fairness dealing with each other and grew to become better persons by being wise, rational and tactful in their treatment of one another.”

“Do you think so? If they were so perfect, why did the prophet (swas) said: *“I have not seen any lacking in rational ability and failing in religion but (at the same time) robbing the wisdom of the wise, besides you [women]”*

“What is meant by lacking in rational ability is that the testimony of two women is equivalent to the testimony of one man. Failing in religion means that women spend days and nights without praying due to vaginal discharges. This is a shortcoming which Allaah has decreed for us and there is no sin because of that, but nobody can change the way she has been created by Allaah and going against our nature can but occasionate sufferings and displeasure in the eyes of Allaah.”

“Yes, I understand, Hikmah. Thank you for being so positive. We are all in the same boat. It is not about being submissive and him being overlording; it is about becoming a better person and a more spiritually mature Muslim. By giving, we win and that is that!”

“That is that! And Allaah says: *“O you who believe... stand up for justice even if it be against your own self.”* So all your feelings of being disturbed by the situation is unfair to Sayyid, unfair to me, unfair toward what Allaah has decreed. I think a husband should be a person who should be able to make you feel good about being a wife. If you feel like going crazy out of jealousy, think that you have been entrusted to him and the responsibility is his. You know, it is not easy to be the man in a polygynous marriage and be fair and partake his time equally between us. *“Look to how you are with respect to him for he is your paradise and your hell-fire.”* (Ahmad & others)

So do not hurt him by being rebellious and resentful because prophet Muhammad (swas) stated that Allaah forgives all sins if we repent but not those we have committed against others like hurting their feelings unless the person we have hurt forgives us. You might

hurt his feelings by not trusting him. And you do not know what is best for you. Allaah knows. Maybe there are more blessings for you in a polygamous marriage than in a monogamous. Some people started with one and finished with the other and are happier being co-wives than being the wife of one man, and vice versa. If any marriage is not built on the foundation ordained by Allaah it will not work. Allaah will bless a marriage in which the husband and the wives fulfill their obligations towards each other, might it be with a co-wife or without one.

Anyway, you have accepted him while you knew about me. A sister has the right to reject a proposal by any brother. The choice is all the woman's; nobody forces her into what she does not want. Allaah is the turner of the hearts, he turned you towards us. Allaah knows best."

Angie dropped her head over her hands, shyly hiding her face between her hands.

"Angie? Think only about how much happiness you feel near him and think about how many rewards you will receive either in this life or in the other because Allaah says: *"Surely by time humans are at a loss, except those who believe and do righteous deeds and counsel each other to the truth and counsel each other to Sabr [patience]" (Qur'aan, Al asr, 103)*

Maybe tomorrow we will lose him and we will be so sad we would look behind us at what we did. Maybe we will regret all the time we spent crying over our fate and we will regret not having spent our time just pleasing our Door to Paradise."

Angie looked up sadly to Hikmah.

"You are right, sister. What am I thinking about. Allaah be praised for sending me such a good co-wife as yourself."

Hikmah smiled and handed the sleepy baby to its mother. She said:

"And maybe this little darling will take care of both of us in our old age and what a bliss to know each other because we will never feel alone, ever..."

Abdullah bin 'Amr bin 'As that Rasulullah (swas):

“He who desires to be rescued the fire of Hell and to enter Paradise should die when he believes in Allah and the Last Day, and should deal with others as he wishes to be deal with.” (Muslim)

On the authority of the Commander of the Faithful, Aboo Hafs `Umar ibn al-Khattaab, said: I heard the Messenger of Allaah (swas) say:

“Actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended. Thus he whose migration (Hijrah) was for Allah and His Messenger, his migration was for Allah and His Messenger, and he whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take some woman in marriage, his migration was for that which he migrated.”

A few years later, Hikmah was visiting one of her best friends. Sayyid had passed away and she had moved in her co-wife's house.

“So how did you managed the burial, Hikmah? I mean who paid for all expenses? Did you prepare a will together?”

“We just shared everything. We put all our accounts together and paid the bills together.”

“So, how did it go with the co-wife? You always said it was better to put a healthy distance between you and her because of the rivalry.”

“Well, he always wanted us to live under the same roof. We never actually could do it until his death. See all the time we were co-wives, we treated each other as sisters in Islam, nothing more, nothing less. Her honor, her blood were sacred to me. We never wished to harm each other neither in action nor in speech. We were not enemies. We just loved each other only for the sake of Allaah and to place peace between our hearts. See, when I talk about my life with Sayyid, I tend to explain everything to you, what we've been up to, where we've been, etc. But if I had to say something to Angie, I would be careful about what I say. I would not mention where he took me and that we did this and that. See, maybe she would get upset because he did not bring her there because of the children or else. Same thing would be true if she did not watch what she said. I would feel upset because I would think, “well he's never done that for me!!” You see the picture? Shaytan would have been busy working his way between us, and later cause trouble between Sayyid and each one of us. See, we want for our sister what we want for ourselves but we do not necessary want to see it before our eyes. Look to how Ayesha

(ra) got angry when Safiyyah (ra) sent a dish to some guests of their husband (swas) who had come to Ayesha's (ra) apartment. She broke the dish, which sent the food scattering. Ayesha's (ra) says, *"I brought harara to the Prophet one day. Sauda was also there. I asked her to eat it too. For some reason she refused. I said, either you eat it or I will smear it on your face. She refused to eat, so I dipped my hand in the harara and smeared it all over her face. When the prophet saw this he started to laugh. He pinned me down with his hands, and asked Sauda to smear my face with harara. She did that, and the prophet started to laugh again."*

Ayesha (ra) says that the Prophet (swas) often talked about Khadija (ra) and that made Ayesha (ra) jealous. One day she said to the prophet (swas) that Khadija (ra) was old and had lost all her looks; why does he still talk about her when Allah had given him better ones (meaning herself). The prophet (swas) said that Allah had not given him one better than Khadija (ra); she was his only friend and believer when the whole world was against him.

Ayesha (ra) once complained of a headache to the Prophet (swas) when he responded by saying he wished that such would occur (an illness leading to her death) only while he remained alive so that he could supplicate for her and ask Allah for her forgiveness. She said to him: *"It seems you desire my death so that you may spend the last of your days as a groom with some of your wives!"* (Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree Vol, 570)

These sisters at the same time had the utmost respect for each other. They really cared for each other and recognized their strong points. Zaynab (ra) and Ayesha (ra) were the stronger rivals, however Ayesha (ra) recalls: *"The Messenger of Allah (swas) asked Zaynab bint Jahsh concerning me, saying: 'O Zaynab, what did you see? What have you learnt?' She said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I protect my hearing and my sight (by refraining from telling lies). I know nothing but good about her.'" Then 'A'ishah said: "She is the one who was my main rival, but Allah protected her (from telling lies) because of her piety."*

When Zaynab died, Ayesha (ra) said: *"She has departed praiseworthy and worshipping much, the refuge of the orphans and widows."*

These two women did not break ties or stop helping each other; it is just that when one is in this situation, things are different. We think it is going to be ok but when we enter

polygamy for real, we have to apply what we believe in. One has to be in the situation to understand the kind of feelings and reactions that come and overtake you from nowhere.”

“I agree that polygyny was permitted as a means to solve social problems. However I believe in total loyalty. See, Hikmah, I do not know why men need several women to feel happy. Maybe it is the attention that they get and the feeling of being in control of a large family that praises Allaah.

As for me, I am blessed. My hubby believes in total loyalty too. This does not mean we never have our fantasies or we never are attracted by someone else, may Allaah forgive us. Ameen. It means that the loyalty we have for each other touches each part of our lives. It is our jihad. We both fight to be ever closer to one another and share everything. There is nothing that touches him that does not concern me, and vice versa. One cannot be one place without the other. We compete in our *deen*. He cannot learn a new *surah* without me learning a longer one, and we also race for charity or for being the first one to wake up for *Tahajjud* (night prayer). This is how it is meant to be. Either you decide to live as partners as in your case or you decide to live as bodies, as one body. What he does with another woman is my concern; for you, it is none of your business. It is your choice. The bottom line is I think, we, Muslim women are lucky because men do not cheat on us as the non-Muslim men do continually to their wives. Someone said that many divorces were due to rampant extramarital affairs, so polygyny could be a solution for the children of the American society. Of course, the children are the first victims. But look here. Cheating does not exist because we believe firmly in monogamy, because men are frustrated by not having other choices. No! Cheating exists because people have fantasies brought by the TV, the Internet and the free mixing of sexes, because they have a sickness in their heart. Being loyal to one spouse begins by lowering the gaze, not accepting to talk with non-*mahram* women except for strict religious or professional purposes. It continues by stopping watching Western movies or wasting time on TV or radio programs that are of no interest for our *deen*. Finally, it is to work on our relationship at home. It is important to make our mate feel admired, cherished, taken care of. It is important to satisfy as many as his desires as possible, to use our imagination and to be agreeable to each other, cheerful, deep and meaningful to him. A man whose only

dream is to come back at home to find his wife is a man who will be loyal to you and vice versa.

Our problem nowadays is that we want to be independent. We get together for our pleasure or whenever we feel like being with someone. So, cheating is the norm.

To create a healthy relationship, a shining relationship asks time and efforts and a lot of love. And we should strive for what we believe is the best for us and to our *deen* while keeping our chastity.

Mormons practice polygyny; they believe it is an ideal way for women to both have a career and children since both wives will help each other in rearing the children. God blesses them! It is their choice of life. Women can truly feel liberated by polygyny; I do not deny that. And a man who is busy working to take care of two households has little time for looking elsewhere; it keeps him in check.

However, for twenty five years of his youth and adult life, our Prophet (swas) remained thoroughly devoted to only one woman, Khadija (ra). He would take none other for consort until he was fifty years old. I see several reasons for this: there were no wars; he needed peace of mind and a one to one helper, and he did not need to seal alliances with other tribes by wedding their daughters. And this was at the time where polygyny was in favor! Historically, in the Bible it says that David (as) had six wives and numerous concubines (2 Samuel 5:13; 1 Chronicles 3:1-9, 14:3) and Solomon (as) was said to have had seven hundreds wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3). The Talmud advises a maximum of four wives.

In many cultures, women do not see polygyny as a sign of women's degradation and would encourage it whether Muslim or Christian or else.

At the time of Rasulullaah (swas) it was customary for Arab chiefs to cement alliances through political marriages. Others were marriages to the widows or to women who needed protection or needed a man to ward themselves off from sin. But some of the companions of the Prophet (swas) never married or married only one wife like Ali (ra). Polygyny was not necessarily the norm. At the same time, there is nothing in any other religion, nation or law than can compare to the honor which woman gains in Islam.

Romans treated their women as slaves who could be the object of a beat or married and divorced several times to give children to different men. Romans decided that women did

not have a soul. In Athens, women were regarded as handiwork of the devil as she is regarded in the beginning chapter of the Bible. Nonetheless, some women in the Antiquity were queens or influenced their husbands decisions.

In the East, the ancient laws of India stipulates that disease, death, Hell, snake venom and fire were better than women. The Old Testament says:

“I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains” (Ecclesiastes 7:25-26). On the contrary, Islam showed tolerance towards women and the mixing of gender. In the time of Rasulullaah (swas), women shared public meetings and decisions along with men; they conducted speeches before the community and presented their arguments; they conducted their own business; they taught men behind a veil; they watched sportive events and festivities held by men in the *purdah*; they were allowed to go to mosque. Prophet Muhammad (swas) even dismounted his camel to let a *sahabiah* ride among the men.

In the 7th C AD's Revelation, we learn that women took part in the First and Second Ba'yat al-Aqabah (pledges of allegiance). It was Somayya who was among the first to be martyred upholding Islam, and Khadija (ra) who was the first to believe and support Rasulullaah (swas). Al-Bukhari and Ahmed cited Al-Rabiyya' the daughter of Mu'awadh as saying: *“We used to participate in the battles with the Prophet of Allah. We gave water to the fighters, served them, and returned the dead and wounded to Medina.”* Also Muslim, Ibn Majah and Ahmed said that Umm Ateyya, the Ansari, said: *“I accompanied the Messenger of Allah (swas) seven times, guarding the camp, making the food, treating the wounded and caring for the sick.”* In his Sahih, Muslim reported Umm Sulaim, the wife of Abi Talha, as saying that she carried a dagger on the day of the battle of Hunain. When the Prophet (swas) asked her about it she said, *“I carry it so that I can defend myself against the enemies.”* Nusaibah, the daughter of Ka'b, fought in the wars of *riddah* (apostasy) at the time of the caliphate of Abu Bakr and she suffered many wounds caused by stabs and strikes.

Maimunah bint Al-Harith freed a girl born as her slave without asking for the Prophet's (swas) permission. When she mentioned this to him, he agreed but he said: *“If you had given her to your maternal uncle as a gift, your reward (with Allah) would have been greater.”*

Women are unanimously accepted as narrators of *ahadith*, and this means that their testimony in narrating *ahadith* is treated like that of a man.

Allah says: *"The men believers and the women believers are responsible for each other. They enjoin the good and forbid the evil"* (Surat al-Tawbah', 9, ayah 71) and: *"Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good and forbidding all Evil. And it is they who are the successful"* (Surat Al-Imran, 3, ayah 104). This verse includes a command that gives women the right to enjoin the good and forbid the evil and part of this is the right to vote for the representative council in the elections.

The Prophet Muhammad (swas) was full of praise for virtuous and chaste women. He said: *"The world and all things in the world are precious but the most precious thing in the world is a virtuous woman."* He once told the future Caliph, 'Umar: *"Shall I not inform you about the best treasure a man can hoard? It is a virtuous wife who pleases him whenever he looks towards her, and who guards herself when he is absent from her."* On other occasions the Prophet (swas) said: *"The best property a man can have is a remembering tongue (i.e. which remembers God), a grateful heart and a believing wife who helps him in his faith."*

He told the Muslims: *"Fear God in respect of women."* And: *"The best of you are they who behave best to their wives."* And: *"A Muslim must not hate his wife, and if he be displeased with one bad quality in her, let him be pleased with one that is good."*

Husband and wife should be full-fledged partners in making their home a happy and prosperous place. They should be loyal and faithful to one another, and genuinely interested in each other's welfare and the welfare of their children. A woman is expected to soften her husband and he is enjoined to educate her.

"Among my followers the best of men are those who are best to their wives, and the best of women are those who are best to their husbands. To each of such women is set down a reward equivalent to the reward of a thousand martyrs. Among my followers, again, the best of women are those who assist their husbands in their work, and love them dearly for everything, save what is a transgression of God's laws."

Once a woman came to the Prophet (swas) with a complaint against her husband. He told her: *"There is no woman who removes something to replace it in its proper place, with a view to tidying her husband's house, but that Allaah sets it down as a virtue for her. Nor*

is there a man who walks with his wife hand-in-hand, but that Allaah sets it down as a virtue for him; and if he puts his arm round her shoulder in love, his virtue is increased tenfold." Once he was heard praising the women of the tribe of Quraish, saying: *"because they are the kindest to their children while they are infants and because they keep a careful watch over the belongings of their husbands."* The first and greatest influence on a person comes from the sense of security, affection, and training received from the mother.

Finally, the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) regards women as the spiritual and intellectual equals of men. The Qur'an admonishes those men who oppress or ill-treat women:

"O you who believe! [...] live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike something and God will bring about through it a great deal of good" (Qur'aan, 4:19)

See, there are many blessings reaching men and women for being together and treating each other well, and marriage is certainly an obligation upon everyone who can afford it, but nowhere there is something in Islam that specifically says that polygyny has many rewards. It is a free choice.

What I like most to take as example in the case of polygyny, Hikmah, is that Hawwa (Eve) was created to complete Prophet Adam (as) and give him companionship. The first couple on earth was strictly monogamous; that proves something, doesn't it?

"It is He Who has created you from a single person (Adam), and (then) He has created from him his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], in order that he might enjoy the pleasure of living with her" (Qur'an 7:189).

"And Allah has made for you mates (and companions) of your own nature, and made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren, and provided for you sustenance of the best: will they then believe in vain things, and be ungrateful for Allah's favours?" (Qur'an 16:72)

Many prophets (as) did not marry or married only one woman. If our Prophet (swas) was not monogamous at heart, why did he always place his love for Khadijah (ra) on top of his love for any other woman, and why did he have special feelings for Ayesha (ra)? And why did he forbid Ali (ra) from marrying other women while his daughter Fatima (ra) was alive? He thought that Ayesha (ra) was a gift from Allaah. He (swas) said: *"I saw*

you in a dream for three nights when an angel brought you to me in a silk cloth and he said: 'Here is your wife', and when I removed (the cloth) from your face, lo, it was yourself, so I said: 'If this is from Allah, let Him carry it out.'"

And, so he treated her until the end of his life. Ayesha (ra) reported that *"at the time of breathing his last, he was reclining against her chest and she was leaning over him and listening to him as he was saying: 'Oh Allah, grant me pardon, show mercy to me, enjoin me to companions.'"*

Ayesha (ra) further reported: *"The wives of the Prophet then sent Zainab b. Jahsh (another) wife of the Prophet, who ranked nearly equal with me in the eyes of the Prophet. I have never seen a woman more advanced in religious piety than Zainab, more God-fearing, more truthful, more conscious of blood-ties, more generous and having greater sense of self-sacrifice in practical life, and of more charitable disposition, and thus more close to God, the magnificent, than her. However, she suddenly lost her temper but soon calmed down. The Prophet had permitted her to enter when I (Ayesha) was along with him in my mantle, in exactly the same state when Fatima had entered. She said: 'Allah's Messenger, your wives have sent me to ask for equity regarding the daughter of Abu Quhafa.' Then turning to me she became harsh and I looked into the Prophet's eyes to guess if he wanted me to hit back. When I realized that he approved of it, I retorted and exchanged hot words with her until she observed silence. Thereupon the Prophet smiled and said: 'She (Ayesha) is the daughter of Abu Bakr.'"*

This episode tells us how love-starved the Prophet's (swas) wives were, showing us that monogamy is the best way to please one's wife. It is in fact the way she can feel fulfilled in the emotional and psychological sense of the word.

"And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may live in tranquility with them, and He put love and mercy between you; Verily, in that are signs for people who reflect." (Qur'aan 30:21)

What is the best way to gain peace of mind than making our spouse happy? If her happiness lies in monogamy, why not give it to her as Ali (ra) gave it to Fatima (ra)? See, Hikmah, the acceptance of polygyny is not an assurance of going to Jannah; it is just a conscious decision to accept it as the man's preference or because it is a good arrangement for everybody. It is a way of thinking and living. I do not agree with the

women who try to convince us that polygyny is the only way, that refusing it for oneself is to displease Allaah. Also it is not an obligation for the man to take the permission from his other wives to marry another but it is recommended as a mark of kindness and respect. Some women say that it is legal to lie for a man as long as he reaches his ends! This is not fair for anyone. If marriage is a partnership, how would you feel about your business partner signing contracts behind your back? And how can a man expect starting a peaceful relationship with another when he takes the risk of upsetting his first wife, preventing her from maybe sleeping, eating out of grief? Allaah says that He created a mate for Adam (as) so *“that he may find rest with her”* (Qur’aan, 7:189) and *“enjoy the pleasure of living with her,”* and not to create more sadness on earth!

It is well known that the more one knows his or her partner and spends quality time by sharing amusements, the more his pleasure is increased.

I definitely think we should value this. Imagine a man with two wives and more. How much time does he have for each one of them besides his privacy time and his work time? When he thinks about one, the other pops up in his mind. When he is with one, he might imagine being with the other. He might remember what pleases the other one and may be confused by it. When he buys something spontaneously for one, he has to think about the other one, losing all spontaneity in the end. He has to calculate his every move. When he feels like being with one, he has to sacrifice his time and happiness to visit the other one and his desires and moods are changing with time and events. This he cannot control because he is a human being and because he cannot pick trials that come his way. One woman cannot offer the same thing another woman offers. One maybe deficient of something that he needs at a special moment in his life, yet he cannot be unjust and make the choice to be with one rather than the other. As a result, he might develop feelings of frustration towards one of his wives and abandon her company for a while. So, the argument that polygyny is a natural state for any human being, I do not buy that. Why non-Muslims enjoy cheating on their wives? It is because they have the freedom to go like a bee from one or the other without being tied up to anyone while enjoying his pleasure. A man should think twice before engaging in polygyny. In monogamy at least there is no confusion because a man tries to adapt to one person only and he lets this person know about what he wants; she teaches him what she wants and both try to please

each other; they can let go together. It is a work of every minute where boredom should never take place. The Prophet (swas) says: *“If a man marries, half of his religion is saved. Fear Allaah for the remaining half.”*

Why risking to be unfair when marrying more than one? Isn't Islam difficult enough? Do we fulfill our duties as a Muslim before even thinking about what is after all just a Sunnah? If it takes *taqwa*, wisdom and good character for a woman to share her husband with a co-wife as you told me once, Hikmah, it takes the exact amount of efforts to be a single wife. I admire you, my friend, because you took this decision, but then you said: ‘I have three choices: stay and be miserable, leave, stay and haul myself up, get a grip on reality, the way things really are and practice this *deen* as was practiced in the past. I don't want to end up a sad, depressed, old woman before my time. Isn't that a waste of my precious time? Isn't it? It's all up to me to change how I personally view this situation because if he wants to do it, anyway he will do it, with or without my permission, and there is nothing I can do about it. Ninety percent of my emotional problems are because of what I choose to continue thinking and feeling. Well, I am done with all of that.

Enough is enough! I do not need my husband to validate my worth. When is Allaah's love more than enough for me? Why don't I cry when I commit a sin, but I cry when he says he wants another wife? When do I stop all of this hemming and hauling over something *halal*? Goodness! Am I that weak?

Yes, I want him to love me, yes, I want him to say nice things to me, yes, I want his children, yes, I want his attention, yes, I want his compassion, his understanding, yes, yes, yes. But sheesh, where is my strength to stand up and say: I make my marriage between you and I and not you and I and a Her and a Her and Her. What is it? Is he sooooo perfect that I sacrifice my dignity, my ticket to Jannah, my individuality?

Ya Allaah, I can do this, Insha Allah, and I can do it well. Allahu Alim. You know why? Because I am going to trust in my Rubb that he would not allow something that is harmful to me, that there is benefit the likes of that which I do not know.

Al Amin, Al Mustafah (swas) said: *“Softness is never put inside anything except that it beautifies (embellishes) it, and harshness is never put inside anything except that it makes it ugly” (Muslim)... ”*

“O, please, stop that! Stop quoting me! To believe in polygamy is to believe in the Qur’aan, Allah's word! If you don't believe in polygamy then you don't believe in Allah's word, that is HARAAM. These women are beautiful inside out and they are living in these polygamous marriages for the sake of Allah, seeking Allah's pleasure. If you stop thinking of what will please yourself and what would please Allah you will see your attitude would change.

I do not believe in *till death do us part*. I love my husband dearly but he is not my everything. Real love is not a love song. He is not my sun rising in the morning and my sun setting at night. I love the man and to me he is my home. Wherever he is, I will be, Insha Allah. But my life does not depend on him. I worship Allah and Allah comes first. I am trying to please Allah and get to Jannah. Alhamdulillah may Allah accept it from me. The hardest part in polygyny is the outside world for co-wives. Other sisters always try to create *fitnah* between the both of us.

Well, sister, you know the old saying! Never say never. Some husbands are a disgrace to this *deen* by the way they go about finding a wife, deceiving, lusting, etc. But some wives are a disgrace to the *deen* in the way they treat their husbands.

In polygyny, you have emotions which cause you to flee to Allah, to turn to Him and call on Him. This keeps you strong in your *deen*, Insha'Allah. But they are just that, sister, emotions, emotions of the moment and emotions are not what we base our decisions on as Muslims. We base our decisions on what is best for us in the *dunya* and the *akhirah*. That is why we make *istikhara* about everything. Polygyny is not an easy adjustment but it is a mutually beneficial solution for which Insha Allah we will gain extra *hassanat* (good deeds). I pray that Allah will help us to be a good example. Ameen.

Also, don't ever forget that your husband is not by any means “yours”. He belongs to Allah just as your children do and just as you do. He is here to serve as a helpmate and garment and tilth for you, but he is not the be all and end all of your existence, and sometimes we let ourselves commit shirk by wanting to love and please our husbands more than we want to love and please the Almighty. It is part of the *hikmah* (wisdom) of polygyny that we develop in our relationship with Allah and loosen a bit the relationship with our husband, who is after all just another human being.

That is not to say parts of this marriage will not be hard: time sharing, intimacy sharing, jealousy, etc., but there are pros as well: extended family, increased faith and the knowledge that if something happens to Angie, there will be someone to take care of her children who loves them, and that's me.

May Allah purify our *niyat* (intention) so that our true goal is to please Him so much that we are truly willing to share that which we love most for His sake and for the sake of our sisters whom we also love for the sake of Allah. Ameen.

The Prophet (swas) said: *"Whoever revives an aspect of my Sunnah that is forgotten after my death, he will have a reward equivalent to that of the people who follow him, without it detracting in the least from their reward."* (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 7/443; this is a *hasan hadeeth* because of corroborating *asaaneed*).

I know I am not always perfect. Isn't it funny how we have totally lucid, tranquil, *sakeena*, happy, accepting attitudes most of the time but every once in a while things just crash around us and we feel ourselves insecure and terrified. But Alhamdulillah these moments pass and are part of the test. Praise Allah for this test, though. Because it is filled with blessings as well and because it is a special jihad that few are called to. All people in polygyny are *Mujahiddeen*.

It is also from amongst the characteristics of the true *Mu'min* or *Muhsin* that he or she does not demand his rights but is more concerned with fulfilling the rights of others. And when his rights are not fulfilled he looks to himself to find a reason why."

"See, Hikmah, I respect you but I prefer not to add trials to my life. Maybe this trial helps you in your faith, maybe it would cause me to lose mine! But in the end: *"On the Day of Judgement, Allah, the Most High, will announce, 'Where are those who love each other for the sake of My pleasure? This day I am going to shelter them in the shade provided by Me. Today there is no shade except My shade.'*" (Muslim)

And this I will say to Allaah on Doomday: I have loved one person on this earth for your sake and that is my husband. I have feared him in Allaah and he has feared me in Allaah. Together we have helped each other for You, The Almighty; we have helped each other to get closer to You; we have carried the same sword and this could not have happened if we had not surrendered to each other and forgot the rest of the world to praise You and to be grateful to You. We have worked hand in hand for Your pleasure, O Lord. Our

priorities was not to revive a Sunnah, our priorities were to hold on tight to the pillars of Islam. Doing so, we fell Shaheed (martyrs) blood in blood on Your path so that You may reunite us in Jannah cause You said: *"Whoever follows My Guidance, there shall be no fear on them, not shall they grieve"* (Al Baqarah, 2:38).

Praise be to Allaah and benediction upon His Prophet.

Allahumma inna na'udhu bika min 'ilman la yanfa'u wa qalbin la yakhsha'u, wa nafsinn la tasha'u wa du'a la yusma'u

I seek refuge in You from knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart that is not humbled, from a du'a that is not answered, and from a soul that is not satisfied.
Ameen.

"...Our Lord! Condemn us not
If we forget or fall
Into error; our Lord!
Lay not on us a burden
Like that which Thou
Didst lay on those before us;
Our Lord! lay not on us
A burden greater than we
Have strength to bear.
Blot out our sins,
And grant us forgiveness.
Have mercy on us.
Thou art our Protector..."
(Qur'aan 2:286)

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