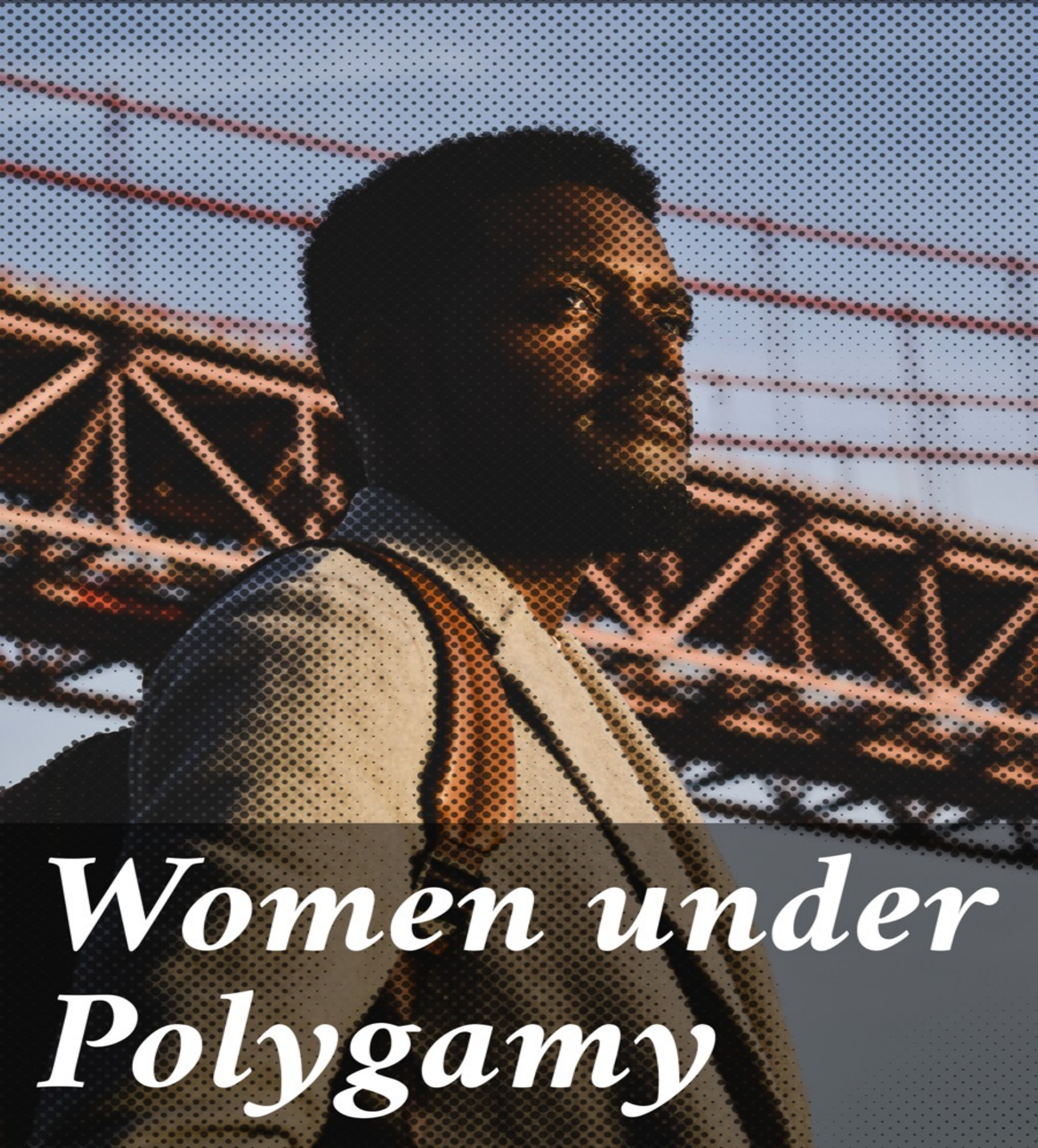


**Walter Matthew
Gallichan**



***Women under
Polygamy***

Walter Matthew Gallichan

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Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066453183

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PREFACE

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This volume has for its main object an inquiry into the actual social and domestic position of women under the system of plural marriage. Polygamy, like monogamy, must be judged by its fruits. In the East, cultured advocates and apologists have explained the biological and racial causes of the practice, and contrasted it with the single marriage custom of the West. Among European and other Western writers, solicitous for the truth, there are those who avow frankly that, from observation and investigation, they are disposed to regard polygamy as an institution with certain distinct advantages for women. Equally sincere critics have condemned this form of marriage, sometimes judicially, and often with passion. One writer, approaching the question with conclusions already formed, denounces zenana life for women as "abominable"; while another of a more dispassionate cast, viewing the subject from various aspects, discovers that a practice of the sex-relationship, sanctioned by many devout and humane teachers, cannot be compounded entirely of evil.

From a mass of conflicting opinion, I have sought to sift the truth. At all events, I have tried to avoid both enthusiastic approval and heated condemnation. My numerous authorities, Eastern and Western, must be judged by my readers with a fair mind. I have rejected neither disapprobation nor censure.

The view of educated English women, who affirm that the lot of their Turkish sisters is more enviable than that of the

mass of the women of our own country, is as worthy of serious attention as the compassionate attitude of the fervent woman missionary in the East. Sir Richard Burton is as worthy of acceptance as Sir William Muir. Bishop Colenso, who permitted polygamy among his native African converts, must be heard with the same attention granted to Professor Edward Westermarck, who heartily reprobates all forms of polygamy.

The point of view of the Hindu woman, who thanks fate that she was born under religious and legal polygamous marriage, should at least interest the intelligent Western woman, who blesses the fortune that made her the daughter of a monogamous race.

I have given the personal views of Eastern men and women known to me, and of Western-born women who have voluntarily entered into harem marriage. I am indebted to numerous writers on ethnology and travel, whose names and works are mentioned in the text.

WALTER M. GALLICHAN.

London, N.W.

Jan. 28th, 1914.

CHAPTER I THE ORIGIN OF THE HAREM

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AMONG the Western nations there are, no doubt, many unreflective and incurious persons who regard the vast institution of polygamy merely as a part of the faith and practice of the ancient Hebrews, the Hindus, and the Mohammedans of former and modern times. The custom is of far greater antiquity than the older religion of the Jews and the birth of Islam. For the origin of polygamy we must seek among the animal ancestry of mankind.

Many male birds and mammals are instances of that instinct of securing a plurality of sexual companions, which in the view of Voltaire, Schopenhauer, and other philosophers, is the natural impulse of mankind. Leaving for the present, the consideration of Schopenhauer's assumption that every normal man desires more than one wife, let us glance for a moment at the sex-relations of the animals nearest to ourselves in the evolutionary chain.

In the Primates, "the lords of the animal world" we find that the Simiae, or true apes, possess organs and nervous systems very closely resembling those of the human being. They have also human-like desires and appetites. Yet among the monkeys we note that polygamy is not the invariable form of union; for some of the species are rigidly monogamous. And so with birds, which are, generally speaking, excellent examples of fidelity to a single partner after courtship and pairing.

The stag has his group of hinds; but the blackbird is supposed to pair with one hen for life. The hawks are monogamous. There is sufficient evidence that the polygamous instinct is not general among animals. The farmyard cock and the male grouse are polygamists, but these are exceptions among birds.

Although most of the carnivorous animals are monogamous, the lion sometimes secures more than one mate. The sea-lions are extremely polygamous, and so are some of the seals.

Among birds the polygamic instinct is strongly instanced in the ruffs. The polygamous birds are almost invariably addicted to conflict, and the males are usually bigger and more gaily-feathered than the females. Stags, especially among the red-deer, are very aggressive towards other males, and sometimes their battles end fatally. A young stag will fight for as many hinds as he can obtain; and the group of females remains his exclusive possession until wrested from him by a more powerful antagonist.

In the marriage customs of mankind we trace, as Goethe said, "the beginning and the end of all culture." The history of civilisation is chiefly the history of the loves of men and women. We must inquire, therefore, into the origin of the widespread polygamy and concubinage, practised from the earliest period of civilisation, as dispassionately as we examine the source of monogamy.

Plurality of wives has been denounced by Schlegel and numerous Western historians and moralists as abominable and unnatural. Are we justified in accepting such condemnation without careful examination of the system?

There is not a stable form of sexual morality for all times and all peoples. Sheer biological necessity, quite apart from ethical ideas, has chiefly determined human sexual relationships throughout all the stages of man's development.

Polygamous marriage in ancient communities grew in some instances through a preponderance in the number of women, just as polyandry arose through a preponderance of men in the tribe. This is not the sole and the invariable cause of either kind of marriage, but an excess of one sex over the other is, no doubt, a factor. In the Western nations of to-day, where the female population exceeds the male, there is no sanctioned and recognised polygamy. But there is an irregular form of polyandry exemplified in the universal practice of prostitution, and more or less open concubinage.

No doubt, the dominant primitive man resembled the gorilla in his desire to possess more than one wife. The craving for variety in sexual unions is probably as deep-rooted in human nature as the desire to subdue enemies and to reap the wealth of conquest. This impulse of sexual variety is checked and thwarted by various means among masses of the people of the West.

Nevertheless, in spite of religious inhibitions, public opinion, psychic refinement in sexual appetite, poverty, and other obstacles to the gratification of polygamous yearnings, there are many instances of the expression of this innate and imperious passion for variety. Christianity and Christian legislation have not succeeded in annihilating the wandering sexual longings of those men and women in whom basic and pristine emotions survive.

"What is the meaning of maintaining monogamy?" wrote James Hinton. "Do you call English life monogamous?"

Our monogamy is constantly varied by polygyny, or pseudo-polygamy, lacking the sanctions and responsibilities of Mohammedan plurality. Side by side with monogamic marriage, concubinage has always existed. The system was plainly recognised in the ancient laws of Wales. In the Thirteenth Century, in England, the mistress, "the concubina legitima," was often the companion of the wife. There are, indeed, many facts in early Christian history that show an ecclesiastic recognition of the tendency of men towards variety or polygyny.

Even in Puritan times there was a measure of toleration for those who could not remain continent with one woman; for we find a writer, in 1658, asserting that it may be in "every way consistent with the principles of a man fearing God and loving holiness to have more women than one to his proper use."

The aggressive, virile man, who craved plurality of wives, or sexual consorts, was also undoubtedly a lover of the power yielded by possessions. When he stole or purchased women for his harem, he increased his prestige and dignity in the tribe. The passion of acquisitiveness is one of the sources of modern polygamy; and it is frequently this impulse, in England and America, which accounts for the lavish expenditure upon the maintenance of a mistress.

Many men are covetous and greedy by nature. They must own costly things. The complete ownership of a beautiful woman, or of more than one woman, affords them intense pleasure, apart from amatory reasons. This lust for

the exclusive ownership of several women dominated the masterful barbarian, and was one of the influences in the institution of the primitive harem system.

The typical polygamous man might be described as highly masculine in all his secondary sexual characteristics. He is predominantly male in a love of authority and of ownership. His instinct is for fighting and subjugation. The early polygamous nations were chiefly martial.* The men delighted in warfare, extension of territory, and capture of women, slaves, and spoil.

During this militant period, women conducted those peaceful and pastoral industries which are at the basis of civilisation. They tamed and domesticated animals; they wove the garments, prepared and cooked the food, and tended the infants and the sick. The warrior devoted to Mars returned triumphant from battle to reap his reward in the tenderness and caresses of woman.

Wherever maleness predominates in the man, we shall find the polygamous form of marriage among the ancient races as in the primitive communities of to-day,

- There are modern exceptions, such as the Iroquois Indians,

who are monogamic.

When the necessity for fighting and hunting begins to wane, men occupy themselves, more often, with the industries assigned hitherto to the women of the tribe; and certain of the marked male characteristics undergo a change. At this stage the position of women is usually raised, and by

gradual stages she often becomes supreme in power, as in the Matriarchal Period.

With a cessation of the dangers of combat and the chase, more men survive in the community; and there is a tendency towards equalisation in the number of males and females. Celibacy being abhorred as contrary to nature, every man demands his right to a wife, and every woman claims a husband.

In cases where the women are more numerous than the men, among existing primitive people, the practice of polygamy is regarded as a natural necessity. The Esquimaux man of the present day, being a fisher and hunter, is continually at contest with the forces of nature, and therefore subject to mortality from accidents. Many Esquimaux fishermen lose their lives by drowning, and in conflict with animals. The widows are not left to languish in celibacy. A man is always willing to take the husbandless woman into his own home, and to adopt her children; an arrangement which is never resented by his first wife.

Polygamy arose naturally in the barbarous times, when it became imperative to capture women for the propagation of offspring and the maintenance of the group. If the conquering side bore off a large number of women, each man was able to secure three or four wives.

Among the semi-civilised communities of our time, polygyny is far commoner than polygamy. The secondary wife, or concubine, is found amongst the Fijians, the tribes of the Pacific Coast, in Madagascar, in Uganda, Ashanti, and other parts of Africa.

Polygyny is often confused with polygamy; but the distinction is important. A devout Mohammedan, the husband of not more than four wives, duly legitimized, is, strictly speaking, a polygamist; but the Chinese mandarin with a legal wife chosen for him by his parents who takes concubines or inferior wives into his household, may be called a polygynist.

This form of sex union in its most primitive example occurs when several sisters are married to the same man. An instance of such a marriage is to be found in the story of Jacob and Rachel and Leah.

Wake, in his painstaking survey of early marriage customs, states that, in the oldest form of polygyny, all of a man's wives possessed equal rights. In another form there is a favourite, or principal, wife, or wives, and inferior wives, who are sometimes legal wives, and at others serf-wives or concubines.

An economic cause of polygamy must not be overlooked. When the dominant males of a community realised that the men of another group were willing to barter for women instead of fighting for them, they began to trade in their daughters and other women relatives.

In the uncultured nations that bartered their women-folk, a woman was regarded merely as an article of exchange or sale. Later, however, the purchased woman secures certain important rights. She is not sold body and soul to her purchaser; and a sum of money is settled upon her for sole personal use.

There exists among the Arabs of the White Nile district a rule giving to the purchased girl full liberty on two days of

each week. As a wife she is only at the behest of her lord on four days out of the seven. Upon the other day she may even regard herself as free from married fidelity.

Besides their sexual attraction, several wives were valuable to a man in the hunting and battle days. The Sioux Indian is often assisted by his wives in the pursuit of wild animals for food or skins. Women are regarded as business assets. With their help a man can increase his possessions. The Sioux with but one wife remains poor. The housewife cannot leave the cooking and the care of her family for the chase, whereas the fortunate owner of several wives has companions for his hunting.

In Australia, according to Howitt, the natives of the interior obtain as many wives as they can afford, not only from passional ardour, but because they are of use to them. A husband can lend his wives for a gift to young men who are unmarried, and by this means he may acquire property.

The property value of women in primitive societies undoubtedly encouraged plurality of wives. A man was esteemed in proportion to the number of women with whom he cohabited.

Wife purchase is not solely the custom of savage people, nor of living Oriental races. It was a practice of the early English and of all the Teutonic people; and the wedding-ring survives as a symbol of a sale-contract.

Havelock Ellis, quoting from the "Annual Register," for 1767, says that an English bricklayer's labourer sold a woman to a fellow workman "for a quarter guinea and a gallon of beer." We may suppose that the vendor subsequently regretted this transaction; for we read that the

woman soon after inherited ",200 and some plate, left her by a deceased uncle in Devonshire."

The masculine desire for more than one wife (polygamy) has been more often expressed than the feminine desire for more than one husband (polyandry) . On the whole, it is stated by some authorities on the marriage customs of mankind, that, of the two systems, polygamy is the better for the race. Polygamy served a racial end in early communities, inasmuch as it enabled the most forceful men to beget the largest number of offspring, and so to perpetuate vigorous qualities. Everywhere plurality of wives has been more the mark of a man's success and power in the community than an expression of male sensuality. The great harem represents a man's dignity and position in society, while its maintenance involves a number of strict legal and social obligations towards wives and concubines.

As we shall see, primitive polygamy arose in many tribes through the labour potentiality of women. The chief with the largest number of wives commanded the largest number of assistants in hunting and industry, and sometimes in warfare. The source of polygamy is not invariably amatory; the system has been often forced upon the community through a scarcity of males. In the fighting and hunting age many men died in combat and the chase. But the preponderance of females has not always been brought about by the high mortality among males. There are races that tend to reproduce more females than males, or more males than females. Whenever the balance of the sexes is disturbed, plurality of mates naturally results.

The chief cause of polygamy in the past was economic. Moral reprobation of the practice has often been based on the assumption that polygamous marriage grew solely from the "vices " or the sexual acquisitiveness of men. This is not proved in the case of primitive polygamy. And though there is ample testimony showing that savage races are far less incontinent than highly civilised people, it is rarely that celibacy exists among them. Polygamy provides mates for the superfluous women of the group. Polyandry supplies partners for the redundant men. Celibacy is a state regarded by primitive people as unnatural, or as contrary to moral law, and according to such a conception, avoidance of celibacy must be provided for by an adjustment of the marriage customs.

C. N. Starcke finds in the desire of primitive fathers to own many children one of the chief incentives to polygamous marriage.* Naturally, the man with the largest number of wives will possess the most numerous progeny. The savage with a goodly number of children owns a retinue of companions for the chase and of workers in the fields and the home.

The craving for dignity, power and riches is clearly one of the main sources of polygamy and concubinage. It has been reiterated again and again by ill-informed writers that "men's lust" alone is the cause of plural

- " The Primitive Family."

marriage. Investigation proves, however, that it is a minor factor, at any rate in polygamy of early ages and among existing primitive tribes.

It is important to note that monogamy has always accompanied polygamy. Obviously, even when women have been redundant, there has not existed a sufficient number to enable each man to possess several wives. Polygamy is the luxury of the prosperous, and it stands for property-ownership. The poor man is bound to practise monogamy. Among some African tribes, the greed of the king and the chiefs, in the acquisition of large harems, actually condemns a part of the male population to celibacy.

"Polygamy," says Starcke, "can never have been the normal condition of a tribe, since it would have involved the existence of twice as many women as men."

It is often assumed that women in polygamic countries are the mere slaves of men, and that they are forced into plural marriage. This is scarcely the truth. Women as well as men have determined the forms of the sexual relationships in communities. Among animals living in polygamy, compulsion on the part of the males is very seldom apparent in their conduct towards the females. The sea lions are a marked exception. But the stag and other polygamous animals, woo and incite rather than impel the hinds to join his troop. It has been noticed generally by naturalists and hunters that the females voluntarily attach themselves to the powerful younger males owning several mates.

As there is not a wide difference between the instincts of the animal and that of primitive men, it seems beyond question that the great bulk of the women of the tribe do not disapprove of polygamous marriage. Doubtless there are a few malcontents, but the mass of the women approve the system. There is plenty of evidence in this matter. Dr.

Livingstone is by no means the only traveller who has heard primitive women declare that they would not live in a country where a man is only permitted to marry one woman.

Chapter II - The Ancient Harem

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CHAPTER II THE ANCIENT HAREM

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I. BABYLON

AMONG the ruins of the noble palaces of Assyria were carvings depicting the leading of men and women captives into the cities. At Khorsabad one of these interesting relics showed plainly the figures of women and eunuchs. "For lo! our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity".

That the harem existed in Nineveh is proved by the testimony of its mural sculpture and the inscriptions deciphered by Colonel Rawlinson and other investigators. This earliest recorded empire came to an end with the great Sardanapalus, probably in 820 B.C., who, upon the sacking of the city by Arbaces, concealed himself in his palace, and set fire to it. With his concubines, eunuchs and slaves he perished; and the Assyrian Empire of Babylon and Nineveh were formed after his death.

Herodotus tells us that the seat of the government, after the downfall of Nineveh, was transferred to Babylon. The city stood in a wide plain, covering a great area, and in its extent and the beauty of its architecture, Babylon surpassed all other cities. A moat and a high wall encompassed the city. In the wall, at the end of each street, were gates of brass. The royal residence and harem stood in the midst of a fortified enclosure.

The temple of Jupiter Belus was an immense square building. In one of the towers was a temple, wherein no mortal might pass the night except a native woman chosen

by the deity from the whole nation. This priestess, who was a vestal, was said to be visited by the god himself.

In Babylon women were queens and priestesses, and held other exalted positions. The goddess was more honoured than the god. Women owned property and had equal rights with men. The Queen Semiramis had immense sway; and greater still was the power of Nitocris, who, according to Herodotus, enlarged and fortified the city and showed a wonderful capacity for engineering and the planning of canals and reservoirs.

By the famous Code of Hammurabi, marriage by purchase and polygamy were permitted in Babylon. But wives could not be divorced at the caprice of the husband, and the marriage dowry given to the bride by her father could not be taken from her even though she were divorced. Concubinage was allowed by the Code, the secondary wife, or concubine, ranking as subordinate to the chief wife.

If a man desired a maiden for his wife, he approached her parents first, and the prospective bride had no voice in the contract. Herodotus describes a custom of the Babylonian villagers that recalls the old-time hiring fairs of England. Once a year all the girls of a marriageable age were collected together in an open space, surrounded by a crowd of men. One by one the damsels were put up for sale, the more comely being first offered to the bidders. The wealthiest men naturally secured the most beautiful wives. After the disposal of the handsome women, their plain sisters were sold by auction; but in this case they were given to poor men, and the successful bidder was one who

would accept the lowest dowry. This sum was paid out of the sale of the beautiful maidens.

Until the buyer of a girl had given full assurance that he would marry her legally, he was not permitted to carry her away. In the event of disharmony in the married life, the wife could be freed from the tie by the return of the purchase money. "Such," writes the historian, "was their best institution. It has not, however, continued to exist." At a later period, after defeats in warfare and impoverishment, the poorer classes resorted to the selling of their daughters in prostitution.

Herodotus refers to the sacred prostitution of women at the Temple of Mylitta, the Venus of the Babylonians. Generally speaking, prostitution is comparatively uncommon in polygamous countries, and its introduction often arises from the coming of strangers from the monogamous nations. The religious rite observed in the Babylonian temple was by no means a purely commercial transaction. Once in her life every woman in ancient Babylon was compelled to sit in the Temple of Mylitta until chosen by a man. The wealthy women came in carriages attended by their servants. The women sat in a row, and the men passed up and down. When a man had made his choice, he threw a piece of silver into the woman's lap, and she was bound to accompany him. After "absolving herself from her obligation to the goddess," the woman returned home, and was regarded as chaste. The plain-featured and the deformed were often obliged to remain in the temple for a considerable time. "Some wait for a space of three or four

years," relates Herodotus. The money given to the women was devoted to the temple of the goddess.

Herodotus describes this custom of the Babylonians as "most disgraceful." But he does not seem to have inquired into its origin and full significance. It was the fervent belief of many ancient societies that procreation is sacred, and a tribute to the gods. They believed also that the rite in the temple favoured the fertility of women.

Professor Frazer, in "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," says: "We may conclude that a great mother goddess, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature, was worshipped under different names, but with a substantial similarity of myth and ritual by many peoples of Western Asia; that associated with her was a lover, or rather series of lovers, divine yet mortal, with whom she mated year by year, their commerce being deemed essential to the propagation of animals and plants, each in their several kind; and further that the fabulous union of the divine pair was simulated, and, as it were, multiplied on earth by the real, though temporary union of the human sexes at the sanctuary of the goddess for the sake of thereby ensuring the fruitfulness of the ground and the increase of man and beast."

The rite of Mylitta was designed as a benefit to the woman-devotee. When the man placed the coin in the woman's lap, he said: "May the goddess be auspicious to thee," referring, no doubt, to her increased potentiality as a mother after the sacred ceremony.

Similar rites were practised by the Egyptians, the Romans, in the worship of Priapus, the Corinthians, and among the priestesses of Cyprus.

In Lydia it was the custom of girls to prostitute themselves for the purpose of securing a marriage-portion. Frazer is of the opinion that this was a development of sacred prostitution. At first the money is offered to the god, but later it is used by the woman as a marriage-portion. The practice survives to this day in Japan.*

The secularisation of prostitution followed gradually upon the decay of religious and symbolic prostitution among the Eastern nations. Once a ceremony of holy and solemn import, it degenerated into a mere traffic for money, and is now a commercial institution of every monogamous country.

In the harems of Babylon, the wives held considerable power and high status. Nor were the concubines the mere chattels of their masters. The Hammurabi Code had important clauses respecting the treatment of inferior wives. If a man determined to dismiss a concubine, he was compelled to pay her "the usufruct of field, garden, and goods," to maintain and educate her children. A bride put away on the ground of sterility, or for another cause, was entitled to the price

- See chapter on "Japan."

originally paid for her. If there was no bride-price, the husband paid her one mina of silver; and in the case of a poor man one-third of a mina of silver.

In regard to faithless wives in the harem, the law was not liberal. The woman who had "belittled her husband," or "played the fool," was sent away without compensation or held as the slave of a new wife. An errant wife was

condemned to death by drowning, a favourite Oriental punishment for women.

II. ANCIENT EGYPT

"Among the Egyptians," wrote Diodorus, "the woman rules over the man." The existence of the harem in a nation so distinguished as ancient Egypt for a recognition of sex-equality, is somewhat bewildering at the first thought.

Let us remember that polygamy from the earliest times has been the privilege and the luxury of the rich. It was never the practice of a vast mass of the population in polygamous countries. Therefore, in speaking of such countries, we must not lose sight of the fact that the bulk of women are outside of the harems. It is also necessary that we should recognise the constant recruiting of the inmates of the harem by the importation of alien women.

Hammurabi, the great law-maker of the Babylonians, who held power for forty-three years, published a number of regulations relating to marriage. Adultery was punishable by the death of both persons by drowning. Provision was made for the desertion of wives. "If a man has abandoned his city, and absconded, and after that his wife has entered the house of another, if that man comes back and claims his wife, because he had fled and deserted his city, the wife of the deserter shall not return to her husband." A wife or a concubine who had borne children could not be sent away from the harem without the return of her dowry, and she was at liberty to marry again. Incest incurred a penalty of death, either by drowning or burning, according to the severity of the crime.

The law of Hammurabi was very rigid in regard to the descent of property through the mother.

"If a man has married a wife and she has borne children, and that woman has gone to her fate, then her father has no claim upon her dowry. The dowry is her children's."

Mr. Chilperic Edwards, author of "The Oldest Laws in the World," writes, in his notes on the Hammurabi Code, that many of the stories of Herodotus about the women of Babylon are fables." The Babylonian woman was given in marriage by her father or brothers. The suitor, or his family, paid a certain sum as "bride-price/ the amount being often handed over in instalments. The bride's father gave her a ' dowry/ which usually, but not necessarily, included the ' bride-price/ The bridegroom might also make his bride a ' settlement/ "

"The status of the concubine is not clear. She does not seem to be necessarily of lower rank, like the Roman, but was a secondary spouse. Like the chief wife she carried bride-price and dowry, and we may assume that she possessed the same rights as the chief wife in regard to maintenance and participation in the husband's estate."

A humane measure for the annulment of marriage on the ground of incompatibility is recorded in the following clause:

"If a woman hate her husband, and say 'Thou shalt not possess me' the reason for her dislike shall be inquired into. If she be careful, and has no fault, but her husband takes himself away and neglects her, then that woman is not to blame. She shall take her dowry and go back to her father's house. "*"

In the Egypt of ancient days the mass of the people laboured for the mere maintenance of existence, and bowed beneath the stern common lot of the multitude in most civilised nations. Family life among the humble was on a very different plane from the luxuri-

- " The Oldest Laws in the World."

ous lives of the influential and the wealthy. But in happy domesticity the Egyptians excelled all peoples. The women were the beloved of their husbands, the mistresses of the house. Innumerable are the precepts to husbands, urging them to bestow tenderness and affection upon their wives, to cherish them in every manner, and to honour all women.

The marriage contracts, in the days of the highest culture in Egypt, prove conclusively that women were more favoured than men. Purchase-marriage became a form only, for the bride-price was given to her, and the wife's property was entirely her own to enjoy and dispense as she chose. In the event of separation, the wife retained her possessions. A woman who left her husband was entitled to all that was her own, and in some instances the wife was endowed with the whole of her husband's belongings.*

Children were carefully and lovingly tended by both parents. Even the child of a slave woman was legitimate and accorded equitable rights. The woman who had wandered from the strict path of chastity was not scorned nor made an outcast. Petah Hotep declared that such misfortune should be softened by the kindness of the man who had consorted with her. He

- See "The Truth About Woman," C. Gasquoine Hartley

(Mrs. Walter M. Gallichan).

was enjoined to shelter her and "be kind to her for a season," and to "send her not away."

The wives living in polygamy had each their own house; their children were endowed, and their property-rights were well-defined. Instead of being at the beck and call of her husband at any time, the woman received him in her own home as an invited guest.

Three centuries ago, in France, certain sage doctors conferred together in order to decide whether women were of the same species as men. In Egypt, long before the advent of Christianity, society had raised women to dignity and almost to adoration. Before we speak of the inevitable degradation of women under a system of polygamy, it will be well to reflect upon the feminism of the ancient Egyptians.

The splendour of the old palaces of Egypt have been often described. Kings occupied magnificent residences, to which temples were attached. The palace had spacious courts and pavilions, and numerous apartments, beautifully adorned with sculpture in relief and with paintings. In the scented and sequestered gardens, there were bowers and sparkling fountains; and rare trees and imported plants flourished.

Surrounded by his wives, children, concubines and slaves, the monarch lived a complete autocrat and the head of a large family.

Women were in constant attendance on the king. When he went out in the city, slaves bore him in a decorated

palaquin, or he rode in a resplendent coach. Musicians, singers, and men and women dancers entertained the sovereign in his leisure hours. We read that the royal parents were much attached to their children, and that the king joined in the games of the nursery.

It is clear that when the Egyptians became pacific, women enjoyed the social, civic and domestic advantages which were denied to them during the militant period. The Greek travellers in Egypt were surprised at the independence of the women. It is doubtful whether, at the highest stage in their culture, the Greeks approached the Egyptian ideal of family life.

With the example of ancient Egypt before us, can we assert justly that the position of women has been always debased under polygamous marriage? Moslem polygamy has its evils. But who can maintain that a sense of justice to women and a true regard for her social and personal well-being has always been a conspicuous virtue of the monogamic communities?

Photo

A DAUGHTER OF EGYPT.

Underwood

Chapter III - Mohammed and Polygamy

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