

### **Women receive half a man's share in inheritance**

This should be seen as part of a broader social framework in which women carry no legal responsibility to support members of the family, but in which men are bound by law to provide for all their female relatives. Thus, a man has to maintain himself, his parents, his wife, his children and his poor relatives. A woman does not have to maintain anybody, not even herself. It is unfair to demand an equal share of inheritance for men and women when their financial obligations and social responsibilities are vastly different.

### **Islam permits polygamy**

Western scholarship has maliciously painted a picture of Islamic polygamy as a shameful oppressive institution where men are given license to fulfil their sensual pleasures at will. This is grossly inaccurate because each wife in an Islamic polygamous marriage has her own rights which her husband is obliged to fulfil. She is entitled to a separate residence, full maintenance and a life of dignity.

A Muslim man is only permitted to marry more than one wife on condition that he treats all of them justly and fairly. This condition of justice, together with the increased financial responsibility upon her husband, steers Islamic polygamous marriages away from mere entertainment and amusement.

It is extremely hypocritical of the West to point a finger towards Islam and legal polygamy, while they are totally silent when a Western man has countless mistresses. A mistress is a million times worse off than a protected wife in a polygamous marriage because a man with a mistress has no social commitment or obligation to her, reducing her to a life of disgrace.

According to their own statistics, 60% of married men among them are estimated to have an affair during their marriage. But, their sick culture permits adultery and prostitution, and it prohibits polygamy!

Polygamy is not a uniquely Islamic practice. It is also amongst adherents of other religions. According to the Old and New Testaments, Messengers such as Abraham, David, Solomon and others had more than one wife.

There are many practical cases when polygamy is the best option:

When the first wife is permanently ill or cannot bear children, it is better for the husband to have a second wife rather than divorcing the first wife or having a mistress.

When the ratio of women to men is high, such as at times of war, women would be better protected and cared for if men were to legally marry more than one wife. If women are left unmarried in a monogamous society due to the smaller ratio of men, it will inevitably lead to illicit sexual activities such as prostitution, fornication and adultery. These evils are a stepping stone to other problems such as abortion and illegitimate children.

If polygamy is not permitted in the case of impoverished widows and orphans, it will leave these helpless souls extremely vulnerable and financially distressed.

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# **WOMEN IN ISLAM**

**What is the status of  
women in Islam?**

**Does Islam permit  
polygamy?**



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Islam, or to obtain more  
pamphlets like this one,  
please contact**

**Hope & Help**  
01254 94 66 66  
info@hopeandhelp.uk  
07902 972179  
Springwell House  
2 Shear Bank Road  
Blackburn  
BB1 8AP

There are misconceptions about the status of women in Islam that this pamphlet aims to address. We will address them one by one:

#### **A woman has little or no rights in Islam**

Islam honours the rights of women by law. The Prophet of the Almighty (peace be upon him) considered it a serious offence when the rights of women and orphans were compromised.

A woman enjoys extensive economic rights in Islam. What she owns is her private property. She may keep or dispose of it as she chooses. She may engage in business transactions and give in charity. She also has rights of inheritance.

Women have rights pertaining to marriage and divorce. A husband has to provide his wife with food, clothing and accommodation during marriage and even for a duration of three menstrual cycles post-divorce. She retains her identity after marriage; she does not lose her maiden name, unlike the Western practice where she takes the name of her husband. She has the legal right to get a separation from her husband when the need arises.

The Noble Qur'an guards the honour and rights of chaste women by prescribing a severe punishment for those who slander her. An entire chapter of the Noble Qur'an, was revealed for this purpose.

While Islam recognised women as full human beings with a soul, more than 1400 years ago, this was only accepted in Western intellectual circles about 200 years ago.

Women in the West and many other countries of the world achieved their rights through campaigning, marching, demonstrations, strikes, violence and struggle. In Islam, women were granted their rights through divine revelation.

#### **Women are forced into marriage**

A woman's consent is required before she marries. No one can marry her without her express wish and consent. The Prophet of the Almighty (peace be upon him) terminated the marriage of a woman named Khansa bint Khidham (may the Almighty be pleased with her), because her father married her to a man whom she disliked. [Bukhari]

#### **Islam sanctions honour killings**

Honour killings are a cultural practice and have nothing to do with Islam. There is no text in the Noble Qur'an or Hadith that provides justification for honour killings. In fact, Islam prohibits its followers from taking the law into their own hands or punishing others based on unverified accusations.

#### **Wives are subservient to their husbands**

Due to the husband being the head of the family and the wife his subject, she needs to respect his decisions, as is the case in every other leader-subject relationship.

It does not mean that she is a servant, maid or slave; rather a husband and wife relationship is one of obedience within the framework of friendship, love, compassion and consultation. It also does not mean obedience in sin. If the husband commands his wife to perpetrate a sinful action, she should not obey him

because of the prophetic command that there should be no obedience to the creation when it entails disobedience to the Creator. Obedience also does not entail abstaining from forbidding evil, so wives are compelled to advise their husbands if the latter engages in sinful actions such as bribery, omission of prayer, etc.

#### **Muslim husbands are commanded to beat their wives**

The Prophet of the Almighty (peace be upon him) never abused any of his wives and the believers are urged in the Noble Qur'an to follow in his footsteps. Let alone beating them, he showed extreme concern for their well-being. Hazrat Aishah (may the Almighty be pleased with her) narrates that he would awaken quietly at night so as not to disturb her sleep.

The Prophet of the Almighty (peace be upon him) discouraged men from beating their wives. He praised men who are good and caring to their wives. Hence, a man who deals kindly and compassionately with his wife is a righteous person, while one who oppresses or ill-treats her is unrighteous. When women complained to the family of the Messenger (peace be upon him) about their husbands beating them, he rebuked such actions.

Domestic violence in many Western societies is far more brutal and so widespread according to statistics that it is regarded as an issue of national concern in many countries. In the USA, for example, 1 in 3 women have been victims of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime. Every 9 seconds, a woman is assaulted or beaten.