

POLYGAMY

BY

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POLYGAMY

Islam has been grossly misrepresented as regards its marriage laws. It has been alleged that it instituted polygamy. In fact, it will be clear to any student of Western literature that Islam has been most maliciously misrepresented in many respects in Europe. Particular care was taken by the Christian priests to keep the real Islam out of the reach of their flock and to present before their eyes such caricatures of Islam that would be repulsive even to look at. They tried their best even to put a veil upon those beauties of Islam which could not be concealed. They used to say that Muslims did not initiate anything. What progress they brought to the world—Europe included—was simply due to their revivification of Greek art, literature, and science. They did not admit that it was through Islam only that the cycle of reason began and that so many superstitions of Christianity were exploded. With the increase of education in Europe which in itself was due to the example set by Muslims in Spain and Sicily, where they founded colleges and libraries for the advancement of general education—the condemnation of Islam took another turn among Christians. They began to misrepresent its beliefs, its institutions, etc. It was said that Islam taught gross fatalism. It was said that Muslims worshipped Muhammad. It

was said that Muslims hated Christ. It was said that Islam instituted slavery.

It was alleged that the Islamic idea of the next life was carnal and sensual, and with a view to frighten away the fair sex of Europe it was asserted that Muslims degraded the woman sex, that Islam enjoined polygamy and seclusion. All this misrepresentation of Islam was due to the knowledge that otherwise Christianity could not stand a day against the dazzling glare of Islam. Christianity was based on myths, Islam on facts. Progress among Christians was only possible when they left Christianity. Progress among Muslims was only till the time that they closely followed Islam. And these Christian priests know that as long as the Book of Islam was intact it could again crush European arrogance, and dominate over Europe as it did before. So they misrepresented that Holy Book, little knowing that because that Holy Book has remained letter for letter the same at it was revealed to Muhammad it will not be possible to misrepresent it for ever. The Holy Qur'ān has not been treated like the Bible or the Psalms, in which changes have been made at will. Anybody, even to-day, can go to the Holy Qur'ān to see what rights it confers upon woman. On the other hand, the New Testament does not deal with the question of woman, and in spite of interpolations no man can up to this day show any single passage in the Bible from which it could be inferred that Jesus Christ or Moses ever meant their followers to be monogamous.

Woman as woman owes not a single right, not

a single privilege to Christ. It would not have mattered to women if he had never been born. Perhaps it would have been better for them, as they would have been saved from those abuses which were piled upon them by those pious disciples of Christ, who tried to follow the Essenic life of Christ and who went so far as to say that it was through woman that even their "Lord had to suffer death."

Polygamy was never forbidden, nor even curtailed or regulated by Jesus Christ or his immediate apostles. Polygamy prevailed among Christians for ages after Christ. Thirteen hundred years ago, when Muhammad came with his mission, polygamy under Christianity was by no means anathema. That Christendom to-day claims to be monogamous is due not to Christianity but to social reformation. When Muhammad came with the laws of Islam' about six hundred years after Christ, polygamy was an established institution in all countries and in all religions. It had been an established institution from time immemorial. No religious or social system condemned it. Excepting Christianity, and also Judaism, there is no religious system to-day, which has condemned or even regulated it. Hindus are the people with the oldest history, oldest civilization, and oldest religion. But they still are polygamous. Their law, their religion, allows them unlimited number of wives. It is only Christians and Jews who, in this respect, departed from the rulings and practical examples of their prophets and holy ancestors. Not to speak of others, Moses himself

had more than one wife. Jesus, having joined the order of Essene, lived the life of celibacy, but he never said anything condemning the practice of his predecessors—Moses, Solomon, or of his own ancestors. It has been said that the Blessed Mary herself had a rival. Muhammad's mission was to remove the social and moral evils and to lay down such laws as would be beneficent to all people at all times, at every stage of human development. He was the Last Prophet. His mission was universal, and all the laws he brought were such as were meant for humanity, i.e. which did not ignore human nature and which were the best means to evolve it morally and ethically. While all other religious reformers and prophets had left the question of woman strictly alone, as if the woman sex were not human at all, as if they were not commissioned for more than half of the human race, Muhammad took up all the questions relating to woman just as he took up all the questions relating to the other sex. He found that he could not, he must not, leave the question of woman alone, and he did not leave that question alone. He had to deal also with the question of marriage, and with marriage the question of monogamy and polygamy. In not a single respect has Muhammad condemned the life of other holy teachers and prophets. He could not condemn their polygamous customs and traditions. Under the inspiration from above he laid down :—

*Wa in khifium alla tuqsitu filyatama fankihu ma
taba lakun minannisai mathna wa thulatha'wa ruba'a.*

Fa in khiftum alla tubdilu fawahidatan au ma malakat aimanukum, zalika adna alla ta'ulu (Al-Nisa, ver.3).

This is the third verse of the chapter of the Qur'an entitled "Women," in continuation of the two verses given before.

The translation is as follows :

"And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two or three or four; but if you fear 'hat you will not do justice (between them) then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess ; this is more proper that you may not deviate from the right course. "

As this is the ONLY verse of the Qur'an from which the permission to marry more than one woman is derived, it will be necessary to deal with it in detail.

The important point which should be carefully noted is that this verse does not ENJOIN polygamy. It only PERMITS polygamy and that permission, too, is given on a very strict condition—i e. if one can be equitable between the wives, then alone he may marry more than one. If he cannot be equitable he is bidden in plain words to marry only one.

Is it not wonderful for a religious reformer to boldly come forward thirteen hundred years ago, when the idea of monogamy was totally unknown to all religious systems, without exception, with this command *Fawahidatan* ("then only one")? It is true that the command is not rigid, but it is there all the same, and we will, later on, bring forward another

verse of the Qur'ān from the same chapter, "Women," which will show that it is as much rigid as humanity can stand without violence to its nature.

Ignorant writers in the West have not only attributed polygamy to Islam as if it were a purely Islamic institution, but have tried to make it an obligatory injunction upon every Muslim to have more than one wife. Japan which is blindly copying the West in other respects, seems also to have followed it in this ignorance. The writer of these pages saw with his own eyes an order of a Japanese official given to a Muslim preacher, who had gone there from Turkey, which mentioned polygamy as an obligatory institution of Islam.

Every one knows that the whole social fabric of Muslim society has been drawn from the Qur'ān. The permission of polygamy is drawn from the above verse. There is no other verse in the Qur'ān which gives the sanction. Now this one point becomes quite clear, *that polygamy is by no means obligatory upon Muslims*. On the contrary, those Muslims who indulge in polygamy and do not observe equity between the wives, commit a sin, because they go against the plain injunction of the Qur'ān to be monogamons if they cannot be equitable. Where is another religion which makes polygamy a sin in certain circumstances?

Those people in the West who consider it impossible to be equitable between two wives, if they were to adopt Islam and have more than one wife they would undoubtedly commit sin in the view of the

Holy Qur-ān. They can only follow the injunction of Islam in respect of marriage if they remain monogamous.

But the question may arise, "Why did Muhammad even permit polygamy under any condition?" The reply to this would be that he could have had no claims to be a prophet for all ages for all people had he not given sanction to polygamy under certain conditions. He was Prophet, not for the West alone, but for the East and North and South as well, for every race, in every age.

This verse which gives permission for polygamy was revealed after a murderous battle—the battle of Uhud. A large number of male Muslims were killed, thus reducing the male population. Many young girls had become orphans, for whom protection was required. The Qur'ān very strictly laid down laws for the protection of orphans and for the safeguarding of their interests. The old Arab custom was that the guardians got married to orphan girls against their will simply to get possession of their property. The Qur'ān forbade it, and said that if by marrying an orphan it be apprehended that injustice be done to her, then with the women who had lost their husbands, or other single women, marriages should be contracted. (See *Muslim*, on the authority of the Prophet's wife, Ayesha.)

There was, then, a situation which made polygamy a necessity. There were more women than men. The constitution of human society is such that on

particular occasions men are more wasted. In Europe the present war has created the same situation. Muhammad was a religious teacher. He was a moralist. He could not recognize "unmarried mothers." He could not encourage 'war-babies,' nor could he ignore human nature. Single life for a woman is not a natural life. A woman in health and with natural vigour, if condemned to single life, will suffer the consequences of ignoring the demands of nature. Modern society may condone or connive at adultery. Muhammad could not. If Muhammad had not permitted polygamy even under restriction, then he would not have deserved that respect as a prophet and a social and moral reformer which he commands now from all impartial and unbiased thinkers. The Book of Laws he delivered he claimed to have from the Great Author of Nature. By the law relating to polygamy that claim is as much justified as by other laws. We all agree that polygamy is not a first-class institution, because it disturbs the society by creating mutual jealousy between two wives of the same man. And this jealousy is due to the fact that one husband cannot be equitable between his two wives.

The Qur'an says that if it be by any means possible for a man to get rid of this evil in a polygamous marriage, then he can have more than one wife. But if it be not possible to be immune from that evil, in that case only one wife should be considered sufficient. Imam Shafai interprets the last portion of the verse, *zalika adna alla ta'ulu*, to mean that polygamy

should be strictly restricted, and there should not be many wives. Imam Razi has supported the view taken by Imam Shafai. Both Shafai and Razi were great Muslim jurists and divines. They lived before the modern European civilization came into being.

Maulvi Abdul Qadir, an Indian commentator of the Qur'ān, who did not know any European language, law, or customs, also laid great stress upon being equitable to the wives if polygamy was indulged in. But the Qur-ān did not stand in need of any elaborate interpretations to make its meaning clear on the point that polygamy is allowed on very, very strict conditions, and that the Qur'ān does not mean to give any licence for polygamy to its followers.

The verse 129 of the Section 19 of the same chapter "Women," says :—

Walan tastati'a an ta'dilu bainan nisae wa lau harastum fala tamilu kullalmaile fatazaruha kalmu'-allaqate.

Rodwell's translation of the above verse is as follows, and we prefer to give the translation of a Christian on this occasion :—

"And ye will not have it at all in your power to treat your wives alike, even though you fain would do so ; but yield not wholly to disinclination, so that ye leave one of them as if it were in suspense."

This verse, read with the verse that gives conditional permission for polygamy, leaves no room for any doubt that Islam has discouraged polygamy, and has adopted in so doing its usual course of appealing to human nature. In one verse the Qur'ān says tha

if an orphan girl is married by her guardian there will be every likelihood of unfair play, so it will be better to marry other than an orphan under the man's own guardianship. As Islam franchised slaves, the Book of God allowed marriage with them also of any free man. Then the Qur'ān, keeping in view certain stages, conditions, and circumstances of human society, gave a permission to man to marry more than one wife. In that also it departed from other religions by putting a limitation and restriction upon polygamy. And not content with putting only limitations and restrictions, the Qur'ān took away the chief sting of a polygamous marriage and said that a Muslim is permitted to marry more than one wife, but on the strict condition that all wives should be equally treated; and no room should be left for injustice or inequity, and no occasion given for mutual jealousy. If a man finds that he cannot be equitable between his wives, then he is commanded in plain and simple words that he should content himself with *wahidatan*, ONE ONLY. At another place in the same chapter he is warned that it is by no means an easy matter to be equitable between wives, and if a man fails to be equitable then he will be held responsible for knowingly causing pain and suffering to one woman, which is undoubtedly sinful.

It may be asked why Muhammad and his saintly disciples did not observe strict monogamy? The answer is that the condition of the then Arab society and the circumstances of the time all over the world made it neither easily possible nor *beneficial* to intro-

duce rigid monogamy. Polygamy was considered to be an almost holy institution practised by prophets and patriarchs. Polygamy was *the only* means to secure comfort and protection for the woman folk of the time who could not protect, could not even support, themselves. The condition of the female part of society was not developed at all. A woman could not earn any money to sustain herself. As long as she was an unmarried girl the custom allowed her to live upon the resources of her father. The father very often did not like his daughter, and in India, as well as in Arabia, sacrificed the girl in her infancy. However, if the girl did grow up, the father was very anxious to see her married, and to be relieved of her burden. When she did get married she became a burden upon her husband. But if she became a widow her case became most unfortunate. She had then nowhere to go to. She then had no means to live upon. In India a widow very often burnt herself with the corpse of her deceased husband. In Arabia and other places the only means of livelihood for a widow was to secure a husband—men being already in the minority, she could never get a husband if strict monogamy had prevailed. The only alternative for her, if polygamy were not permitted, would have been to go in the street. Thus polygamy was, under the circumstances, a blessing from a moral and social point of view. It saved the society and the woman from corruption. Muhammad could not discard such a beneficial institution of the time. He was under a double obligation to practise it himself. Many were

the women whose husbands had died for the cause preached by Muhammad. It was Muhammad's duty to see that those poor widowed women who were left by the martyrs were not destitute and unprotected. Muhammad, even when the Emperor of Arabia, lived most humbly. His private finances were poor. He could not comfortably burden them with a number of dependants upon him. Yet because he had to find protectors for the widow wives of those who had sacrificed their lives for the cause of Islam and as he could not possibly ask others to extend protection to some of them while he himself shunned the burden, the result was that he himself had to marry some widows. Excepting one—Ayesha, whom her father, the staunchest friend and companion of the Prophet, and one of his earliest followers, had given in marriage to the Prophet whilst young—all other wives of Muhammad were widows.

Polygamy was never considered to be a form of licentiousness. Even respectable and rich parents gave their daughters in marriage to those who already had wives.

It was rather considered to be a check upon licentiousness, and was therefore had recourse to by pious men. There was every reason even to-day to consider polygamy far better in every respect than adultery, either open or concealed. Even to-day it would be nothing but insane dogmatism to forbid it in many parts of the world. In many parts of the world if polygamy were forbidden to-day it would

result in the most vile corruption of society and the degradation of the woman sex itself.

Polygamy is certainly a blessing if it stops street immorality. Polygamy can be a national boon if it succeeds in checking a falling birth-rate, and if it saves the nation from diseases.

Supposing we admit, for the sake of argument, and for the sake of argument only, that in Europe women have advanced so much as to be able to take care of themselves, and even to prefer a life of singleness. But surely Europe is not the whole of the world. As long as there are people who need a polygamous marriage, any law which claims to be universal must allow in one way or the other a polygamous marriage for them. Islam does not say that anybody who is monogamous is not a Muslim. A monogamous Muslim is as much a Muslim as a monogamous Christian is considered to be a Christian. The difference lies in this, that while Islam says that if under certain conditions a Muslim is legitimately polygamous he remains a Muslim, but in no case can he be allowed to keep a single mistress. Christians say that if a Christian marries more than one woman he no more remains a Christian, but if he keeps two hundred mistresses and that quite openly, he still remains untouched by the Christian law of the present day.

That Islamic principle has proved far more beneficial to the society than the so-called Christian principle is demonstrated practically in every town which has a Muslim and a Christian civilization in

its different parts, like Constantinople. As has been said before, it is only in that portion of Constantinople which is under Christian civilization that bastardism, street immorality, and adultery prevail.

The beauty of Islamic law is this, that while it has stopped immorality, while it has purified society, it has by no means encouraged polygamy. India *possesses the largest number of Mussulmans of any other single country in the world, but the percentage of polygamous marriages in India among the Muslims is not more than three or four per thousand. Thus Islam has produced about seventy million people in India who are monogamous not only noimnally as people are in Christian Europe, but who are REALLY monogamous. Even if this were not so, even if there were a choice between open polygamy and secret adultery, every sane man who had the least moral sense in him would have preferred the first a hundred times more than the latter.

There is no doubt that certian rulers, kings, princes, and rich libertines in India, as in other places, have misused the permission of polygamy under Islam, but this has happened in Christianity also, and that in our own days as regards the law of monogamy. If Christianity cannot be held responsible for the evil results of monogamy, Islam cannot be held responsible for the misuse of polygamy.

We repeat it, that we personally do not recommend polygamy, that Islam has by no means encouraged polygamy. Islam has, in fact, encouraged monogamy, and if any such people accept Islam

*NOTE: —The Indo Pakistan subcontinent—Ed.

as their faith who find themselves unable to act equitably to more than one wife, then it will be a sin under the law of Islam if they marry more than one woman. There are nations the males of which have not got large hearts and the females of which have developed to a high degree passions of jealousy towards one another. For such nations monogamy, but strict and real monogamy, alone would be the best social law, and for them Islamic law does not permit polygamy.

Where Islam is very strict indeed it is in disallowing any unlawful connection between man and woman. It does not allow it under any circumstance. Islamic restricted polygamy is only a remedial measure against that evil. Islam has no reason to be ashamed of its laws. Muhammad does not stand in need of any apologists. All the Islamic laws are most beneficial to humanity if properly respected.

There is one point more which should not be lost sight of in this connection, and it is this, that *woman herself is responsible for the existence of the custom of polygamy*. If all women were to refuse to marry a polygamous man there would be no polygamy left. Polyandry has died out, though allowed by certain religions, because no man would marry a woman who already had a husband. The existence of polygamy shows that woman tolerates it.

Nature, too, seems to favour polygamy in man, and the principle of Islam is to check nature, to regulate nature, to improve nature, but not to defy nature. Buddhism Hinduism, and true Christianity

all were inclined to defy nature in man—all taught man asceticism. The world, with all its beauty and grace, with all its grandeur and glory, its matter and power, was nothing but a *maya* (illusion) to them. The thoughts of Christ were absorbed by the Kingdom of God, not on earth, but in heaven. He himself took to the Essenic life, and had no wife, no children. The “son of man” had no place to lay his head even. In the modern sense he could not claim even to be civilized. If the people of to-day were to follow him actually there would be no trace of civilization left. If Christ or Buddha were to be followed, the human species itself would cease to exist. On the other hand, a Muslim’s constant prayer, even to this day is :—

Rabbana atena fiddunya hasanataun wa fil akhirate hasanah.

“O God, grant me all that is good and beautiful in this world, and all that is good and beautiful in the next” (ii. 24).

We see that Dame Nature has not gifted man with that instinct which, say, she has gifted a bird called *saras* (a kind of crane). Indians believe by empirical knowledge that the couple of those birds are so affectionate to each other that if one dies or is killed, the other remains single, cries about for its deceased spouse, and dies soon after by the pangs of separation. Neither man nor woman has that abiding love for each other. It seems strange that in monogamous Christian West that love is far less abiding than it is in polygamous Muslim East. In

the Christian West to a man the second-best girl, if free, is always handy to take the place, sometimes even with uncanny haste, of a deceased wife and the second best boy that of a deceased husband, but in India it is very rare indeed that a Muslim widow would care to remarry, though permitted to do so by her religion and very often a man will also cherish the memory of his deceased wife and remain single all his after life. In India it might be the desire to remain straight that might induce a young man to re-marry after the death of his wife, otherwise even in the prime of life he will much prefer to remain single, in memory of his deceased wife ; but in England very often quite elderly men take another spouse after their first is dead. In the West love between man and his wife does not seem to be abiding at all. Soon after the first wife dies men in the West get another as does the male sparrow. However, we do not think monogamy is responsible for that. Nor can polygamy be given the credit for the abiding love which exists between Eastern man and wife. But there can be no doubt that biologists and naturalists hold that man was meant to be polygamist by nature. Man and woman are not born in pairs as are those animals which are meant to be monogamists. The number of women is also larger than that of men.

Nature has expressed in many other ways that she wants man to be polygamous, but man has every right to improve nature, although he cannot go against it without being punished.

With respect to the physiological reasons for

polygamy it has been observed by the celebrated Montesquieu that women in hot climates are marriageable at eight, nine, or ten years of age; thus, in those countries, infancy and marriage almost always go together. They are old at twenty. Their reason, therefore, never accompanies their beauty. When beauty demands the empire, want of reason forbids the claim; when reason is obtained, beauty is no more. These women must necessarily be in a state of dependence; for reason cannot procure in old age that empire which even youth and beauty combined could not bestow. It is therefore extremely natural that in these places a man, when no law opposes it, should leave one wife to take another, and that polygamy should be introduced (Davenport).

Even in cold countries there are physiological reasons and occasions for man to be polygamous if he wants to escape from adultery.

Schopenhauer frankly admits "we all live, at any rate for a time and most of us always, in polygamy. And so, since every man needs many women, there is nothing fairer than to allow him, nay, to make it incumbent upon him, to provide for many women. This will reduce woman to her true and natural position as a subordinate being, and the *lady*—that monster of European civilization and Teutonic Christian stupidity—will disappear from the world, leaving only *women*, but no more unhappy women, of whom Europe is now full."

The great Philosopher further explains—

"There is no use arguing about polygamy; it

must be taken as *de facto* existing everywhere, and the only question is as to how it shall be regulated."

And this is the everlasting and unique triumph of Islam that it is the only religion that has so beautifully and effectively regulated polygamy as many other human institutions.

It was lately reported that a certain German military officer had recommended the introduction of the Turkish system of polygamy in Germany to save the country for the future from a falling birth-rate. He aroused the wrath of Christian priests. However, the question was going to be discussed in the German Reichstag.

But it remains a puzzle all the same on what authority can the Christian priests demand any law as regards marriage—whether monogamous—or polygamous—when their holy Books are absolutely silent in the matter. How dare they go against polygamy when the example of their own prophets favours it. They ought to be ashamed of abusing Muhammad—the greatest benefactor of humanity known to the world—for his having laid down wholesome social laws and for having regulated polygamy and encouraged monogamy by the definite command of *Wahidatan* (only one).

Mr. Higgins says: "Because Muhammad, following the example of the legislator of the oldest ceremonial religion west of Euphrates, and, as all Christians maintain, of the world—Moses—allowed his people, the descendants of Ishmael, the son of the father of the faithful, a plurality of wives, he has

been constantly abused by Christians, to use their own words, for pandering to the base passion of his followers. But why the allowance of a plurality of wives should be visited with such a very harsh censure, I do not know. Surely the example of Solomon, and David—the man after God's own heart, which He had found to fulfil His law—might plead for a little mercy, more especially as Jesus nowhere expressly forbids in any of the twenty gospels which were written by some or other of the multitude of sects of his followers to record his commands." Thomasius in his learned treatise *De concubineta* proves that in all ages among all nations polygamy was permitted. Not only all over the East but in the West also polygamy was permitted.

Polygamy was permitted among the ancient Greeks as in the case of the detachment of young men from the army, mentioned by Plutarch. It was also defended by Euripides and Plato. The ancient Romans did not forbid it. Marc Antony took the liberty of having two wives. From that time polygamy became pretty frequent in the Empire till the reigns of Theodosius, Honorius, and Arcadius, who first prohibited it by an express law, in 393 C. E. After this the Emperor Valentinian permitted, by an edict, all the subjects of the Empire, if they pleased, to marry several wives; nor does it appear from the ecclesiastical history of those times that the bishops made any objection to its introduction. Valentinianus Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, had many wives. Clotaire, King of France, and Heribartus

and Hypericus his sons, had a plurality also. Add to these Pepin and Charlemagne, of whom St. Urspergensus witnesses that they had several wives, Lothaire and his son, as likewise Arnolphus VII, Emperor of Germany (c. E. 888), and a descendant of Charlemagne, Frederic Barbarossa, and Philip Theodatus, King of France. Among the first race of the Kings of the Franks, Gontran, Caribert, Sigebert, and Chilperic had several wives at one time. Gontran had within his palace Veneranda and Meretrude and Ostregilde, acknowledged as his legitimate wives, Caribert had Merfida Marconesa and Theodogilda.

Father Daniel confesses the polygamy of the French kings. He denies not three wives of Dagobest I, expressly asserting that Theodobert espoused Dentary, although she had a husband, and himself another wife, named Visigelde. He adds that in this he imitated his uncle Clotaire, who espoused the widow of Creodomir, although he had already three wives.

John Davenport says :

“ Muhammad did but legalize a practice not only honoured but even blessed of God Himself, under the Old Dispensation, and declared to be lawful and honourable under the new one ; and consequently he must be exonerated from the charge of having sanctioned polygamy and thereby encouraged licentiousness.”

What Muhammad did was only to regulate polygamy. His greatness lies in giving us such laws as are of universal good and efficacy as a well-known Christian essayist admits : “ The system of

laws and morals which he (Muhammad) formed agreed equally with the highest development as well as the lowest level of society, which during ten centuries, passing from race to race, made every people by whom it was received superior to, and triumphant over, the nations and empires with which they came in contact."

The great English orator, Edmund Burke, also admitted that "the Muhammadan Law is binding upon all, from the crowned head to the meanest subject ; it is a law interwoven with a system of the wisest, the most learned, and the most enlightened jurisprudence that ever existed in the world."

Every person who knows the real feminine life in Muslim countries like Turkey acknowledges the perfect sweetness of that life in spite of the prevalence of polygamy. Western ladies who have familiarized themselves with Muslim ladies' life have nothing but kind regard for it. In practice polygamy has been found to be by no means a very condemnable institution. Home life in East is charming and extremely sweet even when polygamy prevails.

However, polygamy seems to be a dying institution unless the present decimation of the male population of Europe may resuscitate it.* But if it is to

*The following statments and figures appeared in the *Nation* :—

Estimated total loss of life in three years of war 1914-18 :

Germany (about)	3,700,000
France (about)	2,200,000

At the end of the first year of the war there were only two Departments in France in which the number of births exceeded the number of deaths.

die, may it die under the ægis of Islamic law and not under that law which is called Christian. It should in no case be allowed to be replaced by concealed polygamy—by the life of adultery.

Islamic monogamy as prevailing in India is real monogamy, and instead of Islam suffering any defeat by the demise of the institution of polygamy, it will be another triumph of Islam if real monogamy becomes the institution of the world. It will be a triumph of Islam in either case. If the nations of Europe adopt truly Islamic polygamy to recoup their depleted population and to safeguard against disease, etc., it will be a triumph of Islam. But if they adopt real Islamic monogamy that will also be victory of Islam.

Those in the West who are not satisfied with conundrums and mathematical puzzles like the

After three years of war it will only be possible for every sixth French-woman to get married.

This takes no account of hundreds of thousands of wounded soldiers scarcely fit for marriage, and of the expectation that after the war France may expect an army of nearly 2,000,000 men weakened by sexual disease and tuberculosis.

Germany, according to Professor Oldenberg, of Gottingen must expect, should the war last much longer, to "miss" several millions of children and fathers. The reduction in the men best able to contract marriage is estimated at nearly two millions. Birth-rates and marriage-rates are rapidly declining.

In France polygamy is being discussed as a remedy for the disproportionate number of women.

Is it not time similar figures were available for this country? We are not told the total casualties in the field, no figures as to the ravages of disease are ever published, and although there is a periodic scare there is no clear definite information as to the ravages of venereal disease—a disease which in normal times slays and maims its tens of thousands, and in war time its millions.—*The Herald*, July 28, 1917

Trinity, which Christianity puts before them for their belief ; those in the West who are not satisfied with such demoralizing beliefs as atonement, redemption, and saviorship, which Christ never taught ; those in the West who like to believe in a religion which appeals to human reason and conscience both, which has a high ethical system that is fully practicable, and the practicability of which was completely demonstrated by the Prophet himself ; those in the West who would like to see all humanity, irrespective of colour, race, and country, bound in one cord of universal love and fraternity under the ægis of One Universal Creator and Cherisher ; in short, those in the West who like to adopt Islam should not allow themselves to be frightened away by the bugbear of polygamy, which is maliciously represented to be an essential institution of Islam.

Polygamy is in no sense an essential or special institution of Islam. Polygamy is not even encouraged by Islam. In fact, Islam is the only religion existing in this world which has recommended monogamy as the most equitable form of marriage system, and has put down on its statute-book *fa wahidatan*, i.e., " then marry only one." The Book of Islam is uncorrupted. It is the final Gospel revealed to the last Prophet. Even the whole Muslim world cannot alter a single letter of it. Even the practice of the whole Muslim world, or the traditions and life of Muhammad himself, cannot be the authority against it. Every person can go to that Holy Book--the Divine revelation, the Word of God

—for authority, and if he goes to it to find the true Islamic law of marriage he will find that *nowhere has polygamy been enjoined upon Muslims.*

To sum up :—

(1) Polygamy is an institution which was most probably established during the very infancy of the human race.

(2) Polygamy has continued to be a recognized and honourable institution for the *majority* of the human race up to our own days. It is more a social institution rather than religious, and social needs and circumstances generally determine its popularity or unpopularity.

(3) Nature seems to encourage polygamy in mankind, and polygamy, whether legalized, or illegalized, open or concealed, prevails even to-day amongst almost all nations, in every country, in all religions.

(4) Women themselves tolerate it, otherwise it could not exist.

(5) It has its uses as it has its abuses. It has been found to be the only check on concubinage and street immorality, and no moral reformer could ban it altogether without incurring the responsibility of encouraging or conniving at adultery and licentiousness at certain stages or conditions of human life and society which have not ceased to exist even now.

(6) No religion on the face of the earth, including Christianity, forbade it, and Christian priests and legislators are absolutely unjustified in abolish-

ing legalized polygamy in the name of their religion.

(7) No religious teacher even tried to regulate or curtail it except Muhammad—the last and most UNIVERSAL of all teachers. Islam has regulated and restricted polygamy in the most beneficial and effective way.

(8) No religious book claiming divine origin has recommended monogamy except the Holy Qur'ān—the Final Testament.

(9) Polygamy seems to be a dying institution if the present Armageddon or other such catastrophes do not revive it and keep it alive for the national good. It should best be left to the needs and circumstances of society to accept it on regulated Islamic lines, or to let it die if it can give place to Islamic monogamy.

(10) POLYGAMY IS IN NO SENSE ANY PARTICULAR ISLAMIC INSTITUTION. MONOGAMY IS MORE CHARACTERISTICALLY ISLAMIC THAN POLYGAMY.

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