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Topic: Polygamy in Islam in the Words and Writings of the Promised Messiah (as)

The Chairman, Invited Guests etc...will be addressed when available

Introduction

In civilized societies, a lot of importance has been attached on the family units. A family unit is the fundamental unit in any society no matter on what basis it is organized. A society can be organized on religious, political or geographical perspectives. As long as the family unit is strong in a society, that society as a whole becomes strong. That is precisely why all politicians, civic leaders and religious scholars put a lot of emphasis on the strength of a family unit.

Marriage is the foundation of each family unit in any society. It establishes the beginning of new generation of human beings. All societies have a well-defined system of rules and regulations in regards to the marriage contract and the ceremonies attached to it. Even in the primitive societies, there are verbal rules of marriage that have been well established through generations. All religions have given the process of marriage so much importance that it is considered to be a holy responsibility for both spouses to fulfill.

God also gave us the perfect models of the Holy Prophet (sa) and enjoined us to tread in his footsteps. He was indeed the only perfect man who had tremendous capacities. Reflecting on any aspect of his blessed models one observes exceedingly great standards. We are enjoined to aspire to follow his blessed models. These perfect and blessed models also encompass marital issues and we observe the supreme excellent standards that he set in this regard. He once said, "*The best of you is the one who is best to his wives, and I am the best of you toward my wives.*" He also said if there is any quality a husband dislikes in his wife he should be mindful of another that he likes and thus generate an environment of harmony.

The Muslim community, especially the Ahmadiyya Jama'at is challenged with marital issues in recent times leading many breakdowns of marriages. A perceived lovely husbands and wives suddenly divorce each other's

unnecessarily. Death is seriously taken a higher tone on the youth these days, mostly men in our societies. The number widows and orphans keep adding in various communities. If the phenomena is not checked adequately, there will be a moral breakdown in our communities leading violence and regret among the members of the Jama'at in the nearest future. One of the solutions to this trend, based on ideal philosophy of the Promised Messiah (as) is that, he admonished the Jama'at to enter into multiples marriages in our current situations called polygamy.

The concept of polygamy in Islam; polygamy is an exceptional

As for polygamy, according to the Promised Messiah (as) it was practiced by almost all other prophets of the Bible, who sometimes had hundreds of wives. According to Bible the Prophet Ibrahim (as) had three wives; Prophet Jacob had four wives simultaneously; Prophet Solomon had a thousand women; and the Prophet David married nineteen wives. In Hinduism plural marriages are permitted and there is no restriction on having a number of women simultaneously. So was the case with the Arabs, they married many wives. Polygamy is permitted in Islam in exceptional circumstances. For example, when there is an excess of women over men, such as during wars which create widows and orphans who need a husband and a father besides financial sustenance.

The Promised Messiah (as) further explained that, even situations can arise when girls of marriageable age cannot find husbands within the community of their faith. In such a situation, polygamy is the only honourable solution. Even then Islam puts a maximum of four wives on condition that the husband can treat them all fairly, otherwise, he should have only one wife [Ch4:3]. Societies which did not allow it suffered complete breakdown of the moral fibre of the nation, with the result been an increase in violence and disorder in those societies.

As far back as the 1920's, *Judge Lindsay in his book - A Case for Polygamy* - estimated that there were, in the small society of England, as many as four million women compelled to become prostitutes, because they could not find husbands. It is, therefore, a necessity that a woman always needs the protection and security of a husband and a home to bring up her children, which is her biggest natural urge.

According to the Quran; *"And if you fear that you will not be just in dealing with the orphans, then marry of other women as may be agreeable to you, two, three, or four; and if you fear you will not be able to do justice, the marry only one or marry what your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that you will not do injustice"* [Ch4:4].

"And they seek of thee the decision of the Law concerning the marriage with more women than one; say Allah gives you His decision concerning them. And that which is recited to you elsewhere in the Book concerns the orphan girls whom you give not what is prescribed for them and whom you desire to marry, and also concern the weak among children, and He enjoins you to deal with equitably with the orphans. And whatever good you do, surely Allah knows it well" [Ch4:128].

He said this verse safeguards orphan girls and ensures that their emotions are taken care of after marriage and it is not deemed that there is no one watching over them. Elucidating this verse and citing the taking of more than one wife the Promised Messiah (as) used the phrase "even if the need is felt," thus confirming that one's personal need to take more than one wife is not of significance, rather, the key aspect is the peace and concord of society.

According to Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) that at times he receives complaints that despite having families' men want to bring a second wife. He said if one cannot be fair to all his wives then one should not marry a second wife. If one has no choice but to marry a second wife then one has to take care of the first wife more than before; unlike the instances that one hears of where the rights of the first wife are slowly eroded in fragrant disobedience of God's commandments. Indeed one has to be concern highly that there is no unfairness in the financial and other rights of the first wife because any such injustice has been likened by the Promised Messiah (as) to a trial to a husband or family.

The narratives of polygamy in our era have shifted from the mainstream paradigm and some Ahmadis women have also become involved in somewhat peculiar innovations in the faith. They deeply frown on the Islamic teaching of multiple marriages, as if they no longer consider it a part of faith. They are unaware that the Law of God contains every remedy. If the injunction of multiple marriages did not exist in Islam, such cases which compel men to enter a second marriage would remain unaddressed by the Shariah.

The Promised Messiah (as) explained that suppose a woman becomes insane or leprous or fall victim to any other disease which forever renders her disable or if such a circumstance arises where, although she is deserving of compassion, she loses her capacities. As the husband is also worthy of compassion it would be cruel to prohibit such a man from entering into a second marriage. In actuality, it is in view of these factors that the divine law of God has left this door open for men. Similarly, in pressing circumstances, God has also opened an avenue for women. If a husband

becomes incapacitated, a woman may ask a judge to allow her a Khula, which is also a form of divorce.

The Promised Messiah (as) said, the divine law of God can be likened to a pharmacy. If the pharmacy is unable to dispense medicine for every kind of ailment, then it will not operate for long. So contemplate, is it not true that men are at times confronted with circumstances that compel them towards a second marriage? What use is a divine law that does not contain a solution for all situations? [The Noah's Ark, pages 130 and 131].

When is polygamy necessary in Islam?

According to the Quran the objects of marriage are four; (1) protection against physical, moral and spiritual maladies [Ch2:188; 4:25]; (2) peace of mind and the availability of a loving companion [Ch30:22]; (3) procreation of children; and (4) widening the circle of relationship [Ch4:2].

In mainstream marriage, one or all of the above reasons of marriage are sometimes not realized in the case of one wife; for instance, (1) if the woman is barren and is unable to produce children, the natural and perfectly legitimate desire of every husband to getting children to succeed him cannot be fulfilled in the absence of polygamous marriage. (2) Sometimes a wife of a man faces a lifelong disease or contagious disease rendering her perpetual invalid, the object of marriage is certainly defeated if such a husband does not married another wife. Indeed, no option is left to him than to go in for another lawful marriage or failing successful to resist attacks of carnal passion, temptations leading to immoral life in society. (3) An ailing wife cannot make a good companion either, because however worthy of regard and compassion she may be, her company cannot give peace of mind to her husband in all respect. (4) Men have more desire for sex than women. In this case a man has two ways for fulfilling his desire. He has to establish illegal relations with other ladies than his wife. This situation is strictly prohibited by Islam because a man cannot maintain his piety. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: "And go not near unto adultery, surely it is manifest indecency and an evil way" [Ch17:33]. (5) Modern medical sciences have proved that women have more powerful immune system than men. Their bodies can fight many diseases easily than men. In this case too, the number of women increase and death of men occur mostly. It is natural and a common observation that chances of deaths are more in number for men than women. Men participate in wars, during work at different places and specially driving etc. enhances this ratio for men. The ladies, as do not participate in such situations and if they do, the ratio is very little. In this way the number of men decreases rapidly and the numbers of women remain the same.

It is to solve the above exigencies that Islam has recommended polygamy. However, in any of the above cases, a husband divorces his first wife, it will be a shame and disgrace for him. The man has to keep the first wife and marry another one, too. It is the responsibility of the husband to fulfill all the needs of both the wives, like: food, dressings and medical needs, for the benefits of both the wives and the husband. This will create peace and violent free society.

There are, however, other reasons also which may sometimes render it necessary for a person to have one or more wives in addition to one whom he dearly loves and who also fulfills the objects of marriage. Those reasons are: (1) to protect orphans; (2) to provide husbands for marriageable widows; and (1) to supplement the depleted manhood of a family or community. Polygamy will provide solutions to protect orphans who are unprotected. Providing husband for widows (Ch24:33) is another object which the institution of polygamy fulfills. This is the ideal philosophy of polygamy in Islam; that is protecting orphans and providing husbands for widows.

Kind Treatment of Wives in Polygamy

"And consort with them in kindness, and if you dislike them, it may that you dislike a thing where in Allah has placed much good" [Ch4:20].

The Promised Messiah (as) narrated that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) is the perfect example for us in every aspect of life. Study his life and see how he conducted himself in relation to women. In my esteem, a man who stands up against a woman is a coward and not a man. If you study the life of the Holy Prophet (sa) you will find that he was so gracious that, despite his station of dignity, he would stop even for an old woman and would not move on until she permitted him to do so [Malfuzat, vol. 4, p. 44].

Do not ever consider women to be contemptible and insignificant!! Our perfect guide, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) has said: *'The best among you is he who is best towards his wife.'* How can one claim to be pious when he does not behave well towards his wife? It is unacceptable to get furious or hit one's wife on the slightest pretence. There have been instances where an enraged husband hit his wife over some slight matter... and mortally wounded her. This is why God Almighty has said concerning them; *"And consort with them in kindness" [Ch4:20].*

There is no doubt that admonition is necessary if a woman behaves improperly. A husband ought to impress upon his wife that he will not tolerate anything which is contrary to the faith, and yet he is not a tyrant who will not overlook any mistake on her part.

For a woman, her husband is a manifestation of the Divine. According to a Hadith, had God been pleased to enjoin prostration before anyone but Himself, He would have enjoined upon a woman to prostrate herself before her husband. Hence a man should be both hard and soft suiting the occasion [Malfuzat, vol. 3, p. 147].

With the exception of indecency, all weaknesses and petulant behaviour peculiar to women should be tolerated. I find it shameful that a man should fight a woman. God has made us men, which is the consummation of His grace upon us, and we should express our gratitude for this great bounty by treating women with kindness and compassion [Malfuzat, vol. 1, p. 307].

The Promised Messiah (as) said, he once addressed his wife in a loud voice and felt that his tone was indicative of displeasure though uttered no harsh words. But thereafter he sought forgiveness from God for a long time and offered supererogatory prayers with great humility and also gave alms because he felt that the harshness towards his wife might have been occasioned by some unconscious weakness in his obedience to God Almighty. To that effect the Promised Messiah (as) received divine revelation that; *'Such behaviour is not appropriate; 'Abdul Karim, the leader of Muslims, should be dissuaded from it'* [Malfuzat, vol. 2, p. 2].

The Promised Messiah's (as) emphasized that the above revelation contains guidance for the whole Jama'at, that they should treat their wives with kindness and courtesy. Your wives are not your slaves. In point of fact, marriage is a covenant between man and woman. Try therefore not to break this covenant. God Almighty says in the Holy Quran...*"A consort with them in kindness"*. Lead a life of kindness and equity with your wives.' And it is mentioned in a Hadith: *'The best among you is he who is best towards his wife.'*

Therefore, be good to your wives both spiritually and physically. Keep praying for them and avoid divorce. A person who is hasty in divorce is sinful in the eyes of God. Do not hasten to break like a dirty vessel that which God has brought together [Tohfah-e-Golarhviyyah, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 17, p. 75].

Equal Treatment of Wives in polygamy

Apart from the degree of love one has for them, a man must treat all his wives equally, for example, in the matter of clothing, food, pocket money and companionship and even in bed. If one were to realize fully all the obligations in this regard, he would prefer to remain celibate rather than to marry. Only a person who spends his life under the constant admonition of

God Almighty can hope to fulfill all these obligations. It is a thousand times better to live a life of hardship than to indulge in such pleasures as are likely to invoke Divine chastisement.

The Promised Messiah (as) reported to have said, that the Holy Prophet (sa) would pray to God that on an apparent level he tried to fulfill the rights of all his wives, however, if due to a quality of a certain wife, at times he expressed about it, he sought God's forgiveness. He said this is precisely in accordance with human nature and God knows everything, He created man and gave the permission of more than one marriage and has declared that a situation can arise that one may be more inclined towards one wife. In such an instance He commands that it is imperative that the apparent rights of all wives are fulfilled.

It is stated in the Holy Quran *"And you cannot keep perfect balance between wives, despite your best intentions, so incline not entirely to one, lest the other should be left suspended, unattended and uncared for. And if you amend and act righteously, surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful."*

"And they the women have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity; but men have a degree of advantage above them. And Allah is Mighty and Wise."

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, *"The best of you is the one who is best to his wives, and I am the best of you toward my wives."*

We permit polygamy only to save a person from falling into sin, and the Islamic law allows it only as a remedy. If a person finds that he is moved and overwhelmed by thoughts about sex and his glances are persistently laden with sexual desire, he had better have a second wife to save himself from adultery. But he must not usurp the rights of the first wife. The Torah also lays down that in such a case the husband should be all the more solicitous and caring about his first wife with whom he has spent the greater part of his youth and established a deep relationship. A perfect example was the case of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) and His wives....The blessed wives of the Holy Prophet (sa) were witnesses to the fact that his deportment with them was most excellent in all aspect of daily life. Yet he would pray to God that indeed He was aware that as far as human limitations allowed he was just and fair with all his blessed wives. However, he had no control over his heart, and if his heart was inclined to one of them more than the others due to a particular quality, he sought God's forgiveness.

Explaining with regards to Hazrat Ayesha (ra), the Promised Messiah (as) talk of the qualities of Hazrat Khadija (ra), and said that she had become the Holy Prophet (sa) companion when he was all alone and helpless. She gave him all her wealth and bore him children. When the world rejected him, she validated him. Despite the presence of living and young wives, indeed the presence of his beloved wife, who was the beloved because he had received most of his Divine revelations whilst in her apartment and who wondered why the Prophet often remembered the elderly Khadija, he responded by lovingly telling them not to be narrow-minded to inculcate a fortitude and explained the reason why he reminisced about his early wife.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) also rebuked those who make baseless allegations on the Holy Prophet of Islam do not observe this excellent model? While his evident deportment with his living wives was fair and equal, with no control over his heart that was inclined to his wife who had made immense sacrifices in the early days, he explained this was because he was appreciative and if he was not grateful in this regard he could be a grate servant of God, who had never left him wanting. His kind and gentle deportment with his wives was in obedience to God's commandment of fairness.

A husband should have such regard and respect for the feelings of his first wife, that if he feels the need of a second wife, but is afraid that it would hurt his first wife and break her heart, in such a case, if he can exercise restraint without falling into sin and without sacrificing his lawful needs, it would be preferable for him to forego the advantages of a second marriage for the sake of comforting his first wife.

The Promised Messiah (as) set forth whatever God Almighty has given him to understand in this context. The reason why the Holy Qur'an permits more than one wife is that you earn the pleasure of God by holding fast to *Taqwa* [righteousness] and by other means such as begetting pious offspring, looking after the near of kin and fulfilling the obligations owed to them. For the achievement of this purpose marriage is permitted with as many as four women at one time, but if you feel that you may not be able to maintain equality between them you should confine yourselves to one wife, as in such cases marrying more than one would be disobedience and a cause of punishment rather than a source of merit [Malfuzat, vol. 7, pp. 63-65].

It is a great sin to hurt somebody's feelings, and female sentiments are very delicate. Just imagine for a moment all the hopes and expectations of the girl when she leaves her parents and is consigned to the care of another man. We can understand their feelings through the Divine injunction: "*And consort with them in kindness*"... The law of God Almighty should not be

used contrary to its purpose, nor should it be invoked to serve as a shield for self-indulgence. To do so would be a great sin. God Almighty has repeatedly admonished against yielding to carnal passions. Righteousness alone should be your motive for everything [Malfuzat, vol. 7, pp. 63-65].

Polygamy challenges in Islam today

Critics often object that polygamy involves intemperance and monogamy is the ideal system. According to the Promised Messiah (as), he was surprised at people's needless interference in other people's affairs. It is well known that Islam permits a man to marry up to four wives at a time; and this is permission, not a compulsion. Every man and woman is well aware of this doctrine. Women have the right to lay down the condition that the husband will, in no circumstance whatsoever, marry another woman. If this condition is laid down before marriage, the husband will be guilty of breach of contract if he goes on to marry another. But if a woman does not prescribe any such condition, and is content with the law as it is, an outsider has no right to interfere.

Every sensible person can understand that God has not made polygamy obligatory; He has only declared it lawful. If a husband desires, for some genuine reason, and under Divine law, to avail this permission, and his wife is not happy about it, she has the options to demand divorce, and be rid of this anxiety. And if the other woman, whom he wishes to marry, is not happy, she too has the easy option to decline the offer of such a suitor. No one is under compulsion.

This is a matter of human rights. If anyone chooses to have two wives, he doesn't do God any harm. The only loser is the first or the second wife. If the first wife feels that her rights as a wife will be placed in jeopardy by the second marriage of her husband, she can seek a way out of the situation by demanding a divorce; and should the husband be unwilling to comply with her demand, she can enforce separation through the court. If the prospective second wife considers the situation to be unacceptable, she is the better judge of her own rights and interests.

It is unwarranted and idle to object that justice is compromised in this situation. God Almighty has directed that a husband who has more than one wife should deal equitably with each of them; otherwise he should confine himself to only one wife. It is mere prejudice and sheer ignorance to suggest that polygamy is resorted to out of a desire for sexual indulgence. I have known people who were inclined towards such indulgence, but were able to save themselves by recourse to blessed system of polygamy—a system which helps such people to lead virtuous and pious lives. Failing this, many who are carried away by the fierce storm of carnal passions, end up at the

doors of women of ill fame, and contract venereal and other dangerous diseases. They indulge openly and covertly in such evil practices to which those who are happily married to two or three wives never succumb. Such people restrain themselves for a short while and then yield suddenly to the fierce onslaught of their passions like the bursting of a dam, whereby vast areas are flooded and ruined.

The truth is that actions are judged by their intentions. Those who feel that by taking a second wife they will be able to live pious lives, or will be saved from sexual promiscuity or that they will leave behind righteous offspring, such people should certainly have recourse to this sacred institution. In Divine estimation, fornication and lustful ogling are such great sins as destroy all virtue and lead to physical suffering in this very world [Ch18:]. One, who chooses to have more than one wife in order to hold himself back from sin, wants to become like angels. I know well that this blind world is a victim of false logic and baseless arrogance. Those who are not constantly engaged in search of virtue, and make no plans for achieving it, and do not even pray for it, are like a boil which shines on the surface but contains only pus.

Those who lean towards God, and care the least about the reproaches of the world, seek the way of righteousness as a beggar seeks bread. Those who plunge into the blazing fire of calamities for the sake of God, who are ever anguished, whose souls are melted and whose backs are broken by the effort of achieving great goals in the cause of God, He Himself desires that such people should spend some times of the day and night with their beloved wives and draw comfort for their tired and broken selves, so that they may return to their religious duties with renewed vigour. No one understands these things but those who have the knowledge and experience of this path [Chashma-e-Ma`rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 23, pp. 246-248].

Conclusion

The Promised Messiah (as) expounding in the Noah's Art, admonish women not despair. He said the book (Quran) that has been given does not require man-made amendments like the Gospel. It safeguards the rights of men just as it safeguards the rights of women. If a woman is displeased by her husband's multiple marriages, she is at liberty to seek a divorce through the authorities. If the divine law of God was ever to be considered complete, it was imperative that God furnished therein provision for all the diverse circumstances that were to confront the Muslims. The Promised Messiah (as) further explained that women should not criticize God Almighty when their husband's intend to enter a second marriage. Rather, pray that you are protected from trials and tribulations.

Undoubtedly, a husband who marries two wives and does not treat them equitably is most cruel and shall be held accountable. Under no circumstance man should marry another wife with the intention of punishing the first wife. In such cases, you will incur the wrath of Allah (swt) and regret both on earth and hereafter. The family may also lose the complete blessings of marriage. But, you on your part must not disobey God and thereby invite His wrath upon yourselves. Everyone is answerable for their deeds. If you become pious in the sight of God Almighty, your husband will be made pious also. Although religious law permits multiple marriages for men in view of various exigencies, there also exists for you the law of divine decree. If the law established by the Shariah should test your resolve then turn towards the law of divine decree through prayer. For the law of divine decree overpowers even the law of Shariah.

It is the man who shuns the restrictions and obligations of marriage. If indulgence in sex is possible outside the obligations of marriage, he is all for it. So where there is a preponderance of women over men, and no polygamy is allowed, free sex springs up and it destroys the moral and spiritual health of the society. It is a terrible thing to happen. And who would care to marry widows and take over their children to look after, unless it is out of compassion which is recommended in the Qur'an by allowing polygamy [Ch4:3]. To minimize and avoid complete breakdown of the institution of marriage, and seriously wish to check free extramarital sex, unwed mothers, bastard children, broken homes, juvenile delinquency, drunkenness to drown sorrows, and daily increasing crime, polygamy should be considered seriously.

In the Noah's Ark, the Promised Messiah (as) advised women to become righteous and do not entirely attach their hearts to this world and its attractions. Forgo your national pride and do not ridicule or mock another woman. Do not demand such things of your husband's as are beyond their capacity. Seek to enter your grave in a state that you are pure and chaste. Do not show laxity in fulfilling the obligations of God such as the prayer and Zakat etc. Be faithful to your husbands with heart and soul for much of their honour rests in your hands. So fulfill this duty with such excellence that God counts you among the virtuous and obedient. Do not be extravagant and do not be wasteful with your husband's wealth. Do not be dishonest, do not steal, do not incessantly complain and do not slander other men and women.

Explaining further on the Promised Messiah's admonition of polygamy, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said one should always try and have the mind-set that whatever God commands us is within our capacity and with this mind-set one should do one's best to put into practice all Divine commandments. If we are able to do this we may be included in the people

about whom God states: "But as to those who believe and do good works — and We task not any soul beyond its capacity — these are the inmates of Heaven; they shall abide therein".

May Allah (swt) bless us and enable us to practice the true teaching of The Promised Messiah (as). Amin!