



Reflections On “Serial Marriage” And Polygyny

There are two programmes I have always enjoyed but recently stopped watching on British television and they are: the ITV/Jeremy Kyle and Channel Five/Trisha Goddard shows.

Human nature is just damn funny! These programmes portray the bickering and “nattering nabobs” going on between married couples, live-in partners, live-apart partners, boyfriend/girlfriend madness and some times, in gay/lesbian relationships. The no holds barred episodes revolve on partners accusing each other of the following: cheating, domestic violence of the ABH or GBH variants, substance and/or alcohol addiction, refusal to seek for job and earn a living and, apparent laziness.

Either the man has cheated or the woman has or both of them have, and they decided to bring their case to the court of a seated audience and public view. It is the relishing duty of the audience, who are in an ambiance mood {trust human beings}, to listen, probe, learn from other people’s experiences, make comments and recommendations while Trisha, in hers, and Jeremy, in his, moderates and gives what seemingly looks like the final verdict.

The programmes are aimed at trying to reconcile couples, counsel them, encourage them to stay together, or stay apart for tempers to cool or at worst, advised to, if possible, go for divorce to avoid Actual or Grievous bodily harm {ABH or GBH} in relationships. And even death! The way the cases are resolved, depends on a moderator’s definition of each situation. However, in some of the aired cases, it really beggars believe that couples could be petty to descend so low to wash their dirty linen in public.

There were some cases that ought not to be beamed for public consumption, even my fellow English co-workers {and this is usually during breaks} tend to agree with me on some of those scores. Again, the world is moving at a dangerously faster rate that these days one cannot, in praxis, establish what is morality and what is not anymore, even though the term is culturally defined. Besides, in some of the episodes I’d watched, I had to look at some of the cases presented from the point of view of “manifest individual differences”. This borders more on ability of persons in any relationship to discern and respect, show credence, tolerance and subtle maturity. Added to these, is the ability of persons to communicate smoothly, soothingly and effectively.

With these in mind, spiced with a Midas touch, the man or boy should be able to weather through most storms in a relationship. I would have added the love and fear of God, which covers a multitude of sins and, which would have been the greatest antidote, but in most of



Reflections On “Serial Marriage” And Polygyny

those cases aired, one is dealing with unbelievers. Most English people are free thinkers! Those who even nominally believed, only remember Jesus Christ during Christmas, which is a time for their crazy shopping spree, after which celebration, they revert to hedonism. Here in the UK, they celebrate Christ {Christmas} and Satan {Halloween}. Some times in my banter sections with some of these white folks, I call them “Confused.com”, while some of them in turn call me “the Reverend without a cassock.”

However, in most other cases on the programmes, I discovered that couples are just tired of each other. Because of their easy proclivity towards hedonism, they just want to part ways and move on, look for another prey to enjoy and then devour. An average English man hates stress and heartbrokenness is a terrible source of stress. Anything, not to talk of a relationship, which is about to give them just a slight headache, they flee - FIAAM - take off like a Hummer or Cherokee Jeep!

Life to them is too short and as such, should be enjoyed to its fullest. Most don't stay long enough in a relationship that is persistently pregnant with conflicts and stroke inducing tension. Such unhealthy relationships tend to shortened their life span and hastened their deaths. Some others have suicidal tendency. Any slightest trigger, like bullying at work or at school, they simply commit suicide and leave the world for that bully to literally eat to his swell.

This is why you see most of them both men and women joyfully claiming when asked by the moderators: “how many marriages have you had?": “this is my 11th marriage”, answers a male respondent; “this is my 5th marriage”, answers a female respondent; yet some other say, “this is my 7th marriage” and to some others, “ this is my 10th or 17th marriage” etc. Marriage to most of them is a fun house that does not need a life time commitment. It could be discarded at will. The fact that the flow of thoughts and value systems often moves from the advanced countries to the less developed - the impact of these loose and very liberal ways of handling the institution of marriage - should be a thing of worrying concern to mankind. If this promiscuous trend continues unchecked, then mankind is a goner!

And flowing along in each of those failed marriages is that a child or children are involved. In other wards, if a man or woman have had 10 marriages and is in the 11th one, hypothetically, and all things being equal, he or she may have had 9 to 10 children from 10 different partners. Now, what is this type of marry-today-and-divorce tomorrow called. I think Sociologists and anthropologists termed it SERIAL MARRIAGE. The English law seemingly works on the premise that if a man is legally married to a woman, and goes ahead to marry another while the first



Reflections On “Serial Marriage” And Polygyny

marriage still subsists, the man has committed BIGAMY and is liable to be sued by the first wife who is wont to claim damages and alimony.

However, some academics have argued that instead of marrying and divorcing at the knock of ones knuckles, why can't a man, marry two, three or four wives, the practice of which is anthropologically termed polygyny? Why this passion to choose and drop with effortless ease? Again, what about the female folk, can they too, marry two, three or four husbands, otherwise known as polyandry? Anthropologically, Polygyny and polyandry are both called polygamy or plural marriages. Existentially, I do not know whether polyandry - a culturally institutionalised practice of a female marrying more than one husband at the same time - is still in vogue?

The point here is that the advanced western countries are often clever by half, especially when it comes to issues concerning Africa. They have always condemned the practice of polygyny as it is practiced in Africa and other third world countries, but the same West has not condescended to condemning serial marriages and its established studied negative effects on children, as is practiced by its own people.

Their own defining predatory system has changed the face of marriage on mother earth. Marriage vows has been changed from: “for better” we stay, “for worse” we split. Now, between these two practices, which, has generated more evil in society and has posed a threat to mankind's existence? Which one is more morally bankrupt; has created more discord in the elementary, joint and compound family units and has dislocated the basic functions of the institution of marriage?

Which, has destroyed family bonding and has enthroned selfishness and excessive individualism? Which, has commoditized sexuality as a “thing or object” to be packaged, advertised, bought and sold in the open market? Which, has encouraged the exploitation of women as mostly sex slaves? Which, has made the females more vulnerable and seemingly unprotected from the vagaries and crookedness of global capitalist integration? Which, has killed the genuine meaning and practice of love and has transformed same into fetishism, a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder. The questions are as inexhaustible as the answers are obvious.

This may not be a good enough analogy but could be read as an aside, which is, that the difference between SERIAL MARRIAGE and POLYGAMY or PLURAL MARRIAGE is seemingly likened to that between Matriarchy and Patriarchy. In Matriarchy, and there are varieties of it, the woman owns the house and can drive the man out of the house at the flimsiest excuse - with



Reflections On “Serial Marriage” And Polygyny

the police as standby ‘generator’ in case of any eventuality! This is what obtains in the UK. In Patriarchy, again, with its nuances, the man owns the house and can drive the woman away at the least of all provocations – with the police almost looking the other way! This is what obtains in Nigeria. But in real and properly consummated marriage – which is built on true love for each other combined with the genuine love for Christ and fear of God – both couples own the house. For, what God has joined together, no one has a right to put asunder to it. Except, where in the present aggressive modern capitalist pursuit for dirty lucre, violence is involved. Even at that, genuine love, prayerfulness, fear of God and the passion for Christ, can take care of it.

My take is that African traditional system of marriage when properly practiced seems to be the best of the two worlds. Except for those who still rigidly practice polygyny on religious ground, that system is gradually wearing off and has paved the way for monogamy. Even at that, the African standard on marriage, if it is devoid of violence, is still being sustained and preserved. However, as a non-hypocritical practicing Christian, I stand by the Biblical principles and prescription for marriage, which seemed to be in tandem with most aspect of African traditional prescriptions.

And here, I present the abridged views of Pastor Funke Felix-Adejumo {one of the most intelligent preacher I have had cause to listen to, on KICC SKY TV channel} and Pastor {Dr} Munroe, the brilliant and articulate preacher from the Bahamas. These are: first, that man and woman must know that they are both made in the image of a loving God; two, that a man, before he ventures into marriage must know that as an image of God on earth, he must be a worshipping husband; three, that before a man goes into marriage, he should be working, earning money and should have a vision; fourth, must love his wife the way Christ loved HIS Church; fifth, honour his wife for him to gain her respect; sixth, assert his authority in a mature, subtle and humble manner for God has assigned that role to him but, should not equate authority to bullying, shouting and aggressive gesturing. Any man who, as a true Christian, says he does not know how to assert authority in his house without being a bully, is deceiving himself. And finally, a family that prays together, stays together. The man should always take the lead in family prayers and worship otherwise your marriage will likely follow the ways of the world: doomed!

As for the women, apart from the fact that you were made in the image of God and as such must worship HIM, the following counts to sustaining your marriage. First, there cannot be two captains in a ship, thus God has assigned the authority in the house to the man. Second, a



Reflections On “Serial Marriage” And Polygyny

woman should come into a marriage with the zeal to HELP – to help her husband fulfil the vision and plans he has for the marriage. Again, as a helper who earns more than her husband, a good display of maturity and tactfulness keeps the marriage going. That aspect is not supposed to be a source of bitterness, rancour and unnecessary acrimony.

To taunt such as an excuse to end a marriage shows the highest display of immaturity, especially if you know, inside your heart that your sweetheart is equally working hard and is not a lazy man. Thus advanced the Biblical book of Proverbs as quoted by Dr. Munroe: “A good wife does not cause her husband to go after spoils”. Third, do not come into a marriage with a vision to replace the man’s. By that action, you are initiating a clash of two visions, which will lead to divisions and then divorce. Suggest a vision and let your husband subsume it under the overall vision he has for the family. If not, forget it. Fourth, be submissive and assertive, but do not turn assertiveness to authority. Any wife who, as a true Christian, says she does not know how to be assertive without being authoritative, bullish, rude and mouthy, is deceiving herself. Fifth, show respect to your husband and he will honour you wherever he goes.

In that sense, RESPECT does not beget RESPECT but rather HONOUR to a woman. I am sick and tired of hearing women say “respect begets respect”. That is absolute bunkum! Such women just belittle themselves. When Pa Awolowo of blessed memory, described his wife as “a jewel of inestimable value”, that is honour. When Barack Obama described his wife with scented roses on the podium, that is honour. With an honourable wife at home, a husband sees other female intruders and temptresses as non-existing. Any time he meets one at any forum, he flashes his wedding ring at the temptress and says to her “sorry darling, I am married and I love my wife to pieces – just take your wares elsewhere”.

That is honour! Honour to the woman who is either at home or is attending another function elsewhere. An ‘intelligent’ temptress will like to probe further, to know “who, the hell is this wife that this man loves to pieces”. And when occasion warrants and she meets that “woman of substance”, she will tiptoe closer to her to know more about her and when opportunity offers itself thereon, she opens a chat forum and before the man knows it, she will whisper to the man’s wife: “You know something, you are a lucky woman, your husband is a man of honour and integrity”. She would not go further to say what she really meant. Yes, it does happen and I have seen it several times over.

When I came into the UK about 8 years ago, advisers – and they are many, very cunning, comical Nigerians, full of filthy lies – told me that “marriage here is 50-50, the man brings 50%,”

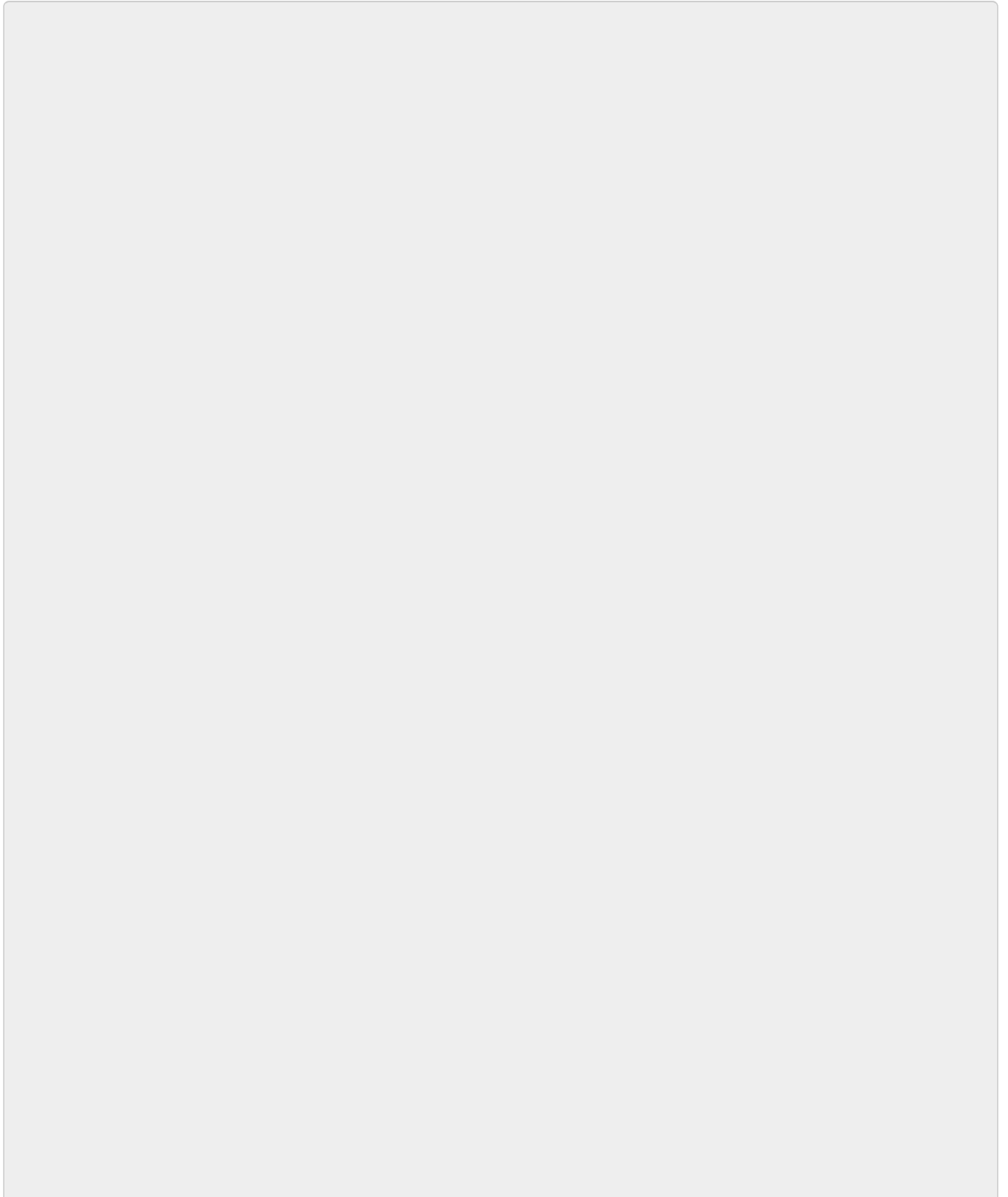


Reflections On “Serial Marriage” And Polygyny

the woman, 50%”. So, if I were to reduce this to a petty domestic practice, it means that if I buy a loaf of bread today, it is the turn of my wife to buy tomorrow. Such simplistic understanding of marriage is just laughable. The sociology in me prompted me to ask some of them thus: “If marriage is 50 -50, where should I and my wife keep the remainder 50 - 50, on the bank of River Thames or in Barclays bank?” I’d advised my advisers that as far as I am concerned, marriage is 100 - 100 or 200% and should not be seen as one of those stupid bourgeois contracts. I give it all and my wife gives it all too. There should be no room for suspicion or clever manoeuvring.

For God’s sake, if you sincerely believed in your vows, you should know that marriage is a life time venture. It should be built on love, companionship, fear of God, forgiveness, and the procreation of children. But most would yell: “but eh! how many times does one has to forgive for whatever repeated offences that has been committed?” Simple answer: for as long as both of you live together until death, do you part. To forgive Biblically 77 times multiplied by 7, is still too small! keep forgiving. God is not a stupid God. HE knows why HE asked us to keep to that simple rule in our journey through life. Like anything human, there are bound to be temptations and they have to be overcome. They come in different guises. And the ability of couples to discern and handle them with maturity is of enormous responsibility. Apart from that no holds barred confession by Rebekah Loos on SKY TV in 2004, there have been other attempts made to destroy David Beckham’s marriage by “Kiss and Tell” female experts. The deliberate purpose of which is to spite not David{himself} but Victoria Beckham. But, so far, the wolves have been failing. This world is gone morally berserk! Allah Kaiskiya! I rest my case!

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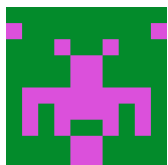
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