

PREGNANCY

In travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command) [Holy Quran: Luqman: 31:14]

The Period of Pregnancy

The time of pregnancy is a very difficult period with anxiety and various physical and spiritual stresses, although a mother is the center of love and affection, an example of God's Mercy and eager to have a baby and see her child's pretty, innocent face. The husband, the relatives of both and their friends should all take care of her at all times, since any yelling or screaming, vulgarity or bad-temper, or any form of bothering the pregnant women will not only hurt her, but it will also have a bad influence on the baby. If the couple lives in the house of either one of their parents, then their parents are morally bound and religiously obliged to not only avoid provoking the husband against his pregnant wife, but also to be considerate of the pregnant woman. The man's parents should seriously avoid interfering in the couple's peaceful life and the woman's parents should try not to be picky about the husband. Both sides are seriously responsible for the couple and the unborn baby.

If the fetus is harmed even slightly by the quarrels, bad tempers or excessive expectations of either relatives, they must undoubtedly answer to God in His just court. Then they shall be seriously punished for their oppression. The Holy Quran holds every one responsible for the slightest to the greatest sins they commit.

Therefore, by the Lord, we will, of a surety, call them to account, for all their deeds. [Holy Quran: Hizr: 15:92-93]

But stop them, for they must be asked: [Holy Quran: Saffat: 37:24]

For every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be inquired into (on the day of Reckoning). [Holy Quran: Bani Israil: 17:36]

I have received many letters from young couples during my religious lectures all over Iran. I have helped resolve many family conflicts, and have noticed that a major portion of these problems are related to the relatives of the couple, usually some unreasonable expectations of the husband's father or mother, or the pickiness of the woman's parents or of the groom's. Imam Sadiq has said the

(182)

source of many of these immoral encounters is the result of jealousy. In some cases, of course, the newly-wed wife is at fault since she is young and inexperienced. In these cases, the elders should forgive her, but they do not, and the fights get worse. Sometimes religious or moral shortcomings worsened the situation to the point of divorce. As you know, any man or woman is seeking freedom and independence by nature. Restriction of this God-given freedom by anyone is a great vice and a sin. Stressing on the needs of a pregnant woman for security and attention does not mean that we should ignore her needs or treat her badly at other times. This is only because of the subject of the discussion in this chapter, and a pregnant woman's special conditions.

In fact, it is necessary for all to respect human rights of freedom and independence at all times and under all conditions. If the two families can provide for a separate housing arrangement for the newly-wed couple without experiencing real difficulty, it would be great. They should treat them kindly and with love and affection. Both parents should associate with the young couple, and avoid gossiping or interfering in their life while doing so. If they cannot provide a separate house for them, then they should let them live in a part of their own house. However, they should try not to bother them, since in the beginning of the couple's life they are filled with love. The bride is God's trust in the family of the groom. She has left her own family with lots of hope and aspirations and has entered a new life. The groom, also, is God's blessing in the family of the bride. They should take care of these blessings just like their own children. Such caring is in line with the Holy Quran and traditions and is considered to be God's worship with the reward being God's pleasure and the eternal Heaven.

The parents of both the bride and the groom have either experienced the kindness and nobility of their near relatives, and started a good life or have been seriously hurt by them when they first got married themselves. In either case, they should now help safeguard the ties of marriage of the newly-wed couple by providing for their peace and security and avoiding undue interference. This way the young couple can enjoy their life and benefit from God-given blessings, instead of being hurt or separated due to improper interventions or unreasonable expectations. I remember seeing the following tradition in Usul-i-Kafi: The sixth Imam said the first piece of advice given to Adam by God when he first started his life on Earth was:

"Want for others what you want for yourself, and do not approve of for others what you do not approve for yourself."

Thus, the relatives and friends of both the bride and the groom should follow these words, since then there will be fewer problems, and these problems can easily be resolved, too. Now consider the following verses of the Glorious Quran regarding pregnancy:

In travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command) [Holy Quran: Luqman: 31:14]

(183)

We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. [Holy Quran: Ahqaf: 46:15]

Do you not think that we should respect the pregnant woman during this strenuous period of weakness, anxiety and suffering? Being considerate of her is at first her husband's moral and religious duty, and next it is the responsibility of all her relatives, so that the physical and mental health of both the mother and the baby are guaranteed.

Duties During Pregnancy

The time of pregnancy is a boring and difficult period during which the various systems in the body undergo strange changes. If it was not for the love of the child, mothers who have once become pregnant would refuse a second pregnancy. In this period some of the internal glands start to increase secretions, and the body uses more and more nutrients. However, the pregnant woman cannot eat food properly due to nausea, and a lack of appetite. Some women go on a rigid diet to be slim and not let the fetus grow too big and hurt their good looks. They avoid eating good foods so that the baby does not grow so much that their skin wrinkles, or they have to undergo a hard delivery. They do not realize that now they are two people, and their diet must be such that it provides the necessary nutrients for the growth of the baby, too. To keep at a reasonable weight and provide for the health of the mother and the proper growth of the child, a well-balanced diet must be established. During this period of over secretion of the glands, food is absorbed and burnt rapidly. Much of the food intake is absorbed by the fetus, else the women would get really fat.

Should the pregnant woman not consume sufficient food, reserves in the kidney, bone marrow, and other parts of the body would be depleted. The fetus needs lime and iron to build up its various body parts: The iron is needed for the blood. Without it hemoglobin which is the fundamental element of blood cells would not be formed. Then the fetus will extract it from the mother's iron. Thus the mother will slowly develop blood deficiency as will the baby. To be able to provide the iron necessary for her body and the baby, she must daily eat some grains, some liver, meat and some fruits like apples, grapes, dates, etc. Lime is the basic material for the baby's body. It is needed in the amount of 40-50 grams to build up the bones. The mother should eat this much calcium every day, otherwise the baby will extract calcium from the mother's body. Then the mother will slowly get weaker, her bones will deteriorate, her teeth rot and her hair will fall out. We can compensate for this need by feeding the mother dairy products, wheat or barley, pears or apples. Thus we can help the fetus grow. [Mother's Guide, p.6.]

There are many books which explain ways to help safeguard the health of the child and the mother. There are many details like the kind of clothes, their color, the shoes, the mother's associations, and so on which affect the baby. If the mother neglects God and does not pay enough attention to her religious duties and reading the Quran, then the baby's mental and spiritual growth will be

(184)

affected. Pregnancy itself is considered a form of worship with a great reward. The Prophet (Pbuh) said:

When a woman becomes pregnant, she is similar to one who fasts, stays up at night to worship God, and fights for God with her wealth and life. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.101, p.106]

Of course, a couple could use birth control with mutual consent. However, this way they will lose out on a profitable deal. They should also not lose control and have too many children, since raising kids requires financial, physical and spiritual strength. Should parents not be able to properly raise their children because they have too many, the kids may turn out to be bad kids and then damn their parents.

[Delivery](#)

Although childbirth is a very pleasant experience for the mother, the father and the relatives, it is very painful for the mother. The Imams have said that labor has a great reward and is considered to be worship. The Prophet (Pbuh) said:

When she delivers her baby she will have a reward which is so great that it is incomprehensible. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.101, p.106-107]

Imam Sadiq said:

A woman who dies during delivery will not be accountable for her deeds in this world since she has died with the sorrow of childbirth.

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: Give your wife a few dates as soon as she delivers her child, since God ordered Mary to eat dates at the time of delivery. Give her seven dates from Medina or your own town. God has said:

I swear by my Majesty, Grandeur, Nobility and Highness that if a woman eats dates on the day of childbirth, then the child shall be patient whether it is a boy or a girl. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.101, p.116]

In Islam, all aspects of childbirth including the delivery room, the midwife, and the people present are closely considered so as to guarantee the physical and mental health of the mother and the baby.

[New-Born Clothing](#)

The Prophet (Pbuh) ordered the people in charge of the affairs of the house to put white clothes on Imam Hassan Mujtaba when he was born. By mistake, they put yellow clothes on him and handed him over to the Noble Prophet. The Prophet (Pbuh) took him, kissed him, put his tongue in the mouth and sucked his lip. Then he said:

Did I not order you to put white clothes on him?

Then he asked for the white clothes and put them on the baby, and put the yellow clothes aside. Then he said the general call to prayer (Adhan) in his right ear and the specific call to prayer (Iqamah) in his left ear. He named him

(185)

Hassan. He did the same things when Imam Husayn was born (Vasa'il, v.21, p.409).

[The First Food for the Baby](#)

The Noble Kulayny, author of the book Usul al-Kafi has narrated the following tradition:

Feed your baby first with the water from the Euphrates River and then the dirt from

Imam Husayn's grave: if not possible use rain water. [Vasa'il, v.21, p.407]

Adhan and Iqamah (The general call to prayer and the specific one)

It is said the first part of the body of the baby which works is the ear. The Quran has placed especial emphasis on the ear. From the very first moments of birth the ear hears and the brain receives and records what the ears hear. Sounds affect the child's mind. The house should be void of forbidden and polluted sounds or else the child will become mentally and psychologically polluted. Saying the Adhan and Iqamah in the child's right and left ears at the first moments after birth was a tradition of the Prophet (Pbuh) and the Immaculate Imams. The child should hear the call to God's unity, Prophethood, leadership, and prayer so that he/she starts life with these concepts and ends it with the same concepts. He/she will be born a Muslim and will die as a Muslim. Do not say that he/she is only one-day old, does not understand, does not see, cannot receive any information. The baby has all these fresh and powerful powers. I heard from Professor Tabatabaee (may God bless him):

A twenty-three year old American girl got a brain disease. They operated on her brain, and then after waking up she sang a religious song in French. The parents were really surprised. The doctor asked why they were surprised. They said our daughter does not know any French, does not have any French books, and nor does she have any French friends. Then the girl's mother solved the problem by saying that when the girl was only three months old, some French refugees of World War 2 came to the US. There was a Christian nurse who had rented a house next to their house: She used to come to our house, hug the baby and sing her a lullaby to pacify her. It was obvious that her lullaby was religious. Those words were recorded in her brain then, and were retrieved 23 years later when she became conscious after surgery. Therefore, saying the call to prayer in the early moments of life, and saying things to the ears of the dead person just after death are not useless. The ear is the first part that works and is the last one that stops to function.

(186)

Childbirth Etiquette

The author of the book, Makarim-al-Akhlagh has narrated the Immaculate Imams saying there are these traditional acts for the time of childbirth. The first of these is naming the child, then shaving the head, giving charity equal in weight to the cut hair, sacrificing an animal, rubbing saffron on the head of the baby, circumcising the boys, and feeding sacrificial meat to the neighbors. [Vasa'il, v.21, pp.411-413]

Imam Sadiq has highly recommended to sacrifice an animal, so much so that he has

nearly considered it obligatory [Ibid].

Imam Musa, the son of Jafar was asked about circumcision, he replied:

Circumcising boys on the seventh day after birth is a tradition [Vasa'il, v.21, p.439]

Mother's Milk

Breast feeding for two years is prescribed in the Holy Quran:

The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years. [Holy Quran: Baqara: 2:233]

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In fact, God has provided for the sustenance of the baby's milk in the mother's breast. A mother does not have the right to deprive the baby of his/her God-given milk and give powdered or animal milk for some personal, imaginary or physical reasons. The best way to start the breasts to produce milk is through sucking them. No drug can do a better job. Once the baby starts to suck the mother's breast, her milk secretions become regular, and she starts to feel healthier too. Breast milk contains 1.6 percent of albuminoids, 0.4 percent fat, 3.8 percent sugar and some salt and vitamins. This combination is only found in the mother's milk, and nowhere else. By God's will, only the mother's breast has the potential to produce such food for a newborn guest. The formula for animal milk is slightly different. Animals like cows which grow faster have more albuminoids. While the breast feeding progresses, the combination above changes slowly. The sugar and fat reduce, while the albuminoids increase. The sucking action of the baby not only helps him/her feed and get full, it also causes an increase in the secretions of the glands in the breasts. In the first fifteen days after birth, the child must be breastfed seven times per day. This starts from nearly 6 AM and continues to 12 PM once every three hours. Then we must reduce this frequency of breastfeeding six times per day, and let the child go to sleep at 9 PM. This way the mother can get a chance to rest, as does the baby's digestive system, which should be prepared for the next day. The mother should try to let the baby get full at each breast-feeding session. This requires some patience. The baby must be then put to sleep on his/her right side. Then the mother can go and get busy doing her own household chores. A child that sleeps

(187)

well after each breast feeding session is perfectly healthy, and one must be glad to have such a baby. [Mother's Guide, p.30]

Even though the Prophet (Pbuh) was very busy, he paid special attention to the feeding of the children. He would come to Fatimah Zahra's house, put his finger on Husayn's mouth and by observing his sucking tested his appetite. If he was really hungry, he would be breastfed. If not, he would not be fed just for crying, since feeding the baby too often would cause illness and slow down the children digestive system. This would make him/her grow up to be weak. The Prophet (Pbuh) said:

There is no milk for babies better than mother's milk. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.103, p.323]

This was said centuries ago by the Noble Prophet of Islam. It is a fact that has been recently discovered by great scientists. In the West where families leave their children to be raised in day care centers and be fed powdered milk, the researches have stated that there is no better food or milk for the baby than the mother's milk. In rare instances where the mother lacks sufficient milk, it has been stressed in traditions to be very careful when choosing someone to breastfeed the baby instead. This is so because the milk is very effective on both the spirit and the body of the child. Based on traditions, one should avoid choosing a dumb, psychotic, evil-doing, weak-eyed person, Jew, Christian, Magi, or an alcoholic person to breastfeed your baby. This is because their condition will be transferred to the baby through the milk. [Bihar al-Anwar, v.103, Chapter on Breast-feeding; Vasa'il, v.15, Chapter on Breast -feeding].

The main point about breast feeding is the reward which is surprising. Um Salmeh asked the Prophet:

Men get all the good rewards but what about poor women?

He replied:

The reward of pregnancy is the same as fasting and night worship, and fighting in the way of God with one's wealth and life. Delivery has such an extensive divine reward which no one can realize. And for breast-feeding, each suck of the baby has the reward of freeing one of the slaves from the generation of Ismael. When the mother stops, a noble angel shall hit her on the side and tell her, start over since you are forgiven [Vasa'il, Al-i-Bayt, v.21, p.451]

It is important for mothers to note the following point that Imam Sadiq told a woman named Um Ishaq:

Breastfeed your baby with both breasts, since one is like a source of food while the other is like a source of drinking.

Naming

Some people consider naming an unimportant issue, and put any name on their child. However, naming is very important, and it affects the child's mentality and

(188)

future. For this reason, there is one detailed chapter dedicated to naming in the books on traditions. The seventh Imam said:

The first kind act of a man towards his child is choosing a good name. Each of you must choose a good name for your child.

The Prophet (Pbuh) said:

Choose good names for yourselves, since you will be called by the same names in the Hereafter. [Ibid]

A narrator said that he went to see Imam Sadiq when he was sitting by Imam Musa's cradle. I sat and waited for him to stop caring for the child. He called me and I greeted

him. He answered and then yelled at me, saying that I should immediately go and change the name I had chosen for my baby the previous day. I had named my newborn daughter Homeyra, but God dislikes this name, so I went and changed it. [Vasa'il, v.21, p.389]

Imam Sadiq has narrated his ancestors as saying:

In fact, the Prophet (Pbuh) used to change the bad names of towns and people. [Vasa'il, v.21, pp.390-391]

Imam Baqir said:

The most loudable name is the one which conveys the meaning of being a servant of God. And the best names for your children are the names of the Prophets. [Ibid]

Imam Musa, the son of Jafar, said:

Poverty shall not enter a home in which a girl is named Fatimah, or a boy is named Muhammad, Ahmad, Ali, Hassan, Husayn, Jafar, Talib or Abdullah. [Vasa'il, v.21, p.396]

To please the Prophet (Pbuh) and the Imams, you should change the names of your children if they are different from the names of the Prophet, the Imams or their mothers; lest your children file a complaint against you in the Hereafter for the bad names, symbolizing the wicked heroes of sin and corruption, which you named them with.